



FRIENDS OF MOUNT PAINTER NEWS

JANUARY 2023

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.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!

We look forward to a new year on Mount Painter with varying degrees of optimism for the future. On the up side, revegetating the hill is going well; on the down side, there are so many weeds, especially this season's explosion of St John's Wort. Our monthly work parties when we will deal with these and other issues will be held on the third Sunday of each month: 19 February, 19 March, 16 April, 21 May, 18 June, 16 July, 20 August, 17 September, 15 October, 19 November, and 17 December. For more information, email friends.of.mount.painter@gmail.com.

GEOLOGY WALK

By John Busby

The highlight of the last few months was a geology walk on Sunday 30 October. It was led by Associate Professor Duanne White from the University of Canberra for some 30 enthusiastic participants.

Dr White commenced by outlining the history and characteristics of the geological features underlying Mount Painter Nature Reserve and the local area. The oldest rocks on the present Australian continent are found in the west. The continent grew by accreting new landmass in the east and southeast. This was a complex process of folding, erosion and



marine deposition, followed by further uplifting and folding. Interspersed with this was the intrusion of magma from deep in the earth, sometimes explosively, resulting in the deposition of volcanic rock of various types in eastern Australian landforms. Dr White noted that the Canberra region was a good example of the resulting complexity. The site where the group was standing was almost on top of a boundary between two major rock types. To the east, the Adaminaby Group of sandstones and shale, locally manifest as the Pitman Formation, dating to the Ordovician Era (485–442 Millions of years ago (Ma)). To the west, the Mt Painter Volcanics, a type technically classified as dacitic ignimbrite, dating to the Early Silurian (430 ± 2.2 Ma). The boundary between these, the Deakin Fault, lay almost under our feet, just east of the bike path running between Cook and Wybalena Grove and crossing under Bindubi Street.

Somewhat surprisingly, the soils derived from these very different rock types are remarkably similar in general characteristics, though the volcanic soil is higher in potassium and the sandstones higher

in sodium. The vegetation on the two types is also different, partly due to the geology and partly to human use. The volcanic soils proved better for grazing and were preferentially cleared, both in prehistoric and historic times.

The group then climbed to the top of Mount Painter, where we not only admired the panoramic view but also learned about the geomorphology of the wider Canberra region. Dr White outlined the block faulting that had led to the formation of the generally north–south alignment of the various mountain ranges, including the Brindabella Range. This process continues today, and we learned that Canberra is one of the most seismically-active regions in the country. Earthquakes have been frequent in the past and more can be expected in future!

To cap off an excellent presentation, the weather relented from its usual pattern and put on a glorious morning. A great time was had by all!



WHAT FRIENDS OF MOUNT PAINTER HAVE BEEN DOING



Weeding. As the weather has warmed up, weeds have flourished. We can't hope to get to all the areas on which we have concentrated in the past and so have been limiting ourselves to keeping the best patches of native vegetation as weed-free as possible. Here you see us at work on a rocky outcrop in the north-west corner of the reserve.



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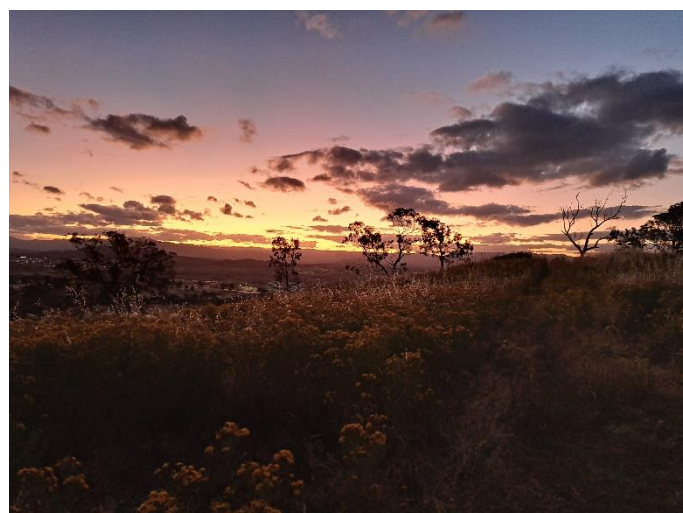
St John's Wort has been a particular focus for our weeding. With a dozen volunteers at each of our last two work parties, we have been able to pull out many plants. Removing them from the upper part of the Wildflower Triangle has been very satisfying. We are also keeping a close watch on the large variety of African Lovegrass along one of the tracks to the water tanks, as well as removing large thistle species.



A two metre tall Variegated Thistle demolished!

Helping to plan the management of the reserve. The Parks and Conservation Service has started the process of drawing up management plans for each of Canberra Nature Park (CNP) reserves. The plans will provide guidance on how the each reserve should be managed by PCS staff and Parkcarers. They will be more detailed than the Canberra Nature Park Reserve Management Plan which deals with all the CNP reserves. Mount Painter Nature Reserve is one of the first reserves to get a plan. FOMP has commented on a first draft and look forward to seeing the final version.

