



FRIENDS OF MOUNT PAINTER NEWS

OCTOBER 2019

For more information about anything in this newsletter: contact friends.of.mount.painter@gmail.com or Sarah Hnatiuk on 0424 263 565

OCTOBER WORK PARTY

- Date:** Sunday, 20 October
- When:** 9.00am – 12 noon
- Location:** Western Ridge
- To reach the location:** Enter the reserve between 20 and 22 Booth Crescent, Cook, and turn right uphill to the water tanks. Go along the track on the lower side of the tanks and through the gate. Follow red markers to where we are working
- Tasks:** Weeding in an area of Yellow Box-Red Gum woodland - one of Australia's endangered ecosystems
- Wear:** Sturdy footwear and clothes to suit the weather
- Bring:** Please bring some drinking water, a mug and some food to share for morning tea. Other drinks will be provided.

Events for the rest of the year

- A work party on Sunday, 17 November
- **A butterfly walk with Suzi Bond, author of *Field Guide to the Butterflies of the Australian Capital Territory*, on Sunday, 1 December**
- A work party on Sunday, 15 December

Planted in May this year in the Wildflower Triangle, flowering in October, despite the drought!



Variable billy buttons (*Craspedia variabilis*) at left and Hoary sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans*) at right



WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING OVER THE LAST THREE MONTHS

The last few months have seen Friends of Mount Painter doing some of our winter tasks, starting with **the annual check on tree guards round recent plantings**. We have removed guards from plants that have died or are robust enough to withstand hurtling kangaroos, and we have restored and more securely anchored guards for the plants that still need them. We have also **chipped out African Lovegrass plants** along the area behind the houses which connects the Wildflower Triangle to Mount Painter. Being a warm season grass, the plants still had beige leaves, which stood out from the surrounding green of the cooler season grasses, and made them easy targets for chipping out.



We did the last of our **planting** for this year by adding a few Early Wattles (*Acacia genistifolia*), sourced from Greening Australia, to a clump of shrubs and trees beside the summit path. It was hard digging and a good idea to have a crowbar to help. The seedlings join one lone Early Wattle bush that puts on a splendid display each winter. We hope they will eventually add to that display.



Connecting with the wider community was high on the agenda in September when a couple of Friends of Mount Painter talked about the reserve and helped identify plants during **a visit to the reserve by University of Canberra geology students**. They were studying the relationship of geology to vegetation and collected data along a transect from the volcanic rock of Mount Painter, across the Deakin Fault in the Wildflower Triangle, and on to the sedimentary rock of Aranda Bushland.

We also participated in **a display at Jamison Plaza** with other local environmental groups, including our neighbours from Aranda Bushland, The Pinnacle and Black Mountain. We shared information about our reserves and the work we do to improve their condition. Several people were interested enough to leave their email addresses with us, so we look forward to seeing them on Mount Painter.



Lastly, we held **our annual, joint work party with Friends of Aranda Bushland**, this year on our patch. We were very pleased to have extra hands to help weed on the northern slopes of the hill and along the summit path. Morning tea was an opportunity to enjoy the views and excellent food, catch up with old friends and make new ones.



Early Wattle (*Acacia genistifolia*) flowering in June

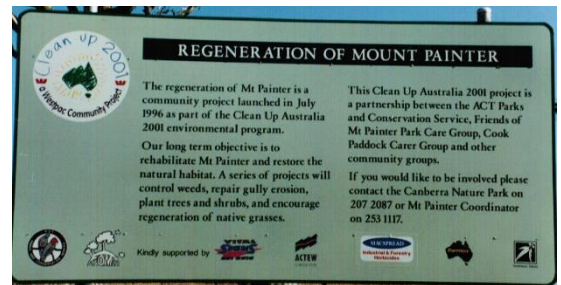


FRIENDS OF MOUNT PAINTER TURNS 30 YEARS OLD

When Parkcare was launched in 1989 by the Parks Service, Friends of Mount Painter (FOMP) was one of the first 'Friends of ...' groups to be formed. Three people, including Philip Bell who went on to become FOMP's first convenor, were concerned about the condition of the bush near their homes and spearheaded the group. At that stage, most of Mount Painter was still being grazed by sheep, cattle and, even at times, goats. It was not protected as a one of Canberra Nature Reserves until 1993 and the grazing, maintained as a fire control measure, did not cease until 1998. FOMP was very active during the early to mid nineties in agitating for the end to grazing. They were at last able to hold an 'End to Grazing Party'.



