



ACT
Government

2022-2023 ParkCare Annual Report



Acknowledgement of Country

The ACT Government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognises any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

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ISBN: 978-0-642-60816-1

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Information about the directorate and an electronic version of this annual report can be found on the website: www.parks.act.gov.au/get-involved/parkcare-volunteering

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	ii
Contact for this report	ii
Freedom of Information	ii
Accessibility	ii
Foreword	1
A word from the Senior Director	1
With thanks from ParkCare	1
With thanks from Lauren, Volunteer Programs Manager	1
With thanks from Chris, RangerAssist Volunteer Coordinator	2
With thanks from Martin, ParkCare Ranger	2
With thanks from Michelle, VisitorAssist and WildlifeAssist Volunteer Coordinator	3
With thanks from Tenzin, ParkCare Ranger	3
2022-23 in review	5
Introduction	5
Who is ParkCare?	5
The Four Streams of ParkCare	5
The Environmental Volunteers Ecosystem	5
2022-23	6
Achievements	6
2022-23 statistics	6
ParkCare volunteer demographics	7
ParkCare over the years	8
ParkCare Reports	9
ParkCare Patch	10
RangerAssist	14
VisitorAssist	17
WildlifeAssist	20
Training	22
ParkCare Out in Community	24
Community Engagement	24
Volunteer Recognition	24
Volunteer Consultation	26
Professional Development	27

Volunteer Reports	28
ParkCare Patch.....	29
Budjan Galindji (Franklin Grasslands)	29
Cooleman Ridge ParkCare	30
Farrer Ridge ParkCare	31
Friends of Aranda Bushland.....	32
Friends of Black Mountain.....	33
Friends of Dryandra Woodland & O'Connor Ridge.....	34
Friends of Gossan Hill	35
Friends of Jerrabomberra Wetlands	36
Friends of Mount Majura.....	37
Friends of Mount Painter.....	38
Friends of Mulligans Flat.....	39
Friends of The Pinnacle	40
Friends of Tuggeranong Hill	41
Friends of Wanniasa Hills	42
Gungahlin Hill ParkCare Group	43
Isaacs Ridge Mount Mugga Mugga.....	44
Majura Pines Trail Alliance.....	45
Mount Ainslie Weeders	46
Mount Pleasant ParkCare	47
Mount Taylor ParkCare Group	48
Oakey Hill ParkCare.....	49
Urambi Hills ParkCare Group	50
Additional note.....	51
RangerAssist.....	52
VisitorAssist.....	53
WildlifeAssist.....	54
ParkCare Affiliations.....	55
Kosciuszko Huts Association.....	55
National Parks Association (NPA).....	56

Foreword

A word from the Senior Director

On behalf of ACT Parks and Conservation Service I wish to take the time to thank each and every volunteer who has been involved in the program over the past 12 months for your dedication to improved environmental outcomes. Working in partnership with community is integral to the works of Parks.

I also wish to acknowledge the many organisations that support ParkCare volunteering, including Landcare ACT, who we continue to work closely with to ensure that the volunteer community is engaged and supported.

The ParkCare community continues to grow and adapt as has been seen by the involvement of volunteers over the past 12 months. This last year has seen considerable growth in the ParkCare program and demonstrated a return to volunteering levels not seen since the global health crisis began in 2020. Over 27,000 hours has been recorded this year, with over 700 active volunteers, and this has had an innumerate benefit to our parks and reserves and our visitors.

In 2022, ACT Parks and Conservation Service was involved in hearings and reporting as part of the Inquiry into Environmental Volunteering. In March 2023, we agreed and agreed-in-principle to all 22 recommendations of the report, and look forward to progressing on each of the recommended items into the coming year.

Thank you once again to all ParkCare volunteers and we look forward to what we can collectively achieve into 2023-24.

Michaela Watts

A/g Senior Director, Parks and Partnerships, ACT Parks and Conservation Service

With thanks from ParkCare

Volunteers are integral to the works of ACT Parks and Conservation Service, and it is the privilege of the ParkCare team to be able to work to support the involvement of community in land management and other key conservation works.

ParkCare recognises that volunteer contribution is not only measured by the number of volunteers, or numbers of hours recorded, but also the passion, dedication and knowledges of the volunteer community. In ParkCare, we are fortunate to have an incredible knowledge bank in our volunteer community, from weed and grass identification skills, to retired ecologists, soil experts, historians and interpretive experts. The experience and expertise of our volunteers does not go unrecognised or unappreciated.

With thanks from Lauren, Volunteer Programs Manager

The ParkCare community never ceases to amaze and inspire me. I feel very fortunate to work in a role that involves supporting community to engage across our parks and reserves. Each year, writing the annual report, I feel in awe as I read each individual volunteer report and reflect on the many achievements of this community.

I continue to learn daily from the many passionate and enthusiastic ParkCare volunteers and look forward to better understanding from community how we can move the ParkCare program from strength to strength; to ensure a safe, accessible and supported volunteering experience for all those involved.

It is at this time that I wish to acknowledge the many people whom without the ParkCare program would not be what it is:

- The Executive Leadership Team within ACT Parks and Conservation Service, including Stephen Alegria (Executive Business Manager, ACT Parks and Conservation Service), Michaela Watts (Senior Director, Parks and Partnerships) and Lisa Testoni (Director, Volunteer and Visitor Experience) who continue to provide ongoing support to the policy and planning of the ParkCare program
- Environmental Volunteering stakeholders, including Karissa Preuss (CEO, Landcare ACT), Frank Garofalow (CEO, ACT Natural Resource Management), Brian Bathgate (Assistant Director, Land Management, TCCS), and the many members of Landcare ACT, ACT NRM, Urban Parks and Places Volunteering, and the three Catchment Groups
- ParkCare Volunteer Coordination staff, including Chris, Martin, Michelle and Tenzin who provide the on the ground support to our volunteer community
- The Parks Ranger staff across the ACT who support and provide guidance on volunteer involvement in our parks and reserves
- And of course, last but not least, our incredible ParkCare Volunteers who make up the amazing community of people working to protect and enhance our parks and reserves, and educate visitors on our natural environment and heritage values.

Thank you again, and I look forward to working alongside you in 2023-24.

With thanks from Chris, RangerAssist Volunteer Coordinator

Another great year for the RangerAssist program. I am sure that having an extra 11 types of activities on the calendar to choose from, resulting in 763 hours extra on last year (almost 2000 hours in total) shows just how appreciated the RangerAssist volunteers really are. Corporate opportunities continue to hold steady with more on the calendar. I am very happy to report the great effort we saw this year from the Calwell High students, and I am very much looking forward to engaging students from Radford College later this year.

Thank you to the Rangers that support the program and of course thank you to the RangerAssist Volunteers who have assisted in the removal of thousands of weeds, for the kilometres of fencing removed and repaired, and the trees and grasses planted. Finally, thanks for the banter, it is always fun.

With thanks from Martin, ParkCare Ranger

Firstly, I would like to say a big thank you for the time, knowledge and enthusiasm across all streams of ParkCare. It is vital to the work that I do and it is an absolute pleasure to be able to work with each of you, particularly ParkCare Patch. The ParkCare Program has evolved over the past 12 months as we have a team of 5 staff full time Lauren McQueen, Michelle Jenkins, Chris Evans, Tenzin Phuntsho and myself Martin Bajt to work with the volunteering community to enhance our environment and visitor experiences within ACT.

The ParkCare Team are equally enthusiastic to achieve the common goals and improvement in efficiencies and better support to the ParkCare Volunteers. I will continue to look for ways to deliver the ParkCare Program with better efficiency such as the introduction of ParkCare Annual Planning Information Day, after very positive feedback we included Office of Nature Conservation Projects Update, Invasive Plants Control

Program Update, Invasive Animals Update, Fire Management Unit – Burns Operation Plan and Offsets Projects Update.

I look forward to the 2023-24 season as I continue my role as the ParkCare Ranger North side, have more on ground day to day hands on approach to assist the ParkCare Groups in delivering better environmental outcomes that align with approved Annual Planning and Parks & Conservation Service priorities. Above all it must be acknowledged that our Volunteer Manger, Lauren McQueen is driving the ParkCare Program forward with solid communication liaising effectively with external and internal stake holders and fostering new opportunities.

Once again thank you for all the incredible hours that are dedicated to land and visitor management.

With thanks from Michelle, VisitorAssist and WildlifeAssist Volunteer Coordinator

As I look back on the last year, I am so proud and privileged to be a permanent staff member and to be a part of this inspirational team of volunteers and ParkCare Rangers. Our little community has grown, we've learned from each other, shared challenges, opportunities and together we move forward to do our bit to care for our local environment. Each one of you have made a difference and I would like to say thank you.

I would like to acknowledge the support and guidance that I have received from Lauren McQueen, Volunteer Manager, and all of the volunteers over the last 12 months and a big shout out to all the staff at Tidbinbilla and Namadgi for their ongoing support.

With thanks from Tenzin, ParkCare Ranger

In June 2023, I celebrated the first anniversary of my work with ParkCare community. I feel truly privileged and honoured for the opportunity to serve in this position. I would like to thank all ParkCare members for making me love my job. One of the biggest bonuses of my work, that is not accounted for, is the scope to learn from our experienced and knowledgeable volunteers even as I perform my roles. This will go as one of the fondest memories I will cherish in my life.

I look forward to the continued learning opportunities and supporting this incredible ParkCare community and our district rangers for improved social and environmental outcomes.



2022-23

In review

2022-23 in review

Introduction

ParkCare is an inclusive, valued and rewarding volunteer program where positive volunteer experiences contribute to improved environmental, social and educational outcomes.

Who is ParkCare?

The ParkCare volunteering program involves a partnership between the Canberra region community and the ACT Government, working together to protect and enhance our nature reserves and national parks in the ACT. Running for over 30 years, this partnership continues to grow and adapt to our changing circumstances.

The passion and commitment shown by ParkCare Volunteers is demonstrated through the continual growth and improvement of the program and positive impacts on Canberra Nature Park, Nature Reserves and Namadgi National Park.

The Four Streams of ParkCare

ParkCare volunteering is divided into four streams, providing opportunities for people with a range of interests and experiences.

ParkCare Patch: ParkCare Patch volunteers take stewardship over a 'patch' of land within the Canberra Nature Park, working closely with the ParkCare team and PCS Rangers to develop and deliver on key conservation work plans, including tracks and trails. Each group is coordinated by a volunteer convenor.

RangerAssist: RangerAssist volunteers work alongside PCS staff to contribute to projects and initiatives throughout the ACT. This stream of volunteering provides individuals an opportunity to get behind the scenes and work on the activities that our ACT PCS Rangers are faced with every day.

VisitorAssist: VisitorAssist volunteers are a team of specialist visitor services volunteers. They are experts at environmental interpretation - connecting members of the community with the environment to better understand conservation. VisitorAssist volunteers work primarily at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Namadgi National Park.

WildlifeAssist: WildlifeAssist volunteers work with the Tidbinbilla Threatened Species Team to care for, protect and conserve native animals at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. WildlifeAssist volunteers work alongside staff to contribute to the threatened species recovery programs through food preparation, enclosure maintenance and other works.

The Environmental Volunteers Ecosystem

ParkCare volunteering sits within a broader community of environmental volunteers in the ACT, supported by a range of key stakeholders.

ParkCare recognises the ongoing work of Landcare ACT, the peak representative body for community Landcare in the ACT and region, as well as the Ginninderra Catchment Group, Molonglo Conservation Group and Southern ACT Catchment Group and the support that they each provide to ParkCare volunteers across the ACT.

ParkCare also recognises our sister program, Urban Parks and Places Volunteering, managed by Transport Canberra and City Services, and that many of our volunteer community crosses over with theirs.

The ParkCare program looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively with key stakeholders to support volunteers right across the ACT.

2022-23

2022-23 continued to be a busy year for the ParkCare volunteering program across all four volunteering streams.

The continuation of La Nina saw 913mm of rain recorded at Canberra Airport (850mm was recorded for 2021-22), which saw both increased weed growth and control activities, and the cancellation of many activities due to wet weather. There were, however, positives to the wetter than usual conditions, which provided positive outcomes for many new plantings across various ParkCare program areas.

From a policy and planning perspective, the Inquiry into Environmental Volunteerism Report tabled 22 recommendations with the intention of supporting, recognising and encouraging volunteer efforts. The ACT Government agreed/agreed-in-principle to all 22 recommendations made in the report. ParkCare has been working closely with key stakeholders in the Environmental Volunteering community to progress on these recommendations, to ensure environmental volunteering is supported and celebrated.

