



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter January 2015

Previous Meeting - Sunday 21st December GAC Darrell

Beautiful sunshine greeted us for our deferred session at this site. Quantities of *Eragrostis curvula* African Lovegrass, *Rosa rubiginosa* Sweet Briar and *Acacia baileyana* Cootamundra Wattle fell to our onslaught. Well done, team!

Craig Wainwright was also out on the Ridge that morning. We exchanged news and greetings (see his email next column).

We did not visit Graham's patch, as he was a bit poorly. We're very glad the indisposition was temporary!

During morning tea, members chose seedlings to cultivate in their own gardens. Doug's *Solanum linearifolium* Mountain Kangaroo Apple and Pat's *Mentha laxiflora* Forest Mint, sourced originally from the Reserve, made great gifts for our volunteers.

Future programme

NB – Remember! We meet in the mornings during the warmer months!

Sunday 18th January Group Area South (Arawang)

Time:- 8.30 am – 12 noon.

Bring:- hat, gloves, hacker, drink, snack, raincoat if it is wet.

Tasks:- Plant ID and weed removal.

Plus:- Woody Weed Spotting Walk, led by Alan with GPS. (1st Leg 9.30 – 10.30; 2nd Leg 10.30 – 12.30). We'll fit in our Monthly Meeting & Morning Tea around 10.30 am.

Chronicle from Craig

"It was good to see you all out working today [21 Dec.], very impressive considering it's only days before Christmas.

"Wombat burrow [Old Dam Fire Trail]

I was able to get the road assessed today. We drove a tanker over the area and it created a sink hole. Our roads guy from the Fire Management Unit has noted the issue and will attend to it in the coming week(s).

*"Nest boxes [near Old Dam Fire Trail] **

I removed one old nest box from the site near the wombat burrow. I left one box in the tree as it had an Owlet-Nightjar taking refuge in it. I checked out a few other boxes as I drove around and saw evidence of possums but no Indian [Myna]s, which was good.

"Merry Christmas to you all and thank you for the great work you have achieved this year.

Cheers

Craig

ParkCare Support Officer"

**Ed's note. – this is a report on sleuth work on mystery boxes we'd found and queried.)*

New Year's Eve at George's Gully

Wednesday Weeders have planted the remaining 12 tubestock seedlings of *Mentha laxiflora* Forest Mint into a drainage line of our Arawang worksite. Pat nobly carted 10 litres of water up for the task. We hope they take in the cool damp places we've put them. (The parent plant on the Trig seems to have carked it.)

We also removed a few *Nasella trichotoma* Serrated Tussocks from the drain.

What's around

Christmas Beetle *Anoplognathus pallidicollis*

Kingdom: Animalia; **Phylum:** Arthropoda; **Class:** Insecta; **Order:** Coleoptera; **Suborder:** Polyphaga; **Superfamily:** Scarabaeoidea; **Family:** Scarabaeidae; **Genus:** *Anoplognathus*

These Scarabs are known as Christmas beetles because they abound in both urban and rural areas close to Christmas.

There are 2 genera and 34 species of Christmas beetle distributed throughout Australia. The genus *Calloodes* are mostly green and found in tropical areas. Most *Anoplognathus* species are brown and occur in the higher rainfall areas of the southern and eastern states.



Image from CSIRO Entomology

Scarab – from Gk KARABOS, via Lat. *scarabeus* = a beetle. To the Egyptians, the scarab was a symbol of the enduring human soul.

References – Encyclopaedia Britannica; various online sources including Wikipedia CSIRO, and *A Guide to the Beetles of Australia* by George Hangay & Paul Zborowski

Anoplognathus pallidicollis - the most common Christmas Beetle.

Description – Adult beetles are usually between 20 and 30 millimetres in length. They have small, clubbed antennae and spiky legs. They fly noisily and clumsily.

Life Cycle - From December to January, adult Christmas beetles mate and lay eggs into the soil surface.

Larvae are commonly known as Curl Grubs or Scarab Grubs. They develop through three stages (instars). In warmer areas of the country, they spend one winter in the soil, emerging as adults the following spring. In cooler parts of the country, larvae spend two winters in the soil.

Under cooler conditions larvae only reach the second instar in the season following laying. They continue to grow and develop for another season before pupating. They pupate in a chamber near the soil surface.

Several waves of emergence can occur from late November through to February. Three factors affect emergence: - species, individual characteristics (passing through one or two-year life cycles), and when rain falls. Winter rains enhance larval survival. After spring rains, or thunderstorms, mass emergence can often occur as the ground becomes moist enough for adults to emerge. During dry conditions, Christmas beetles may remain inactive in the pupal chamber for a few weeks. In very dry conditions, adults can perish in the soil waiting for suitable rains.

Christmas beetles emerge late afternoon and can fly distances of several kilometres. Most flights occur at dusk, with beetles often attracted to outdoor lighting.

Impacts – Christmas beetles are voracious eaters and can defoliate the trees on which they feed (eucalypts particularly but not exclusively). The larvae feed on roots and organic material underground. In grazing land with few remnant trees, these beetles can breed up in huge numbers because of the abundant underground food sources for larvae, but then have limited leaf supplies for the adult beetles. Isolated trees are subject to dieback and death in these circumstances. The larvae sometimes damage suburban lawns. However, both larvae and adults are important food-sources for many birds, including Magpies and Crimson Rosellas.

Looking at Legless Lizards

Craig tells us Richard Milner is doing *Aprasia* rehabilitation experiments at the Molonglo. He expects to report mid 2015.

Bye-Bye to the Byers

Best of luck to Ian and Co., who are expecting to be moving interstate soon.

Greetings from Gösta – he sent us a postcard from Myanmar, en route to Sweden for Christmas.

Training opportunities ahead

Let us know if you'd like to attend!

1. Chemcert courses in February and August.
2. a number of information sessions, including
 - *Burning regimes in the CNP* (?February),
 - *Canberra Nature map* (?March),
 - *Smart phone memory map* (?April),
3. A one-day parkcare forum (?July)