



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter March 2013

Previous Sunday Meeting Group Area North (Chauvel) 17th February

Ten trusty team-members, including one new starter, trudged up to our patch above Chapman in dry but pleasant weather. The eastern area, deliberately burnt earlier in the season, was looking very healthy. Workers therefore concentrated on the westward slope down towards Reet's patch. Exotic weeds abound there - *St John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum*, *Fleabane *Conyza sp.* and **Phalaris aquatica* presently dominate this area. But everywhere under the horrors we found the tendrils and pretty blue flowers of Variable Glycine *G. tabacina*, and plenty of Redleg *Bothriochloa macra* and other native grasses. Also, Sticky Everlasting Daisies *Helichrysum viscosum* have flourished this summer and were seeding.

The group planted out Anna's *Hardenbergia violacea* and the Ryans' Forest Mint *Mentha laxiflora* to combat weed regrowth, spread some hay from local native grasses, and distributed native daisy seeds.

We had a lovely morning tea to reward the troops. Thanks to Tea Laddie Pat for the hot water! Thanks too to the cake bakers!

Verbascum Vamoose !!! Wednesday 13th February

Originally intended for 6 Feb., this activity drew fewer participants to Kathner Street, but a better attendance elsewhere. Ten volunteers turned out for it. As well as *Aaron's Rod *Verbascum thapsus*, the bag included *Sweet Briar *Rosa rubiginosa*, *Prickly Pear Cactus and some feral acacias.

Future programme

This month, we revert to afternoon sessions

Next Meeting – Sunday 17th March Group Area Central (Darrell Place Entry.)

- 1.30 pm – 4 pm
- Plant ID; remove exotic growth, planting.
- Wear long sleeves and trousers, enclosed shoes, hat and gloves.

For the diary

We've agreed to conduct a guided walk on Saturday 20 April as part of the Heritage Festival. More details next issue.

Optus Drill

Parks has issued a license under the Nature Conservation Act to Optus to carry out work in Coleman Ridge. The work involves underground drilling to install a cable from Hertz place to the reservoir directly up the hill from there. They were to commence on Monday 18 February. One of the requirements of the license is to drill underground rather than dig a trench so ground disturbance should be minimal. A number of other conditions are on the license such as washing down vehicles, staying on vehicle tracks, not working in wet weather or high fire danger.

What's around

Cherax destructor

Common Name: Yabby (Yabbie)

(Yabby is an aboriginal word; Macquarie Dictionary gives its origin as Wembawemba *yabij*.)

Kingdom: *Animalia*. **Phylum:** *Arthropoda*. **Class:** *Crustacea*. **Family:** *Parastacidae* (the family of freshwater crayfish found in the southern hemisphere). **Genus:** *Cherax*. (May be a misspelling of the Gk word 'charax', meaning a pointed stake - a thing that scratches.) **Species:** *destructor* (Lat.= destroyer, apparently because yabby burrows damage dam walls and levee banks).

Dead Yabbies in Kathner St Dam Friday 15 Feb Photo – Pat Ryan



A Sorry Day at the Dam

There have long been signs of yabbies in the dam -we'd previously found traps. On this Friday, Parkcarers counted 14 dead yabbies around the edges. We removed one for eventual examination as to cause of death. Frozen, it's now with Martin Lind at Southern ACT Catchment Group. Waterwatcher Pat checked water conditions – nothing untoward. The relevant authorities have been notified.

Commonest of the freshwater crayfish in south-eastern Australia. Abundant in lowland freshwater habitats. Can survive dry conditions for long periods of time (at least several years) by aestivating (lying dormant) in burrows sunk deep into muddy creek and swamp beds. Small to medium in size, smooth-shelled. Usually brownish, but may be almost black, orange-brown, greenish or even blue. They are mainly "detritivores", eating dead or decaying plant material. Also like meat. Breeding: usually from spring to late summer; 200-400 eggs per brood; two or three broods per season. Reproductively mature at a small size. May breed in the first year of life. Females carry fertilised eggs under their tails ("berry").

Source – M. Lintermans & W. Osborne: "*Wet & Wild – A Field Guide to the Freshwater Animals of the Southern Tablelands and High Country of the ACT and NSW*" (Environment ACT 2002)

Are you being counted? *Doug Tinney*

Most of you will be aware of the sign-on sheet Arminel uses to record people's attendance at our monthly meetings. Well, she gives them to me to form the basis of our statistics forwarded to the Park Care Coordinator. Most Park Care groups provide figures to the Coordinator who, I assume, consolidates them to feed into the maw that is the department's annual budgetary submission. If not, I wonder what they do with 'em?

Putting aside the public finance angle, our figures demonstrate a cyclical pattern closely aligned to the seasons (surprise, surprise). Activity as measured in person hours is greatest during the warmer months and tails off in June, July and August. That's not to say intrepid souls are staying indoors to avoid hypothermia, some of us are out there, but not as many as during the rest of the year. Fair enough, I say.

In the last 3 years total person hours recorded per year is of the order of 2000 give or take 10%. By far the largest amount of time (50 to 75 per cent) is spent by members digging up exotic weeds. In recording our activities we use a schedule compiled by the Park Care Coordinator. It refined the old system and slightly extended the activities identified for recording. Hence when we have a surge in numbers such as with our recent bushfire anniversary walk it comes under something like "Environmental Events". Must be clear that those 43 people weren't choppin' thistles and fleabane!

Apart from weed control and environmental events, members should be aware that recording what they do is for the greater good and not a needless bureaucratic impost. How else would I get to see what goes on! If anybody wishes, I can forward them an activity sheet with all the categories set out so whatever you do will be forever noted (provided you tell me). My e-mail is tinneydoug@hotmail.com.