

## Wednesday Walk — Cooleman Ridge, ACT — 27 September 2017

We met at the end of Kathner Street (a side-road from Darwinia Terrace) in Chapman to begin our walk along the Cooleman Ridge Nature Trail.

Cooleman Ridge was grazing land for cattle and sheep for more than a century which has resulted in a lot of introduced grasses still growing across the reserve, but there were still good stands of native vegetation over much of the area. The dark brown and grey rocks standing sentinel on the hillsides are Laidlaw Volcanics, the result of a massive eruption 420 million years ago. The rock is quite grainy and breaks down into gritty well-drained soil which is quite deep in places.

We were greeted in the carpark by a pair of Eastern Rosellas watching us from a large neatly-formed *Eucalyptus polyanthemos* (Red Box). The walk begins along the Bicentennial Equestrian Trail, then turns upwards and over several hills before descending to our starting point. Although some of this area was burnt during the 2003 fires, there were still some sturdy old trees remaining. The most eye-catching at the moment are the *Eucalyptus polyanthemos*. Many of them had beautifully formed canopies some of which were shrouded in masses of cream flowers. Other trees growing there were *Eucalyptus melliodora* (Yellow Box), *E. nortonii* (Mealy Bundy), *E. macrorhyncha* (Red Stringybark), *Acacia implexa* (Hickory Wattle), *Allocasuarina verticillata* (some bearing little red flowerheads) and a few *Brachychiton populneus* (Kurrajongs). One old Red Stringybark had been killed in the 2003 fires, but its dry grey branches still reached to the sky surrounded by a forest of sapling offspring.

Most of the reserve was fairly open, but there were patches of *Cassinia quinquefaria* and *C. longifolia*, a few populations of *Dodonaea viscosa* (Hopbushes) and a scattering of *Bursaria spinosa* (Australian Blackthorn). And, growing almost alone on a hillside, a dense population of *Pomaderris angustifolia* was just about to flower. But the most outstanding shrubs were the *Lissanthe strigosa* subsp. *subulata* (Peach Heaths) covered as they were in masses of white and pale pink flowers. In most other places we've visited they grow as suckering short-stemmed plants but these were the much taller bushy form.

We had lunch on Fence Post Hill near an old eucalypt where a Galah was half-heartedly disputing ownership of a hollow with a few feral bees. There is a magnificent view of the surrounding countryside from that hill. Beyond the green farm paddocks on the lower country vast mountain ranges stretch all along the horizon. Tidbinbilla Range finally merges with the Brindabella Range in the distance while the wide band of Bullen Range holds the foreground — a sight it is hard to turn away from.

We did finally begin to wend our way back to our starting place, but found more plants along the way. Some wildlife too — a large Bearded Dragon sunning itself on a rocky outcrop where *Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia* (Rock Ferns) and *C. sieberi* were growing amongst the crevices. A single carpet of bright green foliage near a tree caught our eyes and we added *Acrotriche serrulata* (Honeypots) to our previous plant list. Another noticeable plant was *Hardenbergia violacea* (False Sarsparilla) — scrambling over rocks and entwined amongst shrubs and covered in bright purple flowers. And there were two surprises — a small group of *Indigofera adesmiifolia* and, hiding behind a large rock, a robust *Polystichum proliferum* (Mother Shield-fern). We even found eight *Wurmbea dioica* (Early Nancy) at the end of the walk. These little plants that usually signal the start of spring are few and far between this year so it was good to see these — a good ending to a pleasant day.

Text: Jo Walker; Photos: Andy Russell (AR), Linda Spinaze (LS), Brigitta Wimmer (BW)

# Plant List for Cooleman Ridge – 27 September 2017

? indicates that those present were unsure of the plant name

*Acacia cultriformis*  
*Acacia dealbata*  
*Acacia decurrens*  
*Acacia implexa*  
*Acacia meansii*  
*Acacia melanoxylon*  
*Acacia rubida*  
*Acaena ovina*  
*Acrotriche serrulata*  
*Allocasuarina verticillata*  
*Amyena miquellii*  
*Aristida ramosa*  
*Arthropodium fimbriatum*  
*Austrostipa bigeniculata*  
*Austrostipa scabra*  
*Bothriochloa macra*  
*Brachychiton populneus*  
*Bursaria spinosa*  
*Carex appressa*  
*Cassinia longifolia*  
*Cassinia quinquefaria*  
*Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia*  
*Cheilanthes seiberi*  
*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*

