



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter December 2006

Previous Sunday Meeting, November 19th

Those of us who made it to the summertime 8 a.m. start felt really pleased with ourselves as the morning heated up and we were well on the way to cutting and dabbing the last of the woody weeds behind Cooleman Trig.

There were fewer woody weeds than last time (April 2005) mainly *Pyracantha* sp., *Rosa rubiginosa* and some deciduous saplings so our progress was rapid. Amongst a spread of *Hypericum perforatum* we found the spectacular yellow-flowered shrub that had puzzled us last year, and that Paul had recently named as the exotic garden-escape *Hypericum calycinum*. So it went, too, as did a new season *Pinus radiata*.

We had already taken a look at the forlorn Grazing Trial area where, as Malcolm put it later "browsing on shrubs was in the order *Acacia dealbata* (most) >> *Bursaria*, *Rosa* and *Cassinia* (branch tips removed only) > *Eucalyptus* (not browsed but some breakage of limbs as usual). The African Love Grass is still present". We ourselves saw that the *Indigofera australis* had been thoroughly chewed, and there was no sign of the *Daviesia mimosoides*; of the other *Acacia* species only a few feathery leaves remained (at ground level). The *Erodium crinitum* had vanished. Cattle seem partial to family Fabaceae

On the hillside just outside the trial fence, with similar aspect, there was a cheering display of *Hibbertia obtusifolia*, *Pultenaea procumbens*, *Pimelea curviflora* and native grasses. The *Brachyscome spathulata* flowers were spent. What a difference a fence can make! ☼

Future programme

We will continue to rotate through the three Group Areas (GA) when there is no special programme, meeting as usual on the 3rd Sunday of the month.

Start: 8 a.m. November, December, January, February

1.30 p.m. during the rest of the year ☼

Next Sunday meeting, December 17th

- GAC/Darrell for clearing of exotic growth,
- **8 a.m. to 10.30a.m.**
- meet at Darrell Place or GAC/Darrell
- bring hat, gloves, hacker, drink, snack, raincoat if it is wet ☼

November log

Cattle grazing along Bicentennial Equestrian Trail
191106 *Hypericum calycinum*, *Pinus radiata* removed
behind Cooleman Trig

231106 Bearded Dragon near step-through to GAN ☼

Pauline Lyngå, 6288 7009, paulyn@iinet.net.au. Decemberr 2006

Arminel's Kathner St journal: 3 Nov 2006

Spent this morning consolidating my weed piles, a task I had been deferring. It has been so hot, dry and windy since August that I had not wished to face the dust in them. Today, after yesterday's thunder showers (3.5 mil in our garden at Kambah), it was cool and damp enough to deal with them. I was pleased to find that the skeleton weed (*Chondrilla juncea*) and sheep sorrel (*Acetosella vulgaris*) patches underneath them were almost completely suppressed, and the remaining plants easy to remove.

Pauline showed us the seeds of *Desmodium varians*, which is everywhere showing its trifoliate leaves. This plant seems to relish the dryness while its rival ground cover, the sheep sorrel, struggles in the drought. We know this plant well – every bushwalker has at some time had to pick its myriad little sticky seeds out of their socks!

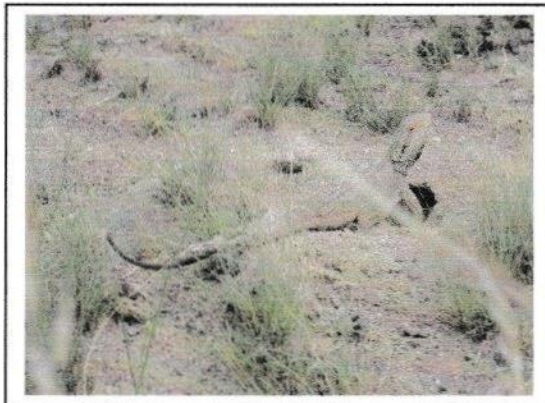
Gösta showed us a white-flowered *Orobancha minor* – not a native, but an interesting parasitic exotic, which is more usually pink. He also pointed out his clump of "Blue Devil" – the attractive *Eryngium ovinum*.

I watched a White Plumed Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus penicillatus*) in furious pursuit of a Noisy Friar Bird (*Philemon corniculatus*). After driving the much larger Friar Bird away, the Honeyeater regaled itself with insects from a patch of the newly cleared earth, before flying back to its own tree further down the hill.

Jenny, John, Pauline and Gösta were all there today.

(Thanks, Arminel! How about other members writing of their time spent on the Ridge? Ed.) ☼

Dragon



Malcolm's picture ☼

Dry

Kathner St dam was close to empty at the end of November. Has anyone records (photos, notes) of it being dry at any time before the fire? Or any memories of it being so?