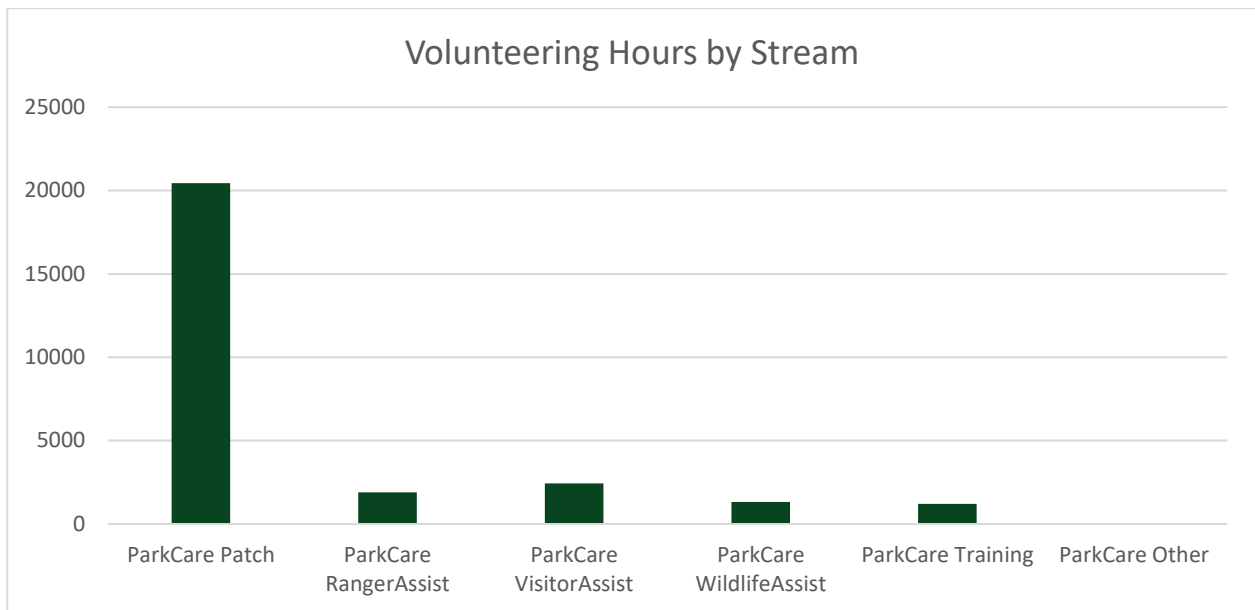
Achievements

The ParkCare program saw a range of achievements across the ACT in 2022/2023, including:

- Over 550 hectares of recorded weed control work
- Over 9,000 visitors supported at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Namadgi National Park
- The number of active volunteers increased by 16 per cent from 647 to 748
- The number of recorded volunteering hours increased by 30 per cent to 27,338
- Five new ParkCare Patch groups were formalised into the ParkCare program
- RangerAssist increased the amount of activities on offer
- The introduction of new wildlife surveying activities at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve
- The successful trial of a new Annual Planning Information Session for ParkCarers
- The introduction of the ParkCare Annual Survey, to be conducted annually herein
- John Butcher, Convenor of Oakey Hill ParkCare recognised in the 2023 Volunteering Awards
- Friends of Mount Majura and Gudgenby Bush Regenerators both recognised at the Landcare Awards
- First collaborative end of year celebration event held on International Volunteer Day

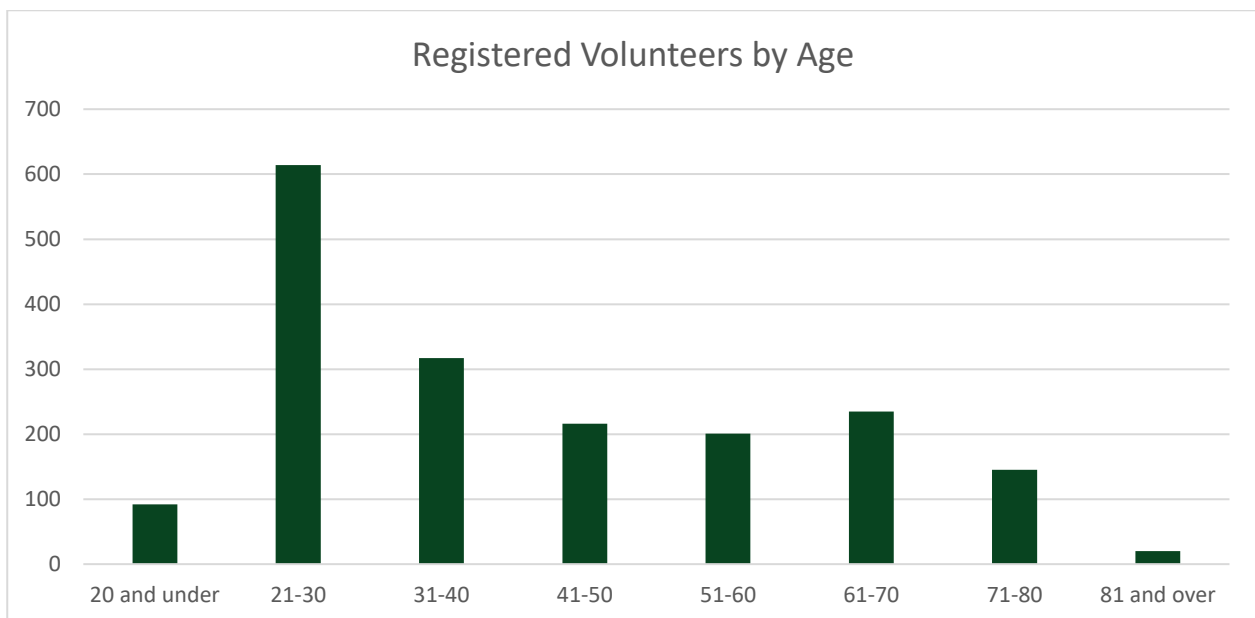
2022-23 statistics

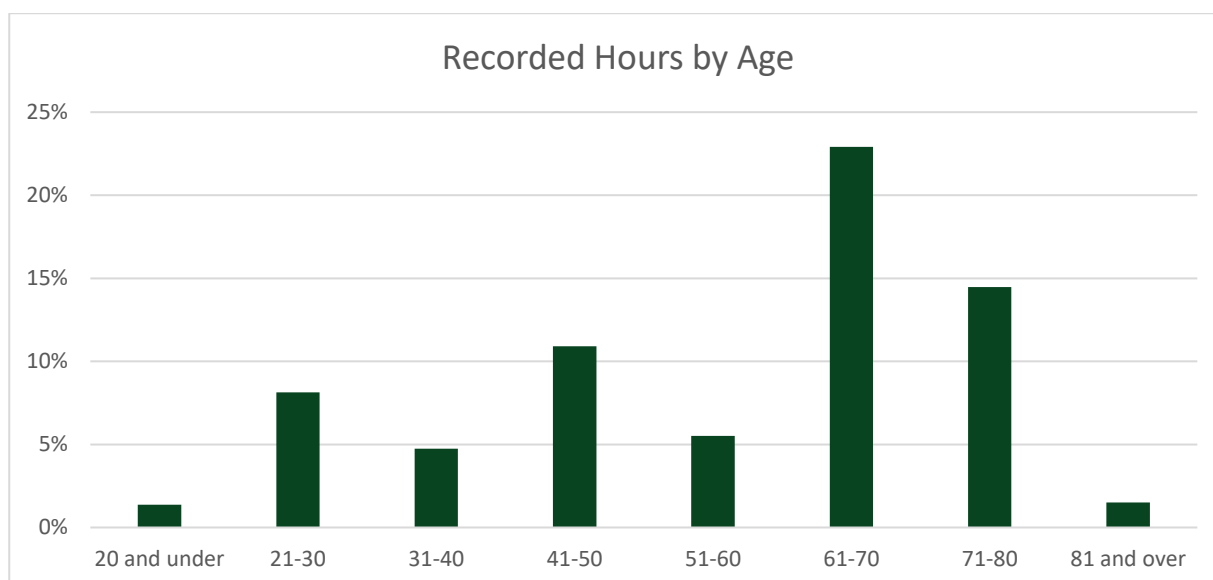
- Volunteers contributed a total of 27,338 hours across 2022/2023.
- This equated to a total economic value of \$1,140,541.36.
- ParkCare engaged with 748 active volunteers and 1,929 registered volunteers during this period.



ParkCare volunteer demographics

- Average Age of Registered ParkCare Volunteer: 42
- 23% of recorded hours were logged in the 61-70 age group
- 7% identify as LGBTIQ+
- 2% identify as living with a disability
- 1% identify as First Nations

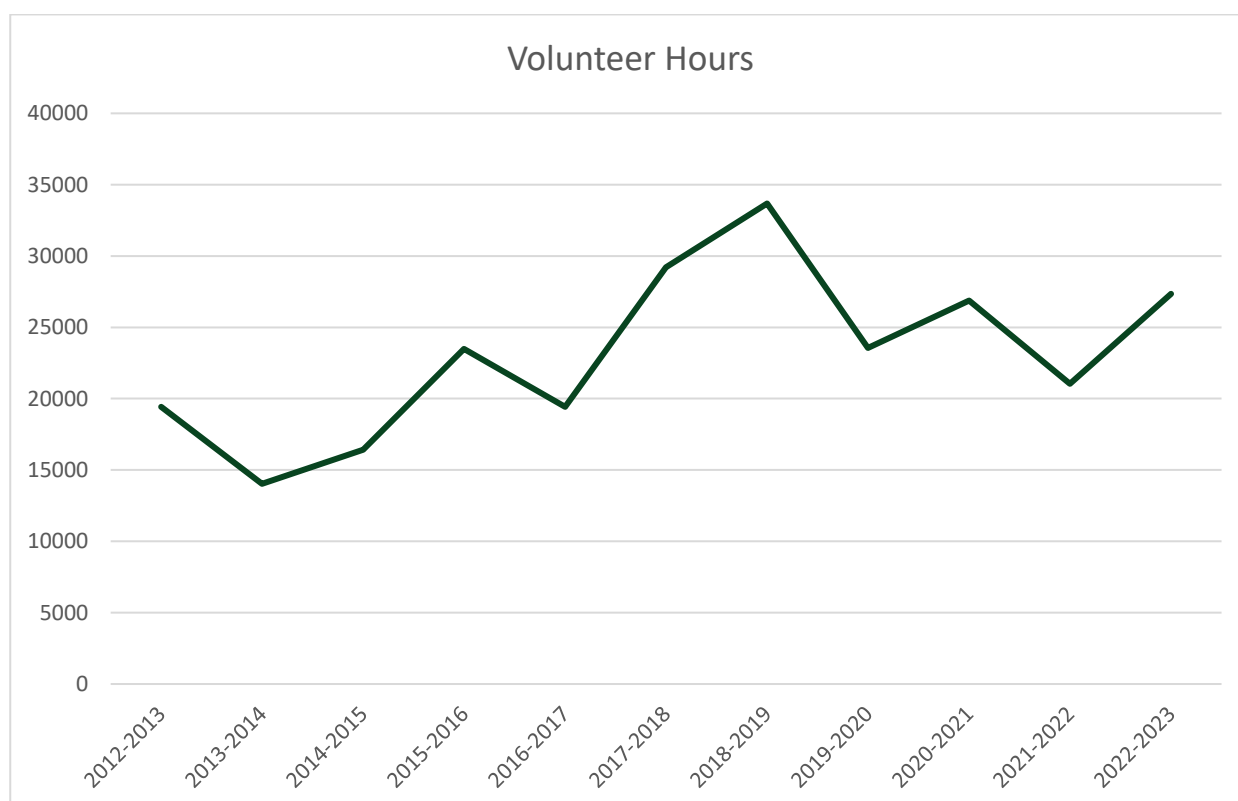




ParkCare over the years

2022-23 saw a 30% increase in volunteering hours, from 21,000 hours in 2021-22 to 27,000 hours in 2022-23.

All areas of the ParkCare program saw an increase in involvement. Notably, the WildlifeAssist stream saw the largest increase in hours after the program completely returned after the COVID-19 shutdown, and saw a series of wildlife surveying activities added including Koala and Turtle surveying.



ParkCare Reports

- ParkCare Patch
- RangerAssist
- VisitorAssist
- WildlifeAssist
- Training
- ParkCare Out in Community

ParkCare Reports

ParkCare Patch



Photo: Friends of Black Mountain, Vegetation Survey

- 20,436 hours
- 360 active volunteers
- 553 ha of recorded weed control

ParkCare Patch volunteers are the origin of the broader ParkCare volunteering program, with their contribution spanning over 30 years. Their knowledges, passions and stewardship have resulted in a significant amount of works to improve conservation and connection in Canberra Nature Park.

ParkCare Patch consists of 31 local community groups who have taken stewardship over their respective 'patch' of land, to ensure that it continues to thrive – through weeding, planting and other maintenance work, including on tracks and trails. In recent years, ParkCare has continued to work more strongly with the mountain biking community, formalising four groups into the ParkCare program and supporting groups to hand build and maintain certain tracks within the ACT.

ParkCare Patch groups are invaluable to Canberra Nature Park and its conservation outcomes.

In 2022-23, ParkCare Patch saw 20,436 hours of volunteering recorded on the ParkCare Hub, the greatest of any stream in the ParkCare program.

The top five groups by hours recorded on the ParkCare Hub include:

- Friends of Mount Majura (3,667 hours)
- Friends of The Pinnacle (2,236 hours)
- Friends of Black Mountain (1,865 hours)
- Friends of Mount Painter (1,493 hours)
- Red Hill Regenerators (1,448 hours)

In 2022-023, ParkCare Patch saw the introduction of five new groups across the ACT. This included three Landcare based groups, and two mountain biking (MTB) focused groups, including:

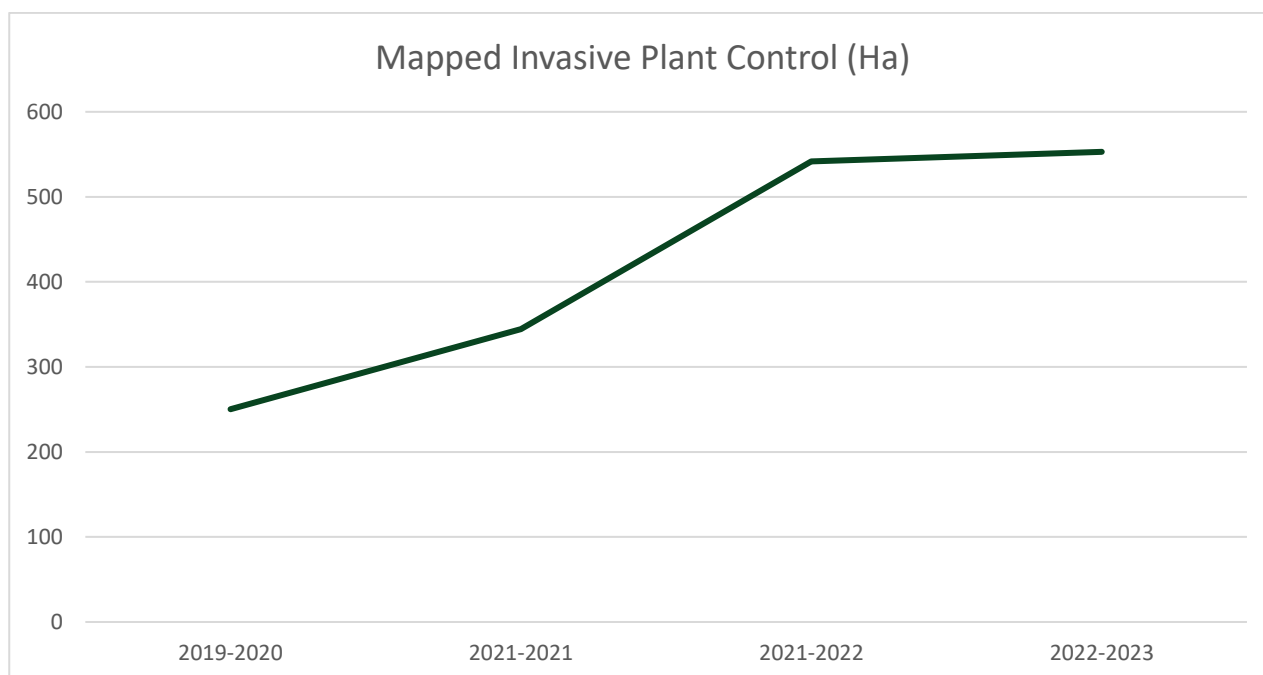
- Crace Landcare (Gungaharra)
- Friends of Dryandra (O'Connor Ridge)
- Friends of Wanniasa Hills
- Blue Range Builders (MTB)
- Molonglo Pines Trail Alliance (MTB)

