



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter
June 2019

Previous meeting
Sunday 19 May
Mt Arawang

Just as in our last visit to this area of the park, in 2018, it was another glorious Sunday afternoon for eight of the Group who met on the slopes of Mt Arawang to continue our efforts to keep on top of a variety of weeds. Before spreading out, Doug gave us a short history of the construction of the track up the mountain and the management of water flows after heavy rain.

Rohan continued spraying *Phalaris* while others mopped up *Verbascum*, Fleabane, blackberries and some Briar Roses. It was satisfying to note that blackberries on our lower patch have pretty much been eradicated. Similarly, outbreaks of *Verbascum* are within sight of being brought under control over large areas on either side of the track all the way to the top. Despite the fact that the 2003 fire was over 16 years ago, evidence of its power can still be found on the Ridge. A length of roofing iron blown over the Ridge was extracted from the middle of a bush during the afternoon.

For the record: Doug, Lincoln, Natasha, Charly, Chris, Natasha, Rohan and Rob formed this month's weeding group.

Rob Lundie

Next Meeting

Sunday 16 June

Kathner Street

Time: 1.30 pm – 4.00 pm

Meet: End of Kathner Street near gates

Bring: hat, gloves, secateurs, dabber-doober, hacker, drink, raincoat if it is wet

Task: plant identification, weeding

Contact: Doug Tinney 6288 8589

July meeting: Sun 21, Chauvel Circle

Happy Volunteer Week!

Thanks to Parkcare Volunteers:

During National Volunteer Week (20-26 May) Alison McLeod, Volunteer Programs Manager with the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, sent out a message of thanks to all volunteers who work to maintain the health of our parks and reserves, including Cooleman Ridge. In part she said: "Did you know that the rate of volunteering in the ACT is the highest in Australia with 36.8 per cent of Canberrans participating in volunteer activities each year? The ACT Parks and Conservation Service would like to thank the 750 registered ParkCare volunteers who contributed over 30,000 hours of their time in 2017/18 (and the millions of hours before that too!) towards protecting, enhancing and promoting our parks and reserves".

Rob Lundie

Hunting rare plants: Stockyard Spur

In February 2018, Jenny and Rob Horsfield led a walk up Stockyard Spur in search of Stockyard Creek falls. Once we'd scaled the 2km climb up the spur, we headed off-track to the north west, down the other side of the spur towards Stockyard Creek. On the way down, I was climbing over a fallen tree and caught sight of a deep purple leaf. It was so unusual that I photographed the plant that had a purply stem, and deep sage green leaves that had a deep purple underside. Rosemary Purdie, of the Australian National Herbarium, thought – from my photo – that it might be Purple Fireweed, *Arrhenechthites mixtus*, a member of the daisy family. The plant has been sighted along the East Coast in places like Wadbilliga National Park and Tallaganda State Forest, but had not been sighted in the ACT for at least 30 years.

In June, with snow underfoot, we again scaled the spur. I'd shown everyone photos of the plant, and on the way down, we all looked assiduously but didn't find it. But we did find the waterfall. And then, on the way back, I found the plant! A small seedling, again, next to a fallen tree. We all hunched around, a couple of people took the coordinates, and some photographed it up close. We then found another seedling nearby, with only the remainder of a dead flower stem attached.

It is now February 2019, a year after the initial sighting. Jenny and Rob have organised another rare plant trip, but unfortunately I couldn't go. The group again scaled the spur, donned their gloves and gaiters and headed down the other side towards the earlier sightings. They didn't find any there, but they did find them elsewhere – and this time, there was a spread of them. But alas, none was in flower (needed for definite identification). The upside of so many trips was that the group were now so familiar with the waterfall that they could pinpoint the plant's location in relation to it: 40m upstream and 20m uphill.

By this time, I was becoming a little obsessed. So the following Saturday, I decided to go looking for the location the group had identified to confirm the sighting. Thanks to Jenny and Rob's navigation course and their description of the plant location, I found the plants! My delight was intensified by not

having navigated myself down the wrong side of the spur. And then, quite unexpectedly, I found two that were in flower.



A plant growing above the falls, just coming into flower.

Rosemary Purdie has a collector's permit, so she proposed that we go to collect a specimen. Two weeks later, we scaled the spur, donned our gloves (and I donned my gaiters) and headed down the other side, hopefully one last time. We found another small spread in the same area, and again, quite unexpectedly, found two that were just starting to flower. Rosemary took some specimens, and we returned to the top of the spur.

After we'd had our afternoon tea, I noticed Rosemary dancing on the spot. A long black snake was wiggling its way through her feet. The snake seemed as keen to escape Rosemary as Rosemary was to escape the snake. Having had enough excitement for the day, we quickly descended the spur to the car. Rosemary placed the specimens in a press, wrapped the stem of the definitive flowering specimen and we returned home. The Australian National Herbarium now has a record of a contemporary sighting and specimen of *Arrhenechthites mixtus*. And I am confirmed in my preference for donning my gaiters on Stockyard Spur.

Anita Davis (text and photograph)