



FRIENDS OF MOUNT PAINTER NEWS OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 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.**

A BUSY FEW MONTHS

Over the last three months, Friends of Mount Painter have planted, watered, and weeded, and volunteers from Red Hat and the Ranger Assist Program helped us with some of the watering. We held a grass walk, a plant walk and a bird walk, and contributed to a display by local environmental groups at Jamison Plaza. Most recently, two of us gave a presentation to students in the Years One and Two at Macquarie Primary School.

August

We helped Ranger Julian Lolicato with erosion control at the bottom of ACTEW Gully, the gully that runs west from the water tanks. We planted tree, shrub, forb and grass seedlings, installed a few coir logs, and put out seed beneath jute mesh.



John Fitzgerald led a grass walk for us, pointing out how to recognise native and exotic grasses with only their winter foliage. We have subsequently placed a named stake by an example of each of the 13 species we saw as we walked up from the Cook Memorial Block.



September

September saw us planting again, this time only forbs: Flax-lilies, Matrushes, and three species of daisies grown from seeds collected on the reserve last summer.

We also participated in a display with other Landcare groups at Jamison Plaza.

Sarah was interviewed about Parkcare and Mount Painter for an OurCBR feature which you

can see at <https://www.act.gov.au/our-canberra/latest-news/2023/november/friends-help-to-serve-mount-painter>.



October

In October we held two walks. The first, attended by 17 people, was led by Rainer Rehwinkel on the slopes of Mount Painter nearest to the suburb. It was described by some of the participants as a 'brilliant' experience. Lyndall Hatch has written a full account of it which is at the end of this newsletter.



Two weeks later we joined Nicki Taws for a bird walk. She took us along the track on the east side of Mount Painter, well-sheltered from the wind. There were 27 of us and we saw 27 species. They ranged from two Wedge-tailed Eagles perched on a pylon to Weebills. There were noisy, aggressive Wattle Birds and Noisy Miners among the trees by the noticeboard where we met. In more open spaces, we

saw Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes and a Black-shouldered Kite hovering. Smaller birds were busy in the trees and bushes: thornbills, Grey Fantails, and Red-browed Firetails.

Valerie Taylor, who was Convenor of Friends of Mount Painter from 1998 to 2003, visited the reserve with Sarah. They drove round the perimeter track where Valerie had not been for for a long time. She pointed out stands of trees that Friends of Mount Painter had planted during her time as Convenor, including the trees pictured in the background in ACTEW Gully.



Early November

Jane and Sarah visited Macquarie Primary School to talk to the Year Ones and Twos about Mount Painter. The students had been learning about special places and how to care for them, so we spoke about what was special about Mount Painter and how we plant and weed to improve its condition. We told a story about the Drooping Sheoaks planted to provide food for the Glossy Black Cockatoo, and another about the canoe scar tree and how canoes were made.



After our presentation we went outside where the students recorded some of the things they saw around them. They also examined kangaroo bones and the scats of animals that we had collected from on or near Mount Painter. There were scats from a horse, kangaroo, wombat, rabbit, and possum.



Holding their noses as they examined the scats. The scats didn't actually smell and the kids were eventually brave enough to pick them up and examine them.

LOTS MORE WATERING THAN USUAL, BUT NOT SO MUCH WEEDING

With a very hot, very dry summer forecast, we will need to do a great deal of watering to keep this year's plantings alive. We have started already; both Friends of Mount Painter and visiting groups have been involved. In September, volunteers from Red Hat watered the trees and shrubs planted on the south-west slope in May and checked that the guards were firmly installed. A Ranger Assist crew watered them again a month later.

There is one good thing about dry weather: while there is much watering to be done, the weeds are less prolific and less weeding is needed.



ANIMAL STORIES

Tony encountered a kangaroo whose leg had become entangled between two fence wires in the horse paddocks adjoining the reserve. He reported that the wires were well tensioned so it was only with the help of a piece of plastic conduit that he could loosen the wires and release the kangaroo's leg. The kangaroo was quite exhausted but hopped off with no apparent leg damage.



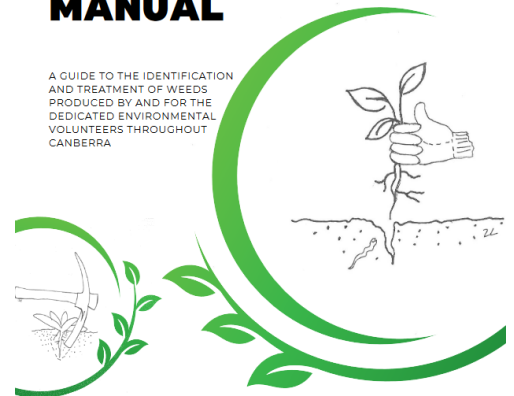
This photo, taken on 16 September, shows damage to the bark of a tree trunk on the ridge between ACTEW Gully and the gully to the south. Posted to Canberra Nature Map, it was identified as having been caused by deer. This is not good news; deer cause major damage to vegetation, are a collision hazard on the roads, and can be aggressive to people and dogs. Numbers are small in the ACT, thanks to their ongoing control, but they are regularly reported on Black Mountain. The two ACT species are Sambar and Fallow Deer.



A GUIDE FOR LANDCARERS TO HELP THEM WEED MORE EFFICIENTLY

About 18 months ago, Parkcare volunteer Vera Kurz started work on a manual to help weeders weed better. As a new volunteer and a new Parkcare Convenor in a new Parkcare group, Friends of Tuggeranong Hills, she found little information available to help identify weeds and provide advice on how to control them. So, she set about gathering information about the main weeds we deal with. She circulated an early draft to other Parkcarers for comment and help also came from the Parks and Conservation Service and Southern Catchment Group. The result is a really useful document. It's available at <https://sactcg.org.au/resources-2/>.

