

STEP News No 9 November
Annual Report Edition 2010



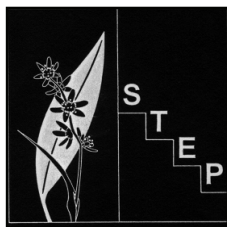
All STEP members and friends are invited to the STEP 2010 AGM on Saturday 4 December at the National Arboretum. Guest speaker Anne Duncan. More details inside on page 3. Meet at the main gate on Lady Denman Drive at 4.45 pm



White border encloses the STEP site at Block 100 and the woodland area (to be acquired in the future).

National Arboretum, Canberra. May 2010





*Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park
- a future regional botanic garden, edu-
cation and ecosystem recovery centre
for the Southern Tablelands. ABN:
60834573059*

Website: www.step.asn

Postal Address: PO Box 987 Civic
Square 2608.

**Notice to all members that the 2010 STEP
Annual General Meeting will be held on Sat
4 December 2010 at the National Arboretum
Canberra.**

Meet at 4.45 at the main gate.

Notice of Annual General Meeting 2010

The STEP AGM will be held on Saturday 4 December 2010 from 4.45 – 6.30 pm at the site shed at the Canberra International Arboretum and Gardens.

Please arrive by 4.45 pm. The gate will be locked at 4.45 pm and we will drive in convoy to the site shed. The gates will be locked until we leave. You could still walk in after 5pm. Enquiries on the day: Mob 0405 623 802.

Agenda

Welcome
Apologies
Minutes of the 2008 AGM
STEP Committee Report
Financial Statement and Auditor's Report

AGM

Election of Office Bearers for the positions of:
President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer
3 Committee Members

Nominations will be called at the meeting.

All members and non members welcome. Light refreshments will be provided.

STEP annual dinner at an Indian cafe

Members and non members are invited to join us at the annual dinner after the AGM at Flavours of India Upstairs in Garema Place – bookings are essential.

*To make a booking please email
limestone@grapevine.com.au and provide names and
number of seats needed. RSVP by 29 November.*

Photo opposite: Linda Muldoon : Study of Andy and Janet Russell's Garden. One of a series of 30 photos taken for the Molonglo Valley Welcome Pack STEP brochure project. The Project will feature landscaping with local plants and pebbles, mulch and paving.

Farewell to three committee members...

Three STEP Committee members will not be renominating for the STEP Committee this year. Warren Saunders, Hanna Jaireth and Geoff Robertson announced their intention not to continue as members of the Committee. Hanna was responsible for STEP receiving the support of the ACT House of Assembly standing committee on planning and the environment. Warren and Geoff have been members since STEP's was launched and have contributed financially and strategically to STEP's development. All three have contributed to STEP in fundamentally important ways. On behalf of STEP's members, the Committee extends our warmest thanks to you all and we look forward to seeing you at our events and

Guest speaker:

Anne Duncan, National Arboretum Board member.

Anne believes the National Arboretum has a key role in connecting our community with the environment. She is actively involved with the National Resource Management Council of the ACT and surrounding region and many other conservation bodies.



Our organisation

STEP is a not for profit incorporated association registered under the Associations Incorporations Act 1991. STEP was registered as an incorporated association on 1 July 2003. It was launched as an organisation on 22 May 2003 at an event held at the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

STEP has 4 Office bearers: the President, the Vice President, the Secretary and the Treasurer. In addition the Act requires that there be a Public Officer. All these roles are outlined in the STEP constitution. A copy of the constitution is available on the STEP website.

The STEP committee is subject to the legislation, the constitution and model rules, and to any resolution passed by the STEP Association in general meeting. The Committee controls and manages STEP's affairs.

Meetings of the Committee

The STEP committee is required to meet at least three times a year. During 2009/2010 financial year, the STEP Committee met 5 times.

