



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter December

2009

Previous Sunday meeting November 15th

This features in the President's Report that follows. ☼

Future programme

Next meeting, Sunday December 13th

- Nature Trail for clearing exotic growth from the track and surroundings. Plant ID
- 8.00-10.30 am
- meet at the Kathner St entrance, or on the Trail
bring hat, gloves, hacker, drink,

and also bring a mug and a foretaste of Christmas to share for morning tea. ☼

President's report for November

Down the drain, up in smoke

It's been a hectic month – hot in more ways than one. We'd planned two extra activities with young people - that was already stretching our resources at this time of year. Then two crises hit - Flood and Fire.

Fire

The proposal to burn-off on the Ridge came just when the Nodding Chocolate Lilies *Arthropodium fimbriatum* [*Dichopogon fimbriatus*] were flowering. We scrambled to weed around them and mark their location as well as notifying their existence to PCL via Sally McIntosh. The burn took place on Wednesday 25 in the afternoon. We will document and monitor its effects over the next month or so.

Flood (Drainage works to prevent a repeat of the 2003 flood damage in Chapman)

On 10 and 12 November, there were information sessions at Chapman Primary School about the proposed flood prevention works on Cooleman Ridge. We realised that consultant GHD's planned works would affect the Reserve, and especially our self-guided walks, Reet's patch and the fenced regeneration area at Kathner Street. So we attended both sessions.

At the same time we hastily changed our scheduled Sunday 15 weeding session at Arawang into a walk along the Management Road, with Pat Ryan providing car-shuttle services. A useful exercise, and we had some new faces with us including Kate Clulow, the environmental scientist from GHD and new member Trish Saunders. Our meeting place was at the Horse Paddock entrance. Gösta, Pauline and Linda came from the Kathner Street end. Others met us along the track.

David Mackenzie was an exemplary guide to the history and features of his patch, and the impact the works would have at various points.

To complete Kate's introduction to our treasures, she visited Kathner Street on Friday 20 November. So with Gösta and Pauline as guides she got to smell the chocolate lilies before the burn took place.

We have since written up our concerns about the proposed works and on Friday 27 November we sent them to GHD. We are asking for a lot more consultation and some changes to their plans. This 7 page document will be put onto our website.

Marist College litter collection walk

Marist College includes Community Service in their curriculum for Year 9 boys. This was the first time we'd collaborated with them on an activity.

The idea had been to walk the length of the Ridge, collecting litter, stopping for drinks and snacks and lunch, and with our carers commenting on the features of the Reserve as we went along. At 9.30 on Wednesday 18 November, Arminel, Tony and Sally met the 2 teachers and 20 boys at the Horse Paddock entry on Namatjira Drive. It was hot. There was an hour less time allowed to complete the walk than planned, as the boys were to go to a swimming pool in the afternoon because of the heat.

The event went reasonably well. No one was bitten by a snake nor by a wasp. No one got sunstroke. Sally found a straggling schoolboy as she went back to her car, and took him back to his school. The ridge was crawling with workers, mowing and slashing frantically.

The boys enjoyed climbing on boulders and ate all the Anzac biscuits I brought. They took photos on Cooleman Trig, intrigued by the "witches' cairn" there. Some litter was found – not a lot, as we were travelling fast and the wild oats grew thick and high along the track. Jenny met us all for lunch at the Kathner Street Dam, with a welcome supply of iced water. The bus arrived early and some fairly tired lads went off to their afternoon dip in the pool, while Jenny's bus took Tony and me and one bag full of rubbish to our vehicles.

Perhaps next year we will collaborate with the college to remove a stand of Cootamundra Wattle.

Gugan Galwan Kids at Risk NRM Programme – fire and regeneration.

This took place on Wednesday 25 November, and was also reasonably successful. The original intention had been to show

participants the Kathner Street area, where Jo had been particularly impressed by our regenerating bush-tucker plants. However, we had eventually decided to go to Urambi Hills for a walk instead. This proved providential – on that day, Kathner Street was closed for the control burn! Malcolm joined David Meyers and myself at Lions Youth Haven in good time. There we waited until Jo Donovan, with Ali and her charges, arrived. Gungan Gulwan means “Young Boy – Young Girl” in the local indigenous tongue. Together we enjoyed morning tea with lemon myrtle shortbread. However, the walk to the seat under the ancient Kurrajong on the hilltop was too hard for the girls. They were quite attentive to Malcolm’s explanation of scarring, but the flies and heat as we climbed were unpleasant for kids who weren’t dressed for physical activity. The girls sat down in some shade while the

boys – athletic lads all - raced up the track and climbed the tree, which was in full flower.

When we returned to Lions Youth Haven, Jo cooked us kangaroo sausages for lunch. Jenny joined us there, but Malcolm had to go. Ali was vegetarian, so she was glad to add some “Tribal Rock” – Illawarra plum and native lime lollies – to her bread! Then Dave entertained us with his guitar, a song and his poem about a 100 year old local Kurrajong, the Tree Of Knowledge, in Queanbeyan. Finally, I talked about kurrajongs and passed around my collection of empty pods from trees growing elsewhere Australia, varying enormously in size. The handout I’ve prepared is available to anyone who might be interested.

Thanks to everyone who shared the load this month. I really appreciate all the help you gave me.

Arminel ☼



Tooth and Claw on the Ridge

In the second week of November, my spouse chose to deviate from her normal route when taking her morning walk. The change in routine took her along the track skirting the Chapman reservoir (the round one that lost its roof in the 2003 fires). From an outcrop of rocks about two metres off the road came a persistent thumping noise and the “cheep, cheep” of what seemed like baby birds.

On getting a better view of the commotion, she noticed two foxes, an adult and a smaller adolescent, trying to reach something in the cave-like recesses of the rocks and discarded metal and concrete from reservoir construction - prime reptile habitat.

Not enamoured of foxes she yelled at the two, which caused the adult to retreat to safety, but the adolescent was very reluctant to give up on what was clearly going to be a tasty morsel. At this point a feral cat leapt from a crevice in the rock and took off. The adolescent fox retreated and left what now appeared to be kittens to their own devices.

Not wanting to get between a mother cat and her kittens nor a fox or two and their meal, my spouse moved on as well.

Depending on your point of view, this may be an inspiring or horrific tale. Just goes to show there is a lot happening in Spring on the Ridge.

Doug ☼

Brainwave

One of our recent awards included a bottle of wine, and Arminel’s brilliant solution was to send it on to Bess.

“What a lovely surprise I got yesterday from the postman!! My son was up for the day from Sydney and said how lucky I was to have friends who still remembered me after all my years away from the group. It was a very kind gesture from you all and I feel really humbled to think I still mean something to you all. I can assure you that the Ridge and all my Canberra friends are often in my thoughts. Once again thank you all and I hope my daughter will be bringing me down your way in the non too distant future.

Regards from Bess.” ☼