



fotpin update #44 August 2023

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It appears from all the predictions that three years of wet weather are finally coming to an end. Rainfall in July was certainly well below average, and August has also been very dry so far, while the temperatures for most of this month have been very spring-like. The reserve's wildflowers are already starting to bloom and many of the birds are busy nest-building. We may be heading for a hot, dry summer, but there's still moisture in the soil in some spots, so we may be in for another good season for wildflowers and, alas, weeds. The months since our AGM in May have also been busy and quite eventful, as discussed below.

Spring Events

Our program of events for the coming spring is filling up quickly with a number of events and guided walks planned for the reserve.

The first event coming up is the annual Joint ParkCare Display at the Jamison Centre in Macquarie. The event will be held this coming weekend from Friday September 1st to Sunday September 3rd. As always, this is a great opportunity for the local ParkCare and environmental groups to raise awareness in the local community of the reserves and the work that the "Friends of" groups do. My thanks to those of you who have already responded to our email notice calling for volunteers to help staff our stall at the display.

This spring, as well as the usual two guided bird walks and a wildflower walk, we plan to hold two new walks. Warren will lead a walk describing the Reserve's history between colonial settlement and its creation in 1993 while visiting some of the remaining reminders of that period. We are also fortunate to have ecologist Michael Doherty as the leader for a tree walk around the reserve, pointing out the various tree species we have and telling us something about them. The committee is also open to suggestions from members on the sorts of walks they would be interested in having at the reserve.

One of the initiatives aired at the recent Environmental Volunteers Conference (see below) was events on the theme of *Wellbeing Through Nature*, which explore the potential for time spent in nature to improve people's physical and psychological health and peace of mind. This is an area that I am interested in exploring as a way to reach out to reserve users who are less focused on (or less able to) engage in more strenuous physical activities, but are still looking for ways to better appreciate and enjoy the benefits that spending time in nature can bring.

We have also been invited to hold a display stall at an event being hosted by Hawker Community Garden in November. They have been asked to host ACT Government Minister Rebecca Vassarotti, who will announce the successful recipients of the current round of Community Garden Grants. The event will run from 9.30 to 10.30 on Thursday November 16th and will include a light morning tea.

The dates of the currently scheduled walks are as follows:

- Sep 1st – 3rd (all day): Jamison Joint ParkCare Display
- Sep 10th (morning): Tree walk
- Sep 17th (morning): Bird walk (1)
- Sep 24th (afternoon): Post-settlement history of The Pinnacle NR
- Oct 22nd (morning): Wildflower walk
- Nov 16th (morning): Hawker Community Gardens event
- Nov 18th (morning): Bird Walk (2)

ACT Environmental Volunteers Conference

The inaugural ACT Environmental Volunteers Conference was held at EPIC last Saturday, August 12th, and was preceded on the Friday by a day of field trips to reserves and urban open spaces all over Canberra. The conference was an ACT Government initiative led by Bren Burkevics, the ACT's Conservator of Flora and Fauna, and was organized jointly by the ACT Government, Landcare ACT and the Ginninderra, Molonglo and Southern ACT catchment groups. I was invited to sit on the organizing committee as a volunteer representative. The theme of the conference was Resilient Environments, Resilient Communities, focusing specifically on the topics of climate change and nature connection.

The field trips on Friday offered visits a total of 10 sites around Canberra, including The Pinnacle (of course), with participants able to choose four of the available sites – two in the morning and two in the afternoon. We limited the group sizes to just 25 people for each site, and every trip was fully subscribed by Friday morning.

For the conference, we were fortunate to be able to attract a number of excellent speakers, including Professor Mark Howden (Director of the Institute for Climate, Energy & Disaster Solutions at ANU), Professor Jamie Pittock (Fenner School of Environment & Society, ANU) and Professor Bruce Pascoe (Enterprise Professor of Indigenous Agriculture, University of Melbourne and author of the book "Dark Emu"). The conference began with a smoking ceremony and welcome to country by Ngunnawal elder Wally Bell, and was officially opened by Rebecca Vassarotti, MLA (Minister for the Environment, ACT).