The STEP committee may delegate to 1 or more sub-committees (consisting of the member or members of the association that the committee considers appropriate) the exercise of the functions of the committee that are specified in the instrument, other than (a) this power of delegation; and (b) a function that is a function imposed on the committee by the Act, by any other Territory law, or by resolution of the association in general meeting. The STEP Committee did not use this power in the 2009/2010 financial year.

STEP Insurance

STEP is insured by Accident & Health International Underwriting Pty Ltd which is underwritten for and on behalf of Allianz Australia Insurance Limited. A copy of our insurance policy is available on the STEP web site.

Auditing the STEP Accounts

The STEP financial statements are audited by Robert Johnson, a Partner and Director of Hardwicke Whigham & Driver, on a pro bono basis. STEP appreciates the generosity of this company with meeting our financial requirements.

STEP Memberships are now due.
If you haven't paid for 2010/2011 please see the back page for details.

STEP Annual Report for 2010

This edition of STEP News features a report to members on STEP's activities during the past year.....

Our vision is:

to create a southern tablelands regional botanic garden and a field station for biodiversity research by March 2013 when the National Arboretum will be opened for centennial celebrations in memory of the creation of Canberra as the national capital of Australia.

STEP has been given the stewardship of an area at the National Arboretum in Canberra to construct a small southern tablelands regional community botanic garden. Other areas of land have been promised to STEP in correspondence received from the ACT Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope. These areas will be acquired in the future. STEP appreciates the assistance we have received from the National Arboretum in pursuing our aims.

Our mission is:

to advance the biodiversity of the southern tablelands region through advocacy, increasing community engagement with southern tablelands ecosystems, education programs and reporting.

Our values are:

- (a) Knowledge and understanding about the natural environment of the Southern Tablelands region;
- (b) Restoration, improvement and conservation of the natural environment for future generations; and
- (c) Respect for individuals, listening to diverse viewpoints and arriving at decisions by consensus.



Our broad objectives are:

- to enhance the quality and availability of practical and scientific knowledge of the ecosystems and species of the Southern Tablelands for both present and future communities and agencies in the region;
- to promote understanding of the natural environment as the foundation of Australia's social and cultural (including Aboriginal) heritage;
- to promote the objectives of the International Convention on Biological Diversity within the Southern Tablelands Region;
- to establish and maintain a public fund to be called the Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park Public Fund for the specific purpose of supporting STEP.

Our specific objectives are :

- *to establish and maintain an ecosystems park representing landscapes, ecosystems and species indigenous to this region*

This includes:

- * a regional botanic garden
- * a significant conservation corridor
- * ecosystems information, training and resources
- * education facilities for school and tertiary students to achieve the objectives of STEP
- * educational facilities for organisations and agencies undertaking biodiversity services
- * a recovery plan for the region, encompassing mapping, recovery protocols, vegetation guidelines and expert advice, assistance and resources
- * a public interest foundation to monitoring and report on the impact of conservation activities
- * resources for building community capacity
- * capacity for regional and global cooperation
- *to secure such grants from public or private sources as are necessary to achieve the objectives of STEP*
- *to establish comprehensive documentation of the ecosystems, habitats and species of the Southern Tablelands;*

- *to encourage participation in STEP projects by individuals, community organisations, industry, government and non -government organisations, volunteers, scientists, educational bodies, students and teachers*
- *to promote awareness of STEP projects among regional and local groups and others who might benefit, and*
- *to arrange training, where necessary, in the skills required in each STEP project.*

STEP partner organisations and stakeholders:

Our work is relevant to:

- the community including future generations
- the Board and the Friends of the National Arboretum
- environment, heritage and conservation groups
- business and industry
- academics
- professional bodies and interest groups
- the Media
- the ACT Government and all other members of the ACT Assembly
- ACT NSW and Commonwealth Government agencies concerned with biodiversity and education policy and programs, and
- the United Nations Secretariat for the Convention on biological diversity.



Highlights of the past year.

