



fotpin update #22 March 2018

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I was thinking the other day that this has been a fairly unusual summer in terms of the weather, but I'm not sure what constitutes a "normal" summer any longer. At any rate, we can be grateful that after the very dry winter last year we had some decent rain from October to December, albeit followed by a long hot and dry spell that slowed weed growth down considerably. One consequence of the 2017-18 Spring-Summer rainfall pattern is that the native grasses at the reserve have done exceptionally well due to the lack of early rain, which put the brakes on the growth of exotic grasses and left the way open for the later native grasses. This should help to build up the seed bank for future years.

Weed Control

Events conspired to reduce our weed spraying capacity to the bare minimum this year. As a result, much of the St. John's Wort was very late in getting sprayed and our first pass was not completed until a few weeks ago. Fortunately the start of its season was also delayed somewhat by the dry winter. The second pass is now under way, and thankfully, the hot, dry weather in January and February has limited the amount of new growth to be treated. Although it has yet to be seen what the impact of the late February torrential downpour will be, it is expected that much of it will have run off and its effects will be localised in depressions and flatter areas.

We could always use more volunteers, particularly for spraying, but the weekly weeding teams are doing excellent work. I am continually being congratulated by visitors to the Reserve on the excellent condition it is in.

Parkcare Coordinator's Meeting

The first Parkcare Coordinators' meeting for 2018 was held on February 8th at the Stromlo depot, as usual. The key points are as follows:

- Hazard reduction burn — There has been a burn scheduled for the Pinnacle for the last couple of seasons. The burn number is FB370 and it affects the Weetangera and Eastern paddocks. The firies plan to do the burns this autumn, possibly as soon as the next couple of weeks, as soon as the conditions are suitable. I noticed the other day that some more work has been done clearing the ground around mature trees, so the rain we had recently may have brought moisture levels up into the right range for burning. As and when it does happen, we'll probably get no more than a day or two's notice. The Bushfire Operations Plan (BOP) is downloadable as a Word document or PDF file here: http://www.environment.act.gov.au/ACT-parks-conservation/bushfire_management/fuel_management/bushfire-operations-plan
The relevant map for the Pinnacle is map 6 (BOP-2016-17-Map-6).
- Roo culls — The culls will take place this year sometime between March 1 and July 31, though at this stage it's not clear exactly when the reserves will be closed or whether there will actually be a cull at the Pinnacle.
- Landscape Classification System — This is a new system PCS have adopted for evaluating how landscapes are used and the "naturalness" of those landscapes. Areas are ranked on a scale from 1-9, with 1 being complete wilderness and 9 being the urban environment. Most reserves, including ours, are probably around a 5 or 6. Detailed assessments of all Canberra's reserve will happen in the coming year, and ParkCare/Landcare groups will be asked to help with the process. All signage within reserves is on hold until these assessments have been completed.

Butterfly Walk

As you know, we had our first ever Butterfly Walk at the Pinnacle last month, led by local butterfly expert and all-round naturalist Suzi Bond. The walk was hugely successful with a total of 38 people attending, much to Suzi's astonishment, and a [write-up \(with photos\)](#) has been put together by a group of the people who attended.

Upcoming Events

- **Kangaroo count**

This year's kangaroo count will be held on Sunday March 18th. PCS initially scheduled the count for Thursday the 22nd, but agree to change the date once I pointed out that getting sufficient volunteers for a mid-week date might be difficult. PCS are also keen for people to sign up using the ParkCare Hub, but are willing — this year at least -- for people to turn up on the day and sign up in the usual way. A number of people have already contacted me and we currently have about a dozen people signed up, including those who have used the Hub. I'll send out another call for volunteers in the coming week.

- **Hawker Primary School Fete — Sunday March 25th**

The school contacted me a few weeks ago to ask whether we'd be willing to run a stall at the fete again this year. I replied in the positive and my call for volunteers has already filled pretty much all the slots on the day. I've arranged for some display boards to be set aside, and I'll pick those up beforehand and deliver them to the school on the Sunday morning, along with the display materials. My thanks to everyone who has agreed to help out.

Autumn Walks

This autumn we have two walks planned: the Aboriginal Heritage Walk led by local Ngunawal elder Wally Bell on April 22nd and the Tree Week Bird Walk on May 6th. I asked for people to contact me to sign up for both walks, and I currently have 20 people registered for Wally's walk and 10 people for the bird walk. I conferred with Wally about numbers last month and we agreed to cap attendance on his walk at 25, so anyone who's interested and hasn't yet signed up should probably get onto it pronto. Just email me at convenor@fotpin.org.au or call me on 0405 331 405. I suspect a number of people will just show up on the day, so it's likely to be a busy morning.

I'd like to thank the ACT Government for their support for the Aboriginal Heritage Walk through the ACT Heritage Grants Program, and also the Canberra Ornithologists Group for their help in organising the Tree Week Bird Walk.

John Brannan
Convenor
March 7th, 2018