COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter August 2013

Previous Sunday Meeting 21st July Group Area Central – Darrell Place

Snow had dusted the hills when our six staunch stalwarts braved bitter conditions to battle the weeds blighting our Darrell Place site. With the ground soft after rain and bright sunshine to cheer us, we got stuck in. Great Mullein *Verbascum thapsus*, Cootamundra wattle *Acacia baileyana*, St John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum*, Briar rose *Rosa rubiginosa* and African Lovegrass *Eragrostis curvula* all met their doom. Arminel planted some baby Hop Bushes *Dodonea viscosa* and a few rosettes of Tall Ammobium *A. alatum* to replace some of the weeds.

Those who could stay until the bitter end enjoyed a very welcome hot cuppa, provided by our trusty Tea Laddie, Pat.

Wednesday Weeders Under Way

President Anna has initiated a new weeding group, to work regularly on Mt Arawang. The group meets at 10 am at the main noticeboard on the base trail above Namatjira Drive. Its first session was on 31 July - a glorious morning. Soft soil meant easy weeding of a variety of nasties. The biggest was a Prickly Pear *Opuntia stricta*. There was a healthy example of Oregon Grape *Berberis aquifolium* plus privet *Ligustrum sp.* and ivy *Hedera sp.* as well as a squillion *Verbascum.*

The Wednesday group complements the Friday Weeders who meet regularly at Kathner Street Chapman. Contact Anna for details of either group – 0407 217 651.

Future programme

Next Meeting – Sunday 18th August
Group Area South – Arawang
Access via the Horse Paddock Entry on Namatjira Drive

- 1.30 pm – 4 pm
- Plant ID; remove exotic growth. Maybe some planting.
- Wear long sleeves and trousers, enclosed shoes, hat and gloves.
- BYO drink and snack to share. (The Kambah Tea Trolley is expected to attend.)

President Anna's report

Operational plans for reserves – PCL will get to them. Meanwhile, I have requested a meeting with Athllon staff to do a 12 month plan together so our efforts are more coordinated.

Monitoring – We monitor our two patches on Cooleman Ridge annually. We'll soon be able to enter our findings into an online database, giving Conservation Planning and Research easy access to this data. Do you have an area you would like to monitor? Please let me know so I can train you up. Linda and Alan have also had the training.

Data Entry - We will soon submit data via a Weed Portal to the Atlas Of Living Australia. We will have access while out in the field to an app to record where weeds are and treatments applied. The equipment will be Samsung Notes units, that Parkcare Groups will be able to borrow long term for this purpose.

What's around

**Ranunculus sceleratus*

Common Name - Celery Buttercup

Native of Europe**.**

A DECLARED NOXIOUS WEED IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND A SERIOUS WEED OF WET PLACES IN NORTH AMERICA.

Family – Ranunculaceae. The **Genus** name *Ranunculus* and the family name Ranunculaceae come from Late Latin, "little frog," from *rana* "frog", plus a diminutive ending. This probably refers to many Ranunculus species being found near water, like frogs. The **Species** name *sceleratus* is also from Latin. In this context, it means "wicked" or "noxious" (cf French *scélérat = rascal, scoundrel*).

Description – Annual or biennial upright herb, <80 cm. First impression - tall buttercup with tiny yellowish-green flowers. Stems in their lower parts are branching, hollow and easily broken. Lower leaves are borne on stalks <20cm, and are <6 cm wide X 2-8 cm long. Each leaf is divided into 3 or 5 parts, each with blunt teeth or lobes around the margins. Upper leaves are smaller and borne on much shorter stalks. **Flowers** grow singly on short stalks at the ends of branches. They have 5 shiny petals about 3 mm long, which curve back toward the stems. **Roots** – fibrous. **Habitat** – muddy locations. **Reproduction** – by seed only. **Spread –** by water, waterbirds, stock, and machinery.

Scan above - A Ryan *Photo at right – P. Ryan*

All Ranunculus species are said to be poisonous when eaten fresh by cattle, horses, and other livestock, but it appears their acrid taste and the blistering of the mouth caused by their poison mean they are usually left uneaten. Ranunculin, a naturally occurring glycoside, apparently becomes a volatile irritant, protoanemonin, after enzyme-mediated conversion through mastication (Cooper and Johnson 1984). The concentration is highest during flowering. Poisoning can occur where buttercups are abundant in overgrazed fields where little other edible plant growth is left, and animals eat them out of desperation. Symptoms include bloody diarrhoea, excessive salivation, colic, and severe blistering of the mucous membranes and gastrointestinal tract.
When fresh Ranunculus plants are handled, protoanemonin may also form. This causes contact dermatitis and blistering of the skin in humans. The toxins are degraded by drying, so hay containing dried buttercups is said to be safe.

TOXIC – TAKE CARE!

(Information compiled from a range of published and on-line sources.)

Eragrostis curvula *Report*

Linda thinks she has discovered a new strain or sub-species of African Lovegrass along the track, south of the old dam. This strain has been found elsewhere in the ACT. It is a vigorous tall grass, with wider, flatter leaves than normal ALG, and less curly. She plans to dig up the 10 plants she found within the next few weeks, to prevent further seeding.

The WorkSafe Act (ACT) and Us

New legislation has clarified that volunteers in our line of business have the same rights and responsibilities as paid employees. Volunteers have 'duties' under the Act based on what a 'reasonable person would do' under various circumstances. A general handout is available, and old hands may be willing to discuss what is reasonable for the kind of work we undertake in our particular location.