STEP's four key objectives are:

To enhance the quality and availability of practical and scientific knowledge of the ecosystems and species of the Southern Tablelands for both present and future communities and agencies in the region.

STEP is advancing this first objective via:

- the delivery of the STEP master plan project. This plan will provide the design for the botanic garden and in the next two years is expected to provide for a work space suitable for a field station for biodiversity research into ecosystems of the southern tablelands— hopefully within the scope of the building program of the National Arboretum.

To promote understanding of the natural environment as the foundation of Australia's social and cultural (including Aboriginal) heritage;

STEP is advancing this second objective by:

- ✦ promoting understanding via its many communications activities which both invite participation by and provide experience for, STEP's stakeholder groups; and by partnering with our stakeholder groups we create new learning and resources that promote understanding of our heritage;

To promote the objectives of the International Convention on Biological Diversity within the Southern Tablelands Region;

STEP is advancing third objective by:

- ✦ becoming a participating organisation in the celebrations of the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity; and commencing a program of practical activities to promote understanding of the status of biodiversity in the Molonglo Valley.

To create a public trust fund

STEP has not advanced far with this fourth objective:

- STEP was expecting that this objective could be achieved in partnership with the Friends of the National Arboretum. This will not be possible after all. The Friends may not be entitled to have their own fund; instead they will establish an ancillary fund linked with the National Arboretum Board Fund. This means that STEP may a new strategy to achieve this objective.

STEP 's three year plan

In May 2010 the STEP committee held its first business planning workshop. This was an opportunity for the Committee to plan the milestones for the next three years up to the opening of the STEP botanic garden.

Creation of STEP regional community botanic garden

In the first year, the design of the master plan for Block 100 and the completion of the planting of the understorey gardens. Barbara Payne, Quandong Designs has donated her services, on a pro bono basis. STEP is expecting to commence the planting in autumn 2011.

The master plan will describe and provide maps and other information necessary for the botanical, ecosystem, the horticultural and landscaping design for and implementation of the botanic garden.

STEP has applied for and received an ACT Government Environment Fund Grant, the larger part of which will provide the funding for master plan and implementation of the STEP Botanic Garden.

The grant provides \$2,085 for an exhibition and workshops showcasing the master plan. The grant also provides \$300.00 for a function to launch the master plan at the Festival of the Forests 2011.

Funding of \$6,464 is included in the grant to purchase the plants for the botanic garden.

Other costs that have been funded include \$3050 for four community planting activities and \$1,584.00 for the hire of a power augur to dig the holes for the plants.

Biodiversity is life

Development and recognition of patches and corridors/ linkages that STEP has influence over.

STEP successfully lobbied the Arboretum Project Manager to prepare a Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) for Blocks 31 – 35. A tender for the plan was advertised in October 2010.

These sites in the Arboretum contain areas of southern tablelands natural grassland and woodland. The photo on page 10 of the newsletter demonstrates the seed bank value of these sites. The VMP will provide a framework for continuation of the STEP activities in good principles and practice for ecosystems recovery in the Arboretum.

Advocacy

STEP accepted an invitation to join both Molonglo Catchment Group (MCG) in March 2010 and later the task force for the Molonglo Valley – Molonglo Valley Bush on the Boundary (BoB) in June 2010. This will continue to provide many marvellous opportunities to undertake activities in partnership with MCG to enhance the biodiversity of the Molonglo Catchment areas adjoining and within the National Arboretum.

STEP has remained a member of the Council of the Friends of the National Arboretum. This group meets monthly. Many mutual benefits have resulted from this partnership.

STEP met with John MacKay in March to discuss a range of issues of concern to STEP and the construction of the infrastructure for National Arboretum. STEP has also met on site with the National Arboretum Curator Adam Burgess and the Horticulturalist, Emma Hallaway to discuss issues such as weed management and the damage to STEP site caused by the construction of the car park on the blocks adjoining the STEP site.

