



fotpin update #26 March 2019

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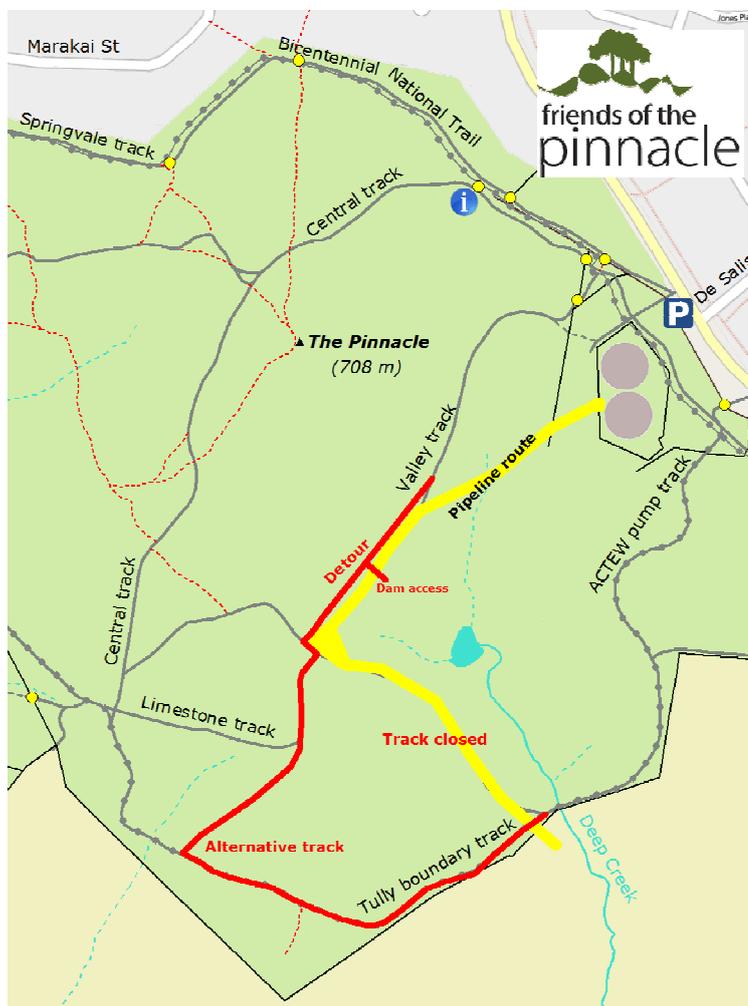
2019 AGM May 19th

I don't think it came as a surprise to anyone when they announced on the News the other day that this summer was the hottest ever in the ACT. The very dry start to spring, the rain and heat that arrived in November and December, and then the unrelenting high temperatures in January have all combined to produce a remarkable season at the reserve.

The lack of moisture in spring suppressed the usual explosion of growth in the early-growing introduced pasture grasses, leaving the way clear(er) for the local native grasses to leap up when the rains arrived in November. The result has been delightfully luxuriant growth in the native grasses and wildflowers, making the Reserve look especially lovely.

Molonglo Water Main

The most visible change to the Reserve in recent months has been the progress of the water main being installed through the Reserve, from the water storage tanks in Weetangera to the new suburb-to-be of Whitlam, south of William Hovell Drive. Temporary fencing has now been erected along the full length of the construction corridor, effectively cutting the Reserve in half, and at the time of writing the pipeline installation has already reached from the southern boundary fence to the junction colloquially referred to as "4-ways" where the Valley track meets the track that runs past the dam.



Please note that the construction company (Woden Contractors) has agreed to keep a passage through the fence open to allow access to the dam from the western side of the Reserve. The passage is roughly mid-way along the detour beside the fencing at the lower end of the Valley track. Here's a map showing the fenced corridor (yellow) and the detours and dam access track (red).

