



fotpin update #37 November 2021

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Thanks to continued high rainfall, Spring this year has actually exceeded the amazing Spring we had last year in terms of lush growth, flourishing wildflowers, and rampant weeds. This is particularly true for orchids, which have been more profuse this year than we've ever seen before. Unfortunately, the same is also true of St. John's Wort, which seems to be having perhaps its best (or worst!) year ever. We have already decided that we will have to carefully target our weed control efforts to those areas of the reserve that have higher conservation values and are more in need of protection from invasive weeds.

While many of the COVID restrictions have now been lifted and we can finally get back into working on the reserve, the lockdowns played havoc with our program of spring events, forcing the cancellation of two of our three planned guided walks as well as two of our major Spring events, namely the Joint ParkCare display at the Jamison Centre and the Weetangera Primary School spring fete. The latter is particularly unfortunate as that now makes two years running that they have had to call off the fete.



Sun orchid (*Thelymitra* sp.)
photo by John Brannan



Donkey orchid (*Diuris* sp.)
photo by Ian McMahon

Birdwalk October 31st

This was the sole survivor from our Spring Walks program, and after having to cancel my first bird walk, scheduled for early September, it was a relief to have some nice weather and the lifting of the mask-wearing mandate just in time for the second bird walk. Fourteen people

turned up on a very pleasant morning and we spent an enjoyable couple of hours watching some of the reserve's residents as well as quite a few of the migrant species that come to the Pinnacle in Summer to nest. We saw or heard 36 species in all, the highlights being three species all nesting in the same large eucalypt near Dungowan St. (Willie Wagtail, Magpie Lark and Black-faced Cuckooshrike), a Noisy Friarbird feeding a nest full of chicks, some nice views of a male Leaden Flycatcher and a Speckled Warbler (one of our locally threatened species), and, right at the end, a surprise visit by a pair of Varied Sittella, another of our locally threatened species.



Black-faced Cuckooshrike on its nest
photo by Alison Milton



Female Magpie Lark on its nest
photo by Ian McMahon



Noisy friarbird feeding young in the nest
photo by Alison Milton



Male Leaden Flycatcher in full voice
photo by Alison Milton

Vegwatch Surveys

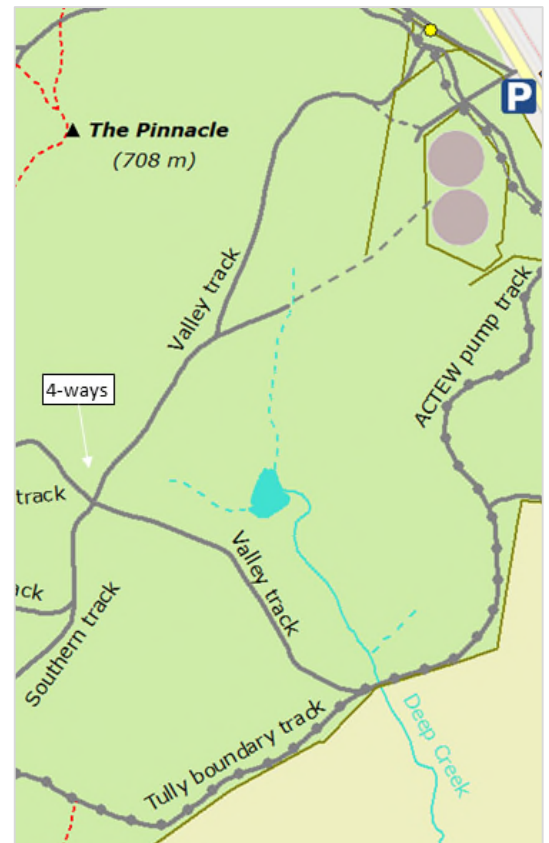
Each Spring, I am joined by the very knowledgeable John Fitz Gerald to undertake Vegwatch surveys at two sites in the reserve. These surveys use [methodology](#) designed by well-known plant ecologist Sarah Sharp and aim to carefully monitor plant diversity and structure over time. One of the Pinnacle sites is located in the northwest corner of Kama paddock on the southern edge of the Spicer's planting area from our very first revegetation project in 2011 and we have been monitoring it since then. The other is beside the Valley Track in the area revegetated following the Molonglo pipeline construction in 2019, which we set up to monitor the progress of revegetation.

While the Kama paddock site has shown a gradual improvement towards native species over the 10 years of monitoring, the pipeline site is almost exclusively weeds (sometimes impenetrably so!) and so we have decided not to continue monitoring that site, as there is unlikely to be any significant change in the structure or species diversity in the foreseeable future.

