



FRIENDS OF MOUNT PAINTER NEWS

APRIL 2018

For more information about anything in this newsletter:
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APRIL WORK PARTY

- Date:** Sunday, 15 April
- When:** 9am – 12 noon
- Location:** On the western slopes
- To reach the location:** Park on the city-bound side of William Hovell Drive, two light poles beyond the large, overhead, electronic sign, 1km from the intersection with Coulter Drive
- Tasks:** Cutting out woody weeds
- Wear:** Sturdy footwear and clothes to protect you from the sun and prickly weeds
- Bring:** Please bring some drinking water, a mug and some food to share for morning tea. Other drinks will be provided.

All tools provided. No experience needed.

Our monthly work parties are on the third Sunday of each month.

OTHER UPCOMING MOUNT PAINTER EVENTS

- Thursday, 18 April: Telstra volunteers work on Mount Painter
- Sunday, 6 May: a bird walk with Greening Australia's bird expert, Nicki Taws, see below
- Sunday, 20 May, 9am – 12 noon: Friends of Mount Painter's monthly work party planting daisies and scramblers on the north-east slop of the hill

BIRD WALK WITH NICKI TAWS

8 am on Sunday, 6 May

Meet at the notice board just inside the entrance to Mount Painter Nature Reserve between 20 and 22 Booth Crescent Cook.

Last autumn we saw 28 species, including two rare species, the Scarlet Robin and Speckled Warbler. How many will we see this year?

BURN IN THE WILDFLOWER TRIANGLE



On 14 March, the Parks and Conservation Service put a hazard reduction burn through the lower part of the Wildflower Triangle, south of the bike path. In the days before the burn, the area was prepared so that ecologically significant items or places were protected from the flames. For example, bark, sticks and dead leaves were raked away from the bases of certain trees so they did not burn. And at Friends of Mount Painter's request, the area round the dam was left untouched. As part of the Frogwatch project, we have records from the dam of five species of frogs and we did not want the tussocky vegetation surrounding the dam burnt and the frogs' homes destroyed and possibly their lives taken as well.



The burn was a cool one, and the burnt, tussocky grasses had already resprouted several centimetres of green shoots two weeks later. We look forward to seeing what small plants grow in the spaces that the fire has opened up between the burnt tussocks. We hope there will be a variety of natives species of grass and forbs, but expect more weedy plants as well. We may need to plant some natives to supplement what comes up from seed, tubers and bulbs in the soil.

The manager of the burn at left walks over to the two rangers lighting the dead grass while two others man the tanker.

In the next few weeks, Friends of Mount Painter plan to spray with herbicide the larger introduced grass species as they resprout. We hope to switch the balance of native to introduced species in favour of the natives. The grassland has numerous *Poa* tussocks and stands of Kangaroo Grass that we would like to see replacing the *Phalaris*, *Fescue* and *Paspalum*.



Burning the woodland and grassland. Below left, we see where the young tree in a tree guard has been protected from the burn by prior raking around it to leave a ring of dirt.

LITTLE CREATURES ON THE MOVE

By Cath Busby

Friends of Mount Painter observing the recent prescribed burn in the Wildflower Triangle became aware of an unusual level of activity in the nearby undergrowth. Insects and spiders of all shapes and sizes were on the move. Spiders ranged from huge huntsmen to tiny jumping spiders, and among the insects were a metallic bronze beetle (right below) and a gum-leaf grasshopper (left below). Also seen were several species of crickets and cockroaches, some praying mantises, an assassin bug and various other beetles.

We assume these were responding to the smoke and trying to seek shelter. We often forget the many small creatures that make their homes in our reserve.



BATHURST BURR

Bathurst Burr is a particularly nasty weed with its long, yellow spines and burrs that are spread readily by attaching to clothing and animals' fur. We find it from time to time in late summer on the reserve. There are usually only small numbers but this year there have been many more plants, and there is a large infestation in a paddock next to the reserve. The rangers are liaising with the landholder to ensure the plants will be removed before burrs are brought on to the reserve again.



Interestingly, Bathurst Burr was the first species to be declared a noxious weed in New South Wales, probably because it is a serious contaminant in sheeps' wool. It was recognised as noxious as long ago as 1856. It is said to have been brought into the country in 1830, in the tail hair of horses imported from Chile. (Image: <http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/samurraydarlingbasin/publications/pest-plant-bathurst-burr>).

Please let us know if you find any and where they are so we can dig them out promptly.

OTHER NEWS

Kangaroo count. On 15 March, seven Friends of Mount Painter helped the Government's Conservation Research group to count the kangaroos living on the reserve and in the surrounding paddocks. From two sweep counts, the average number counted was 319, a few more than at this time last year.

Volunteers from KPMG. Eight volunteers from KPMG recently spent a day on the reserve with some Friends of Mount Painter, Ranger Phil Selmes, and Fiona Spier from Ginninderra Catchment Group. They helped to take out several species of plants laden with berries or burrs, removed guards no longer needed and secured those still doing a good job of protecting young trees. Thanks, guys, and thanks also to Fiona for arranging the visit through Landcare Australia. And courtesy of Landcare Australia, Wally Bell, Ngunawal elder, joined us while we ate our lunch to speak to us about Aboriginal culture and the canoe scar tree close to where we were sitting.



Heading for the summit on Easter Sunday

Compiled by Sarah Hnatiuk