



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter February 2012

Previous Sunday Meeting 15 Jan :- GAC Darrell

Darrell Place Chapman provides easy access to our central site, near the big reservoir. The views are stunning.

On this occasion, the weather was kind to the seven early starters. Anna selected and set up the long-term 20m X 20m monitoring area we are going to use, while the rest of the party worked on Blackberry *Rubus fruticosus*, attacked St John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum*, chipped out African Love Grass *Eragrostis parvifolius*, or removed Fleabane *Conyza* sp and Great Mullein *Verbascum thapsus*. A decomposing rat from under the blackberry was bagged – yes, we found a suitable rat-bag! It was later shot – with photographic equipment, of course!

Flora monitoring was done around 10 am, with four of us quickly finding 15 native plant species and 18 introduced ones within the flagged boundaries.

Tea laddie Pat provided a welcome break, then joined a group of three stayers to accompany Graham to the blackberry infestation he's been working on solo. After clearing cut canes, we climbed through boulders and a stile to a wonderful view from his Rocky Knoll. We even saw a couple of Cunningham's Skinks *Egernia cunninghami* up there – see newsletter March 2011.

'Kangaroo Mob'

Don Fletcher's documentary, that follows the lives of the urban kangaroo in Canberra, will be screened on ABC1 on Tuesday 21 February at 8.30pm.

Future programme

During summer, we meet in the morning, not in the afternoon.

**Next meeting Sunday 19th February
Group Area South (Arawang Summit Trail).** Meet at Namatjira Drive Horse Paddock entrance or GAS.

- 8 am – 10.30am
- Plant ID & clearing exotic growth. Assault woody weeds (Ta, Weeds Ranger Jenny, for your recent efforts!)
- Wear long sleeves and trousers, strong shoes, hat and gloves. Flyveils may be useful too. Bring raincoat if it is wet.
- BYO drink & snack to share. (The tea laddie will provide tea & coffee.)

Contact Arminel 6231 7392 if you need any gear or more info.

CVA Magic at Kathner Street



Photo Pat Ryan

See how the fence-line of our regeneration area divides the grassland from the degenerate roadside? Jenny and Arminel, with Tim and Ken and their team of young heroes from Conservation Volunteers Australia, spent Friday 20 January clearing Mullein and Fleabane above the dam. Many thanks, folks!

What's around

Paspalum distichum

Common name: Water Couch

Most *Paspalum* species were introduced as forage grasses, many have become widely naturalised, and some have become weeds. This native species grows and flowers in the water and on the verges of the Old Dam behind Cooleman Trig. It is being heavily grazed and trampled. Exotic Couch Grass **Cynodon dactylon* grows at the same site.

Family Poaceae

Paspalum (Lat from Gk) - a type of millet.

distichum, (Lat from Gk) adj. - consisting of two rows.

Creeping perennial grass to c. 50 cm tall, with whitish or yellowish rhizomes, and extensive many-noded, branching, stolons often forming loose mats; nodes dark, usually glabrous.

Inflorescence of usually 2, erect then more or less spreading to reflexed racemes mostly 1.5–7 cm long. Spikelets usually solitary on the pedicels, occasionally binate near the middle of the raceme, imbricate, 2.5–3.5 mm long, widely elliptic, abruptly acute, pale greenish.

Flowering: Summer.

Grows in and near fresh water; widespread.

Note - Sometimes sold as a lawn grass.

Occasionally marketed under the misleading name *Drynaria*.

Information (mostly) from PlantNET.

Scan by A. Ryan.

ID assistance – Linda & Friends of Grasslands



Photo Pat Ryan 27 Jan 2012

The heavily grazed grass in the foreground is Water Couch. Disdained by the cattle, tall *Phalaris*, *Conyza* and pink-flowered *Persicaria* are also visible close to the water. At the far side, four heifers have waded into the Old Dam, trampling emergent native grasses (Water Couch and *Eragrostis parviflora*), as well as reeds and waterlilies.

Maybe it's time for a fence to exclude stock and a water-trough to quench their thirst!!

Walks in the Park

The proposed route for the **ACT Centenary Trail** passes through our Reserve. It will mostly follow the main service road around the base, behind Chapman. Group members met with officials at Lincoln Place on Thursday 19 January to look at some sections and discuss issues. We showed off Cooleman Trig's views and easy access before tackling the eroded descent to Monkman. Thanks to everyone involved, but especially our dauntless David (Hydro) Mackenzie. Consultation will continue.

Donning his Drains hat, David also walked the length of the Chapman Flood Mitigation Works on Friday 27 with engineers Peter Tait and Amal Beharry. The three discussed various shortcomings in design and execution, and found Bathurst Burr *Xanthium spinosum* aplenty. We are all very anxious to see the many problems identified on that walk fixed up soon.