



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter January

2008

Previous Sunday Meeting December 16th

Up from Darrell Place the grass was wet and rain was hovering. (It was also close to Christmas, and early in the morning).

Gösta pulled St John's Wort (*Hypericum proliferum*) from the wet soil, and later in the week Arminel returned to pull more and bag the pile. This is a stubborn weed, prolific as its name implies and always needs to be removed from site. Under the prevailing conditions a lot of root came up with the stem – whether this will prove to have been effective remains to be seen. There is plenty more.....

On a more positive note, Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*) is flourishing here as never before.

It seemed a suitable occasion for a thorough plant survey, and with extra pairs of eyes the time was well spent, 71 species being the greatest number ever recorded here. Of the 17 names added, 9 were native. Stars were *Pultenaea procumbens* and *Daviesia mimosoides subsp. mimosoides*, small shrubs flowering beautifully. Members of the Pea family (FABACEAE) have been doing extra well since the fire.

By 10.30 our shoes were soaked and we were ready to head home. ☼

Future programme

Next meeting, Sunday January 20th

- Nature Trail for clearing exotic growth from the track and surroundings. Plant ID
- 8 am or later, until 10.30 am
- meet at the Kathner St entrance, or on the Trail
- bring hat, gloves, hacker, drink, snack, raincoat if it is wet. ☼

Caretaker areas

It is time to update our caretaker map, and add Tammy's name to the area she has chosen on Mt. Arawang.

This map comes as an attachment to members only. If your area is incorrectly marked please plot it more accurately and return it to

paulyn@iinet.net.au. ☼

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

Erosion

Erosion is a problem on the road from Kathner St to the open ditch (cut-off drain) mentioned above. We suggest an examination of this area with a view to possible relocation of this section of road. Realignment from just inside the Kathner St entrance around the slope through the first saddle (just above the first steep eroding section), along the slope more or less parallel to the property alignment and rejoining the present road above Chauvel Circle, would be one option which would avoid both heavily eroded areas. A second option would be to close the eroded sections of the road and upgrade the horse trail to carry heavy traffic near the Kathner St dam (even in wet weather). Eroding sites near the Mt Arawang entrance also need attention amongst others.

Fencing

Fences divide, contain, channel and restrict people, vehicles and stock. In the absence of grazing by domestic stock, fences can be removed and general access can be facilitated for recreationalists and emergency vehicles, let alone Park staff. There are half buried remnants of old fence lines that could be surveyed (simply) for historic reasons and then removed. The current fencing system should be reviewed and consideration be given to the suggestion for channelling equestrians to their designated corridor. Small realignments of the former alignment of the horse trail to avoid boggy patches may be needed if minimum fencing is given priority; originally the horse trail did not follow that section of the Cooleman Ridge Nature Trail from positions 3 to 6 on the map but cut across the area to the south-west across to position 7. A small excision of the pastoral lease (for inclusion in the reserve) to remove the sharp corner of the boundary in the line from position 4 to position 7 should be considered.

Recreation

Recreation is encouraged. However, trail bikes are banned. There is an increasing use of the area by mountain bikes including that during competitive events. Horse riding is encouraged along the designated trail. Managers need to consider the ever increasing recreational use of the Ridge and how this may impact upon it.

Note: the whole draft, submitted in 1998, can be read on our web site. ☼

What's around



Family: FABACEAE
Daviesia mimosoides ssp
mimosoides
Multistemmed native shrub
1-2 m high
Hugh Davies – Welsh
botanist, 1739-1821
mimosoides – mimosa-like

Changes at the Cotter Road depot

We welcome Rebecca Blundell back from leave, at the same time saying goodbye and thank you to Jenny Conolly who has supported us well for the last several months. ☺

Herbicide dye

Margaret Ning responded to the report of our blackberry-spraying exercise in December with the following note: *One thought occurred to me when I read the bit about using more red dye in future. The Nufarm red dye that I use when spraying has an active ingredient of Rhodamine and has been found to be carcinogenic. I continue to use my 5L container, but shall look into alternatives when it is empty.*

We'll have to bear this in mind next time. ☺

Christmas greetings

- Thanks to Jon Stanhope and his wife for their card. We appreciate the recognition.
- The CIMAG Committee wishes us a wonderful Christmas and a feral-free 2008, adding "We have ended the year on a very positive note, with the Canberra Ornithologists Group reporting that for the first time since the local bird survey started many years ago, the returns have indicated a decline in the number of Indian Mynas." ☺

SACTCG

Steve reports: *Rod Dickson is updating the website. For all website requests please contact Rod at rdickson@sactcg.org I intend to start posting the Catchment & Coordinators reports on the website plus Rod is looking into creating a photo gallery. Check it out at www.sactcg.org Any suggestions are welcome.* ☺



Family:
PORTULACACEAE
Portulaca oleracea –
Pigweed, Purslane (the
common name is often used
to refer to other species of
this genus)
Prostrate to decumbent
native annual or sometimes
perennial herb, with stems to
25 cm long.
Grows as a weed in disturbed
areas.
portare L.: to carry, *lac* milk,
olus L: kitchen or garden
herbs.
See Newsletter April 2004

Arminel's story follows.

Portulaca oleracea is a bush tucker plant. It has just appeared in my patch, so might be of interest to readers. Most of us will have pulled it out of the vegetable patch, and some may know it by its ugly common or garden name of Pigweed. Its leaves are edible, with a pleasant lemony flavour and crisp fleshy texture. We have used them in salad, and harvest them when they appear on our suburban block.

Tim Low in "Wild Food Plants of Australia" (p 156) tells us three of its aboriginal names: Munyeroo, Wakati and Lyawa. He says: Pigweed is a succulent, ground-hugging herb with blunt-tipped triangular leaves and small yellow flowers growing in clumps up to a metre across but usually much smaller. Pigweed grows worldwide, mainly as a farm and garden weed, but the large form growing in central Australia is probably a distinct native species. It sprouts on bare soil after rain, often forming thick mats on floodplains. One plant can produce 10,000 seeds. Tiny black pigweed seeds were a staple food of outback Aborigines. When the stems turned pink the plants were harvested and piled onto hard ground, bark or kangaroo skins. After a few days the seeds fell from the plants and could be gathered up, ground into a paste and cooked. Botanist Joseph Maiden mused in 1889: "One would suppose that so small a seed would scarcely repay the labour of collecting", but noted that "the natives get in splendid condition on it." The seeds are a good source of protein and fat. Aborigines also cooked and ate pigweed roots, and ate the leaves and stems raw, steamed, or ground into paste. Boiled pigweed was the most widely eaten of colonial bush vegetables, and it is sometimes still gathered today. It was eaten by explorers such as Burke and Wills. Large pigweed (*P. intraterranea*) is a more robust desert plant with petals 12-17 mm long and stems usually more than 1 cm thick. Aborigines ate the thick taproot, which tastes like potato.

Arminel, January 2008. ☺