

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



Koalas in the Lower Blue Mountains

Clancy the Koala was rescued by Blue Mountains WIRES at Lapstone in September 1998 and released with a radio collar in the National Park at Glenbrook four months later.



This is the first confirmed sighting in 30 years for the lower mountains. A team of volunteer uni students and local residents tracked and mapped Clancy's movements and habitat use until September, when he dropped his radio collar. Significant findings include use of Shale Sandstone Transition Forest and preference for a particular soil type. A paper detailing this work was presented to the Annual Conference of the Australian Koala Foundation at Philip Island, Victoria in September 1999.

A second Koala (named Norman, after Norman Lindsay) was rescued from a dog at the head of Springwood Creek near Birdwood Gully. This animal was tagged and released, and has since reappeared on Springwood Golf Course.

Approaches have been made to the RTA and BMCC to erect Koala warning road signs in the area. The Minister for the Environment, Bob Debus has committed funds to find the core habitat for the remnant Koala population, with a view to managing the area to protect the Koalas from bush fires.

Local environmental consultant Danny Wotherspoon has been involved in the Koala tracking project. He will be presenting the Clancy story and updates at our General Meeting on 28 January 2000. The meeting will be held at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls and will commence at 7.30 pm. Visitors will be very welcome.

The Australian Koala Foundation conference paper and current Koala news can be found on the net at www.mountains.net.au/wilderness.

'Soon' is Now Later

Despite assurances that Amendment 25 was nearing approval as a legislated change to LEP 1999, a recent Court decision overturned this expectation. In December 1999 Judge Cowdroy of the Land and Environment Court ruled that Blue Mountains City Council had

Badgerys Creek Airport would cause "very substantial and permanent changes"

The Badgerys Creek EIS process has finally thrown up the last in a long line of documents: 'The Environmental Assessment Report' prepared by Environment Australia, Environment Minister Robert Hill's fiefdom. Dated July 1999, it has taken until November to reach the public.

The Executive Summary makes interesting reading for Blue Mountains residents: "The direct cumulative impacts of the construction and operation of an airport on the western Sydney region would be very substantial ... The presence of an airport would also attract development and act as a catalyst for the spread of urban development that is already encroaching into the essentially semi-rural area bounded by Penrith to the north, Camden to the south, Liverpool and Fairfield to the east and the Blue Mountains escarpment to the west. It would cause very substantial and permanent changes to the character of the area ten to fifteen kilometres around the airport site. These effects would spill over into the World Heritage nominated Greater Blue Mountains Area and to adjacent parts of Sydney."

Number 49 of the 52 recommendations says: "The potential impacts on the World Heritage values of the Greater Blue Mountains Area must be identified and taken into account in all elements of the planning and operation of an airport at Badgerys Creek." "... taken into account" — how reassuring!

There is still time to voice your objections to this proposal before the Blue Mountains falls victim to the fall-out from those "very substantial and permanent changes" predicted in the Environmental Assessment Report. Why not remind both Howard and Beazley (address Parliament House, Canberra) that the next federal election could be won or lost in the western Sydney seats of Parramatta, Macarthur, Lindsay and Macquarie. *Colin Anderson, Co-ordinator, Mountains Against Badgerys Creek Airport (MABCA)*

failed to give proper notice to adjoining Councils about the Amendment, and that the final plan ended up being different from that which was exhibited.

Widespread public support has been consistently expressed for protection of sensitive vegetation, habitat for rare,

endangered or vulnerable flora and fauna, watercourses and steep slopes. While it is part of the longer history of moves towards strengthening Council's environmental legislation, Amendment 25 itself can be traced back as far as March 1997 and has been endorsed by Council at three separate meetings.

Despite the Judge's decision, Blue Mountains Conservation Society is pleased that BMCC's Acting General Manager, Robert Greenwood, has said "Council is still committed to achieving the environmental protection aims that Amendment 25 tried to address" (BMG 15/12/99) and that Council has recommended the re-exhibition process.

Membership Involvement

The Society needs help! We can always use extra members on the Management Committee, or one of our many Sub-Committees. The Annual General Meeting is coming up in March, so why not come to a Management Committee Meeting as an observer, see what we are up to, and maybe stand for a Committee position in March. Our next meeting is on at 9 am on Sat 22 Jan 2000 at the Mid Mountains Community Centre Lawson. We would

"Hut News", the newsletter of Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

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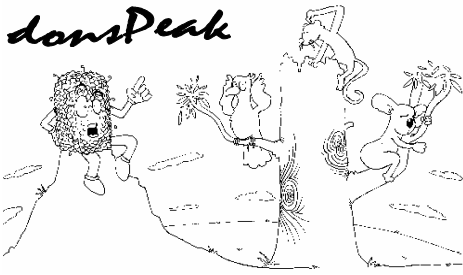
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THE DEADLINE
FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS
FRIDAY 21 JANUARY 2000



Grumpy Greenie Plays With His Crystal Ball

Some think that balancing Australia's population with our environment in the 21st century is going to require resisting clamouring third world hordes trying to enter our continent and further promoting of family planning. I dispute this.

