



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter
July 2020

Previous Meeting **Sunday 21 June 2020** **Darrell Place**

Despite Linda cancelling the weeding afternoon due to intermittent rain, a few hardy souls turned up: Arminel, Jenny, Mick, Doug, Natasha and Charlie!! They went for a little walk to see Natasha's plantings and for Doug to show them a tree that had had its bark cut out in one piece. A scar tree? They then all hurried back to their warm homes!

The next afternoon, Linda, Paul, Rob and new member, Alan, spent a couple of hours at the site digging out Wild Sage, and mopping up some *verbascum* and *African Love Grass*.

Linda Spinaze and Rob Lundie

Cooleman Ridge during COVID19

The Ridge has continued to attract more walkers, cyclists and horse riders than usual. People express their delight at having discovered the Ridge. Just last weekend, a man was very complimentary about the state of the Ridge around Kathner St. I took the opportunity to explain that our Friday group should take the credit.

Some walkers look quizzically at me when I carry a mattock and ask what I'm doing? Am I prospecting for gold? Linda reported that once she was walking her dog and carrying her little rabbit hoe. A passerby commented: 'That's a novel dog training method!' Dog walkers who see me wearing my green Park

Next Meeting **Sunday 19 July 2020** **Lincoln Place**

Time: 1.30 pm – 4.00 pm

Meet: Lincoln Place

Bring: hat, gardening gloves, small digger, water to drink.

Task: Weeding of invasive, exotic plants. Native plant identification.

Contact: Linda Spinaze 6288 6916

August meeting: Sun 23, Mt Arawang

Care Volunteer fleece often quickly put their dog back on lead. The power of the uniform!

The June newsletter featured wood ducks Gladys, Betty and Angus. However, from the day after publication, my friend and I have not seen them again. We think (hope) the ducklings have reached flight maturity and no longer need Angus' protection, We dare not contemplate a fox. We will continue to look out for them. Meanwhile, we enjoy the occasional presence of a wood duck couple on the Old Dam. So, too the cacophony of frogs living there, of which the Eastern Common Froglet (*Crinia signifera*) appears to be the most prominent.

Just up the track next to the orange cone, the resident wombat has been using the lockdown period to make renovations to its burrow.

Rob Lundie

Coolleman Ridge Nature Park: a history, part 1

Coolleman Ridge Nature Park was once part of a large grazing property called *Yarralumla*. Frederick Campbell, who purchased it in 1881, turned it into the largest and most prosperous sheep run on the Limestone Plains.

The landscape of the area was duly modified by contemporary grazing practices and by the introduction of European fauna and flora. By the end of the nineteenth century thinning and ring-barking had taken place on the property, rabbits were already posing a problem in the district, and a number of weed pests had been identified. Many of the local native fauna were being driven close to extinction.

After the Canberra region was chosen as the site for the new federal capital, the Commonwealth began acquiring land in the district. Yarralumla was one of the first properties to be acquired. The valuation of the property was completed in July 1913 and it was resumed by the government shortly afterwards. Much of the property later became the suburbs of inner Canberra.

Coolleman, a subdivision of Yarralumla, was leased by the Champion family from 1937 until 1996 and run as a grazing enterprise for high-yielding merino sheep. No more clearing occurred but there was extensive grazing by sheep and aerial application of superphosphate and pasture seeds, mainly *Phalaris aquatica*.

In 1997 the lease on the property changed hands and the area to the west of the Ridge became an equestrian centre. The Ridge itself had been set aside as a reserve and the 187 hectares of public land was formally declared part of Canberra Nature Park in October 1993.

The lightly timbered hills and saddles of the Ridge form an attractive part of the backdrop to the city of Canberra. Over the past 18 years, its story has been linked to the development of the Coolleman Ridge Park Care Group.

Jenny Horsfield

Native Grasses at Kathner St

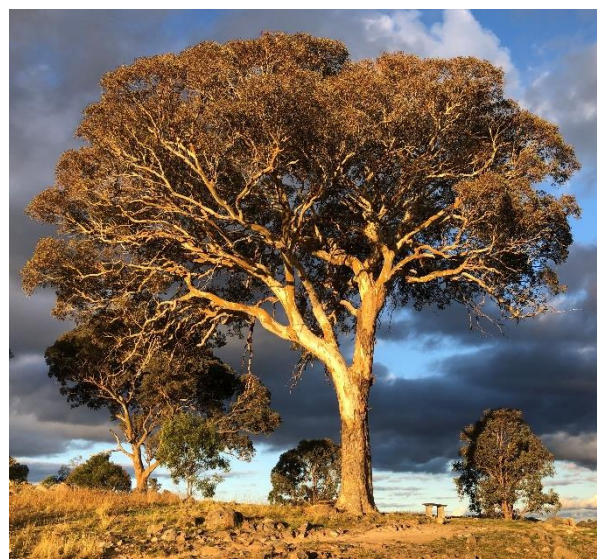
The lovely rains in April this year produced an abundance of flowering native grasses on the Ridge. Many people have noticed the swathes of Red Leg Grass, and the flowing heads of stipa which catch the early morning light.

A couple of weeks ago Arminel and I agreed that the entrance at Kathner St was an excellent place to allow visitors to appreciate our native grasses. So, over the next few weeks, I culled seed from the many grasses on the Ridge, always being careful to harvest from many different plants to achieve diversity, and to not strip one plant of all its seed.

I collected stipa, red-leg grass, barb-wire grass, nine-awn grass, Queensland blue grass and cotton panic grass. These have now been planted around the Kathner St Dam. Arminel has marked where they have been planted so that they are not inadvertently weeded out by our enthusiastic volunteers!

In my experience, this method of plant reproduction has not had a high rate of success. However, it is a method which took very little time or energy to complete, and even if only a few plants survive, they will hopefully help to increase the grass diversity in that area.

Linda Spinaze



Tree over Anniversary Seat

Photo: Rob Lundie