



fotpin update #32 August 2020

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After several months of good rain, the reserve is looking lush and green again. Many of the birds have already decided Spring is here and are busy building nests – indeed, some have already completed their nests and are sitting on eggs.

Alas, much of the lush green growth is the result of an explosion of various broadleaf weeds – Paterson’s Curse, Capeweed, Prickly Lettuce, Nightshade and various types of thistle. With the easing of the COVID-19 restrictions, the indefatigable fotpin weeding teams have been back out there spraying, grubbing and slashing to get on top of the worst of the weeds, recording record levels of effort over the last three months. There’s still lots to do, but our thanks and congratulations go to everyone involved in keeping the weeds under control. For those interested a summary of [weeding for the 2019-20 season](#) is now on the website.

The fotpin committee continues to meet using the Zoom videoconferencing software, and we are becoming fairly adept now with these techniques for meeting remotely. My thanks to Warren for facilitating these sessions and helping us all master the basics of the “new normal”.

Friends of the Pinnacle Turns 10!

We recently reached the 10th anniversary of the meeting that marked the formal establishment of the Friends of the Pinnacle. At the [meeting](#), held on July 25th 2010, 22 people signed membership forms to become fotpin members, thereby accepting the Draft Management Rules and establishing fotpin as an unincorporated organisation.

We had hoped to mark this milestone with a gathering of some sort to celebrate the occasion and everything we have achieved in the last 10 years. However, for obvious reasons, any such gathering will have to wait until we can all come together as a group without fearing for our health or even our lives. But rest assured, as soon as it is safe to do so, we will find a way to celebrate 10 years of fotpin with the appropriate level of enthusiasm!



Molonglo Water Main

Thanks to repeated rounds of broadleaf weed spraying and re-sowing of grasses, the pipeline corridor is now looking in much better shape than it was. Many of the seedlings inside tree guards have been replaced, and while there are still many that have not survived, the ratio of healthy plants to dead ones is now looking much better. Since the end of Summer, there have been monthly on-site inspections attended by ourselves and the various parties involved in the revegetation work and monitoring. These meetings have proven to be hugely valuable in identifying ongoing problems with the revegetation work and ensuring that those problems are dealt with. There’s still a lot to do in terms of weed control and replanting/re-sowing along the pipeline corridor, but we are now cautiously optimistic that it will be in reasonable shape by October, when the current revegetation contractor’s contract expires.

We have been told that, at that point, fotpin will be offered the contract to take over the remaining revegetation and maintenance work along the corridor. We have yet to receive a

formal offer for this work and we do not yet know the details of the terms of the offer, but in principle we are very interested in taking over this project. Needless to say, our acceptance would be contingent on the current revegetation contractors meeting their obligatory targets for replanting and restoration of the groundcover. We will keep the membership apprised of the progress of this project.

Track maintenance

Many of you will have noticed the work that has been done on some of the main trails and walking tracks around the reserve. A few months ago, we were asked by PCS to identify work that needed doing around the reserve that could be tackled by the newly formed PCS work teams (part of the ACT Government's "Jobs for Canberrans" program in response to the COVID pandemic). We sent through a list of tracks that required work, and many of those have now been addressed.

However, the work done on the Central track was carried out with the use of heavy machinery, which has resulted in some very regrettable outcomes due to the boggy ground. There are now some very deep ruts along the track as well as sections that are rocky and difficult to walk on. We have raised these issues with PCS and hope that some further remediation work will be carried out once the ground has dried out and will support heavy vehicles

Weetangera Paddock Revegetation Project

Len and his team have been continuing their excellent work in Weetangera paddock. Unfortunately, we were not successful in our bid for a grant from the Friends of Grasslands, so Len's plans to build semi-permanent exclosures to protect seedlings and areas targeted for grass-seed sowing have had to be scaled back. With assistance from Marty, the ParkCare Ranger, Len has constructed two less substantial exclosures using plastic fencing and recycled fence posts. Len believes that this will make it easier to monitor and maintain the new growth. We are all very interested to see how successful Len's revegetation efforts will be this Spring.

