



## FRIENDS OF MOUNT PAINTER NEWS

MARCH 2013

### MARCH'S WORK PARTY

#### WOODY WEEDING

**When:** 8.30am – 12 noon, Sunday, 17 March

**Where:** Eastern slopes of Mount Painter. Enter the reserve at the Booth Crescent entrance between houses nos 20 and 22. Follow the track half left from the noticeboard area, through a gate leading to the track running round the base of the hill.

**The tasks:** Cutting woody weeds, especially the many small hawthorns that have flourished with the wetter weather of recent years.

**Wear:** Hat, long pants, long-sleeved shirt, and sturdy footwear.

**Bring:** Drinking water, a mug and some food to share for morning tea. Friends of Mount Painter will provide tea, coffee and juice. All equipment will be provided.

**April's work party will be held on Sunday, 21 April from 9.00am – 12.30pm in Stromlo Gully and will concentrate on erosion control.** We will be placing logs in and near the gully to deter the kangaroos from crossing where the gully banks are steep, and from camping beneath the large yellow box where they disturb the ground and contribute to soil erosion.

Park on the city-bound side of William Hovell Drive, 800m from the intersection with Coulter Drive where the metal guard rail ends. Follow the red markers on to the reserve and turn left along the track between the two fences and through a metal gate. Stromlo Gully is the first gully you come to.

**Future work parties** will be held on the third Sunday of each month: 19 May, 16 June, 21 July, 18 August, 15 September, 20 October, 17 November and 15 December.

### HOW MANY KANGAROOS LIVE IN THE MOUNT PAINTER PRECINCT?

On Sunday, 24 February, eight members of Friends of Mount Painter joined other volunteers and staff from the Parks and Conservation Service and the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, Conservation Research, to count kangaroos on Mount Painter Nature Reserve and the surrounding paddocks bounded by the suburb of Cook, Bindubi Street, and William Hovell and Coulter Drives. We made two counts with 17-18 counters who spread out along the western boundary of the reserve. We started by counting the kangaroos in the paddocks to the west of us and then walked slowly across the reserve, each person counting the kangaroos that passed between them and person on their left. We stopped at the eastern boundary of the reserve as we did not

want to drive kangaroos in front of us on to Bindubi Street, and some of the counters went round to Bindubi Street and pushed the kangaroos in the horse paddocks towards the remaining counters on the reserve's eastern boundary so that they too were counted. We were lucky with the weather which was mostly cloudy and not too hot. Very heavy rain fell just as we finished each of the counts but did not interrupt the counts themselves.



Five people spread out along the reserve's western boundary for the sweep count. Photo by Don Fletcher.

**THERE WERE 432 KANGAROOS IN THE MOUNT PAINTER PRECINCT (the mean of 426 counted in the morning and 438 in the afternoon).**

This is a smaller number than was expected on the basis of the 2012 sweep count (492) and the number subsequently culled that year (18). The ecologist who led the count, Dr Don Fletcher, says this is a bit of a puzzle: 'I think this is the first urban reserve where a kangaroo population decline has been recorded, other than from culling. Yet the reserve still has abundant kangaroo food.' He suggests possible reasons for the drop in numbers:

- some of the kangaroos may have left the reserve,
- they may have been killed crossing roads,
- they may have been killed or hurt by foxes, which are favoured by long grass such as exists on the reserve at present – we saw several during the count,
- dogs may also have affected them,
- there may be previously unrecognised diseases or parasites affecting the animals, or
- it is an artefact of the smaller population than is usually studied.

**432 KANGAROOS AMOUNT TO ABOUT 2 KANGAROOS PER HECTARE AVERAGED ACROSS THE RESERVE AND SURROUNDING PADDOCKS. According to Don Fletcher, reserve managers tend to aim for about half to a quarter of this figure and rural managers for a quarter to a twentieth.**

## HOW WELL HAD THE UNDERSTOREY PLANTS ALONG THE SUMMIT PATH SURVIVED ONE YEAR AFTER PLANTING?

During the winter of 2011, volunteers from the Cook and Aranda communities planted more than 600 tubestock in clumps along the Summit Path. Over the summer of 2011-12, we watered and weeded the plants, and we removed the guards from the daisies and hardenbergies that grew too large for their guards. The two lily species still have their guards around them; we will remove them this coming winter and see how the reserve's grazers (rabbits and kangaroos) react to them.

A year after planting, we recorded the number of each species still alive in seven randomly selected clumps. We found that **66 per cent were still alive, and the best survivors were the hardenbergies (74%) and the poorest the bulbine lilies (55%).**

## HOW POPULAR IS MOUNT PAINTER AS A PLACE TO VISIT?

Twelve hundred people were recently interviewed by telephone about which parts of Canberra Nature Park they had visited in the previous year. **Out of nearly 3.5 million visits to Canberra Nature Park reserves, three per cent were to Mount Painter.** The most visited reserves were Mount Ainslie (40%), Mount Majura and Black Mountain (both 22%), Red Hill (21%), and Jerrabomberra Wetland (17%). Of the reserves near Mount Painter, eight per cent of visits were to The Pinnacle and five to Aranda Bushland.

## NEWS FROM ELSEWHERE

**Weed Swap:** take an environmental weed from your garden to Parkwood or Mugga Lane Green Waste Recycling sites between 8am and 5pm on 6-7 April, and exchange it for free for a native one grown by the local Australian Native Plant Society.

**Australian Native Plant Society Autumn Sale:** 8.30am – 2pm or until sold out on Saturday, 16 March in the southern car park at the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

**Earth Hour 2013, 8.30pm, Saturday 23 March:** visit [www.earthhour.org.au](http://www.earthhour.org.au) to see what events are being planned around the country.

**Shaping a Nation: A Geology of Australia:** De Richard Blewett from Geoscience Australia will present a public lecture at 6-7pm on 10 April at CSIRO Discovery Centre, North Science Road, Acton. He will take you on a journey through Australia's long and complex geological evolution and how this geological legacy has shaped the Australian nation. More information: [www.csiro.au/en/Portals/Education/Programs/Discovery-Centre/Whats-on/Shaping-a-nation.aspx](http://www.csiro.au/en/Portals/Education/Programs/Discovery-Centre/Whats-on/Shaping-a-nation.aspx)

**Radio Landcare:** For an interesting update on local landcare listen to Radio Landcare: **2XX FM 98.3** Tuesdays 9 - 10am and **QBN FM 96.7** Sundays 8 - 9am

**For more information about anything in this newsletter, contact Sarah Hnatiuk on 0424 263 565 or at [sarahhnatiuk@yahoo.com.au](mailto:sarahhnatiuk@yahoo.com.au).**

