



## fotpin update #52 December 2025

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Only a month or two ago, the reserve was looking lovely, with some fine displays of orchids and wildflowers and very promising regeneration happening in the Forest following the hazard reduction burn earlier this year. But the lack of rain and the high temperatures since then have crisped off a lot of the vegetation and left the reserve looking very parched. Apart from a wettish September, we've had below-average rainfall for most of this year, and the heat of recent weeks has given us a very dry start to the summer. Even so, it's been a good season for the birds overall, with good numbers of the summer migrant species. At one point there seemed to be Sacred Kingfishers from one end of the reserve to the other. One notable first this year is pair of White-throated Gerygones nest-building – not an event we've confirmed previously. The number of native species recorded at the reserve continues to climb (see the biodiversity report below).

For the Friends of the Pinnacle, this Spring has been another very busy one. We've run three guided walks at the reserve and held stalls at the same number of community events. Our guided walks consisted of two bird walks, one in September and another in November, plus a fascinating walk through the Forest to study how it is recovering from the hazard-reduction burn in April. Our community events were the annual Joint ParkCare Display at the Jamison Centre in September, the Hawker Primary Spring Fete in October and the Florey Fair in November.

### Spring Events

- *Jamison Plaza Joint ParkCare Display – September 5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup>*  
As always, this was a very successful and interesting event, involving the ParkCare groups from Mt Painter, Aranda Bushland and Black Mountain as well as ourselves, plus the Friends of Grasslands, Ginninderra Catchment Group and the STEP group from the Arboretum. This event provides an excellent opportunity to connect with the local community and to exchange news and ideas with the other environmental groups in our area. My thanks to everyone who helped with staffing the stall, and kudos to Linda Beveridge from Friends of Black Mountain who did all the heavy lifting in organising the event so efficiently.
- *Guided Bird Walk #1 – September 14<sup>th</sup>*  
Eighteen of us enjoyed a very pleasant stroll around the western end of the reserve. We observed a total of 37 bird species, including 4 that were either building or sitting on nests. One of the highlights was watching a pair of Striated Thornbills building a nest at the very top of a small eucalypt. Normally difficult to spot as it spends most of its time foraging in the canopy, it was lovely to be able to observe this pair closely as they went about building their intricate domed nest. I checked up on them later, and the pair went on to raise three healthy chicks.
- *Hawker Primary School Fete – October 26<sup>th</sup>*  
Spring fetes at the local primary schools offer a great opportunity to chat with members of the local community about the reserve and the work we do. It was a rather blustery day that got wetter as the afternoon wore on, so conditions were not ideal, but the event was still very well attended and expertly organised as always. Again, I'd like to thank everyone who gave up their time to help set up and staff the stall, and my thanks also to Tracy and Brianna and all the other hard-working staff at Hawker Primary who did such a great job of organising the Fete. I look forward to taking part again next year.



Birdwalk #1. Watching the Striated Thornbills nest-building  
 Photo: John Brannan



Bird walk #2. Willie Wagtail on its nest  
 Photo: Alison Milton



Birdwalk #2. Not the most flattering angle of a White-throated Gerygone working on its nest  
 Photo: Alison Milton



Post-burn walk. John Fitz Gerald pointing out regenerating grasses among the trees  
 Photo: John Brannan



Post-burn walk. A Fringe lily (*Thysanotus tuberosus*) beside the track  
 Photo: John Brannan



Post-burn walk. Warren Bond pointing out a small Onion orchid (*Microtis unifoliar*)  
 Photo: John Brannan [Onion orchid inset photo: Alison Milton]

- Guided Bird Walk #2 – November 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
 Illness and last-minute crises meant that only 9 people were able to make it to our second bird walk, which focused on the area along the Valley Track and around the dam. Conditions were pretty much perfect and the birds were their usual cooperative selves (some of them anyway). We spotted 35 species on the walk, including 8 species that were

either nest building, sitting on a nest, or feeding chicks. It was good to see the White-winged Choughs back at their old nesting site in the woodlands along the Valley Track, and interesting to yet again observe the habit of Noisy Friarbirds and Leaden Flycatchers nesting in close proximity at more or less the same time. I'm aware of three locations at the reserve where the same conjunction has occurred this season. As I mentioned above, the highlight was watching the White-throated Gerygones nest building. This species is a particularly gorgeous bird with a pure white throat (hence the name) above a vivid lemon yellow breast and belly, so it was a real treat to be able to watch the two birds coming and going.

