

Friends of Mount Majura (FoMM) Newsletter May 2013

- * FoMM's future – draft constitution for comment
- * Woody Weeds Working Bee – Sunday 19 May
- * Thursdays Weed Hunt at The Fair
- * News and Updates: white-stemmed gum moth, bird walk, rare Emu-foot

Dear Friends

FoMM celebrates its 10th birthday this year. They have been years of removing weeds, planting trees and shrubs, and of advocacy for the bush environment of Mt Majura. The "Before" and "After" photos are stunning. We have made a big difference!

FoMM's future – Draft constitution for comment

It is time now to put FoMM as an organisation on a firm footing. We are proposing to introduce a membership scheme and an elected committee system to support our work into the future. We welcome your comments. The draft constitution is at

<http://majura.org/2013/04/30/friends-of-mount-majura-draft-constitution-01-05-2013/>

If you are interested in working with us to establish a more robust organisation, please contact us on admin@majura.org. We will be meeting on Sunday 2nd June, 3.30pm to discuss further steps.

Thursdays Weed Hunt at The Fair – next hunt Thursday 2 May

We may have a few more weed sessions along Clancy's track before the temperatures are too low for control. Meet at 9.30am, nature park access close to Tay St / Ian Nicol St intersection, The Fair, North Watson; bring sun protection, drinking water, sturdy shoes, and garden clothing with long sleeve and pants; contact admin@majura.org if you want to come or just come and BYO garden loppers.

Woody Weeds Working Bee – Sunday 19 May

When: Sunday, 19 May, from 9.00am to 12.00noon; come at 9.00am for a little ramble to learn about the most common weeds;

Where: Meet at ParkCare notice board opposite of the water reservoir off Rivett Street and French Street intersection, Hackett;

Bring: Sun protection, body covering garden clothing, sturdy shoes or gum boots for work in the drainage line;

Enquiries: admin@majura.org or ph 6247 7515.

This will be a Search & Destroy activity in the reserve behind Rivett Street and the drainage line close to the Hackett reservoir. We will be cutting and daubing woody weeds using the herbicide glyphosate (Roundup); young weeds that grow in the soft soil at the bottom of the drainage line can be pulled. For more information including information on target weeds Privet and Honeysuckle and the method of control go to <http://majura.org/2013/04/28/woody-weeds-working-bee-5/>.

News and Updates

Do you remember the wonderful strange cocoon featured in the February newsletter? See the beautiful hairy beast that hatched <http://www.flickr.com/photos/61627737@N03/sets/72157633261587135/> (click on the photograph for enlarged view).

7 April, bird walk on the north-west slope of Mt Majura behind The Fair. We walked less than 1km and were amazed about the number and diversity of small woodland birds: Speckled Warbler, Weebill, Tree Martin, various Thornbills – Julie collated a list of the species which you can find below. We noticed the

absence of Pied Currawong and Peter, our walk leader, observed only one Noisy Miner when he arrived. Both species benefit from a human environment and have a devastating impact on the small woodland birds which disappeared from the west slope behind Hackett. We saw a cat, hunting in the reserve. The Fair is a declared cat containment area and I contacted Domestic Animals and the Minister for TAMS requesting the enforcement of the containment. After Jenni officially closed the walk, a White-necked (Pacific) Heron appeared above the eucalypts leisurely beating its wings. The heron is not described for Mt Majura and was a wonderful conclusion of our walk. A fortnight later on my way to map rabbit warrens I came across a flock of eighteen Red-rumped Parrots just behind the Fair houses:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/61627737@N03/8695993074/in/pool-1818610@N22/lightbox/>

In February I reported the finding of the rare plant Emu-foot, *Cullen tenax*. Meanwhile I learned that the species is regarded with concern in the ACT and listed endangered in Victoria. The Mt Majura population – I counted over 30 individual plants – might be the largest in the region. View photos at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/61627737@N03/sets/72157632832658499/detail/>. The quality is low due to the dim light conditions when I took the photographs however the features of the species are shown - mauve coloured flower spike, black seed pot, leaf with 3 to 5 leaflets, sprawling growth habit. See also Michael Bedingfield's beautiful drawing and contribution for the Friends of Grasslands newsletter below.