I believe that this is a century where many third world peoples will achieve more comfortable lifestyles and lower birth-rates, similar to what Australia is now experiencing. Environmentally these changes could be good or bad, depending on how responsibly resources are used.

Unless our nation changes considerably, fewer immigrants will look in our direction for economic salvation, and, on our record of the late 20th century, we ourselves will have little guidance to offer on how to use resources responsibly and little spiritual or cultural enrichment for newcomers. Already the handful of 'boat' people, with whom media and politicians are obsessed, are greatly outnumbered by visa overstayers from low birth-rate, high resource consumption nations similar to our own.

Australia's declining birth-rate is not helping our environment because it is being outweighed by ever less responsible attitudes to our natural resources. Conversely, an environmentally sensible Australia will be a country we will be happy for our children and grandchildren to be born into. When they are, we will have an even greater reason to care for our country. After all, the 'carrying capacity' of Australia for human beings cannot be expressed in absolute numbers — it depends on what each individual gives and takes.

Crocodile Tears

It's a bad month for Personal Water Craft, often known by the brand name 'Jetski'. From January 1, throughout the Sydney Basin, users are limited to 10 knots within 200 metres of shore, unless towing a skier. This speed limit will cover virtually the whole of the Hawkesbury-Nepean upstream of Wiseman's Ferry, including all rivers within Blue Mountains National Park. And a TV soft drink ad frivolously depicts the consumption of a personal water craft user by a crocodile—so sad!

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Don Morison.

NPWS Restructure

Many members will have read in the Blue Mountains Gazette recently about my 'war of words' with Local Member and Environment Minister Bob Debus. It was never my intention to upset Mr Debus, for whom I have great respect. It was necessary however to raise the plight of NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The NPWS is currently being restructured to 'flatten' the management structure, with the intent of reducing layers of management overhead and putting more staff to work running the parks system. While I commend the intention of the restructure, it has taken far too long and caused far too much angst among NPWS staff.

Three local rangers have elected to take voluntary redundancies and leave the service. Staff morale is crushed to the point where some officers have told me that 'the service has been destroyed and will never recover'.

The budget for Blue Mountains District has been cut (again).

No working track works have taken place in recent months, and the only works in the next few years will be around Echo Point as part of the revitalisation of Katoomba.

Vale David Thomas 1925-1999

With the death of David Thomas just prior to Christmas, this Society has lost a friend and true conservationist.

David's early years were spent in the Welsh countryside, where English was his second language. He remained bilingual, and retained his love of Wales and its culture, especially his admiration for Dylan Thomas. He volunteered for service in the British Army and took part in the D-Day landing. He met Elvine in London after the war. They married in 1950 and moved to Hampshire. David was employed at a sanctuary for ornamental waterfowls where he gained a sound knowledge of water birds.

In 1961, the family moved to Australia. On applying to Sir Edward Hallstrom for employment at Sydney Zoo, David solved the problem of the loss of so much of the ducks' grain to marauding pigeons. Not only did he get the job, but the use of a cottage within the zoo, and was thereafter known as Mr Duck. He was always willing to impart his knowledge to others, be it colleagues, or groups of school children. He escorted the Queen when she visited the Nocturnal Animal house.

During his years at the zoo, David made two trips overseas to escort animals, transferred to other zoos. He went with kangaroos to America, and koalas to Japan. His knowledge impressed the Japanese; they corresponded with him ever since, and were greatly saddened to learn of his death.

After retirement, David and Elvine moved to their house in Leura, and soon afterwards joined the Conservation Society. For some years, they both

Colleagues at the Total Environment Centre, Colong Foundation and National Parks Association fear that we are seeing a new 'economically rational' NPWS that will put money ahead of nature conservation. While we have no evidence of this, it is interesting that the Plans of Management for Blue Mountains and Kanangra Boyd National Parks have not yet been gazetted, nor has the Grose Wilderness, and that a Regional Manager has yet to be appointed for the Greater Blue Mountains Region.

When he (or she) is appointed, be assured that the Society will make immediate contact to re-affirm our position that nature conservation is the primary role of the NPWS.

Also be assured that we will continue to lobby Bob Debus for more funds for the Blue Mountains National Parks, in particular for walking tracks. To quote Jim Smith, 'our walking tracks are in crisis' and they urgently need funding injections to make them the world-class tourist attraction they should be, while minimising environmental impact.

