



# COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter June 2012

## *Previous Sunday meeting 20<sup>th</sup> May (Group Area Central)*

Seven people, including new member Ali, blitzed Group Area Central on a clear, sunny and wonderful Sunday afternoon. Perfect autumn weather, the like of which we boast about in Canberra (and fail to mention the blizzard-like conditions such as occurred the following weekend). It wasn't just Park Care types who were out and about. I'd not seen so many dog walkers, strollers and lookenpeepers wandering around the Ridge. It was good to see the Ridge being put to such assiduous recreational use.

To highlight our activities we went for the demonstration effect and worked along the track through the middle of the area. Verbascum, salvia, horehound, blackberry and African Love Grass all took a hit in plain view of the recreationalists. Hopefully our presence was noted and will strike a chord.

*Doug*

## *Giant European Wasp Nest!*

A giant European Wasp nest was discovered recently at Lions Youth Haven on Kambah Pool Road. An ACT Parks and Conservation Service Rural Officer quickly poisoned the wasps and destroyed the nest. This nest would have contained many thousands of European Wasps and were a major hazard to the public and nearby livestock.

According to Dr Philip Spradbery, wasp expert with Territory and Municipal Services, the number of European wasp nests recorded has increased by 15% compared to last year.

Image from  
[www.tams.act.gov.au](http://www.tams.act.gov.au)



Anna See [anna.m.see@gmail.com](mailto:anna.m.see@gmail.com)

## **Future programme**

*In the cooler months, we hold afternoon sessions.*

**Next meeting – Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June  
Group Area South – Arawang, meet at  
entrance to horse paddock on Namatjira Dr**

- 1.30 – 4 pm
- Plant ID; remove exotic growth.
- Wear long sleeves and trousers, enclosed shoes, hat and gloves. Bring raincoat if it is wet.
- BYO drink & snack.

*Contact Anna 0407 217 651 if you need any gear or more info.*

Nests are generally hidden underground or in wall cavities so are not easily seen. However often you can see a steady stream of wasps flying in and out of a small hole or cavity which would lead to their nest.

Please keep an eye out for any wasp activity and contact the European Wasp Hotline on 6162 1914 if you suspect you have discovered a nest.



*Nest being removed near Kambah  
Photo by Dr Phil Spradbery*

Web site URL: [www.coolmanridge.com](http://www.coolmanridge.com)

## What's around

### Double-barred Finch *Taeniopygia bichenovii*



Geoffrey Dabb (COG)

The Double-barred Finch is notable for its white face bordered by black, black and white spotted wings and distinct black band across its chest. They usually feed in flocks and have a bouncing, undulating flight pattern. You often hear them before seeing them as their call is a low, drawn out “tzeaat, tzeaat”.

**Distribution:** The eastern race, *bichenovii*, is found from Cape York down the east coast to south-eastern Victoria. It is an uncommon breeding resident of Canberra (*Canberra Ornithologist Group: www.canberrabirds.org.au*) and Cooleman Ridge is lucky enough to have a resident flock.

**Habitat:** Prefers dry grassy woodlands and scrublands, open forests and farmlands. It is never far from water. Frequently heard and spotted around dense vegetation on Mt Arawang.

**Feeding:** Feeds mainly on the ground eating seeds. It will also take insects, especially when breeding.

**Breeding:** Builds a rounded nest, with a side entrance and short tunnel into an inner chamber lined with fine grass, feathers and plant down. The nest is placed between 1 m to 5 m from the ground in pandanus or thick shrubs, or even in the eaves of a building, often close to an active wasps' nest. Both parents incubate and feed the young.

Information from *Birds in Backyards* <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net>

## Fleabane *Conyza bonariensis*

As this year has been an exceptional year for Fleabane, Steve Taylor, Senior Invasive Plants Officer in ACT Parks and Conservation Service has offered some information and advice on this weed.

Flax-leaf Fleabane (*Conyza bonariensis*) has become widespread in the ACT this year. It is primarily a weed of disturbed sites but it does spread easily, as you have seen, into inter-tussock spaces. It is normally more of an issue in humid areas – but clearly our wet summer has allowed it to become more prevalent in the ACT.

### What we know:

- The respected ‘Weeds of the SE’ reference book by Richardson et al classifies it as a widespread weed across a variety of habitats in SE Australia. Not regarded as a serious invasive plant or environmental weed.
- being a daisy it does spread well into disturbed areas and open vegetation.
- it won't form mono-cultures in un-disturbed areas
- it fills inter-tussock spaces where it can temporarily (because it is an annual) outcompete some small native wildflowers

So it spreads well but the impact is relatively low in native grasslands. That being said there may be a limited number of sites where we would like to

control it, for example

endangered or high quality wildflower sites.

As Parkcarers work in conservation areas we cannot simply boom spray. Spot spraying of rosettes could be done in later winter early spring with Brush-Off at 10g per 100L water under our ACTPCS off-label permit no. 13420. That would be very time consuming, and as you know there are far greater invasive weed priorities. But if there is a localised infestation in a reserve and Parkcarers have time – then hand removal before seeding would be useful to protect a wildflower site. If the Fleabane is already widespread it would be a poor use of time to work on Fleabane control at the expense of time that could be spent on controlling the mono-culture forming invasive grasses.

Steve Taylor - Senior Invasive Plants Officer in ACT Parks and Conservation Service  
Edited by Anna See