COG Bird Walk

The Canberra Ornithologists group asked me in June if I could lead a bird walk for their members at the Pinnacle on Sunday July 26th. I naturally said yes, and the walk was advertised on the COG chatline. Over 20 COG members expressed an interest in coming along, but alas, the day dawned wet and miserable with a forecast of more rain to come during the day. Undaunted, I turned up at the meeting point and, in the end, six of us enjoyed what turned out to be an excellent morning of birdwatching at the reserve. The rain eased during the morning and in the end, we identified a total of 38 species, including numerous Scarlet Robins and Speckled Warblers (both locally threatened species), and no fewer than eight species of honeyeater. You can see the full list of birds here:

<https://ebird.org/australia/checklist/S71824133>

Meeting with Greens Candidate Jo Clay

On July 16th, Warren and I had a pleasant stroll around the reserve with Jo Clay, a Greens candidate for Ginninderra in the upcoming ACT elections. Jo has a strong connection with the neighbourhood, having grown up in Weetangera and being a Cook resident now. She was interested to hear about what we do and was eager to support our efforts at the reserve. In particular, she agreed strongly with the idea of giving the PCS rangers more support and appointing a second dedicated ParkCare ranger.

Upcoming Events

Despite the pandemic, we are already looking forward to a number of events this spring, including our usual program of guided walks and the annual Joint ParkCare display at the Jamison Centre in Macquarie. Unfortunately, there will be no Spring Fete at Weetangera Primary School this year due to the COVID-19 restrictions, but we look forward to taking part in future fetes at the school. The events we have scheduled so far are as follows (subject to COVID-19 restrictions in force at the time):

- Joint ParkCare Display – Sept 11-13 (Fri-Sun) Jamison Centre, Macquarie**
 This highly successful public event is held every year to showcase the contributions made by ParkCare groups and other volunteers at reserves in the Belconnen area. We will be joining the Friends of Black Mountain, Friends of Aranda Bushland, Friends of Mt Painter, the Friends of Grasslands (FOG), the Ginninderra Catchment Group, the Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP) and the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group (CIMAG). I will be sending out an email soon asking for volunteers to help staff the stall and set up and tear down the display.
- Pinnacle Bird Walk – Sunday Sept 20th, 9.00 am at Dungowan St, Hawker**
 This spring is shaping up to be a terrific year for birds at the Pinnacle, with many species already building nests or, in some cases, already sitting on completed nests. This walk will be an opportunity to take a closer look at some of the resident species at the reserve as they settle into their breeding season.
- Pinnacle Wildflower Walk – Saturday October 10th, 10.00 am at the Springvale Drive entrance opposite De Salis St.**
 We are fortunate to have two people as knowledgeable as John Fitz Gerald and Nola McKeown to act as guides for a walk in what promises to be an excellent season for wildflowers at the reserve. With the wonderful rain we've had in recent weeks, we're set to have one of the best wildflower displays at the reserve for years. Don't miss it!

ParkCare Developments

For some time now, there has been a growing sense of dissatisfaction among many of the Convenor's of Canberra's ParkCare groups with the way ParkCare is currently being managed by the ACT Government's Parks & Conservation Service (PCS). This came to a head recently when we were informed, without prior consultation, that the annual Scribbly Gum magazine, which has been the flagship publication for the ParkCare movement in Canberra, was to be discontinued and our annual summaries of news from each reserve would henceforth be condensed and incorporated into the PCS Annual Report.

While not perhaps an earth-shaking development in itself, this was seen as emblematic of a growing trend towards unilateral and opaque management by the current ParkCare team in PCS.

In response to this, Convenors representing over a dozen of Canberra's reserves met on July 11th to discuss our grievances with the current management and to find a way forward that would adequately address our needs and aspirations.

