



# COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

## Newsletter March

2008

### Previous Sunday Meeting

#### February 17th

February's meeting, the last of the early morning ventures, was attended by six park carers. Group Area North (GAN/Chauvel) now looks all the better for the many times we have visited it. Rohan exclaimed "there is hardly any more to do here" when seeing how native grasses grow where we removed all those weeds in the past. However, we found large areas of skeleton weed to occupy us and Arminel removed a sackful of St John's Wort. In March we'll be back to meeting in the early afternoon again.

It was great having Tina come along and she worked vigorously in spite of lingering problems from her accident. The quality of the vegetation surprised her, she not having seen the area for ages. ☺

### Future programme

#### Next meeting, Sunday March 16th

- GAC/Darrell for clearing of exotic growth, meet at Darrell Place or GAC/Darrell
- 2.30 to 4 p.m.
- bring hat, gloves, hacker, drink, snack, raincoat if it is wet

1<sup>st</sup> April (Tuesday) – Ridge walk with Sheila and her group. Bring lunch. Ring 6288 7009 for details.

4<sup>th</sup> April (Friday) Sheila and others will join the Fence Post Hill weeders near the Kathner St dam, from 8 a.m.

Sheila is a prominent Sydney bush regenerator, and helped us plant grasses behind Stonehenge many years ago. ☺

### Australian network for Plant Conservation Inc

ANPC 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference (21-24 April, Mulgoa, W. Sydney)

The Australian Network for Plant Conservation is holding the 7th National Conference on the topic *Declining Flora - tackling the threats*. Further details at: <http://www.anpc.asn.au/conferences>. ☺

### Grazing

As noted last month, up to 35 cattle were brought to the Equestrian Trail, in the section near the Old Dam and extending to the southern end on January 24<sup>th</sup> and they were removed on February 28<sup>th</sup>.

In recent weeks there has been a lot of traffic passing Fence Post Hill – both Rangers' and farm vehicles, the latter carrying bales of straw.

There is potential here for the introduction of weeds as cleaning equipment before entering a nature park is an onerous task.

It is sobering to walk round Duffy observing the verges where new footpaths have been laid – the new sections being much more heavily infested with *Eleusine tristachya* (Goose Grass) than the old ones. ☺

### Our Maned Wood Ducks

On 8<sup>th</sup> February there were 4 adult ducks and 5 chicks on Kathner St dam.

A week later there were 2 adults and 4 chicks.

Another week later we watched 2 adults and 3 half-grown chicks processing in the direction of the cavaletti.

Last Friday (29<sup>th</sup>) there was a single adult....

Erika speculates that the wings of the chicks had not yet developed sufficiently for flight.... ☺

### Rabbits

There is evidence of rabbits on Fence Post Hill again, and Gösta saw one on Friday. A large, active, warren was found on south Arawang during Tuesday's vegetation survey and will be reported with GPS coordinates to CNP. ☺

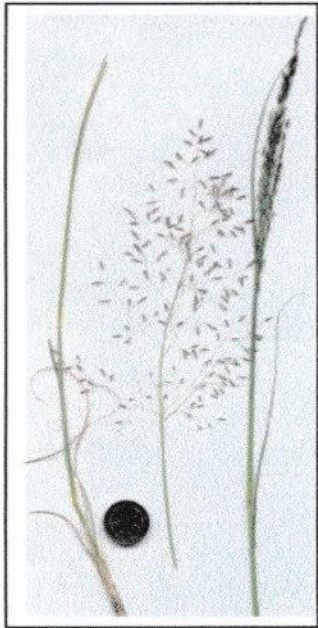
### Grasses

We are becoming aware of more small clumps of *Cymbopogon refractus* (Barbed Wire Grass). The latest find was on the up-hill side of the Nature Trail by the *Eucalyptus polyanthemus-Brachychiton populneus-Indigofera adesmiifolia* group.

