President’s Report for Cooleman Ridge Park Care Group. 2022

We’ve had another amazing year of rain and growth on the Ridge, and the forecast is for another rainy, cool summer. Although some of our native plants have benefitted from the water, especially around our dams, many other species are struggling to compete with the exuberant exotic species. Most of our trees have rejoiced in the change from drought to flooding rains, but a few of our very old trees appear to be not managing well with the constant moisture around their roots. We are hoping that they survive long enough to enjoy drier times again. However, the *Xerochrysum viscosum* is springing up everywhere in large patches and will look magnificent in a few weeks’ time once the sun warms up.

The Group has again spent the majority of our energies over the year on reducing the weeds on the Ridge. Our monthly weeding parties have tackled the old favourites – verbascum, fleabane, and some woody-weeds like briar-roses and blackberries. Most of the volunteers have used manual removal methods, with some spraying carried out by individuals at various times. There have been a few extra impromptu parties organised to tackle particular areas.

The new plantings at the Old Dam are generally surviving very well, despite competition from the tall grasses which we have had trouble controlling due to not having permission from PCS to use whipper-snippers. Some of the plantings have died due to the excess water. They were the incorrect plants for what turned out to be such a wet spot.

Our wombat near the Old Dam continues to be very active in digging out his apartment under the Bicentennial Trail. The road has been repaired at least twice, but he has returned each time to re-build his house. Currently we have a stalemate since the road is too wet for any vehicle to come in and repair the road, and too wet for the wombat as well.

The Group met in February to discuss various items. We decided that we would change our monthly weeding locations so that we could cover different areas of the Ridge. Our current schedule is now as follows: above Chauvel Circle, around the Old Dam, near the Anniversary Seat, above Darrell Place and above Lincoln Place towards Mt Arawang. Other locations can be tackled as the need arises.

In addition to our monthly weeding meetings individuals are encouraged to look after their special areas on the Ridge. This year the following volunteers have spent many hours weeding their patches – Paul Sheils, Ingrid Rehle-Williams, Chris Oates, Natasha Newman, Jenny Horsfield, Alan Ford and Linda Spinaze. Arminel and Pat Ryan have offered to take over the lovely area above Chauvel Circle which had been looked after by Reet, who died earlier this year.

For many years Pat Ryan has performed the monthly task of checking our two dams for their water-quality under the auspices of the ACT Waterwatch program. Pat decided to retire from this duty earlier this year after many years of monitoring. Many thanks Pat for your amazing effort. And thank you to Helen Govey, Peter Lindenmeyer and Robyn Gow for taking over this time-consuming and exacting task.

The website has been reviewed and many changes to the presentation have been made although the information is roughly the same as it always has been. We now need to post up a lot of photos of the Ridge. Rohan Thomas is keen to step down from his position of Webmaster, and we are looking for someone to replace him. Jenny Schapcott has kindly offered some assistance, but is unsure of her experience in taking over all the tasks. Many thanks to Rohan for his constant work in this area over many years.

Rob Lundie has continued his sterling work as Editor of our monthly newsletter. There are always many items of interest, and he reports on any activities which occur on the Ridge. This year the March edition had a very interesting article written by a local, Wendy Hahn, about the variety of butterflies which were fluttering in big numbers over the Ridge at that time of year, and Peter Lindenmeyer’s more recent article about frogs was also very informative and useful.

I’d like to thank the rangers from Parks and Conservation who have assisted us to manage the Ridge this year. Particularly for co-ordinating the spraying of our weeds, (although the weather made it difficult to be effective) and also for the huge assistance in the recent planting near the Square Reservoir by the Stromlo Forest Scouts. Not only did PCS provide most of the plants, and guards and stakes, but they also used their augers for digging the 120 holes needed for the plants.

In April this year the U3A organised a couple of short hikes around the northern part of the Ridge. Thanks Rob for organising these, and we know that they were enjoyed by everyone, despite the trouble some participants had in squeezing through some of the gates. Luckily PCS have now decided to make new squeeze-throughs a larger size to accommodate stiff hips and back-packs.

Rob has also organised some identifying signs for some of our trees on our northern paths. These signs are very discreet, with most of them being placed at the base of the tree-trunk. We hope that some of our visitors will notice and appreciate our eucalypts even more when they have names to help identification.

After December weeding party last year we finished off with a very enjoyable Christmas celebration at Lyndal’s house in Chauvel Circuit. Many thanks to Lyndal for providing us with a dry place under her balcony.

Finally, I’d like to thank the Committee, Chris Oates, Rob Lundie, Paul Sheils, Helen Govey, Rohan Thomas and Jenny Horsefield, for their enthusiasm and assistance during the year. Doug Tinney is stepping down as Public Officer, and Natasha Newman is taking up this position. Thanks Natasha.

Additionally, I’d like to thank all those willing workers who turn up at work-parties and enjoy the opportunities and views that the Ridge provides.

Linda Spinaze

President

Cooleman Ridge Park Care Group

November 2022.