

Cooleman Ridge Nature Reserve



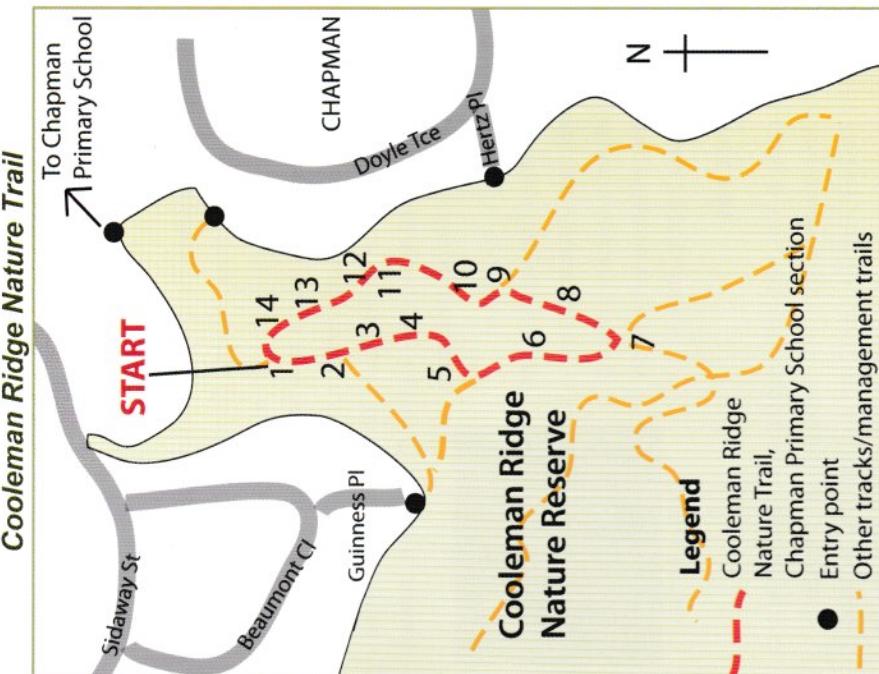
Cooleman Ridge Nature Trail,
Chapman Primary School
section
self-guided walk



Healthy Parks
Healthy People



Canberra Nature Park



Front cover: Chapman Primary School students, Cooleman Ridge park carer and Parks, Conservation and Lands Community Programs Officer working together to restore Cooleman Ridge to its former woodland condition as described in historical records.

Further Information

This brochure has been prepared by the ACT Government in collaboration with the Cooleman Ridge ParkCare Group. Canberra Nature Park: (02) 6207 2087 (business hours) Canberra Connect: 13 22 81 Websites: www.tams.act.gov.au www.coolemanridge.org



Kangaroo Grass
isolated pockets. As Canberra grew, suburbs replaced farms. However, the hills and ridges were protected to preserve native vegetation and wildlife. These reserves are collectively called Canberra Nature Park.

Many groups are working together to protect and restore Cooleman Ridge to its former open woodland condition as described in historical records. They are:

- ACT Parks, Conservation and Lands,
- Cooleman Ridge ParkCare Group;
- community members;
- students from Chapman Primary School and other schools and colleges; and
- Cubs and Scouts.

With the return of local native plants, we hope that many native bird and animal species, now rare, will also return.

Regeneration Program

Cooleman Ridge park carers are gradually removing weeds. The removal of competition helps native plants to re-establish themselves, in some cases from seed that may have lain dormant in the soil for many years.

Nearby residents are encouraged to plant trees and shrubs that won't escape from their gardens to become environmental weeds in the nearby parks and reserves, including Cooleman Ridge. Weeds such as Cotoneaster, Firethorn and Privet are spread by birds eating the seeds.

History

Since European settlement over one hundred years ago, Cooleman Ridge has been grazed by sheep and cattle. As a result of this and other land uses, exotic plants have been introduced. Many of the native trees were removed and other native plants have died out or have only survived in isolated pockets. As Canberra grew, suburbs replaced farms. However, the hills and ridges were protected to preserve native vegetation and wildlife. These reserves are collectively called Canberra Nature Park.

The Trail

By taking a stroll along this trail and following the trail markers, you can find out more about what grew here, how past land use has changed the area and the work being done to restore it.

