



fotpin update #18 March 2016

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Weed Control

As always around this time of year, we're starting to hope that maybe the worst of the weeding season is over. Unfortunately the wetter than average summer months followed by the unusual run of warm days above 30° (which made it feel as though Summer would never end) have combined to produce ideal conditions for weed germination and growth. We have had another prolonged season battling St. John's Wort, but the declining trend in the amount of chemical used on it, coupled with visual observations that the density is lower than previously, provide some encouragement that we're on making progress. Speaking to other ParkCare/Landcare coordinators, other reserves are certainly having a much harder time with wort than we are, so I think our past efforts are definitely paying off.

The conditions have also been ideal for *Verbascum* species and the battle continues, though we've been largely successful in preventing stalking and any additions to the seed bank. Similarly briar numbers had a surge this year, but our system for getting them early had virtually prevented any hips from maturing. Miscellaneous broadleaf weeds continue to flourish in these conditions as well.

African Lovegrass is a continuing concern, especially given the explosion of growth in the suburbs along the verges and urban open spaces. This season has been wonderful for grasses of all sorts, and the ALG is no exception. The good news is that so far we're largely containing its incursions into the reserve, thanks in no small part to the untiring efforts of John Fitz Gerald, aided by some keen ALG spotters. If you want to check out our progress on the weeds front, you can follow it through the [monthly summary](#) which compares this season's effort with previous seasons for all weed types and the [maps of our weeding effort for major target weeds](#) also paint an interesting picture.

On a related note, I attended an information evening (or "Fringe Forum" as PCS called it) on the topic of weeds last week, and the two PCS weed experts, Steve Taylor and Jenny Connolly, spoke at some length about the difficulties they face staying on top of weed outbreaks in the ACT. Jenny, who is the Weeds Officer for City Services (the guys who mow the nature strips), was despairing of ever getting ALG under control. Her focus now is on trying to keep it out of urban native grasslands and preventing outbreaks of new invasive weeds, such as Madagascan Fireweed, from following in the footsteps of African Lovegrass. The guys at PCS have been particularly stressed this year as their budget was cut significantly (from \$2.1 million down to \$1.5 million), but they're optimistic that they'll have their budget restored next year. One reason for that optimism is the weeding data they've been able to compile on their new ArcGIS mapping system, which comes with an accompanying smartphone app (called Collector). This enables them to record their effort in much more detail with far less trouble. To better capture the effort by all the ParkCare and Landcare groups, they're encouraging us to use the app also. Of course, we've been recording our weeding data electronically since 2010, and we're currently working with PCS to find a way to port our data into the ArcGIS system.

These Fringe Forums are going to be happening monthly, it seems, each one targeting a specific topic, such as fire, rabbits, erosion, etc.

Pinnacle Extension

As you may be aware, approval has been given for a 19.5-hectare extension to the Pinnacle Nature Reserve. The area stretches from the southern boundary of the Reserve down to William Hovell Drive, linking the Pinnacle to the Kama Nature Reserve. It has been established under the environmental offsets policy and is in the process of being formally

incorporated as part of the Reserve. More information, including a map of the area can be found at www.fotpin.org.au/pinnacle-extension-2016.html.

A management plan for the offset has been drawn up and fotpin has had some input in the process. In the meantime, improvements of the offset area have already begun in the form of logs ("coarse woody debris") being placed at various points in the area. Needless to say, fotpin will continue to carry out weed management in the area as we do in much of the adjacent North Kama and Bottom Pinnacle areas, but this will now be part of a coordinated management regime with the PCS Offset Management team. At least, that's the theory. We've already had our first meeting with PCS to discuss ongoing management and we are optimistic that we can achieve good outcomes in the future.

Clean Up Australia Day

Following on from our first involvement in this program last year, we held another clean-up day at the Pinnacle on Sunday March 6th. On a pretty much perfect morning (if a little warmer than we'd like), we got a really good turnout, with 16 people coming along to help out. Warren organized maps and loaded GPS units with waypoints to help the groups pinpoint the larger bits of rubbish we've found around the reserve since the last clean-up while doing other things. The result was a full trailer load of old barbed wire, fencing wire, sheets of tin, concrete posts and rubble, as well as a number of regular clean-up bags full of litter. Thanks to everyone who came along to lend a hand on the day, and a special farewell thankyou to Stacy, who is about to leave us for the green shores of New Zealand. Particular thanks to Pax for supplying the trailer and the Subi to pull it round, as well as the tables and chairs for our "headquarters". Thanks also to Bob for lending us his idiot-proof pop-up marquee again. And of course our thanks as always go to the PCS rangers who came along to collect everything and truck it away for disposal or recycling. Our next challenge is to find enough rubbish on the reserve to make it worth holding another event next year!



Fotpin "headquarters" [photo: Alison Milton]



Nat and Bob helping the rangers load the truck [photo: Alison Milton]

Upcoming Events

Autumn may be a little quieter on the weeding front, but there is still lots happening for fotpin. **Sunday April 3rd** is the date for this year's **Hawker Primary Fête**, and we will have a stall there as usual. We're already working on our display for the stall, and I'll be in touch closer to the day to organise a roster for volunteers to help staff the stall. If you can help at all, even if only for a short time, please mark the date in your diary.

Our usual **Autumn Walks Program** is still taking shape, so we don't have any confirmed dates at this point, but I'll be in touch again soon to give you the details.

The other big event will be our annual **kangaroo count**. If you've been involved in these events in the past, you'll know what a fascinating exercise this is and how it can show you a whole new face of the reserve. Even though I spend many hours surveying birds and spraying weeds all over the reserve every month, I still find that the roo count almost always takes me to spots I've never been to before. We're still negotiating with PCS to pin down a date for this year's count, but we know it will be held on a Sunday in April or May. Once again, you'll hear from us as soon as we have a firm date.

John Brannan
Fotpin Coordinator
16 March 2016