



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

**Newsletter
March 2021**

Previous Meeting **Sunday 21 February 2021** **Darrell Place**

A warmish morning greeted 12 weeders: Paul Sheils, Brigitte Brickwood, Helen Govey, Doug Tinney, Peter Flint, Rob Lundie, Chris Oates, Jenny Horsfield, Rohan Thomas, Linda Spinaze. Also, it was great to welcome newcomers Natasha and Alex Newman. They showed that putting out the signs pays off. Jenny introduced Natasha to the Ridge, and they dabbed verbascum and wild sage. Alex, Chris, Peter and Linda cut 'n' dabbed briar roses on the "Western Ledge". Helen, Brigitte and Rob attacked verbascum, fleabane and briar roses around the Large Reservoir and along Panorama Way. Rohan sprayed verbascum and sage. Doug and Paul took out African Love Grass and verbascum.

In other developments: blackberry spraying has begun and a new seat has been installed at the Old Dam.

Linda Spinaze

Grading the Trails

In preparation for the controlled burn off and to enable easier access to trails, much of the Bicentennial National Trail from Kathner St around to the Old Dam was graded to repair the severely eroded parts. Similar work was done near the reservoir up from Darrell Place. A much smoother and wider trail in parts is the result. Until very recently, the section of the Canberra Centenary Trail that connects the Big Reservoir with the Round Reservoir

Next Meeting **Sunday 21 March 2021** **Lincoln Place**

Time: 8.30 am – 11.00 am

Meet: Lincoln Place

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

Task: Weeding of invasive, exotic plants.
Native plant identification.

Contact: Linda Spinaze 6288 6916

April meeting: Sun 18, Mt Arawang

was a pleasant, typically rural walking/cycling track with a grass centre and flat grassy sides, protected by this vegetation from erosion. As a result of the grading, a flat three metre wide road has been deeply gouged out: dusty, unattractive and almost certain to result in more erosion, the steeply-cut sides were already crumbling when Linda and Chris inspected it on 23 February with the rangers. Other new roadworks on the Ridge seemed to be of a similarly poor standard. This was not the work of the rangers, who explained that standards for access roads had been revised and upgraded. They now have to be wide enough to cope with a medium size FWD truck with trailer. Although PCS do have ultimate responsibility for the reserve, they are hampered by the fact that so many other utilities (gas, electricity, water, fire, telcos) have access to and carry out work on the Ridge, often without informing PCS. Ranger Nina is planning to take this issue up with the appropriate area in her agency.



Grading the trails

Photo: Deirdre McKeown

Chris Oates and Linda Spinaze

Fire control burn

On 19-20 February, Parks conducted a slow burn off on the Ridge. Some dampness in the grass meant an extra day was required to complete the job. Unfortunately, areas the Group had designated not to be burnt were in fact burnt. As a result, Linda and Chris met with rangers Nina, Marty and Chris on 23 February with Alan coming along to lend support. While the overall project has been undertaken carefully, with lots of small patch burns and minimal scorching of the trees, we were concerned that areas we had noted as needing particular care had been damaged. Ironically, two rather important areas: the wahlenbergia patch on the Bicentennial National Trail near the gate, and the fenced triangle in the Cow Paddock (established to protect the *Indigofera australis* and a variety of other native species from the grazing cows), seemed to have received a particularly conscientious burn. This was despite the wahlenbergia being protected by wire netting and the triangle guarded by the fence. Nina confirmed she had given thorough instructions to the firies on the Friday about the sensitivity of these areas. However, neither she nor anyone else from PCS had been available to attend on the Saturday, when a new group of firies were rostered. Some of the firies are volunteers, and it is not clear how far any briefings were relayed to them. While the PCS people clearly did their best with the resources available, we agreed that communication channels need to be improved, including: updating the fire plan from 2019; having a ranger familiar with the

area to be on continuous duty during burns; ensuring contact between fire authorities and the CRPCG directly before a burn and if a ranger is not available then a CRPCG volunteer should have the opportunity to advise fire-managers of the location of protected areas. We would like to thank Nina, Marty and Chris for a productive discussion and we look forward to amendments to the protocols to avoid this happening again.

Chris Oates and Linda Spinaze

Cats on Cooleman

Each year feral and pet cats are responsible for killing up to three billion native animals and birds and even threatening the survival of their species. This impact has been heightened following the summer fires of 2019/20. A subsequent Federal Government inquiry made recommendations for strategies to mitigate the damage. With many Canberra suburbs close to nature reserves, allowing cats to wander poses a serious risk. I was stunned to see this large cat on the Ridge before Christmas.



Cat on the Ridge

Photo: Helen Govey

It is also in the interest of cat owners not to let their cat roam because of risks to the cat's safety and health. ACT regulations require that all cats must be microchipped and desexed unless they have a special permit. There are now many regions in the ACT declared as 'cat containment' areas with more to follow should an area be deemed a serious conservation threat. The ACT Government sets out [your responsibilities for keeping cats](#).

Helen Govey