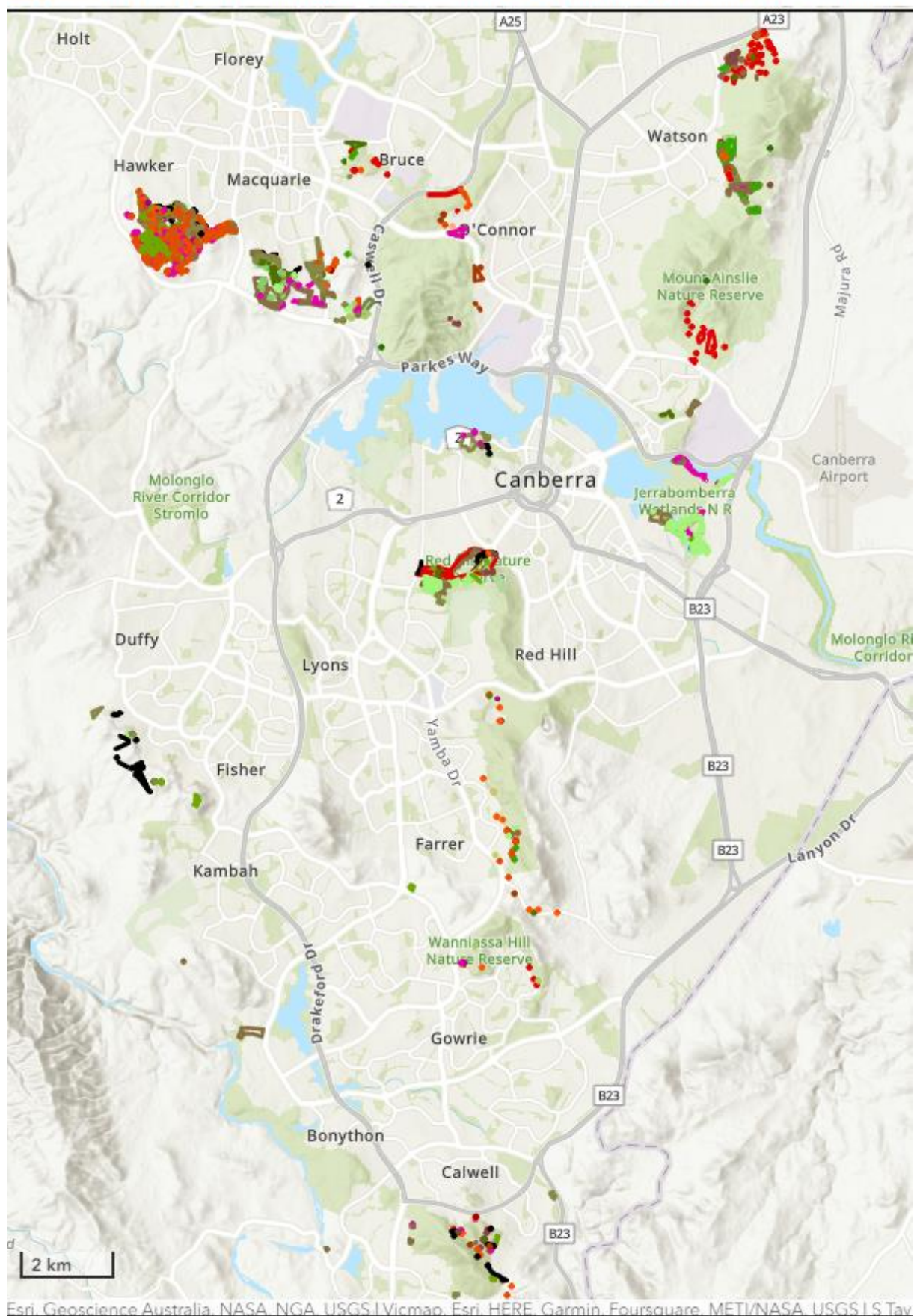
2022-23 also saw the trial of a new Annual Planning Information Session, to help provide context into broader Parks work priorities leading into Annual Planning sessions in Spring. The online session proved successful with Fire Management, Rural Services and Biosecurity each presenting to ParkCarers in attendance. This session will continue to run into the future with improvements made based on the feedback of those involved.

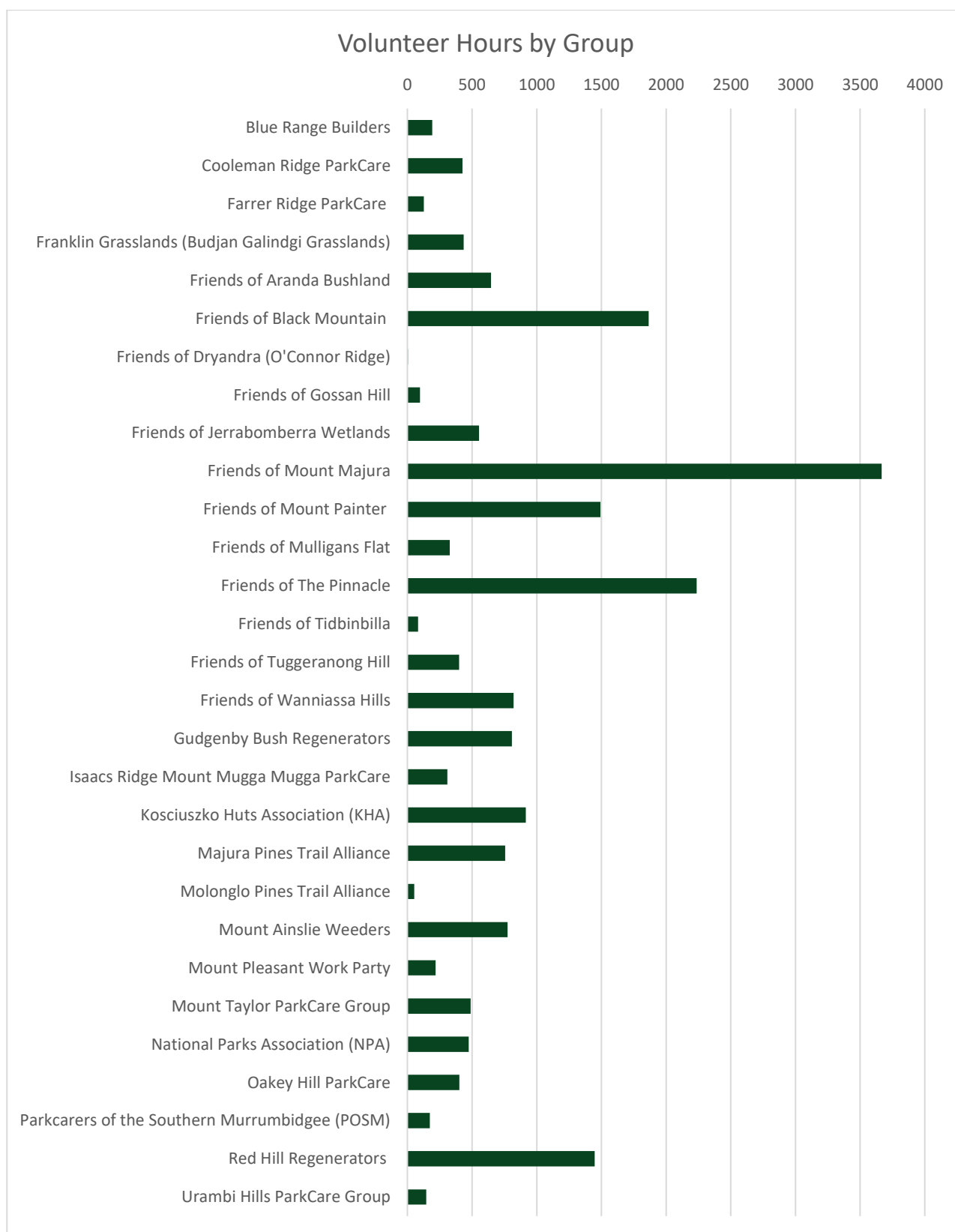
The core recorded activity undertaken by Patch volunteers over the 12 month period was invasive plant control (63 per cent), followed by rehabilitation works (27 per cent).

In 2022-23 ParkCarers mapped over 550 hectares of invasive plant control across the ACT using the Field Maps app, the top three recorded invasive plants for control works included:

- St John's Wort
- Woody Weeds
- Great Mullein (Verbascum)







Note: This graph only reflects the volunteering hours added into the ParkCare Hub and does not necessarily reflect the efforts of each group who may not have registered all their hours.

RangerAssist



Photo: RangerAssist Volunteers at the Volunteer Along the Murrumbidgee Corridor activity

- 1,893 hours
- 101 active volunteers

RangerAssist volunteering involves working alongside a PCS Ranger to undertake a range of projects across the ACT including planting, weeding, fence removal and wildlife surveying.

The RangerAssist program saw 1,893 hours contributed by 101 active volunteers in 2022-23. Many hours were dedicated to regular activities including:

- Volunteer with a Ranger along the Murrumbidgee Corridor
- Namadgi National Park Visitor Information Centre Garden Rehabilitation
- Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve: Sanctuary Rehabilitation

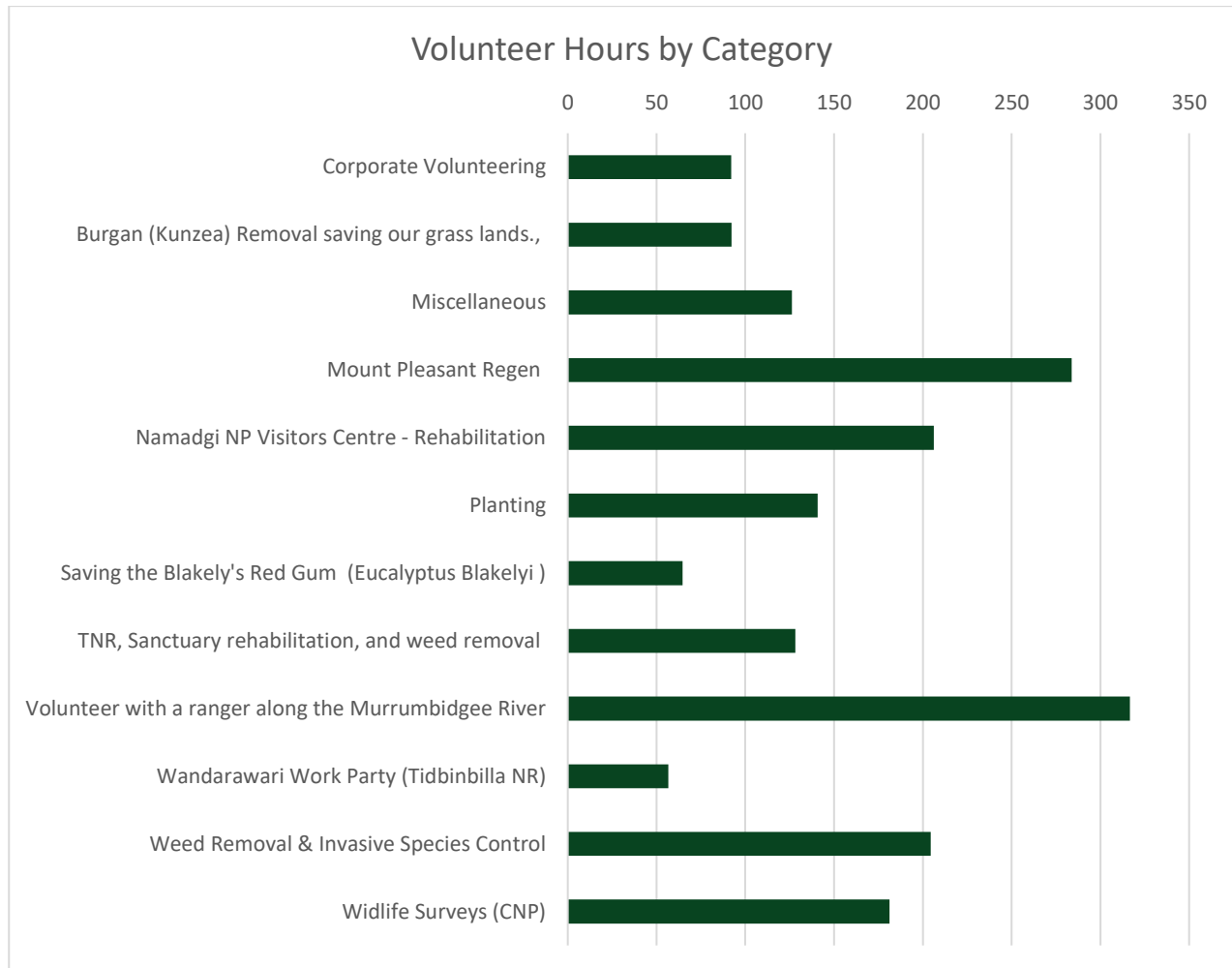
However, there were a range of short-term and one-off activities that saw significant contributions across the broader PCS estate, including:

- Mount Pleasant Regeneration
- Burgan Removal: Saving Our Grasses
- Saving the Blakely's Red Gum

