



fotpin update #49 March 2025

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Conditions at the reserve in the last three months have been less than ideal, I think it's fair to say. Generally below-average rainfall, with long dry periods and some spells of very warm weather. Even so, the reserve is looking pretty good. The sparse Spring rainfall held back the introduced grasses, leaving space for the native grasses to thrive when some decent rain did arrive in early December. The tastier ones of these are now well and truly grazed down by our kangaroo population, which is now well above the recommended conservation density and has been struggling this season. Many of the native daisies have also been flowering - not as profusely as the past few years, but still quite lovely in some spots. The conditions have also meant that the St. John's Wort and Verbascum have had a much quieter year, though they still manage to thrive in areas where there's less competition from other plants and a bit more moisture in the soil. Weeds that thrive in drier conditions, particularly Saffron Thistle and Paterson's Curse, have kept our weeding teams on their toes.

In other news, many of you will have already noticed that the long-running saga of the Interpretive Signage project has finally come to fruition. Now that the signs are in place, we are busily planning an "official" launch event and BBQ to be held on Sunday, April 6th. More details below.

Interpretive Signage

This project first began back in April 2022 when we applied for a grant from the ACT Government under their Environmental Grants Program. We were awarded the grant in June of that year and immediately began working on the designs for the six signs: two large signs to go at the Weetangera and Hawker entrances to the reserve, a panorama sign to go on the Pinnacle summit, and three smaller trackside signs to be located in the stringybark woodland, next to the dam, and near the entrance to the Kama Link paddock (Pinnacle extension). Here, I want to acknowledge a generous donation from one of our members who offered to pay the cost of one of the signs. (Our original plan was for just two trackside signs.)

We established a fotpin subcommittee to pull together all the elements we needed for the signs.



Walkers checking out the Woodland trackside sign
Photo: Warren Bond

This included the text and images for each sign (including the image permissions), logos, contributions from people with technical expertise and historical knowledge, including indigenous knowledge from the traditional custodians. We also gathered photos of other interpretive signage around the ACT and beyond to provide ideas for what did and didn't work, and set up channels of communication with the ACT Government's Parks and Conservation Service and Screenmakers, the firm we selected to fabricate and install the signs. Screenmakers were also amazingly generous with their time in helping us with the

design of the signs, lifting our initially very bland designs to produce the much more vibrant and interesting designs we now have.

In February this year, we finally got all the boxes ticked and all the mistakes corrected (I hope!), and Screenmakers got the green light to print up and install the signs. We made a final visit to the six proposed sites to check the exact locations, and Screenmakers installed the signs over the two days of February 17-18.

As I mentioned above, we are now organising a formal launch for the signs. We've settled on a date (April 6th) and a location (Springvale Drive car park opposite De Salis St in Weetangera), starting at 11 am with a welcome for our guests before we take a short walk up to The Pinnacle summit to look at the panorama sign. In the meantime, Mike will be firing up the BBQ so that lunch will be ready when we get back. We'll be sending out a notification with all the details and a request for people to RSVP to help us manage the catering. We look forward to seeing lots of you there!



Our centrepiece, the panorama sign on The Pinnacle summit

Photo: John Brannan

Upcoming Hazard Reduction Burn (FB829)

Preparations are underway for the long-heralded hazard-reduction burn in the Macrorhyncha woodland at the western end of the reserve. We received the proposed burn plan last October and have been in discussions with the PCS Fire Management Unit on how best to conduct this burn to obtain the best possible ecological outcomes, as well as reducing the fuel load in the forest. The recommended window for this burn is May-June, so if conditions continue to be reasonably dry, there is a good chance that the burn will take place during that period. The FMU generally only provides 24-48 hours' notice of active prescribed burns due to the difficulty of predicting the many factors that govern when burns occur. You can find out more by visiting [the PCS upcoming prescribed burns web page](#).

