COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter
March 2018

Previous meeting Sunday 18 February Kathner St

The sunny morning began with a photo (below) of eight of the Group alongside Rob Horsfield's newly-installed Newsletter distribution box near the Kathner St notice board. (Another box has been installed at the Mt Arawang entrance with five more to be erected over coming weeks.) Then everyone fanned out to do their bit for the Ridge.
As usual, Rohan was the first to come and last to leave our monthly war on weeds. The battlefield was particularly hot, dry and dusty on this occasion! The Friday Weeders' erosion control work uphill from the dam was greatly helped by Pat and Rob Lundie moving weed piles to form swales in useful locations. Chris pulled out Drain Sedge *Cyperus eragrostis* aplenty from the sandy western side of the dam, while Bridgit and Linda looked after Verbascum spikes along the track. Doug and Malcolm went up the Nature Trail in pursuit of more nasties. Gosta worked within the fenced regeneration area.

L-R: Malcolm, Pat, Arminel, Rob H., Linda, Bridgit, Chris, Doug with new Newsletter box at Kathner St

Photo: R Lundie

Next Meeting
Sunday 18 March
Above Chauvel Circle

Time: 1.30 pm – 4.00 pm

NOTE: Meeting in the afternoon

Meet: End of Kathner St or at the site

Bring: hat, gloves, secateurs, dabber-doover, hacker, drink, raincoat if it is wet

Task: plant identification, weeding

Feral Fauna First!

Extraordinary things turn up on our Ridge. The photo below shows a dead white mouse, found by the working party at Kathner St.

Photo: C. Oates

Local Fauna - Yabbies

The muddy bottom of the Kathner St dam remains excellent yabby habitat. Their holes are evident to even the casual observer - some are high up the eroding bank; some are close to the receding water. Amazing creatures, to flourish in such locations!

Rob Horsfield and his Newsletter box, attached to the pamphlet box post he installed years back. Note new stirrup at base - the post had rotted.
Photo: R Lundie

Why invasive plants are so successful

The Last Word is Rob's favourite page in *New Scientist.* In it, answers are provided to questions from ordinary people like ourselves. In the 6 December 2017 issue, someone asked why 'invasive species which often start with just a few individuals and multiply to huge numbers across a continent don't seem to suffer from a lack of genetic diversity.' This answer was provided by Guy Cox, from St Albans in NSW:

"...the bottom line is that an invasive plant starts with a big advantage: its natural predators, parasites and pathogens are generally absent from its new environment. Therefore it doesn't need the genetic diversity which would otherwise ensure that such threats only affect a proportion of the population.

"In addition, a large proportion of invasive species do not reproduce sexually. The extreme example is Canadian pondweed. It blocks watercourses worldwide, yet it is only female plants that have escaped from North America. These can give rise to new plants in an entirely 'vegetative' way - seeds are never produced.

"In less extreme examples, many invasive species are 'apomictic", producing viable seeds but not sexually, so seeds are not genetically distinct from the parent. Blackberries are a classic example.....

"The other typical characteristic of an invasive species is strong vegetative reproduction through runners and roots. Even copious seed producers, such as tree of heaven and Australian fireweed, spread locally and mostly vegetatively. Sex, again, plays only a minor part.."

Lovegrass? Drain Sedge?

We all know and detest African Lovegrass, *Eragrostis curvula.* We also have native grasses of the same genus flourishing on the Ridge - particularly near the Kathner St dam. The name of the genus is derived from the Greek words ἔρως (eros), meaning "love", and ἄγρωστις (agrostis), meaning "grass", according to Wikipedia. That makes sense - they are pretty grasses. But why would Drain Sedge, which flourishes in any soggy area and is another of our invasive weeds, be called *Cyperus eragrostis*? Perhaps because it is a pretty green, and somewhat grass-like?

Weedpiles - how we use them

When first I joined the Group, we piled weeds up into great mounds - very impressive and quite in accord with the Bush Regeneration methods devised by the Bradley sisters in Sydney. We've come to use them more for swales, to create low, leaky dams across the drainage lines. The purpose is to prevent soil loss and erosion, as well as to suppress the regeneration of weeds. It really seems to work very well, with native grasses and forbs able to establish themselves and flourish where pasture grasses predominated. It is gratifying indeed to see how well Kangaroo Grass, Red Leg, Weeping Rice-Grass and the various Wallaby Grasses are doing in the Kathner St area.