



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

**Newsletter
May 2022**

***Previous Meeting
Sunday 10 April 2022
The Old Dam***

A pleasantly mild afternoon for just six of us as we met at Freebody Place and then walked up and over the Ridge to the Old Dam. Here we inspected the new plantings and proceeded to clear and weed an area around each one. We also pulled out *Fleabane*, *Umbrella Sedge* (*Cyperus eragrostis*) and took the rose hips off briar roses which were growing along the fence line. Unfortunately, a large blackberry patch was also located in amongst the grass down the western slope behind the seat.



Natasha Oates and Paul Shiels working at the Old Dam
Photo: Natasha Newman

***Next Meeting
Sunday 15 May 2022
Anniversary Seat***

Time: 1.30 pm – 4.00 pm.

Meet: Darrell Place.

Bring: hat, gloves, water to drink.

Task: weeding.

Contact: Linda Spinaze 6288 6916

June meeting: Sun 19, Darrell Place.

We also hacked out some large clumps of phalaris grass along the western edge of the dam. In Linda's absence, Chris Oates lead the group which also comprised Natasha Oates, Natasha Newman, Doug Tinney, Paul Shiels and Rob Lundie.

Rob Lundie

New Public Officer and Waterwatch Volunteers

After over 10 years as the Group's Public Officer, Doug Tinney is finally stepping down and will be replaced by Natasha Newman. Thanks Natasha. The duties of a Public Officer involve each year submitting details about the Group's financial situation and Committee members. Thanks Doug for all your work. Meanwhile, Helen Govey and Peter Lindenmeyer have offered to take over the Waterwatch role. Thanks Pat for 12 years of diligent monthly water testing.

Coleman Ridge in new edition of Australian Walking Book

Good to see that a walk along Coleman Ridge has been selected as one of just eight ACT walks for the second edition of the book *Walks in Nature: Australia* by Anna Carlile.

Natasha Newman

Setaria or Pigeon Grass



Setaria parviflora

Photo: Linda Spinaze

Setaria is a widespread genus of plants in the grass family. The name is derived from the Latin word "seta", meaning "bristle" or "hair", which refers to the bristly spikelets. Its common name is pigeon-grass (but I don't know why!!). This exotic weed is now widely naturalised in coastal regions of northern and eastern Australia. Several species of *Setaria* have been used as staple crops throughout history: foxtail millet (*S. italica*), koralı (*S. pumila*) in India, and, before the full domestication of maize, *Setaria macrostachya* in Mexico. Several species are still cultivated today as food or as animal fodder, such as foxtail millet (*S. italica*) and koralı (*S. pumila*), while others are considered invasive weeds. *Setaria viridis* is currently being developed as a genetic model system for bioenergy grasses.

Other species have been cultivated as crops including *Setaria palmifolia* (highland pitpit) of Papua New Guinea, where it is cultivated as a green vegetable; *Setaria parviflora* (knot-root foxtail), historically cultivated in Mesoamerica; and *Setaria sphacelata* (African bristle grass) of Sudan, a "lost millet" of Nubia. Although *setaria* has been present on Coleman Ridge for many years, it has up to now presented in small, discreet patches. However, the recent wet weather has encouraged its growth, and it is now evident along many of our paths. It tends to grow amongst other grasses, which makes management a bit tricky. Management of this weed includes manual removal, although this method will use up many volunteer hours. The other options are the use of glyphosate, and/or a selective weedicide. Or do we leave it and hope that future warm, dry weather prevents further spread??

Linda Spinaze

Why are weeds so prolific and what can we learn from them?

Why are weeds so successful? According to Zoe Xirocostas, plant ecologist on the ABC's Big Ideas program on 27 April 2022, it is because they grow quickly, reproduce early and compete fiercely. In half of all invasive plant species the reason they are so successful is because they are eaten less in their new environment than in their native one. So they can grow faster and spread further. For the other half of weed species, they survive easily because they fix nitrogen in their roots better than all the plants around them. This means they can obtain more nutrients from the soil, grow quicker and spread further. For others it may be that they occupy a very specific niche that no other plant has been able to exploit. Weeds are best at rapidly invading disturbed sites, logged areas, parks and bushland with altered fire regimes. Zoe warns that climate change is altering our environment and that weeds will take advantage of this. We can learn from weeds by being more adaptable to change, taking advantage of our surrounding resources and doing both of these in a timely manner.

Rob Lundie