



fotpin update #40 August 2022

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Based on what I hear from the official prognosticators, and what I can see through my own windows, it appears that we are going to be having yet another wet spring. I'm sure this has happened before, but I'm not sure I can remember when.

While sodden tracks and boggy ground have their drawbacks, the rain is a boon to almost all the flora and fauna in the reserve (especially the frogs!), and I have no doubt that we can look forward to another outstanding season for orchids and wildflowers. Many of the birds are already either sitting on nests or busy building them, so you might want to keep a wary eye on your local magpies, if they're inclined to swoop.

The other day, a friend remarked to me that Winter is a quiet time for ParkCarers, during which they can focus on other business while the weeds are dormant. I'm not sure that "quiet" is exactly how I would describe the last few months, which have been hectic and eventful, as discussed below.

Pinnacle Events

Easing of COVID-19 restrictions* means that some of our activities that have been cancelled over the past two years are back on the calendar, so we can plan a full suite of events for the coming spring. These will include at least one (and probably two) guided bird walks, a wildflower walk, participation in the Weetangera Primary School fete scheduled for December 4th, and perhaps the Joint ParkCare Display at the Jamison Centre, a hugely popular and successful event that unfortunately had to be cancelled last year.

I'm still working on nailing down the dates for these events, so stay tuned for future announcements.

* Note that [advice for Covid-19 safe practices](#) is still in place for all ParkCare activities.

Molonglo 3 Watermain Corridor Revegetation

In June, we made our first purchase of native grass and forb seeds to use in revegetating the construction corridor where the Molonglo water main was laid through the reserve. The trees and shrubs we planted last November are doing very well, some bursting out of their tree guards, so the next stage will involve attempting to re-establish some native grasses and wildflowers along the same area. Our intention is to mark out some trial plots and sow them with a variety of grasses and forbs to see which varieties are most successful. Based on those results, we will then make larger seed purchases, focusing on the successful species and the sorts of areas in which they did well. We also intend to repurpose a couple of the old wire enclosures used in the Grassland Restoration Project and use them as plots to grow native grasses and forbs that we can later harvest for seed as an ongoing seed bank.

Meeting with the Ranger

John Fitz Gerald and I recently met on-site with our Ranger, Kelzang, to discuss the work he and his team have been doing in the compound beside the Icon water tanks, as well as the recent installation of boulders in the car parking areas along Springvale Drive in Weetangera.

Kel was busy planting more grasses and forbs in the landscaped area at the southern end of the water tanks compound, and talked about his plans to plant about 10 eucalypts along the southern edge of that area. He also outlined his plans for the rocks that have been dumped at the northwestern corner of the compound, near the gate onto the Valley track. Those rocks

will be spread on either side of the gate to provide reptile habitat once the existing rubble piles have been bulldozed flat.

The boulders in the Springvale Drive car parks were put in place following a directive from the Minister to restrict vehicle movement between the car parks and limit the damage to vegetation along that strip. Further landscaping work is planned, with sand and gravel and mulch already ordered to remedy the erosion that has occurred and remediate the informal vehicle tracks running between the car parks along Springvale Drive.

The new opening in the fence beside the gate closest to the mobile phone tower on Springvale Drive is apparently to comply with the policy to promote inclusivity by providing wheelchair access to the reserve and access for people pushing strollers or prams. I pointed out that an opening that wide is also an invitation for motorbike riders to enter the reserve (something we've seen too much of just recently), but Kel could only suggest that we contact senior PCS management to voice our concerns.

Asked about the much-needed repairs to the fencing at the Dungowan St reserve entrance, Kel assured us that it was on his list of things-to-do, but his fencing team was currently tied up fixing the extensive damage to the fencing along Ginninderra Creek during the heavy rain event in Early August.

Pinnacle native plant diversity

Since the 2019 drought, 44 additional native species have been identified on the Reserve, an increase of more than 20% to our already extensive list, bringing the total to 247. These included 8 rushes and sedges, 8 daisies, 6 orchids and 4 lilies and some rare or endangered species, some of which are shown below. This can be attributed in part to the very favourable seasons we've had since then as well as to the increased use of [Canberra Nature Map](#) allowing easy identification of species.



From left to right: top row: *Caladenia carnea* (Pink fingers); *Diuris chryseopsis* (Golden moth); *Cyperus sphaeroideus* (Scented sedge); *Sporobolus creber* (Slender rat's tail grass); bottom row: *Olearia lirata* (Snowy daisybush); *Arthropodium milleflorum* (Vanilla lily); *Wahlenbergia planiflora* (Flat bluebell); *Utricularia dichotoma* (Fairy aprons).

