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THIS EDITION: CANBERRA, THE BUSH CAPITAL of AUSTRALIA

E R

to W O N D E R

WANDER to WONDER by MARTINA NICOLLS

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The world will never starve for wonder, but only for want of wonder. G.K. Chesterson



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editor's note

Welcome to the 7th edition of WANDER to WONDER

This ninth edition of Wander to Wonder focuses on the bush capital of Australia – Canberra – as part of the United Nations 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

Canberra is a small capital city, similar in size to Washington D.C. in America. It is the home of Parliament House, and has developed gradually from a city of public servants to a diverse range of residents and organisations, both public and private. But above all, it is the bush, the landscape, that defines it.

Until next edition, with another theme,

Martina

MARTINA NICOLLS







the indigenous owners

The area where Canberra is located belongs predominantly to the Ngunnawal people, but specific areas continue to belong, or had belonged, to the Ngarigo, Wandandian, Walgulu, Gandagara, and Wiradjuri peoples. Archaeological evidence places indigenous peoples in the region for the past 21,000-25,000 years.

The iconic Aboriginal Tent Embassy, outide Old Parliament House in Canberra, is listed on Canberra's tourist map. A symbol at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy is a sacred fire which represents peace, justice, and sovereignty, much like an eternal flame. International and domestic visitors are invited to place gum leaves on the ceremonial fire as a symbol of protection during their stay in Australia.

The Aboriginal Tent Embassy is also the longest continuous protest site in Australia. Four Aboriginal men established the Australian Tent Embassy in January 1972 as a simple but significant protest. Michael Anderson, Billie Craigie, Tony Koorie, and Bertie Williams, launched the embassy in response to Prime Minister Billy McMahon's refusal to grant land rights to Aboriginal peoples. The government has, over the years, attempted to remove the tents (due to their "illegal occupation" and later deeming them to be an "eyesore").

In 1992, the Aboriginal Tent Embassy was established as a permanent occupation. It has remained there ever since. In 1995, the Aboriginal Tent Embassy was entered in the Register of the National Estate, Australia's official listing of natural and cultural heritage places. However, it is not recognized as an official Embassy. The Aboriginal Tent Embassy has become the ultimate "sit-in" or Occupy Movement. The significance of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy is that it has a 40 year history, continuously for the past 20 years. This means it can be regarded as the longest running political demonstration in the world.



the state of the nation

Canberra lies within the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) – a landlocked area of Australia. In fact, of the six states (Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, and Western Australia) and two territories (Northern Territory and the ACT), the ACT is the only landlocked area of Australia.

Captain Arthur Phillip, from Britain, took formal possession of the colony of New South Wales on 26 January 1788 and became its first Governor. Before 1901 each state and territory of Australia had its own government and state flag. The federal dream was to join all of the six states and the one territory of Australia to form one nation – "One people, one flag, one destiny." On 1 January 1901 the dream was realized and the first Australian government, under the leadership of Edmund Barton, was sworn in. This was the formal proclamation of a federated Australia by the Governor-General Lord Hopetoun. The Australian Capital Territory was established and Canberra became the nation's capital.



the australian capital



the australian capital



the city and the lake

Canberra is separated into north Canberra and south Canberra by an artifical lake, Lake Burley Griffin.

The Lake Burley Griffin site was selected to hold the main water supply to the city based on the river system of the Cotter River, Molonglo River, and the Queanbeyan River, and a weir. The lake's dam and weir were named after district surveyor Robert Scrivener.

In 1911 urban planning ideas for the city of Canberra were sought through an international design competition. Walter Burley Griffin, with his wife Marion Lucy Mahony, was the architect team from Chicago that won the competition (from 137 entrants). Part of the design competition was to provide an 'ornamental' water feature. The Griffin team submitted an idea for three formal basins at the centre with large naturalistic lakes at each end. The higher level, East Lake, is where the rivers first enter the city and where they were to be held back by a weir that would carry road and rail traffic across the flood plains. The three basins, East Basin, Central Basin, and West Basin, as well as West Lake would be contained by a lower weir. Walter Burley Griffin was appointed in 1913 as Federal Capital Director of Design and Construction to organize the establishment of the city of Canberra and the construction of the lake. During the post-war period there was little activity, and it wasn't until after 1921 that progress was made. But the city design commenced first, and the lake had to wait.

