**PRESIDENTS REPORT FOR THE 2019 AGM, HELD ON NOVEMBER 17TH**.

The past 12 months has been very dry, which in some ways, has made caring for Cooleman Ridge easier. In these dry situations, the exotic weeds do not flourish, and the native plants have more of a chance of survival.

The following is a summary of our activities of the past year.

1. **Management of Invasive Plants.**
2. The monthly meetings have continued, rotating through the 5 different areas on a monthly basis. Most of us use manual removal in these meetings, or cut-and-dab with glyphosate, and one member uses a spray pack with glyphosate. Our average number of members at these Sunday meetings is between 8-10, (which is more than last year), with fewer members attending during the winter months.
3. A smaller group meet on Friday mornings at the Kathner Street entrance, clearing weeds from the fenced area and from around the Kathner St dam. There is a noticeable difference in the vegetation due to their diligence.
4. A few individual members use various methods to remove invasive weeds whenever they can spare the time. This includes spraying for African Lovegrass, Tweedia, Euphorbia and Wild Fennel; dabbing and manual removal of verbascum; and cut-and-dabbing Sweet briar and blackberry.

Linda has been using a metsulphuron dabber on the blackberry and sweet briars to see if this is more effective than glyphosate in stopping re-growth.

St Johns Wort seems to have become particularly invasive this year, and we can no longer leave it up to PCS to control this weed. Control suggestions have been canvassed from other parkcare groups, and a plan has been formulated. It will include some manual removal, cutting flower/seed heads off at the correct time of the year, and spraying with Starane when the plants are flowering.

There was no fire-reduction burns this year due to the poor growing season not producing enough fire-load to be a danger.

Recently the SACTCG provided a demonstration of steam-weeding, using their large machine which is on a trailer. Trials are being conducted on some local farms which will assess the effectiveness of this method of weeding. The trailer and machine will be available for hire to groups after the trial has finished.

1. **Newsletter**

Monthly newsletters are distributed by email, and hard copies are placed in the 4 boxes on the ridge. These newsletters are a valuable source of information about the ridge in particular, but also contain articles of local interest. It is a great way to stay in touch.

1. **Website**

Our webmaster continues to update our website with the newsletters, and with new plant and animal and insect information sent to us from Canberra Nature Map. Recent stunning photographs were obtained from a local walker who had taken photographs of a kestral hovering, and then landing on the ground in an attempt to catch prey.

1. **Parks and Conservation Service**

We continue to work closely with PCS rangers and other staff. We have managed recently to have an Annual Planning Meeting between the Convenor of the Ridge and the our new ranger Anthony Hart. Marty Bajt and Nina Burns also attended the meeting. These meetings are particularly useful in planning the spraying program and working out who will work in which areas. The budget for weed spraying for the Ridge for 2019-2020 is $7,000 for St John’s Wort, $4,000 for African Lovegrass and $2,000 for blackberry. The cost of each days’ spraying is $1,000.

The most important event for this year was the fencing of the Old Dam, which was provided by PCS. The Ridge group has been agitating for this fencing for quite some years, in order to keep cattle out of the dam and allow it to be naturally vegetated. The fencing was erected early in the year, but there has been minimal rain and no water collected in it, so re-vegetation will be slow. But we look forward to seeing new growth of native species, and we may need to create a new site in our weeding-program in order to keep it “clean”. PCS plans to provide some plantings in 2020 to help establish a native environment more quickly.

During the year PCS have held 3 Convenor meetings for all the parkcare group leaders, and have provided an electronic forum for the discussion of common problems.

Shirts, hats, gloves, poisons and tools have also been provided by PCS, and Marty has even offered to sharpen our tools to keep them in good shape and easy to use.

A few of us attended a First Aid Course in April, which was interesting and informative, but none of our group was able to attend the Chemcert courses which were offered. The problem mainly being that the courses are run on a weekday, which is not suitable for our members still in the work-force.

1. **Pamphlets**

We continue to distribute our 2 nature Trail pamphlets via the boxes near Kathner St and above Monkman Place for the northern nature trail, and via the box near the Chapman Primary School Nature Trail.

1. **Monitoring**

Over the past 5 years 2 of our group have performed monitoring in 2 locations on the ridge. One of the locations is near Darrell Place, and the other one is close to the Namatjira entrance. The monitoring is performed in November, and takes at least a morning for each site. Recent results from the combined ACT sites indicate that the load-reducung burns have reduced diversity for a few years after the fires, but the diversity recovers after time.

1. **New plantings**

One of our newer and younger volunteers is participating in an on-line vegetation rehabilitation course. Part of her course involved clearing an area of weeds, and planting. Natasha approached our group and we decided that we would choose a site that had some good native species near Darrell Place. Natasha planted some local shrubs in April, which will hopefully provide habitat for small, woodland birds. Natasha has taken responsibility for looking after this area for at least 1 year.

**Summary**.

The Cooleman Parkcare group has expanded its active membership this year with a small number of new, younger volunteers joining the monthly weeding groups. They have been welcomed most enthusiastically, and have given a boost to the weeding efforts. We appear to be making some inroads in controlling some of the invasive species.

My thanks to the wonderful members of the Committee who cheerfully perform all the tasks necessary for the running of a group. Rob Lundie (Secretary and Newsletter Editor, assisted by Natasha Cole when he was overseas), Rohan Thomas (Treasurer and webmaster), Alan Ford and Doug Tinney, who have filled-in for me when I was away, and Jenny Horsefield and Brigitte Brickwood. And also thanks to all members who assist in reducing the number of invasive weeds on the ridge.

I think we can look forward to another year of successful activities.

Linda Spinaze

10th November,2019