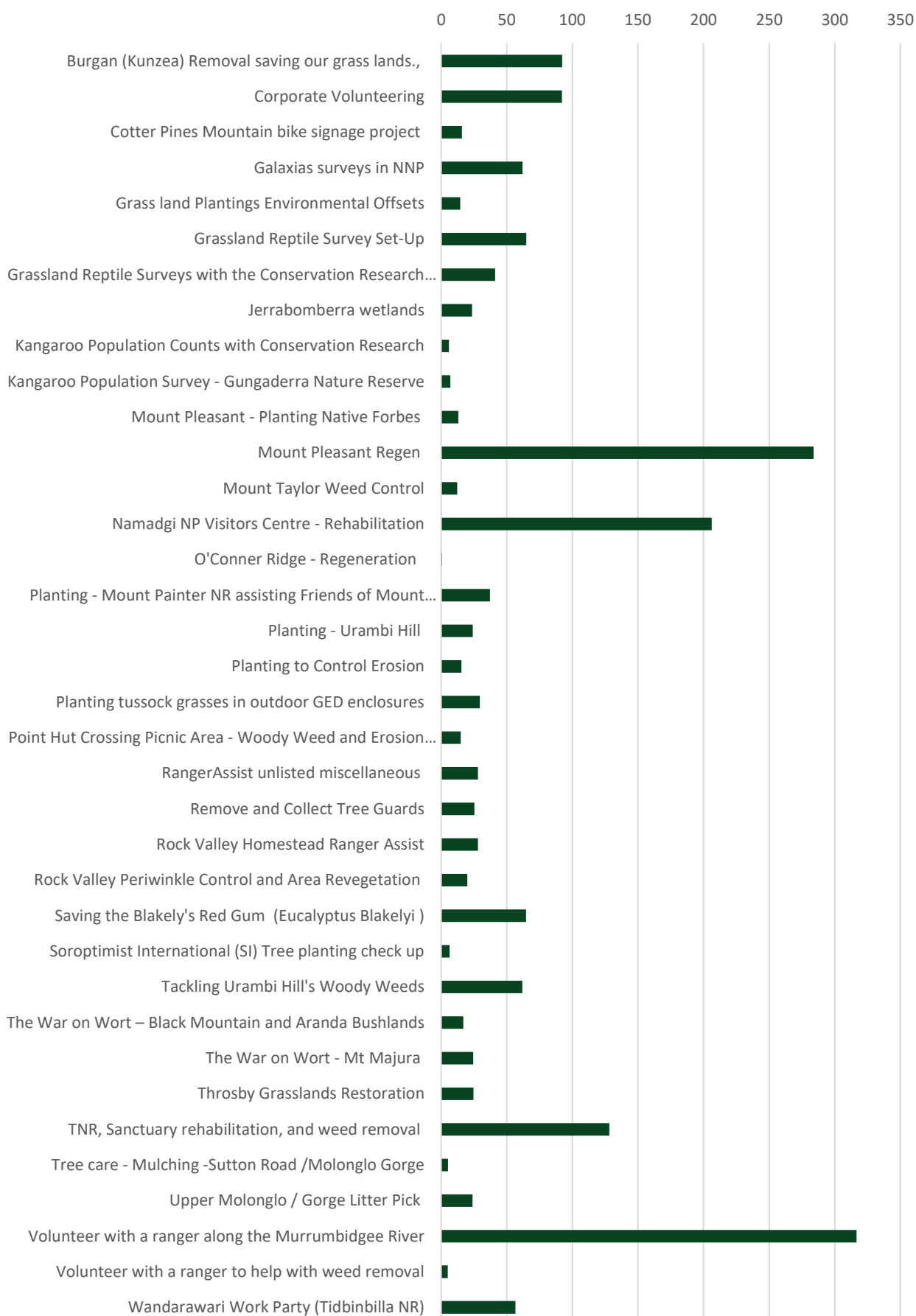
Volunteer with a Ranger along the Murrumbidgee River Corridor (MRC) activity continued to see the greatest contribution of hours, with 317 hours contributed to a range of weed removal activities alongside the MRC Rangers.

The RangerAssist program also increased its engagement with Corporate Volunteering groups in 2022/2023, with activities held with Microsoft, Callida Consulting and DXC Technology throughout the year.

2022-23 also saw an increase in the amount of activities on offer, with 36 different activities offered in comparison to 25 different activities in 2021-22. The 36 different activities can be seen in the below tables.



Volunteer Hours by Individual Activity



VisitorAssist



Photo: VisitorAssist volunteers engaging with visitors at Namadgi National Park

- 2,441 hours
- 40 active volunteers
- 9,351 visitors assisted

The ParkCare VisitorAssist program works across Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and supports visitors to engage with the environment effectively and safely. VisitorAssist Volunteers are involved in a variety of ways, including:

- Providing Volunteer Interpretation at Namadgi and Tidbinbilla Visitor Information Centres
- Engaging with visitors in The Sanctuary and Eucalyptus Forest at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve
- Running the NaturePlay School Holiday program at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Namadgi National Park
- Engaging in Heritage Festival and other community events
- ... and more!

In 2022-23 the VisitorAssist program saw 40 active volunteers contribute over 2,400 hours across roles at both Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve; a 55 per cent increase on hours in 2021-22. Through their engagement, volunteers recorded engaging over 9,300 visitors at both sites.

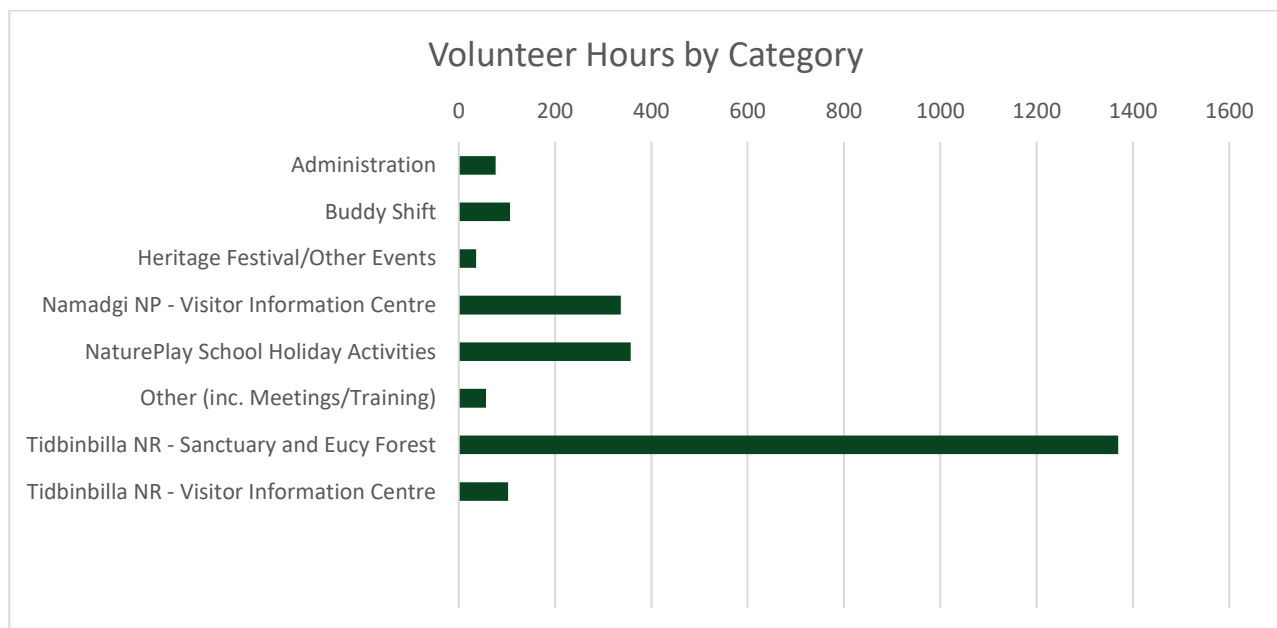
The Sanctuary at Tidbinbilla recorded the highest levels of volunteer engagement, with 4,862 hours recorded in supporting members of the community to learn and understand about the natural environment in the predator proof Sanctuary.

The School Holiday Program, a series of free events run by volunteers each holiday break, saw significant growth in 2022-23, with activities now on offer at both Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Namadgi National Park. The introduction of Tidbinbilla Bush Detectives, Namadgi Explorers and Swagman Billy Tea and Damper contributed to the now seven different activities offered to children and young people as part of the program. In 2022-23 a total of 21 activities were run, engaging 464 attendees. Of those who provided feedback, 97 per cent identified as being extremely satisfied or very satisfied with the activity they attended, and 99 per cent recorded that were engaged and learnt as part of their attendance.

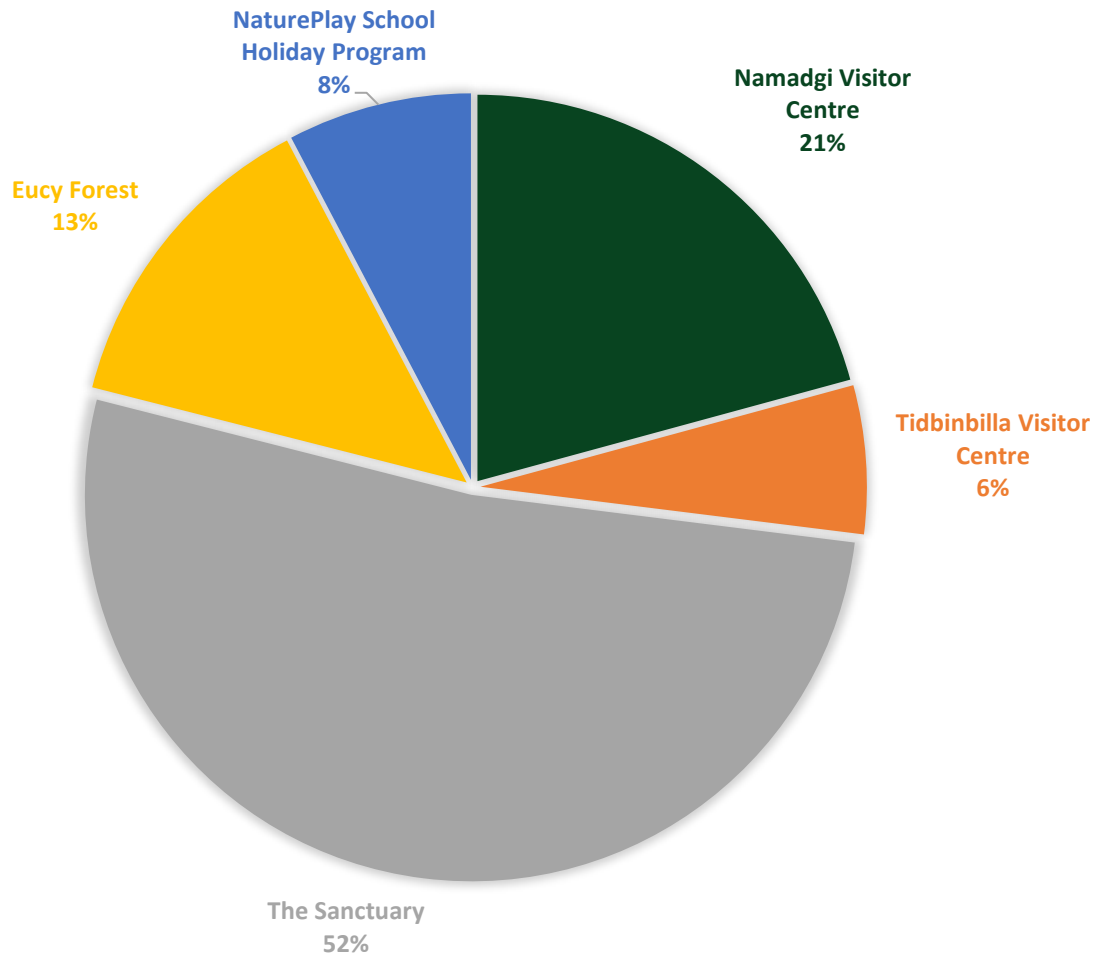
The introduction of Storytelling Training in 2023 has supported the work of volunteers in delivering interpretive storytelling to visitors.



Photo: School Holiday Activity: Swagman Billy Tea and Damper



NUMBER OF VISITORS ASSISTED



WildlifeAssist

- 1,315 hours
- 57 active volunteers

The WildlifeAssist volunteering program involves volunteers working directly with the Threatened Species Team to support various wildlife programs, including food preparation and 'Doing the Rounds' with the rangers, as well as undertaking various wildlife surveys at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

The WildlifeAssist program was the most significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with activities only returning to full capacity in May 2022. This saw a significant increase in volunteer hours in 2022-23 as volunteers were able to once more fully engage in the program, as well as engage in some new opportunities.

2022-23 saw 57 active volunteers contribute over 1,300 hours to the WildlifeAssist program. Increased opportunities with the Grassland Earless Dragon project, alongside additional turtle and koala surveying projects saw increased opportunities for volunteers to work alongside the Threatened Species Team and researchers.

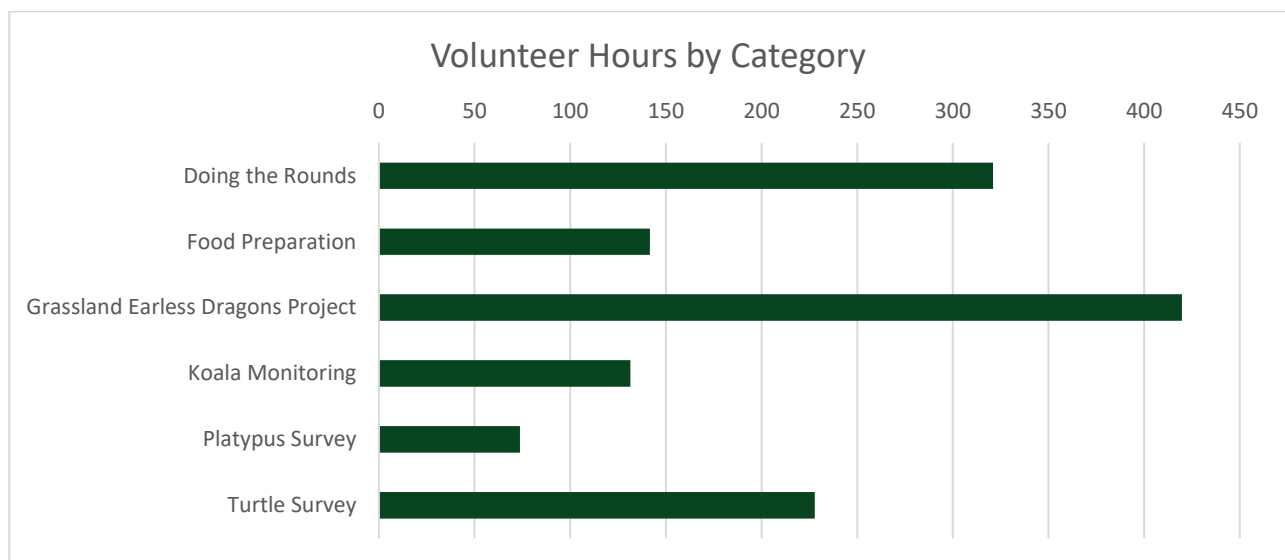




Photo: WildlifeAssist Volunteers with Volunteer Co-ordinator Michelle Jenkins at the launch of the Grassland Earless Dragons.



