COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter August 2006

Previous Sunday Meeting, July 16th

Weren't we lucky! The forecast was adamant about rain, it rained all Saturday and then held off all Sunday. The ground at GAN/Chauvel was beautifully wet and rich with nematodes, white grubs and earthworms. Weeds came away easily exposing large clumps of *Lomandra*; *Cheilanthes* species were greening and there were vivid splashes of moss. We encountered no *Echium plantagineum* or *Malva neglecta* even though they were growing under the grove of *Eucalyptus nortonii* not so very far away – the site of an old cattle camp. Still, there was plenty of *Chondrilla juncea, Acetosella vulgaris, Phalaris aquatica* etc. to keep us going and to bring us back when spring comes.
Welcome to Tammy. ☼

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 at 1.30 p.m. ☼

Next Sunday meeting, August 20th

- Fuel reduction trial areas, vegetation assessment and GPS measurements
- 1.30 - 4 pm
- meet at Monkman St entrance, or at the water trough above Monkman St
- bring hat, gloves, weeder, drink, snack, raincoat if it is wet.

Come and share your plant ID and GPS skills, or learn from those who already have them
If you have a GPS, bring it along, as well as your reading glasses and a pen. David will be leading us. ☼

Nature Trail to be reopened

Ten years ago the Cooleman Ridge Trail was opened with a festive ceremony, and hundreds of Weston Creek residents went for the inaugural walk in the sunny winter weather. Through the years thousands of walkers have used our trail, read the information, enjoyed the views and become aware of our work.

It was a great occasion when the Cooleman Ridge Park Care Group last month received an ACT Environment Grant to resurrect the walking trail and that work will soon commence. The burnt posts will be replaced, new landmarks will be pointed out and a new pamphlet will be designed and printed to be available at the Kathner Street and Monkman Street entrances. This will involve discussions in our group and perhaps also some working bees. Again the Nature Trail will be opened, hopefully some time during the coming autumn.
Gösta ☼

Mynas

Bill Handke, interim president of the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group reports:
At the moment we are collating the capture data for July. Up to the end of June we had removed 2779 mynas from the Canberra environment, so we are hopeful of another good result in July. The Group continues to grow, with over 110 members — 50 of those trapping across Canberra. The Group has been liaising with the RSPCA, who have now agreed to a collaborative arrangement with us in tackling the Indian Myna problem in the ACT. We are most grateful to the RSPCA Council for this association. For more information, contact Bill on 6231 7461 or handke@grapevine.net.au ☼

July log

040706 habitat logs placed in both dams
mid month echidna seen crossing track to Fence Post Hill
250706 notice board Perspex shattered irreparably ☼

Rumours

Regarding the grazing trial rumours mentioned last month, David (Monkman St) reports having heard from Red Hill residents that fencing is being carried out in the reserve.

David (Lincoln Place) has had all three rumours confirmed (yes the cattle will be returning, no the cattle won't be returning, and their reintroduction to Red Hill).☼

Sugar

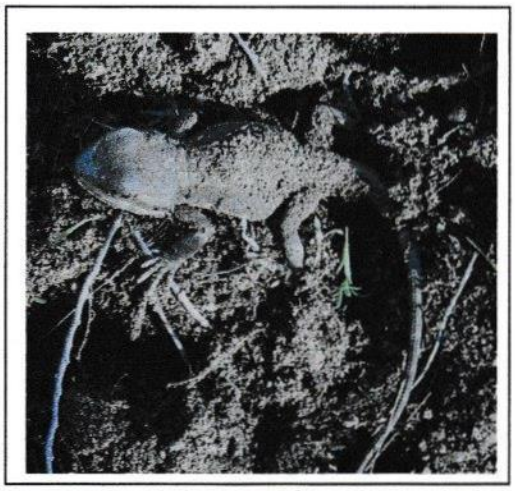
Bernadette Brown, (the ranger we met when Graham drove us round the Ridge looking at the weed situation) has sent us a very useful report of the outing, and adds:
I am also looking at some methods that the group could consider for the control of verbascum and thistle. And I am researching into methods that have been tried for control of annual grasses i.e. using sugar to suppress growth of annual weeds, this is the URL **http://www.csu.edu.au/herbarium/FullText/Prober%20et%20al%202005%20sugar.pdf**. I am looking at some projects in the Cowra area as part of the rebirding of the Lachlan catchment, that we may be able to get some ideas from.
Feral Bees are now in two trees of the area burnt as part of the hazard burn.
Current Works in the reserve at Guinness Place are for a new tower for communications, into the ACTEW reservoir area.
Thanks, Bernadette.