If anybody has a 'fire in their belly' about the National Parks system, contact Don Morison (4759-2471) about our new National Parks Additions Sub-Committee. I'm sure he would welcome your help. *Ross Coster, Membership Secretary.*

served on the management committee. David loved the bush, and was always ready to defend it against any move to destroy it. At meetings he would speak up on matters of importance to conservation, he spoke clearly and with persuasion, and had a keen sense of social justice.

He did duty in the old Hut selling teas and biscuits etc, raising funds for the Society, and it was David who gathered wood and kept the fire burning, for our comfort on winter nights.

David was among the group which carried out an environmental study for the Water Board in the area now known as "The Transit of Venus" track. He did the mammal study, which involved setting traps at all hours of the night. Such efforts did much for the society, both by way of funds and PR.

Those of us who have been privileged to walk with him, either on Conservation Society outings or with Olive's Woody Pear group, will not forget how much he contributed to these occasions.

David's knowledge and powers of observation enabled us to take home so much more from the day. He saw the birds, their nests, and those of the ringtails, a delight to see that little face with sleepy eyes appear over the rim.

He was always ready to offer a helping hand, he knew the animal tracks and their scats, and taught us about these things. He could be relied on to scout for a track, and entertained us with lunchtime poetry readings.

We are fortunate indeed to have had such a companion.

Joan Storey and Olive Noble.

On Finding a Dead Robin

Small yellow breasted one whose watchful eye followed the turning earth beneath our spade for luckless grub or hapless worm companion of the lonely track joining us when the billy boiled for crumbs and company small friendly fearless one farewell.

Wilson Alcorn, June 1976

A One-day Bushcare Course

Linda Thomas, an experienced bush regeneration supervisor, will introduce members to bushcare in a one-day hands-on course.

Have you ever noticed that a patch of bush or a park near you is looking run down and weedy but would look superb with wildflowers in Spring. Have you ever thought of joining a bushcare group but need to know more? This workday will be an opportunity to ask questions, discover how to care for native plants and animal habitats, and to learn that bushcare can be easy and sociable.

Meet 9 am, Sunday 13 February at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. Books are essential. Phone Meredith 82.4823 after 5 pm.

Source of the Grose

The recent dry weather solved irrefutably the argument concerning the true source of the Grose River. According to geographers, this river has its rise at Mount Victoria, flows North to a point East of Bell, and then turns East past the extremity of Hat Hill. Local bushmen, however, always have contended that this section of the waterway is but a tributary; that the true source of the Grose is Minnehaha Creek. The drought disclosed that a considerable volume of water flowed down Minnehaha and the Grand Canyon, whereas the reputed head of the river was bone dry. From Mount Victoria to the junction East of Hat Hill there was not a drop of moisture in the bed. Thence onward, the waters of Minnehaha and the Grand Canyon kept the river flowing, to be augmented by Wentworth, Woodford, Linden, and Faulconbridge Creeks at lower levels. (*Blue Mountains Echo* 31/12/1926)

Mt Wilson Mt Irvine

Bushcare Group

The Mount Wilson community has had a long history of successful community projects in their area. Now they have ventured into bushcare.

The group has initially taken up the challenge of bush regeneration works in Sloane Reserve, a high profile site along the main road that enters Mt Wilson. It is part of the highly valued remnant rainforest that inhabits the sheltered slopes on the area's basalt soils.

Sloane Reserve was being strongly invaded by climbing ivy, which covers the ground and then creeps its way up the tree ferns and tree trunks into the canopy. The smothering effect can be devastating to a natural ecosystem.

Successive work sessions have seen

the group complete primary weeding for half the reserve area — a great effort. Once on top of the weeding the group has long term plans to extend the size of these remnants with regeneration and planting techniques. They have also worked at a site in Mount Irvine, an area of similar ecology but also with more than its fair share of weeds.

The group is currently working on the second Friday morning of each month. Contact Elizabeth Raines on 4756 2121 if you would like to get involved.

Welcome to New Members

Francine Mullan, Wentworth Falls
Jill Buckley, Winmalee
Rebecca Carr, Manly
Rose O'Malley, Katoomba
Laura Drennan, Lawson
Paar Viktor, Bullaburra
Nigel Wild, Milsons Point
Pat Haines, Bullaburra
Mr and Mrs Pidgeon, Birrong
Richard Forshaw, Blaxland
Tony Webb, Hazelbrook

Australia Makes Roads From Mobile Phones

An ambitious Australian recycling programme could lend new meaning to the phrase "information super-highway".

Officials on Wednesday launched a world-first voluntary recycling programme to allow Australia's seven million mobile phones users to safely offload old handsets, batteries and accessories.

Millions of old phones and batteries are to be melted down, with the resulting slag recycled as building materials — and used even for resurfacing roads.

