

Friends of Mount Majura (FoMM) September 2008 newsletter

- Water a Seedling - this Sunday, 7 September
- Talk: A Hollow Existence – Thursday, 18 September
- Spring Working Bee and Morning Tea – Sunday, 21 September
- ACT Election 2008: Meet the Candidates (NCCC) – Wednesday, 17 September
- Leap into Frogwatch this spring - register now
- ANU Science Café. Birds, Bats & Beasties: Community Science & Volunteering

Help: Please contact me if you can help putting up posters especially in Watson (community board).

Dear Friends

The care and maintenance of inner North Canberra Nature Parks will be one of the issues Candidates for Molonglo are asked to address at the “Meet the Candidates” night that the North Canberra Community Council (NCCC) has organized for the 17 September (see below details). It is election time and this is your opportunity to hear what aspirants have to say. What are their plans to protect the values of our nature reserve? Also on the agenda will be Monash Drive, a major threat to Mt Majura and Mt Ainslie and the proposal to change the Territory Plan to allow dense residential development on the north-west foot slope of Mt Majura. The proposed development would create a hard edge with the nature reserve and will most likely impact on conservation values within the reserve.

It would be excellent if you can make it to the meeting and squeeze the candidates on matters that are close to our heart.

Solid proof that frogs are sexy was the large turn-out at Beth Mantle's presentation on “Slippery Friends in our Backyards” (see report below). Many people have signed up for this year's community frogwatch program. You can still join the frogwatch fun and learn more about the frogs of the ACT and their habitats; for details see below.

Dr. Phil Gibbons, a forest ecologist and the Australian expert on Tree Hollows, will give the next lecture in our Hilltop to Backfence series. In his talk he will present data collected on Mt Majura earlier this year. Together with Prof David Lindenmayer he has published the book: “Tree hollows and Wildlife conservation” (CSIRO, 2002) which is the first comprehensive inventory of hollow-dependant Australian fauna and a compendium for practical land management. You can find a list of hollow using bird species of Mt Majura on our website www.majura.org.

The Australian National University will conduct a “Science Café” for volunteers interested and involved in monitoring; for more information see below.

September will provide the last opportunity to plant before it is getting to warm. If you can come along to our Spring working bee on Sunday the 21 September.

This coming Sunday, 7 September we will again bundle forces with fellow parkCare group, the Mount Ainslie Weeders to water the seedlings planted on the National Tree Day. This is also a great opportunity to see how the youngsters are faring. Bring friends and family and don't forget the buckets.

Warm regards

Waltraud

P: 6247 7515

04. September 2008

Water a Seedling – this Sunday 7 September

When: this Sunday 7 September from 10.00am to noon

Where: Old Ainslie tip site off Philip Av Kellaway St nature park entrance

Bring sun protection and buckets

What: We will water the seedlings at the top part of the old tip site and if there are enough hands around we will even tackle some weeds.

Talk: A Hollow Existence – Thursday 18 September

by Dr Philip Gibbons, Fenner School of the Environment, Australian National University

When: Thursday 18 September 2008, 7.30 – 9.00pm

Where: Blue Gum School Friends' Lounge, Hackett shops

Most of the hollow-bearing trees on Mount Majura were standing when Cook sailed into Botany Bay. Over 300 Australian species of birds, mammals, reptiles and frogs rely on tree hollows. Why do tree hollows take so long to form? What animals use them? And why are 100 hollow-dependant species listed as threatened in Australia?

Dr. Philip Gibbons lives in the shadows of Mount Majura and is Australia's expert on tree hollows.

He will tell a story of love, loss and hope: The love between Canberra's old trees and its fauna; the loss of old trees and their hollows in Canberra's streets, parks and surrounding farms drawing on data collected locally; and the hope that we can reverse this decline by erecting nest boxes, learning to live with old trees and recruiting the next generation of old trees.

Spring Working Bee and Morning Tea – Sunday 21 September

Celebrate the arrival of spring with the planting of local trees and shrubs and the removal of weeds at the foot slope of the mountain. Please come early for a cuppa and an introduction.

When: Sunday, 21 September 2008, from 9.30am to 1.00pm

Where: meet at the lower Hackett Reservoir off Rivett / French Streets, Hackett

Bring & Wear: sun protection, sturdy boots, and suitable clothing; all equipment will be provided

ACT Election 2008: Meet the Candidates – Wednesday 17 September

When: Wednesday 17 September, 7.30pm

Where: Dickson College, Philip Avenue Dickson

The North Canberra Community Council (NCCC) has invited Candidates for Molonglo to speak and answer questions on topics of interest for North Canberra residents. Topics include: a curfew for Canberra Airport; ecologically sound solutions to traffic problems in North Canberra; community assets and development in North Watson; maintenance and management of Nature Reserves.