Molonglo Watermain Revegetation

Work has now begun on revegetating area 2 of the pipeline corridor between the junction at 4-ways and the Boundary track at the bottom of the hill. The contractors, Glascotts, have been spraying out some of the major weeds among the previous revegetation effort and slashing the vigorous growth of exotic grasses, and will shortly begin sowing a native seed mix, which should show good results soon given the excellent growing conditions this season. We have already held a number of on-site meetings with representatives from Glascotts and the ACT Government, and we have been very pleased with the commitment shown by all parties to achieving a satisfactory outcome for this section of the pipeline.

At the same time we have also begun plans for revegetating the top end of the pipeline, which runs from the water tanks at Springvale drive across the creek and down the Valley track to 4-ways. In the short term this included an event on Sunday 28th November when a group of 17 enthusiastic volunteers showed up to plant over 80 seedlings of various types, including trees, shrubs and grasses, in the inhospitable terrain of the compound beside the Icon water tanks.



It's easy when you know how
photo by John Brannan

Two of the younger volunteers hard at work
photo by John Brannan



The planting starting to take shape
photo by Alison Milton



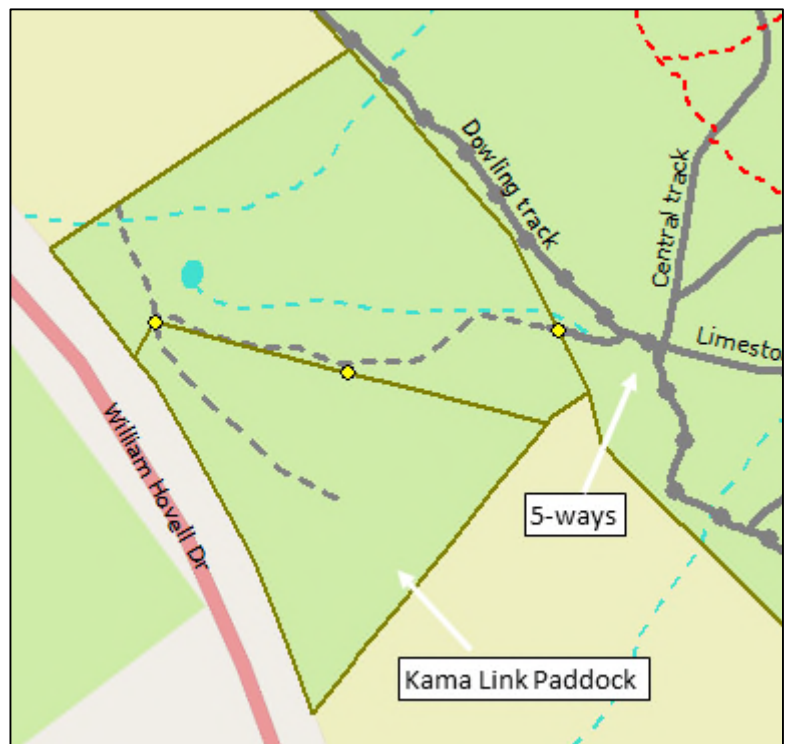
I would particularly like to thank Veronica and Catherine from Soroptimist International, who came along to help plant the 20 tubestock that their organization funded as part of its centenary celebrations. I also want to thank our hard-working ParkCare Ranger, Marty Bajt, who rustled up some recycled tree guards and stakes for us. At some point he will be relocating one of our water cubes to the planting area to allow for future watering and to assist with the plantings planned by our District Ranger, Kelzang Tschering, who has brought in a team to landscape and revegetate the southern edge of the same compound.

This is just the start of a larger long-term revegetation effort by fotpin to restore native vegetation along the upper part of the pipeline corridor (from the tanks down to the junction at 4-ways) using funding provided by the ACT Government. This project, which is likely to be ongoing for several years, will combine selective weed treatment with ongoing applications of native grass and forb seeds.

Pinnacle Extension Renamed

The offset area that was officially added to the western flank of the Pinnacle Nature Reserve last year has, thus far, been referred to either as “the offset” or “the extension”. Up until this year, the offset area was managed by the PCS Offsets rangers (a separate and quite well-funded area of PCS), but management has now been handed over to the local district rangers and the extension is now regarded as just another part of the reserve. In light of this, there has been some discussion within the committee on the need to come up with a new “official” name for this important area of the reserve.

Because it effectively links the Pinnacle reserve to the Kama Nature Reserve immediately across William Hovell Drive (see the [corridor map](#)), we have, somewhat prosaically perhaps, decided to call it the “Kama Link” paddock, and that is how it will appear on our future maps of the reserve.