Molonglo Watermain Pipeline Corridor Revegetation

At the end of last year, we organized another planting event in the degraded compound beside the Icon water tanks on Springvale Drive. On December 14th, a small group of 7 volunteers planted 35 tubestock in holes that had been augered for us by the PCS rangers. The plants were a mixture of eucalypts and acacias and were planted in seven loose clusters so that they will create shelter for each other as they develop. By planting tree and large

shrub species, we hope to gradually improve the condition of the soil in that area so that, at some point in the future, we can successfully establish native grasses and wildflowers.

The planting went extremely well, with all the plants mulched, watered and protected by tree guards by morning tea time. A number of the volunteers generously offered to help with keeping the water up to the new plants, something that has proved essential with the very hot weather and meagre rainfall that has followed the planting. I particularly want to thank Mitchell and Cybele, who have done the bulk of the follow-up watering, as well as providing some replacement acacias for a few of the seedlings that didn't make it through the hot weather.

Looking back through our records for this area, if we include the revegetation efforts by contractors after the Molonglo pipeline was installed, this latest planting is now the seventh attempt to get things to grow in that compound. And that is excluding the extensive planting and conditioning work done by PCS Ranger Kelzang and his team at the southern end of the compound. But I can now confirm that this latest planting will definitely be the last for the foreseeable future. It is time, I think, to turn our attention to more rewarding areas of the reserve.

Speaking of which, we are continuing to work with John Fitz Gerald on the trial ground-cover revegetation inside the exclusion plots down the hill from the compound along the Molonglo pipeline corridor. We've received a few kilos of native grass seed from GCG and plan to do some trial seeding this coming autumn, once we get some decent rain.

Flora and Fauna (Warren Bond)

Our total native species count continues to increase, albeit more slowly than in recent years. It currently stands at 1058, an increase of 25 since last June. The number of native plant species is currently 276, an increase of 4. The other new species include 5 beetles, 4 moths and 7 other insects.

The Pinnacle Nature Reserve Species Richness Score ([SRS](#)) on [NatureMapr](#) still ranks 5th of the Canberra Nature Reserves.

In other news, frequent walkers on the reserve will likely have noticed the new Wombat burrow on the side of the Macrorhyncha Track. While we have had indications of wombat presence on the reserve ever since the beginning of development of the suburb of Whitlam, this burrow, together with copious amounts of distinctive wombat droppings on tracks in the area, is the best evidence yet that they have taken up residence. Unfortunately some reserve users have apparently thought it entertaining to poke sticks down the burrow and we would ask anyone seeing this behaviour to discourage it.

On the topic of mammals we have had fleeting sightings of the very timid Swamp Wallaby on the reserve for many years but one finally stood still long enough a couple of weeks ago for me to get a reasonable photo and have the species recognized on [NatureMapr](#) as a Pinnacle resident.



I have noticed during the last few months that the behaviour of our dominant macropod on the reserve, the Eastern Grey Kangaroo, has changed to that observed during drought periods. They are grazing in smaller groups and/or are very widely spread and appear to be conserving energy, resting more and allowing people to come closer before moving away. It was also unusual for the Swamp Wallaby to let me get so close and not instantly disappear into the dense shrubs. Many native grass species have been grazed down to ground level and other less palatable plant species appear to have been grazed by kangaroos as well (including Dianella and Fleabane). There is also an increase in areas of soil erosion where they camp, as happened in previous times of high kangaroo numbers and low rainfall. This is all in keeping with the overall dry season and reduced plant growth as well as the observation that the number of kangaroos currently on the reserve is above the conservation density (see [Eastern Grey Kangaroo Conservation Management Advice 2024](#), page 95).

Working Bee with ANU Intrepid Landcare

On February 15th, a group of 17 students from the ANU Intrepid Landcare group joined Len Taylor, Siobhan Finn, Tom Cochrane and myself for a morning of weed pulling. We targeted the large patches of St John's Wort that have flourished in recent years along either side of the Valley Track, aiming to prevent this year's plants from dropping a load of seed that would germinate in years to come. The morning was very successful, with enough wort pulled to completely fill Len's trailer (even with me jumping up and down on it) with over a dozen bags full left over. Everyone also enjoyed a delicious morning tea that included some baked treats from Len's wife Jean. The ANU Intrepid Landcare group (<https://www.facebook.com/anuintrepidlandcare/>) are a terrific bunch of people that we've now worked with several times at the reserve, and we look forward to working with them again many times in the future. My particular thanks to Len Taylor for taking the initiative in making this event happen, and of course to Jean for the yummy slices!



