# COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

## Newsletter May

## 2008

### Previous Sunday Meeting April 20th

GAN/Arawang benefited from a super-large turn-out, with members roaming far from the meeting rock searching out their chosen weeds.

The blackberry thicket had clearly been affected by our November spraying, but is far from eradicated. We'll spray it again in spring, while those who prefer can dig it out with a mattock. It is important not to confuse it with Native Rasberry which also grows in the area. See *What's around.* ☼

### Future programme

#### Next meeting, Sunday May 18th

- Nature Trail for clearing of exotic growth, plant ID and track work
- 1.30 p.m. to 4 p.m.
  meet at the Kathner St entrance
- bring hat, gloves, hacker, drink, snack, raincoat if it is wet ☼

### A Memorable Visit

"*It was lovely to show our ridge to a dozen visitors on a glorious autumn day. They came from a regional capital (Sydney) to see the national capital and its surroundings. They had been to Square Rock and now we were privileged to show them our areas. Two groups, one led by Pauline followed the Nature Trail, the other with me went from Kathner Street to Mt Arawang on the western side with those magnificent views of the Brindabellas, had lunch on the top and walked back east of the ridge with the wide Canberra views spreading before us.*" Gösta

### Eastern Grey Kangaroos

Before taking off on 2 months' touring, Arminel sent in the following article:

*"Controversy has raged recently over our Eastern Grey Kangaroos. I felt I'd like to know more about these herbivores, so attended an illustrated talk on 17 April by Dr Don Fletcher and Ms Claire Wimpenny from ACT Parks, Conservation and Lands (PCL). It was an excellent and timely presentation to an attentive audience, arranged by Friends of Mount Majura as part of their "Hilltop to Backfence" Lecture series. Don and Claire presented many facts and findings I didn't know. Here are a few random things that struck me and may be of interest to YOU:*

*The ACT Government has funded research into fertility control of Eastern Greys for 10 years. It is the only government to have done so. Research on population dynamics of Eastern Greys started in 2001. (Most research on macropods has been done on Red Kangaroo populations in dry inland areas. Red Kangaroos have been commercially harvested for many years.)*

*The kangaroo populations studied and counted are at Googong, Gudgenby and Tidbinbilla. These represent three different habitats within the range of the Eastern Greys.*

*Eastern Greys and Red Kangaroos appear to be very different. Research findings for Reds do not necessarily apply to Eastern Greys.*

*Eastern Greys are native to the better-watered eastern areas of Australia – and reach their highest density in the Southern Tablelands.*

*Eastern Greys are being commercially harvested in a four-year experimental program in an area surrounding the ACT.*

*Eastern Greys are not migratory. They live and die in their own familiar small areas. Females, particularly, do not willingly stray far from where they are born and bred. Their habits are essentially sedentary.*

*Their natural diet is 99% grass. Grazing is necessary to biodiversity – there is one ACT long-term exclusion zone in which there are now only 7 kinds of plant, whereas the grazed area outside has 38 species of plants.*

*Although males and females are born in approximately even numbers, in stable high density populations like the one at Tidbinbilla, fewer males survive to adulthood.*

*The fertility rate is much higher than necessary to replace the old animals that die. This is balanced by a high starvation rate amongst young kangaroos. The result is a population with high 'ecological resilience' against things like predation, disease, culling or fertility control.*

*Our region has by far the highest rate of road accidents involving kangaroos to which police are called. The Yass-Goulburn-Canberra triangle has the highest call-out records for these accidents. This is a very expensive problem.*

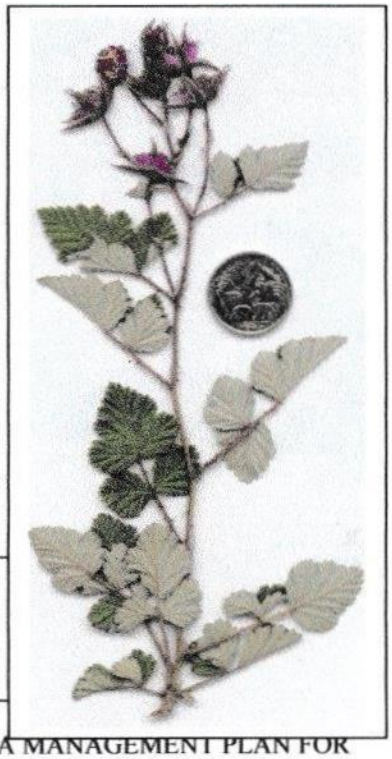
*Canberra is very fortunate to have this sort of research being done. I'm looking forward to reading more about the work of Dr Fletcher and the PCL research team. With their partners at the Institute for Applied Ecology, the Marsupial Research Laboratory, the CSIRO, and the ANU, they're working on a variety of topics, including artificial fertility control methods.*

