



fotpin update #38 February 2022

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We've certainly had an interesting few months since my last report. After the wettest year in the 50 years of records for southern Belconnen, this year started off the same way with the wettest January for 27 years. This has resulted in another wonderful year for the native plants on the reserve, but the soggy soils probably made trees more susceptible to being uprooted when the storm cell swept through Belconnen and Gungahlin in early January. The storm left a trail of destruction that many residents are still dealing with. Many people lost power, some for several days, while falling trees resulted in blocked roads, driveways and tracks, along with damaged cars and smashed roofs. To their credit, the SES were quick to respond, clearing most of the blocked roads in short order, although the full clean-up of roadsides is ongoing, with the assistance of the Parks and Conservation Service Fire Management Unit (FMU). Even so, there are still people with downed trees in their gardens that are yet to be cleared, such was the extent of the damage.

January Storm Effects on the Reserve

Damage in the reserve included the massive Red Stringybark at the summit of the Pinnacle, which was completely downed, and a large section of the ancient gum tree at the western end of the reserve near Dungowan St. in Hawker, as well as dozens if not hundreds of other trees around the reserve.

Our PCS Ranger Kelzang was left to deal with most of the blocked tracks on the reserve himself, receiving some help from the FMU with the really big trees. However, there was one silver lining to this particular cloud, as described below.



Uprooted Red Stringybark on the Pinnacle summit
photo by Alison Milton



Damaged eucalypt at Dungowan St
photo by John Brannan

New Benches at Dungowan St. Entrance

A few days after the storm, as I was looking at the downed trees near the reserve entrance on Dungowan St., I was approached by Wayne Hoy, a long-time fotpin member who lives just a few doors down from the reserve entrance. He pointed to the downed eucalypts on the

northern side of the road and wondered whether a section from the trunk of one of the trees might not serve as a nice bench where reserve users could sit and look out across to the distant Brindabellas. It seemed to me to be an inspired idea, particularly since that spot is now used by local residents for their annual Christmas Carols evening. So I emailed our trusty PCS ranger Kelzang with the request, including a map showing where the proposed bench should go. At the time, I knew how absolutely flat-out all the crews were with the job of clearing away the storm debris, so my expectations were fairly low. But the eventual outcome far outstripped anything I could've hoped for, as these images show. Needless to say, I am hugely grateful to the hard-working FMU crew for taking the time to shape and set up these seats and to Kelzang for making it happen, as well as to the estimable Wayne for suggesting it in the first place. One further positive outcome is that the mulch from the cleared trees in that area will be used to aid the revegetation work happening in the Icon water tanks compound off Springvale Drive.



The new seats being put to good use



The artists' mark



A nice spot to enjoy the view

*Photos:
John Brannan
Warren Bond*

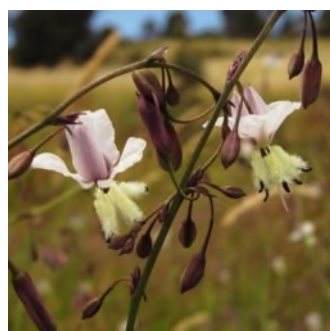
Wonderful Wildflower Season

We've had another great orchid season this year, with the *Diuris* species (commonly known as the Tiger, Leopard, Hornet or Donkey orchids) and the *Microtis* species (Onion orchids) being very prolific, the latter showing up in parts of the reserve where orchids have not been seen before. This was followed by wonderful displays of native daisies such as the Sticky everlastings (*Xerochrysum viscosum*) and Clustered everlastings (*Chrysocephalum semipapposum*). The wet season has seen a proliferation of sedge species, including many native ones, and several new species have been added to our [plant list](#). Recent sightings can be seen on [The Pinnacle rushes and sedges](#) page on Canberra Nature Map.

Our native lily species have also had an especially good season, starting with the well-known Early nancies (*Wurmbea dioica*) which were even more prolific than normal. Of the 12 native dryland lily species that have been reported previously on the reserve (see the [The Pinnacle lily list](#) on Canberra Nature Map), at least 10 of them are known to have been sighted this season.



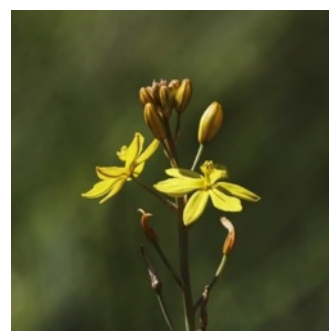
Arthropodium fimbriatum
Chocolate lily



Arthropodium milleflorum
Vanilla lily



Arthropodium minus
Small vanilla lily



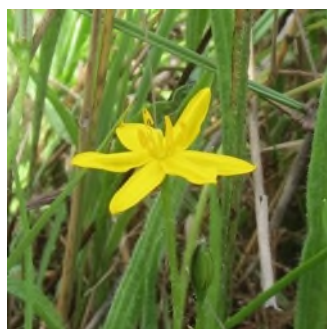
Bulbine bulbosa
Golden lily



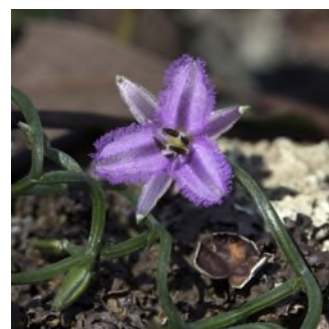
Caesia calliantha
Blue grass-lily



Dianella revoluta
Black-anther flax lily



Hypoxis hygrometica
Golden weather-grass



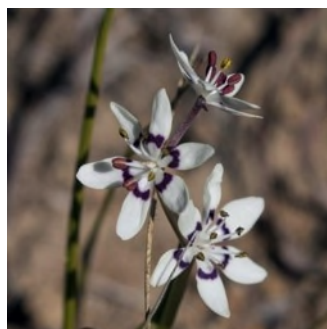
Thysanotus patersonii
Twining fringe lily



