

Newsletter 071 February 2000

Description

Dear Friends

Welcome to the year 2000 and the February heat! After 114mm of rain in December, { almost 5 inches} plus the unexpected cool weather through January we are feeling the sudden arrival of summer. Nevertheless six of us tackled the bushland reserve restoration. Armed with saws, paste and rubbish bags we made quite a difference in a couple of hours. The main weeds were Cootamundra Wattles and Pine Trees. The majority of the rubbish had been there for many years. About a third of the reserve remains to be cleared and we have set aside time in the March meeting to complete the task.

The dry appearance of the bushland reserve contrasted greatly with the green grass of the adjoining Chiltern Cemetery. The Cemetery grounds are full of the native Kangaroo Grass, Themeda triandra, which the Cemetery Trust keeps mown, so producing a green carpet during the dry summer without water.

After the effort someone produced a cream filled sponge to undo any weight loss which may have taken place.

At Depot Dam a pleasant hour or so was spent watching birds come to drink and enjoying our tea. A Black Wallaby was seen leaving the dam as we approached. A Little Pied Cormorant was seen taking a Yabbie, a cautious Common Bronzewing sneaked to the water's edge for a brief drink, a noisy group of Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters was present for most of the time. White-winged Choughs came down in single file, a lone Sacred Kingfisher made several swoops over the dam, Brown-headed and the occasional Black-chinned Honeyeater called from the trees while a Peaceful Dove and Yellow Robin called in the background.

An inspection of the trees planted on the revegetation area showed that the large wire guards have thwarted the Wallabies efforts to eat them. Some robust Ink Weed plants were removed but no doubt there will be many more after the Autumn rains.

On the topic of weeds there is great concern in the shire about the rampant, and recent spread of Chilean Needle Grass, Stipa neesiana. This serious pasture and environmental pest was introduced in the 1940's from South America. It belongs to the speargrass group and forms dense tussocks, choking out the native grasses. According to the literature from the Keith Turnbull Institute it has a super-efficient system of seed production and up to 15,000 seeds per square metre can be found in the seed bank beneath infestations. A close watch is being kept around the park boundaries in case an infestation occurs.

Meanwhile, action is being taken to curb its spread. Indigo Shire, DNRE, Vic-roads and the CMA have combined to map the infestations and distribute information to landholders. Trial control sites will be set up and strategies developed in an effort to control the weed.

As dusk approached Barry took us to Donchi Hill to do some stag watching. {Stags are dead trees with hollows in them} We divided into three groups and were given a "stag" to watch. Armed with a chair, and plenty of repellent we settled to await the dusk and its surprises. Peter scored a glider and was lucky enough to see it glide from tree to tree; my group could only tick off a bat; Barry's group, well wouldn't you know it! scored two gliders and two Brushtail Possums. The three gliders were probably Squirrel Gliders which was pleasing. A White-throated Nightjar called from the ridge just after dusk, its clear trilling echoing through the park. After dark we went for a walk through the bush and enjoyed the coolness of the night and the everlasting stars in a cloudless sky.

Tee Shirts and Coffee Mugs

These continue to sell well. Have you acquired one? Tee shirts remain at \$17.00 for members, \$20.00 for non-members. Mugs are \$10.00 each. Bird Lists are available for \$3.00, printed on card. Order form overleaf.

Flora of the Park

The booklet, which lists the known plants and their status along with some notes on the Park, is at the printers and should be available in late February. Cost \$5.00

Crown Land Reserve, Barnawartha Road:

This small block was severely damaged by activities of Rail Services Australia during extensions to the rail line. We have successfully negotiated its rehabilitation with costs to be borne by RSA. The work will commence as soon as the autumn break occurs.

New book: Feral Future: The Untold Story of Australia's Exotic Invaders, by Tim Low. The story of the biological invasion of Australia. \$24.95

NEXT MEETING SATURDAY MARCH 4TH AT 4PM

PLEASE NOTE THE PROGRAMME CHANGE

Meet at Chiltern Post Office. Activity will be Bushland Reserve restoration, followed by tea at Chiltern Valley No 2 Dam and an evening activity depending upon the weather. BYO tea, gloves, small saw, repellent, energy and a friend. Contact: 03 57 261 484

Category

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