



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter
October 2022

Previous Meeting
Sunday 18 September 2022
The Old Dam

A fine but windy afternoon for five of us (Chris Oates, Paul Sheils, Jenny Shapcott, Doug Tinney and Rob Lundie) to tend to the area around the Old Dam. We inspected the new plants, removed any grass and trimmed around each tree guard. It was pleasing to see that many of our new plants have survived despite the wet conditions. Chris attacked clumps of Phalaris although it was hard going in the boggy area near the water's edge. Paul retrieved some rubbish from the dam. Then we all set to to attack the rather large and spreading blackberry between the dam and the farm fence. As Doug said: We may not have eradicated it but we have certainly slowed it down. We will need to keep on top of this weed as we had to the one at the base of Mt Arawang years ago.



Paul trims around the guards Photo by Rob Lundie

Rob Lundie

Next Meeting
Sunday 16 October 2022
Anniversary Seat

Time: 1.30 pm – 4.00 pm.

Meet: Darrell Place.

Bring: hat, gloves, water to drink.

Task: weeding.

Contact: Rob Lundie 0418291735

Nov meeting: Sun 20, Darrell Place.

Remote control mower

I spotted this remote control, miniature, tracked, vehicle capable of working in wet and/or twiggy conditions such as those up from the cavalletti at the moment. I don't know whether it was just a trial. Now if someone could invent a remote controlled weeder.



Remote controlled mower

Photo by Malcolm Gill

Malcolm Gill

Demise of a Yellow Box

At a recent Parks planning meeting, we raised the condition of the large Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*) near the Darrell St entrance, which appears to be suffering from the boggy conditions. We were advised that little can be done since even improving the surface drainage is unlikely to affect the situation down at the deep roots.

Chris Oates

Reet Vallak – a valediction

[Reet Vallak, a prominent member of the Cooleman Ridge Park Care Group, died on 1 May 2020. Following a memorial service this year, Arminel Ryan shares her memories of Reet – Ed]

I knew Reet a little from well before my time in the Cooleman Ridge Park Care Group. In the 1970's we were both active members of the Canberra Bushwalking Club. So it was a privilege for me to renew that acquaintance much more recently in the Group. Cooleman Ridge divides the Weston Creek suburban area, where Reet lived, from the Tuggeranong Valley, where I still live. For both of us, south and north of this watershed, Cooleman Ridge was Bush in the Backyard, to be treasured and cared for. The Park Care Groups formed in the early days of the Canberra Nature Park, Reet joined, of course, no doubt encouraged by her dear friends from Mt Stromlo days: Gosta and Pauline Lynga. The redoubtable founder of our Group, Bess Sledge, kept detailed records of work done. The Group's diary from January 1994 to December 1997 shows Reet's amazing contribution to the back-breaking labour. Here are two typical entries from January 1994 on the introduced weeds she removed:

27 Salsify, 50 Skeleton Weeds, 101 Flatweeds, 30 Thistles

20 Salsify, 560 Skeleton Weeds, 300 Flatweeds

Rain, hail, fog or merciless sunshine, Reet turned up. The task was never-ending. Her dogged determination never flagged. The piles of weeds she made rotted down to be replaced by native plants, regenerating from the seed-bank in the soil, restoring original vegetation. By the time I joined the Group in 2006, Reet's patch was amazing. As well as

its wonderful views to her beloved mountains, its trees and bushes were a haven for many birds and the ground a garden of wildflowers, ferns and graceful grasses. Orchids grew and bloomed there that we found nowhere else in such profusion. Like her old friend Pauline, she taught me the patient regeneration techniques developed by the Bradley sisters in Sydney, adapted to our own harsh local conditions. Local knowledge, local responsibility, repeated treatment! Love and devotion!! As members of the "Friday Weeders", Reet and I often exchanged a few words. When I became President of the Group, I came to value even more her knowledge and skills. In common parlance, you might say that her glass was always half empty, but the truth of her was much more than that. I will never forget her using a scythe to demonstrate how best to fell tall grasses! A skill from her own homeland, long lost by our mechanized and electrified masters here! And then there was the "heritage weed" on which she declared war. Season after season, she chopped out Great Mullein, until she no longer had the strength to wield the tools: Great Mullein! Such a useful plant to our early white settlers! Such a persistent curse on the landscape now! Her method of control beats anything else, to my way of thinking. I cannot ever see Great Mullein now without remembering Reet. Vale, valiant woman and warrior.



Great Mullein (Verbascum)_ Photo by Pat Ryan

Arminel Ryan

Annual General Meeting

10.30 am Sunday 20 November 2022.
Meet at the end of Darrell Place, Chapman.
All welcome.

Rob Lundie