I need to acknowledge all the effort Warren has put into our end of this project. On top of all the other things he does for fotpin, Warren has also taken the lead role in our communications with the various organisations involved in the Molonglo pipeline construction and has been his usual thorough and competent self in getting information out to the membership about the progress of the construction. This includes taking the time to prepare maps, print out notices and put them up at various points around the Reserve. Thanks Warren!!

ParkCare Convenor's Meeting

The first ParkCare Convenors' meeting for 2019 was held on February 12th at the PCS Stromlo depot, by Alison McLeod, the Volunteer Programs Manager. Key points discussed were:

- Celebration of 30 years of ParkCare – This was raised by members of the ParkCare community as an opportunity to celebrate this milestone and to consolidate and review our achievements over that time. The consensus from the discussion was that we should have a full-day forum in which the various ParkCare groups can discuss their achievements and exchange information on what they have learned in the process. It was also agreed that it might work to combine the event with the ACT Landcare awards dinner scheduled for November. We agreed to appoint an organising committee to discuss the structure of the event, with a team from PCS to implement the committee's decisions. The committee includes myself and representatives from other ParkCare groups along with a couple of people from PCS to handle the admin work.
- Training and Event Schedule – Alison showed us a draft version of the schedule for the coming year. Events on the schedule include ParkCare forums (Fringe Forums), training/education courses, Convenors' meetings and other events of interest to ParkCarers. The [draft schedule](#) is available on the fotpin website and will be updated as the dates are finalised.
- Herbicide use training – This is a training session to supplement the Chemcert courses and will focus on the hands-on practicalities of weed-spraying and herbicide use in the reserves. The first of these courses is now scheduled for Wednesday March 20th from 9 am to 12 noon. Future training events will be paired with the formal 1-day Chemcert courses.
- ParkCare Forums – A forum on weed identification with Steve Taylor was flagged (date to be announced). There was also a Fringe Forum on March 7th to discuss the ACT Government's latest Regional Fire Management Plan, which outlines all the planned fire-related work for the next 10 years, including slashing, grazing and hazard-reduction burns. The Strategic Fire Management Plan discussed at the Fringe Forum heralded further hazard reduction burns for the Pinnacle NR – one in Hawker paddock sometime during the 2019-2023 period and one in the Forest north of the Macrorhyncha track in the 2024-2028 period.
- Template for flyers – Alison flagged PCS' intention to design a template flyer that can be used by all the ParkCare groups to produce their own flyers to hand out at public events or distribute in their respective areas. The ParkCare groups supply their own images and text and production is handled by PCS.
- Track maintenance – I also spoke to Alison on the issue of eroded tracks around the Reserve, particularly the steep track immediately behind the houses on the northwest corner of the Forest block, which is becoming increasingly hazardous to navigate. She agreed to nominate the job of repairing the track as a "Ranger Assist" task, which hands management of the job to our local ranger with the assistance of volunteers who sign on through the ParkCare Hub.

Butterfly Walk

Suzi Bond once again led a very successful walk at the Pinnacle on January 20th. An impressive haul of butterflies included a Marbled Xenica among the Dainty Swallow-tails at the Pinnacle summit and huge numbers of Chequered Coppers throughout the walk. We also came across numerous other interesting varieties of insect life, including some very colourful Fiddler and Flower Scarab beetles and, more significantly, a couple of Coconut Ant nests (they really do smell like coconut!). These are especially important as these ants are host to two locally rare species of [ant-blue butterflies](#). Something to watch out for!

For a sample of what was seen on the walk, see the [Butterflies and Caterpillars collection](#) of wonderful photos taken by Alison Milton.

Clean Up Australia Day

March 3rd was fotpin's 4th Clean-up Australia Day event, and an enthusiastic group of around a dozen volunteers turned up to help rid the Reserve of a substantial trailer load of rubbish of various types. The more interesting finds included several loops of fencing wire, a very nasty tangle of rusty barbed wire, a small safe (already emptied, alas), and a 20-litre bucket two-thirds full of solidified concrete, which Gilbert valiantly lugged several hundred metres back to base. Thanks to everyone who took part, including PCS's newest ranger and British import, Nick.