Arboretum Interface

STEP is lobbying to create an attractive and secure physical interface between the STEP botanic garden site and other STEP areas and the future suburbs of Molonglo, the wider Arboretum and other neighbours on administered land surrounding the Arboretum. Through the good offices of the BoB task force and the MCG we have obtained access to representatives from ACT Planning and Land Authority, the Land Development Agency, Hawker College and other stakeholders concerned with the land use issues in this part of the Molonglo Valley. This has provided opportunities to strategise about management issues such as erosion and water drainage, water quality, fire management ecosystems recovery and revegetation and cat containment which will assist with the coordination of all elements of the interface.

Ecosystem recovery site

STEP weekly working bees are making a difference to the natural vegetation cover on the site and to gradually manage the most pernicious weeds.

STEP Committee reviews progress and takes action to manage issues on the site on a monthly basis. STEP has a record of the tree planting events and community members who have participated in planting activities. We also have a record of the provenance of the tree species on the site.

STEP has kept and updated the list of the weeds present on the site and the weeds management activities undertaken. Activities to systematise the record keeping and monitoring activities are discussed in more detail in other sections of this

Education centre

At community events, such as the ANBG Open Garden for the 40th birthday celebrations, we distributed copies of the *Urban Habitat Guidelines for the ACT* and had many opportunities to discuss with visitors to the STEP tent the importance of growing local plants in our gardens as well as in the bushland. One way to improve the biodiversity of our city is to care for the small patches of natural habitat that are scattered in the National Arboretum, the urban built landscape in residential gardens, along nature strips, local parks within suburbs and especially individual trees. Our home gardens may be too small to provide a permanent habitat for many species but they do provide habitat for smaller species such as insects and skinks. Tall trees can be especially valuable and provide vantage points for birds searching for permanent habitat.

Whilst STEP is currently in its construction stage, there are still opportunities to develop educational resources to promote and increase our collective understanding of southern tablelands ecology and vegetation communities. STEP has some small projects underway.

One of our new projects is the development of concept for a booklet and web materials entitled *Know Your Eucalypts*. Funding of \$15,000 is being sought for this project from the Dahl foundation. A second project has already been funded with money from STEP ACT Environment Fund Grant. This project is to design and create a brochure and a series of website with links to new web content. In Welcome packs for new residents on Molonglo. This project will link the STEP website and STEP partners' websites to new resources to support the supply and demand of services and products for the construction of new gardens in the Molonglo Valley.

Ecological monitoring and assessment

STEP received funding in our ACT Environment Grant for two workshops on ecological monitoring and assessment. The first workshop, *Park Care in the Molonglo Valley* was held on 28 August 2010. Feedback received from this workshop was very positive. Thirty participants from fourteen organisations attended the workshop. National Arboretum Board member, Anne Duncan and horticulturalist, Emma Holloway made presentations to the Workshop and later expressed their support for the outcomes. The Workshop Report and future actions has been distributed to all participants and organisations who attended. A copy of the Report will be forwarded to the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment for noting in the State of the Environment reporting activities.

The second workshop is planned for May 2011. At this workshop it is hoped to have an exhibition of maps and a Living Atlas of Australia web portal demonstrating the biodiversity overlay on and the extent of the community science projects in the Molonglo area in administered land areas surrounding and within the National Arboretum.

STEP monitoring sub-committee

STEP has commenced work to establish a monitoring group. The desired outcomes of the STEP Monitoring program are to establish the cycle of seasonal monitoring activities; have the measures reported in mandatory official reports (e.g. annual reports) and specific publications (e.g. ATLAS of Living Australia, National Arboretum data base, newsletters, leaflets or booklets) so that historical data is accessible; ensure the measures are compatible with relevant national or international standards of methodology for such measurement for the flora and fauna; ensure the methodology and reporting are consistent with the principles of achieving better practice; create productive partnerships with relevant organizations; promote productive involvement with educational programs in primary, secondary, and tertiary education programs in Canberra; and promote and maintain productive involvement and liaison with relevant community groups.