My photo records show it dry July-August 2004, and March-June 2005

How about the Old Dam? It has a much longer history. ☼

What's around

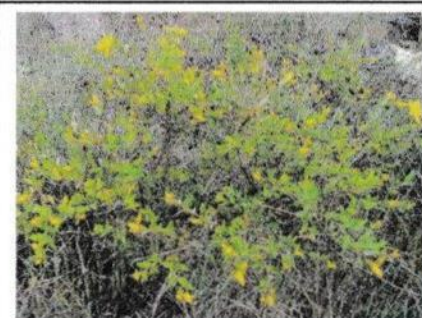
Family CLUSIACEAE



**Hypericum perforatum* var. *angustifolium* – St. John's Wort
Erect several-branched shrub.
causes photosensitivity in stock
hypericon Greco-Latin: St John's Wort,
per L. through + *forare* to bore,
angustus L: narrow,



Hypericum gramineum – Small St John's Wort
Erect native herb 10-40 cm
hypericon Gr.-L. St John's Wort,
gramen L: grass (grass-like)



**Hypericum calycinum*
Shrub
hypericon Greco-Latin: St John's Wort,
Caly- Gr: calyx cup
Native of Europe

DRAFT: TOWARDS A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR COOLEMAN RIDGE CANBERRA NATURE PARK (continued)

Herbaceous weeds, widespread on the Ridge, include *Phalaris aquatica*, Wild Oats (*Avena* sp.), Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*), Paterson's Curse (*Echium plantagineum*) and St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*). Thistles are thick in some places. It is likely that some or all of these species have been spread by cattle and sheep. "Camps" of these animals under trees have promoted dense populations of Horehound, Thistles and Paterson's Curse in places. *Phalaris* is a vigorous persistent perennial grass while Wild Oats is a dominant annual which suppresses some other species to the extent that they are confined to the soil seed pool until the oats are removed. Suppressed species include the weed *Lactuca serriola* (Wild Lettuce).

The study of the plants and animals of the Ridge has hardly begun. The interplays of suburb and farm with the Ridge ecosystems need to be understood in order to support good management. The study of the natural history of animal /plant associations would add to the intrinsic interest of the Ridge. Disturbance regimes that tip the balance of performance from exotic to native for both plants and animals need to be known. What roles are there for herbicides, fires, weeding, and controls on foxes, dogs and cats? Are nesting hollows of native species being colonized by introduced species?

Note: the whole draft can be read on our web site ☼

International Volunteers Day

Gösta went to the Park Care Lunch at Weston Park, on Tuesday 5th. It was a nice opportunity to meet members of other Groups, and to talk to Rebecca, Briony, John Freeman and other staff members.

Best wishes to Rebecca for a joyous maternity leave. ☼

Arminel's Kathner St journal: 17 Nov

I missed last week, having gone away for a couple of days.

We had very cold weather on the 15th. The air was cool still, but the sun was shining quite fiercely as we toiled. The hillside is looking parched again. The *Desmodium varians*, so healthy looking on the 3rd, seems to be struggling this week.

Bush flies came out in force as the day warmed up. I was very glad to have a veil, for they were a torment to Gösta and John.

I continued removing skeleton weed (*Chondrilla juncea*) and sheep sorrel (*Acetosella vulgaris*).

My highlight of the day was moving a small rock and finding a small pale scorpion underneath it. The little creature was still there an hour or so later, when I carefully moved the rock aside again to show Pauline, Jenny and Reet. Will it be there next time?

Pat brought lunch for me and we enjoyed a picnic in the shade near the dam. Only the usual native birdlife was around – superb fairy wrens (*Malurus cyaneus*), crimson and eastern rosellas (*Platycercus elegans* and *P. eximius*), red-wattle birds (*Anthochaera chrysoptera*) and of course the ubiquitous magpies (*Gymnorhina tibicen*). The exotic common myna (*Acridotheris tristis*) unfortunately seems to have thriving colonies in the three eucalypts closest to the dam – we watched them going in and out of a hollow. ☼

Mynas

Bill Handke in Kambah writes:

It is very difficult to gauge the proportion of the myna population we are trapping. ANU research suggests we have around 250 mynas per sq km. In my area of sixty houses off to the side of the rest of the suburb, six trappers have taken out over 400 mynas since Feb. The numbers diminished considerably. As we were taking them out, the void was being replenished by birds coming into the area, until we had largely taken out the close recruitment ones as well.

We still get them around – and occupying tree hollows – but in very much lower numbers. ☼