

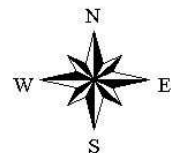
HISTORY OF THE JUSTICE ROBERT HOPE PARK and the Watson Woodlands Working Group

The history of the Watson Community Association (WCA) and its activities goes back to 1989. The Watson Woodlands Working Group is comprised of WCA members. There is a coordinator who sets times for working bees; and liaises with ACT Government agencies, which provide insurance for the group, assistance in kind, and provides grants as appropriate.

Watson Woodlands



0 70 140 210 280 350 420 490 560 Meters





Martin Grace

Coordinator of the Watson Woodlands Working Group 2001 to 2008
You will be remembered

- The WCA prepared its first National Landcare Program grant application in 1993. This does not appear to have been officially submitted. The document which I have in my possession is undated and clearly a handwritten draft. External funding sought was for the sum of \$7400. The purpose of the grant application was to protect and manage native grassland, and to increase community awareness, knowledge and appreciation of native grassland communities.
- The Watson Community Association was formally incorporated on November 17 1995.
- Liberal Planning Minister Humphries defers development of Watson Woodlands 'for the foreseeable future' in September 1995.
- 'Walk for Watson Woodlands' Picnic Rally April 2000 triggered by the announcement of funding for housing development in 2001-02 ACT Budget.
- The Gilles Report on the *Ecological Value of the Watson Woodlands* is published June 2000.
- 'Keep the Bush in the Bush Capital' Rally March 2001. Over 200 people hear leading national conservationist Phillip Toyne speak on the value of the Watson Woodlands.



Rally March 2001

- ALP declares support for protecting Watson Woodlands and an appropriate buffer zone May 2001.
- Humphries Liberal Government forced by Greens, ALP and Independents to review Watson Woodlands housing development proposal June 2001.
- Justice Robert Hope Park (Blocks 2 and 3, Section 75, Watson), comprising about 5ha of land, was named in September 3 2001, using Disallowable Instrument DI2001-275. A commemoration ceremony was held on Sept 13 2001 at the southern end of the Stirling Avenue reserve in Watson.
- Commencement of on-ground work was recorded on September 1 2002. Martin Grace and John Briggs signed on.
- The first volunteers working bee was held on September 29 2002. This attracted 36 adults and four children. Jean Gerre has provided photographs of this event.
- There apparently was a grant application issued in 2001/02 for funding of \$2934 to prepare a brochure and issue planning studies using consultants.
- A second grant application in 2003/2004 for external funding of \$4356 was primarily expended on on-ground work on the reserve and to finalise the draft Management Plan for North Watson Woodlands. The Site Assessment and Agreed Works Plan was finalized in November 2006. This grant was formally acquitted on January 30 2007.

- The Justice Robert Hope Park was expanded on August 2 2005 to include all of Section 72 Watson (approximately 18ha). The original Disallowable Instrument used to name and gazette the park, DI2001-275, was revoked, and replaced by DI2005-170. An open day to commemorate the Park, held on November 13 2005, was attended by June Hope and 101 participants signed on.



**Expanded Justice Robert Hope Park
Commemoration November 13 2005**

- A third grant application was submitted in 2006/07 for external funding of \$8370. The budgeted work program for this grant has been primarily used to fence the gazetted boundary of the Park, for seed collection, plant propagation, planting of eucalypts, wattles and forbs, suppression of herbaceous weeds, and preparation for a native grass rejuvenation project (including purchase of additional fencing materials and *Themeda* – mixed grass hay). We intend to acquit this grant after June 30 2008. A revised budget and work plan was amended and approved on May 21 2008 to reflect the grass rejuvenation project, which is a very recent initiative of the working group.

AIMS OF THE WATSON WOODLANDS WORKING GROUP

Justice Robert Hope Park is a remnant Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland, bounded by Stirling Avenue Reserve, Antill Street and Negus Crescent in the North Canberra suburb of Watson. The Watson Woodlands Working Group

undertakes a number of activities in the Park including removal of non-native plant species, collecting seeds of local native plants, raising seedlings, re-vegetation using tube stock and flora and fauna monitoring. Activities and progress carried out by the group are published in the quarterly newsletter of the Watson Community Association, the *Watson*. The WCA has published a brochure for the Watson Woodland 'A Rare Patch', and issued two significant documents to support its longer term work program and strategy. Three Parkcare grants have been successfully applied for since 2000/2001, with total external funding of some \$15,660 allocated. We intend to expend the last of our grant monies by the end of financial year 2008.

Working bees involving massed volunteers are seasonal-dependent and have traditionally not been held on a monthly or regular basis. Planting invariably occurs spring to early summer, progresses to late summer watering, summer weeding, autumn watering, and finally ends with winter preparation.



