

Friends of the Pinnacle AGM July 2013

Convenor's Report

Hello again. Before we move on to the business of nominating and electing our new Coordinating Committee for 2013-14, I'm going to bore you all by recapping the main activities and achievements of the Friends of the Pinnacle in the past 12 months.

Needless to say, weeding is what we've spent most of our time doing, in fact, we've logged 1,216 hours of effort over the year, slightly down on last year but still ahead of our target for the year. A lot of our effort this year was spent in North Kama and the Bottom Pinnacle, even more so than last year, and this largely because our work in previous years has reduced the weed infestations in the main reserve to the point that we can afford to invest more time in the adjacent properties. This is helpful in preventing weeds spreading back into the reserve, as well as being an important investment for the future.

Thinking back, it's hard to recall now just how badly infested the reserve was just a few years ago, particularly with woody weeds, briar rose, verbascum, horehound and thistles. On one of the walks I led this year, a couple of people remarked to me how good the reserve looks compared with other reserves around Canberra, particularly in terms of weeds like St Johns Wort and Saffron Thistle. While there's still a great deal of work to do, I think we can afford to congratulate ourselves just a little on what we've achieved. I'd like to take this opportunity to say thanks very much to everyone who has contributed to that effort, but especially to our tireless Coordinator Pax, who has devoted hundreds of hours of his time to spraying weeds himself and to facilitating the weed spraying effort by other fotpins.

Don Driscoll's ground-layer restoration project continues to be one of the most important and exciting projects we're involved in. The project is in its final year now (though it may be extended for another year) and is going brilliantly, largely thanks to the invaluable assistance he's received from fotpin volunteers and the Parks and Conservation Service rangers. Don has already produced some initial findings based on the 2011 surveys, which can be downloaded from our website.

This year was bookended by a couple of important planting events; one in September last year of around 450 plants, and another one in May of this year of almost 400 plants. Both were funded by the ACT Government as part of their Woodland Restoration Project, which is aimed at establishing wildlife corridors between existing patches of woodland. In our case, the plantings were designed to help link the Pinnacle to Mt Painter in the east and the Kama Nature Reserve to the south. Both events were organized brilliantly by Greening Australia and both were very well attended, with lots of fotpins turning out to do their bit by getting the plants off to the best possible start. I'm pleased to report that at this stage, both plantings are doing extremely well, with survival rates up around the 90% mark.

The more observant among you may have noticed that this year marked Canberra's Centenary, and fotpin had a small, but we like to think valuable, role in the celebrations. In April we held two guided walks; a short one around the western end of the reserve led by myself and a long one down through the Bottom Pinnacle and the Kama Nature Reserve to the Molonglo River led by Pax. Both walks were well attended, with 18 on the short walk and 22 on the long walk. The short walk was run in collaboration with an ACT-wide program for families and kids run by the Conservation Council. The aim was to drag the kids away from their computers and put them in touch with the beauty of the Canberra Nature Park. If our walk was any indication, it was very successful.

We also ran a Spring Walks program in October last year, coordinated expertly by Heather Burness, including a couple of well-attended wildflower walks led by Rosemary Blemings and a very successful "Drawn From Nature" walk led by Heather herself, which attracted several families and their children and introduced them to the pleasures of translating natural beauty into marks on a page. The same program also included a very successful Sausage Sizzle, ably organized and staffed by our Secretary Elizabeth Smith.

One more milestone this year has been the production of a shiny new brochure for the Pinnacle Nature Reserve. Copies are available today, so please feel free to help yourself. I want to thank everyone involved in producing the brochure, particularly the folks at the Ginninderra Catchment Group, who paid for the printing, Warren, who produced the excellent track map.

Other significant events this year include:

- our second kangaroo count in August last year;
- staging a fotpin stall at the Hawker Primary School fete;
- ongoing warren mapping to assist in the increasingly successful rabbit eradication measures by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service
- guided walks for non-fotpin groups, including the U3A and Canberra Ornithologists Group
- continuing biomonitoring surveys in the Kama paddock and monitoring of the 2011 plantings
- further erosion control measures in the Bottom Pinnacle

Most of you would be familiar with our website. I don't think anyone who has spent any time exploring the site could fail be impressed by what our Webmaster Warren has created. Both as a repository of data and as a reference for interested visitors, the website is immensely valuable. At meetings I attend with other parkcare groups around the region in my role as Convenor, I am often complimented on the website and congratulated on having someone as talented as Warren in the group. And then there's nearly 200 hours he's also spent spraying briar roses.

I have no doubt that 2013-14 will be another busy and productive year for us. If we get the wet winter they are forecasting, it will nurture the new plants we have put in the ground, but it will also put a spring in the step of the weed species. Each year brings a new challenge, this year it might be Saffron Thistle or more St Johns Wort or something else again. There are already signs that this could be a big year for Patersons Curse and Capeweed. Doubtless, there'll be something to keep us busy.

There is only limited remaining scope for further plantings at the Pinnacle, but we are currently developing a program of small-scale plantings of complementary species among the existing woodlands in the reserve. This will be accompanied by a program of selective plantings to replace the woody weeds that are being removed in the Bottom Pinnacle and North Kama.

This report would not be complete without thanking ACT Parks' officers for their great support. Promptly supplying chemicals, coir logs, access keys, support with the ground-layer project and following up on our many queries has been hugely supportive. We are now meeting with local rangers on a regular basis, and this will definitely contribute to more effective reserve management in the future.

I'd like to thank all fotpins for their energy and enthusiasm, and in particular the members of the Coordinating Committee, who have been great sources of support and encouragement in helping me settle into my role as Convenor this year.

I would strongly encourage anyone interested in a slightly more active role to join Committee. As an ordinary member, your only duties would be to attend 3 or 4 meetings a year and sit around eating cheese and bikkies. It's not that hard! And the other members of the committee would then be in a position to benefit from your wealth of experience and wisdom. Seriously, give it some thought. You don't need to decide now, you can opt into the committee any time you like. But today would be good!

Thank you.

John Brannan
14 July 2013