

STEP NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2019



Acacia pycnantha Golden Wattle, National Floral Emblem

Message from the President

Greetings to all. I hope you have survived our chilly Winter and are, like us all at Forest 20, looking forward to Spring and the excitement it brings.

Some items which did not meet the deadline of the May newsletter and which are in this edition are the Reconciliation Week event and opening of Stage 2 of the Bush Tucker Garden. The following day saw a visit from Transport Canberra and City Services staff to acknowledge the significance of reconciliation. Following this ceremony, STEP volunteers took small groups on guided walks through Forest 20.

During Winter we had many visitors. CIT students came and worked with Jens measuring and recording tree data. Two teachers from St Gregory's Primary School in Queanbeyan came to see our planting of bush tucker species for a project at their school, some members of the Molonglo Catchment group came to see what we do. Parks and Conservation staff planted grasses in the scraped areas across the fence (with some of the seed sourced from STEP) and staff from Cool Country Natives came for an in-service morning. All of these visitors help to re-affirm the educational and ecosystem recovery purpose of STEP.

Our visit to Mt Annan Botanic Garden and Seed Bank, organised by Marg Bourke, was most enjoyable and informative.

We are currently engaged in planting more Acacias – see item by Jane Cottee. In addition, we held a Workshop for small regional botanic gardens (31 August), with delegates coming from Wellington, Shoalhaven Heads, Bowral and Goulburn. We shared a meal on the Friday night which was an excellent icebreaker and on Saturday we had a very productive day sharing successes and working together on problems.

Best wishes to you all.

Judy Smith (President STEP)

Power of the Pen

In the May Newsletter, Max Bourke recounted his trip with Marg up through central NSW. Mike and I have travelled the same route many times but have always been in a hurry to get to a destination or in a hurry to get home. Inspired by his account, on our last return journey from Queensland we stopped off at the sandstone caves in the Pilliga Scrub which Max had described – truly wondrous. We stayed overnight in Coonabarabran before heading north west to Baradine the next day. The visitor centre there was as amazing as Max said, but our real enjoyment came from the walk at Dandry Gorge, viewing the sculptures along the way.

Two of these stood out. The first was a study of two kinds of axes which I thought of as “different strokes for different folks”. The white polished stone axe head recalls the timber industry which once flourished in the Pilliga, and the black polished stone hand axe recalls the traditional owners and their enduring connection to this place. Of particular interest to me was the sculpture of the story of the land carved on two sides of a sandstone block. The Warrumbungle Mountains are featured at the base in the picture. This work was created by noted artist Badger Bates, a Barkandji man from Wilcannia. We have seen one of his works in the Sculpture Garden west of Broken Hill

These powerful creations were wonderful to see. Thankyou Max for your article; it was a great source of encouragement for us to break our journey and linger awhile.



Sculpture by Badger Bates

Photos and text by Judy Smith



Two kinds of axes

News from Forest 20

Although its winter and very dry, we have not been any less active at Forest 20! In fact, we have been busy executing or planning a number of activities. Important over the last three months has been welcoming a variety of visitors using Forest 20 as a venue for a pre-planned event or perhaps using our plantings to enhance their own organised activities. These activities underline the fact that Forest 20 and the southern tablelands regional botanic garden has reached an important milestone of being a useful venue for value-adding to activities by other organisations. STEP will continue to promote Forest 20 to other organisations and visitors.

Picture, Visitors from Transport Canberra and City Services celebrate Reconciliation Week by forming two meeting lines to greet each other.

Article by David Shorthouse, photo by Judy Smith



Bush Tucker garden

Although we reported in our June newsletter on the opening of the Bush Tucker garden on 30 May I thought it important that we record, listen to and reflect on the words of welcome from Scott Saddler (Senior Director, National Arboretum Canberra) at these opening events, as they are very relevant to us at our working bees that support and continue to develop the southern tablelands regional botanic garden.

“U in nar di Scott Saddler. New ri gi lung Wiradjuri gib beer

(My name is Scott Saddler, proud Wiradjuri Man)

Today we stand on Ngunnawal country, on their ancestral domain, in footsteps millennia old. Country is a word for all our values, places, resources, stories and cultural obligations that we have cherished for more than 60,000 years.