Photo: WildlifeAssist Turtle Survey

Training

- 1,215 hours
- 171 volunteers, 301 registrations
- 33 sessions delivered

33 training sessions were delivered in 2022-23 for ParkCare Volunteers. 171 individual volunteers have engaged in training, with a total of 301 attendees across the 33 sessions. Training aims to provide volunteers with fundamental certifications required to undertake their roles, minimise safety risks, as well as provide additional training to help build the knowledge and skillsets of the volunteer community.

In 2022-23, ParkCare offered core training in:

- ChemCert (AQF3)
- Provide First Aid
- CPR Refresher Training

As well as additional training in courses that aim to support ParkCare Patch and RangerAssist volunteers in their mapping and ID skills, including:

- Grass ID
- Weed ID
- Field Maps Training

There were also several trainings that provided targeted interpretive storytelling education for VisitorAssist volunteers, including:

- Tidbinbilla: Interpreting the Sanctuary
- Tidbinbilla: Aboriginal Connections to the Sanctuary
- Storytelling Training

The ParkCare program plans to build on the training provided to volunteers into 2023-24 and beyond.

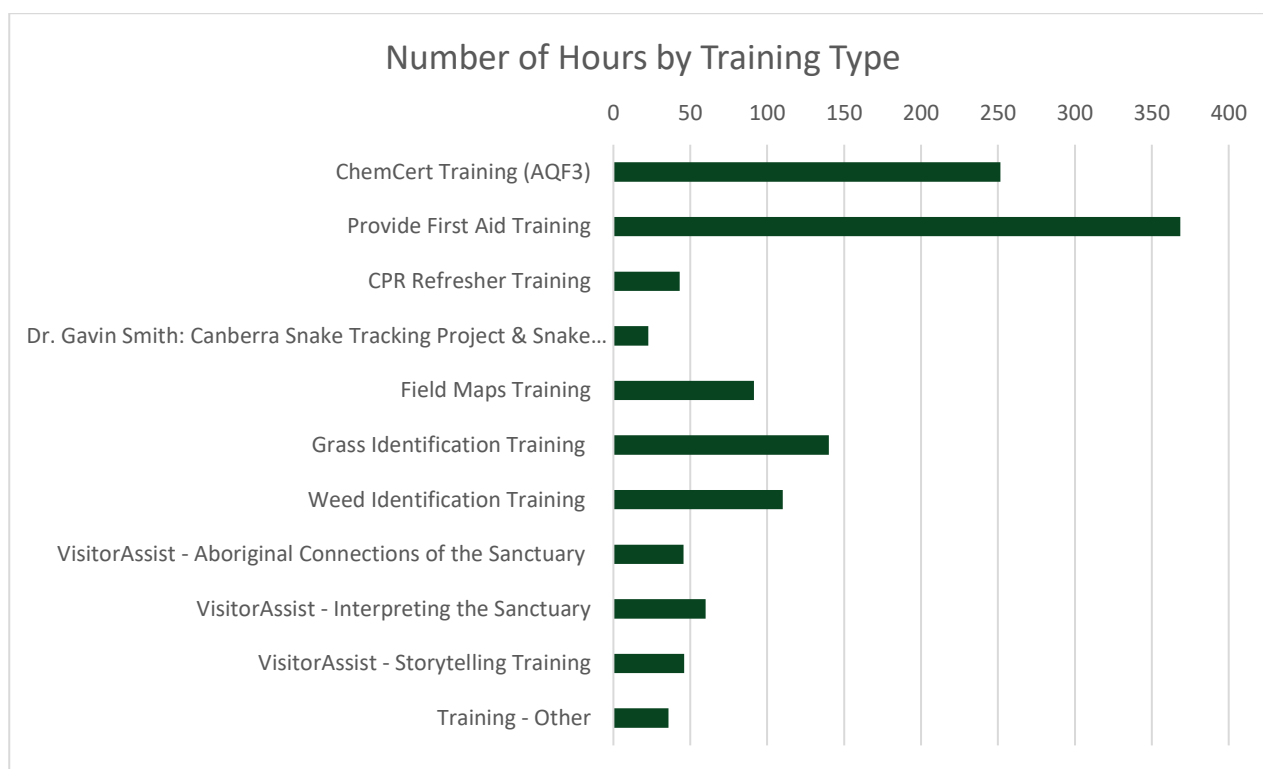


Photo: Mark Butz delivering Storytelling Training at Namadgi National Park Visitor Information Centre

ParkCare Out in Community

Community Engagement

Each year, ParkCare volunteers and staff attend various events out in community, both to engage with community to engage new volunteers, as well as to help the broader community engage with their local environment.

In 2022-23, ParkCare continued to engage in key events, including:

- 2023 Volunteering Expo, Canberra Region
- 2023 Heritage Festival

The Volunteer Expo continues to be an important event for the ParkCare program, as we engage with members of the community interested in volunteering. In 2022, we shared a table with the Urban Parks and Places volunteering program, and sat alongside WaterWatch and the Catchment Groups to strengthen our engagement to members of the public interested in environmental volunteering.



Photo: 2023 National Volunteer Week: Volunteering Expo

Volunteer Recognition

The ParkCare Team hosted and co-hosted a number of recognition events for the community in 2022-23, celebrating the ongoing works and achievements of ParkCare Volunteers. This included the inaugural 2022 ACT Environmental Volunteers End of Year Celebration, hosted on International Volunteers Day. This event was co-hosted by key stakeholders in the ACT environmental volunteering community, including

Landcare ACT, ACT Natural Resource Management (NRM), Transport Canberra and City Services and ACT Parks and Conservation Service. The event was attended by over 120 people and celebrated the collective achievements of all environmental volunteers in the ACT.

Additionally, ParkCare hosted a thank you event for ParkCare Volunteers in May 2023, during National Volunteer Week. The event saw a morning tea, speeches, and a screening of Tenzin Phuntsho's short film based on his experience as a ranger in Bhutan.

ParkCare also nominated several volunteers for the 2022 Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region, hosted by VolunteeringACT. We were delighted to see John Butcher, Convenor of Oakey Hill ParkCare group receive the Volunteer Leadership Award in recognition of his commitment and innovation in convening and leading the Oakey Hill team of volunteers.

Friends of Mount Majura and Gudgenby Bush Regenerators were also recognised at the Landcare Awards, for the ACT Landcare Community Group Award and ACT Government Quiet Achiever Awards respectively. Congratulations to both teams.



Photo: 2023 National Volunteer Week Thank You Event



Photo: 2022 Volunteering Awards – ParkCare Rangers Martin Bajt and Tenzin Phuntsho with ParkCare Volunteer John Butcher

Volunteer Consultation

The ParkCare program is consciously working to integrate volunteers into key committees and working groups as appropriate, and to encourage feedback. Key milestones were made in this space in 2022-23.

ParkCare released its inaugural annual volunteer survey in August 2022. An anonymous survey, it asks core information around the performance of the ParkCare program in providing a safe and supported volunteering experience, and asks for recommendations for improvement. The survey will be run annually herein with reports on findings made available to the volunteer community.

Additionally, ParkCare representation was made available on a range of committees and working groups:

- Warren Bond, a member of the Friends of the Pinnacle was elected to the NRM Advisory Committee
- Sarah Hnatiuk, convenor of Friends of Mount Painter, was elected to the Invasive Plants Working Group

Professional Development

The ParkCare program also invests in the professional development of its staff to ensure they are best equipped to support volunteers.

In 2022-23, several professional development opportunities were made available to ParkCare staff including attendance at:

- 2022 Landcare Conference
- 2023 Volunteering Symposium
- Essentials for Volunteer Managers Course



Photo: 2022 International Volunteer Day Thank You Event

Volunteer Reports

- ParkCare Patch
- RangerAssist
- VisitorAssist
- WildlifeAssist
- ParkCare Affiliations

ParkCare Patch

Budjan Galindji (Franklin Grasslands)

By Margaret Ning

2022-23 was Budjan Galindji ParkCare Group's third full year of operation, having commenced in June 2020. Budjan Galindji (BG) is a Friends of Grasslands' on-ground project, and is a member of Ginninderra Catchment Group. In 2022-23 the group held 21 work parties with average attendance of seven volunteers, contributing 329 hours overall.

Our work parties focus on weeding (best methods, including some experimentation), some seeding and planting, and plant identification opportunities in a small 1.5ha area of 'greater' BG (20ha). Since an eco burn in March 2022 in our small area, our main targets have included St John's Wort, Phalaris, Cocksfoot, Yorkshire Fog, Paspalum and exotic Plantain.

Budjan Galindji is an offset site, and the group works closely with the offset team. That team has occasionally mowed exotic grasses to remove biomass and seedheads, and allow the grassland plants to recover where they have previously been shaded out. Among the species we added to the BG species list in the last 12 months were Small Vanilla Lily, Blue Grass Lily, Fringe Lily and Early Nancy, which were all very exciting finds.

In the 'greater' BG area, we have also helped weed the seed production garden and hosted a couple of visits by corporate volunteers. In April 2023, a 5ha ecological burn was held which razed an enormous area of Phalaris. Rangers are doing follow up spraying as it reappears.

The offsets team has also focussed on the exotic understorey in the NE BG woodland area, doing some mowing, including of tracks. A huge pile of spoil will be removed from the southern part of the reserve some time in the next few months, and landscaping on the site will commence.

For more info contact margaret.ning@fog.org.au.



Photo: Work Party of Budjan Galindji

Cooleman Ridge ParkCare

By Linda Spinaze

Our group's main activity continues to be the monthly weeding, with some additional weeding done by individuals on their patch. We have welcomed a small number of new members.

Our change of rotation of weeding sites is working well, particularly with the addition of the Old Dam, which is in the heart of the Ridge. We also spent one occasion weeding the briar-roses that have grown on our Western Ledge. It was satisfying to see that few had re-grown after our attack 3 years ago. However, at times during summer the exotic grass was so long that few other weeds could be seen. The delay in approving volunteer-usage of whipper-snippers has impacted on this control of weeds.

The main concern of the group has been the run-away proliferation of St Johns Wort, and fleabane. Both these weeds, with verbascum, now cover extensive areas of the Ridge, and are a depressing sight. We attempted to focus on controlling small areas, with combined manual and chemical control. The good news is that Patterson's Curse decided to have a rest for at least a year.

We engaged the local Scout group to join us in a successful planting in November. They provided funds for plants, which was enhanced by PSC donating extra shrubs and trees.

Last years plantings beside the Old Dam are generally doing well, although many of the smaller plants have been consumed by the vigorous grassy growth over summer. The leptospermum are springing out of their protectors, as are some of the larger tussocky grasses. Interestingly the Old Dam has been covered by Ferny Azolla since January. It is supposed to disappear in cold weather, and it is now July.

Our 2 display cases at each end of the Ridge have now been refurbished (thank you ranger Tenzin). Thanks to two of our members these cases are now exhibiting an excellent map of the Ridge, including a QR code access to our website, and some photographs.

During the year the Group submitted ideas to the Environment Volunteer review, and we have formed a close working relationship with the Conservation Council, of which the group is now a member.

To cap off the 2022-23 year some of us enjoyed a special piece of music commissioned by one of our visitors who was inspired by her regular visits to Cooleman Ridge. The Canberra Symphony Orchestra played this piece in late March.



Photo: Cooleman Ridge Volunteers Natasha, Jenny, Linda, Paul and Chris.

Farrer Ridge ParkCare

By Wendy Rainbird

During 2022, the wet weather curtailed some work activities, especially in Winter when it was cold, wet and windy. It has been remarkable to see the soaks and springs on Farrer Ridge Nature Reserve, sometimes in places not seen since we started ParkCare work there. A great year for frogs!

In September, 22 Year 10 Marist students came to assist with cutting and bagging Verbascum seed heads, which resulted in many bags of Verbascum seeds being removed from the Reserve. Tenzin did a great job of removing the huge pile of bags.

Instead of the usual Farrer Ridge ParkCare led Spring Wildflower Walk, I had made a brochure with photos, for a Self-Guided Spring Wildflower Walk, that describes what is likely to be seen flowering along the Nature Trail. Sally Halliday ran one of her Walks in Nature on Farrer Ridge.

Again, October was too wet on our usual meet day, so a group of us returned about a week later to continue removing Verbascum seed heads. After a quiet November and December, and we do not meet to work on the Ridge on the first Sunday in January, February of 2023 saw a great turnout and much weeding was done.

Due to the wet seasons, there has been an outburst of weeds and grasses.

It has been good to receive new Farrer Ridge ParkCare brochures that I gave to members so they could inform or letter-box drop to neighbours and local friends.

Two new members helped clear weeds, and discussed with Tenzin the best approach to treating a mass of Vinca from the back of properties in Farrer into a small area of the Reserve.

