

COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter January 2014

Previous Sunday Meeting 15th December GAS Arawang

We were blessed with a cloudy, coolish morning for our last working bee of the year. Willing hands carted up gear and morning tea. Three parties spread out for the blitz.

Party 1 (1F) chipped out a large bag of *Serrated Tussock **Nassella trichotoma* bearing unripe seed. Plants sprayed in August got another zap if showing green tinges.

Party 2 (1F, 2M) sawed down the savagely thorny Hawthorn *Crataegus* monogyna*. After felling half the copse, the chaps put paid to an enormous Twiggy Mullein *Verbascum* virgatum* for good measure.

Party 3 (1F, 3M) did lots of weeding and poisoning – Blackberry *Rubus* fruticosus*, Great Mullein *V.* thapsus* &c. *Phalaris* aquatica* fell to the mattock.

We all admired the lovely grass seeds of Wild Sorghum *Sorghum leiocladum* and abundant fruit on the canes of Wild Raspberry *Rubus parvifolius*. Morning tea was duly served and enjoyed, with yarns told and photos taken.

Thanks to all for a sterling effort!

Barking Mad

Our Friday Weeders report visits by a woman and five (5!!) off-lead dogs in and around the Kathner Street dam. Canberra Connect has promised attention when staff is available. If you see the “lady” and her pack of pooches, please send Gösta an email about the time and the circumstances – he’s keeping score. (gosta@esc.net.au)

Future programme

In the warmer months, we meet in the mornings.

Next Meeting – Sunday 19th January
Nature Trail & Pauline’s Patch

Time: 8.30 am – 12 midday

Parking at Kathner St Entry

Plant ID; remove/poison weeds.

Wear suitable protective clothing

BYO drink & snack to share.

Queries? Contact Arminel 6231 7392

For the diary

Tuesday 18th February 5.30 – 7.30 pm
Southern ACT Catchment Group Park Care &
Share Session 1-

Native Vegetation Identification at Kathner
Street with Arminel & Gösta.

Contact 6296 6400

Thursday 20 Feb 12.30 pm
Anna See – ‘Centenary Canberra BioBlitz:
bouquets and bushbats.’

Australian National Botanical Gardens
Theatrette

Anna will report on the first Canberra BioBlitz,
a Centenary event held to discover, identify
and record the region’s biodiversity.
(Friends of the ANBG lunchtime talk)

Trail Trials

Vandals attacked our pamphlet box at the foot of Mt Arawang at the end of December. Thanks to our vigilante for a quick repair job.

Tatiana’s Report Received – Ta!!!

This study of weeds and native plants at Kathner Street is to be placed in our Library. Our June 2013 newsletter has details.

What's around

Lesser Brown Blowfly or Bluebodied Blowfly (*Calliphora augur*)

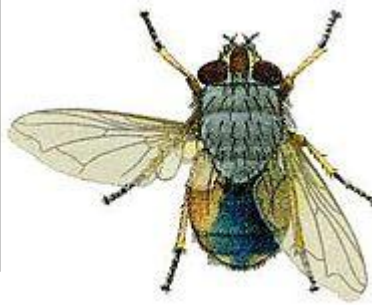
Kingdom: *Animalia*; **Phylum:** *Arthropoda*; **Class:** *Insecta* (CSIRO *Hexapoda*); **Order:** *Diptera*; **Family:** *Calliphoridae*

The large brown, blue-black and metallic coloured Blowflies are associated with spring and summer but are found throughout the year, feeding on the corpses of dead animals, hastening decomposition. (Roadkill Eastern Grey Kangaroos no doubt afford ideal breeding conditions for many!) They are of great forensic importance and can be used to determine time of death in some circumstances, depending on the species of blowfly and the stage of development found in a cadaver. The group also includes the economically important Australian Sheep Blowfly* *Lucilia cuprina*, which apparently can't compete with native blowflies on carcasses, except in the case of sheep! Footnote – CSIRO's Blowfly Insectary No. 2 was "the first purpose-built veterinary entomology laboratory in Australia and perhaps the world." (1997 heritage report). The insectaries are now "derelict, unusable and unsafe" (CT).

Genus: *Calliphora* (from Gk. *kalli* = beauty, + *phoros*, bearing, carrying).

Species: *C. augur* (from Lat. *augur* = augury, soothsayer, seer)

Calliphora augur thrives in hot weather. It is a common visitor to houses and was the first native blowfly to be noted as a perpetrator of flystrike on sheep. Females lay living maggots capable of feeding immediately. They breed mainly in carcasses but will lay larvae into wounds, weeping eyes, etc.
Body length: 11 mm.



Illustrative view from above showing the blue patch on the abdomen.
Image © free

Information from Dr Philip Spradbery, Wikipedia, Garry Levot, Sheep blowflies (PRIMEFACT 485 JUNE 2009 – NSW Department of Primary Industry), KR Norris (Abstract - Daily patterns of flight activity of blowflies (Calliphoridae : Diptera) in the Canberra district .. Aust. Journal of Zoology 14(5) 865 – 853 Pub. 1966), CSIRO Entomology website, and Canberra Times 5 Sept 2013.

Doug's Great Encounters

Every now and then something comes along in the great outdoors which causes an observer to gape in wonder. I recall the day a group of us down the coast came across a diamond python swallowing a black cockatoo. Another time, we watched the seemingly synchronised breaching of hump back whales. Never forgotten either, the charge of a lace monitor up on its hind legs coming straight for you because it thinks you've got something for it to eat!

Well, it was Saturday morning, 25°C. heading for 35°C., on the Ridge just past the Lincoln Place houses, when the two of us pulled up at the sight of a lithesome, shiny, 1.3 metre brownie on the edge of the track.

Eyeballing each other at 15 metres, Mr Brownie decided, even with our feet stamping to simulate a herd of buffaloes, we weren't very scary. Casually, disdainfully, he started a slow passage across the track - quite wide, say 5 metres, at this point.

Then the winged marauder made his move. Flying fast from behind us, the wattlebird skimmed across the head of Mr Brownie clacking his beak and totally bamboozling the snake. Big strike attempt by our lowly serpent, but back came the wattlebird. Same pattern, different side.

Mr Brownie dug the scales in and headed flat out for the cut-off drain. Mr Wattle Bird kept up the harassment for half a dozen sweeps, really annoying the snake which couldn't get anywhere near landing a fang. The bout concluded when Mr Brownie crossed the drain, then up the man-made rock wall (designed to stabilise the steep slope) on the other side, and into a crevice. That new crevice was interesting in itself, but I do always keep an eye out around rocks on the Ridge during creepy crawly season. So should you.

Doug Tinney