

COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter June 2015

Previous Meeting

In total contrast to the conditions on the (abandoned) April work party at Group Area Central (Darell Place), Sunday 17 May was a beautiful day, sunny but cool – enough to make anybody smile. Trouble is they were smiling elsewhere. Just three members ventured forth to do battle with the St John's Wort, phalaris and verbasum. All the same, their efforts are noticeable by the piles of uprooted nasties along the Centenary Trail which bisects Group Area Central.

A Greening Australia-inspired planting in this area last year is struggling along. Interestingly weeders reported three or four verbasum rosettes at the site of each of the recently planted species. Opportunistic coloniser taking advantage of disturbed soil? Seems plausible.

Several members who were overseas, interstate or just hiding, are understood to be back on deck for the June meeting. Hence the traditional advice follows:

Next Meeting

Where: Group Area South (Mt Arawang). Meet at entrance to horse paddock on Namatjira Drive just up from the Kambah Pool Road turn-off.

When: 13.30 – 16.00, Sunday 21 June.

What: Plant ID and weed removal.

Bring: Hat, gloves, water. We have a few tools if needed.

Contact: Doug Tinney 6288 8589

Arawang Homestead and Mt Arawang (Part 2)

The Homestead

The Arawang Homestead was built in 1952 by Robert Campbell on the western side of Stoney Hill (Mt Arawang). During the late 1950s droughts in the district were exacerbated by rabbits, foxes and saffron thistles (sounds familiar! Ed.)

In 1959, the property (now reduced to 274 acres [110 hectares]) was taken over by Mr Burt Thornely. As part of managing the land, clover, lucerne and phalaris were planted and fertilised with superphosphate (the leaching of which may account for the phosphate spike in the Waterwatch physical chemistry tests done since 2003 on the Old Dam on the Ridge. Ed.).

The early 1970s saw withdrawal of several pockets of land for the development of Kambah. In addition urban development on the north side of Mt Arawang resulted in increased numbers of dog incursions and trespassing by Chapman residents on the agistment land on Mt Arawang. The Thornelys handed back the lease to the government in 1975.

The current owner of the property is ACT Housing. Prior to Housing taking over the lease in 1984, the Department of Capital Territory's Conservation and Agricultural Branch used the property as a Ranger's residence.

Observations

From photographs in the source documents, the homestead looks unaltered from its early period. The grounds have changed, particularly the row of pine trees bordering the Pound paddock which were devastated by the 2003 fires. In fact the homestead was in severe danger during that event and was saved due to the efforts of the current occupant.

(Sourced from documents provided by the current occupant of "Arawang" Mr Ross Bennett.)

This month's "What's around" is a bit of a cop out on the editor's part. It's a reprint from October 2011 and deals with a form of vegetation anybody who has seen a stand of eucalypts will have come across, if not actually recognised. That's the theme – common plants which we less than botanically gifted see but don't have a clue if it's good or bad.

What's around

Mistletoe – a contribution from Malcolm Gill.

Muellerina eucalyptoides

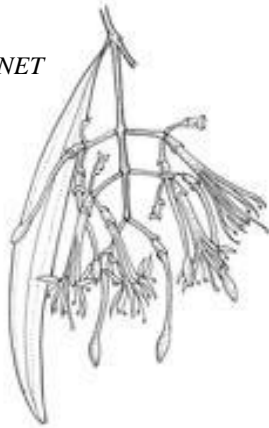
Muellerina: Named for Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, 19th century German/Australian botanist and founder of the National Herbarium of Victoria

Pronunciation: mew-ler-REE-na

eucalyptoides: Lat. – Eucalyptus-like



Photo Malcolm Gill
Line Drawing PlantNET



Contrary to popular belief, mistletoes are native plants, not weeds. They produce their own energy from photosynthesis but depend on their tree hosts for water and nutrients. Australia has a wonderful array of them – 89 species – and there is an informative web site concerning their taxonomy and biology (www.anbg.gov.au/mistletoe). There are two genera at Cooleman Ridge: *Muellerina* and *Amyema*. (*Amyema miquelii* was featured in *What's around* in August 2004.) *Muellerina* is rarer, and unlike the pendulous *Amyema*, has roots, which are usually partly buried in the bark of the host. The plants are readily killed by fire but can avoid death by being high up in the host tree. To recolonise an area they need to be dispersed via the mistletoe bird from an unaffected population. New plants have not been seen since the 2003 fire although there are still surviving adult plants. *Muellerina* is most common on *Eucalyptus blakelyi* in the reserve (see Malcolm's photo below) but is also found on *E. polyanthemus* (see Paul Downey's list of hosts at www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0018/58041/Cun5Dow_685.pdf.)

Aboriginal Heritage Walks

In May, Martine Franco, Coordinator, Southern ACT Catchment Group, accompanied Wally and Tyrone Bell, Ngunawal custodians and principals in Thunderstone Aboriginal Cultural and Land Management Services on a survey of the southern part of Cooleman Ridge. Wally and Tyrone were checking out the site as a possible area for conducting a walk a talk event under an ACT Heritage Grants Program.

While giving nothing away, the team seemed unenthused about the aboriginal heritage properties of the Ridge, specifically Mt Arawang.

Interestingly, following the 2003 fires, an archaeological assessment of potential aboriginal artefacts was conducted on behalf of the Heritage Council. Some 72 sites across the ACT were surveyed, mainly by walking fire trails. Cooleman Ridge was one of the sites.

The report is available on the net but it appears Cooleman Ridge is not a rich deposit.