Further along the Access Track close to where the path up from Chauvel Circle comes in, there is a spectacular display of *Dichanthium sericeum* (Queensland Blue Grass). Take the time **today** to have a look! ☺

## What's around –

Family POACEAE



*\*Eragrostis curvula* –  
African Lovegrass  
Tufted exotic perennial  
to 1 m  
*eros* Gr: love, *agrostis*  
Gr: grass  
Native of Southern  
Africa  
Declared noxious weed.  
This grass is infesting  
many nature strips in  
Canberra  
**Dispersal:** Seeds that are  
often spread in mud on  
vehicles and animals

*\*Eragrostis cilianensis*  
- Stinkgrass  
Tufted exotic annual  
to 0.6 m  
*eros* Gr: love, *agrostis*  
Gr: grass, first  
collected in Ciliani in  
Northern Italy  
A native of disturbed  
ground in the Old  
World tropics and  
subtropics, now  
widespread as a weedy  
grass



### Notes from FOG

I have gratefully mined Friends of Grasslands newsletter for the following:

*Nassella tenuissima* (Mexican Feather Grass) has been found in the ACT, next to Bendora House. "This grass produces more seed than the related Serrated Tussock and is a slightly taller plant. The seed is similar but has a longer awn – it readily sticks to all surfaces including plastic. .... So don't delay if you see some" –

contact Steve Taylor, A/g Weeds Coordinator, ACT Parks, Conservation & Lands, phone 6207 2278

Michael Beddingfield presents *Chenopodium pumilio* (Small Crumbweed). "..... Being a coloniser of bare or disturbed soil, it helps prepare and improve the soil for succeeding generations. Being unpalatable means that when it dies it adds to the humus layer of the soil. The dead roots also leave tiny channels in the soil, making it easier for the next season's plants to grow root systems. There are a number of native forbs which play the colonising role, such as Blue Heron's Bill (*Erodium cicutarium*), Nodding Saltbush (*Einadia nutans*) and Swamp Dock (*Rumex brownii*) ..... " all of which are flourishing on Cooleman Ridge. ☺

### Skeleton Weed

The introduction in the 1970s by the CSIRO of a rust fungus for the biological control of this weed has saved the wheat industry more than a billion dollars. ☺

### Friends of Tuggeranong Hill and Conder Wetlands Park Care Group

Jenny represented us at the inaugural meeting and reports:

"It was a lovely, inspirational afternoon. FORTY people turned up for the launch of the new Park Care Group and they are all interested to be 'hands on' members. A program is being planned to introduce them to landcare work and I hope to get along to the first meet on Sunday 30 March." ☺

### DRAFT: TOWARDS A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR COOLEMAN RIDGE CANBERRA NATURE PARK(cont) FIRE MANAGEMENT

#### Aims of fire management

There are two main aims. The first is to protect life and property, a statutory responsibility. The other is to maintain the biota and ecological processes.

#### Fuels and fires

The main fuel on the Ridge is grass. How much Grass there is per unit area affects the intensity of the fire and flame length but has little effect on the rate of spread. Once more than about 70% of grassy materials is dead fires can spread. Grasses of many species occur on the Ridge and the way they grow (and die) affects the way fire will behave. The most prolific fuel is produced by *Phalaris aquatica*, an exotic weed (and pasture grass) but substantial quantities of fuels can accumulate from native species also. In general, grasses are most green in spring when many of them flower. In November and December some grasses senesce so the chances of fire spread increase. The extent of growth in the summer and autumn depends on the amounts and distribution of rainfall and the occurrence of drying weather and winds. Frosts may kill grasses and growth is poor during the cold months of the year so there is the possibility of fire spread in dry grass in winter if the weather is suitable.

Litter fuels of dead leaves and twigs are found under woody plants. In mature plantations the fuel quantities are large beneath the Blue Gums particularly. Some woody plants have fuels present as streamers of decorticating bark or as dry fibrous stringybark. The crowns of woody plants can also burn. Burning pieces of bark may detach from their source and fall, still alight, some distance away. Burning debris can be a potent source for the ignition of structures (Ramsay *et al.* 1996).

Note: the whole draft, submitted in 1998, can be read on our web site. ☺