In 1958 the newly-formed National Capital Development Commission began discussing the lake's construction. The idea of East Lake was abandoned because the weir designed to carry a railroad across the lake was no longer required. Today there is no railroad across or around the lake. The shape of the lake was revised to conform to the natural contours of the land, and scale models were built to test water flows, and islands were introduced to minimize the need to remove excess earth from the lake bed. Work commenced on the Scrivener Dam, Kings Avenue Bridge, and Commonwealth Bridge, as well as landscaping around the lake. It was designed to ensure lake activities, such as sailing, rowing, boating, swimming, fishing, picnics, parks, and lakeside running, cycling and pedestrian tracks. The lake was officially finished and launched on 17 October 1964, even though detractors said that there would never be enough water to fill it.

The lake was to be named after Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies, but the convention for naming places required that the person had to be deceased. Hence Lake Griffin was suggested. It was then decided to include Walter's middle name, Burley.

the lake



the lake





the lake



the lake



the bush capital

Canberra is often referred to as The Bush Capital for its parks, gardens, and natural reserves. The Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) conducted a study of the proportion and types of land cover in 16 Australian cities. It listed Canberra as Australia's most tree friendly city – the city with the highest urban tree coverage in Australia, with 56%. Due to the abundance of nature, there is also an abundance of native birds and animals. Commonly seen animals and birds include kangaroos, possums, cockatoos, rosellas, pelicans, and black swans.



Common brushtail possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*, literally meaning furry tailed little foxes) are nocturnal, semi-arboreal leaf-eating marsupials native to Australia and New Zealand. They are the largest of all native possums and are silver-grey, brown, black, and a golden colour, with large pointed ears and extremely bushy tails that can wrap around branches. Their feet have sharp claws with a strong grip. They can grow to 32-58 centimetres (12-23 inches) with their tail length at about 24-40 cm (9-16 inches) and can weigh between one and 4.5 kilograms (2-10 pounds). They make quite a few sounds, such as clicks, grunts, hisses, coughs, and screeches.

Common brushtail possums particularly like eucalyptus (gum) leaves, but will also eat fruit and vegetables. The mammals are marsupials because they have front pouches in which their young are raised. They nest in tree hollows, caves, and the roofs of houses, and breed in spring (September to November) and autumn (March to May). The gestation period is about 18 days and they give birth to a single young. The young are called joeys, the same as young kangaroos.



Sulphur-crested cockatoos (*Cacatua galerita*) are large (about 44-55 cm; 17-22 inches) with white-feathers, grey feet, black beaks, and yellow crests. Males and females look similar. They are native to Australia (in the south, southeast, east, and north) and New Guinea, and are not migratory. They can live up to 70 years in captivity, but only 20-40 in the wild. Their breeding season is from August to January in the south of Australia and from May to September in the north. They like tree hollows to nest, where the female lays 2-3 eggs which take about 27 days to hatch. Both parents keep the eggs warm and raise the nestlings until they can fly (usually 9-12 weeks).

Sulphur-crested cockatoos are social, comical, and love to dance to music. In the wild, they are often seen in groups and can be quite raucous. To avoid predators, while the group is on the ground feeding, one is usually in a tree keeping a look-out.

Crimson rosellas (*Platycercus elegans*) are parrots native to eastern and south-eastern Australia, mainly in forests and gardens. They are medium-sized at 36 centimetres (14 inches) with a long tail. They have brilliant red breasts, with bright blue wings and blue cheeks. Males are a little larger than females, but the young can be different colours (often greenish) until they gain their adult red and blue feathers. They are not migratory birds, and like to travel in pairs. When they mate, they stay with the same partner for

life. Nesting sites are hollow tree trunks, limbs, and stumps, which the female selects. The breeding season lasts from September to February and varies depending on the rainfall. They lay 3-8 shiny, white eggs and have an average incubation period of 20 days. Only the female keeps the eggs warm. For the first six days, only the mother feeds the nestlings. After this time, both parents feed them. The young become independent in February, and reach maturity at 16 months of age. They eat fruit, seeds, nectar, berries, and nuts from a wide variety of plants. Often they will also eat insects, including termites, aphids, beetles, weevils, caterpillars, and moths.



