



fotpin update #17 December 2015

Spring Events Program

In the absence of the popular walks we've held in previous programs led by Wally and Tyrone Bell and Craig Wainwright, this season's program consisted of my usual bird walk and a reprise of Warren's walk looking at the impact of ParkCare at the Pinnacle. We also held a social BBQ to see whether an event of that sort would generate broader community interest. As a sort of afterthought, I led a second bird walk later in the season for people who'd complained that they couldn't make it to my initial walk.



"What're you lot lookin' at?"
Photo by Alison Milton

While the walks were reasonably well attended, the BBQ really didn't garner much custom at all, though there was a late flurry in the last hour. Some lessons to be learned there perhaps. It might've worked better if we'd held it earlier, to catch the morning joggers and dog-walkers, or later so that it coincided with lunch. Hard to say. My thanks to Warren for his excellent walk and to Mike & Denise and everyone else who helped to set up and run the BBQ. Particular thanks to Bob for providing the wonderful idiot-proof marquee!

Other Events

Following on from last year's 25th anniversary ParkCare Forum, there was a similar but smaller event -- "Community Voices in Reserve Management" -- held at the Aboriginal Cultural Centre in Yarramundi Reach. There were several speakers from local Landcare/ParkCare groups, as well as speakers from government (ACT and NSW) and from non-government organizations like the Conservation Council and Greening Australia.

As with all such events, it was primarily an opportunity to exchange ideas and compare notes about what works and what doesn't when it comes to landscape restoration, and this forum was very successful on that front.

Weed Control

I was impressed to read Warren's report to the December Coordinating Committee Meeting that this season we've broken our previous record for weeding effort for the 3 month period September to December. I suspect this is down to an enormous effort by a very limited number of individuals, and all credit to those apparently tireless few! You can view the latest monthly update on our [weed control effort](#) on the website.

The bird surveys that I carry out each month take me to pretty much every part of the reserve, and I can honestly say that I don't think I've ever seen the reserve looking so good. Particularly in the November surveys, the condition of the native grasses and wildflowers was amazing, and it's wonderful to see the way that some areas that were once full of St. John's Wort or Saffron Thistle are now a sea of native grasses, wildflowers and regenerating shrubs and trees. I was particularly pleased to see extensive swathes of flowering Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda australis*) in several parts of the reserve, something I don't recall ever seeing before, though this may be largely due to the reduced grazing pressure from roos following the most recent cull. But the overall results clearly show that if we can continue to keep competition from weeds in check, the native plants will claw their way back.



Flourishing Kangaroo Grass
Photo by Warren Bond

Vegwatch Program (Biodiversity Monitoring)

I again called on the expert plant ID skills of John Fitz Gerald for this year's surveys of the biodiversity monitoring plot in Kama paddock. Perhaps due to the prolonged dry spell, the plot was less swamped with Oat Grass this year, though it was still abundant in some patches. The plant species we found pretty much matched those found in previous years, but the new species found included Kangaroo Grass (yay!)

and Serrated Tussock (boo!). Needless to say, the latter was promptly removed. A notable absentee this year was Briar Rose, no doubt thanks to Warren's sterling efforts.

Future Planning

Pax's push for us to take a more strategic approach to revegetation and the gradual depletion in weed abundance has me thinking that we should be turning our attention (and our energy) towards restoring native grassland species in certain areas of the reserve. This is still something to be discussed, but I think that well-timed slash-and-remove interventions in areas of exotic grasses that are adjacent to high conservation value areas might well have a beneficial effect in the long term. By preventing seed-set by introduced annual pasture grasses and slowly pushing down soil nutrient levels, we can create the preconditions for a resurgence of native species in those areas. I plan to do some more reading on this and talk to a few experts in the field, but I think maybe it's time to broaden our approach beyond simply eradicating weeds and look at how we can transform the setting in which the weeds appear.

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