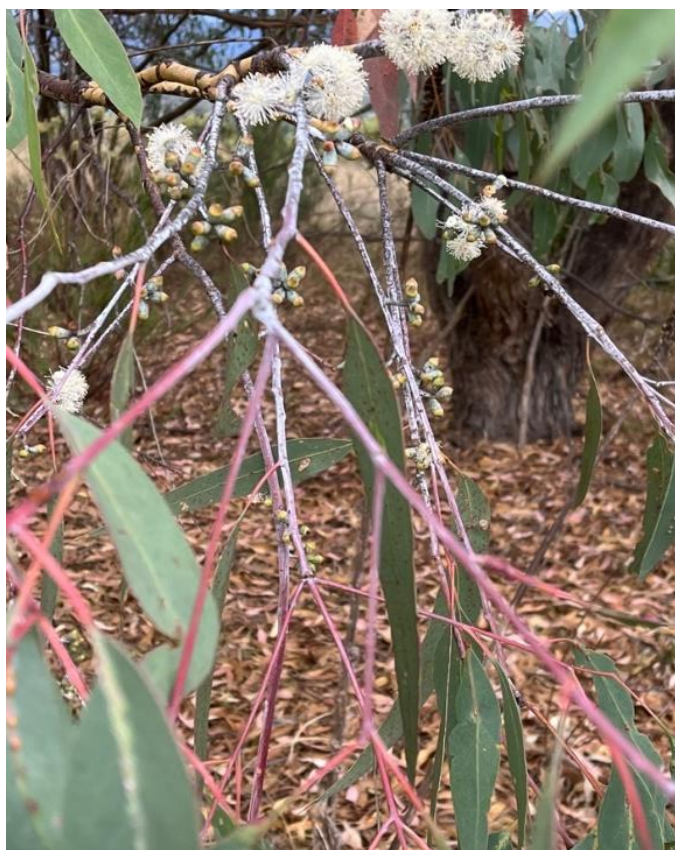


Photo: Flowering on Farrer Ridge Nature Reserve

Friends of Aranda Bushland

By Ian Falconer and Sheridan Maher

After three wet years the Snow Gums region of our bushland has changed from a pasture of short grasses and eucalypts to dense growth of St. John's Wort and 'Dirty Dora' (*Cyperus eragrostis*), to the extent that it is difficult to walk through. While our most treasured areas will continue to be weeded by hand to preserve the variety of native flora, the most afflicted parts require herbicide spraying to restore them to grassland. In the forest areas garden escapees have reappeared, particularly Cotoneaster, Agapanthus and Cootamundra wattle. There is much to do.

During the year we have been helped by the Parks 'Ranger Assist' program and by a group of ACT Geocachers, to control prickly tea-tree encroaching on the grassland and to repair erosion control rollovers on our steep walking tracks. We also hosted a 'Come and Try' event, a part of the Wellness Through Nature program run by Sally Holiday of ACT Landcare. The participants enjoyed the activity and Sally spoke at our (fabulous) morning tea on the benefits of working with nature.

Our members have contributed significantly this year to Canberra Nature Map records. The new walk in the South Aranda woodland is progressing, with the route approved by Parks and by ACT Heritage. The interpretive signs are designed, and will be a great introduction to the flora, fauna, geology, European and Aboriginal heritage of the area. Funding for the signs was awarded by the ACT Environmental Grants program, and the walk will be officially launched later in the year.

We wish to express our thanks the many Parks staff who have helped us, particularly the 'on the ground' work of Marty Bajt and Kelzang Tshering.

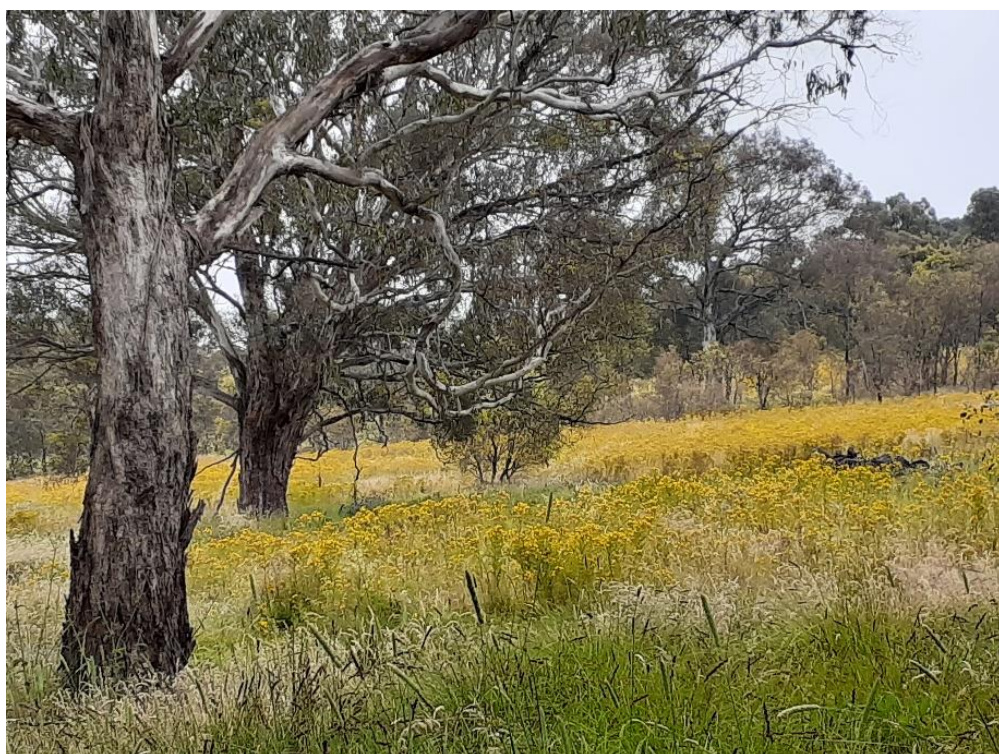


Photo: Yellow Box trees in a paddock of St. John's Wort'

Friends of Black Mountain

By Linda Beveridge

Friends of Black Mountain (FoBM) celebrated the tenth anniversary of their monthly weeding work parties. In that time more than 160 volunteers have removed more than 105,000 mostly woody weeds. Sixty-one of the volunteers were regular wonderful weeders at the 11 work parties this year.

Many attended the mid-winter talk in June by Dr Dianne Firth about how Black Mountain is an inspiration to her. The Oral History project is close to completion and the interviews will shortly be available via the ACT Heritage Library.

Weather and the state of the trails caused the cancellation of 2 of our most popular spring walks. Nevertheless, we held 15 walks led by 19 volunteers for 280 participants on themes of Butterflies, the Summit, Ngunawal and National Capital Cultures, Fire and Plants, Wattle and Orchids.

Fifteen (15) Frogwatchers (including helpers from other areas when our regular Frogwatchers were ill), 8 Vegwatchers, and 3 Bird Observers provided data to related organisations. Among the more than 30 species recorded in the reserve in the last 12 months, a highlight is the sightings of painted button quail

The annual 3-day ParkCare display at Jamison was held by FoBM and several ParkCare groups active near Jamison Plaza. Each of the groups benefited by several new members joining up after discussing their respective activities.

FoBM was awarded an Environment Grant to reprint the interpretive signs on the Forest Loop Walk.

FoBM recorded more than 1850 voluntary hours this year in relation to the above activities as well as policy consultation.

All of FoBM extends our heartfelt thanks to our 126 volunteers, 15 helpful community organisations, other organisations, radio and print media, and support by Parks and Conservation Services, for their respective roles in another very enjoyable and productive year.



Photo: Weeding Wood Weeds. Photo credit: Ernestine Kirsch

Friends of Dryandra Woodland & O'Connor Ridge

By Jamie Pittock

Friends of Dryandra Woodland is local residents group that was formed in 2020 to restore and conserve significant bush land remnants along and west of Dryandra Street in north Canberra.

Our bush regeneration work focuses on urban parks land south of Fairfax Street, and the Bruce Ridge and O'Connor Ridge sections of Canberra Nature Park. We aim to weed the urban interface to increase the resilience of the bush land reserves.

In FY23 our work in Canberra Nature Park in collaboration with PCS has weeded the stream line and parallel bike path verge between O'Connor and Bruce.

Key weed species removed include Cootamundra wattle, privet and blackberry. We have also weeded the box-gum woodland section of Bruce Ridge between Kunzea and Fairfax streets, including of infestations of WA bluebell creeper.

Further, Alivio Holiday Park has collaborated in identifying a removing the creeper from their adjacent land. Rubbish removal has been another key task.

In FY24 our group aims to work with PCS to control a number of Vinca infestations and expand our efforts to reduce weed invasion from the suburbs along the edges of the Nature Park.

Thanks for all your good work – Jamie.

Friends of Gossan Hill

By Julia Raine

Gossan Hill is one of Canberra's smallest reserves, bordered by residential areas of Bruce and Radford College. The Reserve is criss-crossed with many tracks and trails which makes for easier weeding coverage for the many Bruce residents who use their time while walking to remove St John's wort, Paterson's curse, fleabanes and other weeds – THANK YOU! The Friends group hold occasional work parties when extra efforts are needed, and this year we've matted freesias and other garden escapees, West Australian bluebell creeper, fleabanes and continued to remove Cootamundra wattle.

We're pleased that Parks and Conservation will be installing updated Canberra Nature Park signage on Gossan Hill so visitors know to have their dogs on leashes and keep to management trails when walking and biking.

Our community walks are back on track with Chris Davey leading a bird walk and Dr Catherine Ross leading a wildflower walk in spring. As well, Dr Ken McQueen repeated his fabulous geology walk focussing on the gossan and College Street cutting. We're looking forward to holding these walks again later this year as well as our first orchid walk in coming months.



Photo: Gossan Hill community walk

Friends of Jerrabomberra Wetlands

By Grant Battersby

The Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve is unlike many other Reserves for a number of reasons – one of them being there is a lot of water! Consequently our work parties, on the first Tuesday or third Saturday of every month, sometimes take on tasks that are uncommon in other Reserves. We are fortunate that we have a dedicated Senior Ranger and part-time help from another Ranger to guide us with these sometimes more challenging tasks. All of our ParkCare tasks are conducted under the broad umbrella of the Management Plan focused solely on JWNR. And Jerrabomberra, like Mulligans Flat, also is jointly administered with the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust.

Two of the projects unique to wetlands in the last year were directed towards assisting the local bird watching community. Both projects required wearing more or less water proof waders and stepping into Kelly's Swamp or the Billabong. The first project was to broaden the field of vision from one of the bird-watching hides by cutting wider channels through the vigorous and dominant cumbungi (*Typha orientalis*). This required us to cut at least 10 cm below the water surface to allow the water to rot the base of the plant.

The second project was to remove 12 duck nesting-boxes from their posts, followed by cleaning, sanding, and painting, before re-installing them in their original locations. Some of the nesting boxes needed to be raised higher above the water to avoid flooding, while they all needed modification to prevent rakali (water rat) predation of eggs or hatchlings.

Another unusual aspect of the Jerrabomberra reserve is the large amounts of introduced fill (stone and rubble) that was deposited here before it was declared a nature reserve. This became evident when we received a generous gift of 20 local eucalyptus (yellow gum, red box) seedlings and 100 other shrubs from ACT Urban Woodland Rescue. It proved impossible to plant the trees in the selected sites until we received some help from a skilfully operated mechanical digger from PCS. But it has been worthwhile - some trees have doubled in height and all survived the summer. Some of the shrubs are providing screening for Canberra City Farm which is on one side of the Reserve and others will provide new habitat for small birds when we remove their woody weed habitat.

Ongoing weed control efforts continue to challenge us and include work to suppress St John's Wort, Scotch thistle, boxthorn and blackberry. Periwinkle (*Vinca major*) is a major challenge for the future. We have also made an extended effort to remove exotic trees from the eastern side of Jerrabomberra Creek near the Biyalligee board walk.



Photo: Cumbungi control in Kelly's Swamp January 2023

Friends of Mount Majura

By Margy Burn

FoMM celebrates its twentieth anniversary in 2023, our first project being a drainage line near the Hackett water tank. Sustained work has transformed it into a shady watercourse, enjoyed by frogs and many bird species, including migrating Swift parrots. FoMM volunteers have propagated plants to replace weeds, such as Hardenbergia and native raspberries.

We also worked at two other early sites, an old sheep camp on the ridge at the summit trail, and an area near two former farm dams. This latter site is close to one of the least modified areas of the reserve, which features rich and diverse flora including rare and endangered species. Occasional maintenance visits help limit weed incursion.

Most of our effort continued at The Fair site in North Watson, weeding, planting, mulching and building on a decade of activities rehabilitating this formerly highly degraded part of the nature park.

<https://majura.org/progress-the-fair/>.

St John's Wort remains our biggest challenge and we focussed on rich floristic sites. Tedious hand-weeding was relieved by bird song, including that of a rare visitor, the White-browed Babbler (*Pomatostomus superciliosus*) last sighted in 2007. Unfortunately, we also sighted new weeds, such as the toxic Inkweed (*Phytolacca octandra*) and Barberry (*Berberis*).

Our educational activities included guided walks about trees, birds, wildflowers and at twilight to hear and see nocturnal animals. We welcomed groups including local Cubs and Scouts. Some 300 people receive our monthly e-newsletter.

FoMM volunteers actively map the areas we have controlled, as well as significant weeds requiring treatment by contractors and evidence of vertebrate pests. We also contribute to the Canberra Nature Map.

Thanks to the 90 volunteers who worked with us this year to weed, plant, sow and mulch – every bit of effort helps to maintain our beautiful part of the nature park.



Photo: Waltraud frilling wattle. Photo Credit: Barbara Read

Friends of Mount Painter

By Sarah Hnatiuk

Three years of exceptional rainfall created the perfect planting conditions last spring for putting trees onto the highest, steepest, relatively inaccessible slopes of Mount Painter. The ground was so sodden that there was no need to water in the seedlings! We followed up in the autumn with a tree and shrub planting with a Ranger Assist team. We put 206 plants into the ground to add to the structural complexity of the wildlife corridor round the bottom of the hill. In addition, we continue to trial different methods of establishing ground cover, and are propagating tubestock from seed collected on the reserve.

The reserve management plan prepared by the Parks and Conservation Service for both rangers and volunteers supported our continuing several of our long-standing activities, and usefully drew attention to others with which we could help.

In terms of connecting with the wider community, we held three well-attended walks: an autumn bird walk with Nicki Taws, a history walk with Ranger Craig Wainwright, and a geology walk with Associate Professor Duanne White. The latter took us from the north-east corner of the reserve, across the Deakin Fault, and up to the summit of the hill, with Duanne explaining the processes by which the volcanic and sedimentary rocks came to be arranged in today's landscape. Craig Wainwright's talk focused on the European settlement of our local area. As usual we participated in the annual display by environmental groups at Jamison Plaza, and The Cook Grocer generously gave us \$300 from the sale of "Mount Painter" socks which we will spend on plants.