The Australian Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*) is the most common pelican in the world (with about 400,000 of them worldwide). Pelicans are large water birds with long beaks and large throats. They have pale white feathers with black dorsal feathers. They can grow to 1.6-1.9 metres (5-6 feet) with a wingspan of 2.5 metres (8 feet). They are also a heavy bird at 8 kilograms (18 pounds), but they can fly.



Kangaroos are macropods, which means that they have big feet. Kangaroos have long legs built for speed in wide-open spaces. They can hop very fast, at a average speed of 32-38 kilometers per hour (20-25 miles per hour), but they can also reach speeds up to 70 kilometers per hour (about 50 miles per hour) over short distances. They can also jump over tree logs, low hedges and obstacles up to three meters high.

Kangaroos and wallabies are the only large mammals that can hop. Their strong tails are used for two main purposes: to assist with hopping and to help keep their balance when they are standing. Their tails are often called their fifth leg because they help to keep balance. Adult kangaroos weigh up to 90 kilograms (200 pounds) and grow up to 2.1 meters (8 feet) tall.



the kangaroo



the namadji

'Namadgi' is the Aboriginal word for the mountains south-west of Canberra, called the Namadji National Park. The area in the ACT was declared a park in 1984 and has an area of 106,095 hectares, making up 46% of the Australian Capital Territory.

The north-west section of the park lies just to the west of Canberra's suburbs. To the south-west, the park joins Kosciuzko National Park and the Bimberi and Scabby Ranges Nature Reserves, with the Brindabella National Park on the north-western border. The Bimberi Wilderness covers the south-western section of Namadgi National Park.

The Namadgi Visitor Centre is near the village of Tharwa, where there are displays, a theatre production, and a shop where visitors can obtain maps, brochures and books about the park. Ranger guided walks are also conducted in the park from time to time.

For activities, visitors can go camping, cycling, mountain-biking, bush-walking, rock climbing, abseiling, skiing, toboganning, picnicking, sightseeing, fishing, and view the indigenous rock art. There are also designated horse riding tracks.

Birrigai Rock Shelter at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve is north of Namadgi, where there are at least 390 known Aboriginal sites, including quarry sites where stone was gathered for tool making, campsites on the high peaks, and rock art sites.

Pastoralists settled in the valleys at the southern end of the park in the 1830s. They found it difficult due to the remoteness of the area and its extreme weather. Fences, yards, huts and homesteads can still be seen of the early European settlement.

The mountains of Namadgi National Park have been used to protect and store water for the region since 1917 when the Cotter Dam was completed. Timber extraction began in the Brindabellas in the 1930s. From 1928 until 1968 arboreta were planted throughout the ACT including six in the Namadgi section of the Cotter Catchment. Only one of these, Bendora arboretum, survived the 2003 bushfires.

Recreational skiing commenced with the formation of the Canberra Alpine Club in 1934. The club's chalet — Franklin Chalet — was built in 1938 but was destroyed during the 2003 bushfires. Today a shelter near the chalet site commemorates the club and chalet.

Namadgi entered the space-age in the 1960s-1980s with tracking stations operating at Honeysuckle Creek and in the Orroral Valley. Honeysuckle Creek was set up initially to support America's Apollo Moon mission and later participated in the Skylab missions and was briefly part of the Deep Space Network. Honeysuckle was the first place on earth to receive the images of Neil Armstrong as he became the first man to walk on the moon in 1969. Orroral Station tracked earth-orbiting satellites and also played a role in the final Apollo Moon missions, the Apollo-Soyuz project, and the early space shuttle missions. Namadgi has a diverse range of habitats and wildlife. Habitat includes open grasslands, low open woodland areas in the high mountains, tall wet forests, fern gullies, wetlands, moss bogs, sub-alpine peaks, and heaths.

