



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter
February 2018

Previous meeting
Sunday 21 January
Mt Arawang

The prospects of a very warm day failed to deter five CRPCG members. Rohan who cleverly arrived at 7.30 am was later joined by Doug, Rob, Arminel and Pat. They set about mopping up the remnants of what had been a very large blackberry patch six years ago (see photos from 2012 and 2018 below). Also cleaned up were *Verbascum*, *fleabane*, *Phalaris* and some briar roses.



Blackberries Mt Arawang 19.2.12 Photo: Rob Lundie



Blackberries Mt Arawang 23.1.18 Photo: Rob Lundie

Next Meeting
Sunday 18 February
Kathner St

Time: 8.30 am – 11.00 am

NOTE: If there is a fire ban in place, this activity will be cancelled

Meet: End of Kathner St, Chapman

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

Task: plant identification, weeding

Contact: Linda Spinaze 6288 6916

Rohan: 'bush regeneration addict'

Rohan is a self-confessed 'bush regeneration' addict. He has been working in ACT Parks since he was a teenager and says that if he could, he would work in ACT Parks, all day every day. Rohan dreams of giving up his day job to do bush regeneration full time but unfortunately the pay with Parkcare is just not good enough to do this!

Rohan joined the CRPCG soon after moving to Kambah in 1996. He worked closely with Tina Nevins on Mt Arawang who taught him all about bush regeneration. The summit of Mt Arawang was then a 'diabolical mess' – the worst weeds he had ever seen in any ACT Park. It was head high with thistles and fleabane and almost impossible to move through. Many hours were spent hacking them out plus planting many trees and shrubs to suppress the weeds. This has resulted in a major improvement over the last 20 years with the thistles and fleabane now being

almost extinct on the summit (although the blackberry remains as a major problem!!!). Mt Arawang still remains his favourite place on the Ridge and although he rarely gets to the summit anymore, the sight of Mt Arawang with more vegetation covering it, provides him with a great source of satisfaction as he travels to work every day on the Tuggeranong Parkway.

Soon after joining the Group, Rohan moved to Conder at the base of Tuggeranong Hill. He says that it is one of 'the great jewels in the crown' of the ACT reserve system and is very different to Cooleman Ridge as it is still largely in its natural state. He therefore no longer does 'private' work on Cooleman Ridge but dedicates his private bush regeneration efforts to Tuggeranong Hill where he can be found for several hours on most weekends whacking weeds and recharging his soul before having to return to face his weekday job.

Rohan, however, continues to attend the CRPCG monthly Sunday meetings because there is no active Parkcare Group on Tuggeranong Hill. He says the work provides him with the knowledge and camaraderie that comes from being part of a group. He has a reputation for 'getting stuck into the weeds' and not wasting time on 'chit chat' or 'paperwork'. He tries to focus his efforts on doing some of the 'yucky jobs' that others don't often want to do – blackberry, *Phalaris*, pioneering new territory, etc. He says he enjoys the contrast of the 'hands on work' to his week day desk job and often has trouble dragging himself away from – so much so that he is normally the last to leave. He fails to mention that he is the Group's treasurer and also maintains the Group's website!

Rohan believes that there have been major improvements on the Ridge over the 20 plus years he has been a member. He says we often forget how far we have come and how much a small group of people with the right motivation and methods can achieve. He is keen to encourage others to promote our success, and thus to inspire others to help regenerate the bush on Cooleman Ridge. Seeing Rohan at work is inspiration enough for the Group and, hopefully, passers-by.

Rob Lundie interview with Rohan Thomas

Promoting the Ridge

During a break in a public concert at a private house in Kambah on Australia Day, I took the opportunity to talk to the audience of around 40 people about park care and Cooleman Ridge. I had been invited to do this two years ago, but other priorities had intervened. The annual front garden concert in Kambah this year featured local bush band, McQuoid's Offering. This was a fitting combination, as McQuoid's Hill is the reserve adjacent to our Ridge! I spoke for three minutes about Kurrajongs (our own garden specimen is in flower and provided a sample spray), Wombats, Wallaroos and Worm Lizards. Perhaps something will come of the opportunity. Thanks to the Fyfes, who hosted the event and requested Pat and my participation.



Arminel promotes the Ridge

Photo by Pat Ryan

Arminel Ryan

Ridge regeneration

As we work to regenerate the Ridge, it is nice to know that the Ridge regenerates others. Overheard on a bus this week were two women, one of whom had just moved to Canberra and to a suburb near the Ridge. She revealed to her friend that she thought Cooleman Ridge was 'the most beautiful place' and that it 'had changed her life'.

Dominic Nagle