I acknowledge the Ngunnawal mob, the traditional custodians whose cultures and customs continue to nurture and enrich this land since men and women awoke from the great dream. We honour the presence of these ancestors whose deep connection resides in the essence of this land and whose irrepressible spirituality flows through this sacred soil we are meeting on today.”

During his remarks Scott also acknowledged the work of STEP volunteers for the strong partnership and commitment to regional botanic garden and the Bush Tucker garden.

Article by David Shorthouse, photo by Andy Russell



In late July STEPpers installed the corten sign for the Bush Tucker garden. The sign was provided by the Arboretum and complements those we have installed at The Clearing and She-oak Nook.



Forest 20 as a location for student learning.

In early June we welcomed a class from the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) who were learning about measuring trees. About 20 students arrived with their teacher, Vanessa Hagon, and Jen Svensson showed them several ways to measure the height of a eucalyptus tree. He demonstrated methods from 'stepping back and estimating', 'imagining felling the tree and measuring the distance on the ground' to a very sophisticated high-tech method employing 'laser telemetry'. The variation of the results from the three measurements was instructive to the students, as was the difficulty of working out the actual top of the tree (several stems, front or back leaves, wind movement).

We were not able to enter the results and compare them with growth of trees over the past 10 years (due to the almost inevitable technological problems of computers just when you want them) but the students returned to CIT to compute their results.

STEP hopes that CIT will continue to see Forest 20 as a useful venue for field studies that support their educational programs.

!!!! Late news, CIT students will indeed be at Forest 20 again, this time to use our plantings for Plant Identification as part of a Conservation and Land Management course!!!!

Cool Country Natives staff pay visit Forest 20 for their staff development programme

In early August STEPpers welcomed four staff from Cool Country Natives located at 5A Beltana Road, from Pialligo. Many STEPpers will know about this excellent nursery, and it was a pleasure to show our visitors around Forest 20, as part of their staff development programme. Animated discussion ensued about many practical issues we have encountered over the years including those plants that were growing successfully (or less so), their suitability for landscaping in gardens, propagation opportunities, and future intentions.

STEP hopes to continue links with Cool Country Natives, and indeed develop them further by making our plantings available for seed collecting, taking cuttings and promoting Forest 20 to plant buyers at the nursery.

Acacia Project

The Acacia species hold a special place in the Australian flora. Not only for their sheer diversity and number of species (approximately 1000 in Australia), but also for their iconic “green and gold” colour tones.

The first of September is Wattle Day, and STEP volunteers, in conjunction with Suzette Searle from the Wattle Day Association, will commence a planting of Acacia species at our Thursday working bee in the week following Wattle Day. The idea is to plant clusters of Acacias, native to the geographic areas that STEP represents, that will be seen from the top carparks and provide colourful photo opportunities for visitors. New species will be planted as they become available, and the plantings will complement the Wattle Walks which already take place as National Arboretum Canberra guided tours.

Right hand photo, David Shorthouse and Suzette Searle (ACT Wattle Week Convener) admire the first flowering of *Acacia pycnantha*.
Photo by Lainie Shorthouse



Trees planted were *Acacia lanigera* Woolly Wattle, *Acacia mearnsii* Late black Wattle, *Acacia implexa* Hickory Wattle, *Acacia pravissima* Oven's Wattle, *Acacia acinacea* Gold-dust Wattle, *Acacia buxifolia* Box-leaf Wattle, *Acacia cultriformis* Knife-leaf Wattle and *Acacia dawsonii* Poverty Wattle.



Many hands make light work planting wattles. Above 3 photos by Andy Russell

Visit to STEP by Tom North and Rosella Hampshire from the Australian National Botanic Gardens on July 4th

Tom (National Seed Bank) and Rosella (horticulturalist, who is working on the new *Pomaderris* plantings at the ANBG) met with Jane Cottee to look at the *Pomaderris* species located at STEP.

