

# ***STEP NEWSLETTER MARCH 2021***



## **From the President**

Greetings and welcome to 2021. We all are looking forward with hope to a better year with fewer restrictions and fewer anxieties. We began the year in a spirit of happiness as we gathered for our yearly lunch. There were 36 of us able to attend and enjoy the sumptuous fare and great company. At this event, we awarded Andy Russell a well-deserved Life Membership.

Having signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the Arboretum, and with a new Strategic Plan to implement we have many things to occupy us. We have had a meeting with NAC administration to discuss our partnership and how to implement some specific goals from the Strategic Plan. We are also trialling a system of shared decision making for volunteers, with Go To people being identified to assist with the maintenance and development of the many things which go towards maintaining our mission and vision.

Drainage control continues to be problematic with heavy rain early in February creating significant damage to paths and plantings. We are working with NAC staff to remedy these problems.

New signage giving directions to the various interest places of Forest 20 is in the process of being designed.

If you have spare time on a Thursday, we will welcome your presence to see “how does [our] garden grow”. You are also welcome to join us for morning tea at 10am.

May the year ahead bring you health and happiness.

Judy Smith

(President STEP)

## **Life Membership Awarded to Andy Russell**

At the annual STEP luncheon , 17 January 2021, Andy Russell was awarded Life Membership.

Judy Smith made the following speech to acknowledge Andy’s achievements.

Once upon a time in the dim dark past, when STEP was just an idea, Andy Russell was there. Thanks to Margie Bourke who unearthed a precious ancient text (Minutes of Meetings dating from 2002) which gives evidence of Andy’s continuous involvement. Such archaeological evidence is rare, and it has allowed us to see the growth and evolution of this rare species, *A russellii*.

The evidence indicates key events beginning in December 2002 when *A russellii* was part of a group visiting possible locations for STEP. Next was June 2003 when he was made Secretary of the STEP Interim Committee. In November 2004, at STEP's Inaugural AGM, he was re-appointed Secretary.

Always adaptable, our little *A russellii* was appointed Treasurer in September 2006, and stoically held that position until 2015. Further evidence of his ability to adapt and adopt emerging technologies as society grew and changed, he took on Publicity Officer, Membership Secretary, Editor of STEP Newsletter (circulated electronically and stored in Dropbox and on the STEP website) and producer of his crowning achievement, the monthly sheet of photos "Of Interest at Forest 20", a highly valuable way to promote visitors to STEP.

*A russellii* is truly a living treasure. He advocates for us in the wider community and had gained us many corporate sponsors. His persuasive manner has bent many businesspeople to our cause.

When I joined STEP in 2013 (and I only know this date because of Andy's diligence in record keeping) I was set to work with Andy as my mentor down in the gravelly little patch near the *Eryngiums*. He was so friendly and forgiving of my lack of knowledge. I continue to be so impressed by what he knows about trees, plants, bugs and birds.

Over the years, this tough indomitable little species *A russellii* has been extremely generous in his support of STEP. He is truly a wonderful person and it is with much gratitude from us all that we are awarding him Life Membership of STEP.

The citation is shown below.

**Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park  
members are pleased to award**

**Life Membership**

to

**Andy Russell**

in recognition of his outstanding contribution to STEP through promotion of individual and corporate memberships, production of the STEP newsletter and the monthly "Of interest at Forest 20" photo-sheet, and support and advocacy on STEP's behalf since its inception.

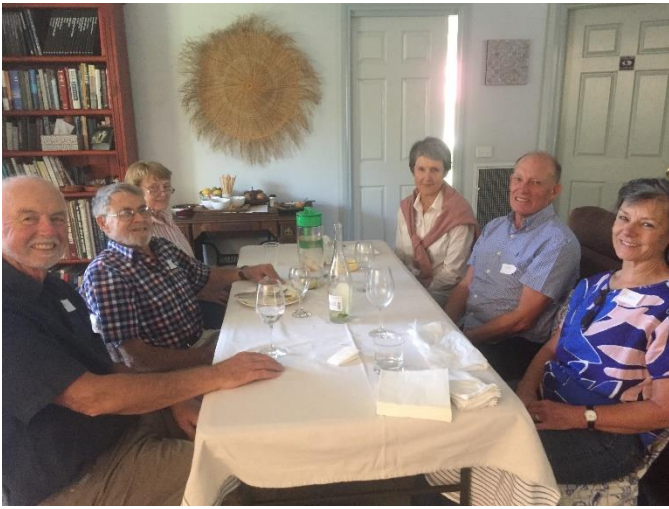
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Judy Smith (President)     David Shorthouse (Vice-President)

