

Friends of Mount Majura (FoMM) November 2008 newsletter

- FoMM meeting – this coming Sunday, 9 November
- Working Bee – Sunday, 16 November
- Talk: A Secret Life. Southern Boobook Owls – Thursday, 20 November

Dear Friends

Before everyone gets too busy with Christmas stuff let's have a meeting to plan for the coming year. 2008 was full on with talks, walks, working bees and advocacy work. What has worked well, what can be improved? What should be our focus for 2009? Everyone is welcome to bring along ideas and constructive proposals or mail them if you can't make it to the meeting.

Richard Peters' lecture on the language of Lizards was an intriguing insight in a scientist's approach on how to unravel the puzzles of life (see report below). In our last Hilltop to Backfence lecture Susan Trost and Jerry Olson will introduce us to the secret life of Boobook owls and local artist Katherine White will add a special note to this event with the display of some of her objects that were inspired by Mt Majura and Mt Ainslie.

Please contact me if you can help setting up the room and taking care of the sign-on sheets.

And of course there will be an opportunity for you to get your hands dirty at our November working bee jointly held with the Mt Ainslie Weeders on Sunday, 16 November at the old Ainslie tip site. Bring friends and family along; there will be something to do for everyone. Please find details on the working bee and the other events below.

Warm regards  
Waltraud  
P: 6247 7515

#### **FoMM meeting**

We will be discussing plans for 2009.

**When:** Sunday, 9 November 2008, 7.30 -9.00 pm

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

**Bring:** Your ideas and proposals.

**RSVP** much appreciated

#### **Working bee**

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

**When:** Sunday, 16 November, from 8.00 am (yes!) to noon

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

**Bring and wear:** gloves, sun protection, enclosed footwear and full body covering clothing; if you can, please bring a wheelbarrow and a shovel.

#### **A Secret Life. Southern Boobook Owls**

**Talk by Susan Trost and Jerry Olson, Canberra University**

**When:** Thursday 20 November 2008, 7.30pm

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

You've often noticed their distinctive falsetto call but what else do you know about the elusive Boobook?

Susan Trost and Jerry Olsen have studied Southern Boobook owls in Canberra since 1993 and have documented their breeding, hunting, and their conflicts with neighbouring Boobooks and other animals in a number of scientific papers. They will talk about this work, and the raptors you are likely to see on Mount Majura hunting or breeding alongside Southern Boobook owls.

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

#### **Art student inspired by Mt Majura/Ainslie**

Local artist, Katherine White, has been looking at issues around vulnerable species in grassy woodland, focusing on Mt Majura and Mt Ainslie. Her research led her to the FoMM website and walks and talks. As a Dickson resident who walks regularly in this area, she was concerned with the effect of drought, encroaching urban development, and the impact of recreational use of the area by dog walkers and bike riders. She was interested in particular species, and the whole ecological community.

In response to this, Katherine has produced some art works which will be displayed at the next "Hilltop to Backfence" talk on Thursday 20th November, at Blue Gum School Friend's Lounge. Included amongst these are artist's books, a sculptural installation piece and several art objects.

Katherine is currently a student at ANU School of Art, in the Printmedia workshop.

## **Report: Signals from another world. The language of lizards**

Dr. Richard Peters of the Australian National University spoke about the language of lizards on the 16<sup>th</sup> October in the second last lecture in the Hilltop to Backfence series organised by Friends of Mount Majura. He began with an over view of how animals communicate with displays of colour, sound or movement. One of the most well known is the fearsome face presented by a frill necked lizard when threatened by a predator.

Scientists study movement-based animal communication by observing them in the field, experimenting with live animals in a controlled environment, using video footage, 3D animations and sometimes robotics.

Richard then spoke about his research passion, the communication of Jacky lizards. These lizards of south-eastern Australia commonly grow up to 30 centimeters long, 2/3 of this length being the tail. Their main predators are other larger lizards and birds, especially kookaburras. Jacky lizards climb trees as well as foraging for food on the ground. The males are territorial and have a regular sequence of tail flicking patterns to assert their dominance. The submissive display is shorter, a simple rotating of an arm before scurrying away. The behaviour varies with environmental conditions. For example, on a windy day with a lot of plant movement, the tail flicking goes for longer, to ensure it is recognized.

Photos and video footage were most effective in illustrating Richard's information.

Liese Baker