

Convenor's annual report October 2007 - October 08

The Friends of Aranda Bushland (FoAB) did many positive things during the year.

Work program 2007-08

Our work parties continued on the second Sunday of each month. From October to May we mainly worked in the Snow Gums paddocks. target weeds were St John's Wort, Paterson's Curse, Hoary mustard, African Love Grass, silver and saffron thistles, the occasional hawthorn, and rose briars. erosion control project continued, with planting on erosion sites. monitoring and research involves six transects across the Snow Gums and adjacent paddocks, along which we do step-point monitoring each April and September. We had some work parties in June in the Aranda Bushland, focussing on track and roll-over maintenance, and in the rural lease focussing on woody weeds. Many volunteers' hours of additional casual weeding helped to ensure that the thistles and St. John's Wort were reduced to minimal amounts in the Aranda Bushland and Snow Gums paddock, and additional casual track maintenance also kept the roll-overs in good condition (with special thanks to Ian and Mary Falconer for their leading effort). Jim Arnold's determined effort in locating and removing the recent incursions of Bathurst Burr also seems to have kept that weed at bay.

Our contribution to ParkCare as reflected in statistics

For the twelve months from the end of October 2007, we worked for 2,435 hours*, easily beating our achievement of the year before (2,000 hours). The busiest periods were in December/January (496 hours), when we were weeding, and in July (267 hours), when we were planting. At both of these times we held extra work parties in order to get through the tasks.

This very good result is largely due to the increased average attendance at work parties compared to previous years. Many members have undertaken extra weeding outside of organised work parties, as well as seed collection and watering.

*This includes an estimate of 150 hours for the month of June, when I was in France (I don't know what happened to the stats for that month). The June estimate is conservative, as our average monthly hours are more like 200. Many thanks to our secretary, Jenny Andrews, for her efforts in collecting and compiling the statistics.

Canberra Day weekend celebratory planting - 8 & 9 March 2008

FoAB had a very successful Canberra Day weekend celebratory planting in March 2008. On Saturday the 8th, with a strong turnout from FoAB and Friends of Mount Painter, and energetic help from Grant Woodbridge, our ranger, and Warren Saunders from Seeds and Plants Australia, we whipper-snipped *Phalaris*, and planted about 700 *Poa labillardieri* (River tussock) and 40 *Carex Apressa* (Tall sedge) in the Snow Gums drainage line. We planted about 100 each of *Vittadinia muelleri* (Narrow leaf New Holland daisy), *Leptorhynchos squamatus* (Scaly buttons), and *Poa sieberiana* (Snow grass) on the drier sheet erosion areas. On Sunday the 9th we planted a range

of grasses - (*Themeda Australis* (Kangaroo grass), *Bothriochloa macra* (Redleg grass), *Poa sieberiana* (Snow grass) and *Microlaena stipoides* (Weeping grass), as well as *Leptorhynchos squamatus* (Scaly buttons), at the lower part of the end of the Snow Gums paddock towards the walkway through the rural lease. This was our last major planting for the erosion control project and it was a pleasure to participate because we had plenty of volunteers which ensured less work by each of us.

Canberra Volunteers' Day 2008

FoAB participated in the inaugural Canberra Volunteers' Day 2008 on Sunday 18 May 2008, hosting a stall at the Hotel Realm in Barton. Many thanks for the FoAB Committee and Volunteering ACT for providing such enthusiastic support for the day.

Evaluation of Land Keepers program

During the year FoAB participated in a trial of an evaluation process called 'Performance Story Reporting' as part of an Australian Government project called 'Building Better Data'. Hassall & Associates (an NRM consultancy), the ACT NRM Council and Greening Australia, with funding from the Australian Government, evaluated the Land Keepers' Program trialling the new reporting process. FoAB appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback on the program.

Educational Volunteering

FoAB participated in several significant events with young people in 2008.

In May two FoABulous grandmothers (Mary Falconer and Jenny Andrews) participated in a ceremonial presentation of a Landcare Australia Wollemi Pine to Aranda Primary School. Mary and Jenny also presented a copy of James Woodford's book, *Wollemi Pine*, to the school library. The young tree has been planted in the school's frog garden amongst bottlebrush and flax, protected from wind by the walls of the school.

In early July 2008 a party of 13 cadet officers from the Australian Defence Force Academy led by Rachel Chipman joined 7 members of the Friends of Aranda Bushland in clearing weeds from part of the rural lease area of Glenloch Station. The area adjoins the heritage listed Snow Gums frost hollow, and has a high quality grassy woodland with interspersed hawthorn, briar rose, blackberry and honeysuckle. These woody weeds were cut and dabbed with glyphosate, an energetic activity which all enjoyed. In the afternoon those cadets who were interested had a walk along the signed interpretive track into the Aranda bushland, with explanation of the flora and fauna.

In September and October FOAB collaborated with Conservation Volunteers Australia, several Canberra High School staff and a group of mainly Year 10 students, and Greening Australia, in a five day (over five weeks) 'learning by doing' project involving educational and environmental volunteering. This project was reported in detail in FoAB's December 2008 newsletter.

