

Friends of Mt Majura (FoMM) May 2008 newsletter

- Latest news on swift parrots, FoMM stall, meeting with the Chief Minister, FoMMs' website
- Talk: Tackling Indian Myna, the Cane Toad on Wings – Thursday 15 May
- Working Bee: Erosion control and tree planting at the lower Majura dam – Sunday 18 May
- Celebrate World Environment Day with a Walk Talk & Tea on Mt Majura – Sunday 8 June

Dear Friends,

Exciting news: the swift parrots are still around! A flock of about 20 swift parrots has been observed on Sunday 4th May at the lower slopes of Mt Majura east of Verco Street in north Hackett heading towards Watson. This is quite remarkable, because (1) the highly endangered swift parrots (sp) are rarely seen in Canberra; (2) this is the second time sp were observed on Mt Majura for such a long period, the longest ever recorded in Canberra; (3) the observation period (March to beginning of May) is about the same as in 2005 (mid March to end of April); (4) the 2005 and the 2008 sp counts - more than 60 respectively more than 20 birds – are the largest ever recorded in the Canberra region; and (5) the sites where the parrots were observed are the same as in 2005, i.e. the lower slopes of Mt Majura between Helms Place and Watson with a concentration around the lower Hackett reservoir and the southern parts of the Majura horse paddocks. 3 years ago Debbie Saunders of the National Swift Parrot Recovery Team said that sp are known to return to foraging sites, and - voila – here they are, same time, same place.

Please let me know of any swift parrot observations. I would be grateful for information on date, time, locality and approximate number.

The national survey for swift parrots is coming up soon (weekends 17/18 May and 2/3 August). If you want to join the survey please contact the Swift Parrot Recovery Coordinators Belinda Cooke / Debbie Saunders at ph 1800 66 57 66 or e-mail swiftparrots@yahoo.com.au.

Other good news is that our exhibition and information stall at the Hackett birthday party last Saturday was a great success and I'd like to thank all of you who helped. Many people came around for a chat, to view our exhibition and to grab some info material. We raffled 2 Wollemi Pines – a reward donated to Landcare groups - and received 212 bugs, which will be used towards the costs of running FoMM.

On the 15 April three representatives of the Hackett Community Association and FoMM met the ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope to discuss issues of community concern: inner North Canberra traffic, the expanding airport and Mt Majura nature reserve. I've briefed the Minister on the degradation of the nature reserve as a result of overgrazing and weeds, the need to budget for the control of rabbits and the repair of eroded tracks, the threat Monash Drive poses to endangered grassy woodland and the need of 100% ACT Government funding of an ACT Park Care co-ordinator position. The Minister listened carefully and asked for follow-up information. I'll keep you informed on outcomes of the meeting (if any...).

Good news too in regard to our website. Adam, our website manager is currently transferring the site to a new and safe server and although much work needs to be done it will be up and running soon.

Last not least please see below our up-coming events; it would be great if you can come along, lend a hand, learn something new and have some fun too.

Warm regards
Waltraud
FoMM co-ordinator

Tackling Indian Myna - the Cane Toad on Wings

Talk by Bill Handke, Canberra Indian Myna Action Group

When: Thursday 15 May, 7.30pm

Where: Blue Gum School Friends' Lounge, Hackett shops

Hear about a community effort to reduce the numbers of Indian or Common Myna, the success it is having, and how you can help.

The introduced Myna birds aggressively compete with native birds and mammals for nesting tree hollows. They fight for hollows, destroy eggs and chicks of native birds like Rosellas. They evict Sugar Gliders from hollows, which means the death sentence for these small mammals because they have nowhere to go. The impact of the Indian Myna on hollow dependant native fauna is severe as nesting hollows in our cleared landscapes are in short supply.

Local residents who want to get involved in Indian Myna control can contact Tim Deveson on 62625374 or email timd@grapevine.net.au.

The talk is part of the Hilltop to Backfence lecture series to celebrate 5 years of Park Care on Mount Majura.

Dragonfly Working Bee: Erosion control (stage 3) and tree planting at the lower Majura dam

When: Sunday 18 May, 10.00am to 1.00pm

Where: meet at the lower dam off Mackenzie / Grayson Streets park entrance, Hackett

Bring and wear: a garden fork or mattock if you have one, a bucket, sturdy boots, and gloves.

We will continue with the work to control erosion in the vicinity of the lower Majura dam that began in 2007.

The work includes loosening the soil, placing coir erosion matting on top of it, anchoring the matting with pegs and spreading seeds of native grasses and forbs. We will plant local eucalypts uphill of the dam.

Project Dragonfly started in October 2005. The project's aim is to rehabilitate the degraded dams and to create a wetland habitat for wildlife. The ground in the vicinity of the lower dam has been compacted leading to bare soil and erosion. For more information on Dragonfly visit our website at www.majura.org.

Celebrate World Environment Day 2008 with a Walk Talk & Tea on Mt Majura

When: Sunday 8 June 2008, 1.00 – 3.30 pm

Where: Meet at Mackenzie Street Nature Park entrance opposite Grayson Street, Hackett

Come for a gentle walk through the beautiful woodlands of Mt Majura. Visit Friends of Mt Majura projects and learn about the processes involved in enhancing degraded sites. Enjoy afternoon tea and hear about the bush and wildlife on your doorstep from local naturalist and author Ian Fraser.