

Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) Inc. 28th Biennial Conference 2015 Canberra

Many APS members and friends converged on Canberra in November for the Biennial Conference and the pre and post-conference tours. The theme of the Conference, as befitted its location, was 'Bush Capital – Garden City'. The Canberra APS Group hosted the event, which was held at the Australian Institute of Sport, and made the most of the opportunity to showcase the region's native plants and vegetation. For those of us coming from quite different parts of Australia this was a novel treat indeed.

As one of SA's two regional delegates to ANPSA Council (the other is our Vice-President Rod Belchamber), I also attended the ANPSA Council Mt on Sunday November 15. Delegates from all States were present and matters of national relevance were discussed including updating the list of native species we distribute to the floristry industry (to combat misconceptions like Proteas being Australian natives), how to encourage plant nurseries not to sell and promote species (both native and non-native) likely to become environmental weeds, how best to communicate with the State APS Groups via the website and other media and numerous other matters. A new Council was elected with Ben Walcott as the incoming President and another notable event was the 'final' stepping down of Margaret Lee from the Executive after many years of dedicated service.

The rest of the week consisted of the Biennial Conference, organised so that we attended talks and presentations in the morning and fieldtrips in the afternoon, except on the last day when that order was reversed. This worked well although as the weather warmed up during the week some of the fieldtrips became rather hard work in the afternoon heat. Nevertheless, the sites were all extremely interesting and a pleasure to visit.

Morning presentation included talks on the original plan for Canberra and how's it's changed and evolved over the years, the role and work of the National Botanic Garden, the flora of Black Mountain, fire ecology in the Warrumbungle Ranges, native orchid ecology, alpine plants, the status of grassy ecosystems and many other fascinating topics.

Fieldtrip locations included the Pillan and Walcott gardens (both private gardens belonging to Canberra APS members), the Queanbeyan Nature Reserve, the Australian National Botanic Gardens, the National Arboretum including the Southern Tablelands Ecosystem Park, the National Bonsai Garden (featuring a collection of native species especially augmented for our visit), the National Rock Garden (very much at an embryonic stage) and the Kowen Travelling Stock Reserve and associated grasslands. In several cases there were introductory presentations in the mornings about the areas we were going to visit.

There was also a meeting of Study Groups after dinner one evening which gave members the opportunity to meet face to face with fellow members from all over the country. This meeting resulted in some friendly rivalry as to which group had the most members and the most popular plants. Naturally, the Eremophila Study Group won hands down as Eremophilas are clearly the most interesting, diverse and beautiful of Australia's plants (no bias here!).

By the end of the week we were all replete with information and experiences and rather regretfully set off to either return home or go on one of the post-conference tours. Grateful congratulations are, of course, due to the Canberra APS Group for putting on such an enjoyable conference with

such a broad range of topics and excursion sites. The opportunity to visit new and/or different habitats is always exciting as well as the chance to meet old, and make new, friends.

The next Biennial Conference will be held in Tasmania in early 2018 so if you've never been to one before, or even if you've been to many, start planning now to share a wonderful experience.



The South Australian contingent at the ANPSA Conference Canberra 2015