Left, the 1995 open day between the houses on Mackellar Street and the horse paddocks, with talks and walks, attended by 450 people and five politicians



Above, sign recording the launch of Mount Painter's regeneration project in 2001 as part of Clean Up Australia's environmental program

Through the 1990s and early 2000s FOMP was very active in planting, as in the 24-hour plantathon with 'Dr Earth and Ecoman' in 1996, and weeding that included slashing thistles on the hill and removing dense hawthorn thickets from the Wildflower Triangle. They collaborated with government and horse riders to determine the route of the horse trail in 1998, and in 1999 received a grant to employ a consultant to produce a revegetation plan for the hill that guided subsequent plantings. In 2002 Valerie Taylor, FOMP's second convenor, was recognised in the ACT Volunteer of the Year awards.

Many of the long-standing members of FOMP retired at the end of 2003 and for the next few years we were a small group, led by Vernon Bailey, 2001's ACT Environment of the Year. Since that time, we have gradually grown again and continue to plant, weed, control erosion and monitor plantings and weeds. More recently we have added to our activities the counting of kangaroos and electronic mapping of weeds and rabbit burrows. We received grants from Landcare Australia in 2008 and 2013, which purchased mesh and pickets to construct robust tree guards, coir logs for erosion control, and interpretive signs along the summit path. A Natural Heritage Trust grant in 2009 funded an enclosure round a few Yellow Box to improve the likelihood of regeneration.

We celebrated our 25th birthday in 2014 in style with a large birthday cake and Shane Rattenbury, then Minister for the Environment, launching our new signs. This year's celebration will be more modest and work-oriented, with a review of the outcomes from the 2000 revegetation plan. We are conducting the review with the local rangers and David Hogg, who produced the original plan.



DRAFT CANBERRA NATURE PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

The ACT Government has released its latest draft Canberra Nature Park management plan for consultation. This plan will replace the 1999 one and guide the management of Canberra's 37 nature reserves for the next decade. It is a lengthy document, the first part of which covers the policies, objectives and actions relating to every aspect of reserves and their use: plants and animals, geology and water, through Aboriginal and European heritage, to community use and involvement and more. The second half of the plan provides information about individual reserves and the measures to be taken to improve their condition. The page for Mount Painter Nature Reserve is on page 5 of this newsletter, along with a map of the reserve on page 6 which shows the location of areas of significant native vegetation.

The plan is available via <https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au/act-parks/canberra-nature-park>. The community is invited to provide feedback on the plan to the planners, and Friends of Mount Painter is likely to make a submission on behalf of the group. If you have any comments that you would like to pass on via us, please send them to friends.of.mount.painter@gmail.com.

ACTIVITY ON OUR WESTERN FLANK

There's recently been a lot of planting of eucalypts, acacias and shrubs in brilliant pink guards on the rocky land on the other side of Wm Hovell Drive. It's nice to think of it as being an extension to the reserve, via the underpass that is accessible from the end of metal guard rail 800 metres from the intersection of Coulter and William Hovell Drive.



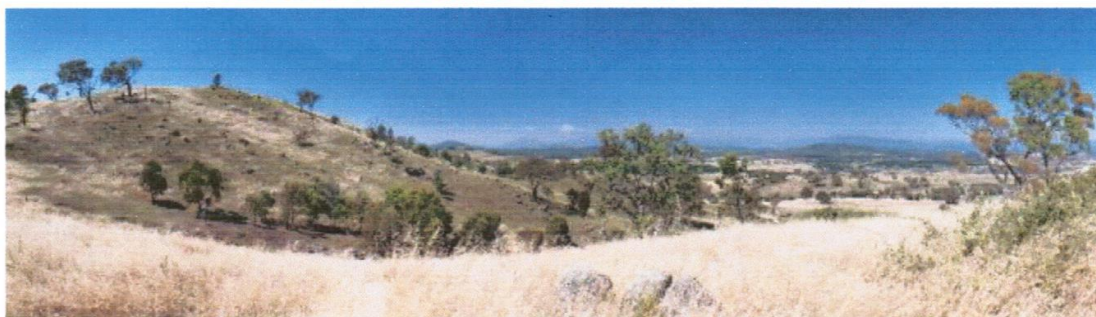
You can see the pink tinge of the tree guards from the summit path

Spring flowers in September and October



Bitter pea (*Daviesia mimosoides*) in the dip on the summit path

MOUNT PAINTER NATURE RESERVE



Andrew Tatnell

ESTABLISHMENT: Mount Painter Nature Reserve (93 hectares) was established in 1993 and is a Designated Area under the National Capital Plan. The Conservator has assigned the reserve to IUCN protected area management category IV: habitat/species management area.

