



Friends of the Pinnacle AGM July 2016

Convenor's Report

The 2015-16 year has been yet another highly productive year for fotpin, largely thanks to the tireless efforts of our stalwart weeding teams, but it has also been an eventful year that has brought some significant changes, both to the Reserve and to fotpin itself.

Warren's meticulous records of our [weeding effort](#) on the website tell me that we again put in a massive effort of close to 1,200 hours during the year, and that doesn't include quite a bit of effort that goes unrecorded. John Fitz Gerald and I walked around the Reserve the other day with Kate Auty, the ACT Government's new Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. Kate is getting to know her new patch by visiting as many of the reserves as she can, and during our walk she remarked on the absence of some of the common weeds she'd been seeing at other reserves. This is a pretty common reaction from visitors to the Pinnacle and illustrates the effectiveness of our weed control program.

The other contributing factor to the apparent health of the Reserve at the moment (apart from the good rain) is the greatly reduced number of kangaroos. The ACT Government's management program culled nearly 400 roos at the Pinnacle last year -- the first time that they have reduced our kangaroo population to the estimated desirable population density -- and the Reserve has responded really well, with large swathes of Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*) and other native grasses blooming in several areas and smaller patches popping up in places where I've not seen them before. This year's cull is expected to be much smaller, as the rangers are now happy that they have the kangaroo numbers down to sustainable levels. [This year's kangaroo survey](#) on May 22nd turned up around 290 kangaroos. This compares with results between 600 and 800 in previous years, which gives you some idea of how overpopulated the Reserve and the adjacent properties were.

You may also have noticed that some of our tracks have recently undergone a bit of a makeover. This is a long-term initiative by the Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) to "formalize" some of the informal walking tracks that have appeared in the Reserve and close off some others. The aim is to limit erosion and in some cases to protect adjacent vegetation being trampled by people straying off the path to avoid the holes that were starting to appear. In some cases, this has been accompanied by planting of native grasses to help with the recovery of areas disturbed by the track work. Nic Mikhailovich, who is our current PCS ranger and the one either organizing this work or doing it himself, is putting a lot of effort into this and is doing a pretty terrific job of it.

Our Spring and Autumn walks programs this year were a little less ambitious than in previous years. This was due to a combination of a lack of funding and the fact that a few walk leaders were unavailable this year. That said, the walks we did have were still well attended and enjoyable. However, last year's experiment with a "social" BBQ taught us that future cook-outs need to be tied to an accompanying event. Ah well, live and learn...

But certainly the most significant event of the year, both for the Reserve and for fotpin, was the formal addition of approximately 19 hectares of leased land to the Reserve as an offset for land that was cleared to make way for a new hospital at the University of Canberra. This new Extension to the Reserve comes with its own management plan (now in the final stages of being drafted) and our consultation process for that plan generated strongly opposed views within fotpin of how best to address the issues raised. As a result, Pax (fotpin Convenor at the time) requested a [Special](#)

General Meeting, held on April 17th, at which both sides of the argument were presented and a consensus was reached on how to proceed. A few days later, three fotpin committee members met with PCS staff to talk about how we could best work together to implement the provisions of the Offset Management Plan. The PCS ranger with the job of overseeing this process is Nina Bruns, and she appears to be taking her job very seriously. Indeed, she's already started the process of improving the ecological values of the area by having woody debris dropped at several locations and organising contractors to control weeds and rabbits. The conversations we've had with her indicate that she's well aware of the environmental values of the offset and is determined to ensure that the offset meets the targets set for improvement.

The downside of this process is that Pax has now decided that he would prefer to withdraw from all fotpin activities to focus on his professional and family obligations. I am very saddened by this, as I'm sure are many others. Pax was a founding member of fotpin and was in many ways the key driving force for its establishment. His passion and commitment brought many of us into the group and have continued to guide and direct our participation ever since. His seemingly tireless efforts in weed control have underpinned much of what fotpin has achieved in the last five or so years, and his departure leaves a massive hole that we are unlikely to fill anytime soon, if ever. I continue to hold out hope that one day he might change his mind and re-join the group.

In the meantime, we will need to consider our weeding strategy. For a couple of years now, a larger and larger proportion of the weeding effort has been put in by just two or three people, one of whom was Pax. So without his input, we may need to be a little less ambitious in terms of the size of the area we can effectively cover.

On a different topic, we were contacted last month by representatives of the ACT Government's Land Development Agency (LDA), who wanted to discuss the development of the new Molonglo suburb of Whitlam. Whitlam will be the closest of the Molonglo suburbs to the Pinnacle, being located just east of the Kama Nature Reserve, just across William Hovell Drive from the Bottom Pinnacle. In a meeting with the LDA, they informed me that the water supply for Whitlam will come from the two large water tanks in the Weetangera paddock just off Springvale Drive, and that a new pipeline will be needed to take the water from the tanks down to Whitlam. That pipeline will be 600 mm in diameter and will run south through the middle of the Pinnacle Reserve. That entails digging a 1.5 m deep trench roughly parallel to and east of the creek line that runs down to the dam and then past the pumping station at the bottom of the Reserve. Unfortunately, this runs through some of the lovely Themeda grassland I mentioned earlier, and will also bisect the Deep Creek plantings that we put in with Greening Australia a couple of years ago. LDA assured me that they will do everything they can to limit the damage to the Reserve (the proposed route avoids treed areas as much as possible) and that they will organize remediation works after the pipeline is finished. Even so, the disruption will be significant. The route for the pipeline has already been marked out and construction should begin next Autumn. I will bring copies of the maps they supplied to the AGM so that anyone who's interested can check them out.

So, all in all it has been a very eventful year. It remains only for me to thank all the fotpin members who have contributed so wonderfully this year and to thank the hard-working people at the Parks and Conservation Service for all their help and support.

The other day, revisiting the **planting** we undertook just south of the Forest in 2011, I noticed that some of the plants we put in are now surrounded by their own cluster of seedlings. This struck me as the most satisfying demonstration of the sort of legacy that we as a group can leave behind, knowing that we have set in motion a self-sustaining process of native plant restoration. I hope that we can continue contributing in the same way for many years to come.

Cheers,

John Brannan