- *Post-burn Forest Walk – November 9<sup>th</sup>*

Anyone who visited the reserve's Red Stringybark woodland shortly after it was burnt in April this year will remember how desolate it appeared just then. In the intervening months, the recovery has been remarkable, particularly since the good rainfall we had in September. This fascinating walk, led by our extremely knowledgeable guide John Fitz Gerald, looked in detail at the many different ways that the woodland plants have recovered since the fire. Some of you may have seen the profusion of Early Nancies (*Wurmbea dioica*) that appeared in October, but by the time this walk rolled around, the Early Nancies had been superseded by a variety of native lilies, orchids and peas. John also pointed out the way that some plants cope with fire by resprouting from the base (such as *Bursaria spinosa*), some by resprouting from their stems or trunks (such as eucalypts), and some by regrowing from seed (such as *Acacia* and *Cassinia* species). In fact, some species were using multiple strategies for recovering from fire – a demonstration of the way the Australian bush has evolved in environments where fire is normal, and sometimes necessary.

At the end of the walk, John announced his intention to come back next year and revisit the same locations to gauge how the recovery is progressing and whether we can learn anything from the way the Forest is changing after the burn. I strongly recommend making a note in your diaries to sign up for next year's walk when it comes around.

The Walk for Families that had been scheduled for November 23<sup>rd</sup> was cancelled due to lack of interest. The committee is reconsidering how we present such walks and is planning to send out a survey to our online audience asking them what sort of additional walks they might be interested in.

### **Molonglo Watermain Pipeline Corridor Revegetation**

The trees and shrubs we planted last December in the Icon water tanks compound have continued to do well, with only a few succumbing during the winter, and most of those replaced with similar species from seeds germinated by Mitchell Kelly. We continue to monitor the health of the plants and look for ways to spur more vigorous growth. Mitchell and Cybele have maintained their efforts in this regard by watering and supplementing the mulch around the plants. Mitchell is considering bringing in soil and leaf litter from nearby woodlands to "inoculate" the soil around the plants with beneficial organisms that may be missing in the existing soil.

John Fitz Gerald and I are planning to do a little work inside the fenced plots further down the pipeline, mostly digging out some of the more intransigent weeds (ribwort plantain, for instance) and replacing them with donated Kangaroo grass and Wallaby grass seedlings. We may also broadcast some of our stock of native grass seed if there are any reasonable prospects of decent rainfall. To assist us in this, I asked Ranger Marty to move the water cube closer to the fenced plots and refill it. Now that it is in place and filled, John and I are hoping for some rain so that we can begin work planting out the native grass seedlings.

### **ParkCare Convenors' Meeting – Tuesday November 11<sup>th</sup>**

I recently attended a meeting of the PCS ParkCare Convenors at the PCS Stromlo depot. PCS have trialled holding separate meetings for the Northside and Southside Convenors recently, but seem to have decided to revert to the familiar joint style of meetings, a move generally

approved by those attending. The Convenors or Co-Convenors from around 20 groups attended, half online and half in person. The official minutes of the meeting will be available in due course, but some of the more salient points raised were as follows:

- The Canberra Nature Park North rangers are continuing to update and formalise tracks and trails in the Northside reserves. Vertebrate pest control is ongoing, with rabbit control by contractors funded for Bruce Ridge and Aranda bushland. When questioned about the Belconnen Hills reserves, they said that there was no more funding for control by contractors, but some in-house rabbit control would be undertaken in the future. It was noted that spotlighting counts has indicated that control measures were needed at The Pinnacle.
- Future power tool induction training will be outsourced pending final approval of the scheme. This is not likely to happen until sometime in 2026.
- Fringe Forums will be relaunched in 2026. Topics to be discussed.
- A number of Convenors raised the issue of the pending closure of [NatureMapr](#) as a result of the failure to obtain continuing funding. It has already ceased operation in the other states but the ACT part of the site (Canberra Nature Mapper) will continue, albeit with reduced functionality, until 2029-30 when the ACT Government funding ceases. Convenors were encouraged to lobby the government directly for funding to continue. Not all Convenors agreed, saying that iNaturalist was an adequate alternative. Overall, fotpin strongly supports the continued operation of CNM as an extremely valuable resource for conservationists and nature-lovers in general in the ACT.

