

Friends of Mt Majura (FoMM) September 2009 newsletter

- **Is the Grassland Earless Dragon going extinct?** – Talk this Thursday 3 September, see information at the end of this newsletter
- Resuming work at the old Ainslie tip site – Sunday 6 September
- GPS Use and Mapping Workshops – Fridays 4 and 11 September
- Invitation to celebrate 20 years of ParkCare in the ACT – Saturday 19 September
- Casuarina trail launch – coming soon; date and time to be announced
- Horehound blitz – Sunday 20 September

Dear Friends,

On our tree walk a week ago we've noticed the early signs of spring: *Hardenbergia* is in full flower and the leaves of Bulbine lilies and orchids promise a special *Floriade* on the mountain. I'm sure participants of the tree walk will join Michael Doherty again to explore the spring wildflowers on a walk planned for the 11<sup>th</sup> October. Please visit [www.majura.org](http://www.majura.org) for further information.

The ACT 2009 Landcare Awards will be announced on 10 September. Thanks so much for some encouraging words in support of my individual landcarer award nomination and for the rabbit mapping project – and yes, words can make a difference when you sometimes wonder if it is all worth it. You can check out the nominations on the ACT Landcare website <http://act.landcareheroes.com/nominees/act-landcare-nominees>. If you like to vote or leave a message you will be asked to set up a password - this is for the landcare awards account only and can be anything such as your favourite pest.

Parks, Conservation and Lands (PCL) granted permission to resume certain work at the old Ainslie tip site. The Mount Ainslie Weeders will host a working bee and Friends of Mt Majura are warmly invited to come along

**When:** next Sunday, 6 September 2009, 9.00am to 12.00 noon

**Where:** old Ainslie tip site

**Bring and wear:** Sun protection, enclosed foot wear, body covering clothing

Come early for a briefing on the work and for a cuppa.

You might remember that in March 2009 fragments of bonded asbestos were discovered in discarded construction material at the old Ainslie tip site. As a precautionary measure PCL closed the area for public use. The assessment of the contamination and remedial work is now completed and the area has been opened to the public. Volunteers have permission to resume work that does not disturb the soil, such as spraying weeds.

The GPS Use and Mapping Workshops on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> September have a few places left. I'd strongly recommend participation because firstly it is fun, secondly it provides you with skills that can be widely used and thirdly it will bring you to a level of GPS use and data processing for Google Earth mapping and communication that we will use in the future to map items such as pests (rabbits, serrated tussock) or threatened species (Canberra Spider orchid). FoMM, the Ainslie Weeders and the Watson Woodland Working Group share a number of Garmin 60 GPS units which you might borrow to play with and gain confidence. Please contact Sally at 62057384 or [sally.mcintosh@act.gov.au](mailto:sally.mcintosh@act.gov.au) for training details and to secure a place.

There are times to celebrate achievements. You are invited to share in the celebration of 20 years of ParkCare in the ACT with a breakfast and presentations in recognition of the efforts of all ParkCarers.

**Who:** all ParkCarers, present and past, tall or small, blonde or brown

**When:** Saturday, 19 September 2009, 9.00am to 12.00 noon

**Where:** Southern Cross Yacht Club, Mariner Place, in Yarralumla.

Please RSVP for catering purposes to Sally McIntosh by 10 September at Ph: 6205 7384 or Email: [sally.mcintosh@act.gov.au](mailto:sally.mcintosh@act.gov.au) and please indicate any special dietary requirements.

The repair of Casuarina trail is nearly completed and the trail will be officially opened with a ministerial launch sometimes early in September; I'll inform you about the date and time as soon as I receive confirmation. FoMM was the driving force behind the project as we secured the funds for the repair work. We can look forward to safely access a beautiful part of Mt Majura that has a rich biodiversity.

We will hold another horehound massacre with morning tea and muffins.

**When:** Sunday, 20 September 2009, 9.00am to 1.00pm

**Where:** meet at the water reservoir off Rivett / French Streets

**Bring and wear:** sun protection, enclosed footwear, preferably densely woven clothing to minimise burr attachment and household gloves with long cuffs or garden gloves, a weeding tool such as a trowel, small mattock or hoe.

Warm regards, Waltraud

**Talk: Is the Grassland Earless Dragon going extinct?**

**Wendy Dimond**, University of Canberra, Applied Ecology

**When:** Thursday 3 September 7.30pm

**Where:** Australian National University, Gould Wing (Building 116) of the Botany and Zoology Dept, access is via Daley Road.

The endangered grassland earless dragon (*Tympanocryptis pinguicolla*) is an endemic species confined to areas of native grassland in the Southern Tablelands and Australian Capital Territory (ACT). Surveys of populations in the ACT have revealed a contraction in distribution and declines in trapping rates raising concern for the future of this species. To better define the nature of the decline and the factors affecting it, we conducted a systematic study at two sites in the ACT. Our trapping revealed a dramatic crash in population numbers since 2006. At the site where the species is believed to be most abundant, population size decreased from  $2287 \pm 255$  to  $276 \pm 98$ . Of the two populations sampled, only one produced sufficient captures to enable survival estimates to be made. In that population, seasonal survival in juvenile (0.33-0.44), sub-adult (0.28 -0.4) and adult (0.28-0.63) stages did not change over the two years of sampling.

Using the data derived from that study to perform a stage-based, population viability analysis, we show that extinction of the largest remaining population is likely within 15 years and identify egg production and/or juvenile survival as the life stages of greatest influence on population growth rate. We discuss our findings in the light of the prevailing drought conditions and their implications for the future management of this rapidly disappearing species.

Wendy Dimond is a PhD candidate at the Institute for Applied Ecology, University of Canberra. Her interests include population biology and modelling as well as translocation/relocation science.

The talk is organised by the Field Naturalists Association of Canberra.