



FRIENDS OF MOUNT PAINTER NEWS JANUARY 2022

This is the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, 2021-2030: to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems on every continent and in every ocean.

THE EAGLE AND THE KESTREL



To the Ngunnawal, the **Wedge-tailed Eagles**, that we see riding the thermals above Mount Painter or perching on dead trees, are watching over all that is happening below. The eagle is seen by different Aboriginal groups as a protector that ensures all are kept safe.



Ranger Kel Tshering from Bhutan, who manages the Mount Painter Nature Reserve at present, brings with him from his homeland the custom of there being a guardian for each major feature of the landscape. For him, Mount Painter's guardian is the **Nankeen or Australian Kestrel**, chosen in his mind as the hill's guardian because he sees it whenever he visits. It is certainly one of the most frequently seen bird species from the upper, open slopes of the hill.



The photos are taken from the Canberra Ornithologists Group website, <http://canberrabirds.org.au>. With the exception of the perching Nankeen Kestrel photographed by Julian Robinson, the photos were taken by David Cook.

SINCE THE LIFTING OF LOCKDOWN: BACK IN ACTION ON THE RESERVE – WHEN IT HASN'T BEEN RAINING

Butterfly and bird walks. On 12 December, Suzi Bond, author of the *Field Guide to the Butterflies of the Australian Capital Territory*, led a walk to the summit of Mount Painter to show us what butterflies were flying and tell us about their habits, life cycles and the habitats they frequent. We saw lots of Cabbage Whites and Common Browns, several Common Grass-blues, a few Meadow Argus, and one or two Dainty Swallowtails, Chequered Coppers and Australian Painted Ladies.

The weather was perfect for butterflies, a marked contrast to the conditions on a day in March 2021 when we first tried to hold the walk. That walk was cancelled because it was too cold for butterflies to be flying! And after two failed attempts to hold a bird walk in November, cancelled because of rain, we were very pleased that at least the butterfly walk was able to go ahead. Nicki Taws, who was to have led the bird walk, has offered us an autumn walk in place of the cancelled ones.



Suzi Bond, in the red shirt, talking about butterflies at the start of the walk.

End-of-year celebration



In early December, some of the hard-working volunteers gathered on the Western Ridge for our usual end-of-year celebration. We enjoyed a peaceful, modestly coloured sunset – no dramatic lightning strikes over the Brindabellas this time.

On-ground work. With all the rain this growing season, there has been an explosion of plant growth that includes a great profusion of native flowering and seeding, which we are enjoying, and flourishing weed populations with which we are struggling. Controlling the weeds has been hampered by the lockdown that curtailed spraying and by rain that has interfered with some of our weeding sessions. Notwithstanding this, thanks to a very dedicated effort by Tony Ashton, many of the woody weeds throughout the reserve, especially Sweet Briar, were sprayed during the spring. We are now concentrating our weeding in the Wildflower Triangle and on the northern slopes of Mount Painter.

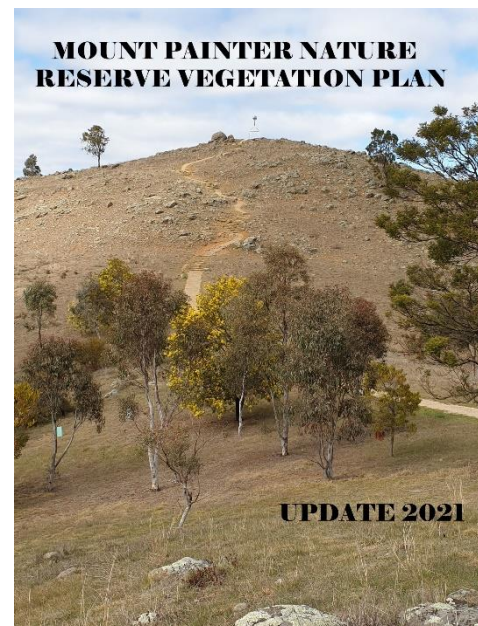
We thank the unknown person who ranged widely over the hill slopes, tying marker tape on the woody weeds which made them easier for Tony to spot as he sprayed. Mapping weeds on the Parks and Conservation Service's (PCS) Field Maps app is another way of recording where control work is needed. We have used the app to register where blackberries (the pink splotches) are and help the spraying contractor to find them.



A PLAN FOR PLANTING ON MOUNT PAINTER.

Each year, Friends of Mount Painter (FOMP) identifies where, when and what we would like to plant on the hill during that year. We have been guided in this by the *Mount Painter Vegetation Plan* that was prepared by David Hogg in 2000 for FOMP and PCS. At that stage, the southern two-thirds of the hill was very devoid of trees and shrubs. It was only four years after the rural lease was withdrawn from that section of the hill and it was added to the small, existing reserve above the houses. After 20 years and the addition of many plants to the hill, we felt that we needed an updated plan to help us decide on further plantings to suggest to PCS for approval each year. With the help of David Hogg and ecologist, Rainer Rehwinkel, we have produced a new plan and presented it to PCS as an indication of how we would like to see the hill develop.

The aim of our plan is to eventually produce a landscape in which there is an open woodland of well-spaced mature eucalypts, groups of shrubs for shelter and refuge to small animals and plants, and open glades for ground-feeding birds. That means planting some more trees, especially on the southern slopes, more tall shrubs, and increasing the number and diversity of low shrubs and ground cover species.



FRIENDS OF MOUNT PAINTER'S 2022 CALENDAR

Our monthly work parties are held on the third Sunday morning of every month. The dates for 2022 are on Sundays: 16 January, 20 February, 20 March, 10 April, 15 May, 19 June, 17 July, 21 August, 18 September, 16 October, 20 November, and 18 December.

We hold the occasional community event, the first of which in 2022 will be an autumn bird walk. And for those who are unable to come to the monthly work parties and/or are extra keen Landcarers, we also work one morning during the week.

You can keep up to date with details of our events and work parties through Facebook.

January's work party is on Sunday, 16 January, 8-11am. More details on Facebook.

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