Create productive partnerships

The support of 12 stakeholders groups for the STEP ACT Environment Grant application is very important to the planning and implementation of the projects funded by the Grant. STEP has continued to broaden its range of partnerships via its Monitoring Workshop and its contribution to partner organisations.

STEP acknowledges the contributions of financial and practical support received from the Friends of the Arboretum, Jocelyn Plovits and the Council; the Friends of the Grasslands, the Conservation Council, the Australian Native Plants Society ACT Region and the Molonglo Catchment Group. The National Arboretum Project Team members have been particularly supportive to STEP. John McKay, the National Arboretum Board Chair met with STEP committee members this year and promised continuing support.

STEP has participated in the Kosciusko to Coast Biodiversity and Farming Fair, the Australian National Botanic Gardens Open Garden Party and Celebration Dinner and the National Arboretum Festival of the Forests 2010.

STEP acknowledges the donations and support received from Warren Saunders, Seeds and Plants Australia who has provided STEP with valuable horticultural knowledge and resources. Thanks go to Linda Muldoon, well known National Arboretum photographer, has given STEP many beautiful photos of our activities.

Organisations on the radar for future partnerships in the coming year, are Greening Australia, the Girl Guides, Hawker College and Green Corps.

Communications Program

Three editions of STEP news were produced in 2009/2010 and one 2009 STEP Christmas card with an overview of STEP activities. Our website displays the main STEP organisational documents.

Our web site is due for a renovation and the Committee hopes to consider a better membership renewal functionality in 2011, using pay pal.

STEP has designed a one page leaflet this year with information about STEP and a STEP membership form on the back. STEP continues to produce a coloured book mark with The STEP logo and website details. These are quite small but remain an effective way to give visitors to STEP events colourful and minimal information about contacting STEP.

STEP has purchased a second weather proof banner, that is a couple of metres long. It has large green lettering on a white background that can be seen from a considerable distance. The banner can be tied to a fixture, and is very portable so we can use it at all our STEP activities. STEP also has a range of A3 laminated photographs that can be used indoors and outdoors and fixed to boards or fabric display modules with masking tape or velcro.

Communications Program cont'd

Thanks to the STEP Environment Grant there is funding for STEP indoor and outdoor signs; a brochure with website information about local plants and sustainable landscaping; materials to support a media event, exhibition, and for the launch of the STEP Master plan in March 2011 at the Festival of the Forests. The STEP Grant also includes funding to advertise and support four community plantings to complete all the activities for the next stage of our botanic garden.

STEP activities

STEP has supported the Russell open Garden event, hosted several workshops, a community planting and regular working bees in 2009/2010. STEP maintenance working bees are generally held every Thursday morning on site, weather and season permitting. A minimum of 6 hours and a maximum of 15 hours volunteer hours on average each week is worked on the maintaining the STEP site. In addition an hour each week would be spent on administration in connection with the maintenance work – inviting participation and managing crises around damage to the site by the construction activities next door, the rampant growth of weeds or damage from pests.

STEP needs still more volunteers and creative ideas are needed to increase membership and partnership involvement with STEP activities.

Recognition

STEP is concerned to maintain its good reputation with our major stakeholders such as our conservation management network of partners, the Chief Minister, the ACT Government and the people concerned with constructing the Arboretum, the Board of the Arboretum.

We hope to become known and respected through our STEP activities. Andy (our treasurer) and Janet Russell invited STEP to the donor organisation for their Australian Open Garden event in Aranda. Through this event, STEP received its first media coverage in the Canberra Times' feature article on Saturday 2 October. The article introduced Andy Russell as the treasurer for STEP and went on to say that STEP is "a community group working to create a regional botanic garden and field station for biodiversity research." The article outlined information about the Russell garden's sustainability features and highlighting the 250 native species that it show cased.