Our most optimistic estimate when planning for the size of the conference day itself was 150-170 attendees, with perhaps 80 attending the dinner held on the Saturday evening. The actual number of registered volunteers by the morning of the conference was 220! The event was a resounding success by any measure, and the feedback we have received so far has been universally positive. It now seems highly likely that this will become either an annual or biannual event for the foreseeable future. So if you couldn't make it this time, you will have another chance!

Molonglo Watermain Corridor Revegetation

Our plans to revegetate the Icon water tanks compound have had to be shelved indefinitely, as we discovered earlier this year that Icon are considering constructing a third water tank on the site, which would turn the entire compound into a construction site. This is very disappointing given the amount of energy and resources we have already ploughed into the area, and was especially annoying for Kelzang, our previous District Ranger, who spent a great deal of time and effort rehabilitating the southern end of the compound. At this point, Icon are still in the process of making a decision on whether to proceed with the additional tank and where the proposed site will be. We await with interest. In the meantime, we are channelling our efforts into the remaining sections of the pipeline corridor.

John Fitz Gerald and I met on site with Jarrod Ruch, an ecologist with extensive experience in landscape restoration who is currently working as a Project Officer at GCG. We looked over our attempts to promote native groundcover restoration in the Icon water tanks compound and the regrowth currently occurring on the track running down to the creek and along other sections of the watermain corridor. He strongly recommended fencing off plots along the corridor to protect the regrowth from grazing, particularly by rabbits. The rubble-strewn area immediately west of the Icon compound is clearly a haven for rabbits, and the on-site evidence shows that they are feeding heavily on regrowth in the compound and the section of pipeline corridor running down to the creek.

I have consulted with Len about how best to fence off these areas, and he has some fencing that will soon be available to be re-used. I am planning to supplement Len's fencing with additional fencing purchased using the grant funding. Initially, we will simply put up the fencing and wait to see what grows, and then supplement that growth with additional seeding or tubestock later on.

Interpretive Signage

Work continues on this project, with some particularly excellent work by Anne and Alana. Alana managed to track down Nan Betts (née Dixon) the daughter of Oswald Dixon, who was the last lessee of the parcel of land on which about a third of the current Pinnacle NR stands. Nan agreed to meet with us at the reserve on August 5th and very generously shared many photographs and documents with us from her own research for a book she is currently writing about her father. This has enabled us to clarify and expand the information on the reserve's history that we will be including on the panorama sign to go on the Pinnacle summit. We have scanned all the material she gave us and we have her permission to use it on our website as well.

We also met with Maureen and Maurice Tully at their homestead in Cook. The Tully family has a long history on the land in the Weetangera area and still hold the lease for the horse paddocks on either side of Coulter Drive. Maureen Tully was very pleased that we are taking an interest in the history of settlers in the area and is eager to help preserve that history.

On July 20th Anne and I met with Cheree Mostert at the Screenmakers facility in Queanbeyan, where our signs will be fabricated. We had a very productive meeting in which Cheree said she would definitely be able to work with our current designs and that the initial production of the sign stands and boards could proceed while we finalize the images and text. We agreed to share access to the files as they are finalized.

I also met with Wally Bell at the GCG General Members meeting on July 31st and discussed the progress of the Ngunnawal language text to go on the entrance signs. He agreed to look into the progress of the text and let me know how it is going. We are also in discussions with PCS regarding the necessary approvals for indigenous content on our signs. We have been warned that the approval process could take 2-3 months, based on the experience of the Friends of Aranda Bushland. We are doing our best to learn from their experiences and ensure that our wording is as "approval-friendly" as we can make it.

I would like to thank Alison Milton, who went to considerable effort to create a composite panorama image for the summit sign, as well as Bob Hodgson for his advice on local landmarks, Warren for providing his research on the history of the reserve as well as additional images, and our District Ranger Julian, for his assistance helping Anne to identify landmarks on the panorama sign.

PCS Annual Planning Briefing

This year's briefing was an online meeting held on July 26th and included updates from the Office of Nature Conservation (formerly Conservation and Research), the Invasive Plants Control Program, the Invasive Animals Program, the Fire Management Unit and the Offsets Projects. The Commercial Tourism Update had to be postponed as the presenter, Jac Travers, was unwell.

