

Newsletter 007 February 1994

Description

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Dear Friends,

Bartley's Brewery site was again the focus of our attention. Thistles were ruthlessly hacked out and bags of Caper Spurge seed heads were removed. The browsing Kangaroos have created open patches and tracks among the sedge. The 130 year old Persimmon trees, with their elegant branches laden with fruit, provided deep shade for the children. In the Autumn they will provide rich golden fruit for those who wish to gather them before the Currawongs arrive. Beneath the Persimmon trees are the remains of the garden beds constructed over 100 years ago. Caper Surge was probably introduced at that time. An ancient White Mulberry, a Lime, Quince trees and Cherry Plums are other survivors of the homestead garden.

After morning tea and a brief meeting a healthy stand of Cootamundra Wattle hiding along Riley's Road was removed. There were numerous native plants struggling to survive under it. A number of Eastern Shrike-tits called as we worked. A Jack â??pruningâ?• saw proved to be a popular tool. It's amazing how competition for a tool gets the job done quickly!

The Genista site on Howlong Road was inspected. This mass was sprayed by C.N.R. in November and the results are excellent. A few stray seedlings were removed. The area will be hand weeded throughout the year. Lunch was top priority when we reached the Valley 1 Dam. A cool breeze blowing over the water was welcome.

We did a waterbird count on the adjacent swamp. There were large numbers of Straw-necked Ibis and Little Pied Cormorants, lots of Coots and a few Hardheads. As it was well past the middle of the day the birds were inactive and easy to observe. There were many young Cormorants. While we were observing a large young Pied Cormorant standing on a post its parent came in and fed it.

One shrub flowering in the park at present is the Geebung, *Persoonia rigida*. Since its foliage resembles that of the *Grevillea alpina* at first glance it is often overlooked. The small yellow flowers are often difficult to see. Some plants had tiny fruits forming on them. When mature, the fruit, which is a stone fruit, will have a single hard-coated seed, covered by a fleshy layer and a tough skin. {Like a plum} A few of last season's fruits were still on the plants suggesting that the birds have no taste for them.

At this time of the year many spider webs adorn the shrubs in the park. The most common spider we saw was the Spiny Spider of the *Gasteracantha* species. The web of this small colourful spider was difficult to avoid. Spiders do not eat solid food. They trap and squeeze their prey, then, with their specially adapted mouth parts they suck up the body juices into their stomachs. If you care to examine the contents of a spider's web you will get a good idea of its menu, for the skeletons of its prey will be left in the web.

