



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter June

2007

Previous Sunday Meeting, May 20th

A lot of thought and enthusiasm was poured into designing and constructing the last section of the Nature Trail to avoid the steep, eroded descent on the access track.

Once the route had been decided, Doug reduced any long grass with the whipper-snipper, followed by a team shifting aside protruding rocks and smoothing the ground. Then further emphasis was added with an edging of stones.

The track winds down the hillside below Malcolm's area, skirting potentially boggy spots. Promising conservation areas were side-stepped wherever possible, but still the walker can enjoy extensive views and a bush experience.

The Friday people have continued the improvements, and we anticipate adding this section to our Group Areas. ☼

Future programme

We will continue to rotate through the three Group Areas (GA) when there is no special programme, meeting on the 3rd Sunday of the month at 1.30 p.m.

But not in June ☼

Next meeting, Saturday June 16th

- Nature Trail opening
- 2 p.m.
meet at the Kathner St entrance ☼

May log

200507 2 Maned Wood Ducks and 2 ducklings at the old dam

200507 Post-fire reappearance of *Veronica anagallis-aquatica* at old dam

250507 2 Maned Wood Ducks at Kathner St dam
Boobook reportedly heard near Chauvel & Kathner St

Boobook

A regular walker tells us of having heard the call of a boobook owl. He also speculates that ducklings may switch parents, resulting in ducklings of differing sizes following one set of adults. Erika, as a suburban wild life carer, avoids mixing ducklings of different ages as larger birds will harass the smaller ones, and also accidentally smother them under the heat lamp. ☼

Verbascum

Reet has again cleared the verbascum from Bess's area, and moved on to the Olympic site. ☼

Trail Opening and Letterboxing

To make the opening a real success, we will letterbox the following notice to the households in Chapman and nearby streets in Rivett, Duffy and Kambah. If all our members help for a couple of hours with putting the notice in letterboxes, it will be done quite efficiently. Please respond to gosta@webone.com.au or call us at 6288 7009 before Saturday 9th to offer your services. ☼

The Tale of a Trail

Again you are invited to walk the trail of Cooleman Ridge, to see the wide views of the Western ranges from the track and the Canberra suburbs from Cooleman Trig.

Again the pamphlet boxes will be filled with a re-designed pamphlet telling you about the trees, the plants and the hills.

Again we are meeting for an opening festival of the trail as we met 11 years ago on a clear day in June.

On Saturday 16 June at 2 pm the revived Cooleman Ridge Nature Trail will be opened at the end of Kathner Street, Chapman.

The 2003 bushfire destroyed several of the landmarks and posts of the original Nature Trail.

With the help of a generous ACT Environment Grant the Cooleman Ridge Parkcare Group and Canberra Nature Park have collaborated to make this occasion possible. The trail and the information will again be available to generations of walkers.

Welcome

Weed identification course

Jenny Conolly (Weeds Officer with Parks, Conservation & Lands), will be conducting a basic identification course for local weeds, initially in-house with potted & picked specimens, followed by a stroll in the adjoining Stromlo area.

Location: Stromlo Depot, 500 Cotter Rd Weston Creek

Date: Saturday 23 June 2007

Time: 9:00 am to 11:00 am

RSVP: Rachael Dawes by 15 June

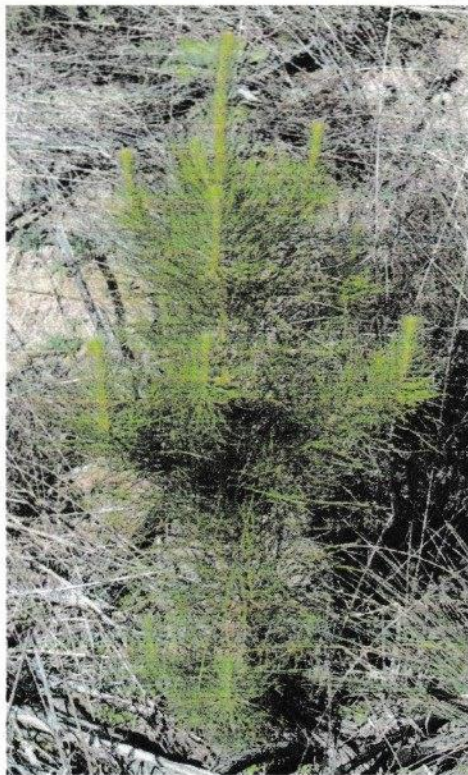
Bring: Note book, pencil/pen, hat, long pants and shirt, suitable shoes, drinking water

Refreshments: Morning tea will be provided.

