



Friends of Aranda Bushland

to conserve and rehabilitate the bush

Convenor? Annual Report

AGM Tuesday 21 February 2012

2011 to February 2012 has been the year we rejuvenated our interpretative walk and demolished a massive explosion of St John? wort threatening plant diversity in our grasslands and woodlands. Our monthly work parties averaged eleven parkcarers and included delicious morning teas. Our total contribution for the year was 2,055 hours. Weeding continues as our main focus with some erosion control activities. Work parties have been advertised by email, Neighbourhood Watch and notices in the bush. Ginninderra Catchment Group funded a brochure about Aranda Bushland and it was printed in time for a return to Jamison for a joint parkcare display in October. Keith Pantlin updated our website to appeal to a wider audience.

Your committee has done a magnificent job in planning and has undertaken the guts of the on-ground work. Many thanks to Jenny Andrews (Secretary), Peter Mellor (Treasurer), Ian Falconer (Con Council, tools & chemicals), Diana Brown (minutes & Con Council), Roy McAndrew (website), Kevin McCue (erosion), Peter Ormay (interpretation) and Jim Arnold (catchment groups). A special thanks to Roy who will step down from the committee this year, but will continue with work parties. There are a number of members who are regulars at work parties and some who come once or twice a year. All are welcome - every little helps.

Walking from Frost Hollow to Forest

Rejuvenating our *Frost Hollow to Forest Walk* signage was a just-in-time project as the signs had begun to show their age. The graffiti layer had peeled, there were chips from numerous falling branches, a tree had died and we? lost the juvenile leaves from another. It was surprisingly difficult to get grant monies. We obtained funds from NSW Landcare, Caring for Our Country, *Communities in Landscapes*, Box-Gum Woodland in the Murrumbidgee Catchment. Our self-guided walk places Box-Gum Woodland in context with adjoining ecosystems and showcases ten eucalypt species all in a one to two hour walk. We were able to support our grant with field guide entries and newspaper articles.

The signs are looking fantastic. Our elegant signs with Winifred Mumford? botanic drawings and maps are still highly relevant. Screenmakers had the data, fabricated new metal plates and installed them in August with our help. We used a generous donation from the children of Aranda Primary School towards an additional sign using aerial photos to show changes from the 1945 canopy to today? circle of regeneration. The grant also covered a new edition of our walk brochure which will be printed soon.

Parks & Conservation supported our project with additional track markers and funds for moving two signs and three track markers. The work took ages because it could only be done on standby for snakes

and fires - but we got more track markers and brushcutting than first requested. Thanks Rangers Craig Wainwright, Felicity and Jackson and our Peter Ormay for all you have done to improve the walk.

Weeding St John? wort

This recalcitrant weed consumes most of our work parties in spring, summer and into autumn in Aranda Snow Gums. Our parkcarers are passionate about controlling it and reducing the seedbank. Our dilemma is that the wort invades healthy, undisturbed, diverse natural vegetation. Using broad-leaved herbicides like Starane is effective in killing the wort but destroys the forbs that give our native grasslands their beauty and conservation value.

Our policy is to keep chemicals away from our heritage listed Snow Gums and two metres beyond the dripline. Painstaking digging and pulling the wort has worked as evidenced by the heavy infestation photographed there in 1996. We wand the wort in other forb rich areas at rosette stage in early spring as we can hit it with Zero/Roundup with minimum collateral damage. Once the wort begins to flower, we dig or pull to ensure it doesn't set seed.

Now we have ChemCert trained parkcarers who can use Starane, we can be more effective in killing the roots of the wort without damaging our sometimes cryptic wildflowers. Ian, Roy and Jim have a done a careful job in spraying Starane this summer and parkcarers have removed wort from all the sensitive areas and incursions into Aranda Bushland. We had extra two-hour work parties in January to make sure we stopped any wort from seeding. Parks & Conservation helped with contract Starane spraying of three quarters of the endangered grasslands and hope staff will finish the rest before seed hardening.

Other weeding

Our annual rural lease work party tackled hawthorns in the Caswell Drive paddock and we were grateful to have a chainsawing ranger for the most challenging ones. Next year? work party could be the last with chainsaw size hawthorns - we started in 1998 and went slowly to maintain bird habitat. This season? St John? wort in the adjoining Glenloch rural lease is distressing. We have continued writing to Ministers and there were promises that these paddocks would become nature reserve but nothing about timing. Glenloch rural lease will be broken up for Molonglo stage 3 urban development.

Surprisingly, Paterson? curse was almost invisible in 2011 just a few inch high plants with two flowers. It seems that grasses and exotic plantain flourished in disturbed areas instead. A few curse rosettes appeared this month. We blitzed the serrated tussock site (first identified in 1992) in winter at the top of the uphill route of our Frost Hollow to Forest Walk.

Erosion control

We maintained all our steep walking tracks in Aranda Bushland during winter with a work party and individual work by Ian. Ranger Felicity? team worked on the Frost Hollow to Forest Walk route. Unfortunately, summer rains have scoured our tracks and we need to schedule more work soon.

David Tongway returned in November to help us manage the unsightly gullies in Aranda Snow Gums. The hawthorn debris placed along the gullies in 2009 using David? advice has been effective in protecting the gully edge from kangaroos and encouraging natural regeneration. Ranger Craig followed up by providing more coir logs/log debris and Kevin organised a small installation team.

Measuring Snow Gums

Peter Ormay and I measured the DBH (diameter at breast height) of our 42 remnant Snow Gums and the distances between them in 2001 to provide benchmark data and complement our set of aerial photos. This year, we gathered a team of four, repeated the measurements (with some difficulties) and included our three stands of planted trees, some of which are now over our criteria of 5cm DBH. Jenny is documenting the results to ensure the same measurements can be done in 2021. Technology changes make it easier to share such information.

Jean Geue, Convenor

19 February 2012