The STEP members on the welcome table met 440 visitors at the welcome table and served more than 100 morning and afternoon teas. STEP received a substantial donation of \$1200 from the proceeds of this event.

STEP activities received good media coverage at the Bredbo Biodiversity and Farming Festival with a photo in several local newspapers of the STEP children's table. K2C coordinator, Lauren Van Dyke later rang to thank us for managing the children's activities table at the Festival.

STEP scored a photo of the members of the STEP table at the ANBG 40th Anniversary Dinner in the Canberra City news. And STEP members at the dinner were also delighted to read about Dr Hanna Jaireth and her reflections on ANBG visitor experience during tours of ANBG. Her photo and an article about her work at the ANBG were featured in the booklet published by ANBG and provided to each table at the celebration dinner.

The award of substantial funding to STEP by ACT Government through the Environment Grant Program and the more modest but still much appreciated funding from the Molonglo Catchment Group, were wonderful examples of recognition for STEP and its mission as an organisation.

STEP made presentations to a number of different groups including the post graduate students in the Landscaping Design Course at the University of Canberra, the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens and the Australian Native Plants Society.

The Australian Native Plants Society made a donation of \$2000.00 to STEP and has promised help with STEP Projects.

At the March Festival of the Forests, STEP hosted a spectacular event which attracted 70 community visitors. The event completed the STEP tree planting program. The last 5 species of eucalypt were planted on the STEP block. The STEP talk in the Speakers Tent also attracted a large crowd.

Governance and reporting

STEP aims to conduct its business in a transparent way and in compliance with the relevant legislation and codes of conduct governing all our activities. Our constitution, business plan, insurance policy and other organisational records are displayed on our website. The president, secretary and treasurer have provided written reports of the main activities to each STEP committee meeting. Our accounts are audited each year by an external auditor and on a pro bono basis. The grant funding that STEP has received will be placed into an interest bearing deposit and the expenditure of the funding will be acquitted in accordance with the requirements.

Governance and reporting

A STEP representative attended a session with the National Arboretum Project to discuss health and safety management issues on site in 2010. It is mandatory for STEP members who attend working parties to sign on the attendance sheet and wear their orange safety jackets. Care must be taken to protect members from unsafe or uneven ground and to use tools safely. Molonglo Catchment Group also donated the cost of the senior first aid course for a member of the STEP committee to obtain this training.

The STEP Committee approves all decisions so as to control expenditure on STEP activities. Decisions for postage and printing of newsletters are made on the basis of an email setting the details of the expenditure and accompanied by an invoice in the case of the printing.

Develop resources

STEP Committee members have continued to develop STEP's assets especially, the financial resources in this last year.

Successful fund raising activities included: increased membership fees from \$10.00 per family to \$20.00 per family; A STEP Raffle – which broke even; donations from member organisations – ANPS \$2000.00; Molonglo Catchment Group Funding Program - \$450.00 for specific items; Environment Grant Funding Program - \$16,058 for specific activities and items; and the Russell Open Garden Event - \$1200. Another application for a project valued at \$15000 for Dahl Foundation fund is pending. In the coming year, more work will be needed to develop creative involvement of the community and students in STEP activities both theoretical and a practical nature. with STEP's projects.

Development of STEP assets

STEP has very few assets. There are two STEP banners, a wheel barrow and some weed packs. The latter were donated by the National Arboretum. The records of the Association are held at the homes of the office bearers. STEP meetings are held at the Conservation Council Board Room and the National Arboretum site shed.

Indigenous involvement

STEP plans to link with the ANBG Aboriginal Plant use in SE Australia website materials in its brochure for landscaping with local plants. We have opened discussions with Friends of the Grassland and Kosciusko to Coast to develop a concept plan for this activity. Unfortunately there is not much to report at this stage. Creative and practical support is needed to further this area of the STEP mission.

