



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter
February 2023

Previous Meeting
Sunday 15 January 2023
The Old Dam

Five weeders (Jenny Shapcott, Paul Sheils, Linda Spinaze, Chris Oates and welcome new member Michelle Bright) trekked over the Ridge to the Old Dam. This was the site where, in March 2021, we hosted a half-day land care event with the Southern ACT Catchment Group for 14 young people, involving the joint planting of a range of native bushes and grasses. Our Group periodically checks the progress of these plantings. While there had been some expected attrition, we found that many of the plants were surviving and some thriving. Good performers included plume grass (*Dichelachne crinita*), red-stemmed wattle (*Acacia rubida*) and woolly tea-tree (*Leptospermum lanigerum*). One interesting group of survivors were the long-stemmed bluish green plants of the genus *Eryngium ovinum* (Blue Devil), with beautiful blue star-shaped spikey flowers.

We weeded carefully around the bases of the plants, checking to ensure that we didn't grub up natives by mistake. Linda's expertise was invaluable here. We also inspected the corflute plant guards, replacing damaged ones. In some cases, the plants had grown so well that we felt confident we could dispense with the guards.

The site remains heavily infested with phalaris grass. We clipped back some of it, but the area needs regular whipper-snipping. We look forward to the completion of current Parks and Conservation Service review of volunteer use of whipper-snippers.

Next Meeting
Sunday 19 February 2023
Above Chauvel Circle

Time: 8.30 am – 11.00 am.

NOTE TIME

Meet: Chauvel Circle.

Bring: hat, gloves, water to drink.

Task: weeding.

Contact: Linda Spinaze 6288 6916

Mar meeting: Sun 19, Darrell Place.

A couple of small frogs (probably Common Eastern Froglets) observed our work with interest.



Blue Devil (*Eryngium ovinum*) \\
Photo: Chris Oates

Chris Oates

Resting place for turtles on the Old Dam

A recent posting on the Group's Facebook site lamented the lack of places for turtles to get out of the Old Dam and sun themselves. Helen wondered: 'What would it take to have some large dead trees/branches put into the dam to replace ones that used to be there?' With the dam currently quite full, the only obvious resting place for the turtles is a large rock on the water's edge across from the seat. Years ago there was a very large log placed at the northern end and the turtles regularly sunned and even mated upon it. When the dam was all but empty, a wombat made its burrow under the log. However, as the log has been submerged for a long time, maybe Helen's suggestion could be implemented along with some large rocks.

Paul Sheils and Rob Lundie

The wombat and the BNT – the story continues

From the photo below it can be seen that logs have been placed on either side of the Bicentennial National Trail. This is a temporary measure to reinforce the sides of the trail. After lots of rain last year the burrow under the trail flooded and collapsed creating a major hazard to all users of the trail, not to mention rendering the wombat homeless. There is still a large hollow on the trail and more work needs to be done to restore it to its former and safe glory. Parks is awaiting storm damage insurance money to come through before undertaking more permanent repairs. We will continue to log events as they arise.



Logs marking the former wombat burrow
Photo; Helen Govey

Helen Govey and Chris Oates

Dogs and Ducks and Dams

It is lovely to see dogs enjoying the Ridge and it is understandable that after a hot walk they will want to cool off in the dams. However, Coleman Ridge is a nature reserve and its dams home to ducks and grebes. While chasing them is great fun for the dogs, it is terrifying for the birds. If it happens often enough, the birds will simply go elsewhere. And none of us want that. So, please restrain your dog from swimming in the dams.

Linda Spinaze

Biodiversity networks

The Group is looking to develop its contacts with other ACT conservation organisations. Peta Bulling, Biodiversity Campaigner with the Conservation Council (ACT(CCACT) and an executive member of its Biodiversity Working Group (BWG), joined Helen and Chris for a walk around the Ridge on Wednesday 1 February. It gave us an opportunity to explain what we do, our particular biodiversity issues, and canvas issues of mutual interest. We walked for nearly two hours, around the Ridge. Areas canvassed for potential cooperation included:

The CRPCG alerting BWG to developments that could affect biodiversity. A key concern here is the possible environmental implications of the Western Edge Investigation Area. You can find CCACT's Western Edge webpage [here](#);

Developing networks with environmental groups through BWG contacts and resources, including organisations such as the Canberra Ornithological Group and Friends of Grasslands;

CRPCG access to BWG advice and resources, to enable better surveying, mapping and monitoring of the Ridge's flora and fauna.

We are very grateful to Peta for taking the time to visit us, for her attentiveness to our concerns and for her ideas. We look forward to working with her and her organisation.

Helen Govey and Chris Oates