



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter August 2015

Previous Meeting Sunday 19th July – Nature Trail etc

Nine of us turned out on a lovely winter's afternoon at this sheltered spot. First concern was to look at the erosion report in situ. Being on the spot made it much easier to follow and assess the recommendations. Nine heads were put together, and decided not to bring in materials before trying some local solutions. Gösta has put himself in charge of gathering rocks for the "minor headcut".

In general, the drainage line is looking wonderful. Low-growing native grasses dominate the gentle slopes. Very few tussocks of **Phalaris aquatica* nor of **Paspalum dilatatum* remain. This has been a huge and sustained effort by the Friday weeders, begun during the drought and continued in suitable conditions ever since. Congratulations, team!!

Statistical Stuff

In a frenzy of end-of-financial-year figuring, Doug reduced Cooleman Ridge Park Care activity for 2014-15 to black numbers on a white page.

Our figures for 2014-15 are well down on the previous year. Over the year we had 30 percent less people doing weed control, and working 40 percent fewer hours (slowing up in our old age?) than the previous year. In raw terms, for the most recent financial year, some 135 persons contributed 568 hours to controlling weeds on the Ridge.

Thanks to Doug for the accounting!

Future programme

NB – Afternoon meetings this time of year!

Sunday 16th August

**Group Area North – Chauvel or via
Kathner St. Entry in Chapman**

Time:- 1.30 pm – 4 pm.

Bring:- hat, gloves, hacker, drink, snack, raincoat if it is wet.

Tasks:- Trail clearing, plant ID and weed removal.

For more info, contact Arminel 6231 7392

Advance Notice – AGM 15th November

We usually hold our AGM at Kathner Street in October, but this year we will defer it for a month. This is because several committee members will be unavailable in October.

Please consider nominating for the committee – we need new office-bearers and must train other members in the administrative tasks.



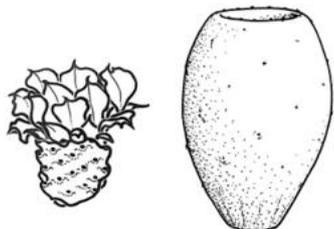
Typical Committee Meeting, 19th July. Photo P.Ryan

What's around

**Opuntia spp.*

Common Generic Name: Prickly Pear

Originally from the Caribbean, *Common Prickly Pear *Opuntia stricta* is a **Weed of National Significance**. *O. s.* is “an erect shrub to 1 m (rarely to 2 m.) high”, with yellow flowers in late spring and summer. Prickly Pears spread “by seed or vegetatively by segments that root where they contact the ground.”



**Opuntia stricta* once devastated large areas of northern NSW and central Queensland. During the 1920s and 1930s, various biological control agents were released for its control. A moth, *Cactoblastis cactorum*, and a cochineal beetle, *Dactylopius opuntiae*, still control this cactus in most areas.

Drawing from PlantNet

15–20 species (naturalized), all mainland States. Many species have become established and spread in pest proportions. All species except *O. ficus-indica* have been declared noxious weeds in N.S.W. All have glochids (tiny, easily detached spines) as well as ferocious spikes that will penetrate a leather glove.



References – PlantNET & other online sites; WEEDeck.

Left – A recent close-up of an **Opuntia sp.* fruit in a Chapman garden near the Ridge. **Below** – the same plant, general view.

Photos – Pat Ryan.

The Group continues to find and remove **Opuntia* plants above Chapman. We've found tall ones – 1 - 2 metres plus. We think our horror weed may not be **O. stricta*. It may, however, be a garden escape. (It bears a strong resemblance to specimens in properties abutting the Reserve.)

Traditional Uses of Prickly Pear

The fruits ("tunas") are eaten raw or turned into candies or jellies. The flat, paddle-shaped stem segments (cladodes), harvested young and tender, are eaten as a vegetable (Mexican "Nopales"). Plants have also been used for barriers on property lines (eg villages in the Middle East during the First World War).

Family – Cactaceae (from Latin *cactus*, from Ancient Gk κάκτος (kákτος, "cardo", of pre-Gk. origin).

Genus - *Opuntia* (Gk. - a region - *Locris Opuntia* - where other spiny plants grew)

Occurrence – throughout the Americas. (*O. s.* came from the Caribbean). Various species now naturalised world-wide.



Thankyou to our rangers

It was World Ranger Day on 31 July. We welcome Josh Mulvaney, our new Ranger!

We particularly thank the staff with whom we have had most dealings over the past year - Ani Kunz (our Ranger, now in Environmental Offsets), Craig Wainwright (Parkcare Support Officer), and Jasmine Foxlee (Coordinator).

Community voices in reserve management

Friday 11 and Saturday 12 September.

This forum is for community volunteers, interested reserve neighbours and users. It will provide an opportunity to share experiences and research in ACT parks and reserves with each other, park staff and the wider Landcare network. More information soon!