



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter February

2009

Previous Sunday meeting January 18th

This was another very successful early morning start: two new members - Brigitte and Adam - were introduced to Group Area South/Arawang, and Rohan was back from the last of his holidays. Gösta tested his newly-minted crib sheet of local grasses and found it handy.

**Hypericum perforatum* var. *angustifolium*– St. John's Wort – was everywhere to be seen. It is extremely invasive, and poisonous to stock. It regenerates by root-suckering, and as a back-up a single plant can produce up to 30 000 seeds per year. It can be sprayed in summer, autumn and spring, and controlled biologically. ☼

Future programme

February's meeting is the last of the early morning starts till next summer.

Next meeting, Sunday February 15th

- Nature Trail
- **8.00-10.30am**
- meet at the Kathner St entrance or on the Trail
- as usual bring hat, gloves, hacker, drink, snack, raincoat if it is wet.

We will start with a short look at local Wallaby Grasses (*Austrodanthonia spp*), using a botanical key. If possible bring a hand lens.

Gösta will introduce members to the Tree Survey, and data will be collected for near-by trees. ☼

Welcome to new members

Brigitte Brickwood
Adam Meadows
Andy and Victoria Stodulka

We look forward to meeting you on work parties. ☼

Staff changes

Nadia Kuzmanoski has moved to another district. Her replacement is Lara Woolcombe, Acting Senior Ranger, Canberra Nature Park South District, Parks Conservation and Lands, Athllon Depot. 6207 2095, lara.woolcombe@act.gov.au ☼

Review

We are going to review our draft Management Plan, as it is ten years since it was drawn up. A core working group is already identified and an initial meeting will be held on Saturday afternoon, February 14th. We will keep you informed of progress, and call on members for information, comment and feedback as we go. ☼

European wasps

The European Wasp (*Vespula germanica*) is a serious environmental pest as well as a dangerous insect. Nest populations are most numerous between February and May. Jenny Conolly from Parks Conservation and Lands informs us that they have obtained an Agvet permit (valid until April 30th 2012) to allow minor use of an AGVET chemical product for the control of European wasps within the urban and rural environment. ACT residents are listed as 'persons who can use the product' under this permit. Note: it does not apply to NSW residents.

Bayer Advanced Garden Ant and Wasp Dust, containing permethrin, is used in the simple home made-feeders. This dust is carried back to the nest by wasps attracted to the baits (liver). For details on how to make the feeder and use the dust, as well as a copy of the permit and instructions, please contact Arminel (6231 7392). ☼

Nesting boxes

PhD Candidate Kate Grarock has a project studying the impact of Indian Mynas on our native species. She is focusing on 15 Canberra suburbs and adjoining reserves where she has set up nesting boxes and organised people to conduct bird surveys.

Doug has reported wind damage to boxes 10 and 11 on the Ridge. They were completely destroyed by some very strong gusts in the first half of December.

On his walks Pat has noticed 5 undamaged boxes up from the Pelham Pl./Lincoln Pl. area, with one housing Mynas.

Kate reports that the nesting boxes have been very successful and are being used by a range of species, including rosellas, sugar gliders, Australian owllet nightjars, as well as Mynas. ☼

The Census of Vascular Plants of the ACT

This census was updated 12th December 2008, with the addition of Hornworts and Liverworts. Further information is available by clicking on individual plant names, which are directly linked to the Australian Plant Name Index (APNI). It is not immediately clear whether any name changes have been made.

<http://www.anbg.gov.au/cpbr/ACT-census/index.html> ☼

What' around

POACEAE – *poa* Gr. meadow grass. The Grass family (previously Gramineae.)

**Eragrostia curvula*

**Eragrostia curvula*, tall



**Eragrostis curvula*

African Lovegrass

Tufted exotic perennial to 1 m

eros Gr: love, *agrostis* Gr: grass Native of Africa

We first met Ranger Lisa Poulsen from the Athllon Drive Depot, and the tall form of *Eragrostis curvula* on the same Friday morning.

Lisa was out mapping *E. curvula* for the spraying programme, and we were able to guide her to some outbreaks.

We showed her the handsome and vigorous *Eragrostis* plant just discovered on the Kathner St dam wall and she promised to get an identification from their weed expert as soon as possible. That same day she came back to us with a provisional identification of African Lovegrass, to be removed straight away.

By the following Friday that tussock was gone **but we found more** (see photo top right and observe the small tufts scattered round it.)

These were all bagged and removed. A specimen was taken to the Botanical Gardens for confirmation of botanical name, and there was no escape: *E. curvula*.

This form has been causing concern for some time, as a new arrival in the ACT. Those who went on the Weed Identification course at the Stromlo Depot in June 2007 will remember Jenny Conolly telling about it. Our experience points to it now being well and truly established. ☼

Tree survey starting up again

The survey of trees on Cooleman Ridge started in 1997 and during the next few years trees were tagged, identified, photographed, examined, measured and had their data recorded. This was to be repeated at 5-yearly intervals.

The Ridge was divided into 8 areas, and different members took on the responsibility for a particular area. The division turned out to be unbalanced as the number of trees in some of the areas was grossly underestimated.

Then came the disruption of the fire and all but 398 of the records, including many photographs, were lost. Against all odds the data from some areas were retrieved by David from the inferno of Lincoln Close, and returned to Gösta.

A tremendous amount of work was invested in the survey. A sobering example is Area 6 where Naarilla tagged, examined and photographed over 300 trees. These photographs still exist in digital form, and many tags are still legible. However they gradually become embedded in the trunk, and without GPS coordinates the photographs lose meaning. (Wanted: a surefooted sleuth).

It is easy to understand that, with the loss of so much of the documentation, enthusiasm ebbed.

After more than ten years the work has restarted. In a small area near Kathner Street Pauline and Gösta recently examined 28 trees of which 9 saplings were new to the survey, i.e. they had passed the threshold girth of 0.5m. One stringy bark and one red gum had burned down and fire scorching was recorded on most of the old trees. Most of the original aluminium tags in the area had melted in the fire but accurate GPS coordinates made the identification unambiguous. The numerous photos also help with identification.

From the first survey it seemed that *Eucalyptus nortonii* preferred higher positions whereas *Eucalyptus polyanthemus* was found lower down. The latter species more often hosted mistletoe on its branches than did others. With more data a clearer picture of the Ridge should emerge.

If you want to take part in the survey contact Gösta at 6288 7009, gosta@webone.com.au

but be prepared to spend some time on the task. Come along on Sunday 15th if you would like to see what it is all about. ☼