*Artificial fertility control of course has its proponents and may be a politically attractive option at the present. Will these experimental exercises lead to actual deployment? The outcomes aren't certain and the lead time is very long".* ☼

## What's around

Family: ROSACEAE – *roseus* L: rosy. The Rose family which includes apple, pear

**Rubus fruticosus* – Blackberry
It is considered to be an aggregate of several species.
Exotic scrambling semideciduous shrub
*rubus* L: bramble bush, *fruticosus* L: bushy
chiefly native of Northern temperate regions
In the ACT it is placed in Class 3 of Pest Plants and must be contained: it out-competes other species and provides shelter and food for pests such as foxes. Birds and foxes spread the seeds in their droppings. The blackberry rust fungus, released in the 1980s, has not established well in the ACT.



*Rubus parvifolius* – Native Rasberry
Native scrambling shrub
*rubus* L: bramble bush, *parvifolius* L: small leaves

## Natural Sequence Association

Jenny has sent in this report:
"*Recently we watched a DVD prepared by the landcare group Natural Sequence Association.*
*The DVD was an interview with a landowner in the Hunter Valley, who demonstrated how this landcare regime has helped him restore his waterway, Widden Brook, from a dry, sand-choked creekbed to a healthy flowing and well-vegetated creek.*
*The Association are trying to restore something of the pattern of pre-white settlement to our waterways. This means trying to restore the 'chains of ponds' that characterised most small waterways on this continent. Instead of the European streams that flow in deep regular channels all year round, Australian waterways tended to gather in pools, spread out on flood plains in times of flood and sometimes dry up altogether. The flora and fauna of our landscapes had adapted to this ever-changing regime. White settlement brought heavy grazing, rabbits and other pests, and consequent erosion and silting up of creeks. The building of numerous dams on farm properties also interfered with the normal flow of water, and when floods do occur, often they are very destructive when they overflow the dams and rush down the eroded waterways.*
*The Hunter Valley landowner showed us how he had 'broken up' Widden Brook by throwing rocks into the creek, which impeded the rush of flood water and also trapped sediment and topsoil which then became the bed for new vegetation. He didn't particularly worry if the vegetation was weeds: he said they still trapped carbon and were environmentally useful. And eventually the casuarinas seem to colonise the waterways and replace the weeds. 'Weeds will rehabilitate a landscape faster than trees.'*
*The rock piles act like 'leaky weirs' that slow down the water flow and prevent erosion. When a major flood does occur, the water spreads out from the banks onto the grassy surround, thus starting a kind of 'flood plain' which enriches the soil."* ☼

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

FIRE MANAGEMENT

Options for the protection of life and property

There are two likely scenarios for the occurrence of fires on the Ridge. The first is the ignition of fires near the houses and the second is the ignition of fire to the west of the Murrumbidgee River and the development of a major fire which spreads rapidly in a wide front towards the Ridge area. There are many possibilities for fire scenarios of course.

Fires starting near the houses will have a tendency to burn uphill away from the suburb but the direction of spread may be strongly influenced by a northwesterly to southwesterly wind. In most cases this will create a fire front which will burn in a direction away from, or parallel to, the houses - but of course, the fire will spread out in all directions. Most fires are likely to be accidental although deliberate ignitions have been witnessed. Unless an arsonist sets a fire in a strategically bad position for the protection of life and property and on a day of extreme fire weather, most local fires are likely to be small and pose little - but not zero - threat to property. Response times of the Rural Fire Services or the Metropolitan Fire Brigade are likely to be of the order of 10 minutes.

*Note: the whole draft, submitted in 1998, can be read on our web site.* ☼

## Caring for our Country Program

Information Session: how the ACT intends to invest in Natural Resource Management.
Majura Community Hall, Rosevear Pl Dickson
Thursday 22 May 2008, 4pm to 6pm
Contact: Rebecca Blundell 0439 895 019,
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