Leap into Frogwatch this Spring – Register now

Frogwatch is a community program that aims to involve volunteers of all ages to undertake frog monitoring and protecting frog habitats in the ACT. It is carried out during **National Water Week** in October and volunteer training starts in September. To join **Frogwatch** and for more information about frogs and frog habitats please contact Beth Mantle at 6278 3309 or waterwatch@ginninderralandcare.org.au

Science Café. Birds, Bats & Beasties: Community Science & Volunteering

When: Tuesday 16 September, 7-9:30 pm

Where: National Museum Hall, Acton Peninsula Canberra

RSVP by Friday 12 September 2008

Jacqueline de Chazal, P: 6125 5008, E: jacqueline.dechazal@anu.edu.au

The Australian National University in collaboration with the Bureau of Rural Sciences will hold a science café to gauge interest in volunteer biosecurity detection. The science café provides an informal frame to encourage everyone to participate and includes an expert discussion panel followed by open-floor questions, comments and debate. This is an opportunity to share your ideas and experiences of volunteer monitoring - in any capacity - from birds to weeds. The organizers particularly encourage attendance from individuals with experience in reading landscapes and working with

volunteers. You might be a farmer, scientist, retiree, tradesperson, naturalist, government officer, bushwalker, and/or a member of a volunteer, conservation, Landcare, gardening, wildlife or other 'watch' and 'care' group. Please come along and be part of this exciting opportunity to converse, converge, create and conspire! The evening will start with an open conversation between a panel of experts comprising Denis Saunders, President World Wildlife Fund, Lorraine Higgins, CEO Volunteering ACT, and Drew English, ACT and Southern NSW Regional Manager, Conservation Volunteers Australia. The event will be facilitated by Genevieve Jacobs, presenter ABC Radio Canberra and Jason Alexandra, Director Water Policy Co-ordination, Murray Darling Basin Commission. For further information please see <http://www.acera.unimelb.edu.au/news/index.html>

Report: Slippery Friends in our Backyards – About Frogs and Frog Habitats

The bonking of a Pobblebonk is not exactly what you expect to hear at the Blue Gum School Friends' Lounge. On the evening of 21 August however, a large audience including teachers and kids listened to the mating calls of *Lymnodynastes dumerillii* and its slippery comrades that thrive on Mount Majura. In her Hilltop to Backfence lecture presentation, the **ACT Frogwatch coordinator Dr. Beth Mantle** explained that the calls are the most reliable way to identify frog species in the field, as some with an adult size slightly bigger than a thumb nail are difficult to spot. There was much to learn from her talk about frogs and their environmental needs.

Frogs and tadpoles are an important link in the food chain of our ecosystems. They can decimate insect pest and algae in garden ponds. As frogs are extremely sensitive to habitat changes they can indicate the health of aquatic and terrestrial environments. During the past years frog populations have declined worldwide in an alarming rate as a result of habitat loss, pollution and the wide spread use of chemicals. In addition, chytrid fungus, an amphibian skin disease, decimates frogs by suffocating them as they rely on their skin for the uptake of oxygen.

A great way to help protecting local frog populations is to **create frog friendly habitats** in our own backyards, on school grounds and public spaces. Basically there are two types of habitat: open water required for breeding and shelter sites.

Before you begin, check carefully whether frogs are already around. They visit open water to mate and to release their eggs, however most of the time they seek shelter under rocks, logs, and in thick vegetation. If you really need to touch frogs ensure that your hands are clean and moist. Your neighbours will appreciate if you don't build a pond under their bedroom window since even tiny species can be noisy. Also check for underground pipes before digging and be aware that ponds with water deeper than 30cm may require approval from ACTPLA. Safety features such as mesh over the top are essential to protect small children. Frogs need shelter from seasonal weather extremes and from predators, in particular cats. Rocks, logs and patches of dense native grasses in your frog habitat will provide for the necessary food such as insects and other small invertebrates.

A frog pond should be planned to be 2/3 in shade preferably in a damp spot which naturally collects water, avoiding deciduous trees. Consider the pond liner carefully as some liners contain chemicals that are toxic to frogs. Ponds should have a deep water zone for the frogs to escape to and a shallow edge to enable the leg developing young frogs to climb out. Use clean washed sand or gravel to cover the pond floor and submerged logs and potted aquatic plants to provide shelter and habitat for frogs and their prey alike. Avoid weed species and duck weed or water fern as the latter species will cover the water surface and deprive tadpoles of oxygen. Ideally use rain water to fill the pond - chlorine contained in tap water requires time to escape - and avoid pesticides and fertilizers around the pond.

Frogs will find their way to your newly created habitat particularly if there are corridors of dense vegetation such as grassed areas that enable a safe passage. So don't be tempted to take them from the wild – it is illegal and carries the danger of spreading disease. You may engage neighbours in what you are doing and together you can create a chain of ponds and corridors that will help our slippery friends to survive and thrive.

Dorothy Mackenzie, Waltraud Pix