**Majura Primary School Grade 3 students
Watering and mulching tree seedlings October 12 2007**

WORKING BEES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2007-2008

Date	Group	Hours	Number of volunteers
	Recorded volunteer hours		
July 19 2007	Conservation Volunteers Australia	23.00	17
Aug 12 2007	Watson Woodlands Working Group	25.25	9
Oct 12 2007	Majura Primary School (Year 3 students)	96.25	40 + 6 adults
Oct 20 2007	Watson Woodlands Working Group	5.75	2
Nov 19 2007	Watson Woodlands Working Group	22.5	9
Mar 16 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	13.25	7
Mar 23 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	3.00	2
May 9-10 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	2.5	1
May 14 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	2.5	1
May 16 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	0.5	1
May 18 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	1.5	1
May 24-26 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	7.0	1
May 28-30 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	11.0	1
June 1-2 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	4.0	1
June 6-7 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	5.0	1
June 8-9 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	3.5	1
June 10 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	1.0	1
June 12 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	1.5	1
June 13 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	3.5	1
June 14 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	5.5	1
June 15 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	3.0	1
June 16 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	2.0	1
June 17 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	1.0	1
June 21 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	4.0	1
June 24 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	2.0	1
June 26 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	4.0	1
June 27 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	5.0	1
June 29 2008	Watson Woodlands Working Group	1.5	1
Total hours		260.5	
July 1 2007 – June 30 2008	Estimate of unrecorded volunteer activity		
Scything weeds	Watson Woodlands Working Group	14.00	1
Watering	Watson Woodlands Working Group	24.00	1 or 2

Tree and scrub planting	Watson Woodlands Working Group	12.00	1
Auguring for trees	Watson Woodlands Working Group	30.00	1
Preparation for tree planting	Watson Woodlands Working Group	20.00	1
Wire cutting	Watson Woodlands Working Group	15.00	1
Total hours		115.0	

Richard Larson
Chair, Watson Community Association
Coordinator, Watson Woodlands Working Group
Last updated June 26 2008

A decade out of the woods

CHRONICLE 10 JULY 2012

Rare habitat celebrated

By Mark Sawa

THE PROTECTION of a nationally endangered ecology in Canberra has been celebrated 10 years after it was successfully saved the area from development.

At the end of the 1990s a determined local community conducted a sustained campaign to prevent an 18 hectare section of Yellow Box Red Gum Grassy Woodlands from being turned into a housing estate.

In July 2002 then Minister for Planning and Environment, Simon Corbell ensured the woodland was gazetted as park.

Since then residents have poured countless volunteer hours into restoring the ecosystem after it was used for farming.

Julie Smith from the Watson Community Association was one who spearheaded the campaign to protect the woodland a decade ago.

"Twenty years ago, when the Watson Community Association first began campaigning on the woodlands issue, the rarity of this Australian native woodland was not well recognised," Ms Smith said.

"The critical turning point for the woodlands was our public rally held in March 2001, at which ... conservationist Phillip Toyne spoke. Phillip observed then that our campaign was not just about a local dispute, but about a 20 hectare remnant of the most endangered forest ecosystem in the south east of Australia."

The area is a feeding and breeding ground for many vulnerable native birds, including the endangered Regent Honeyeater.

Less than one per cent of the original extent of this native woodland ecology is set aside in reserves in Australia and only five per cent remains in existence.

To mark the 10th anniversary Ms Smith organised a writing competition for primary school students in Watson. This encouraged them to put into words why they thought the woodlands were important to the community.

The winner was year 3 student Oliver Martin who wrote a poem with the help of his big sister.

"I hope that our young prizewinners also know, from the story of the woodlands, that when they are older, they too will have a chance to make a difference on things that are important to them," Ms Smith said.

Our Watson Woodlands (winning poem)

By Oliver Martin (Year 3 - with help from his 10 year old sister, Grace)

*The Watson Woodlands is a place for the community,
A great place to be,
Walk the dog with my friend,
Take the path round the bend.
Dad says 'You feel good knowing it's there...
Where we live is connected to nature'
Mum says 'Good things are worth fighting for'
Isn't it good our neighbours worked hard to make
sure it became a park.
Bark on the trees, barking dogs.
See the colourful birds, nature when we walk and
cycle to school.
No cars,
A nicer view on our way to the Saturday markets.
Imagine if there were only houses all around?
If there was no Watson Woodlands?
It would be so much more crowded.*



Watson Woodlands poem winners Jemika Gilbert(9), Oliver Martin (8) and Grace Martin(10) with Chair of Watson Community Association. The poem competition was created to celebrate the woodland's 10 year anniversary.

Picture: Elesa Lee