Photo: Planting a Kurrajong on Mount Painter

Friends of Mulligans Flat

By Caroline Sternberg

Throughout 2022-23, Friends of Mulligans Flat monthly work parties continued working with local ACT Parks and Conservation rangers on a variety of activities. The team welcomed the use of the Parkcare trailer which comes equipped with a variety of tools.

In the Goorooyaroo Reserve, the focus has been on regeneration activity, with ongoing planting of forbs and grasses as well as maintaining established nodes. Volunteers provided the man power to do a walk through in the Wildbark paddock to flag hazards prior to a slasher coming in to conduct slash and bale activity in the phalaris, one of a number of strategies being rolled out to restore the grassland to its nature state.

As well as doing an annual clean up at the Woolshed in the Mulligans Flat Reserve, other maintenance tasks included removing old fencing wire that was a hazard to wildlife and supporting the Australian National University team with weed control in the mini safe havens used for small mammal release. After a year of heavy rain restoration of erosion control was necessary along some well worn water courses.



Photo: Volunteers working in Phalaris

Friends of The Pinnacle

By John Brannan

This has been as busy year as things gradually returned to normal and the disruptions caused by COVID-19 faded into the background. Our weeding teams clocked up 943 hours controlling weeds in the reserve between July last year and the end of May this year, and there are signs that our effort is yielding positive benefits. Briar prevalence is now down to just 3.5/ha compared with 44/ha ten years ago, despite this being a bumper year for woody weeds. The similarly rampant St. John's Wort appears to be declining in areas where we have sprayed regularly, and verbascum also seems to be back under control after its resurgence at the beginning of the record rainfall period in 2020-2022.

At the same time, we have now recorded 917 native species of flora and fauna in the reserve. This includes 266 native plant species, 24 of which have been added in the last 12 months. Highlights include our first records of the 'rare/uncommon' lily *Burchardia umbellata* (Milkmaids) and the 'sensitive' *Pellaea falcata* (Sickle fern), as well as several new locations of 'rare/uncommon' lily species *Dianella* sp. aff. *Longifolia* (Benambra), previously only recorded at one site.

In addition to well-attended bird and wildflower walks, the reserve hosted walks for the Canberra Ornithologists Group and the U3A Nature & Wellbeing program run by Landcare ACT.

We were successful in applying for two ACT Government Environment Grants, one to fund ongoing revegetation in the Weetangera paddock, and the other to cover the costs of designing, fabricating and installing five or possibly six interpretive signs in the reserve. The design process is well under way and we hope to have the signs completed and installed before the end of the year.



Photo: Friends of the Pinnacle Volunteers

Friends of Tuggeranong Hill

By Vera Kurz

What a lovely year it has been. The third wetter than average season in a row, which means that lots of plants are thriving. There has been another terrific lot of native grasses flowering on the Hill, which will hopefully re-stock the seedbanks. Due to kangaroo grazing we often don't see many native grasses get to flowering stage. Even in this wetter year, where there was not so much grazing pressure, it was very interesting to see that in some of the small fenced enclosures on our planting site, there were grasses flowering which were not seen elsewhere at the site, such as Plume Grass (*Dichelachne* spp.). This begs for more experimentation with enclosure fencing.

Of course it has also meant a fair bit of weed growth, as was common across the nature reserves. We've seen quite a bit of blackberry recruitment, probably spreading from just a few quite large patches on the western flank. This is alarming, as we know what happens when it gets out of hand, so the group has been working on some of those of a more manageable size, as well as mapping these awaiting paid contractor attention. There has also been an explosion of privet coming up in most of the gullies and under large trees, as well as a carpet of ST John's Wort in many areas. One thing we are not short on is weeds to keep us busy, but luckily we also have a marvellous group of volunteers who get a huge amount of work done. We've averaged at least 12 per session, and there is ongoing interest from new people in the community.

We'd like to thank all the volunteers who come along month to month, ready to tackle whatever is thrown at them in good spirits. It's a joy to work with them. Also deserving of thanks are Tenzin and Lauren from the PCS team, who are constantly on hand meeting or anticipating our needs. And finally in this year of a significant referendum on the Voice, we would like to thank the Ngannawal and Ngambri peoples, who for so long have looked after this country, and who continue to do so.



Photo: St John's Wort removal

Friends of Wanniasa Hills

By Lois Padgham

The exceptionally prolific growth of weeds on Wanniasa Hills during the last three years of unprecedented La Nina, prompted local Fadden residents Tim and Wendy to enquire about starting up a Wanniasa Hills ParkCare group to help reign in the 'Triffid' takeover. This has indeed resulted in the formation, in November 2022, of an enthusiastic ParkCare group for this beautiful and diverse reserve.

Mike Mulvaney also offered advice about what the Friends of Wanniasa Hills might tackle, sharing rehabilitation principles and noting the importance of following our passions and interests to retain momentum.

We currently have 13 on our list of volunteers across a wide range of ages from teenagers upwards. The group initially conducted a couple of walks to get to know each other and the reserve. The second walk was led by 16 year old Mia who shared a deep knowledge of the local bird population and their movements and habitat needs.

While we are still developing the main focus areas for the group, we have weeded in some of the more degraded areas, eradicating Great Mullein and other herbaceous weeds on Macarthur Hill, and blitzing herbaceous weeds (Great Mullein, Tall Fleabane, Patersons Curse, Spear Thistle, Saffron Thistle, Horehound) and woody weeds (Sweet Briar and Hawthorn) on the west facing slope of the western half of the reserve. This has provided literally many ute loads of weed filled bags for the rangers to cart away.

In the more pristine intact areas in the Core Conservation Zone some sections are now devoid of a number of woody weed species including Broad and Narrow-leaf Privet, Japanese Honeysuckle, Briar Rose, Hawthorn and Cootamundra Wattle. Heads have also come off Fleabane and St Johns Wort. A potential highly invasive environmental weed (*Senecio angulatus*) was discovered near the water tank between Macarthur Hill and the rest of the reserve and has been dispatched.

In May, the group met with the ACT PCS area managers and rangers to discuss possible projects including dam rehabilitation, revegetation, weed removal, butterfly and bird bioblitzes and monitoring. We will decide on our main focus areas that are aligned with ACT PCS management priorities and our own areas of interest. Exciting times!

Thanks to all our enthusiastic volunteers and here's hoping for a lot more in the future. Thanks also to Lauren, Tenzin and the southside Rangers who have been so responsive and helpful with all aspects of the formation and support of the group. Tenzin makes fabulous cinnamon tea!



Photo: Morning tea break

Gungahlin Hill ParkCare Group

By Alan Timmiss

Gungahlin Hill is contained within the Gungaharra Grasslands Nature Reserve on the eastern boundary of the suburb of Crace. The Nature Reserve is a 297 hectare grassland protected area which includes a 1.9 km stretch of Gungaharra Creek and rises to the wooded area of Gungahlin Hill at 652m above sea level.

Gungahlin Hill is located on Ngannawal Country, an ancient and diverse landscape managed and cared for by Ngannawal people for tens of thousands of years. The area also has significant European heritage and was once part of the historic property established by William Davis in 1862. Located, within the Yellow Box – Red Gum Grassy Woodland, on the hill are several small historic mine workings.

The Gungahlin Hill area of the Nature Reserve has one of the highest densities of recordings of rare and threatened plants in Canberra, being particularly rich in orchids. The biggest threat to these sensitive plants is trampling by walkers and the creation of informal paths. ACT Parks and Conservation Rangers have been working in the area to close informal and duplicate trails, and have erected signage to discourage off track access. The other major threat is competition from weeds.

The Crace Landcare Group has been undertaking work within the suburban area of Crace over the last 10 years. During the early construction phase of the houses within Crace many of our Working Bees involved the removal of “building materials” that had blown into the Gungahlin Hill part of the Nature Reserve. Recognising the value and beauty of the Nature Reserve on our eastern boundary, the Crace Landcare Group made an approach, in October 2022, to Canberra Nature Parks North to offer volunteer assistance with the maintenance of the Reserve.

We are currently working with the Volunteer Programs Manager of the ACT Parks and Conservation Service to formalise the functions of our Gungahlin Hill ParkCare Group.

If you would like to know more about Gungahlin Hill ParkCare or to join in with our activities, you can contact Alan at alan.timmiss@bigpond.com or 0439 642 639.



Photo: Gungahlin Hill

Isaacs Ridge Mount Mugga Mugga

By Mike Sim

Our small group continues work in Isaacs Ridge and Mount Mugga Mugga Nature Reserves. Though our activities were curtailed by bad weather and people taking advantage of long weekends we have removed many woody weeds.

Most of our work has been removal of briar rose and other woody weeds on the western edge of Mugga Mugga Reserve, stretching from O'Malley Pond along Scrivener Creek and up the hill. We found and removed sleeper weeds such as Callery pear and Chinese elm.

Because of track damage our planting area on the east of Isaacs Ridge is inaccessible without a long walk. There is still room for infill planting of shrubs and groundcover so we hope to return soon.

Damage to the Centenary Trail from Isaacs Ridge to Mount Mugga Mugga has been repaired. The section of trail on the west side of Mount Mugga Mugga was diverted due to storm damage but is open again. Repair of a collapsed section of the Drainline track on Isaacs Ridge is on someone's 'to-do' list because it is a firetrail.

We continued removing invasive plants along the Spine Trail in Isaacs Ridge Recreation Area. Thanks to chainsaw work by our ParkCare Rangers some of the bigger Irish strawberry trees and privets have been removed.

The most obvious change to our reserves is continuing removal of pine trees south-west end of Isaacs Ridge where chainsaw training is now being conducted. ParkCare Ranger Tenzin did his chainsaw qualification there so he should be involved with future restoration of this area.

Many of our plants are mapped on Field Maps but it is only the high priority weeds that get tackled. Blackberry is a big problem that is too time-consuming to cut and dab so gets put on the map, but perhaps we should simply prune it and pick the fruit in autumn. Photos of our flora and fauna are added to Canberra Nature Map (naturemapr.org).



Photo: Orchid photographed by Mike Sim, Convenor

Majura Pines Trail Alliance

By Jake Hannah

2022-23 was a very busy year for Majura Pines Trail Alliance. Volunteer trail maintenance days continued to be very well attended both on Sunday mornings and our very popular mid-week evenings sessions in the summer. We ran our first "corporate" trail, for employees of companies who offer a community volunteer day. This was a huge success that we will be repeating this year.

High winds in the spring saw a number of trees come down at the southern end of the forest and we are indebted to the PCS rangers who cleared these for us.

We were fortunate enough to receive a small grant from online bike shop MTB Direct that enabled us to bring in professional contractor Iconic Trails to maintain the popular trail Rock Lobster.

In general, just the right amount of rain throughout the year meant the trails were in excellent condition and enjoyed by many riders.



Photo: A welcomed break during an activity

Mount Ainslie Weeders

By Annette Martin

Mt Ainslie Weeders continue the regeneration work at the Old Ainslie Tip. We are expanding out from the Lower Tip into small areas of the Middle Tip, planting a variety of local area natives to see which species are best suited to the conditions. This also enables us to see if the clay cap and underlying structure is sufficient to support vegetation other than weeds. We are experimenting with a variety of group plantings in the hope that we can develop protective habitats for the numerous bird species that are starting to return after the drought and the fires. When selecting plants for this area, we are also trying to establish a seed bank and to that end, we are trialling a number of casuarinas on the Upper Tip with a view to improve natural regeneration and encourage the Gang Gang and the Glossy Black Cockatoos to return.

Our challenges have been quite considerable as the rain, whilst benefitting both new and mature plants, has also enabled the weeds to proliferate. St John's Wort, Buchan Weed and Sticky Weed have ensured we have been kept busy. Woody weeds have also flourished in the areas around the Tip, with Cootamundra Wattle, Blackberry and Privet being the main culprits. There have also been challenges in trying to turn our many weed piles into compost, with various approaches being tried to hasten this process. The use of weed piles has limited the seed dispersal, with any new growth able to be quickly removed.

Again we thank PCS and our local rangers for their assistance and appreciate the attempts to reduce both the rabbits and the Chilean Needle Grass. We also acknowledge and thank our small band of volunteers for their enthusiasm and commitment.



Photo: Mount Ainslie Weeders

Mount Pleasant ParkCare

By Toss Gascoigne

Blue periwinkle (vinca) is the scourge of our reserve.

It poses 'the greatest threat to biodiversity long term' and in a consultant's report on management of the Reserve, controlling vinca was nominated as a priority 1 activity.

In March we applied for funding under the ACT Environmental Grants Program. We set out how we planned to control vinca and reclaim areas of bush. It's a program in four parts: spray, mulch, revegetate and monitor.

This method has been developed over many tests, many failures and innovations. Our experimental site was a monoculture, a dense mat of vinca 500mm high, and it's been transformed.

The report describes it as "the successful reestablishment of planted native vegetation ... the ecological function of this site is now significantly greater than it was prior, due to the high diversity of all plants which together improve soil condition and provide microhabitat for critical elements of food webs."

It's a lovely forest glade now, revegetated with trees, grasses and understory, and we want to extend it.

The grant will allow us to hire commercial sprayers and pay to truck the mulch to the site. These tasks are beyond the resources of PCS staff and the capacity of our group. Our contribution will be to identify the priority areas, direct the spraying program, help spread the mulch, conduct the revegetation program, and maintain the area.

Many approaches have been tried to controlling vinca: different sprays, different treatments but there is still an experimental element. The map below shows the location of our work, with an area in blue we have successfully treated, and an area in brown we hope to treat.



Photo: Mount Pleasant ParkCare volunteers with ParkCare Ranger Martin Bajt

Mount Taylor ParkCare Group

By Kathy Eyles and Anne I'ons

The La Nina conditions have enabled the triumvirate of St John's Wort, fleabane and Verbascum to flourish on Mt Taylor as well as the germination of the woody weed seed bank under mature trees. The scale of the task means we have again focused our weeding and erosion control efforts on the most important ecological sites – our high quality pink-tailed worm-lizard habitat and wildflower meadow. Our annual spring wildflower and summer butterfly walks provide a delightful break from the weeding and the opportunity to learn about and enjoy nature on the mountain.

One of the highlights of the year was partnering with Landcare ACT's Wellbeing through Nature program in Spring to run a cultural walk and work party with Uncle Wally Bell, introducing a whole new cohort to the cultural values, places and stories of Mt Taylor.

