



fotpin update #10 November 2012

Dear Friends of The Pinnacle

My apologies for the long gap since the last update in June. We (the committee) had hoped we could keep the updates coming fairly regularly. Alas, life got in the way...

This update covers the following activities and events;

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The contact person for each item is shown in case you want to know more

September 1st planting/Woodland Restoration Strategy

(John, john.fotpin@gmail.com)

This year has seen the initial steps in the ACT Government's Woodlands Restoration Project, a \$1 million initiative aimed at establishing vegetation corridors linking existing reserves and other woodland areas to the permanent wildlife corridors in the surrounding region. In the case of The Pinnacle, this involves plantings of both new "stepping stones" of tubestock grassy box woodland species as well as enhancements to existing isolated pockets of remnant woodland by adding coarse woody debris and shrublayer plantings. The first of the new tubestock plantings, organised expertly by Greening Australia, took place on September 1st 2012 and resulted in 460 trees, shrubs and grasses being planted. We were also pleased to have the help of Simon Corbell, the Minister for the Environment, who came along with his two children to lend a hand with the planting. This initial planting has already been followed by other enhancement plantings by GA in North Kama, with further plantings to come in the future.

Erosion control works in the Bottom Pinnacle

(Pax, fotpin@optusnet.com.au)

Following last year's initial installation of coir logs and protective brush, we installed a second set of coir logs in September this year. Using the principles and methods established last time, and again with the expert guidance of David Tongway, we installed over 100 coir logs along the steeper sections of a gully in Bottom Pinnacle. The logs were then supplemented by layers of Cootamundra Wattle branches taken from the main reserve, which protect the coir logs from kangaroos and encourage the growth of groundlayer species around the logs that will enhance their erosion control function. We're grateful to PACS (Parks and City Services) for their help in chainsawing the Cootamundra Wattles on the reserve. Being able to use the wattle branches to protect the coir logs provides an added bonus.

2012 Kangaroo Survey

(Pax, fotpin@optusnet.com.au)

Pax worked a minor miracle recruiting a total of over 50 volunteers for the morning and afternoon roo counts this year. Once again, the count was supervised by PACS ranger Don Fletcher and his able assistant Claire Wimpenny, who ensured that the sweeps were coordinated. On the day, the results from the two counts were amazingly close, attesting to the effectiveness of the method and its execution. This year's count gave us an averaged total of 677 roos. This is roughly 100 roos down on last year's number, but still more than the reserve can sustainably support in the long term. We're all enormously grateful to all the volunteers who gave up their time to help out on the day. For more details, see [2012 Kangaroo Count](#).

Rabbit Warren Treatments

(John, john.fotpin@gmail.com)

This year saw another round of rabbit eradication by PACS rangers and contractors, who revisited known warrens and ripped and fumigated any that had been re-opened by rabbits. It is very heartening to see a continuing commitment from the ACT government to tackling this problem. While we can never be rid of rabbits and the problems they bring, sustained treatments of this sort keep numbers down and prevent the sort of heavy infestations we've seen at the reserve in the past.

Spring Walks Program

(Heather, heather.fotpin@gmail.com)

The Spring program continues to draw interested members and non members to the reserve. This season we have had some lovely walks focusing on birds, wildflowers as well as children and their creative talents. Rosemary Blemings' last wildflower walk would have seen many blooms and I heard that the bird walk with John Brannan was a great success. I am very pleased that some participants are going back to the reserve on other weekends to find the flowers and birds that they saw during their guided walk experience.

One special event this Spring was the walk; *Drawn From Nature*. Nine children, with family representatives in tow, joined John Brannan, Don Driscoll and I for an hour and a half of walking, talking and drawing. Don pointed out the blooms of the mistletoe on the large E. melliodora. We contemplated how old the tree might be. It was great to see people taking time to look. The drawings were fresh and inspiring. We walked to the forest block and checked out the Spotted Pardalote's nest hole, imagining what was under the soil. A close encounter with a fence leaping Kanga was an eye opener to some younger ones, setting us on our path to the inner reaches of the Macrorhyncha Track where we stopped. Don showed us some small often overlooked plants at the edge of the track and then some more quiet drawing ensued. Feedback has been very positive and I think this is something we should do more. If you have any photos or scans of drawings from the day that you would like to go up on our website please contact me on heather.fotpin@gmail.com.

Drawing is something that tells us more about who we are and what we value. We can't escape the marks we make, even those we make on the environment itself. Take the time to keep looking, keep drawing.

Bushfire Operation Plan Meeting

(John, john.fotpin@gmail.com)

On August 16th, PACS held a meeting at their Stromlo depot in Weston Creek to present the latest incarnation of their Bushfire Operations Plan to any interested parties. This was largely at the instigation of Kelly Behrens, Coordinator of the Ginninderra Catchment Group, who has been working with Phil Selmes, the PACS ParkCare Coordinator, for some time to open better lines of communication between the PACS Fire Management Unit (FMU) and the various LandCare and ParkCare groups around the region. Currently, volunteer organizations are given very little notice of specified hazard reduction burns to be conducted by the FMU, and little or no specific information on the location and extent of the burns. It was Kelly's and our hope that the FMU might prove more willing to release detailed information on upcoming burns to the other organizations involved in land management.

