

And of fundamental importance, at our conferences and in our courses we have provided regular points of dialogue and knowledge-exchange between sectors that rarely get to sit down together – practitioners, managers, policy people, and researchers.

It's a pretty good 20-year record for an organisation that has never had more than four part-time (and usually two) paid staff. It's all down to our members and supporters and their voluntary contributions of time, energy, and expertise. Among them are our corporate members – many of the major botanic gardens and herbaria and conservation agencies have given staff-time and other forms of support for our work. In particular, the Australian National Botanic Gardens has hosted our national office since 1991 – a great and direct contribution to the national conservation effort.

2011 has been a very active year for ANPC. We have been the first (and so far only national) organisation to roll out publicly accessible training events on the newly arrived Myrtle Rust pathogen that threatens so many wild and cultivated species. We held three training events on management of native vegetation in Travelling Stock Reserves (TSRs), funded by the NSW Environmental Trust. We have also developed a partnership with the national Meat Industry Training Advisory Council (MINTRAC) to extend our capacity to deliver courses, and which we hope will help us return to offering TAFE-accredited events in the future.

For 2012, in addition to further TSR and Myrtle Rust courses, and the national conference, we are hoping (the little gods of funding permitting) to fully translate the ANPC Germplasm Guidelines into training modules,

develop a new series of plant identification courses, and take the Myrtle Rust course to all States.

In 2012, ANPC can help you stay in touch with developments in plant conservation through this quarterly bulletin, which is also an avenue for you to publish your work and experience to a wide conservation readership. On a more frequent basis you can stay in touch via our e-bulletin ANPC News (an opt-in free subscription – visit <http://anpcnews.blogspot.com/> to sign up), which is also an opportunity for you to post short news items about developments in your State or Territory.

On a personal note, I reach my constitutional use-by date as President of ANPC at the 2011 Annual General Meeting. During my tenure, and in my time on the Committee before that, it has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with many remarkable and dedicated ANPC members and staff. There are far too many to mention individually but I'd like to say particular thanks to staffers Sally Stephens, Merryl Bradley, and Sue Mathams, and to past Committee members Phil Ainsley, who has been a rock-steady Secretary of ANPC in recent years, Tricia Hogbin and Judy West who helped steer ANPC through difficult times, Jim Crennan, Cathy Offord, Rosemary Purdie, Helena Mills ... and many, many others.

Finally – if you're reading this but haven't joined ANPC yet, or have not renewed your membership for a year or two, or are looking for a tax-deductible gift recipient – now is the time. We are making a difference, and we need you as a member and supporter. It's just a click away.

*Bob Makinson
(ANPC President 2008-11)*

Request for feedback on monitoring programs

Thomas Payne

Central West Catchment Management Authority, Gilgandra; thomas.payne@cma.nsw.gov.au

I had the privilege of speaking recently at the 'Reading the Landscape' conference on biodiversity held in Dubbo, NSW. I was a panel member in a session aimed at provoking discussion amongst participants (research ecologists, representatives of state and federal natural resource management agencies, and private landholders) on issues related to conservation of flora and fauna in the Central West Slopes. One topic from the conference that has generated some interest is a proposed program to encourage private landholders to report wildlife sightings within the Central West Catchment.

The Central West Catchment Management Authority (CMA) oversees the catchments of the Bogan, Castlereagh, and Macquarie rivers, and comprises a landscape that has

been highly modified since European colonisation. Land clearing and grazing practices, changed fire regimes, and the introduction of exotic plant and animal species have all contributed to a decline in native biodiversity. Stands of native vegetation on privately held land generally persist as relatively small fragments. Vegetation communities that require soil types and landscape situations also suited to agriculture are under-represented across the Central West.

As a Catchment Officer charged with implementing incentive programs that encourage environmentally sound land management practices, I frequently attend meetings of Landcare and other local landholder community groups. In conversations arising at these meetings I have been struck by the enthusiasm many landholders have for the

wildlife present on their properties, and by the extent of their knowledge of such things as seasonal behaviour or favoured habitat. It seems logical that people running farm businesses requiring an understanding of animal husbandry or basic plant physiology, and who live in close proximity to nature, should be astute and intuitive ecological informants.

The idea of recruiting landholder volunteers to partner with our CMA in monitoring the state of biodiversity across the Central West is at present little more than a topic of discussion that may or may not develop into a fully-fledged program in the 2012-13 financial year. But it is a discussion that we would like the readers of APC to join.

Questions we would put to ecological researchers and natural resource managers (that is, the end users of monitoring information submitted by the landholder community) are:

- What are your experiences with community-based monitoring programs?
- What is the minimum amount of data necessary to make a record of a species sighting useful to you?
- What level of verification would you need in order to consider such data reliable?

- Where a record for a plant is made, would you consider it necessary for a voucher specimen to be submitted to a herbarium, or would photographic evidence or informed observation suffice?

We often hear landholders describe themselves as being time poor. Therefore, many of our questions for potential volunteer naturalists relate to factors that would limit their participation:

- What would motivate you to share your observations with the CMA?
- How much time would you be willing to devote to reporting on biodiversity in your patch?
- And related to the above, how often would you be willing to submit observations?
- If the CMA held free trainings or organised meetings in your area where volunteers could compare notes and learn about local biodiversity issues, natural history, threatened species, conservation efforts, etc., would you be likely to attend?

Readers can contact me directly to share their ideas, insights and experiences. Please phone (02) 6847 8501 or e-mail thomas.payne@cma.nsw.gov.au.

Restoration as a learning process – lessons from temperate grasslands

*David Freudenberger and Paul Gibson-Roy
Greening Australia*

Summary

To date the Grassy Groundcover Research Project (GGRP) has restored nearly 40 ha of species-rich grassland. Put into context, virtually no remaining high quality grassland sites in western Victoria are larger than 1 ha in size. With GGRP methods producing 50 plants per m², over 20 million plants (representing over two hundred species) are now contained therein. Monitoring and learning were important elements of GGRP that led to this significant outcome.

Restoring herb rich grassy ecosystems

Greening Australia's development of strategies and technologies to restore diverse native temperate grassland and grassy woodlands (with hundreds of species) is a useful illustration of how monitoring and review can play a critical role in improving restoration outcomes (Gibson-Roy et al., 2010). Initiated in 2004, a fundamental element in the success of GGRP was a commitment by management and staff to a simple and clear objective: increase the spatial scale and diversity of temperate grassland restoration. This

was coupled with an effective and productive Research and Development (R&D) partnership with the University of Melbourne that was supported by various funding bodies (government agencies, corporations and individual donors) over many years.

Throughout this period the GGRP has benefited from a team of talented staff with a range of research and on-ground skills. All have been dedicated to developing novel and effective restoration approaches through a process of continuous learning and improvement, which has been supported by embedding monitoring processes across the program. Specialist researchers were integral to developing, investigating and interpreting experimental actions. Just as important, it involved simple monitoring and review strategies at all levels of the program including steering committees, technical panels and ongoing staff-led program reviews. Critical contributions were made by non-specialists in areas such as site management, seed collection, plant propagation, seed production and seed sowing. These combined skills ensured the GGRP was able to prosecute a particularly difficult restoration challenge.



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