The meeting was a valuable opportunity for us to air issues that have been concerning us for a couple of years now, including the lack of transparency and consultation in the management of ParkCare, the lack of progress in finalizing the Canberra Nature Park Management Plan, together with the specific Operational Plans for individual reserves that flow from the management plan, the lack of clarity around training opportunities, and the shortcomings of the ParkCare Hub as an online communications tool for volunteers involved in ParkCare activities. We also discussed the recent request from PCS for submissions by ParkCare groups to the proposal that ParkCare reserves be opened up for commercial Nature-based tourism – something that, on the face of it, runs directly counter to the primary purpose of Canberra Nature Park reserves, which is environmental conservation.

It was proposed at the meeting that we seek a meeting with the relevant ACT Government Minister – MLA Mick Gentleman in this case – to put forward our grievances and seek to find a better way forward. One suggestion was that we seek to establish a formal partnership agreement with the ACT Government that adequately recognizes and values the role that ParkCare and all other Landcare volunteers play in maintaining and improving the ecological values of Canberra's urban and peri-urban reserves. We agreed to meet again to review our progress in the interim.

At the second meeting, held on Sunday August 1 at the offices of the Southern ACT Catchment Group in Erindale, we learned that discussions had already been held in the days previously with Stuart Jeffress, Deputy Director of PCS, and that he broadly supported our goals. A meeting with the Minister had also been scheduled for Tuesday August 4th using the Webex videoconferencing software. In the course of Sunday's meeting, we finalised our

message to the Minister and delegated particular topics to be raised with the Minister to a small number of ParkCare Convenors, including myself, who would be invited to participate in the videoconference, with several other convenors present as observers.

The videoconference with Minister Mick Gentleman on August 4th was attended by myself, Sarah Hnatiuk (Convenor, Friends of Mount Painter), Kathy Eyles (Convenor, Mt Taylor ParkCare Group), Jochen Zeil (Convenor, Friends of Mt Majura), Ian Walker (Executive Director, Environment & Planning Directorate) and Justin Foley (Executive Branch Manager, Parks & Conservation Service), with a number of other group convenors present as observers. The topics covered in the meeting included future support for the local catchment groups, coordination between agencies within the ACT Government, particularly PCS and TCCS, the progress of the Canberra Nature Park (CNP) Management Plan, additional support for volunteer groups through the ParkCare ranger and the PCS district rangers, and the need for continued management of over-grazing in the CNP reserves.

With regard to long-term funding for catchment groups, Minister Gentleman mentioned the difficulty of obtaining funding for organizations per se, since the ACT Government's preferred model of funding is a function-based approach. The Convenors present pointed to the long list of important functions that the catchment groups provide, including delivering funding for local ParkCare and Landcare groups and coordinating programs such as Waterwatch, Frogwatch and the Healthy Waterways Initiative. Ian Walker promised to keep working to improve inter-agency cooperation, particularly at the middle- and lower-management level.

Regarding the CNP Management Plan, Ian Walker was optimistic that it should be up and running by mid-2021, and he and the Minister both emphasized the need to carefully balance initiatives in the Nature-based Tourism Strategy against the conservation values of the CNP reserves, with conservation always being the primary consideration. Minister Gentleman suggested that any tourist initiatives be trialled first in locations such as Tidbinbilla, where there is an established model of commercial tourism. Jochen signalled the need for more resourcing of compliance enforcement and educational programs if tourism is to operate in the Canberra Nature Park.

Ian addressed the need for on-ground support for ParkCare by discussing the new Ranger Assist program and outlining plans for more ParkCare support to be delivered through the District Rangers. Disappointingly, he did not acknowledge our request for a second ParkCare Ranger so that Marty's workload could be split between two rangers – one each for Northside and Southside.

Ian and the Minister both acknowledged the importance of kangaroo and rabbit control in the reserves and pointed to the long-term funding for these measures, also noting that much of the effort so far had gone into ensuring the complete eradication of rabbits inside the Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve.

The meeting finished with a promise by the Minister to have his office schedule regular ongoing meetings with ParkCare convenors and an agreement from Ian Walker to arrange a follow-up meeting in coming weeks.

John Brannan
Convenor

August 10th, 2020