From the editor

PAUL ADAM

This issue is our opportunity to pay tribute to Roger Good, a stalwart of the Australian Network for Plant Conservation for many years, and one of Australia's leading plant ecologists.

Looking over Roger's career one cannot but be impressed by the breadth of his interests. He started work in the New South Wales Soil Conservation Service in that organisation's heyday as a pioneer in the establishment of permanent vegetation monitoring sites, not just in the Alpine catchments, where Roger worked, but elsewhere in the State. It is fortunate that Roger was able to continue the monitoring, and part of his legacy will be the maintenance of the plots. Alpine environments are likely to be particularly exposed to the impacts of climate change and understanding the biotic response will require both knowledge of the past and continuing close observation.

One of Roger's visions was for the establishment of a research centre dedicated to the study of Australia's mountain environments. The proposal is described in the article by Nicotra *et al.* which demonstrates that Australia has a strong research base able to form the core for the Centre. These are uncertain times for research funding but we hope the plans come to fruition.

A great deal of Roger's work involved the management and restoration of degraded and damaged peatlands. The Australian environment is not for the most part conducive to the formation of peat. This confers considerable conservation importance, both nationally and internationally, on the limited areas in the continent where peatlands occur. Unfortunately much of what peatland we do have is in a degraded state. Roger was an inspiration and encouragement to those engaged in the rehabilitation of damaged peat swamps, and Shane Grundy pays tribute to Roger's support for his work in the Blue Mountains.

One of the major threats to peatlands globally is fire, and we have become aware in recent years of the losses of lowland peat in Indonesia with the formation in most years of extensive palls of smoke arising from burning peatlands for conversion to agricultural use. This summer has witnessed devastating fires in Tasmania affecting peat and other montane habitats. This has attracted international attention. Fire is, of course, a recurrent theme in Australia, but the rarity and long-term consequences of peat fires of this magnitude have not yet registered in the public consciousness.

French *et al.* discuss the threat to Australian montane peatlands from fire, with graphic photographs of the extent of the damage.

Peat has traditionally been a component in propagation soil mixes. In 2000, Sydney hosted the first peat free Olympics– the contracts for supply of all the planting material used in the extensive landscaping required a guarantee that no peat had been used in propagation. Since then, the push to phase out peat use, both in Australia and internationally, has weakened. Australia still imports peat for horticultural use, thus contributing to the damage and loss of peatlands elsewhere. There are suitable alternatives to peat available and we should all encourage their use.

Roger published frequently in *Australasian Plant Conservation*. This issue contains reprints of two of his articles which illustrate the breadth of his contributions. One, from volume 18(4), covers montane habitats, but also deals with the topic of the impacts of increased ultraviolet radiation, which is at the cutting edge of climate change research. The second, from 19(2), on restoration of power line corridors illustrates Roger's interest in ecological restoration, but also his involvement in planning for conservation, in this case of a linear feature in the landscape.

Roger had a very long standing interest in fire management, both from a theoretical and a practical perspective. The first time I met Roger was at the symposium at the Academy of Science in Canberra which led to the 1981 publication *Fire and the Australian Biota,* a book of continuing value.

Scott Mooney points out the originality of Roger's ideas about fire in montane habitats, and Philip Zylstra builds on the foundation established by Roger in his discussion of feedback between fire and flammability in snowgums.

A bibliography of Roger's many publications is being prepared, and will be available on the ANPC website. This will be a resource for all working in montane and wetland habitats.

A permanent tangible legacy to Roger will be the establishment of an alpine garden at the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra. Hopefully this will, in a few years time, be one of the major attractions for visitors.