ACT WEEDS MANUAL



A GUIDE TO THE IDENTIFICATION AND TREATMENT OF WEEDS PRODUCED BY AND FOR THE DEDICATED ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERS THROUGHOUT CANBERRA

Supported by



AN HISTORIC SIGN



This sign at the reserve entrance off Skinner Street opposite Skene Street reads 'Trail bike riding in this area prohibited'. It was erected by the Department of the Capital Territory which existed from December 1972 to March 1983, and so is 40-50 years old. Should it be kept as a record of former times or removed as a deteriorating, rusting eyesore?

THE BRILLIANT PLANT WALK ON MT. PAINTER 8 OCTOBER 2023 LED BY RAINER REHWINKEL

By Lyndall Hatch

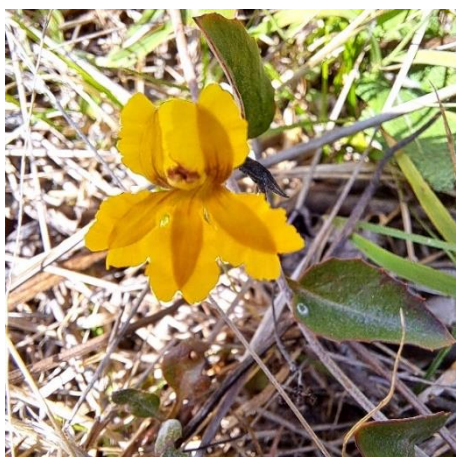
Those of us that have taken part in any ACT environmental workshop are likely to have met Rainer previously. He has unlimited expertise and enthusiasm for teaching, so he is invited everywhere. Our walk was advertised to last one and a half hours, and in fact it lasted three hours there was so many questions and such enthusiasm among the 17 participants lucky enough to be there.

We started by walking up the hill off track, up a gradual slope, the easiest way to get to the water towers from the Cook Memorial. Somebody remarked that all they could see were weeds. Rainer certainly showed us that in between the weeds are a multitude of native species. As Rainer pointed out these species, he led us on to discover many interesting facts. Where an *Allocasuarina* and a wattle were growing almost entwined he asked what these two species had in common. The answer was that they are both nitrogen fixers. They contain bacteria in nodules on their roots that can convert atmospheric nitrogen to nitrates, in other words, producing their own fertilizer. Among the native species we noticed were *Lomandras*, *Indigofera adesmiifolia*, *Hardenbergia*, and Cherry Ballart (*Exocarpos cupressiformis*) which we learned was semi parasitic not only on Eucalypts but also on herbs and even grasses. Weeds were identified too, and we learned that one could identify weeds in the Brassica (Cabbage) family by the fact that their four petals form a cross. Almost all our weeds come from Mediterranean Europe where the climate is very similar to ours which explains their success. Most were introduced by accident in shipping packing. Up the hill we noticed small stringy barks as the dominant Eucalypt but on attaining the ridge our attention was drawn to the magnificent Yellow Boxes. We learned that “box” refers to the wood grain similar to an English box tree.

Walking through the gate below the water towers onto a long ridge we noticed a *Nandina* (sacred bamboo) plant, and Reiner introduced us to the concept of “sleeper weeds”. These are plants that are currently sold by nurseries for Canberra gardens, but which have a propensity to escape into the bush. We are encouraged to post these on NatureMapr in the hope that once identified they may be withdrawn from sale. Other sleeper weeds we saw were a type of elm and the Chinese Pistachio. At the end of the walk, we saw many escaped cultivar *Grevillea* bushes not native to Mt Painter.

Back to the ridge, we stopped at the most beautiful (to me) Yellow Box, took in the view and in this beautiful place we thought of the traditional owners of Mt Painter and acknowledged their thousands of years of land management. How much damage we have inflicted over two hundred years! Rainer explained that this sparse scattering of mature old trees was characteristic of grassy woodland habitat, and told us of the many species of birds, mammals and reptiles that rely on this habitat. Although weeds were still most noticeable, especially St John’s Wort, Patersons Curse and Mullein, there were natives, including a very healthy stand of Native Raspberry and a Hop Bush in full flower. We also saw the small bronze beetle introduced as a biological control for St John’s Wort, but it was fighting a losing battle and the emerging flower heads appeared unfazed by the beetles.

Dropping down off the western end of the ridge, we encountered a rocky outcrop where native vegetation dominated. There we found many small wildflowers, mostly of the daisy and heath families. A veritable treasure trove! The Everlastings (*Chrysocephalum*) dominated along with the tiny, purple, fuzzy New Holland daisies (*Vittadinia cuneata*).



Some of the species on the rocky outcrop: top left, Urn Heath (*Melichrus urceolatus*); top right, Yellow Burr-daisy (*Calotis lappulacea*); bottom left, Ivy Goodenia (*Goodenia hederacea*); bottom right. Rock Fern (*Cheilanthes sp*)

Our track back to the Skinner Street start traversed other rocky outcrops with similar vegetation until we came upon the recent plantings near the Coulter Drive track and picked up the track behind the houses. Along the way we saw still more interesting species. While the group was discussing a particular fern-leafed wattle believed to be a hybrid, a rounded, low, dense, delicate plant was noticed which was identified as the native Nodding Saltbush (*Einadia nutans*). Rainer had been looking for this under several of the large trees we hovered under. Also growing under and up into other trees we noticed Kurrajongs. Rainer told us these had been introduced to the area from the rain-forested north by the aborigines. Their seeds were prized as food and their trunks could be tapped for water. Just so many interesting facts all the time!

Thank you, Sarah, for organizing this walk, Jane for being such a warm hostess to the attendees and most importantly to Rainer for being such an interesting leader.