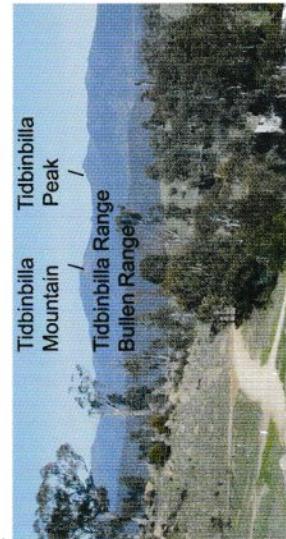
The information in this brochure refers to numbered posts along the marked trail and to the numbers on the map. The walk is 800 metres and will take from 30 minutes to one hour. Dogs are welcome but must be kept on a lead.

1. The start of the track follows the management road. To your left on the stony hill there are a number of Blackthorn *Bursaria spinosa* shrubs. Their dense habit and thorny branches provide valuable shelter for small birds while nectar from the cream-coloured flowers provides food for butterflies and native bees in summer.



Blackthorn

2. From this point there is a magnificent view of the Tidbinbilla Range, much of which is covered in eucalypt forest. The closer hills are the Bullen Range.



In conjunction with the Cooleman Ridge ParkCare Group.

You can also see thickets of Silver Wattle *Acacia dealbata*, which provide shelter for lots of birds.

Remnant trees

5. A majestic Yellow Box *Eucalyptus melliodora* stands to the left of the walking track. Heavily damaged by the 2003 bushfires, the vigorous epicormic growth along damaged branches shows that the tree is now recovering. Epicormics are generally fire-induced clusters of growth which grow just under the surface of the bark. Yellow Box trees were once common across these hills. To the left are some bushes of Native Tomato *Solanum cinereum*.



Native Tomato

6. The two Blakely's Red Gums *Eucalyptus blakelyi* that you will walk between have had various Native Mistletoe *Amyema* species growing on them. The mistletoes were badly damaged by the 2003 bushfires.

Exotic grasses

7. Many grasses in this area were introduced to feed cattle and sheep. The farmers believed these exotic grasses provided better feed for their animals. Over time and assisted by hand weeding, the local native grasses and herbs will again take over.

Ancient landscape

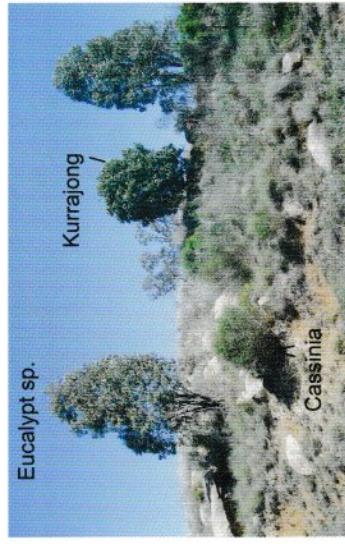
8. The rocks here, the Laidlaw Volcanics, were formed by a gigantic volcanic eruption during the Paleozoic era, 420 million years ago. The lava and volcanic ash in these formations are referred to as rhyolites and dacites. The soils formed from the rocks are also very old, fragile and lacking in nutrients. Australian plants have adapted to these soils, as have the animals that eat them. Native Australian animals cope with eating native plants that may have low nutritional value for much of their life cycle.



False Sarsaparilla

9. Below the road, False Sarsaparilla *Hardenbergia violacea* grows over the rocks, and behind it is a thicket of Native Cherry *Exocarpos cupressiformis*. The Native Cherry is a partial parasite—their roots tapp into the roots of trees and grasses. The yellow to red fruit of this tree is traditional Aboriginal bush food.

10. On your right is a eucalypt that has sprouted several basal epicormics after having been damaged by fire.
11. Above the road are more Blackthorns, and below, Hickory Wattle *Acacia implexa*. To the right you can see Native Raspberry *Rubus parvifolius*. They can be distinguished from Blackberries *Rubus fruticosus* by their smaller leaves and softer stems. Native birds feast on their fruits in early January.



Native Raspberry

12. Overshadowing the road is a Yellow Box. Nearby, are some cream-flowered bushes, *Cassinia* species, eucalypts and a White Sally Wattle *Acacia floribunda*. This wattle has flowers in yellow spikes instead of balls. There is also a Kurrajong *Brachychiton populneus* with bright green leaves.

13. False Sarsaparilla, with its glossy green leaves and purple flowers, grows on the bank. Note the big Red Box *Eucalyptus polyanthemos* to your right on the far side of the management road.



False Sarsaparilla

14. Local native grasses including a stand of Kangaroo Grass *Themeda triandra* to your left are establishing in this area.