One particular species, *Pomaderris pallida* Pale Pomaderris), has been listed as having a vulnerable conservation status in NSW and also by Commonwealth legislation.

At Forest 20 we have healthy planting of these, and they were much admired when in full flower last spring. Rosella is trialling hedging *Pomaderris* spp. at the ANBG and she was impressed to see how we have used them as an edging plant. There is scope for promoting these as alternatives to more mundane exotic hedging plants that are currently being used in urban landscapes.

The seed of *Pomaderris pallida* is hard to collect, according to Tom, so we will keep an eye out during fruiting time this summer.



Text by Jane Cottee, photo by Andy Russell

Welcome to the following new members who have joined in 2019

J & D Davison-Mowle, D Gascoine, J Maples, J & B Gilleland, The Wattle Day Association, G Till, R Wallis, B & J Hamilton, D & R Swanson and Y De Britt.



New members, Diana and John Davison-Mowle, plant grasses with Wal Kelman along the maintenance track.

“Pitfalls, Problems and Progress of Community-run Botanic Gardens”

As part of our celebration of 10 years planting at Forest 20, the STEP Committee considered a proposal from Max Bourke to link with other regional botanic gardens run by volunteer groups such as ours. The proposal was adopted and preparations followed, invitations sent out, and catering carefully organised so that over the weekend of 30-31 August STEP and four other like-minded groups discussed the topics of *‘Pitfalls, Problems and Progress of Community-run Botanic Gardens’*.

The four community groups attending came from the Southern Highlands Botanic Garden, the Burrendong Botanic Garden and Arboretum, the Shoalhaven Heads Native Botanic Garden and the Goulburn Wetlands. On the Friday evening about 25 STEPers and visitors assembled at Judy and Mike Smith’s house for an informal meal that allowed us to get to know one another. We quickly found many common interests and experiences that laid a n excellent foundaiton for the next day.



STEP members and workshop participants at the Friday night dinner hosted by Judy and Mike Smith. Photo Mike Smith

Then on Saturday we met at the Arboretum's Terrace Room, and under the disciplined and good humoured guidance of Bill Handke, we shared our experiences on issues such as: recruitment, enrichment and support of volunteers, induction practices, keeping volunteers, site management, funding, and signage.



Bill Hanke guiding the workshop discussions. Photo by Andy Russell

Lunch under the shelter of our new shed followed a walk through Forest 20, which was at its spring-time best with wattles flowering and much else demonstrating the variety of southern tablelands flora.



David talks to workshop participants at Forest 20. Photo Andy Russell.



Lunch at the STEP shed. Photo Judy Smith

A record of the workshops discussions is available from STEP. A very big thank you to all STEPpers who made this occasion so successful, and one that might be well worthwhile repeating at another place and future year.

STEP acknowledges the support of the following Corporate Members



Specialist business and personal taxation advisors of Deakin ACT. Phone 026232 4588 Web www.dfkeveralls.com



Tom's Superfruits Store Belconnen Markets, Belconnen ACT. Great quality food at low prices with outstanding customer service. Phone 02 6253 4162



Morgans in Alliance with CIMB, Stockbrokers, Wealth Management and Corporate Advisers of Deakin ACT Phone 02 6232 4999 www.morgans.com.au



Equipment Repairers of Mudgee, Gunnedah & Rutherford in Hunter Valley NSW, Leinster & Karratha WA Phone Mudgee 02 6372 3257 Web www.dblr.com.au



FlagCentral.com.au E-mail 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



Hawker Place Physio & Pilates. Expect excellence in service when it comes to physiotherapy assessment, diagnosis and treatment. Phone 02 6255 2033
www.hawkerplacephysio.com.au

STEP Newsletters are produced quarterly in March, June, September and December and are edited by Andy Russell.