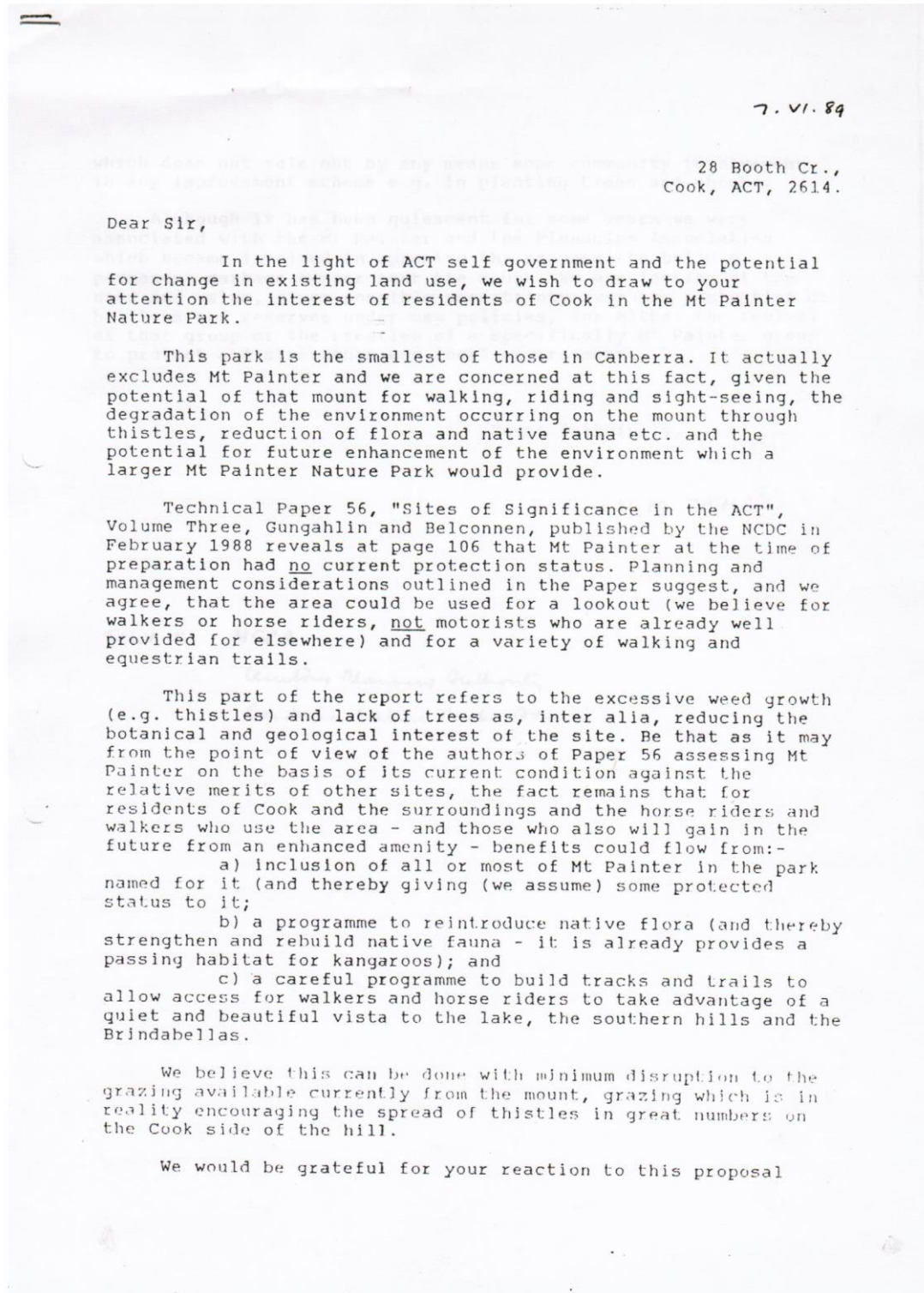
Celebrating a year of hard work in 2022. On 13 December, we met on the Western Ridge near the water tanks at sunset to share a drink and nibbles as we watched the sun go down.



And finding (unusually): an echidna in the Wildflower Triangle, a Cunningham's Skink beside the ridgeline path to the summit and, possibly, a Murnong (*Microseris walteri*) on the hill. Or is the latter a Hairy Hawkbit, a weed (*Leontodon saxatilis*) – the experts are not quite sure.

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

FOMP is very short of records of the early years of its existence so it was very good to acquire some from Kerry Keneally, who had kept papers from the time when he was convenor of the group from 1995 to 1999. One of FOMP's major activities in those years was lobbying for the whole of the hill to be added to the existing small reserve next to the suburb. The 1989 letter below argues the case.



which does not rule out by any means some community involvement in any improvement scheme e.g. in planting trees and shrubs.

Although it has been quiescent for some years we were associated with the Mt Painter and the Pinnacles Association which became involved in opposing the proposal to build a permanent garbage hopper near the mount. We are looking at the need and value, given possible uncertainty over the protection of hilltops and reserves under new policies, for either the revival of that group or the creation of a specifically Mt Painter group to protect and strengthen our local environment.

Yours faithfully,

J. C. & V. M. TAYLOR.

Sent to NCPA

Territory Planning Authority

Canberra Nature Parks Admin.

A detailed 13-page submission was also prepared. It described the geology, flora and fauna of the existing reserve as well as the part of the hill that was still being grazed by domestic stock, including those voracious eaters, goats. Interestingly, there is no mention of St John's Wort among the weeds listed and minimal mention of Paterson's Curse. These are now significant problems on the reserve.



Paterson's Curse near the summit, October 2023



St John's Wort covering much of the eastern slope, December, 2023

Compiled by Sarah Hnatiuk

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