COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter May 2014

Previous Meeting

This is easy, there wasn't one. As advised in last month's newsletter, our scheduled meeting fell on Easter Sunday. Your Committee members decided that given most of them would be away, then such was likely to be the case with other members of the group, hence the holiday.

Not Everybody Took a Break!

Challenges on Oakey Hill
Having our April group meeting cancelled, I took the opportunity to visit an energetic Park Care group on neighbouring Oakey Hill. Object of the day was to attack woody weeds, the main challenge being a dense grove of Cootamundra Wattles, but also Pyracantha and Briar Rose got their share of sawing, lopping and dabbing. Oakey Hill is, like Cooleman Ridge, an inspiring Nature Park with lovely eucalypt forest and native grasses. It really feels worthwhile to get rid of weeds in such places.
Gösta

Coming Up

Don't forget the Friday mob on their weekly working over of the baddies on Fence Post Hill. Access from Kathner Street. It's a morning show.

Also there's the Wednesday Weeders beavering away on Mt Arawang. Kick-off around 10.00am. Meet at the notice board up from the Namatjira Drive entrance.

Next Meeting –Sunday 18 May
GROUP AREA CENTRAL – DARRELL PLACE, CHAPMAN
Time 13.30 – 16.00 hours
Meet at Darrell Place.
Plant ID, kill weeds, encourage good guys.

A Grass Expedition by Linda Spinaze

On Tuesday 8th April, a small but enthusiastic group inspected the re-emergent grasses along the northern cut-drain path. Most of these native grasses had been in evidence before the bull-dozing 2 years ago destroyed them, and mowing, whipper-snippering and burning has prevented their growth until this year when a very dry summer was followed by heavy autumn rains.

We first inspected a Sporobolus elongatus (Rat's Tail Grass) which had been identified by ANBG a few years ago. It is now spreading along the narrow path above Chauvel Circuit. Nearby was another similar grass, which did turn out to be the exotic sporobolus, and has now been removed.

Walking along the main track, and above Monkman St, we found a large patch of Digitaria brownii (Cotton Panic Grass) and close by some Enneapogen nigricans (Nine-awn grass). We were a bit confused since the Enneapogen appeared to have more than nine awns, but on closer inspection there were 2 seeds stuck together! The seeds of this grass remind me of sea-anenomes!

Further on we found Dichanthium sericeum (Queensland Blue grass) right on the path, with it's beautiful silvery, furry inflorescences, reminding me of caterpillars.

After seeing a stunning spider on the path, bright blue and red, a male mouse-spider, we ended the walk above Freebody Close, where there is a patch of another sporobolus, this time Sporobolus creber. It differs from the S. elongatus by the bigger spacing of its spikelets along the upper part of the stem.

On returning along the path, we stopped to admire a huge brown snake sunning himself on the north-facing bank of the cut-drain.

What's around

Missulena occatoria

The male red-headed mouse spider is a distinctive black spider with a red head and blue abdomen. He matures at around four years of age, after which time he can be found wandering about between late summer and winter looking for a mate. He has long palps at the front that almost appear like another set of legs.

Male and female *M occatoria* were initially believed to be different species. Females are much larger at around 3.5cm, and black or brown in colour. She is a lot scarier looking than the male, appearing similar to a funnel-web, or perhaps even looking like a small mouse- one theory for the origin of the name *mouse spider.* Both sexes live in trapdoor type burrows. The less adventurous female stays close to her burrow all her life.

Online sources indicate that whilst no deaths have been recorded from *M occatoria*, the venom is highly toxic and recommended treatment for a bite is the same as that for funnel-web: apply pressure bandages, immobilise the victim and seek medical attention.
M occatoria is found across the Australian mainland in many different habitats.

Why a spider?

A mouse spider is the prime suspect in sending our newsletter editor, Arminel, to Casualty in April. She felt a bite on a finger when picking up rose hips on Mt Arawang. Unlike an ant, bee, sandfly or mosquito, the sensation was not of immediate intense irritation or pain but a tingling in the arm and a numbness at the bite site. This developed after some hours into intermittent, short duration real discomfort.

Perhaps the main concern with spider bites is necrosis. Hence the immobilising of the limb may not be the best treatment, contrary to the information above. Arminel didn't develop the danger symptoms of a bite from the most venomous spiders and after a day the symptoms subsided.

This is a timely reminder that the usually benign environment in which we work does have some unpleasant surprises.

Contributions

With Arminel last heard of on the Nullarbor heading west, your stand-in editor is blundering along struggling with formatting and wondering what to say. Hence any comments, leads, actual written pieces (thank you so much, Linda) are more than welcome. My e-mail address appears below.