17 January 2021



## Annual Lunch Get-together

17 January was STEP's annual lunch date. Photos below show us all having a wonderful time – great food and great company. *Bottom right photo, Just Smith and Andy Russell with his life membership certificate.*



*the lunch photos are by Judy Smith and picture of Judy and Andy is by Lainie Shorthouse*



## Alice Hathorn and the Weston Pocket Park

Some time ago I was contacted by Alice Hathorn as she had propagated some *Lepidiums*, a threatened peppergrass understorey plant, and was wondering if we would be interested in some for Forest 20. During conversation, I learnt a lot about her and her project to rehabilitate a “pocket park” between Fowles Street and Withers Place in Weston. With considerable research behind her and a passion for native plants, she was successful in gaining a government grant to restore this area. The residents who live adjacent to the park have embraced this project also and native grasses, forbs, and shrubs flourish in what was previously a weedy, sterile patch along a bike path. It is a park well worth a visit.



*Above, A view of the Fowles Street Woodland Park, right Information sign for the park.  
Text and photos Judy Smith*

## Storm damage at STEP entrance

It was late Tuesday afternoon on 2nd February that I parked my car on the bottom car park level and looked around with increasing sense of apprehension as I saw remains of debris and swirling water marks on the ground leading to the STEP footpath.

It was the recently finished “New Entrance” that copped the most damage from two areas.

Firstly, sheets of water seemed to have flowed over the dirt slope, down through the grass with nothing to stop it or slow it down, into a recently planted and mulched area, taking with it gravel, mulch, soil and a few recently planted tubestock. Next, there was the river running unhindered beside and over the footpath, creating a mini gorge and again sweeping all the recently laid gravel path and mulch before it.



I can only imagine the frustration felt by the wonderful STEPPERS who created and worked so hard to complete the entrance so it was safe, welcoming and interesting for visitors, but knowing the determination of those workers I'm sure they will have repaired and replaced so much that you wouldn't know what had happened.



*Damage is shown in three photos clockwise and above left, Peter & Elliot from NAC making improvements.*

*Text and photos by Georgie Till*

## The Marvel of STEP

<p>A garden is a treasure A place for so much pleasure But STEP is so much more than this We have trees and shrubs Some birds and grubs - The place just oozes bliss.</p> <p>We have spots for contemplation Many rocks for decoration With eucalypts across the site in bands We've been planting to direction Understorey in each Section Only plants of the Southern Tablelands.</p> <p>Our volunteers are plenty (some times there're up to twenty) And morning tea just makes the morning go We are weeding, planting, mowing Great conversations flowing The time is never really slow.</p> <p>The Clearing is for meetings And for talks and general greetings The Wetlands are where Jennie's frogs call home If you need to have a rest The Kurrajong rocks are just the best For freshening up before another roam.</p> <p>The Nook 's a special spot Six she-oaks we have got Jane's Wattle Walk will be a focal point Our new entry's taking shape In time it will be great And t'will really help to make the joint.</p> <p>If not for David's skill His wisdom and his will This place would not be here at all It's he that we must thank For STEP's vision and its swank And for the ecosystem we adore.</p> <p>The one lovingly called Jude Is not just any dude She is the smart leader of our place Whether meeting up with NAC Or talking to our pack It's always done with so much skill and grace.</p> <p>Terry's keen on planting seed Max is always spraying weed Mike's mowing has proved to be a gem Jens' problems are the water From broken pipes that really aughta</p>	<p>Three Jenny(ies) we have got - that is an awful lot - But none of them's a little fairy Wren The real ones often come You can see them having fun Their blue flashes in our forest glen.</p> <p>Andy prints a photo sheet Each month of what is neat While Digby toils away in Section G Wal is working on the edge Planting grasses – and a sedge? In time we'll see what it will be.</p> <p>STEP's had many many workers And never any shirkers Altho' some have now dropped out of view But Margie's ever at it Her zucchini cake's a magnet For weeks it feeds a very hungry crew.</p> <p>John and Di and Greg and Lou Help make up the weekly few That toil away regardless of the heat Same with Robyn and our Ray Who rock up every day Without whom we'd give up in defeat.</p> <p>Mardi's chooks often get a treat With scarab grubs they love to eat We dig them up at her request. Heather and Georgie also beg When do we get to taste an egg? - but perhaps a drumstick would be best.</p> <p>When we need to move a rock Or lay down gravel in a block The Mikes and Brian are who we always call. They very happily pitch in With a smile and a big grin We drive them hard till they hit the "wall".</p> <p>Twelve years it now has been Since the first plant was ever seen Put in to represent this region The time has really flown And how the trees have grown! Grasses, shrubs and forbs are now legion.</p> <p>If we need a cross-country runner Sue's the one who is a stunner At winning Masters races everywhere. She could take messages to Scott With no signs of getting hot</p>
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<p>Have never had a spade or pick go through them.</p> <p>There is one always in our mind Though his trips have now declined Its Richard who's been with us many years A tuneful song he will render Of Wales and all things tender It's just the Welsh than brings us all to tears.</p> <p>Ross's eye is on our money Lainie's manner is ever sunny Elizabeth is as charming as can be The Ikins at the top Are also there to stop Errant bikers riding through the place with glee.</p>	<p>And much faster than our local hare.</p> <p>Andy knows our native bees That flit amongst our many trees Insect life is a new dimension But when people see the wort Or damage hares have wrought It is then you re3ally feel the tension</p> <p>Our STEPpers are sublime And STEP is looking rather fine But the regional garden is not yet fully done With skill and nimble hands Our plot of Southern Tablelands Will be the Territory's attraction No 1</p>
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Written by Bill Handke