The presentation was well attended, and covered the mechanisms behind the drawing up of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (a 5-year plan), the Bushfire Operations Plan (produced annually), and how these fit together in the context of the Regional Fire Management Plan (a 10-year plan).

This information is now available on the TAMS website at:

http://www.tams.act.gov.au/play/pcl/fire_management

In the Q&A session that followed the presentation, various questions were put to Phil Selmes and Dylan Kendall, the Senior Fire Management Officer who gave the presentation. However, the replies were not as forthcoming as we might have hoped, and there was no commitment from Phil or Dylan regarding the specific Burn Plans that are drawn up for each hazard reduction burn. We all felt strongly that these plans should be made available well in advance of the actual burn, rather than being distributed a couple of days prior to proposed burns, as is currently the practice. Advance knowledge of the specific location and extent of burns in our reserves would better enable us to forward plan with respect to our weeding and planting activities.

While some of us were disappointed with the outcomes of the meeting, Kelly remains optimistic that further progress can be made, and is still pleased that a channel has been opened.

Briar Rose Replacement Program

(John, john.fotpin@gmail.com)

For several years now, Warren Bond and others have laboured tirelessly against the scourge of briar roses – tramping to all parts of the reserve and the adjacent Bottom Pinnacle and North Kama paddocks to spray and tag briar roses. You've probably seen Warren's little ribbons tied around resurgent briar roses (usually dead or dying) around the place.

In the Bottom Pinnacle and North Kama, we have the problem that removing some of the very large briar roses down there sometimes removes valuable habitat for small birds. In some cases the briar roses provide the only shelter from predators for some distance. We have proposed that clumps of equivalent native shrubs be planted around these strategically important briar roses so that the roses can be removed later without depriving the local birds of important shelter and nesting habitat.

Due to the fire management status of the Bottom Pinnacle and North Kama, any plantings have to go through PACS and the FMU and RFS (Rural Fire Service), so approval to begin these plantings may take some time to arrive.

In the meantime, Warren and the other weeding teams are continuing to spray, or lop and poison, briar roses that do not provide needed bird habitat, while briars that do provide habitat are being de-hipped to prevent further spread of this persistent weed.

Tree-cutting & Firewood Gathering in the Reserve

(John, john.fotpin@gmail.com)

Some months ago, some of you may have spotted a front-page article in the Northside Chronicle about a tree that was felled along the top track at the Hawker end of the reserve. The tree was a perfectly healthy mature Red Stringybark and was cut down by a visitor from Sydney who was cutting firewood for his parents, who live nearby. We know this because he was caught in the act by Craig Wainwright, our local PACS ranger, who confiscated the cut timber and redistributed it as "coarse woody debris" around the reserve.

What this incident served to illustrate is the level of ignorance among some reserve users regarding the purpose of the reserve and the importance of both live and dead trees and fallen timber in the environment. With the assistance of Craig and our ever-helpful MLA, Mary Porter, we were able to get a reporter and photographer up to the "scene of the crime" fairly promptly in the hope that some newspaper coverage might help to raise public awareness around the issue. This was followed up by signs posted at the entrances to the reserve informing users that removing timber of any sort from the reserve is an offence. Let's hope that this prevents any future problems of this sort.

The 2012-13 Weeding Season

(Pax, fotpin@optusnet.com.au)

The good growing season has been a boon for plants of all types, including weeds, of course. However, our past efforts are starting to show real benefits now, with fewer weeds appearing and, in many cases, their places taken by native species.

Grubbing and bagging continued right through the winter, targeting briars, thistles and verbascum, while spraying kicked in in late August as the weather started to warm up and the first Paterson's Curse seedlings started to appear. With drier weather, the Curse was initially looking to be our major challenge this year. In the meantime, thistles were also starting to appear in numbers, so sprayers and grubbers both started attacking the outbreaks.

In the high-conservation areas inside the Forest block, a regular weeding team has been working to rid this particularly beautiful area of the more invasive weed species, particularly flatweed and fleabane. These species are less of a priority in other parts of the reserve, but the largely pristine environment of the Forest is one place where, with carefully targeted effort, we can hope to re-establish a haven for native groundcover species.

St John's Wort has again emerged as a challenge this year, though not in anything like the quantities we saw last year. Spot spraying is the only really effective way to deal with wort, and we have now sprayed all known occurrences in the main reserve.

Much of our effort this year has been directed at the more widespread weed infestations in the Bottom Pinnacle and North Kama. Keeping weeds in these adjacent areas under control helps to prevent weed spread into the main reserve and also lays the foundations for future rehabilitation of those paddocks in the event that they are included in an expanded Pinnacle Nature Reserve at some point in the future. Weeding in those areas also assists the efforts of PACS and Greening Australia as they implement the Woodland Restoration Project.

For more information, go to the [Recent Weeding](#), [Weeding Maps](#) and [Weeding Effort](#) pages on our website.

As we head into the festive season, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a wonderful, care-free summer and encourage you all to spend at least some of your holidays enjoying the delights of the Pinnacle.

If there's anything you'd like to know more about, feel free to contact me (john.fotpin@gmail.com) or the committee (contact.fotpin@gmail.com).

John Brannan