

## Friends of Black Mountain Oral History Project 2021-23

**Interviewee: Rosemary Purdie**

**Timed summary: Rosemary Purdie interviewed by Mary Hutchison**

Session #1: 24/11/2021

<b>Time</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Names – people and organisations</b>
00:00:00	Introduction. Childhood in Adelaide Hills. High school connection with botany. Path to university study.	Blackwood, Ashby's farm, Eden Hills Primary School, Unley High School, Mrs Wellington, education, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam
00:05:00	Studying at Adelaide University as a botany department cadet. Field ecology main interest. Ecology excursions. Gender ratio and roles	Cadetship, Commonwealth Scholarship, Koonamore, Yunta
00:09:16	Learning methods of field ecology with focus on impact of grazing on vegetation. Longitudinal study of impacts at Koonamore from c. 1930s to present. Support of botany department staff. Camping and collecting trips with small group of students	Taxonomy, Adelaide Botanic Gardens, Goyder Line, monitoring plots, quadrats, Bob Lange, Constance Eardley, Flinders Ranges
00:13:27	Enjoyment of ecology honours field research on population dynamics of three different arid zone tree species.	Bob Lange, Whyalla
00:14:58	Offer of PhD scholarship in the Department of Biological Sciences at ANU in 1970, but chose to first take up Australian Volunteers Abroad posting to Malaysia. Transformational experience of teaching botany and English a year after 1969 race riots. Decision to return to Australia 1972 and take up PhD scholarship.	Serdang Agricultural University, Kuala Lumpur, race relations
00:19:37	Contrast between affluence of Canberra and poverty in Malaysia highlights social justice issues and leads to decision to live sustainably. Decision to research vegetation response to fire based on its practical application.	Wesley church, Ralph Slatyer, CSIRO Forestry Research Institute (FRI), Alan McArthur, Bruce Ridge, environment movement, snow line research, global warming
00:24:48	Declaration of Black Mountain as a Reserve 1970. Development of ecology as a career in Australia. The distinct value of Australian ecosystems	National Parks Association, Nancy Burbidge, CSIRO Herbarium
00:26:04	Methods of PhD research on Bruce Ridge. Intense everyday work of monitoring 120 plots. Distinct nature of research.	Forestry Research Institute, Phil Cheney

	involving experimental burns. Research provides intimate knowledge of Black Mountain plants.	
00:29:52	Enjoyment of field work confirms career direction. Types of vegetation in research plots. Characteristics of dry sclerophyll forest. Black Mountain becoming Rosemary's backyard. Focus on research during Telecom Tower protests. Accommodation during research.	Ralph Slatyer, Burgman Hall, Graduate House
00:32:54	Looking for work after completion of PhD. Offered job in Brisbane as the botanist on a small team mapping land systems for Western Arid Region Land Use Study.	Australian Conservation Foundation, Western Queensland, gender.
00:36:36	Details of field work on Queensland land use study and area covered. Its intention to assess carrying capacity of pastoral blocks. Interaction with property owners.	
00:39:36	Return to Canberra. Marriage. Reconnection with Black Mountain through experience of living in Botanic Gardens cottage. Everyday relationship with Mountain continues with move to Dryandra Street.	Australian National Botanic Gardens
00:41:58	Heritage management aspect of career. Consultancy for Australian Heritage Commission to assess natural heritage of Simpson Desert leads to permanent assessment position with Commission.	Academy of Science ('Dome'), Michael O'Brien, CSIRO
00:45:31	Process of heritage assessments. Working on assessment of natural heritage in 1980s context of forest logging protests. Seeing that science-based description of vegetation reveals conservation value and rarity of places.	Public consultation, 'greenies', Murray Darling Basin Commission
00:48:50	Position in people management at Murray Darling Basin Commission (MDBC). Return to botany and ecology as Associate at National Herbarium 2002. The importance of conservation areas in everyone's life. Black Mountain becomes logical place to continue working on conservation projects.	Don Blackmore
00:51:30	[return after break] Decision to retire from public service based on using field and policy experience to work with plants and contribute to conservation. Part-time position as ACT Commissioner for the Environment. Consolidation of post-retirement activities with focus on	Statutory authorities, sustainability, National Herbarium

	plants, conservation, and giving something back to society. Value of dual field and policy experience.	
00:56:40	Black Mountain and small contract-based projects provide opportunity to pursue interests. Plan to update Black Mountain, Mt Ainslie and Mount Majura lists of trees and woody shrubs to support advice on controlled fuel reduction burns. Repeatable methodology. Scale of project.	Friends of Black Mountain, Jean Geue, Gungahlin Drive Extension, ACT Natural Resource Management Advisory Team, Laurence Adams, National Herbarium
01:01:03	End of session [decision to stop because of rain]	