Arboretum opening 2013

The STEP project is on track to be part of the grand opening of the National Arboretum in March 2013.



Photo by Jean Geue 2004. Block 34 National Arboretum. Harvesting Themeda a scythe.



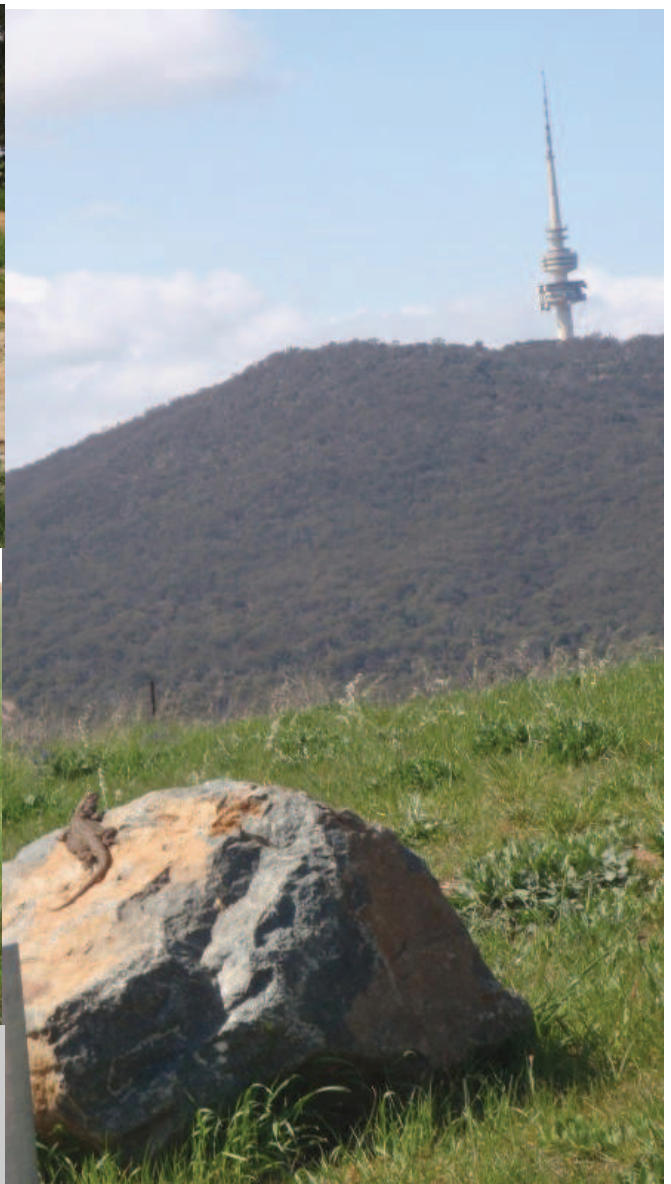
Andy Russell, the STEP Treasurer at the STEP tent during the Bredbo Farming and biodiversity Festival.

New publication:

The World of Tidbinbilla

Edited by Wendy Rainbird, Jennifer Widdowson and Valerie Brown.

Highly recommended Visit www.sactcg.org.au



STEP Membership fees are now due.

Thanks to all those who have paid their STEP membership.

If you haven't paid yet, please cut this form out and sent it to the STEP membership officer at PO Box 987 Civic Square 2608.

STEP members are important for us to continue with our work.

STEP Membership Form

Please tick appropriate box

Incorporated organisations - \$100

Non-profit organisations - \$50

Individual and family memberships - \$20

Date.....

Your details:

Name.....

Address:

City

State.....Postcode.....

Phone ah b.....

E-mail.....

Payment of \$..... is enclosed. Make cheques payable to STEP Inc. Donations are also welcome.

Payment may be made directly to BSB 082-967



STEP Inc
PO Box 987
Civic Square ACT 2608