The article by Barrett and Rathbone discusses rare plant conservation and impacts of grazing in the Stirling Ranges. Viewed from the eastern states these ranges, although rugged, are not very high compared to the Australian Alps which feature in other articles, but the issue is one which is relevant to many habitats and I am sure would have been of interest to Roger. Peter Bridgewater's article on synthetic communities will, I hope, generate comment. It raises an issue of increasing relevance to conservation management, but one which surprisingly we have been reluctant to discuss. It also postulates what appears to have been a vacant niche in Australia at the time of European colonisation – temperate sandy beach strandlines. In the tropics there are a number of native species occupying this zone. Should coastal zone managers take action to conserve a plant community made up of introduced species? I am sure Roger would have enjoyed being part of the debate on such an issue.

The regular items include a Member's Profile introducing our new Secretary, Melissa Millar, whom we are delighted to welcome aboard and a report on the most recent conference of the Australian Systematic Botany Society. The next issue of *Australasian Plant Conservation* will feature a number of articles based on presentations at this symposium.

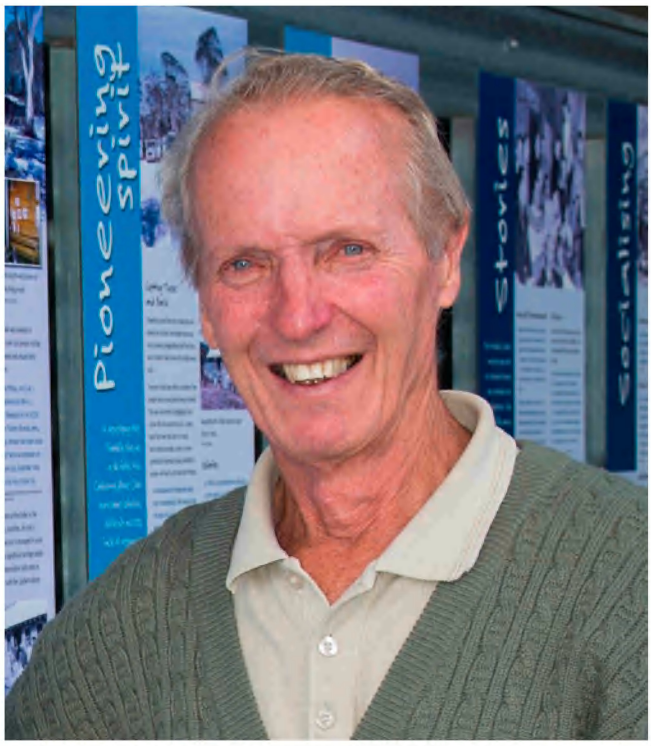
The contribution by Wood and Rudman on seed collecting from Tasmania's conifers is particularly timely given this summer's fires and the montane flavour of this issue.

Hopefully for many of you the issue will bring back memories of Roger, and, for all of you, it will be of interest and provoke thought about some current issues.

Vale Roger Good

Sadly, on Monday evening 12 October 2015, one of Australia's eminent alpine ecologists and naturalists, Roger Good lost a battle with cancer. Roger loved nature and his contributions to national and international conservation efforts during his professional career contributed significantly to a better Australia and a better planet. Roger's early professional career began in the 1960s with the NSW Soil Conservation Service where he helped manage the restoration of severely eroding catchments in the then Kosciuszko State Park.

The 120-plus year history of summer cattle and sheep grazing in the Kosciuszko mountains had resulted in severe erosion in the highest catchments. This erosion threatened the newly completed downstream dams established and operated as part of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme. It also threatened the loss of the alpine area's unique plants and animals. The 1960s and 1970s work by CSIRO and the NSW Soil Conservation Service stopped the erosion and restored the catchments in one of the great restoration achievements of our nation. Roger was an integral part of this Soil Conservation Service team and ultimately came to lead the alpine catchments restoration project in Kosciuszko National Park. He helped to devise and apply new techniques of soil conservation that best suited Australia's harsh mountain environments; environments that were snow covered in winter.



Roger Good, Mt Franklin Chalet, 29 January 2015 following an inspection of the Ramsar Listed Wetland and source of Canberra's water supply, Ginini Swamp, Namadgi National Park, Australian Capital Territory. Photo: Graeme L. Worboys.

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