Thysanotus tuberosus
Common fringe lily



Tricoryne elatior
Yellow flax lily



Wurmbea dioica subsp. dioica
Early nancy

Photos by:

Warren Bond
John Fitzgerald
Alison Milton

Not seen this season:
Arthropodium milleflorum
Vanilla lily
Dianella Longifolia
Pale flax lily (no photo)

You can also see many of [The Pinnacle's recent lily sightings](#) on Canberra Nature Map.

Also very pleasing has been the spread of many native wildflower species to areas of the reserve where have not normally been found.

Molonglo Watermain Revegetation

As outlined in previous reports, fotpin is now responsible for ongoing weed management and revegetation along the top section of watermain corridor, using funding we have received from the ACT government to manage weeds and maintain a supply of native grass and forb seed to use in future revegetation work.

This process began in late November with a planting adjacent to the Icon water tanks compound, as described in [Update 37](#), and plans for autumn sowings of native grasses and forbs are still being formulated. This is quite an exciting opportunity to significantly improve the ecological values of the areas concerned and to establish islands of native grasses and forbs that will, with a little care, have a positive ecological impact on the surrounding vegetation communities. I would be very interested in hearing from anyone interested in helping out with this project.

Weed Management

This summer has been a particularly challenging time for weed control. It became obvious early on that St. John's Wort was going to have a big year, but the same was also true of Verbascum and thistles. This led to us take a targeted approach to weed control, focusing on areas of high conservation value, since attempting to cover the entire reserve is simply beyond our capacity in a year like this. You can see where most of our spraying has been targeted on the [St. John's Wort map](#) for this season. Our weeding teams have been working hard to stay on top of the weeds, clocking up 232 hours of effort in the last 3 months. The majority of this (65%) was devoted to controlling St. John's Wort, either by spraying or hand-pulling. (For more information see the summary of [weed control effort](#) for the 2021-2022 season up to the end of December.)

The fact that this has still left large swathes of St. John's Wort untouched is testament to just how prolific this year has been. Our ranger Kelzang tells me that he may still be able to prevent seed set of St. John's Wort by slashing and collecting it in some of the most heavily infested areas. He had planned to send in contractors to spray those areas, but those plans were disrupted by the continuous wet weather, the storm and by a COVID outbreak among the contractors that sidelined a number of teams just as they were ready to begin. I am still optimistic that the efforts of our weeding teams and Kelzang will prevent at least some of the St. John's Wort from setting seed this year.

Hawker Community Gardens

Some of you may be aware of this initiative by a local volunteer group. Their plan is to set up a community garden in one of the relatively unused car parks opposite Hawker shops. They are holding an Open Day Market on Sunday, February 27th to raise interest and awareness of the project and have invited fotpin to set up a display stall at the market. (Stay tuned for an email calling for volunteers to help staff the stall.) This event will include a demonstration build of the wicking vegie beds, which will be run as a training session for the actual building day. The Open Day Market will be followed by other opportunities to get involved from March onwards:

- Building the Community Garden
Date: 5 & 6th March 2022
Activity: Constructing wicking beds on the first day and planting out on the second day. This will be run as a volunteer activity open to the local community to engage as widely as possible.
- Shade strip (western edge) A
Date: 12 & 13th March 2022
Activity: Setting up garden beds and digging holes for future tree planting along the western edge to improve the amenity and heat reduction of the site.
- Shade strip (western edge) B
Date: Winter 2022 (June-July)
Activity: Planting bare-rooted deciduous trees in prepared holes in the western edge gardens.

If you're interested in getting involved with the Hawker Community Gardens group, you can contact me or email the group directly at hawkercommunitygardens@gmail.com.

Upcoming Events

- **Hawker Community Gardens Open Day Market** – 10 am to 2 pm Sunday Feb. 27th
(See article above for details.)
- **Autumn bird walk** – 9.00 AM, Sunday, April 24th
I'll be running our usual autumn bird walk at the Pinnacle on April 24th. We'll start at 9.00 am, meeting at the reserve gate at the end of Dungowan St in Hawker. Numbers will be limited, so let me know soon if you'd like to come along. You can call me on 0405 331 0405 or email me at convenor@fotpin.org.au.

- **Fotpin AGM** – 2.00 pm, Sunday May 15th
We will be holding this year's fotpin Annual General Meeting on Sunday May 15th. As usual, the venue will be Weetangera Primary School on Southwell St. The AGM will start at 2.00 pm and we encourage everyone to come along and enjoy a convivial meeting and afternoon tea with other fotpin members (the formal part of the meeting never takes that long, after all). I'll be in touch again closer to the day with a reminder.

Our guest speaker this year will be Lauren McQueen, who was recently appointed as the new Volunteer Programs Manager for PCS. In her role, she supervises all the volunteer programs run by PCS, including the "Friends of..." groups operating in the Canberra Nature Park reserves, such as fotpin. Having her along will be a valuable opportunity to find out what she brings to this important (for us) position and how things may or may not change under her tenure.

Note that, for obvious reasons, Hawker Primary School have decided to cancel their annual school fete again this year.

John Brannan
Convenor

14 February 2022