We have been successful in obtaining an Environment Grant in 2023 through the Southern ACT Catchment Group to help us care for the high quality pink-tailed worm-lizard habitat on the lower north-east slopes of Mt Taylor. The grant will allow us to set up a program to monitor habitat condition, install interpretative signage to educate the community about these important grassy habitats and dependent species as well as providing assistance with weed control.

PCS has been busy managing the re-grading of fire trails across the mountain addressing widespread erosion damage from the rain. Southern trail walkers are delighted with the new bridge over the gully at the start of the Mannheim gate trail which has improved safety for walkers of all ages. Thanks to our District Rangers and the Parkcare team for their support over the year and a huge shout out to our dedicated volunteers.



Photo: Cultural Walk on Mt Taylor with Uncle Wally Bell September 2022. Photo Credit: Kathy Eyles

Oakey Hill ParkCare

By John Butcher

Over the past 12 months the Oakey Hill Parkcare Group has convened 11 Parkcare events, representing 291.5 volunteer hours. The number of volunteers ranged from 5 to 16, with an average of 10 volunteers per event.

Our approach over the past 12 months has centred on the targeted remediation of high-conservation-value 'nodes' characterised by biological and topographical complexity. To greater and lesser degrees, these nodes are also vulnerable to invasive weeds. Our aim has been to reduce the seed bank of targeted species in demarcated areas by removing flowering seed heads (*Verbascum* and fleabane), and hand-pulling (St John's wort).

In part our strategy has been to work within a grid comprised of 10m by 10m 'squares' and progressively clear these of targeted species. This approach is labour-intensive, and while it has not eliminated targeted species, it appears to have reduced their number and density. On a positive note, our work has had a marked visible effect on the prevalence of *Verbascum* in the treated areas.

The coming 12 months will see a modification of this approach. We will continue to monitor and remediate high-conservation nodes, but this will occur alongside the establishment of an 'archipelago' of 5m x 5m squares containing mixed woodland species. Oakey Hill, assisted by the SACTCG, was awarded an ACT Environment Grant for this purpose.

On 28 May Oakey Hill hosted a 'Come and Try Day' convened by the Landcare for Well-being program, and assisted by ACT Parks & Conservation, Woden Community Services, and the SACTCG. This event was a genuinely collaborative effort and attracted 19 registrants who assisted with the planting of 15 *allocasuarinas* propagated from seed collected on Oakey Hill. The day was a great success, and our group is open to future such collaborations.



Photo: Oakey Hill ParkCare Volunteers

Urambi Hills ParkCare Group

By Louise Curham

Urambi Hills has had a busy year. In July and Aug 2022 we supported Amberley farm in its dam rehab projects with ACT NRM, planting seedlings around two dams. Amberley is on the western boundary of Urambi Hills and we collaborate with the farm whenever we can. Here's a photo from that event that we're proud of. We think it shows the heart of land care with all the government partners, the catchment group and the ParkCare patch community, including neighbouring groups. Little can be done without everyone working together and for us, this photo expresses that.

A feature of 2023 has been more action from Marg Thompson and Glenn Schwinghamer. Marg worked with ranger Colin Schofield to select six sites for seedling plantings along Tuggeranong Ck Fire Trail, which he prepared for planting. Plant allocations were secured through Ranger Assist Ranger Chris Evans, and the first stage of plantings was carried out successfully as part of the Ranger Assist Program in June.

Plant allocations were also secured through Southside ParkCare Ranger Tenzin Phuntsho. These are to be planted to boost shrub coverage in 2014 sites, and the first stage plantings were also carried out in June. Glenn and Marg will oversee further plantings in these areas up to and into 2024 as new seedlings become available.

A huge thanks to Chris Evans for prioritising pyracantha removal sessions in the RangerAssist program over the past six months. Urambi Hills is guided by the goal of improving habitat for small birds so we're happy to be replacing the pyracantha with more shrubs, in line with a general philosophy of 'one out, one in'.

We thank previous Ranger Jim Clark, and interim Ranger Colin Schofield for their efforts in Urambi Hills.

This is also a chance to recap on our past plantings before all that work gets lost in the mists of time. Information management is always a challenge for environment related activities around the hills runs. Our Group runs a Google Drive and a Facebook page @urambihillsgroup where you can see all our past events. Amongst the resources are our quarterly woodland bird survey data and survey sites, some of the submitted environment grants, maps of pink tailed worm lizard likely locations (noting Will Osborne never actually completed that survey, he just proposed where they would likely be found), maps of water cubes and past planting projects. Buried in our gmail account are more detail on grant applications and other evidence of arrangements for these plantings.

There is other work that's been done on Urambi Hills (erosion control, gates added to the fenced area around the creek on the Tuggeranong fire trail, fencing of an old kurrajong above the old tip site, rabbit removal, blackberry spraying, for example). What great collaborations!



Photo: Rob, Jenny, Tenzin, John, Carol, Fiona, Jim and Martin

Additional note:

Volunteer content for the 2022-23 Annual Report was not received from the following groups. ParkCare thanks the below groups for their ongoing commitment:

- Blue Range Builders
- Friends of Bruce Ridge
- Friends of Tidbinbilla
- Gudgenby Bush Regenerators
- Molonglo Pines Trail Alliance
- Parkcarers of the Southern Murrumbidgee (POSM)
- Red Hill Regenerators

RangerAssist

By Steve Taylor

Ranger Assist Co-Ordinator Chris Evans worked with numerous rangers to provide a wide range of activities across the ACT's nature reserves and parks during the 2022-23 year. Some of the activities were one-off events focusing on one particular task, while other activities were ongoing, featuring a variety of tasks and locations. The activities provide volunteers with a wonderful opportunity to assist, and learn from, rangers.

The Ranger Assist along the Murrumbidgee Corridor is a fortnightly shift that attracts a devoted group of around 10 regular volunteers alongside Ranger James. Activities included targeting woody weeds along both sides of the heritage dry stone wall in Tuggeranong, woody weed and serrated tussock removal in Gigerline Nature Reserve, tree planting along the Murrumbidgee at Tharwa, tree planting, weeding and old fence removal at Pine Island, and removing pine wildings in the Bullen Range.

Other regular shifts included rehabilitation work with the Ranger around Namadgi Visitor Centre focusing on broadleaf weeding, native grasses planting and plant and track maintenance. Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve Sanctuary shift with Ranger Scott targeted broadleaf weeding, as well as grass plantings, track maintenance, including removal of overhanging branches and shrubs and filling in path edges, and rehabilitating old, unused tracks. Also at Tidbinbilla, Ranger Kristi led the Wandarawari Track Working Party carrying out weed management, track maintenance and old fence removal.

Ranger Assist volunteers appreciate the efforts of Chris in his co-ordinator role in not only providing a diverse range of activities, but also ensuring we have a complete range of appropriate, and well maintained, tools to carry out the tasks.



Photo: Volunteers Mike and Paul with Ranger James at the Gorge, Dyball Creek, Gigerline Nature Reserve

VisitorAssist

By Tony Cory

The ParkCare VisitorAssist program provides volunteers for the Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. The Program assists and supports visitor engagement with the environment and provides advice on how to effectively and safely access the Tidbinbilla and Namadgi environments.

VisitorAssist Volunteers are involved in a variety of ways, including:

- Providing Volunteer Interpretation at Namadgi and Tidbinbilla Visitor Information Centres
- Provide interpretation of the landscape whilst engaging with visitors in The Sanctuary and Eucalyptus Forest at Tidbinbilla
- Running the NaturePlay School Holiday programs, including Cubby House Rules, Poos Give Us Clues, Tidbinbilla Bush Detectives, World of Waterbugs, Namadgi Bush Explorers, Namadgi Swagman Damper and Billy Tea and Billy Tea and Damper
- Engaging in Heritage Festival events, including running the Eucalyptus distillery at Black Flats and Picnic at Rock Valley
- Assisting in research projects such as the Eastern Long Neck Turtle study and the Grassland Earless Dragon project

In 2022-23, the VisitorAssist program saw 38 (plus Namadgi) active volunteers contribute approximately 2200 hours across various roles at both Namadgi and Tidbinbilla. The bulk of the volunteering hours (1320) was spent providing assistance to visitor in the Sanctuary and Eucalypt Forest at Tidbinbilla, with Namadgi Visitors Centre contributing a further 250 hours.

The NaturePlay School Holiday program was expanded this year to include running events at Namadgi as well as those at Tidbinbilla. A mix of 9 programs are now run with 2 programs being run at Namadgi and 4 to 5 at Tidbinbilla each school holidays. 280 volunteering hours was contributed to running the programs at Tidbinbilla and Namadgi catering for the 720 children who participated in these well attended and enjoyed activities.

A number of new volunteers are currently progressing through the mentoring and training program with a further recruitment program to be run in the near future to further increase the number of active volunteers.

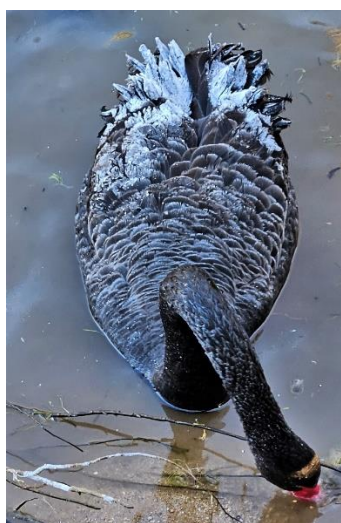


Photo: A frosty resident swan at The Sanctuary, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

WildlifeAssist

By Rebecca Mack

The WildlifeAssist volunteers have been incredibly busy over the past 12 months with a range of exciting activities!

Once again, volunteers have been providing support to the Threatened Species Team to care for the native wildlife by completing regular 'doing the rounds' and food preparation shifts.

WildlifeAssist volunteers have also been fortunate to participate in a variety of projects and surveys throughout the year that have been arranged by our volunteer co-ordinator, Michelle. Platypus surveys were conducted in August 2022 and February 2023. In addition, the turtle survey conducted during September 2022 and February 2023 saw 228 Eastern long-necked turtles captured and recorded within Tidbinbilla Sanctuary and Waterbirds.

The commencement of the Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon Project saw many hours spent in the ring tanks each week, preparing the tanks with a variety of native plants in preparation for the release of 40 dragons, that was due to happen in September 2022. However, the La Nina event last year saw the release of the dragons into the ring tanks delayed several times and when they were finally released in November 2022, there was a dusting of snow on the mountains! Since then, the dragons have been thriving and have been successful in producing 5 baby dragons! Volunteers are now maintaining the ring tanks and assisting with feeding, weighing and monitoring.

On a personal note, the undoubted highlight for the year would have to be monitoring JJ the koala, who was released (following a couple of false starts) from the front enclosure into Eucy Forest in March! JJ is now living the best of koala lives, high in the trees!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Threatened Species Team for sharing their time and knowledge with the volunteers. Also, thanks to Michelle for organising these activities to enable the volunteers to gain a further understanding of our native wildlife!



Photo: Volunteer Rebecca Mack with resident koalas at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

ParkCare Affiliations

Kosciuszko Huts Association

By Jean Hammond

Unfortunately, due to weather conditions and access into Namadgi KHA were unable to perform any work on the huts but in the last six months we are happy to say some projects were completed and there are more to come.

A work party was conducted at Glendale which seen the area surrounding the KHA containers and shed cleared of long grass and blacken wood that was burnt from the fires that had fallen on the ground. Further work is needed as the grass is very high not only around our site but all over the park.

Work that was well overdue was completed at Waterhole hut. For people who are unaware this hut is part of the Settlers track. This was a fantastic work party with the collaboration of Rangers and KHA members working together to dig a trench and install Ag piping to improve drainage. Equipment was also supplied and managed by Parks staff which made this task manageable. It was also a great team building event.

The next task was to reconstruct the 1940's stockyards to as near as possible to the original one by using as much of the original wood as we could. Again, we were supported by Parks staff in supplying equipment (brush cutter and Auger) and assistance. The 2020 fires came very close in reaching this although spot fires were quickly extinguished by parks. The grass had to be cut before work could continue due to the height and visibility for working. For all of us working on this sight we were extremely proud of the end product.

KHA's biggest event this year was the bi-annual Woodskills event held at Wee Jasper on private property. This year it was held in April rather than November. The committee working on the event worked countless hours in preparing and organising the best ever two-day event for KHA members to learn and maintain their traditional bush skills. Demonstrations were provided by skilled instructors, members could try their skills at various activities, there were 4WD demos and a visit to a restored cabin. On the Saturday night around 100 stayed for dinner and listen to traditional music and it was a great way to catch up with friend and network. The event was attended by more than 150 visitors. So, if you are a member of KHA you are more than welcomed to come to our next.



Photo: Trench being levelled by everyone after dug out, Waterhole Hut.

National Parks Association (NPA)

By Martin Chalk

The National Parks Association (NPA ACT) conducted 14 work parties during the reporting period. Four of these were additions at short notice to the planned program. The planned March work party was cancelled due to wet weather.

Eight of the work parties were conducted within Namadgi National Park. The tasks varied from woody weed control in the lower country of Glendale, Rendezvous Creek and the Naas Valley, to juniper control in the former Stockyard Arboretum, located upper reaches of Stockyard Creek.

A reconnaissance walk was conducted to the former arboretum in April by three NPA members and a PCS ranger to determine the extent of juniper cover and they assessed that sufficient work existed to justify a commitment to the work party. The work party was conducted in May but completion was frustrated by wet and snowy conditions.

The NPA also had the privilege to return to the Orroral Valley in June to commence a program of barbed wire removal from old stock fences. The strands of barbed wire pose a threat to native wildlife and will be progressively removed from the valley.

Five work parties were conducted in a variety of PCS reserves including two visits to Moores Hill for briar and Acacia baileyana control and a return to the Red Gum reserve on Sheep Station Creek, just south of Tharwa, for general maintenance. Fence removal in the Bullen Range Nature Reserve again featured on the program.

The NPA also conducted a three-day work party for the National Parks and Wildlife Service at Dananbilla Nature Reserve on the central slopes of NSW. Twenty such work parties have been conducted since 2013, in addition to those conducted for PCS.



Photo: Crossing Cheyenne Flats enroute to Stockyard Arboretum