CONNECTIVITY: The reserve is a key component in an extensive landscape of remnant woodland vegetation extending from Black Mountain and O'Connor Ridge in the east to the Molonglo and Murrumbidgee rivers in the west.

NATURAL VALUES: Mount Painter protects:

- a small area of nationally critically endangered Yellow Box–Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland
- habitat of several plants that are rare in the ACT
- the 'Wildflower Triangle' (approximately 10 hectares) behind the suburb of Cook, which has high habitat value for woodland birds and a high diversity of plants, including several rare species.

CULTURAL VALUES: The ACT Heritage Register lists one Aboriginal heritage site within the reserve. The remnant of a hut belonging to early settler Roderick McDonald is located close to the reserve boundary in the adjacent horse paddock.

RECREATION: The Bicentennial National Trail passes along the northern edge of the reserve and through the Wildflower Triangle in the eastern section. Horse riding is permitted on this trail and the identified equestrian trail on the eastern perimeter of the main section of the reserve. Dogs are permitted on leash.

PARKCARE: Friends of Mount Painter has been active since 1989, with regular activities that include weed and erosion control, planting trees and shrubs, mapping rabbit burrows and counting the kangaroo population.

MANAGEMENT: Mount Painter has been grazed since pastoral settlement in the 1830s and is substantially cleared of native trees and understorey vegetation. Heavy grazing pressure has resulted in erosion of the shallow, infertile soils on the steeper slopes and in gullies.

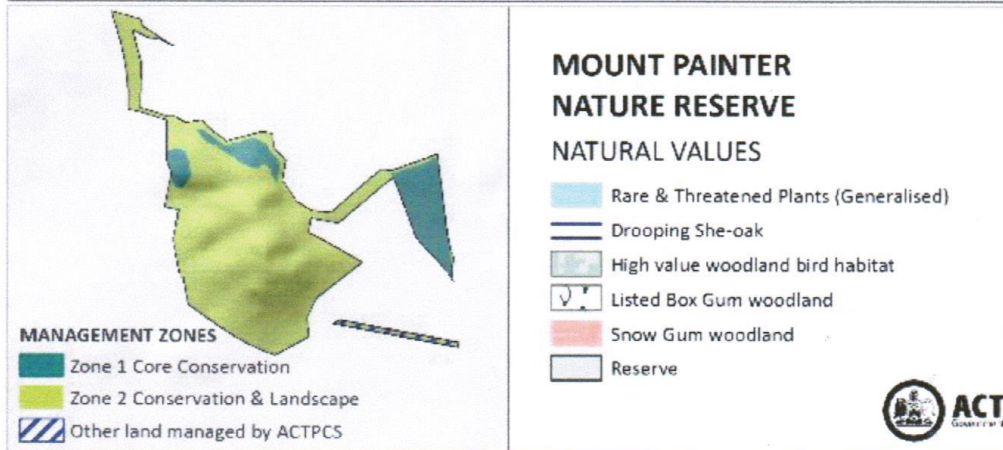
Mount Painter has been subject to much recent weed control, and the dominant ground cover species are moving from thistle and exotic annual grasses to native grasses.

There have been several attempts to restore the native tree and shrub layer, with varying degrees of success, and erosion control works have also been undertaken.

The long-term management aim is to conserve the Wildflower Triangle and rehabilitate the woodland and open-forest vegetation to strengthen its value as habitat, and as part of a significant wildlife movement corridor.

KEY ACTIONS: In addition to actions identified in Part 1 of this plan, reserve management will aim to:

- protect and improve the Wildflower Triangle and existing box—gum woodland
- maintain and supplement revegetation plantings to improve landscape connectivity
- continue to undertake measures to promote ground cover
- continue to support the Friends of Mount Painter ParkCare.



Note: For information on areas identified as other land managed by ACTPCS refer to s. 1.10

Compiled by Sarah Hnatiuk
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