

COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter
July 2016

Previous meeting

Sunday 19th June

Group Area Central: Darrell Place

If the rain had come half an hour earlier June's meeting above Darrell Place would probably have been cancelled. However, as it came as Rohan, Malcolm and Rob walked up to the weeding area, they tacitly decided to keep going. Although it drizzled all afternoon and was a bit cold, by the end, it felt like it had been a worthwhile effort. Malcolm dispensed with 121 Cootamundra wattles a Rohan and Rob pulled out countless verbascum rosettes. Even though there were lots of them, at least the rain softened the earth so they came out relatively easily. Rohan also tackled his 'favourite' plants.

Rob Lundie

Lightning taking a short trip off a Stringybark

Where would you expect lightning to strike on Coolleman Ridge? The usual answer, I expect, would be on Coolleman Trig, the highest point on the Ridge. However, there is clear evidence that lightning struck a tree near the base of the steps to Trig – next to the drain parallel to Monkman St. Three photos show the early (Picture 1) and later (Pictures 2 and 3) effects. The first of these was in 2012 and the later ones in 2016.

The tree was affected from top to bottom beginning with a strip of bark blown from the trunk and the detached bark pieces strewn around the base of the tree (Picture 1) This is

Next Meeting

Sunday 17th July

Group Area South: Mt Arawang

Time: 1.30 pm– 4 pm

Meet: Horse paddocks, Namatjira Drive

Bring: hat, gloves, hackedrink, raincoat if it is wet

Task: plant identification and weeding

Contact: Rob Lundie 6288 4125

consistent with lightning taking the easiest route down the tree – in the moist tissues beneath the outer bark. As it travels it rapidly boils the water in the cells of the tree causing them to explode and blow away the outer bark.

The tree survived this strike although there was considerable damage. The first picture shows the initial stages of death – browning of the foliage – while the full view of the tree shows many dead branches (Picture 2)

Sometimes, the bark blown from the tree can be heated so much that it catches alight and starts a fire that spreads across the landscape. There was no sign of charring on the bark blown from this particular tree.

When there is a fire at this tree in the future the loosened bark around the wound will burn more readily. The exposed wood, now dead, will be charred and sometimes smoulder away to the extent of creating a hollow. Given a number of such fires, the tree can be killed

from the inside and collapse as the dead inner wood of the trunk is burned away.

Picture 3

This tree is working to cover its wounds. Notice the rounded reddish-brown new growth of bark poking out beneath the loosened old bark on the left side of the lower pictures (2 and 3). This new growth has the potential – eventually – to cover the wound and again, thereby providing some protection of the trunk. Maybe the tree will not be able to completely cover the wound close to the ground because of root death. Perhaps insects and fungi will attack the tree before the wound can be closed? Keep watching.

Picture 1

Article and photos by Malcolm Gill

The Yarralumla landscape

Frederick Campbell owned the lands that now form the southern suburbs of Canberra and include Cooleman Ridge. The Commonwealth acquired his property – 39,670 acres – in 1912/13.

Picture 2

In February 1913 Campbell sent a letter to the Territory Administrator David Miller, detailing the improvements on his estate, for which he required compensation. They are of interest to us now as they give an idea of the kind of expensive land management required to succeed on the land in European style – and keep it productive. Campbell lists: 500 miles of drains to abolish Fluke; rabbits cleared off 16,625 acres at 10 shillings an acre; briars, countless thousands destroyed; 39,000 acres cleared of noxious weeds, including thistles, blackberries and Bathurst Burrs; 81 flood gates in 66 miles of netting; planting and sheltering 1800 willows and osiers for edible use and shade; 401 oak trees planted near river for making bullock yokes; 10,683 red and yellow box trees have been selected, marked and protected for posts, sleepers and blocks lasting 50 years in the soil; trees and dead timber netted for firewood on Black Hill (Mt) useless timber and scrub killed and burnt off.

Jenny Horsfield