

Living with Nature on your Doorstep

Birds

Canberra has the richest birdlife of any Australian City, with more than 250 species occurring in the region. Mt Majura Nature Reserve is home to more than 110 species. You can download a list of birds species from www.majura.org

A highlight in the winter months on Mt Majura is seeing mixed species groups of small woodland birds foraging together. These delightful birds are vital to controlling insect pests in trees, crops and pastures.

Rare and endangered birds you may see on Mt Majura include the Scarlet Robin *Petroica boodang*, Swift Parrot *Lathamus discolor*, Speckled Warbler *Sericornis sagittatus*, Diamond Firetail *Emblema guttata*, Glossy Black Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus lathami* and Gang-Gang Cockatoos *Callocephalon fimbriatum*.

Invasive birds, such as the Currawong *Strepera graculina/versicolor* and the Indian Myna *Acridotheres tristis*, are a threat in Mt Majura. They can be very aggressive - killing and harassing smaller birds. You can help to discourage invasive birds by ensuring that leftover pet food and other scraps are not left out for them to feed on.

The Canberra Ornithologists Group is involved in observing, monitoring and protecting birds. The groups hosts enjoyable field trips and educational activities. Find out more and glimpse the birds

at their website www.canberrabirds.org.au



The numbers of the gregarious Gang Gang Cockatoo *Callocephalon fimbriatum* numbers are declining rapidly. Inset - male (left) and female. Courtesy Geoffrey Dabb.

Reptiles

Snakes, lizards and frogs are protected in the ACT and it is illegal to keep or capture them without permission.

Snakes

The venomous Eastern Brown Snake *Pseudonaja textilis*

and the Red-bellied

Black Snake *Pseudechis porphyriacus* are the most common species in the ACT and can be found on Mt Majura. Most snakes are shy, non-aggressive creatures and will retreat quickly if not provoked.

Lizards

Mt Majura has a great diversity of lizards. On your walk you might come across a Shingleback *Tiliqua rugosa*, a Jacky Lizard *Amphibolurus muricatus* or a Bearded Dragon *Pogona barbata*. Bearded dragons rely on camouflage for protection and are difficult to spot when motionless basking in the sun. If a predator spots them, they will make themselves look more impressive by extending a scaly beard. Despite this bravado, the lizards are defenceless and easily harmed so please keep dogs on a leash at all times.

Frogs

FrogWatch volunteers have identified six species of frogs on Mt Majura. While frogs mostly live in dams and creeks, they often need to seek protection from weather - so please don't move rocks or timber which may provide them with a refuge.



The distinctive Bearded dragon *Pogona barbata* Courtesy Waltraud Pix.

If you see a snake...

Move slowly backwards and let the snake move on its way. In the bush wear long pants and covered shoes, avoid walking in long grass and don't put your hand into hollow logs or rock crevices.

If bitten- call 000 immediately, apply a pressure bandage and avoid moving.

Keeping or capturing native wildlife is illegal in the ACT

If you see signs of trapping contact Canberra Connect on 13 22 81

Possums and Sugar Gliders

The Mt Majura Nature Reserve is home to several kinds of possum including the Ringtail Possum *Pseudocheirus peregrinus*, Brushtail Possum *Trichosurus vulpecula* and the Sugar Glider *Petaurus breviceps*. Possums sleep during the day and come out at night to feed on leaves and flowers. Their main predators are cats, foxes, owls, kookaburras and goannas.

Sugar Gliders are very small air-gliding possums, reaching up to 35 cms long – most of which is their bushy tail. They are ash grey in colour and have a distinctive black stripe from nose to tail. Sugar Gliders make a distinctive yapping call at night and move by gliding through the air from branch to branch. They feed on tree sap, pollen and small insects. These enchanting animals are very sensitive and are protected by law.

The Brushtail Possum is more commonly found in Canberra and you may even come across one in your back yard. Brushtail Possums often eat fruiting plants, kitchen greens and flowers. If you wish to deter them from your beloved plants you can smear hot mustard on the plants or make up other unpleasant tasting non-toxic sprays to deter them.

In the bush, possums use tree hollows as homes. When houses are built near bushland, possums often make a habit of moving in to roofs and sheds. Keep these spaces sealed and well maintained if you wish to keep them out. Possums are territorial and like to return to their home base before dawn - so if you do block up an entry-point, please do it at night when the possum is out and it will re-locate to another place.



The highly appealing and well-camouflaged Swamp Wallaby *Wallabia bicolor* on Mt Majura. Courtesy Waltraud Pix.



A shy echidna *Tachyglossus aculeatus* foraging on Mt Majura. Courtesy Waltraud Pix.

Kangaroos and Wallabies

Canberra is one of the best urban places to see kangaroos in the wild. The Eastern Grey Kangaroo *Macropus giganteus* is the most common, and from time to time you may see the less-common and smaller Swamp Wallaby *Wallabia bicolor* or the Red Necked Wallaby *Macropus rufogriseus*.

Kangaroos will often travel from their bush environment to feed on neighbouring suburban gardens, so don't be surprised if you see one on the road or even in your garden.

Kangaroos eat grasses and small plants and can consume between 70-300 kg of pasture each year. Heavy grazing by kangaroos in lean times can threaten the livelihoods of other animals, so controlling kangaroo numbers may be necessary to help keep the balance and support healthy ecosystems.

Early morning, dusk and night are the peak times when kangaroos may try to cross roads - so please take extra care around these times.

Echidnas

If you are lucky, you may sight the usually nocturnal Short-Beaked Echidna *Tachyglossus aculeatus* on Mt Majura during the day.

The Echidna is an egg-laying mammal. Its young, called a 'puggle', suckle in their mother's pouch on iron-rich pink milk after hatching from the egg. Echidnas eat ants and termites and can live for more than 45-years.

Echidnas are covered in spines apart from a soft furry underbelly. If you meet an Echidna on a walk be careful not to handle them as they are fragile and their spines can pierce human skin.

Injured wildlife

If you find injured wildlife call Canberra Connect on 13 22 81