## You deserve a mention Bill

Let's introduce the poet,  
It's Bill, of course you know it.  
H's a stalwart of the STEPpers and the like, If you spy the She-oak Nook,  
Go close and have a look, it's Bill's work along with Terry, Jens and Mike.

Paths and rocks are placed by Bill,  
All up and down the hill,

Carefully crafted,  
But don't get drafted,  
To whackerpack the fill.

*From Lainie Shorthouse*



## Volunteer Week

17-24 May is Volunteer Week and thus it is timely to consider how we can attract mor volunteers to STEP. If you know anyone (especially younger than our current demographic) who may be interested in volunteering with us , please direct them to one of our committee members for more information or orientation.

## STEP acknowledges the support of the following Corporate Members



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FlagCentral.com.au E-mail [sales@flagcentral.com.au](mailto:sales@flagcentral.com.au) Phone 1300 788 891 Suppliers of promotional banners and flags of Burleigh Heads, Queensland. Flag Central donated the flag at STEP



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## Wild Pollinator Count



**Wild Pollinator dates for 2021 are as follows**

**Autumn 11-18 April**

**Spring 14-21 November**

**For further information visit [wildpollinatorcount.com](http://wildpollinatorcount.com)**



## Pollinators

The National wild pollinator count started in 2014 to raise awareness of the importance of pollinators. Information is collected twice a year and is shared with the Atlas of Living Australia. STEP contributes to this National wild pollinator count.

As plants can't move around in search of a mate to reproduce, they need pollinators to transfer the male sex cells (pollen) to the female reproductive parts of flowers. This pollination leads to fertilisation which assists plants in developing seeds and fruit. Over 75% of the world's flowering plants rely on insect pollinators to reproduce. Butterflies, beetles, wasps, bees, flies and ants can all be pollinators. At STEP there are many pollinators, but one group that is often overlooked are the flies. Flies are only second in importance to bees for pollination and are primary pollinators for some species especially where climatic conditions cause reduced bee activity.