Upcoming Events

- Hawker Primary School Fete -- Sunday April 7th

I've just heard from the school, confirming that we'll be running our usual stall in the usual spot. I've asked PCS to set aside display boards for us and will be putting out a notice to the membership asking for volunteers in coming weeks.

- Autumn bird walk – Sunday April 28th (9 to 11-30 am)

I'll be running my usual walk looking at the Reserve's autumn birds, hoping that the honeyeater migration will be in full swing and that the winter migrants will be starting to arrive.

- Bottom Pinnacle Planting – Sunday May 5th

We've been given approval to proceed with this planting, along with offers of help from PCS. Greening Australia have set aside plants, and we should have sufficient tree guards and stakes to protect the 100 or so shrubs and trees we are planning to plant. If necessary, I will be organising a working bee in the weeks beforehand to collect some additional tree guards from our autumn 2014 planting in the Bottom Pinnacle. Watch this space!

Pinnacle Extension / Offset

On February 6th, Warren and I met with Lexi (Alexi Williams), the new PCS Offsets Ranger with responsibility for our offset (the Pinnacle Extension). Lexi has been sidelined for several months with a rather nasty and complicated wrist fracture that has kept her out of the field. However, now she is getting back on top of things and we had a very informative chat with her about PCS's plans for the offset. There has already been extensive revegetation work in the offset, and they're having a surprisingly good survival rate for the new plants. They've also undertaken some weed control and erosion control work, though Lexi acknowledged that there was room for improvement in their efforts to deal with African Lovegrass in particular. She said that she will be using some of her budget to organise lovegrass control in coming months.

The other interesting news is her intention to use patchwork ecological burns, drawing on Richard Milner's findings about optimal thatch density to prevent excessive thatch levels from building up. We're hoping that this approach will prove to be a successful substitute for crash grazing as a way of reducing the fuel load. We finished our meeting by agreeing to arrange more regular communication in the future so that we can better coordinate our weed-control efforts.

Weed Control

The weed control season to date has been dominated by St. John's Wort, which was favoured by the seasonal conditions and flourished, and a total of 206 hours was spent spraying it up to the end of February. With very little rain in February compared with earlier months, St. John's Wort, like most other plants, has been stopped in its tracks by lack of water and the control effort required has decreased considerably.

Most of our other primary weed targets from previous years have had a quiet season so far. In some cases this is because we are well on the way to permanently controlling them, while in others the seasonal conditions favoured other plants. Notably, Themeda (kangaroo grass)

has been flourishing in the last 2 or 3 seasons and has become dense enough in places to limit the growth of weed species.

Between 1 July 2018 and 28 February 2019 the total amount of effort deployed in weed control was 528 hours, 99% of which was spent on the Reserve. This was 21% more than last season (34% more for the Reserve alone), but the second lowest of our 9 seasons of records. This is partly because we are succeeding in controlling some of our primary targets and partly because of reduced available volunteer time.

For more analysis see the [weeding effort web page](#) and associated links to maps and charts for comparisons of weed types with previous seasons and across the different management regions of the Reserve.

2019 AGM

In order to avoid the mid-winter cold that has accompanied our AGMs in the past, the Coordinating Committee decided at its March meeting to bring the meeting forward to a more agreeable time of year, and this year's meeting will be on Sunday May 19th (at the Weetangera Primary School as usual - to be confirmed).

It is important that we get a good turnout this year to:

- (a) approve the decisions made by last year's AGM which failed to achieve a quorum; and
- (b) consider (and hopefully pass) some proposed changes to the fotpin Management Rules, details of which will be available soon at: www.fotpin.org.au/governance.html#AGM1905

John Brannan
Coordinator
March 10th, 2019