

COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter
August 2018

Previous meeting
Sunday 15 July
Mt Aawang

Another sunny but nippy winter's afternoon especially when a breeze got up. However, nine of us (Chris, Rohan, Rob, Linda, Gosta, Jenny Doug, Alan, and new volunteer, Karl) gathered at the entrance to the horse paddocks on Namatjira Dr before heading up to Mt Arawang. It was good to welcome Karl and our new ranger, Marty who came bearing gifts of clothing and tools. Up on the slopes it was great to see that there was very little sign of our nemesis the large blackberry patch. This was probably not surprising given the season and lack of rain. We spent the afternoon mopping up phalaris and verbascum noting the latter is more prevalent near the summit where Linda, Karl and Marty dug out a good number of thistle rosettes.

Rob Lundie

Pigs on the Ridge (continued)

Readers will have noted in last month's newsletter a piece on this topic. Well, since then more observations have come in about the activities of feral pigs. Of course, nobody actually has seen a porker, just evidence of their searching for food. Pigs forage mainly in softer ground around water or in a gully softened by seepage. Their foraging could be mistaken for ploughed ground such is the turnover of soil containing grass and roots. The potential for erosion is very high as the grasses they disturb take some time to re-establish. Anecdotal pigs have been on rural

Next Meeting

Sunday 19 August

Kathner St

Time: 1.30 pm– 4.00 pm

Meet: end of Kathner St

Bring: hat, gloves, secateurs, dabbler, hacker, drink, raincoat if it is wet

Task: plant identification, weeding

Contact: Linda Spinaze 6288 6916

Sept meeting: Sun 16 Sept Chauvel Circle

leaseholds between Coolleman Ridge and the Murrumbidgee River for a number of years. Until now there has been no evidence of their having got onto the Ridge. There are three sites on the Ridge where pigs have left their mark. The first area is near the horse troughs at the base of the Arawang saddle. In the ten days since first noted, the affected area has almost doubled. The second site is adjacent to the old dam. This area has received quite a workover with extensive diggings in the soft ground. The third area is into the 3.5 hectare paddock just up from the dam. This area is opened to cattle in the annual fuel reduction grazing program during spring. Given it is fairly close to the old dam, maybe it's an opportunist striking out from the well worn area below. There is some disturbance on the rural leasehold not far from the first site on the Ridge. But it does not seem to have expanded in recent weeks. Besides, it's close but not actually on the Ridge.

Doug Tinney

During the June working party I came across some small patches of saffron thistle on the hill above Chauvel Circle. I chipped them out but, as it happened, saffron thistles were on my mind at the time because I had discovered what a disastrous effect they had on the land in the interwar years. One of the soldier settlers at Tuggeranong was forced off his block by an invasion of thistles. Below is an extract from the book I'm writing about these men and their struggles.

Saffron thistle is regarded as a significant pasture weed in most Australian states. Native to the Mediterranean, it was introduced to Western Australia in the late nineteenth century and spread east. It competes with crops and other useful pastures for light, nutrients and moisture. Its stiff, spiny leaves discourage grazing and can injure the eyes and mouth of livestock. Hay and chaff contaminated by the thistle can have a similar effect. Dried seeds contaminate wool and can cause injury to shearers. Men were known to have gone on strike rather than shear contaminated wool.

Saffron thistle had been identified as a potential noxious weed in the territory as early as February 1915 when Charles Scrivener had forwarded two weed specimens to Joseph Maiden of the Sydney Botanic Gardens for identification. Maiden identified them as saffron thistle and star thistle. They were already growing in quantities on land north of the Molonglo. By 1918 nearly all the leased land in the settled part of the territory was infested with both Bathurst burr and thistles, including the grounds of the Royal Military College, the paddock of St John's Rectory and most vacant city blocks. By December 1919, thistles were growing along all the road verges, except in the remote southern areas. Gangs of men were set to work on Commonwealth lands, and lessees were notified of their urgent responsibility to control the invaders.

Alexander Powell was a returned soldier, veteran of both the Boer war and the Great War where he served with the Imperial Camel Brigade in the Sinai. He applied for and was granted a block of land in what is now the Tuggeranong town centre. By 1921 his land was fenced and ready for grazing. But Powell was faced with a battle on the land. Briars, whose seeds were spread prolifically by birds

Saffron Thistle

Photo: Canberra Nature Map

and took root in cleared ground, were taking over. In November 1921, the department sent Powell a stern letter on 'destruction of briar: work must be taken in hand immediately and completed within six months'. His block was also identified as one on which saffron thistle was spreading. To be continued next month.

Jenny Horsfield

Updates to the CRPCG Web Site

I have updated both the Animal List and Plant List on the Group's website. The lists now contain additional entries that were recorded on the Canberra Nature Map web site (<https://canberra.naturemap.org.au>) but were not on our own lists. There are also new columns called Category and Sub Category that allow for better sorting and filtering of list entries (e.g. Birds, Reptiles, Mammals, etc). Lastly, the lists also have new functionality such as paging, global searching, column selection and search totals. Check it out! www.coolemanridge.org.au

Rohan Thomas