



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter June

2009

Previous Sunday meeting May 17th

Several groups of walkers were out enjoying a pleasant autumn afternoon and stopped to chat with us at the foot of Mt Arawang where we were extending Group Area South (GAS). The large blackberry tangle that we had sprayed a couple of times was dead, probably finished off by PCL. Some members used their mattocks on the peripheral emergent runners. Others spread more widely working on verbasicum and salvia. A few did a RabbitScan walk contouring east, finding scattered droppings as well as a five-entrance warren.

In a rocky outcrop on the west side of the Summit Track there were several burrows with one particularly large exit. Unlike rabbits the resident had preserved the bushland setting rather than leaving it looking bulldozed. Wombat, perhaps? ☼

Future programme

With the cooler months here, we have reverted to afternoon Sunday work parties.

Next meeting, Sunday 21st June

- Nature Trail for clearing exotic growth from the track and surroundings. Plant ID
- 1.30-4 pm
- meet at the Kathner St entrance, or on the Trail
- bring hat, gloves, hacker, drink, snack, raincoat if it is wet. ☼

Garden Birds

From the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group (CIMAG) newsletter:

“Three years ago, the Garden Bird Survey (GBS) by the Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) members indicated that Indian Mynas were the 3rd most abundant bird in Canberra.

“The 2007 GBS Report showed that after CIMAG members started trapping in backyards, mynas had dropped to the 9th most abundant bird in Canberra.

“Well, the good news continues! The 2008 GBS Report has just been released. The sharp drop in myna numbers goes on, with mynas now down to the 12th most abundant bird.” ☼

Chapman Primary School

Jenny reports:

“Arminel Linda and I were joined by Lois Padgham and Sally McIntosh on a recent visit to the ridge with 58 enthusiastic year 4 students plus three teachers.

“We walked up to the start of the school trail, admiring the wonderful slopes of kangaroo grass nearby and also the sturdy growth of our little surviving Kathner St eucalypt.

“The children had all been issued with gloves and we had with us thirty new 'child-friendly' digging tools which Rob Horsfield has made for CRPCG.

“Parking our gear under the big old eucalypt further along the trail, we demonstrated the safe use of the tools and what weeds to target. The children were all keen and interested and attacked verbasicum and horehound with great energy. The attached photo gives an idea of the busy and enjoyable afternoon we had.

“More sessions are to follow in June. There will also be a ceremonial installation of the new Chapman PS Trail sign, designed by Lois Padgham and paid for by PCL!” ☼



Photo: Lois Padgham

What's around

Family: SOLANACEAE



Two bushes of white *Solanum sp.* were found in the Olympic site, in company with several of the familiar mauve *Solanum cinereum*. Presumably that's what this is, too.

We'll be watching it and its formidable spikes. ☼

Tree survey

Saturday morning 6th June was foggy and cold but still dry enough to be out with clip board, GPS, compass, tape measure, camera, binoculars.....

We had with us Michael from Isaacs Ridge as he was interested in seeing how we tackled the survey. His home territory is warmly clad with woody weeds, exotic trees including countless *Pinus radiata* wildlings, and some very fine old eucalypts.

We resumed with the lower, further section of the Olympic site and were astonished to find that of the 23 trees we studied, 13 had been incinerated, many scarcely showing above the grass. ☼

Native Trees

This ACT field guide was published by the National Parks Association of the ACT Inc. in 2007, the second edition of their 1983 booklet. Price \$27.50 at Botanic Gardens.

The format is slightly larger, the line drawings unchanged; maps are restricted to showing the distribution of trees not frequently found. It is enhanced by fine colour photographs.

Additions are *Eucalyptus camaldulensis ssp. camaldulensis* and *E. cinerea ssp. triplex*. *E. mannifera ssp. maculosa* is now *E. mannifera ssp. mannifera*. ☼

RabbitScan

Notes from the RabbitScan team:

"We won't suddenly be taking down the mapping access; this will be an ongoing process; we encourage more sightings.

"*Why count?* We need to count them to estimate the damage they cause, to estimate the effort required to control them and to measure the effectiveness of control efforts.

A QLD Case study: at Bulloo Downs Station in southwest Queensland we counted the rabbits and mapped where they were and estimated the population to be at least 600,000 in the early 1990s. We also had a map for all of Queensland and found that 25% of Queensland's rabbits were on Bulloo Downs. This showed us clearly where we needed to put our rabbit research and control effort.

100 rabbits eat the same amount of pasture that a steer can eat. At that time the landholders were making \$100 per head per steer per year. Since the rabbits were eating enough pasture to feed 6,000 cattle we estimated the cost of rabbits in lost cattle production was at least \$600,000 per year on Bulloo Downs. Once this figure was determined then we had a better idea how much we could afford to spend controlling the rabbits.

"*Warren ripping can be very effective:* on Bulloo Downs 48,000 warrens were ripped and we have found no evidence of reopened warrens 6 to 8 years later."

Notes from CRPCG:

Six of our members (on one occasion with the participation of 58 Chapman Primary students) provided data from 6 sites spanning the length of the Ridge. Some of the worst areas, on the rural side, were not scanned. ☼

Civilization

In his 2004 book "A Short History of Progress" Canadian historical philosopher Ronald Wright has this to say: "The lesson I read in the past is this: that the health of land and water – and of woods, which are the keepers of water – can be the only lasting basis for any civilization's survival and success." ☼

Membership

Welcome to Trish Saunders of Chapman.

In its 17th year of activity the Cooleman Ridge Park Care Group now has 45 members and 16 non-member supporters. ☼

Despatch from Arminel and Pat in Hay

It's parched. The Murrumbidgee is low and milky. ☼

Remember

Vice president Doug will be acting president from 10th June to the end of July when Arminel is absent on travels.

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