Cost: Free ☼

What's around

Family PINACEAE



Pinus radiata –
Monterey Pine,
Radiata Pine
Large exotic tree
with dark, often
deeply ridged bark.
Native of California

This photograph shows a cone
that a cockatoo has “attacked”.

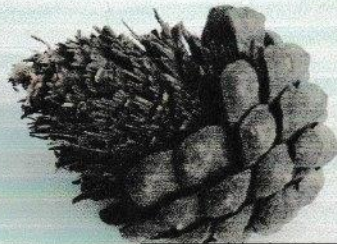
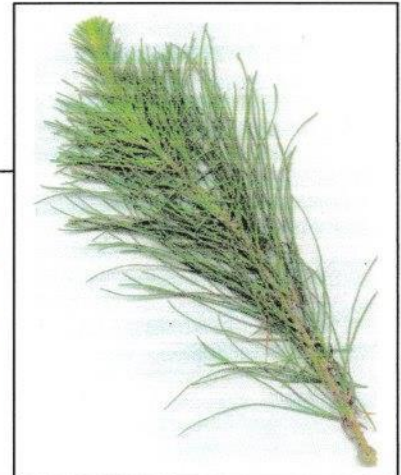


Photo: Tony Fearnside



DRAFT: TOWARDS A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR COOLEMAN RIDGE CANBERRA NATURE PARK (continued)

Exotic Grazing Animals

Since the reallocation of land from pastoral lease to management by Canberra Nature Park intermittent grazing by cows and calves has been allowed with the intention of reducing fuel loads and thereby reducing potential fire intensities. Grazing has been concentrated in the northwestern and central parts of the Reserve while the areas immediately adjacent to Chapman, the fenced regeneration areas and Mt Arawang have been excluded. Grazing intensity has varied significantly from very light to complete removal of grasses and herbaceous material.

While the impact of grazing animals on fuel loads and fires will be discussed in the fire management section, it is noted that:

- (i) exotic animals represent the antithesis of the aim of attaining a state of native biodiversity in the Reserve and maintaining natural processes;
- (ii) cows and calves move from farms to the Reserve most likely carrying weeds on their hides and in their digestive systems;
- (iii) grazing often leads to an increase in weediness perhaps through selective choice of food;
- (iv) native plants may be disadvantaged over exotics by the presence of exotic herbivores;
- (v) cattle deter recreational use of the area (Fenwick and Overall 1975)

Note: the whole draft can be read on our web site ☼

Radiata pine as a weed on Cooleman Ridge

By Tony Fearnside

I always think that it is easier to understand a weed if one knows why it was introduced to Australia; in this case radiata pine was found to be the fastest growing softwood that could help to solve Australia's chronic shortage of timber and resultant adverse balance of trade in forest products which persists to this day.

Radiata pine comes from a restricted range in California and a couple of off-shore islands. It is a member of the “closed cone” group of pines which are distinguished by serotinous cones i.e. they open to disperse seed after being heated. Forests of mature radiata pines can disperse huge quantities of seed after fire, as we can see so easily in the areas burnt in the 2003 fires. Locally this dispersal mechanism is made worse by the hot dry summers which can cause the cones to open and by cockatoos which have developed a liking for pine seeds and often prise the cones open (see photograph). When disturbed they often fly off with the remnants of an unopened pine cone only to drop it if it gets too heavy thereby leaving a pine cone or part thereof to open in the sun.

The trees are monoecious - literally “one house”, with male and female flowers on the same plant - and produce cones from about age 10 onwards. This means that seedlings need not be cut until they are quite tall, before they are old enough to reproduce. On the ridge, we could have a successful “blitz” every five years or so provided that we were willing to cut larger trees rather than pull up the smaller seedlings. However, when cutting the seedlings it is MOST IMPORTANT to cut them off at ground level or just below, otherwise they can re-sprout from dormant buds. ☼