## Dam Renewal

This project, first outlined in [Update#51](#), continues to evolve. I recently met with Anke Maria Hoefler from GCG to discuss options and we had a fruitful conversation that yielded some ideas for how best to establish new floating and rooted vegetation in the dam, as well as an idea for re-routing one of the informal tracks to the western side of the dam to minimise further erosion along that bank. I have since met with Leah, our local Ranger, to discuss her plans to install woody debris along the western bank with the aim of reducing erosion and promoting revegetation. She also plans to place some woody debris on the foot track that runs from the Valley Track to the western side of the dam to re-route reserve users to the southwest corner of the dam where the interpretive sign is located. I will continue to meet with other experts in the field as we develop a more detailed plan that we can present to PCS for approval.

## Pinnacle Native Species Biodiversity (Warren Bond)

Despite winter and spring being among the driest in the last 16 years, many native species have flourished this season. It was a great year for the *Diuris* orchid species in the areas where they are normally found, with larger numbers of Tiger orchids (*Diuris sulphurea*) and Golden Moth orchids (*Diuris chryseopsis*) than seen in recent years. Other orchids were sighted for the first time in a few years – *Diuris pandina* (Leopard orchids) and *Glossidia major* (Wax lip orchid). Greenhood and Pink Finger orchids showed up in very small numbers or not at all, while Onion orchids (*Microtis* sp.), which were present in large numbers at their rosette stage, mostly shrivelled with a few growing to only a fraction of their normal height. Among other species, Billy buttons (*Craspedia variabilis*), Native plantain (*Plantago varia*), Australian carrot (*Daucus glochiatus*), Golden lilies (*Bulbine bulbosa*) and many more were much more prolific than normal and the less widely spread Silky Swainson-Pea (*Swainsona sericea*) was present in larger than usual numbers. It has also been pleasing to notice some species expanding their range or turning up in new locations, recent examples including Hairy apple-berry (*Billadiera scandens*), Barbed-wire grass (*Cymbopogon refractus*) and Sticky everlasting (*Xerochrysum viscosum*).

On the other hand it seems it has been a tough season for insect species, with beetles and moths in particular seeming to be less prolific than in recent years.

The total number of native species identified on the reserve continues to increase gradually. It reached 1100 in early December and currently stands at 1105. Another milestone reached

in December was the 500<sup>th</sup> insect species. Numbers in other categories include: 283 plants, 120 birds, 65 fungi, 53 spiders, 29 mosses, lichens and liverworts and 27 reptiles and amphibians. For a full breakdown see the [Flora & Fauna](#) page on our website where you can access lists of all the species and download the latest tally of species subdivided into categories.

Two very small recent additions to the species list. The Long-legged fly is about the size of a mosquito while the Water blinks are less than 50 mm tall with flowers about 2 mm diameter.



Long-legged fly (*Dolichopodidae*)  
photo: Alison Milton



Water Blinks (*Montia fontana*)  
photo: Warren Bond

### Weed Control (Warren Bond)

A [summary of weeding effort](#) for the period July to December 2025 has recently been uploaded to the website. This summarises the hours contributed by our weeding teams, how much effort there has been in the different parts of the reserve and on the different weed types and how it compares with previous seasons. The total amount of effort in this period was 534 hours. This was 36% more than for the same period last season and 29% more than the average of that period for the previous 15 seasons of monitoring. Targets that absorbed the most time were St. John's Wort, Saffron Thistles and Paterson's Curse as well as the group of miscellaneous low to medium risk ever-present broadleaf weeds. While St. John's Wort is present at lower densities than in recent seasons because of the very dry season to date, Paterson's Curse and Saffron Thistles thrive in such conditions where there is reduced competition from other plants. Just as important, although requiring less time, was the control of Sweet Briars, Blackberries and other Woody Weeds as well as African Lovegrass, which also require continual vigilance to prevent their numbers from escalating.

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 previous 7 years, as sprayers have had to reduce their effort and have not been able to be replaced.

We need to boost our spraying team to ensure ongoing control of the most invasive weeds across the reserve. If you are interested in being involved please contact Warren ([webmaster@fotpin.org.au](mailto:webmaster@fotpin.org.au)) to find out more about what is involved. PCS provides the necessary training if you decide to join us as well as the equipment and chemicals that we use.

John Brannan  
Convenor  
January 2026