

Friends of Mount Majura (FoMM) October 2008 newsletter (available on our website [www.majura.org](http://www.majura.org))

- Talk: Signals from another world: The language of lizards – Thursday, 16 October
- Weeding bee and morning tea – Sunday, 19 October
- Early Bird Walk – Sunday, 26 October
- Wildflower Walk – Sunday, 2 November
- FoMM meeting on 2009 plans – Sunday, 9 November

Dear Friends

The 2008 National Landcare Awards will be presented on the 23 October and for those who have joined FoMM lately and might not know: Friends of Mt Majura ParkCare Group is finalist!

This year a special 'People's Choice' award will be awarded and you can cast your vote for Friends of Mt Majura - or for other groups and individuals that inspire you - by following the link to the voting pages:

<http://www.landcareheroes.com/index.php/>. FoMM is listed under the category "The power of people". To see our profile and to vote you can also use the link: <http://www.landcareheroes.com/profile/friends-of-mt-majura/16/16/>. It would be nice to see some support. Happy voting!

Phil Gibbons gave an excellent talk on tree hollows (see report below). He showed data on the distribution of tree sizes collected in April this year from the lower slope within the southern Majura paddocks. From the data Phil predicted that the current low tree regeneration will result in the decline of large hollow-bearing trees over the long term – gloomy prospects for sugar gliders, gang-gangs and fellow hollow-dependant fauna. The lack of regeneration is most likely due to the high density of herbivores (rabbits and roos) and current management to reduce fire fuel load.

I think our planting over the past 2 years is an important contribution to assist regeneration at various areas in the reserve ...which brings me to up-coming working bees at National Tree Day planting site, the old Ainslie tip. We have been planting, watering and mulching and you are now invited to help tackling weeds. The Mount Ainslie Weeders will have a woody weeds party at the bottom part this coming Sunday, 5 October from 9.00am and FoMM will have a weeding bee on Sunday, 21 October from 8.30am onwards (see details below). It would be great to see you there on either event – or at our walks & talks scheduled for the coming months!

Warm regards  
Waltraud

**Signals from another world: the language of lizards**  
**Talk by Dr. Richard Peters, The Australian National University**

**When:** Thursday 16 October 2008, 7.30pm

**Where:** Blue Gum School Friends' Lounge, Hackett shops

Do you know how lizards talk to each other? Find out how a Jacky dragon starts a 'conversation', engages in peace talks and tells other dragons about its strength.

Dr Richard Peters is a neuroethologist who has been studying the 'language of lizards' for a number of years. Find out how a scientist goes about studying lizard communication, and learn how knowledge gained from the displays of the Jacky dragon is revealing much about the evolution of movement-based signals in general, and the importance of motion vision to an animal's daily life.

The talk is part of FoMMs' Hilltop to Backfence lecture series. For more information visit [www.majura.org](http://www.majura.org)

**Weeding bee and morning tea**

**Come early for a cool start, an introduction and a cuppa.**

**When:** Sunday, 19 October from 8.30am to noon

**Where:** Old Ainslie tip site off Philip Av / Kellaway St Nature Park entrance

**Bring and wear:** sun protection, water and full body covering clothing; all equipment will be provided

On National Tree Day in July we planted 380 local trees and shrubs. In August we spread 4 truck loads of wood chip mulch around the seedlings. Beginning of September we gave the young plants a good drink. You are now invited to help tackling the weeds that grow on the site.

**Early Bird Walk**

Join ornithologist Geoff Dabb for an early morning walk to observe and hear some of the many birds that call Mount Majura home.

**When:** Sunday, 26 October, 7.30am

**Where:** Meet at Mt Majura Nature Park entrance off Antill Street opposite Canberra Carotel

**Limited places! Booking is essential. Booking and enquiries:** ph 6247 7515 or e-mail [admin@majura.org](mailto:admin@majura.org)

**Bring:** binoculars if you have them; gold coin for a list of Mt Majura bird species or download your copy from the "Species lists" page of our website.

#### **Wildflower Walk**

Explore the plants growing in the Mount Majura nature reserve on a delightful walk with local botanist Michael Doherty.

**When:** Sunday, 2 November 2008, 2.00 - 4.00 pm

**Where:** Meet at the Mackenzie / Grayson Streets Nature Park entrance in Hackett

**Bring:** Sun protection and water; gold coin for a list of Mt Majura plant species or download your copy from our website.

**Enquiries:** phone 6247 7515 or e-mail [admin@majura.org](mailto:admin@majura.org).

No booking required.

#### **FoMM meeting**

We will be discussing plans for 2009.

**When:** Sunday, 9 November 2008, 7.30pm

**Where:** Blue gum School Friends' Lounge, Hackett shops

**Bring:** Your ideas and visions

#### **Dr. Philip Gibbons: A Hollow Existence.**

Friends of Mt Majura Hilltop to Backfence talk (report; this report with graphs showing the Mt Majura data will be available on our website)

Trees not only store vast amounts of carbon thus contributing to balance our carbon emissions, mature trees in particular play an important ecological role. It's their decline in our landscapes that affect a wide range of Australia's wildlife as Dr. Philip Gibbons explained in his well attended presentation at the Friends Blue Gum School Lounge on the 18 September 2008.

Phil introduced himself in the informal manner that characterized his talk, which was well structured, entertaining, and informatively illustrated. From a job in forestry at Orbost, East Gippsland, his enquiring mind had sought a deeper understanding of trees, and via the Australian National University (ANU), CSIRO and The NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change he is now a Senior Fellow in the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the ANU.

The evolution of native forests over 14 million years has changed them from predominantly rainforest to eucalyptus as the climate became drier. A consequence has been an increase in tree hollows, which form a habitat for more than 300 vertebrate species. Locally, hollows are occupied by 20 bird species, 8 mammals, including 6 bat species and 2 reptile species.

One third of all hollow-using species in Australia are threatened by loss of tree hollows. This loss results from a culture that is inimical to the preservation of old and large trees, which are the main source of hollows - only eucalypts older than 120 years produce hollows suitable for vertebrate animals. Causes of loss in urban areas are the fear of fire, a preference for a 'tidy' landscape and the fear of falling limbs.

The long-term consequence of such attitudes will be the erosion of the population of large trees. In relatively undisturbed box-gum woodland, a size distribution of the tree population per hectare is approximately:

Diameter (cm)	5-20	21-40	41-60	above 60
Number	170	60	20	20

However, in an area on the urban fringe at the lower slopes of Mount Majura, a recent study has found that the number of small trees is almost the same (less than 20 per hectare) as the number of large trees. Thus the replacement of large hollow bearing trees over time is unlikely.

Measures to counter the trend and its consequent threat to wildlife as a loss of habitat are:

1. Protect old and dead trees
2. Prominently label them as a wildlife habitat
3. Similarly preserve fallen timber in reserves
4. Ensure ongoing recruitment of young trees
5. Place nest boxes.

Rules for successful nest boxes.

1. Waterproof
2. Minimal size entrance
3. Adequate depth (more than 20 cm)
4. Rough inside surface so young can exit
5. Empty (no nesting material)
6. Place well apart
7. Mount accessibly for observation (such as removal of pests)

At the conclusion of his talk Phil answered many questions, referring to local experiences of the audience.

Jack Palmer