### Session #2: 29/11/2021

00:00:00	Introduction. Vegetation types included in updated Black Mountain plant list follow previously published field guide. Methodology used to record trees and shrubs, their abundance and frequency based on creating a benchmark for 2009 and enabling comparable measurement at a later date.	Field guide to the Trees and Shrubs of Black Mountain Mount Ainslie and Mount Majura, quadrats, transects, sub-units
00:05:02	Value of Benchmark research publicly and personally includes provision of data for ACT Government controlled burns. Concern about woody weeds on Black Mountain leads to connection with Jean Geue and Friends of Aranda Bushland. Talk for Aranda Bushland anniversary 2010. Jean Geue's role in activating and reactivating Friends of Black Mountain. Jean invites Rosemary to participate in reactivation 2012.	Cotoneaster, Pyracantha, Citizen Scientists, 'Interlopers on Black Mountain'
00:09:42	Initial meeting leads to new Friends of Black Mountain committee. Accreditation as ACT Park Care group enables members to start removal of woody weeds. Rosemary's role in this. Achievements of monthly weed removal. Management of Australian woody species not native to Black Mountain.	'Ginger group' as a precursor to Friends of Black Mountain Co-ordination Group, ACT Government, Cotoneaster, Pyracantha, Cootamundra Wattle ( <i>Acacia baileyana</i> ), Australian National Botanic Gardens, cultivated native species, conservation.
00:14:12	Value and enjoyment of weeding by Friends groups. Relationship between ACT Parks and Conservation and Park Care groups. Rosemary's role in Friends of Black Mountain facilitates communication between Friends and government advisory bodies.	Biodiversity, conservation, Linda Beveridge, endangered species, weed management, fire management, ACT Flora and Fauna Committee, ACT Natural Resource Management Advisory Committee,

		Michael Mulvaney, Margaret Kitchin
00:19:31	Long term on the ground knowledge of a place as critical factor in planning weeding and other activities whether lay or professional	
00:20:34	Friends of Black Mountain involvement in Vegetation Watch Program established by Sarah Sharpe to monitor grassland areas. Methodology for monitoring 20x50m vegetation plot.	Threatened ecosystem, percentage cover, population count, tree canopy measurement, <i>Daviesia mimosoides</i> , <i>Acacia implexa</i> , <i>Exocarpos</i>
00:24:27	Rosemary's provision of plant identity refresher courses. Yearly monitoring. Inclusion of two existing small plots and one additional south facing for different vegetation. Finding manageable approaches to plant identification for Friends members without Rosemary.	Reading the plot, CSIRO, fire impacts, Linda Beveridge, Mini Field Guide, Quick Guide, adult education
00:28:50	Idea to develop a complete list of plant species for Black Mountain based on 1969 CSIRO herbarium plant list and other sources. 600 plants documented by end of 2012, about half not recorded for 30-60+ years.	Bruce Ridge, Aranda Bushland, Australian Society for Growing Native Plants, Wednesday Walkers
00:32:54	Looking for missing plants 2013-2017 to create up-to-date benchmark in context of changes in vegetation and habitat on Black Mountain. Findings include two thirds of missing species and 90 never recorded including a few rare native species. Lodging specimens in Australian National Herbarium	Fuel reduction burns, global warming, <i>Stylidium despectum</i>
00:36:20	Search for published research work on ecology of Black Mountain. Extensive material suggests book on natural history of Black Mountain for 2020 50 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of Reserve. Friends of Black Mountain develop 2018 Symposium. Papers invited from specialists on theme of "The past 50 years informing the next 50".	Annotated Bibliography, Tidbinbilla, Namadji National Park, Canberra Ornithologists Group
00:41:08	Response to invitation. Inclusion of natural and cultural history. Symposium event 24-25 August 2018. Personal experience. Response of audience. Intention for someone else to write the book [brief pause]	Cryptogams, Indigenous culture, protest, gondola, Mark Butz, Julie Hotchin, Discovery Centre CSIRO, Ian Fraser
00:46:01	Inviting Ian Fraser to write book. Decision to take on role of editor. Book framework and inclusions. Process of	Friends of Black Mountain Organising Committee

	making the book. Benchmark for readability.	
00:51:02	Testing readability of book for general readership. Illustrations and graphic design. Final editing. Key elements of book's readability. Responses after publication.	Friends of Black Mountain Organising Committee, Canberra Nature Map
00:57:03	Relevance of PhD fire ecology research to present context. Complex issues of fuel reduction burns on Black Mountain. Fire-vulnerable species on Black Mountain.	Fuel reduction management
01:00:52	Managing fuel reduction burns for complex species issues includes seasonal timing and fire frequency. Role of Friends of Black Mountain in providing specific advice for each burn period. Maps of species recorded in GIS.	ACT Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, orchids, fire management regimes, community consultation, ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA), Park Care Liaison Officer, Golden Pomaderris, mosaic burning, ACT Scientific Group, Jean Egan, Tony Wood
01:05:04	Importance of unburnt areas for peacock spiders. Ideal burning regime. Importance of good relationship between ACT Government agencies and Friends of Black Mountain. Impacts of fire on bird species. Micro patch cultural burns.	Canberra 2003 bushfires, ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA), Indigenous fire regimes, food plants, grassland ecosystems, painted button quail, ESA
01:09:00	Balancing conservation and recreation. Addressing issues of mountain bikes, dogs, unofficial pathways.	Canberra Nature Park Rangers, erosion
01:12:50	Role of education in generating understanding and respect but resulting enthusiasm can also have a negative effect. Value of active Friends group and responsiveness of Rangers to damage. Inevitability of change in vegetation in the future. Aim to maintain good ecological condition now to provide opportunity for survival of biodiversity through change. Worst nightmare Cootamundra Wattle.	Friends' program of walks, rubbish dumping, global warming
01:17:02	End of session	