



# COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

## Newsletter January 2005

### Previous Sunday meeting, December 19th

The temperature climbed to 35° at 3.30 pm and winds gusted to 63km/h (34 knots), but by then we had retreated from the flying grit at GAN/Chauvel to the relative shelter of Malcolm's patch. Here he welcomed us to attack his thicket of Prickly Lettuce – though Rohan ranged wider beheading Verbascum – and Susan got to know more of the Ridge than Fencepost Hill where she has taken to spending her Fridays. Our ambition to assess fuel levels above GAN/Chauvel had already been thwarted as we searched fruitlessly for the star picket hammered in months earlier by Angela to mark the central plot. It (and possibly others along the Ridge) appears to have been harvested, making it impossible to proceed without GPS and co-ordinates. Gösta and I returned the following Tuesday with 4 wooden stakes to mark the north, east, south and west rectangles; the centre is now marked by a short metal stake. The stakes do not show above the long grass so it will always be necessary to locate the central one by GPS, and pace 50m by compass to the others. Nuisance. Then we measured fuel levels, which came out *low* in all 5 cases, and sent the data to Angela. ☺

### Future programme

*Provisionally 2005 looks like this, rotating through the three Group Areas (GA) when there is no special programme):*

- Jan 16<sup>th</sup> GAC/Darrell weeding, fuel assessment
- Jan 18<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday, Recovery Walk
- Feb 20<sup>th</sup> Reptile Walk with Meg Doepel
- March 3<sup>rd</sup>, Thursday, evening picnic: weeds, plant ID, star gazing
- March 20<sup>th</sup> GA weeding, fuel assessment, plant ID
- April 17<sup>th</sup> GA weeding, fuel assessment, plant ID
- May 15<sup>th</sup> GA weeding, fuel assessment, plant ID
- June 19<sup>th</sup> GA weeding, fuel assessment, plant ID
- July 17<sup>th</sup> Lichen Walk – Jack Elix
- August 21<sup>st</sup> GA weeding, fuel assessment, plant ID
- Sep 18<sup>th</sup> Brendan Lepski Plant Walk
- Oct 16<sup>th</sup> ? AGM
- Nov 20<sup>th</sup> GA weeding, fuel assessment, plant ID
- Dec 18<sup>th</sup> GA weeding, fuel assessment, plant ID ☺

### Web site

Our web site URL is:

<http://coolemanridge.inventivedingo.com> ☺

### Next Sunday meeting, January 16th

GAC/Darrell for fuel assessment, plant ID and weeding

- 1.30 - 4 pm
- meet at Darrell Place or GAC/Darrell
- bring hat, gloves, weeder, drink, snack, raincoat if it is wet ☺

### December log

- 101204 skinks, Fencepost Hill
- 171204 skinks, Fencepost Hill
- 171204 frogs Kathner St dam
- 311204 frogs Kathner St dam
- 311204 echidna Fencepost Hill ☺

### Lincoln Close

Several of our Group responded to a request from a Chapman resident to attend a meeting called by the Weston Creek Community Council with Emergency Services, Rural Fire and CNP personnel.

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> December at 4.30 pm of all times! In baking sunshine.

The official presenters spoke well, and listened to the concerns of the residents many of whom were clearly still very anxious and demanding action. Long grass was a commonly expressed worry even while ember attack from distant sources was acknowledged as a major threat.

It was generally accepted that in an emergency on the scale of the January 2003 fires official resources could never be adequate and that preemptive collaboration was vital. Suggestions covered whipper-snipping, slashing, grazing behind the houses, relaxed water restrictions so residents could keep their gardens lush, appropriate plantings, buckets, hoses and taps.

Lincoln resident Joe Walker spoke with the authority of his ecological and fire management background to balance some of the alarm expressed. He pointed out that cattle grazing will not necessarily reduce the threat from fires – grass height does not affect the rate of spread of a fire, only its intensity. Any grass-reduction efforts should be concentrated on the strip directly behind the houses.

CNP's Daniel Iglesias, East District manager, spoke passionately of ecological values, and of Cooleman Ridge as a precious community asset.

Gösta announced our January 18<sup>th</sup> Recovery Walk and handed round leaflets detailing it.. ☺

## What's around



18<sup>th</sup> January 2004 – the Kathner St dam was very low, and covered with the fern *Azolla filiculoides* which this Red Bellied Black Snake appeared to traverse with ease. No snake has been reported here since, though one was seen on Fencepost Hill on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2003. The dam was still covered with *Azolla f.* 13<sup>th</sup> February 2004, but two days later it had all vanished. ☼

### Letterboxing: help required

Angela has printed over 1000 flyers for us to distribute to the residents of Chapman, inviting them to come on our Recovery Walk.

Ring Gösta (6288 7009) telling him which streets you prefer to cover, and how many pamphlets you will need. Get in first! The distribution is best done January 8-9-10, early enough for people to plan to come, but not so early that they will forget about it. We want to reach every household, but avoid duplication.

Our presenters are:

Dr Joe Walker, ecologist and fire management expert, local resident

Dr Malcolm Gill, fire ecologist, local resident and Group member

Daniel Iglesias, CNP manager East district.

Malcolm and Joe have walked the proposed route (roughly following the Nature Trail though omitting Coleman Trig) and chosen half a dozen spots to stop, point things out and answer questions

Read the flyer in the next column. ☼

### Briony introduces herself

I have recently been appointed as the Southern ACT Catchment Group Coordinator, taking over from Katie Hollingsworth. I come from a background consisting of cultural heritage, indigenous heritage and anthropological studies, having worked for the Department of the Environment and Heritage, the Department of Veteran's Affairs and Environment ACT.

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31<sup>st</sup> December 2004 – this Echidna was spotted burrowing in the patch where Jenny and Susan were winding up a morning's weeding. We watched it for about 15 minutes, sometimes with its head down and scrabbling at the earth, at other times appearing to gaze up at us. We wondered if it was part of an egg-laying ritual but when it wandered off the hole was empty. Had we upset the routine?

An Echidna was last reported in the area, on Fencepost Hill, 15<sup>th</sup> August 2003. ☼

### Flyer text:

**Recovery Walk 18 Jan 2005** - two years after the firestorm swept through.

Many of us lost our homes, some moved away, while others have chosen to stay in this friendly neighbourhood with its lovely nature reserve for recreation as well as conservation.

The Cooleman Ridge Park Care Group is particularly interested in continuing its efforts to improve the quality of the nature park and in this we have the support of Canberra Nature Park as well as local residents.

On Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2005, from 5pm to 7pm we would like to take you for a walk starting at the Kathner Street entrance to show you some of the features of the park. We will stop at several places to discuss the recovery of the vegetation after the fire, and identify issues of concern regarding future management. We'll be accompanied by several ecologists specialising in bushfires and regeneration including a ranger from Canberra Nature Park.

### Cooleman Ridge Park Care Group

**Enquiries:** President Doug Tinney 6288 8589

**Date:** Tuesday January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005

**Time:** 5 pm – 7 pm

**Meeting place:** at the end of Kathner Street, Chapman Wear hat, sturdy shoes and bring water bottle; raincoat if it is wet.

**RSVP** 14<sup>th</sup> January, **Phone** Angela, 6207 2193 at work ☼