We encourage everyone to hop through the gate in the little gully below 5-ways and have a wander round this new part of the reserve, particularly the southeast corner, which you can reach by using the little set of steps to get over the fence that divides the paddock in two. The southeast corner is a particularly lovely area in terms of vegetation and has some of the best areas of native wildflowers in the whole reserve.

Weed Management

This is usually a fairly quiet time for weed control but the exceptional conditions of the last two seasons have called for more effort. The mid-year lockdown curtailed our weeding effort somewhat over the last four months, and because we do not have enough surge capacity we will struggle to adequately control most invasive weeds in the reserve this season. For more details of what weeds are being tackled and where, see the summary of effort for this [season to date](#) and the summary for the [2020-21 season](#).

We are potentially seeing benefits from our weed management efforts over the longer term; there have been large reductions in the incidence of woody weeds, especially [sweet briar](#), and areas that were once weedy are now being increasingly occupied by native grasses and forbs instead. This may, however, be a function of recent seasonal conditions. Two favourable seasons in a row have seen many native species flourish on the reserve, none more so than

the native daisies, such as this extensive patch of Sticky everlasting daisies (*Xerochrysum viscosum*), as example of many that can be seen across the reserve.



photo by Warren Bond

Weetangera Paddock Revegetation

Len Taylor's team continue their good work in Weetangera paddock – you might have noticed the native daisies planted in small wire guards alongside the Springvale track along the top of the paddock. Through a combination of direct seeding and tubestock planting, they are gradually reintroducing a range of native grasses and forbs to small parts of the area previously razed by the 2018 hazard reduction burn. In recent months, Len's team have planted 120 native wildflowers as tubestock, as well as a number of native grasses, and they are busy germinating almost 200 grass and wildflower seedlings to be planted in the seasons to come.

Much of Len's time has been spent in erecting barriers to keep the rabbits and roos away from his seedlings, and his trials of various types of fencing in combination with layers of dead branches are providing a useful guide to what does and doesn't work against the different threats. Len and his team have also been intensively weeding the area.

Our thanks also go to Tim Gill and his family and everyone at St Francis Xavier College for their assistance with raising the majority of the tubestock planted.

ParkCare News

- The position of Volunteer Programs Manager, previously held by Alison McLeod and then by Kaz Williams in an acting capacity, has now been permanently assigned to a newcomer to ParkCare, Lauren McQueen. Lauren has already held a number of senior positions at Volunteering ACT and brings many years of experience in working with volunteers to her new position in PCS. I served as the ParkCare volunteer representative on the interview panel for this position, and I am very pleased that Lauren was selected as the successful candidate. I look forward to seeing what she can achieve in her new role, though I'm sure her first few months will be a very steep learning curve.

- We were also delighted to hear that funding has now been allocated for a second ParkCare Ranger to take some of the burden off Marty's overworked shoulders. Interviews for the new position will probably not happen until sometime in the new year.
- In other good news, the ACT Government has promised secure funding for all the local catchment groups for the next 5 years. This takes an immense burden off the shoulders of the hard-working catchment group coordinators, as they can now concentrate on their core work instead of having to scratch around for grant funding to support their programs.
- Earlier this month, I attended (virtually) my first meeting of the Landcare ACT Members Council, of which I am now a member. (This is what you get for putting your hand up in meetings.☺) This came about because Landcare ACT, which is the peak advocacy body for land care issues in the ACT, decided to expand their Members Council to increase the number of members from each branch of Landcare (ParkCare, Urban Landcare, Rural Landcare, Aboriginal Landcare and Other) from two to five to broaden the range of input to their activities. The meeting focused on identifying the key issues from each branch, with the ParkCare representatives identifying integrated biodiversity management across all government agencies and the development of an education program as key objectives. My hope is that Landcare ACT will continue to speak directly to the relevant ACT Government and Federal ministers and help steer policy decisions in the right direction.

New on the Website

Warren has been working away industriously on our website and recently completed a project to compile [aerial photos of the reserve](#) dating back to 1940. He spent many hours painstakingly georeferencing and combining the old images so that they can now be compared directly with overlays of today's reserve tracks and boundaries. Cycling through the images provides a fascinating montage of change over the years, clearly showing the impact of the construction of the Belconnen suburbs and the huge tree planting initiatives in the 1980s and 90s. Among other things it's interesting to see when the outline of the reserve emerges and when the dam was constructed. Searching old maps for reference points has inspired his next project which will be a web page documenting the history of land tenure across different parts of the reserve since European settlement in around 1826 and how this is reflected in features of the reserve today. Stay tuned.

He's also been busy updating our lists of [flora and fauna](#) (now just 2 short of a total of 800 native species), [weed management](#) information, local [rainfall](#) statistics and more.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work put in by Denise and Alana on our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages. Well done you two!

John Brannan
Convenor

November 29th 2021