Since the last update of the Mt Majura flora list in November 2012 we identified nine new species, seven of which are local natives and all were by-chance findings at weeding and other activities.

Warm regards,
Waltraud
1 May 2013

List of bird species, 7 April 2013

Australian Magpie	Rose Robin
Australian Raven	Silvereve
Buff-rumped Thornbill	Speckled Warbler
Common Bronzewing	Spotted Pardalote
Crimson Rosella	Striated Pardalote
Eastern Rosella	Striated Thornbill
Galah	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Golden Whistler	Superb Fairy-wren
Grey Currawong	Tree Martin
Grey Fantail	Weebill
Grey Shrike-thrush	White-necked (Pacific) Heron
Ibis	White-winged Chough
Little Eagle (or Whistling Kite)	Yellow Thornbill
Noisy Miner	Yellow-rumped Thornbill

Emu-foot, *Cullen tenax*, one of several rare native pea flowers

Michael Bedingfield

John Muir (1838-1914) was a prolific and passionate writer on the subject of nature conservation in the USA, and he is still being published. Perhaps his writing is so well regarded because he achieved so much in his lifetime for the protection of wilderness in his country, particularly in national parks, which were a new concept back then. He once said "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe." His bold assertion was made pertinent to me when I was watching the ABC television series "Voyage to the Planets". The planet Jupiter is one thousand times larger than Earth, and therefore exerts a very strong gravitational force in our solar system. So it attracts many wayward comets and asteroids that might otherwise crash with violent and destructive impact into our own planet. We were told, "Life would not be possible on the Earth if it were not for Jupiter. We need Jupiter." It is still a controversial subject, but some astronomers believe that without Jupiter's protective influence, the Earth would not have been stable and safe enough for life to develop here. It is fascinating to think that a planet which appears to us as a tiny point of light in the night sky, just one of zillions, and which is over 590 million kilometres away, could have such a significant effect on us.

There is so much we don't know about the functioning of our extremely complex and magnificent world, that we have to be very careful of what we do. The work of FOG in trying to secure a good future for grassy ecosystems, and the plants and animals that are part of them, is very important. John Muir believed that wildness and wilderness are a part of our own nature, that in wild places we can find true peace and contentment. He believed that when we go out into the wild our wounds are healed and our wellbeing restored.

John also believed that since wilderness is part of our own nature, and things are so intimately connected, when we lose features of the natural world, we lose part of ourselves. Losing a species is a great tragedy, and there are many plants whose future is uncertain, including emu-foot, known botanically as *Cullen tenax* (formerly *Psoralea tenax*). It is listed as endangered in Victoria, and is regarded with concern in the ACT. It receives special mention in "Action Plan 27, Woodlands for Wildlife, ACT Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy", published by Environment ACT.

Other peas mentioned in the same vein are mountain swainson-pea (*Swainsona monticola*), small purple pea (*S. recta* - endangered), silky swainson-pea (*S. sericea*), austral trefoil (*Lotus australis*), and *Zornia dictiocarpa*.

Emu-foot is a small perennial plant growing up to 20 cm tall, and sprawling to 60 cm wide. It appears to be quite palatable to herbivores, as it is often found grazed upon. The small pea flowers are purple or mauve in colour, growing in spikes on stems from the leaf joints. The leaves have three to five leaflets, and occasionally seven, arranged around a central point at the end of short stems. The fruit is a tiny black pod, about 3 mm long. It is rare in the ACT, though reasonably common to the south on the Monaro, and can be found on the slopes and plains of NSW, and in Qld.

I have provided a drawing of the *Cullen tenax* at about half its natural size, with a flower-head at normal size. Whatever the effect is, on the universe or on ourselves, when a species is lost forever, it could not be beneficial. So we continue to work to protect plants such as emu-foot and ensure it has a safe future.



Cullen tenax
Emu-foot
Michael Bedingfield
©2010

[from: The Friends of Grasslands May/June 2013 newsletter]