To summarise very briefly: There is \$5.6m over 4 years for conservation projects, including a strategic review of environmental conservation in the ACT. There will be additional funding for rabbit and weed control, including funding for more staff. Funding of \$650,000 for habitat restoration, including climate adaptation measures, \$2.2m for biosecurity (including \$350,000 for rabbit control), \$300,000 for Grassland Earless Dragon conservation at Tidbinbilla, \$1.8m over 3 years for a mountain bike trail from Stromlo to the Cotter, and \$1m over 3 years for Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve.

In the Waterways portfolio, there will be an extra \$8.2m for the Healthy Waterways program, some of which will be spent on re-naturalizing water flows in Canberra, such as replacing concrete runoff channels with wetlands. One such project will be the construction of a wetland on Belconnen Oval.

The minutes of the briefing (including the Q&A sessions) as well as copies of some of the presentations are available on our website (<https://www.fotpin.org.au/annual-briefings.html>).

Kama Link Plantings

At the prompting of our District Ranger, Julian Lolicato, we carried out a small planting event in the new Kama Link paddock (formerly the Offset) in mid-July. Julian had a small number of trees that he wanted to plant in that area to supplement the initial planting put in by the Offsets team when they were still managing the offset. Part of the job involved removing heavy steel mesh guards from the existing young trees and transferring them to the locations for the new plants. On the day, half a dozen of us removed and relocated around 20 of the heavy, cattle-proof guards and still had time to plant about a dozen new seedlings before knocking off to enjoy a late morning tea (or early lunch).

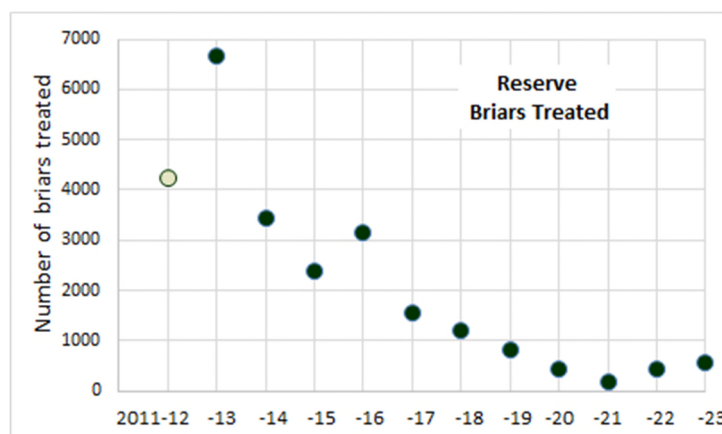
Julian still had a number of seedlings to plant, and quite fortuitously, Len was contacted through the ParkCare Hub by the Intrepid Landcare team at the ANU, who were hoping to come and do some work on the reserve. We saw this as a pretty good fit for the remaining tree planting, so we arranged with Julian for the ANU students to come to the reserve on August 19th to finish the planting that Julian had planned.

On the day, 16 students turned up to join Julian, Len, Graham and myself and we spent the morning relocating guards and planting new tubestock, with the result that 90 trees and shrubs found a new home in the Kama Link paddock. The event was a very successful collaboration between fotpin, the ranger and the volunteers at ANU Intrepid Landcare. It was an opportunity for us to chat with the ANU students and share our experiences as environmental volunteers. I am optimistic that this event has laid the foundation for more such events in the future.

Weed Management (Warren Bond)

Winter is usually a fairly quiet time for weed control but this year (as for last year) time has been spent catching up on work that there was not time to complete earlier, including a second sweep of St. John's Wort spraying and a complete sweep of Verbascum spraying. It was pleasing to see that there was not as much new late season growth of either of them compared with the last few seasons, which may bode well as we move into El Nino conditions.

This is also the time of year when we look back at our [effort for the past season](#) (the 13th for which we have kept records of how our effort was spent) and compare it with seasons past. It is also a good time to update the effects of our efforts to control [Sweet Briars](#) and [Blackberries](#). Whilst the latter have become quite problematic again as a result of the three favourable seasons for their growth, particularly in the Kama Link paddock, the former is are a good news story, with little increase as a result of the wet years (see below).



John Brannan
Convenor

30 August 2023