

Friends of Mt Majura (FoMM) February 2010 newsletter

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Dear Friends

Do you know that you can hear the eucalypts flowering? No joke! Last Sunday, when we watered the shrubs planted along the paddock drain line we heard the humming and buzzing of thousands of insects interspersed by the gentle but distinct tap-tap-tap of falling caps of flower buds. Looking up we saw the majestic Apple box trees flowering. There's always something to enjoy when you're out there.

I'm very pleased to inform you that volunteers completed the mapping of rabbit warrens in allocated areas of the Mt Majura and Mt Ainslie nature reserves. This survey is part of a second rabbit control program following initial work in autumn last year. 43 volunteers spent 720 hours walking an area of 1003.52 ha (10,035,200 square metres) and recorded 1069 locations with warrens and burrows - a map that shows the surveyed areas and gps records will be published on our website soon. In addition volunteers spent many hours on GPS training, processing data and coordinating the project. This time we've included the steep mountain slopes in the survey which we didn't check in the first round. A preliminary finding is that steepness is certainly no hurdle for rabbits taking residence – although I'm not going so far as to suggest that rabbits prefer sites with a view! According to my observations the only sites free of rabbit signs were those around fox dens and those with very shallow gravelly and rocky soils that support She-oak and a very sparse Red-anther Wallaby grass (*Joycea pallida*) and Mat-rush (*Lomandra sp*) ground cover.

I am proud of what we have achieved and I'd like to thank all volunteers for generously giving their time. Thank you also to the North Canberra Community Council, the Molonglo Catchment Group and Parks Conservation and Lands, particularly Murray Aston, for the support with training, advice and resources to successfully accomplish the survey. It is now over to rangers and contractors who will start control work next week.

Help with rabbit data analysis: I'm looking for someone who could enter records from field data sheets into an Excel spreadsheet for a further analysis on the distribution of rabbits. Please contact me if you can help.

I'd like to share with you the good news that the vast majority of the seedlings, which we planted in winter 2009, have (so far) survived the dry and hot weather. Of more than 600 seedlings we lost 12, most at the steep rocky west slope, which is a truly challenging site for seedlings and volunteers alike.

I hope there will be something for you to join in at one of the events coming up in February. I'm keeping FoMM meetings to a minimum since everyone tells me how much they hate meetings. However, I think a meeting once a year to plan ahead is quite appropriate. So we will have our annual planning meeting on Sunday, 14 February. If you have a couple of hours please come along and share your ideas. Please read on for further details of this and other events or visit our website www.majura.org

Warm regards

Waltraud

31. January 2010

P: 6247 7515

Working bee old Ainslie tip – Sunday 7 February

Our fellow ParkCare group, the Mt Ainslie Weeders, invite you for a working party on the first Sunday in February to complete the mulching of the young trees and shrubs planted on National Tree Day 2008 at the old Ainslie tip. The mulch will help to suppress weeds which compete with the seedlings for nutrients and water. The plan is also to cut-n-bag mustard weeds – what the horrible horehound is to us at Mt Majura, is the mustard-weed menace (mwm) to the Ainslie mob. Anyone with brush-cutter skills will be highly welcome for a serious mwm massacre.

Where: Old Ainslie Tip, off Phillip Ave

When: Sunday, 7 February 8 - 11am

What to bring: Hat, long sleeves and pants, sun protection, a pair of gloves if you have them.

FoMM meeting to plan 2010 activities – Sunday 14 February

When: Sunday, 14 February from 11.00am - 12.30pm

Where: 9 Selwyn Street, Hackett

What: Plans and actions for 2010.

Everyone is welcome; please **RSVP** to me.

Please think about projects and activities and whether / how you could become involved in FoMM affairs. The average participation at regular working bees dropped from 14 volunteers in 2008 - the year with the Hilltop to Backfence lecture series - to below 10 in 2009. Is there anything we should / could do to raise the profile of FoMM and to attract volunteers to events? Please see Chris's invitation at the end of this newsletter in this context.

Woody weeds working bee – Sunday 21 February

We will join forces with the Watson Woodlanders to tackle young weed growth at a site where we've removed large briar roses and hawthorns a year ago. I'm particularly calling on chemcert-trained and experienced weeders to take less experienced volunteers under their wings.

When: Sunday, 21 February 2010, from 8.00am - noon

Where: Meet at the nature park entrance off Antill Street opposite Carotel south of the Australian Heritage Village

Bring and wear: sun protection, appropriate shoes and body-covering clothing

Equipment, tea and coffee will be provided

Along a trail with ants on Mount Majura. Expert-guided walk – Sunday 28 February

Join ANU myrmecologist Dr. Ajay Narendra for a glimpse into the fascinating world of one of the most dominant animals on the planet.

When: Sunday 28 February, 4.30pm - 6.30 pm

Where: meet at Mackenzie / Grayson Sts nature park entrance, Hackett

Bring: sun protection, sturdy boots and a magnifying glass if you have one

Kids (with adults) are especially welcome

Limited places, booking essential!

For booking and enquiries: Phone 62477515 or Email admin@majura.org

Ants play a leading role in the environment as predators and scavengers. Their highly social organization, effective communication and amazing navigation skills have been the object of research for generations. Mount Majura has a rich diversity of ants, including several species of bull dog ants.

Ajay Narendra is part of the research team studying navigation strategies in Jack Jumpers (*Myrmecia croslandi*) in Hackett. Find out about Jack Jumpers and other ants on Ajay's website at <http://web.mac.com/ajaynarendra>

Investigation into Canberra Nature Park (Nature Reserves)

The Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, Dr Maxine Cooper, is inviting public submissions to an investigation into the Canberra Nature Park (Nature Reserves), the Molonglo River Corridor and Googong Foreshores. People who would like to make submissions should look at the **Terms of Reference** on the Commissioner's website at www.envcomm.act.gov.au. The date for lodging submissions is **Friday 26 February 2010**. All submissions will be made public unless otherwise requested in writing.

Please send your submission to:

The Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment

PO Box 356 Dickson ACT 2602 or email: envcomm@act.gov.au

Chris wrote:

Dear Waltraud

On the 27th March, between 10am and 3pm, the suburb of Downer will be celebrating 50 years since its gazettal as a suburb and there will be a big event at the Community Centre and nearby ovals.

The event will recognise the history of the site - particularly use of the site as a research station for CSIRO plant industry division and its role in essential war time work and its legacy in trees and road layout. Also the history of the school and a school reunion, the Downer Community Association and current activities. A book will be launched, heritage signs, prizes of an art competition etc. There will also be promotions by local community groups with stalls, music, dancing and entertainment for all ages.

I think this is a good opportunity to promote FOMM - you see Mt Majura on the horizon from this celebration if looking east. I cannot take on this myself as I am responsible for a lot of activity in the lead up to and on the day. Would you ask for volunteers to take this on please - perhaps through the newsletter or ask someone you know who perhaps lives in Downer?

I envisage a simple table with information and background decoration comprising photos of local flora and fauna and perhaps volunteers weeding and planting. I am happy to work with a volunteer or two or three to develop the idea and any other practical ideas.

Thanks

Chris