



# COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter  
November 2023

***Previous Meeting***  
***Sunday 15 October 2023***  
***Darrell Place***

An overcast and slightly windy afternoon for five weeders: Helen Govey, Hamish McGlynn, Natasha Newman and Chris Oates welcomed new weeder Yoji Yishii, an environmental scientist from Japan doing research in Australia for a PhD. We focussed on the area to the east of Darrell Place, between the Cutoff Drain foot track and the Centennial trail that runs up to the small dam, opposite 'Kangaroo Valley'. Here we found extensive new growths of St John's Wort, some remaining spikes of *verbascum* as well as new rosettes and clumps of wild sage just coming into flower. We cut and bagged the *verbascum* seed heads and dug out or dabbed the new rosettes. The St John's Wort was also tackled by clipping the new growth down low, a method that has worked for the Mt Taylor Park Care Group, whereas digging out the weed risks leaving roots. A lot of wild sage along the path was chopped out. We also cut down and poisoned some woody weeds, briar roses and *pyracantha*. A large blackberry patch, with many outlying canes, was treated similarly.

*Chris Oates*

## **Cattle; burn-off; weed control stewardship**

The cattle have now been removed from the Ridge after doing their job of reducing the fuel load along the National Trail and with

***Next Meeting***  
***Sunday 19 November 2023***  
***Freebody Place***

**Time:** 8.30 am – 11.00 am. **NOTE TIME**

**Meet:** Freebody Place.

**Bring:** hat, gloves, water to drink.

**Task:** weeding – attacking woody weeds

**Contact:** Linda Spinaze 62886916

**Dec. meeting:** Sun 17 Dec Lincoln Place

(more info on this last for the year next time)

whipper snipper type efficiency. Interesting how they knew to carefully avoid the St John's Wort stalks.

We expect a fire-reduction burn to take place in early December. It will affect the area between Kathner St and Freebody Place, and include Coleman Trig. A PCS ranger will attend the burn to ensure no collateral damage occurs. Tree labels will be removed and replaced after the burn.

Efforts are ongoing to attack and reduce some of the invasive weeds on the Ridge e.g. Chris Oates has done a lot of work in submitting a couple of EOI's for the ACT Gov Community Stewardship Weed Control Support Program. Success with these EOI's will greatly support our work on the Ridge.

*Helen Govey and Linda Spinaze*

## Coolleman Ridge Old Dam. How's it going?

Have you ever wondered what's in the dams on Coolleman Ridge – apart from that mysterious purple Azolla on the Old Dam and the occasional turtle or teal?

You would be surprised! Each month some people from the CRPCG take samples of water from both the Old Dam and Kathner Street Dam to assess the water quality. This information is collated by the Southern ACT Catchment Group (SACTCG).

Each October, volunteers survey both dams as part of the ACT-wide Frogtober. And once a year, one of the dams is chosen for a more in-depth assessment. This year it was the turn of the Old Dam, and a few CRPCG volunteers (Helen, Robyn, Natasha and Peter) joined SACTCG water specialist Martin Lind to see how the assessments are done.

Using a net, Martin took samples of water life from the dam, and poured these into flat white dishes. We then pored over the dishes and, surprisingly, we managed to see quite a few small animals that Martin identified: mayfly, damselfly, caddisfly nymphs, small worms, beetles, water boatmen and pond snails. A disappointing number though, and particularly given that in 2018 when the dam came close to drying up there was a greater overall number of bugs eking out an existence in the warm smelly water. It would seem azolla is not harbouring a hidden world of water bugs – is it actually preventing them from thriving? Interesting also to compare the Old Dam to Kathner St Dam, which hosts different types of water animals including yabbies and even large water scorpions! Is there any good news? Yes, there is! The hard work of the CRPCG around the Old Dam has produced measurable improvements in the dam's surrounding habitat. The last survey in 2021 scored the 'riparian zone' as 'Poor' with low numbers of native plants and a lack of things like logs and leaf litter seen as essential for a healthy ecosystem. This year the score increased to 'Fair' with a notable increase in all these things. By contrast, Kathner Dam only had 'Poor' surrounding habitat at the time of her last check up in May. We can see from all this how vulnerable the 'dam life' is, which serves as a reminder to ensure our pets are kept on lead.

*Martin Lind, Peter Lindenmayer and Helen Govey*



*Natasha, Peter, Robyn, Helen Photo Martin Lind*



*Martin Lind – bug catching Photo P. Lindenmayer*

## Whipper-snipping on the Ridge

On Sunday 22 October, ranger Tenzin offered to do some whipper-snipping for the Group. Currently no volunteers are allowed to use whipper-snippers, so we jumped at the chance. We asked Tenzin to reduce the tall growth of the *phalaris* grass around the Old Dam, being careful to avoid the very similar *Carex appressa* which is about the same size and shape as the *phalaris*. Our plan is to spray/dig-out the *phalaris* when it starts to regrow, and hope that the native plants will dominate the area adjacent to the Dam. Tenzin also chain-sawed a medium-sized deciduous tree. Thanks Tenzin.



*PCS Ranger Tenzin Phuntsho Photo Linda Spinaze*

*Linda Spinaze*