

# President's report

*Judy West*

*Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research  
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Amongst the most severe current threats to global biodiversity are human-induced processes such as land use change and invasive species. Fragmentation of habitat, being one of the consequences of these processes, is often recognised as the number one threat to biodiversity and as such has attracted considerable research effort. The field of restoration ecology is rapidly developing principles and practices to address these major issues.

The strength of ANPC is in the effective transfer and exchange of skills linking the outcomes of scientific research to on-ground practitioners. This has recently been recognised by the NSW Environmental Trust through additional support to enable ANPC to run the Translocation of Threatened Plants

Workshop in three regional areas of NSW this year. The first of these will be held in Queanbeyan on Wednesday 18th May followed by Newcastle in July and Coffs Harbour in August. See page 32 of this issue for additional information.

Staff of the ANPC office are also currently developing programs for another three workshops to be held in regional NSW during the remainder of 2005, largely funded by the NSW Environmental Trust. These workshops on rehabilitation of disturbed native vegetation are scheduled for Armidale, Wagga Wagga and Dubbo. An additional grass identification workshop will be offered in Dubbo. Details of these workshops can be found on the ANPC website - <http://www.anbg.gov.au/anpc/course1.html>

The next issue of APC will be a SPECIAL EDITION on:

## CRYPTOGAM CONSERVATION

Articles and short notes about the conservation of cryptogams are invited.

Cryptogams are mosses, liverworts, hornworts, lichens, fungi and algae. They are often overlooked, but are worthy of conservation in their own right and because of their important roles in ecosystem functioning (such as in soil crusts).

The special issue will cover various approaches to the conservation of cryptogams, from a focus on individual species or communities to investigations on how habitat can best be managed for cryptogams. Articles on any groups of cryptogams are welcome. We are also interested in articles that deal with the inter-relationships between cryptogams and other plants and animals that are themselves endangered (such as the interaction between mycorrhizal fungi and orchids, or truffles as food for endangered mammals).

**Please contact Tom May ([tom.may@rbg.vic.gov.au](mailto:tom.may@rbg.vic.gov.au), 03 9252 2319) if you wish to contribute.**

See title page section on 'Contributing to *Australasian Plant Conservation*' for information on preparation and submission of articles.



## Have you renewed your membership for 2005?

Please check the flysheet if you are uncertain. The year you have paid up to appears on the flysheet above your address. If you wish to renew, please complete a membership form (download from [www.anbg.gov.au/anpc/membfm05.pdf](http://www.anbg.gov.au/anpc/membfm05.pdf)) and return to the ANPC National Office.

Only those who have renewed for 2005 will receive the next issue of APC.

Plans for the National Conference on **Plant Conservation: The Challenges of Change** are progressing well. This year's conference will be held in Adelaide from 26th September to 1st October, hosted jointly with the South Australian Department for Environment and Heritage and the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide. Four sub-themes have been recognised to tease out the challenges we are facing in plant conservation into the future –

1. Extreme policy changes
2. Urban ecology
3. Using revegetation to achieve ecological outcomes
4. Indigenous interests in conservation

Abstracts for papers are due June 17 – see [www.plevin.com.au/ANPC2005](http://www.plevin.com.au/ANPC2005)

See the back cover of this issue for further information.

The conference will include two days of scientific program, a field day and two days of workshops, several of which arose from suggestions made in the evaluation forms submitted by participants in last year's South East Queensland workshops.

I would like to remind you that subscriptions to ANPC for 2005 are now overdue. Several members, both renewing and new, have taken up our new 3-year membership offer (for the price of 2.5 years membership). However, many members have not yet renewed for 2005. We urge you to renew your membership if you have not yet done so – members are vital to the organisation's future.

The recent announcement that the Australian Government is proposing to discontinue its support for environmental and community groups is very disappointing. The Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations (GVEHO) have played a significant role in supporting the infrastructure of many NGOs carrying out diverse activities and functions in the community. It has always seemed to represent an enlightened program with the government essentially funding conservation and environment groups to keep an eye on them and to lobby about conservation issues.

I hope this special edition of APC on "Pathogens and Plant Conservation" is a stimulus to many of you and results in increased recognition of the role of pathogens in the ecosystem. The ANPC greatly appreciates the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust's sponsorship towards this issue of *Australasian Plant Conservation*.

## The biology of *Phytophthora cinnamomi*

Brett Summerell, Ratiya Pongpisutta and Christopher Howard

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*Phytophthora* root rot is a significant cause of death of trees and shrubs and as a result is a serious threat to biodiversity in many parts of Australia. The disease is common wherever there is enough water to allow the pathogen to be active, even for a small period of time, and consequently the disease is generally restricted to moister parts of the country and unlikely to occur in arid and semi-arid regions. *Phytophthora cinnamomi* is the most common and important species of *Phytophthora* causing root rot. While other species of *Phytophthora* may cause disease, it is generally less severe.

### The pathogen

Traditionally the Stramenopile genus *Phytophthora* was considered a fungus, and indeed it shares many characteristics with fungi. However, it is not a true fungus and is classified in the kingdom Chromista with

many organisms like the Protists and some algae. There are many species of *Phytophthora* and differentiating different species is extremely difficult but very important as they can vary significantly in their aggressiveness as pathogens. *Phytophthora cinnamomi* occurs worldwide, affecting an enormous variety of different plant species and was first described in 1922 from isolations from *Cinnamomum burmanii* trees in south-east Asia. Not long after that the pathogen was first associated with disease in horticultural crops in Australia and in 1948 the pathogen was associated with disease symptoms in native vegetation in Australia.

All of the characteristic features of *P. cinnamomi* are microscopic, so you won't be able to see it. In addition its entire life cycle takes place in the soil, making diagnosis of this organism extremely difficult. We have to recover it from roots or the soil in order to observe it. On agar media it will grow to produce a culture that you



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