



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter September

2007

Previous Sunday Meeting August 19th

Fortune favoured the hardy, while the timid were left with regrets. The showers cleared, so chipping salvia and verbasicum proved to be the best way of keeping warm, and a test of new-comer Paul who none-the-less filled out a membership form.

A long hard look at the blackberry patch stiffened resolve to deal with it when conditions are right. With back-pack spray equipment, loppers and people-power those who have done it before claim it's possible, with minimal subsequent mopping-up.

Themeda triandra – Kangaroo Grass – is spreading nicely. ☼

Future programme

Next meeting, Sunday September 16th

- Nature Trail for clearing of exotic growth, plant ID and track work
- 1.30 p.m. to 4 p.m.
meet at the Kathner St entrance
- bring hat, gloves, hacker, drink, snack, raincoat if it is wet.

A brisk AGM on October 21st at 1.30 p.m. will precede the work party, at GAN/Chauvel. ☼

August log

050807 2 ducklings Kathner St dam
170807 7 Choughs at Kathner St dam
170807 Maned Wood Duck Kathner St dam
190807 Pine seedling No. 35 Arawang – removed
240807 Choughs building nest near Kathner St dam ☼

Nature Trail – almost there!

After the opening of the Nature Trail in June we have had a few delays, mostly due to the heavy work load on the rangers who were to arrange the pamphlet boxes and a few other details. At the meeting with the new ranger Monica Muranyi she agreed that Rob Horsfield should make the boxes - and a wonderful job he made of it, thank you Rob! The superfluous gate is to be left open, so the building of a walk-through is no longer needed. Only remaining are some minor details by the sign-makers and those seem to be well under way. On Sept 1 we had a working bee to install the boxes, a lovely afternoon with some heavy work rewarded by tea and yummy cake baked by Jen. Thanks to all helpers and to Monica for the pamphlet box design and for good collaboration. *Gösta* ☼

Spring is in the air

A pair of Maned Wood Ducks were seen flying between two big dead Scribbly Gums – *Eucalyptus rossii* – on Fence Post Hill. They were perhaps checking out nesting spots – a pair had been nesting in one of these trees before the fire.

Roger the Birder drew our attention to the fact that the White-winged Choughs we'd seen at the Kathner St dam were building a nest. The following Friday we watched them at it. One pecked up a beakful of mud from a couple of centimeters above waterline and flew with it to a Red Box – *E. polyanthemos* – over the fence in the horse paddock. The next trip saw it stripping fibres from inside the charred trunk of a fallen Stringy Bark – *E. macrorhyncha* – and heading back to the nest again. Two observers report not having seen Choughs here since the fire.

Anne I'Ons sent us the following note. "A Major Mitchell at one time inhabited Mt Taylor, near the Tug parkway, had a sulphur mate, and a tree fairly near the top dam. Then they moved off, but at the Myna meeting the other night I was informed there are several escapees, and a breeder in Dickson admitted to loss! I was also told that they do not x breed".

And from Bill Handke, President of CIMAG: "As at end June 2007, our mass trapping program had rid Canberra / Queanbeyan area of some 11,200 mynas and almost 1200 starlings" ☼

Changes

Rachael Dawes is now on maternity leave.

Jenny Conolly is the replacement Community Programs Officer: 6207 2145 or jenny.conolly@act.gov.au. Previously she was the Pest and Weeds Officer with Parks, Conservation and Lands.

Graham Heanes, has had a spell in hospital, and we hope he is fully recovered. He has now moved to Tidbinbilla.

New senior ranger at Athllon Drive Depot:
Monica Muranyi. email monica.muranyi@act.gov.au

Briony Woolaston has stepped down after several years as coordinator of the Southern ACT Catchment Group in order to further her studies. We'll miss her.

Our old friend Steve Welch takes Briony's place. He can be contacted on 6296 6400, info@sactcg.org. ☼

What's around



Left
Family: FABACEAE
Indigofera adesmiifolia – Tick
Indigo
Native shrub to 1.5 m
Indigo – a blue dye originally
from such plants.



Above
Nest of
White-winged Choughs

DRAFT: TOWARDS A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR COOLEMAN RIDGE CANBERRA NATURE PARK (continued)

Biological control agents for weeds, although exotic, have the potential to control serious weeds like Paterson's Curse, St John's Wort, Skeleton Weed, Blackberries and Thistles.

Having one long axis of the Ridge lined with houses means that exposure to suburban influences is maximized. One of these influences is the spread of exotics from gardens. Apart from human dispersal of plants through illegal practices like the dumping of garden waste and the planting of extended gardens, natural dispersers like the native Currawongs and the introduced Blackbird can, by analogy with Buchanan's (1989) study in Sydney, carry a wide variety of fruit species into the reserve. A high density of seeds of the exotic tree *Prunus sp.* has been found in the reserve in several places.

Exotic birds

On the basis of the research of Pell and Tidemann (1997) in the Canberra area, Common Mynas and Starlings take over the hollows necessary for the nesting of native bird species like the Eastern and Crimson Rosellas and Galahs. Mynas are increasing in numbers and are already reducing the nesting success of the parrots.

Note: the whole draft, submitted in 1998, can be read on our web site. ☼

Pauline Lyngå, 6288 7009, paulyn@inet.net.au September 2007 Web site URL: www.coolemanridge.org

'Burn' by Paul Collins

This book, subtitled 'The Epic Story of Bushfire in Australia', was published in the summer of 2006, as a new wave of fires threatened the alpine regions. It is a thought-provoking and well-researched account of the major fires that have occurred on this continent since white settlement. A tradition of constant burning- clearing 'the scrub' to allow for pastoral expansion- was established from the early days of settlement, and many of the fires that followed began from deliberately lit fires that got out of control. The first major fire outbreak occurred on 'Black Thursday' in February 1851. It set the pattern for the great conflagrations that followed and that have become part of our common history: Black Friday 1939 in Victoria, the 1967 fires in southern Tasmania, Ash Wednesday 1987 in Victoria, and most destructive of all, the 2003 fires in Victoria, southern NSW and the ACT.

The main argument of the book, supported by an impressive amount of research and documentary evidence, is that, while fire has always been a natural part of the ecology of this land, it has become much more widespread, frequent and out of control due to destructive and inappropriate patterns of land use: clearing of forests and draining of wetlands, overstocking of pastures and introduction of highly combustible weeds being among the main problems. Settlers have seen 'the bush' as something to be conquered and cleared, or managed for economic purposes, and the prevailing Australian mentality has been one of regular clearing by burn-offs. Now, many people are beginning to realise the true environmental cost of this outlook, not least the threat to biodiversity and the loss of the great forests that used to clothe much of the southeast regions.

I can recommend this book to any reader interested in our social and environmental history. It is of special interest to Cooleman Ridge carers, as our friend and colleague Dr Malcolm Gill is quoted frequently and regarded as 'Australia's most experienced fire researcher'.

Jenny Horsfield, September 2007. ☼