FoAB has been calling for more recognition of 'hands-on' environmental volunteering as part of school curricula in the ACT for some time. In October 2008 we welcomed

the recommendation made by the National Curriculum Board's Advisory Group (reported 14 October 2008) that science education in schools should follow a 'science for life' approach. FoAB's view is that environmental volunteering could become an important part of the national science curriculum. FoAB also hopes that our program with schools might become an annual tradition, perhaps enhanced with an assessment component to test the students on what they have learnt whilst volunteering in the Aranda Bushland and Snow Gums site.

Particular thanks in relation to the CVA/FoAB/GA/CHS project were extended to: Conservation Volunteers Australia Project Co-ordinator, Cristina Vicente; Angela Calliess of Greening Australia; Canberra High School Youth Worker, Kristina Stewart; Canberra High School Pastoral Care Executive Teacher, Vicki Gwilliam; FoAB members, the Manager of the ACT Government's Fire Management Unit, Neil Cooper and team-member Dylan Kendall, Cormac Farrell, from Connell Wagner, CSIRO Plant Ecologist Doherty; Waterwatch Coordinator and ACT Frogwatch Coordinator Beth Mantle; ACT Parks, Conservation & Lands ranger Grant Woodbridge, and *The Chronicle*.

Unfortunately however, FoAB also had cause to grumble during the year.

South Aranda Bushland

FoAB committee members met with ACT Government officials during the year to express our concerns, on behalf of members, about the state of the South Aranda Bushland.

In December 2008 FoAB was pleased to learn that meetings had been held involving the rural lessee and Department of Territory and Municipal Services staff, and that remedial measures had been agreed.

In late 2007-early 2008, FoAB wrote to various agencies, including the ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, expressing concerns about 4 main issues.

- the present and future well-being and preservation of the South Aranda Woodland, which is currently part of a rural lease and is adjacent to both Aranda Bushland and the Aranda Snow Gums site;

the prevalence of weeds in the rural lease adjacent to and including the South Aranda Woodland, with the consequent deterioration of a high class conservation area; the impact of both rural lease weeds and roadside verge weeds on the Aranda Bushland and the Aranda Snow Gums Natural Heritage Site, and the prevalence of new and potentially noxious weeds in the rural lease which have not been controlled effectively.

In December FoAB was advised that agreement had been reached between TaMS and the rural lessee that boom spraying would be done in the rural lease to contain some of the St Johns wort and other weeds which threaten the biodiversity values of the Aranda Bushland. FoAB was consulted about the proposed spraying before it was done, and we suggested precautionary measures to complement the strategies proposed, which we welcomed.

FoAB continues to seek the inclusion of the rural lease adjacent to the Aranda Bushland and Snow Gums in Canberra Nature Park.

Garden refuse dumped in Aranda Bushland

FoAB members continue to be dismayed by the actions of a few which create unnecessary work for volunteers and rangers, and which impact adversely on the Bushland. We continue to see piles of garden prunings dumped in the Bushland near houses. It is extremely concerning when such material contains seeds which create new weeds, and more eradication work. Please spread the word amongst your friends, neighbours and colleagues that dumping in the bushland is illegal. Rangers can be contacted via Canberra Connect on 132281.

Special tribute to Bill Packard

I would like to express a special thank you on behalf of the FoAB Committee, to one of our longstanding committee members, Bill Packard. Despite his health challenges, and our concerned protests, Bill has continued to provide extraordinary support for FoAB by providing wonderful morning teas for our monthly workparties. I don't know of many other octogenarians who regularly cater for groups of about 20, with vitality, culinary talent, and generosity, and who also help with weeding and other activities. Bill makes constructive contributions to almost all committee discussions, and has a lively ability to de-fuse debates with insightful witticisms. FoAB thanks you sincerely Bill for your many and varied contributions over many years.

Thank you to our rangers, the FoAB Committee and other FoAB volunteers

FoAB would not exist without its selfless volunteers, and we rely heavily on the support provided by the Department of Territory and Municipal Services rangers. Thank you all.

And another special thank you to the Committee whose efforts in a wide range of areas are too many to list. Suffice to say that thanks are due to the usually inexhaustible Jenny Andrews, Jim Arnold, Diana Brown, Peter Mellor, Ian Falconer, Peter Ormay, Bill Packard, and Wendy Twiss. An additional thank you to Wendy for hosting our end-of-year party, which involved a screening of photos from some of our members who travelled to Europe last year.

Cor Visser Marchant also continued as our auditor, for which we are most grateful. Roy McAndrew also deserves a special thanks for setting up for FoAB a new Gmail account. FoAB has been experiencing difficulties with the distribution by email of its newsletters and work party notices, so Roy created a Gmail account accessible to FoAB Committee members.

It is pleasing to see so many willing to put up their hands to do more again this year.

Other news:

Recent Work Parties

Due to the welcome rains in spring and summer we've seen a very unwelcome resurgence of St John's Wort in the Snow Gums paddock and surrounds. Largely thanks to Mary Falconer's organising, members attended extra weeding parties on 18 and 25 January (and will again on 1 February) to tackle the regrowth and seedlings before the flowering heads turned to seed and set back FoAB's efforts. Thank you all for a great effort despite the heat.

Website refresh

A new member, Simon King, has kindly offered to freshen up our website. Please contact one of the committee members if you have any helpful suggestions for this project.

Hanna Jaireth

FoAB Convenor, 29 January 2009