*Chrysocephalum semipapposum*  
*Convolvulus angustissimus*  
*Dianella revoluta*  
*Dodonaea viscosa ssp. angustissima*  
*Enneapogon nigricans*  
*Erodium crinitum*  
*Eucalyptus blakelyi*  
*Eucalyptus macrorhyncha*  
*Eucalyptus melliodora*  
*Eucalyptus nortonii*  
*Eucalyptus polyanthemus*  
*Exocarpos cupressiformis*  
*Geranium solanderi*  
*Glycine clandestina*  
*Hardenbergia violacea*  
*Hibbertia obtusifolia*  
*Hydrocotyle laxiflora*  
*Indigofera adesmiifolia*  
*Indigofera australis*  
*Juncus sp.*  
*Lepidosperma laterale*  
*Lissanthe strigosa subsp. subulata*  
*Lomandra filiformis ssp. filiformis*  
*Lomandra longifolia*

*Lomandra multiflora*  
*Melichrus urceolatus*  
*Microlaena stipoides*  
*Panicum effusum*  
*Pelargonium australe*  
*Persicaria prostrata*  
*Plantago varia*  
*Poa labillardieri*  
*Polystichum proliferum*  
*Pomaderris angustifolia*  
*Pseudognaphalium luteoalbum*  
*Rytidosperma pallidum*  
*Rumex brownii*  
*Senecio quadridentatus*  
*Solanum cinereum*  
*Themeda triandra*  
*Tricoryne elatior*  
*Vittadinia cuneata*  
*Vittadinia gracilis*  
*Wahlenbergia communis*  
*Wurmbea dioica*  
*Xerochrysum viscosum*



*Acacia melanoxylon* flowers (BW)



Chough in nest (LS)



*Chrysocephalum apiculatum* (front) and *Acacia melanoxylon* (LS)



*Dodonaea viscosa ssp. angustissima* female flowers (BW)

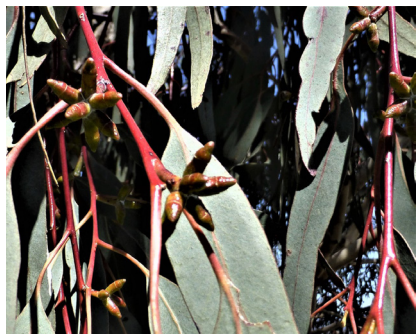


*Dodonaea viscosa ssp. angustissima* male flowers (BW)



*Erodium crinitum* (LS)





*Eucalyptus nortonii* buds (BW)



*Eucalyptus nortonii* red stems (LS)



*Eucalyptus polyanthemus* flowers (BW)



*Geranium solanderi* (BW)



*Glycine clandestina* (AR)



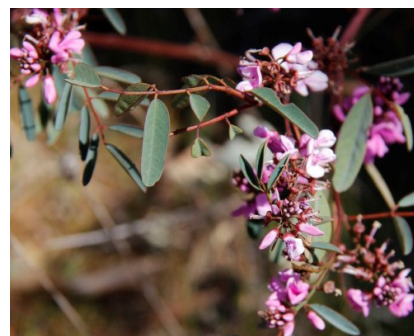
*Hardenbergia violacea* (BW)



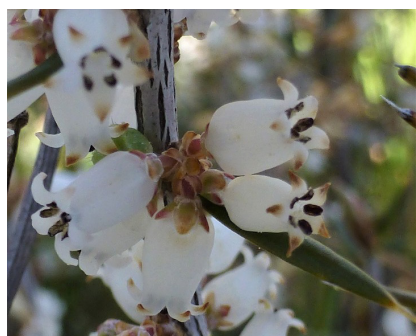
*Hibbertisa obtusifolia* (BW)



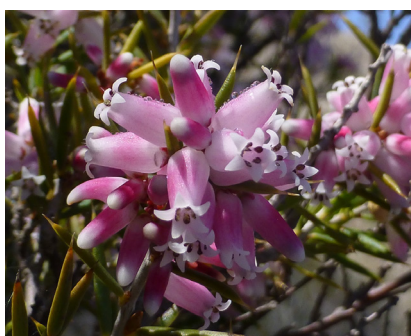
*Indigofera adesmiifolia* (BW)



*Indigofera australis* (LS)



*Lissanthe strigosa* subsp. *subulata* (white) (BW)



*Lissanthe strigosa* subsp. *subulata* (pink) (BW)



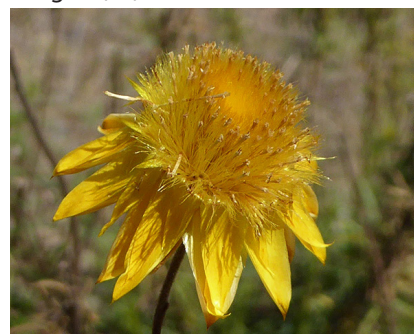
*Pogona barbata*, Common Bearded Dragon (LS)



*Wahlenbergia communis* (AR)



*Wurmbia dioica* (AR)



*Xerochrysum viscosum* (AR)