Namadgi provides habitat for a wide range of native animals. At least 35 species of mammals, 14 species or subspecies of frog, over 41 species of reptiles, four native fish species and over 130 species of birds have been recorded in Namadgi National Park. There are 13 threatened animal species including the smoky mouse, river blackfish *Gadopsis marmoratus*, and northern corroboree frog *Pseudophryne pengilleyi*.

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the faunal emblem

While black and white swans feature on the Australian Capital Territory flag, the official emblem of the ACT is the Gang-gang Cockatoo.

The Gang-gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*) was adopted as the faunal emblem for the ACT on 27 February 1997. Canberra is the only city in Australia where these distinctive ash-grey cockatoos live. During winter small flocks are common in gardens around the city where they feed on pine cones, firethorn, and hawthorn berries. In summer most of the flocks return to the mountain forests to breed in tree hollows. Their call is a distinctive sound resembling the sound of a squeaking gate. The Ganggang Cockatoo is also the logo of the ACT Parks and Conservation Service.





the floral emblem

The official floral emblem of the ACT is the Royal Bluebell.

On 26 May 1982 it was announced that the floral emblem for the ACT would be the Royal Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia gloriosa*). The Royal Bluebell grows only in the high mountain (sub-alpine) areas of the Australian Capital Territory, south eastern New South Wales, and eastern Victoria.

It is a frost-hardy ground cover (a perennial herb), flowering in Canberra from late October until February. The violet blue flowers are up to 2-3 cm in diameter with two white stigmas. It does best in light soil enriched by organic material, in a sunny or semi-shaded situation. The soil should be kept moist but not waterlogged.

The flower was named in honour of Georg Goran Wahlenberg (1780-1851), a former Professor of Botany from Uppsala in Sweden.

The Royal Bluebell is protected in the wild and should not be picked or collected.





the parliament house

There are two Parliament Houses in Canberra: Old Parliament House and the new construction. Both are open to visitors.



Federal Parliament was initially in Melbourne until 1927, and moved to Old Parliament House (Provisional Parliament House) in Canberra from 1927 to 1988, pictured above.

Australia's Old Parliament House, on King George Terrace, commenced its construction in 1923 and was officially opened in 1927. It is situated between Parliament House and Lake Burley Griffin. It ceased its duties as Parliament House in 1988 when the current Parliament House was constructed. Today it accommodates the Museum of Australian Democracy.

The building is low-rise, and expansive with white exteriors. John Smith Murdoch, the Commonwealth government architect, designed the building. It was always intended to be temporary, and was therefore designed as such – modest and functional. In the 1920s the Old Parliament House had its own library, post office, hair salon, carpentry workshop, bars, and dining room.

(New) Parliament House, on Capital Hill in Canberra, is a striking building designed by Italian architect Romaldo Giurgola (1920-2016) of Mitchell/Giurgola Architects from New York, after winning a design competition which attracted 329 entries from 29 countries. The House is situated on 80 acres (32 hectares) of land with grassed areas on top of the building. Its design is based on the shape of two boomerangs with an 81 metre

(266 foot) flagpole (the flag is the size of a bus), and is set into a low hill. Construction commenced in 1981 and was completed in 1988. Often called 'the bunker' because it looks like a 'reinforced underground shelter' Giurgola called it a 'nested' building and emphasized that it was not buried, but that every room had daylight. Giurgola moved to Canberra to design the building, and stayed, becoming an Australian citizen in 2000.





the view



the leaves



the bush in the city



the architecture



the fresh food in the park



the bench



the lake



the national carillon



the didgeridoo



the camel rides



the flags

Represented below are the Aboriginal flag, the Australian flag, the Australian Olympic flag, and the flag of the Australian Capital Territory.



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I am an author and humanitarian aid consultant with over 30 years' experience in the management, implementation, and evaluation of international aid development projects, particularly in post-conflict environments and countries with transitional governments, such as Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Darfur, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Pakistan, Iraq, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Georgia, Kosovo, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka, and also Mauritius, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia – and others. I provide technical advice on areas such as peace-building and conflict mitigation, education, poverty reduction, human rights, child labour, data quality and financing models.

But mostly I am a wanderer. Wherever I am and wherever I go, I take photographs and I write. My books include:

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