



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter July 2011

Future Programme

Previous Sunday meeting 19th June

Monthly Meeting, 19 June 2011

It was one of those beautiful blue/gold Canberra winter afternoons as eight Park Carers assembled at the Kathner Street entrance to the Ridge. The plan was to check out the final leg of the nature trail and do whatever maintenance was required. For the afternoon we were joined by Michael Sim from the Mt Mugga and Isaac Ridge group. Malcolm indicated that we should first have a look at the phenomenal surge in eucalypt seedlings he'd observed at several sites on Fence Post Hill and the open area at the end of the nature trail near where the 20th anniversary bash was held. He'd counted over sixty seedlings, some of which in the open area appeared to have been stunted by mowing. He'd marked many and was in the process of recording their progress. Given the juvenile state of the seedlings, identification is far from definitive. Possible parents include *E. polyanthemus*, *E. nortonii* and *E. blakeleyi*.

After this excitement, track maintenance seemed tame. Rock picking and whipper-snipping tidied up the trail before people moved on to the ever-present verbasum and phalaris. Our thanks to Malcolm for showing us the results of a great season.



Photo D. Tinney

E. blakeleyi seedling marked for monitoring

Next Meeting – Sunday 17th July

Time – 1.30 – 4pm

Location – Group Area North (above Chauvel Circle)

Tasks – Plant identification, weed removal and monitoring for eucalypt seedlings.

Meeting Place – Kathner Street car park.

Bring – Bring hat, gloves, water and digger (or borrow one of ours)

QUERIES - Doug Tinney, 62888589

Please let me know of any changes to your address or other details.

Mr Magpie

Doug Tinney

During the monthly meeting on Sunday 19th June an extraordinary thing happened. While Malcolm was showing us the extent of the eucalypt generation, a lone magpie casually flew onto the ground nearby then returned to his perch with a mouse in his beak (see photo). Very Kookaburra-like. You know you've got a mouse plague when a magpie can chomp one at will. Mind you, actually eating the prey was a challenge!



Photo D. Tinney

What's around

(Hopefully not much!)

Nassella trichotoma

Common name: *Serrated tussock* Family Poaceae *Exotic*

Originally named 'Yass River tussock' or 'Yass tussock' as it was found near Yass. It was later re-named as 'Serrated tussock', presumably because of its serrated leaves.



Serrated tussock in early January after flowering.

Photo: Linda Ayres



Serrated Tussock on Mt Arawang after being sprayed.

Photo: Anna See

Description: Serrated tussock is very similar in appearance to many Australian native grass species making it hard to identify when not in flower. Serrated tussock changes colour throughout the year from golden yellow bleaching in late Autumn and Winter to bright green new growth in spring. It is most recognisable when in full flower in late spring/summer as it has a distinct purple tinge. Serrated tussock leaves are tightly rolled, narrow, stiff and upright. They have small serrations that can be felt when the leaf is drawn between the fingers.

Distribution and occurrence: Serrated tussock is native to the South American countries of Peru, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina. It occurs as a serious weed in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa while small infestations also occur in England, France, Italy, Scotland and the USA. It was first recorded on Mt Arawang in June 2010.

Impact in native ecosystems: Serrated tussock threatens the biodiversity of many native vegetation communities. Because of its similar appearance to many Australian native grass species it is hard to identify when not in flower. It can therefore go unnoticed for many years and eventually form monocultures in once diverse ecosystems. This reduction of biodiversity is a serious threat to native fauna and flora that inhabit these areas.

Information from Department of Primary Industries, NSW Government. <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/>

Chapman Primary School

Doug Tinney

In June, Jenny and Doug, at the invitation of year 3 teachers at Chapman Primary School, led around 60 eight year olds up to the Ridge to check out the Chapman Primary section of a nature trail on Cooleman Ridge. Around half of the students previously had not walked the Ridge.

This activity builds on the work of earlier students who, many years ago, planted quite a plantation on their patch and more recently others who weeded and worked to promote growth of native plants. Hopefully, the school curriculum and timetable will let the students get their hands dirty carrying on the good work.



Photo: D. Tinney

Anna See anna.m.see@gmail.com

Nest Boxes

Kate Grarock, ANU PhD Candidate

Nest boxes on Cooleman Ridge have been put up as part of a PhD project, looking at the impact of Common Myna's on native bird nesting. The 15 boxes were checked every month during the breeding season, for three seasons between 2008-2011. There was strong use of the boxes on Cooleman Ridge by native bird species, the most common being Crimson and Eastern Rosellas. I also recorded an Australian Owlet-Nightjar, which successfully raised a brood. Galahs widened the hole on one of the nest boxes and also successfully raised a brood. Two introduced species were found nesting on Cooleman ridge, the Common Myna and Common Starling. Common Myna nesting was at a much lower rate on Cooleman Ridge compared to some other sites surveyed. I am in my final year of my PhD and plan to have a full analysis of nesting box data completed by early 2012.