



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter December 2005

Previous Sunday meeting

The focus of the meeting had shifted from weeding Group Area North to an inspection of the site of the exotic grass reduction trial being conducted by Environment ACT. Malcolm Gill, one of the scientific troika following the trial, led the group.

Joining our group for the afternoon was Clive Hurlstone from National Parks of the ACT and Benj Whitworth of Friends of Grasslands.

Rock Picking

On the way up to the site from Kathner Street, Malcolm drew the group's attention to a separate exercise being conducted by Environment ACT. Behind the houses from Kathner Street to Chauvel Circle a swathe some 10 metres wide had been crushed and, in places, bared. Described in a leaflet drop to residents as a "rock picking" exercise, the clearing is a mowing lane – which appears to be intended as a buffer break for fires. The break cuts through some strong stands of *Themeda* and *Stipa*. No doubt other flora has been affected in the process.

The work represents another encroachment in an area which has already seen the dumping of building waste (with eventual removal and "rehabilitation" of the area) as well as what was deemed to be "minor" incursion of the Nature Park by ACTEW when restoring power lines. With small reserves, small areas matter.

We don't know what options may have been considered before going ahead with this work. Perhaps control burning may have been more ecologically sensitive. As it is we have a heavily disturbed area some 400 – 500 metres long which is seemingly at odds with the principles of conservation to which we hoped Environment ACT adhered. However, we recognise the manager's authority and responsibility to make decisions in the best interests of the community. Hopefully, the new buffer strip will aid in fire suppression and in prescribed-burning operations.

Exotic-Grass Depletion Trial

The exotic grass depletion trial site had greened up appreciably in the two weeks since the cattle had gone. *Hardenbergia violacea* had reshot as had *Indigofera australis*, but to a lesser extent than the former. There remained a significant level of exotic grasses and forbs.

But the effects of trampling on the soil were evident, especially where it had been moist and was in the process of drying out.

In short the site looked somewhat knocked about with several small eucalypts broken or nibbled and other shrubs stripped bare. The briars were unaffected and seemed to have fared rather well, what with reduced competition.

The two separate (cattle free) enclosures for the slashing, wick wiping (herbicide) and do-nothing regimes remain in their shorn, dead and flourishing modes. The wick wiping certainly wiped out the vegetation to which it was applied. But there appeared to be very little oats (a target species of the trial) in those patches.

We can only wait and observe. The grazing trial has not been replicated - hence lacks the rigour to make results valid in a scientific sense. The three years proposed for the trial is also likely to be too short. However, observations of effects of the cattle can be made and the Park Care Group hopes to continue to assist in this way. ☼

Future programme

On the above somber note we concluded our Sunday programme for 2005

Next year we will continue to rotate through the three Group Areas (GA) when there is no special programme.

Note that there is no organised activity in December.

On January 15th 2006 we'll meet again at Kathner St or GAN/Chauvel for weeding and plant ID.

Bring hat, gloves, weeder, drink, snack, raincoat if it is wet ☼

Good news, too

Before leaving for WA in September Reet counted 100 *Wurmbia dioica* (Early Nancies) in her area. Back home again she was welcomed by 42 *Diuris sulphurea* (Tiger or Hornet Orchids) in flower ☼

September log

041105 42 *Diuris sulphurea* in flower C1
051105 Cattle removed from Ridge ☼

What's around

Family POACEAE



Austrodanthonia eriantha – A Wallaby Grass
Erect caespitose perennial native to 70 cm
australis L: southern; Danthoine was a French
botanist ☼



Elymus scaber – Wheatgrass
Erect perennial native to 1.1 m
scaber L: rough ☼

Community Linkage Team

One of the agenda items for the next Park Care coordinators' meeting will be to provide information on the new structure for Land Management in the ACT, and to introduce Park Carers to members of the new Community Linkages Team who will be responsible for coordinating the Park Care Program in future. ☼

SACTCG is moving

The SACTCG has relocated to:
21 Snodgrass Cres, Kambah (at the Urambi Primary School)
New Contact Phone: (02) 6296 6400
E-mail address - to be set up ☼

Rubbish

Over 554,000 thousand tonnes of material was recovered for reuse, recycling and reprocessing in the ACT during 2004/05. ☼

Rock picking

As mentioned earlier, a lot of rock-shifting took place in November, some of it apparently sanctioned by CNP in a campaign to create buffer zones behind the houses. Inside at least one of the three exclusion areas in the grazing trial enclosure a large rock has been displaced, presumably to get it out of the way of the slasher. (Inside at least 2 of the exclusion areas there is cow dung, indicating that the experiments have been complicated/compromised by unintended grazing.)

On Fencepost Hill there have recently been large rocks shifted. We have always put it down to reptile collectors operating outside the law. It now seems as though displacing rocks is not the serious matter we had been lead to believe. ☼

The Lunt report

The final version of this report has been made available to our group by Bill Woodruff. It is mentioned frequently by CNP management when discussing grazing issues, and makes interesting reading. ☼