Pulling and stuffing



Loading up the trailer



ANU Intrepid Landcare – a great bunch!

Photos: ANU Intrepid Landcare

Weed Control (Warren Bond)

Weeding effort so far this season (July 1 to February 28) has been 608 hours, slightly less than for the same period in 2023-24 as well as for the average of this period over the previous 14 seasons.

The largest proportion of effort (27%) was spent on St. John's Wort. This was followed by the group of miscellaneous, mainly low-threat, Broadleaf weeds (15%), Saffron thistles (13%), Woody weeds (including Briars and Blackberries, but dominated by 'other' woody weeds) (11%), Paterson's curse and grass weeds (both 7%).

We are nearing the end of our 15th season of documenting fotpin's weeding effort in the Reserve and neighbouring paddocks. This was started originally to monitor our progress against the projections and aspirations documented in the [fotpin Community Weed](#)

[Management Plan for The Pinnacle Nature Reserve](#). A lot has changed in those 15 years and although we've been making gradual changes to our practices it will soon be time to review where we're at and how we go forward. Over those years we have been grateful for the efforts of a total of 45 people participating in weeding activities on a regular or semi-regular basis for various lengths of time. One thing that hasn't changed very much is the core members of the weeding team, except we're all 15 years older and slowing down.

Targeted spraying with selective herbicides has proven to be the most efficient and effective weed control method in most cases with the least impact on native vegetation. This has been particularly important in the last few years as the reserve's native plant species have flourished in the favourable environmental conditions and removing weeds in and around them has been able to contribute to this. Unfortunately the amount of spraying effort in the last 8 years is only half that of the first 7 years, as sprayers have had to reduce their effort and have not been able to be replaced.

We will soon be putting out a call for people interested in joining the spraying team as well as input into our future weed control strategies.

Upcoming Events

- **Hawker Community Gardens Autumn Market**

Where: Hawker shops, outside the Rocksalt café

When: 9.00 am to 1.00 pm, Saturday March 22nd

We will have a display stall at the Autumn community market hosted by the Hawker Community Gardens Landcare group. This event offers a great opportunity to meet with people in the local community and talk to them about the reserve and the work that we do. I am looking for volunteers to help staff the stall, so if you might be available to help, please contact me by emailing convenor@fotpin.org.au or call me on 0405 331 405



- **Autumn bird walk**

Where: Reserve entrance on Dungowan St, Hawker

When: 9.00 to 11.30 am, Sunday April 27th

The Autumn bird walk at The Pinnacle NR is timed to coincide with the movement of many migrant bird species through the region and offers a chance to spot some of the 100+ bird species that have been observed at The Pinnacle NR.

If you'd like to join John Brannan for this stroll around the reserve, please email me convenor@fotpin.org.au or call me on 0405 331 405. Don't delay, as numbers are limited for these walks.

- **Guided Tree walk**

Where: Car park off Springvale Drive, opposite De Salis St in Weetangera

When: 9.00 to 11.30 am, Sunday March 23rd

We are pleased to have plant ecologist Michael Doherty leading another guided walk looking at the tree species growing on the reserve and discussing how they function in the landscape. This will be Michael's second walk at The Pinnacle, following on from his very successful walk in Spring 2023. Don't miss this terrific opportunity to learn more about our lovely woodlands. Some of the walk will be off-track, so wear appropriate shoes or boots, and dress for the weather. Once again, if you'd like to join Michael for this walk, please email convenor@fotpin.org.au or call John on 0405 331 405.



John Brannan
Convenor

13 March 2025