

## **Friends of Mt Majura: 2005 in a glance**

During the past year, Mount Majura Nature Reserve was host to a record number of one of Australia's most threatened parrot species – the beautiful green and red Swift Parrot.

An abundance of flowering gums around a drainage zone that the Friends of Mount Majura Parkcare Group (FoMM) has been rehabilitating attracted a flock of around 60 of these birds, which were on their way North from Tasmania.

At the time of the swift parrot visit, back in April, Environment ACT ranger Daniel Iglesias noted that less than 1,000 breeding pairs now make the annual migration. He said:

“This really puts the Mt Majura sighting in perspective, and re-affirms how precious the ACT system of woodland reserves is to species such as the Swift Parrot. The ACT leads the country in its preservation of lowland woodland habitat and it is particularly exhilarating to witness tangible benefits of establishing and protecting viable nature reserve areas. Mt Majura forms an almost continuous green chain with Mt Ainslie to the south and Goorooyarro and Mulligans Flat Nature Reserves to the north. This system of woodland reserves plays an important role in preserving the habitat utilised by a number of threatened and endangered woodland animal species.”

The Swift Parrot's visit drew bird watchers from across Canberra, and FoMM members were delighted to work with the Swift Parrot Recovery Team in monitoring the flock during its stay on Mount Majura.

It was a busy year. We have continued with monthly weeding parties, the sponsoring of walks and talks, and some replanting. And we're happy to say that Environment ACT rangers currently tackle the erosion of walking tracks, which troubled us for a long time. Information about our activities is now available on our website, [www.majura.org](http://www.majura.org). Getting this website up and running has been a significant upgrade to our work, and was done on a voluntary basis by FoMM member Susan Campbell.

### **Project Dragonfly**

The other highlight of the past year was the start of the rehabilitation initiative Project Dragonfly. With the assistance of an ACT Environment Grant, FoMM is working to improve the habitat around two dams in the Mount Majura Nature Reserve. The project is sponsored by the Molonglo Catchment Group and has the full and enthusiastic support of Environment ACT staff.

We hope to create a wetland environment as a haven for birds and frogs and a community asset - a place to experience and appreciate wildlife. The project has been code-named 'Dragonfly' as our indicator of success will be the emergence of the first dragonfly.

The dams were originally built to trap silt, but over time the edges have become compacted and unsuitable for plant life. Overflow from the dams enters the Hackett storm-water system, eventually finding its way into Sullivan's Creek. The rehabilitation of the dam environment will immediately improve the water quality in the dam, and will have a positive impact further downstream.

The project comprises planting local native species of both wetland and dry land plants,

placing rocks and logs to provide shelter for wildlife, improving pedestrian access and installing seats for wildlife watching. The project has been promoted through a number of talks, by articles in the local Neighbourhood Watch newsletter and on our website.

Our first planting day was held on 9 October 2005. It was a great success and we'd like to thank the more than 50 people who put in many hours to help get the plants in. Nearly 10,000 seedlings were planted, many of them with the assistance of a group of Australian Conservation Volunteers, who tackled the upper dam under the expert guidance of Warren Saunders of Seeds and Plants Australia. The day was a pleasant experience for all participants.

We'd also like to thank the Environment ACT rangers, who placed rocks and logs as a way to establish new habitats, and who built fences to protect the young plants until they are established.

Monitoring is carried out by FoMM members, by students of the Blue Gum Community School in Hackett with the support of Molonglo Waterwatch co-ordinator Bayne Geikie, and by Environment ACT ranger Bernadette Brown. We keep a photographic record of the change over time, measure the water quality and invertebrate population and conduct an annual frog watch. The results are presented on our website.

### **Weeds, walks and talks**

We hold weeding parties, targeting woody weeds, on the third Sunday of each month. The weeding of horehound, and the direct seeding of native forbs and grasses is continuing on a former sheep 'camp'. Horehound has now been removed from a large area. Since we've had long-hoped for rains this spring, large mobs of kangaroos are to be seen enjoying the grasses.

Our expert-guided walks on Mount Majura are very popular. Topics for the walks during the past year have been "Fire history" by Steve Taylor of Environment ACT and other walks had covered wildflowers, orchids and birds. A Haiku walk in conjunction with the Majura Festival in March was a most pleasant experience. During the World Environment Day, members of the community were invited for a "Walk, Talk and Tea on the Mountain". We visited three rehabilitation sites and conducted a ceremonial seeding of the former sheep camp.

We also conducted a working bee with Environment ACT ranger Peter Mills to protect an old stone post and rail fence at the north-western slopes of Mount Majura.

We held or organised talks on FoMM projects and the natural heritage of Mount Majura Nature Reserve. Nearly fifty people turned up for a presentation on "The Birds of Mount Majura" by Anthony Overs – solid proof that Canberrans value their bush environment.

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