



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter March

2009

Previous Sunday meeting February 15th

Our morning started with a close look at some *Austrodanthonia* (Wallaby Grass) plants near the Kathner Street dam, and we were pleased to have new member Martha join us.

A quick run through the pictorial key of *Grasses of New South Wales* (Wheeler, Jacobs and Norton, University of New England Publishing Unit) gave an idea of how to arrive at the genus, and people were as impressed with the structure of the botanical key as they were with the structure of the *Austrodanthonia* flower.

Examination of the plant later left me vacillating between *A. eriantha* and *A. caespitosa* but leaning towards the latter (according to the Flora of NSW which lists 22 species it is a variable species.) Our Cooleman Ridge plant list names 10 *Austrodanthonia* species.

We briskly moved on to the Tree Survey with Gösta sketching the procedure. While most members then concentrated on weed removal, details of 17 trees near the lower part of the Nature Trail were recorded.

Reet removed 500 *Verbascum thapsus* plants before working with Doug to cut and dab briar roses and other woody exotics that had been bugging us for some time. Then we bagged and removed seeding skeleton weed, St John's Wort and *Verbascum* spikes - 5 bags by knock-off time at 10.30. ☼

Future programme

With the cooler months due, we revert to afternoon Sunday work parties – starting in March.

Next meeting, Sunday 15th March

- 1.30-4 pm
- meet at the Kathner St entrance or GAN/Chauvel for clearing exotic growth and plant ID
- bring hat, gloves, hacker, drink, snack, rain gear. ☼

Birds

“*The State of Australia's Birds 2008*” was launched last month by Birds Australia. ☼

Herbicide accreditation training course

Arminel attended the course and reported:

“Our focus on Cooleman Ridge is weed removal, but sometimes we just can't avoid using weedicide. Of course, we leave the big patches of weeds to Parks and their professional contractors (Mt Arawang above Namatjira Drive, for example). But in our walks and wanderings and in the course of weeding work-parties, we do meet isolated woody weeds, such as briar rose, blackberry, pyracantha, and nasties like the *Euphorbia depauperata* infestation on Cooleman Trig. Adequate control requires the application of suitable plant poison.

To use weedicides in this situation, on public land in Canberra Nature Park, members need to have appropriate accreditation. At present, I know of only David MacKenzie, Doug Tinney and Jenny Horsfield holding and using current certificates. As I understand it, this means they can apply (and supervise the application of) Glyphosate in the course of their Park Care work.

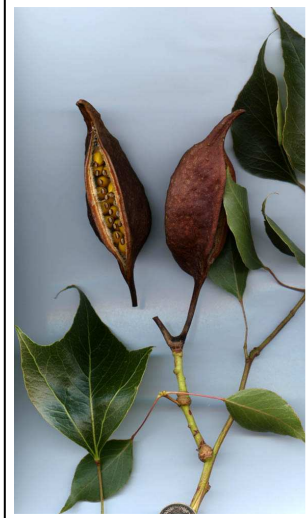
“I had requested training/retraining for volunteers in this aspect of our responsibilities. So, with two other Park Care volunteers, a lot of Parks staff, and a number of other people, I attended a two-day accreditation training course delivered under the auspices of Chemcert Australia Inc in February. If the trainer so decides, and my answers to the test questions were accurate enough, I'll eventually get a certificate myself!

“The course was very comprehensive. It put a great deal of emphasis on Integrated Pest Management – ie, using various control methods of which applying chemicals is only one, and often the choice of last resort. It was made clear that eradication is usually unrealistic - the aim is control. It covered understanding labels and instructions for use, as well as dealing with safety in storage, transport and handling of chemicals. It also covered environmental safety, legislation, risk management, record keeping and application of chemicals in various situations.

“An interesting point made was that over-reliance on the same chemical (or chemicals which act in the same way), or inappropriate application/underdosing, almost invariably result in the development of resistant strains of the weed (or other pest) targeted.

“Bush regeneration was covered only briefly in the course, but is discussed more fully in the manual: *Chemcert Accreditation National Training Course 3rd Ed (June 2007)*. If you wish to borrow or refer to it please contact me on 6231 7392.” ☼

What's around



Family: STERCULIACEAE.
Sterculus Roman god of dung-heaps and privies rf. bad smell of flowers of some species.

Brachychiton populneus - Kurrajong
Native evergreen tree to 20 m

Calyx is tubular, 5-lobed and petal-like, creamy-white and speckled dark red in throat
Petals absent. Follicles on stalks, and containing 8 – 18 seeds. ☼

brachys Gr: short, *chiton* Gr: coat of mail or tunic rf. massed hairs over seeds, *populnea* L. of poplars

ANBG Lunchtime Talks

Thursdays: 12:30 – 1:30 pm February to November
Theatrette. Forthcoming talks are:

12 March: Andy Sheppard: *Insights into Biological Control*

19 March: Greg Whitbread: *An Update on IBIS (Integrated Botanical Information System)*

26 March: Frances Graham: *Bush Foods of the ACT Grasslands.*

Gold coin donation - bring lunch or enjoy a bite at Hudsons after the talk. ☼

ARBORETUM

The Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP) was established in 2002 by some members of Friends of Grasslands (FOG) and the Australian Native Plants Society (ANPS) to create a regional botanic garden focusing on the vegetation of the Southern Tablelands.

The STEP newsletter reports on the proposed work on a native vegetation block at the Arboretum and mentions '...we visited the mature eighty year old Himalayan Cedar plantation at the Arboretum and admired the fine understorey of Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*) growing there...Over time, the grasses that will establish themselves as the understorey for the whole Arboretum are likely to be local native species if given a little encouragement'
More detail at www.step.asn.au ☼

Review

A first meeting has been held to begin the process of reviewing the Draft Management Plan for Cooleman Ridge.
☼

Wombat

Doug reports on a road kill wombat that was on the Arawang side of Namitjira Drive about 100 metres from the last house in Fisher. It is the only wombat he has seen on or near the Ridge in the 36 years he has lived there.

It was a young adult/old teenager of a beast, about three-quarters the size of a full-grown specimen. A female, with brown fur, she had been struck by a car overnight one Saturday in February.

Doug rang the ranger to report the event, mainly to flag the fact that this was evidence of wombat habitation which had not been seen to date.

The only previous sign he had seen of wombats on the Ridge was wombat-like diggings in 2007 on the bank of the old dam.

This note revived my memory of meeting a very convincing small boy on the town side of Arawang in the late 1990's. He insisted he had just seen a wombat. ☼

The Tree Survey

This has made progress, so that we have re-examined around 50 trees which have data from 1997 and a dozen or so trees that have now reached the size for inclusion in the survey. Many trees have recovered well since the 2003 fire but *Eucalyptus macrorhyncha* and *E. rossii* have been hard hit.

Naarilla is going to re-examine the trees that she studied earlier; Pauline and I will continue in the NW part of the ridge.

There are more areas for anybody interested in this project. You can expect to do a full study of 5-6 trees per hour, a wonderful way of spending time in our beautiful nature park.

The database contains lots of earlier data as well as new studies of each tree; photos exist as well.
Gösta ☼