



fofpin update #15 March 2015

Hi all,

Well, it's been an odd summer, and a busy one, especially for our weeding teams. The regular rainfall through December and January, followed by a very dry but relatively mild February kept our favourite weeds thriving long past their due date. The St. John's Wort had an extended season, requiring several passes over most areas, while the rain triggered an explosion of *Verbascum* germinations. Largely thanks to the spraying efforts of Warren, we're making steady progress against *Verbascum* in the Reserve and the number of briar roses appears to be declining exponentially. Interestingly, other reserves are complaining of rampant Saffron Thistle outbreaks this season, whereas we've had a fairly quiet year on that front. This suggests to me that our Herculean efforts in previous years have eased the ongoing burden of Saffron Thistle control on a long-term basis. At least, I'd like to think that was the case; only time will tell. The battle against African Lovegrass continues, with significantly more help from the ACT Government this year -- it seems that they're finally getting the message, albeit many years too late. Their spraying around the perimeter of the Reserve has been very welcome, though the patchy coverage provided by the contractors still required extensive follow-up by our own sprayers.

We continue to track the progress of the offset area in the Bottom Pinnacle that is scheduled to be added to the Reserve. The offset will link the Pinnacle to the Kama Nature Reserve to our south across William Hovell Drive. We have provided our feedback to the ACT Government on their proposed draft Offset Management Plan, and we await the final version of the draft plan with interest.

The focus at a couple of external events this summer has been on hazard-reduction burns. The PCS Coordinators' meeting heralded a talk by Brian Levine, head of the FMU based at the PCS Stromlo depot, addressing the concerns of parkcarers around the burns conducted in the urban and peri-urban reserves. The Coordinators' meeting is also an opportunity for the various ParkCare and Landcare group coordinators to talk about more immediate concerns and share their insights and apprehensions with the other groups. Notably, Bernie Bugden from the Molonglo Catchment Group announced that small grants (up to \$5,000) are now available for ParkCare/Landcare groups. MCG is also sponsoring one team from the Green Army, who will be available to local groups for specific projects. One team consists of ten 17-25-year-olds and includes a supervisor, which means that they can (in theory) be directed to a task and then left to it. They will also be Chemcerted, which broadens the potential uses for the group.

Brian Levine's briefing on prescribed burns gave us an overview of how the various levels of government formulate and implement hazard-reduction burns. In short, a Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, which is revised every 5 years, gives rise to a Regional Management Plan (also revised every 5 years), and this then forms the basis for the annual Bushfire Operation Plans, which more specifically dictate what gets burned, how and when.

Each year, 30-50 burns are planned, mostly in urban reserves, and each burn has its own "Burn Plan". These are available on the TAMS website at http://www.tams.act.gov.au/parks-recreation/bushfire_management. This is the site to watch for updates on when our own burn might happen.

Individual burns are implemented by an "Incident Management Team", which includes a "Values Officer" whose job it is to protect the ecological values of the burn site. Usually the Values Officer will be either Michael Mulvaney or one of his colleagues from the TAMS Conservation, Planning and Research office.

Brian also went into the extensive (and evolving) science behind fuel hazard assessment and fire management, and spoke of his commitment to open communication, noting that the website is being improved to make it more accessible to the public, including an RSS feed for information on Burn Plans and the on-ground assessments carried out by Brian and his colleagues in sites where burns are scheduled.

Ultimately, the outcomes of any burn depend to some extent on the specific conditions on the day and the competence of the individuals on the Incident Management Team. We just have to hope that conditions are as good as they can be when our turn comes around.

On March 1st, fotpin held its first ever "Clean Up Australia Day" event. We decided to restrict our outreach to email notices to the membership, and the 12 people who turned up (those who were still around when the camera came out are shown in the photo below) on a lovely Sunday morning did an amazing amount of rubbish clearing. I think we're all aware that the Pinnacle is largely free of significant amounts of litter. There are a few hotspots around the main entrances on Dungowan St and Springvale Drive, but generally it's in pretty good shape. So for us, the event was an opportunity to clear out some of the larger bits of rubbish that have been cluttering the Reserve for years, including tires, barbed and fencing wire, old sheets of tin and even some old bits of farm machinery. We filled two trailers and the back of Pax's Subi with what we collected, and the Reserve will never be the same again!



A good morning's work!

Our walks program for this autumn is still taking shape. My bird walk is locked in for April 19th, but I'm still waiting to hear from Wally and Tyronne Bell on whether they can lead another aboriginal heritage walk this season. The other major upcoming event is the next planting event, which is currently planned for April 26th. I'm only looking at planting around 120 plants, so it will be a fairly small (but significant!) planting on either side of Valley track, so will straddle the Central and Dam paddocks. The aim, as with the Kama paddock planting last year, is to complement the existing vegetation (mostly mixed eucalypts planted in the 1980s) by providing native groundcover and shrublayer species.

John Brannan
Fotpin Coordinator
16 March 2015