

Friends of Mt Majura (FoMM) December 2009 newsletter

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Dear Friends,

Christmas is upon us and before everyone indulges in festivities and opulent meals here are some suggestions to counter-balance with physical pre-Christmas activities.

The Mt Ainslie Weeders invite for a working party at the old Ainslie tip this Sunday. Join in if you have a couple of hours. The tasks offer something for everyone such as placing newspapers, shovelling and carting woodchip mulch, cutting down and collecting weeds and distributing woody weed debris to reduce rabbit cover. There will be time for a cuppa, a chat and for admiring the growth of seedlings planted in 2008 that have bravely survived grazing as well as recent vandal attacks.

Where: Old Ainslie Tip

When: Sunday 6 December 8-11am

What to bring: Hat, long sleeves and pants, sun protection, water.

End-of-the-Year Working bee – Sunday 13 December

We will conduct our final working bee for this year on Sunday the 13 December around the drain line and National Tree Day 2009 planting site. There will be something of everything: removing of horehound, cutting and dabbing of woody weed regrowth and mulching and taking care of young plants. I'm particularly pleased that native raspberries that occurred in the drain line and that were severely threatened by honeysuckle overgrowth and overgrazing have survived. Ongoing weed and rabbit control will help this species to thrive and provide food to a number of wildlife including to berry-eating lizards.

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

When: Sunday 13 December 8.00 am -12.00 noon

What to bring and wear: sun protection, long sleeve and pants

Update rabbit mapping. Volunteers are doing a fantastic job recording rabbit warrens on Mt Majura and Mt Ainslie. We hope to complete the mapping of blocks allocated to volunteers before Christmas. Please contact me if you have capacity to fill in any gap. The task requires to walk across an identified area and to record any rabbit warren or borrow using a gps device. You will be working in pairs and you will receive training and all material and equipment needed to complete the work.

Kangaroo documentary – Opportunity for involvement. A Melbourne film company called '360 Degree Films' plans a one-hour documentary about Canberra kangaroos, centred around a study on the home range and movements of eastern grey kangaroos conducted by Research and Planning in PCL. The documentary will also include different community opinions on kangaroo management and the producers have asked to suggest people who would not mind being interviewed about kangaroos visiting their homes or street. If that is you, please let Don Fletcher know preferably by email. E: Don.Fletcher@act.gov.au P: 62072104

ParkCare celebrations. ParkCare finishes off a successful year with a BBQ celebration. If you want to come along please rsvp by 9 December to Sally McIntosh. E: Sally.McIntosh@act.gov.au or P: 62057384

It has been a successful year for FoMM and a full-on year for me. The below report “2009 at a glance” gives you an insight in some of our achievements. I wish everyone the best for a joyous Christmas and a happy New Year and I hope to see you again on the mountain in 2010.

Warm regards

Waltraud

3 December 2009

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Friends of Mt Majura (FoMM) - 2009 at a glance

It has been another busy year for the Friends waging war against weeds, feral animals and erosion in the Mount Majura nature park and taking care of over 850 seedlings planted in 2009 with the help of the wider community. Our focus this year was the control of herbaceous weeds - mainly Paterson's Curse, Mustard weed and horehound - at the National Tree Day 2009 planting area and adjacent to the newly planted shrub corridor along the drain line that runs through the southern part of the Majura paddocks.

Highlights of this year were the launch of Casuarina Trail repair and upgrade, obtaining an ACT Government grant for a public demonstration trial to exclude grazing, the successful first round of rabbit control involving community volunteers and government, and the National Tree Day 2009 community planting that attracted over 140 volunteers including local and Federal polities. Together with the *Hackett Community Association* and the *Mt Ainslie Weeders* we organised a first bush clean-up on *Clean-Up Australia Day* in March 2009.

We've established close links with our neighbouring parkCare groups, the *Mt Ainslie Weeders* and the *Watson Woodland Working Group*. We share tools, knowledge and experience and work jointly and successfully on projects such as the rehabilitation of the Ainslie tip, removal of woody weeds and the mapping of rabbit warrens.

FoMM wrote a submission to the *ACT Planning Authority* not to proceed with plans to redevelop the *Australian Heritage Village*, a proposal which includes building on adjacent bush at the north-west slope of Mt Majura. We are afraid that the planned dense residential development will not only destroy some endangered Yellow box Red gum grassy woodland but damage remaining habitat, leading to a decline in woodland birds and other fauna living and visiting the north-west slopes of Mt Majura.

After years of campaigning, FoMM recently received a letter from the Planning Authority informing us that the Territory Plan will be varied to include parts of Majura paddocks into the nature reserve. The site of concern is the most southeast paddock located partly on steep land with little grass cover and significant habitat trees with nesting hollows for Gang-gang cockatoos and other native fauna.

Friends of Mt Majura were thrilled by the decision of the *National Capital Authority* at the end of October to remove *Monash Drive* from the *National Capital Plan*. If built, the motorway would destroy the endangered grassy woodlands of Mt Majura and Mt Ainslie behind Hackett, Ainslie and Campbell. Following heavy lobbying during the Downer, Watson and Hackett Neighbourhood Planning process in 2003/04, the ACT Labor Government decided to scrap plans to build the road. However, the route remained on the *National Capital Plan*. Since then, community groups including FoMM continued to lobby. After last year's election the ACT Labor Party and the Greens agreed to lobby the Federal Government, which achieved the breakthrough. The removal of Monash Drive from the *National Capital Plan* will provide security for our future projects to enhance the biodiversity of the western foot slopes of the mountains.

The results of years of hard work and dedication are clearly evident every time we walk through the woodlands of the reserve. The accomplishments were only possible because of the contributions of many people and organisations. First of all I'd like to thank our volunteers for all their hard work and input to protect the values of Mt Majura nature reserve. We are grateful to staff of *Parks, Conservation and Land* particularly to ranger Murray Aston for their continuing help. We greatly appreciate the considerable contribution and assistance from the *North Canberra Community Council*, the *Molonglo Catchment Group* and from *Greening Australia*. Thank you to the *Hackett Neighbourhood Watch* and the *Hackett Community Association* for support and to the students, parents and teachers of the *Majura Primary School*, the *Blue Gum Community School* and the *Marist College* for lending a hand. Cadets of *ADFA* deserve a big thank you for digging hundreds of planting holes and for the removal of thickets of woody weeds that ended up in wood chip mulch for newly planted seedlings.

Finally, I'd like to thank the *ACT Government* for the funds to repair the popular Casuarina Trail and the control of rabbit populations in the Mt Majura, Mt Ainslie and Watson Woodland reserves. The difference pre- and post control is remarkable. As I write, about thirty committed volunteers are mapping rabbit warrens across the reserves as part of a follow-up program. We look forward to the Government showing the commitment to support an ongoing rabbit control program.

Waltraud Pix
FoMM coordinator
3 December 2009