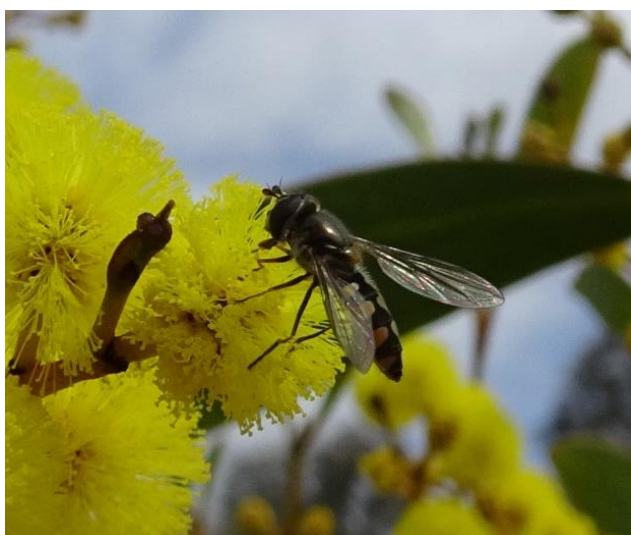
If you watch any group of plants that are in flower at STEP you will soon see a fly visiting the area. There are hoverflies that can easily be mistaken for bees. These, however, can be distinguished from bees by observing their eyes. Hoverflies have large, rounded eyes (as do most flies) and they have intricately patterned stripes. Beeflies also disguise themselves to look like bees, but their striped bodies are pale in colour and they have white tips to their wings. If a eucalypt is in flower, then bristle flies are frequently attracted to them. These are large black flies with large bristles around their tail. Another spectacular fly that visits the grassland area is the greenbottle, also known as a blowfly. These flies are large and glitter with iridescent green colours. Even the annoying bushflies also do their part in pollination. Photos below left, Green Fly *Calliphoridae* sp. right, Bristle fly *Rutilla* sp.



Below left, Hoverfly *Simosyrphus grandicornis*



Below right, Bee fly *Bombyliidae* sp.



## Acacia Horned Tree Hopper - *Sextius virescens*

Horned tree hoppers, (also known as Acacia tree hoppers) have recently appeared at STEP on the newly planted Blackwoods (*Acacia melanoxylon*). They are small green insects with small brown horns and belong to the cicadellids which are related to cicadas. The hoppers mainly remain quite still or move slowly but jump if touched. This family has been in existence for about 200my and there are more species in Australia than in any other land area but only 57 species have been described.

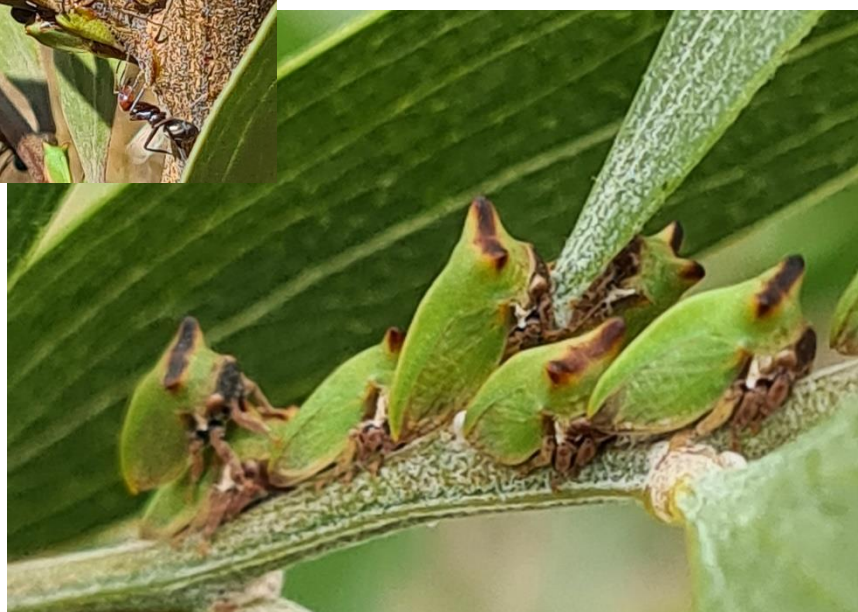
The hoppers are typically found on young acacia trees where they suck out the plant sap using 2 needle like stylets. The plant sap contains water and sugar and any excess to the hopper's requirements is excreted as honeydew which attracts ants.

The hoppers lay eggs in the plant tissue which hatch to pale yellow-green larvae that lie flat on the acacia stems to help with their camouflage. Many other insect species including wasps, sawflies, ants and bees parasitise the eggs so the hoppers only ever appear in low numbers and do not become serious pests.

*Below left, Iridomyrmex purpurea* Meat ants feed on honeydew exuded by the hoppers *Below right a closer photo of the hoppers.*



Two pages, text and photos by Jennie Widdowson.



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