



fotpin update #11 December 2013

Convenor's Report Spring 2013

Dear Friends of The Pinnacle

Spring is always our busiest season for all sorts of reasons, and this year has been no different, starting with the Spring Walks program and an information display at Jamison Centre, and including another (fairly small) planting and the latest round of surveys for Don's grassland experiment.

In September we were asked to comment on a proposed expenditure review for the Parks and Conservation Service, and Pax put together a very professional [submission](#) that was gratefully adopted as a proxy by many of the other Parkcare groups. It also contributed significantly to the submission drafted by Ginninderra Catchment Group. What impact this will all have remains to be seen.

This year's rather hastily assembled [Spring Walks program](#) kicked off with my bird walk, followed by a wildflower walk led by Rosemary, Pax's "Long" walk, and finally David Tongway's very short but highly informative walk looking at the ecological processes, particularly around erosion, happening on the reserve. Attendances were generally good, but we're hoping that we can get even better numbers next year.

Fotpin again punched well above its weight at the annual joint Parkcare display held on the weekend of September 6-8 and involving 4 parkcare groups and the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group. Fotpin provided more volunteers to staff the stall than all the other groups combined, something noted with gratitude by organiser Jean Geue from the Friends of Aranda Bushland. This year's event was especially successful, with the presence of CIMAG and their Indian Myna trap attracting quite a bit of extra attention.

On October 7, we held a smallish planting event in the woodlands just to the south of the Forest block. A total of 102 shrubs and groundlayer plants were given the best possible start by a dozen or so volunteers, and last time I looked, they were still in excellent shape. My thanks to PCS Ranger Anthony Hart for helping to move the water tank to its new spot and getting it filled, to Greening Australia for augering the holes and providing the plants, and to Elizabeth for organizing an excellent morning tea for the hard-working volunteers.

[Fotpin's grassland experiment](#) run by Don Driscoll is now in its 3rd year, and he again managed a Herculean feat in mustering enough sharp-eyed volunteers to pore over the minutiae of each of his survey plots. Congratulations Don.

We also carried out a survey of a far less ambitious type -- Fotpin's biodiversity survey (or Vegwatch, as it is now known), under the guidance of Sarah Sharp and the Molonglo Catchment Group. With the expert help of John Fitz Gerald, we were able to complete our surveys and come up with the most complete plant list yet for our 20 x 50 metre plot.

You may also have noticed that someone has dug logs in across some of the Pinnacle trails to act as erosion barriers. The person responsible for those is, again, our PCS Ranger Anthony Hart, who will be similarly reinforcing other tracks around the reserve on an ongoing basis. We have offered to assist him in this, so expect a call for volunteers before too long.

Just last week, we conducted a survey of rare plants at the Pinnacle with the assistance of Michael Mulvaney from the ACT Govt's Conservation Planning and Research division. This is an ongoing stocktake of rare and endangered plants in the ACT and helps to give government a better idea of where Canberra's botanical treasures are and, more importantly, why those areas need to be protected. We were delighted to come across some new species of rare plants at the Pinnacle (which will soon be added to our [Pinnacle](#)

[plant list](#)) and the general feedback from Michael was that the reserve is now in far better shape than when it was last surveyed, with a number of areas of the reserve upgraded to a higher level of ecological values.

On a related topic, we've just heard that the hazard reduction (HR) burns that were scheduled for the Pinnacle this Spring will now not be carried out until Autumn (conditions permitting). Current research indicates that Autumn burns do far less long-term damage to ecologically sensitive areas, so this is very good news indeed. It is also true that the HR burns conducted by the Parks and Conservation Service these days are far more ecologically nuanced than in the past, so tend to be less damaging all round. Indeed, there are many Australian bush plants for which fire and/or smoke are an essential component of their regeneration.

I can't end without saying something about the magnificent weeding effort that has gone in over the last few months. Once again, Pax has led from the front (ably assisted by Warren, of course) in the war on weeds, and once again, the achievements of the fotpin weeders are the envy of all the parkcare groups, and greatly appreciated by the Rangers at PCS. A striking example of the impact of several years of weed control can be seen in the final page of this update, where there is a photo taken by Rosemary in December 2007 of a notorious *Verbascum* site near "Five ways" accompanied by a comparison photo taken a few days ago. We hope to produce more such comparisons and put them on our website.

I and the rest of the fotpin committee wish you all the best for the festive season and hope you have a very happy and productive year in 2014.

John Brannan
Convenor

Looking south-west from “Five ways”; then and now



The potential still exists for a recurrence of what is seen in 2007, with several hundred Verbascum seedlings having been sprayed this year in the area shown in the images. The time required for maintaining Verbascum control in this area is, however, significantly less than a few years ago.