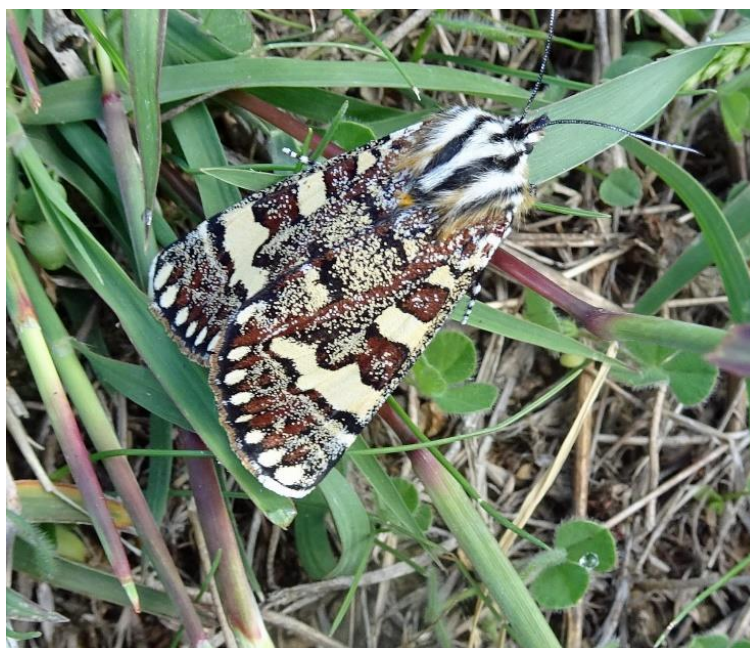
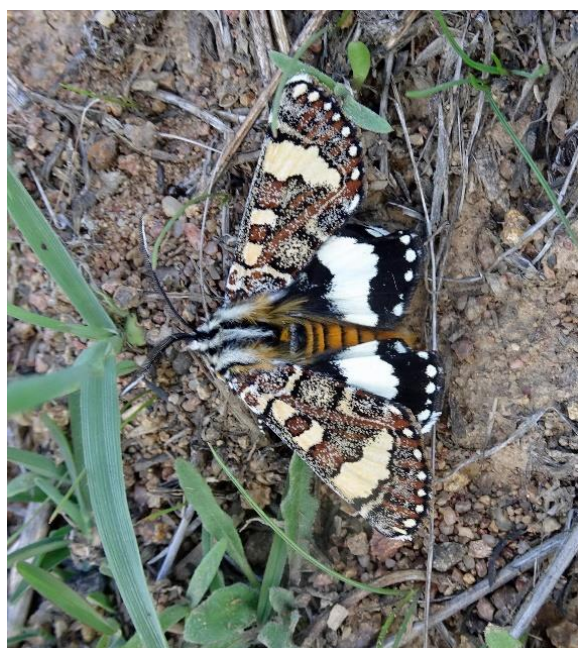
Contact details for STEP are by post, STEP President , PO Box 440, Jamison Centre ACT 2614.
For newsletter or membership matters email contact is membership@step.asn.au

For further information on STEP please visit the STEP website at www.step.asn.au This includes membership information and the membership form.

Have you seen this caterpillar?

At STEP recently there have been large numbers of caterpillars of the Pasture day moth. The larva (caterpillar) grows to up to 60mm long with a dark greenish brown body decorated with reddish orange and yellow markings and 2 yellow spots near its posterior. It is also covered with prominent bristles.

The adult moth has cream and brown markings. They fly low over pastureland in April and May. There were large numbers of the moths in the grassed area between STEP and the Arboretum overflow carpark. They are a common moth that occurs throughout eastern Australia from Tasmania to Queensland.



The moths lay their eggs in pastureland in the autumn, often after rain. The caterpillars hatch and feed mainly on broad leaved weeds such as capeweed, mallow, sorrel, plantain and clover. They can also feed on erodium (native heron's bill and Early Nancy). They are sometimes seen as a minor agricultural pest as they are known to feed on canola crops.

When the caterpillars are fully-grown, they dig a burrow in the soil to pupate, emerging as the moth several months later. They do not form a chrysalis but use the burrow to protect them.

The caterpillars can become a hazard if they hatch in large numbers on the edge of airport runways. Predatory birds will be attracted by the caterpillars and land on the runway to feed on them which can cause problems for aircraft if the birds are sucked into the aircraft engines.