Photos by Alison Milton, John Fitz Gerald and Warren Bond

Weetangera Paddock Revegetation

A fairly quiet time for planting, Len and his team have been busy preparing areas for spring plantings by grubbing and spraying weeds and repairing and preparing fencing. Propagation in the greenhouse has continued though, with 26 *Poa labillardieri* (Common Tussock Grass)

already in tubes and about 40 seedlings of *Arthropodium fimbriatum* (Chocolate lilies) ready to be pricked out and put in tubes.

New Pinnacle Brochure

One benefit of having so many rainy days is that it gave me the opportunity to use a few of them to revamp our ageing Pinnacle brochure. We handed out the last copy some months ago, so I am looking forward to having a supply of new brochures to hand out at future public events. I need to thank Warren for providing an updated map of the reserve and the kind folk at PCS who have agreed to fund the printing costs this time around. With luck, we should have copies hot off the press by the end of this month. It is already available from our website ([new brochure](#)).

Fotpin Not-for-Profit Status

As foreshadowed at the Special General Meeting held just before this year's AGM, we have had to officially register as a not-for-profit organization (and be listed on the Australian Charity Register) in order to retain our current web domain name (fotpin.org.au). This is largely a formality and makes no difference to the way the organisation operates, but it was a long and tedious process that I thank Warren for pursuing.

PCS Annual Planning Briefing

After a few years of trying out new formats for the annual planning meetings held between the Parks and Conservation Service and the various ParkCare groups, this year PCS settled on the idea of holding a "briefing" to be attended by all the ParkCare groups, to be followed by individual meetings between each ParkCare group and their local rangers. The purpose of the briefing is to set out the current situation and plans for the coming year in each of the areas PCS works in. Specifically, the briefing covered Nature-based Commercial Tourism in ACT parks and reserves, the Bushfire Operations Plan (BOP), the Weed Operations Plan (WOP) and the Vertebrate Pests Operation Plan (VOP). A brief summary of each follows.

The draft framework for Nature-based Commercial Tourism (NBCTF) is now being finalized and will go out for public consultation in coming months. Jacqui Travers, who is supervising this initiative, was at pains to assure everyone that nothing would happen without the approval of all parties (including volunteer groups) and that conservation would always be the first priority in CNP reserves. We have yet to see what shape any commercial tourism is likely to take, though coffee carts were mentioned at one point.

PCS Fire Ecologist Kirsty Babington took us through the information available on the [Bushfire Management website](#), assuring us that it would be updated during the following week. She noted that very little burning has been possible in the last year or so due to the very high moisture levels, which are the highest for several decades. Advance notice of upcoming burns was discussed, and Kirsty told us that, for simple logistical reasons, 4 days' notice was the best warning she could give us for any specific burn, as the factors that make a burn viable are too variable to predict with any certainty more than 4 days in advance. An area of The Pinnacle Nature Reserve between the Pinnacle and Hawker is scheduled for burning in autumn 2023. This 7 ha area is bounded by the Central, Macrorhyncha and Springvale tracks and can be seen on the [prescribed burns map](#).

Harley Baker led us through the [Invasive Weeds website](#), available to the general public, as well as the Dashboards portal used by PCS, weed contractors and ParkCare members with access. PCS use the information there to prioritize weed treatment. Anyone can use the website to find out what weed control has been carried out where and by whom.

The Vertebrate Pests conversation was dominated, predictably, by rabbits, and Mark Sweaney showed us the Rabbit Dashboard in ARCGIS, which shows the rabbit population data PCS uses to prioritize its treatment. This particular dashboard is not currently available to volunteers, but will be soon, apparently. Following the retirement of contractor Chris Robinson, rabbit control has been carried out by the PCS rapid-response teams and other contractors. Chris did an excellent job of controlling the rabbits and his retirement has left a large hole that PCS is struggling to fill, as evidenced by the large number of rabbits on The

Pinnacle this season. The good news is that another local pest control contractor has bought all Chris's equipment and will be taking over his role. However, as long as it keeps raining, resources will continue to be stretched and rabbit control programs will have to be prioritized based on the densities measured using night spotlighting. This coming year there will be targeted programs at Red Hill, Mt Percival and Mt Ainslie.

We have not yet been contacted regarding our group's annual planning meeting with the rangers for our area, though I am aware that meetings have already been scheduled for some other groups. The delay in our case is due to PCS wanting to wait until the Landscape Improvement Plan (LIP) being compiled for the Pinnacle is completed.

John Brannan
Convenor

24 August 2022