Frogwatch Census

To participate, first attend a free Frogwatch training event.
Contact Rachelle McConville, Waterwatch Coordinator
Phone: (02) 6278 3309
Email: waterwatch@ginninderralandcare.org.au ☼

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

Wolf Spider: found and photographed by Doug ☼



Common Bearded Dragon: found by Arminel. Gösta was nearby with camera. ☼

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

There was no clearing on *Cooleman* from 1937 onwards but there were aerial applications of superphosphate (13 cwt per acre per year, about 1.7 t/ha, from 1950 to 1969) and pasture seeds. *Phalaris aquatica* was established where ploughing was possible. Over the period of the Champion's lease sheep carrying capacity multiplied by 5 times with wool yield per sheep increasing by 3 times. However, with the establishment of suburbs nearby, domestic dogs took a toll of sheep. Up to 2000 sheep were lost overall, the maximum rate of loss being 70 on one night. By 1996 the reduced holding carried about 100 cattle and a similar number of horses, the latter mostly on agistment from individual owners. No cattle reside on the property now (1997).

As part of the development of Weston Creek two reservoirs were built on Cooleman Ridge (for Rivett and Chapman) and a major cut-off drain was dug in a line above the houses and unsealed service roads were established. A number of non-indigenous eucalypt species 2 or 3 rows wide were planted out in long strips, each strip terminated by a planting of *Acacia floribunda*. There are two farm dams on the reserve, the one near Kathner Street (at the far northwestern corner of the Ridge) excavated in 1993.

As occurs for the whole of the ACT, the Ridge is subject to the Territory Plan. Hills in the Canberra region, like the Ridge, form part of the backdrop to the city and are mostly managed under some category of "open space". This 187 ha area was set aside as a Reserve in 19xx but was declared as part of CNP (Public land - Nature Reserve) only in October 1993. The new status of the area brought it under formal management. *(to be continued).*

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

Wild food plants of Australia.

Thanks, Arminel for this contribution

Native Millet: *Panicum decompositum*

Other Names: Native panic, umbrella grass, cooly, tindil, windmill grass, papa grass, kaltu (Pitjantjatjara), altjurta (Arrante)

Field Notes: Native millet is a nondescript grass with large, often pale, blue-green leaves, and very spindly, branching seed-spikes. The leaves are hairless, up to 50 cm long, and the seed spikes are 30-80 cm, sometimes up to 145 cm tall. The seeds are about 1.5 mm long. Native millet is a widespread outback grass, found on low-lying ground in most habitats. It is especially common on heavy clay soils, forming dense swards on floodplains, riverbanks, and in roadside ditches after summer rain. An important pasture grass, it is eagerly grazed by cattle and sheep.

Uses: Native millet was a staple food of outback Aborigines, and one of the most important of the native grains. The tiny seeds, produced abundantly in late summer and autumn, are easily husked by hand. They were ground to flour and roasted or baked into nutritious damper. Major Mitchell saw great heaps of this grass pulled by Aborigines for many miles along the Narran River; he rode through a field of millet which ran for nine miles. Native millet is closely related to cultivated millet (*P. mileaceum*).

At least two other species of desert millet were eaten by Aborigines. Hairy panic (*P. effusum*)*, a very similar looking grass, has hairy leaves and stems, and grows 20-60 cm tall. Bunch panic (*P. australiense*) is a smaller plant, about 15 cm tall, often with reddish leaves, and with seed heads hidden among the foliage. Its seeds were usually gathered, not from the grass, but from around ant nests.

*From Tim Low: **Wild Food Plants of Australia.** Australian Nature Field Guide, pub. Angus & Robertson 1991. p 158*

(NB The location map shows that native millet spp occur through most of inland Australia.)

*commonly found locally. See Newsletter May 2005 ☼