Australia has one of the highest per capita mobile phone usage rates in the world, and affluent Aussies are quick to switch on to new technology.

The Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association, which is behind the recycling programme, said this meant many of the country's mobile phone users already using their second or third generation cellphones.

"Mobile phones are changing all the time, with new features coming on to them, so people like to keep up with the latest technology and are constantly upgrading their phones," the Association's executive director, Peter Russell, told Reuters. "We do expect a huge response and we expect it will pick up Australia-wide very quickly."

Germany also has a recycling programme, but unlike the voluntary, industry-funded Australian scheme it was introduced by politicians via act of parliament.

Over 600 retail outlets throughout Australia will act as collection points and will send old mobile hardware to a Melbourne-based recycler for safe destruction or re-use. Gases and metals, including such environmental hazards as nickel and mercury, can be also extracted during the process for commercial re-use.

The recycling programme follows

Greenhouse Corner

Cooking: Electricity and gas used for cooking can generate from ¼ to 1½ tonnes of greenhouse gas and cost up to \$150 each year.

Efficient cooking methods

Efficient cooking methods such as putting lids on pots, simmering gently instead of boiling vigorously, and using a pressure cooker can save half the greenhouse gas generated during cooking.

Cook toast in a toaster instead of under the grill: reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to three quarters.

An electric kettle or gas cooker generates about a kilogram of greenhouse gas for every 10 litres of water boiled, half as much as using a microwave or an electric cooktop.

Pre-prepared meals in open aluminium foil trays with sides less than 4cm high can be reheated in a microwave oven with much lower greenhouse gas emissions than in an electric or gas oven (ensure the aluminium does not contact the sides of the microwave oven — stand it in a larger plastic container to avoid sparks).

Fan-forced ovens generate up to 35% less greenhouse gas than conventional ovens, and more items can be cooked at the same time, as heat is more evenly distributed around the oven.

If cooking with electricity, for maximum efficiency use pots and pans with flat bases that match the size of the element.

Thaw food in the fresh food compartment of the fridge before cooking. Cooking time is reduced and less greenhouse gas is generated.

For small households, cooking in bulk, freezing the food and then reheating in a microwave oven, cuts greenhouse gas emissions and saves time.

Some Statistics

Greenhouse Gases generated by cooking vegetables: Benchtop Electric Steamer, 0.28kg; Microwave Oven, 0.10kg; Electric Cooktop, 0.223kg; Gas cooktop, 0.10kg. Changing from electric to gas cooking could save up to half a tonne of greenhouse gases each year. Maximum use of microwave ovens can save almost as much.

More Transport Information

The retirement rate for cars in Australia is about 5%, which means cars last on average for 20 years. However the pollution control equipment on modern cars only lasts about 10 years! If your car is 10 years old or older, get the pollution equipment checked. Our State government is still delaying introduction of compulsory emissions testing at registration time. So beat the rush and get yours tested now. You may be generating larger quantities of greenhouse gas than you need to. Of course, you could always walk, cycle or catch a train! (The RTA provides vehicle emission testing for free at Botany and Penrith. Ring 13 22 13 to arrange a time.) *Ross Coster, Membership Secretary*



the trial in New South Wales of a mobile phone battery recycling scheme, which collected around 100,000 batteries (over 14 tonnes) in the past year. (*Story from Jane Nelson, Reuters News Service, Nov. 25, 1999*)

Thursday Bushwalks

Experience the beauty and poetry of the Blue Mountains in a series of summer bushwalks, commencing on Thursday 10 February.. Each walk will be of approximately three hours duration, of medium grade, and held at a leisurely pace. During the walks we will learn a little about the Blue Mountains environment, the flora and fauna, geology, Aboriginal and European history. Special guests will show us areas of their expertise, for example, birds, snakes, and plants.

There will be a charge of \$20 for the eight walks, to cover expenses. Numbers will be limited. Contact Christine Davies 4787.7246 for more information.

December Rains ...

In the reserves and valleys, the bush flowers are in abundance, consequent upon the plentiful December rains, and the warm intervening weather. Christmas bush, coachwood trees, wild apple and the black ash are all showing profusion of beautiful blossoms. Consequently the absence of the wild bees this year is all the more remarkable. Generally, the blooms are largely visited by the bees, almost from sunrise to sunset, but it is not so now. The causes possibly are the absence of sufficient pollen during the very dry months of October and November, followed by the heavy and some cold rains during December. Another interesting and unusual fact is that during the dry months mentioned, cranes, pelicans, bluebills, ibises, wongas, and other wild birds were numerous. Since the rains they have all disappeared. (*Echo* 28/1/1927)

Moving House

We have moved house, a mere two kilometres down the road, away from the town to the edge of the National Park. It was hard to leave behind my little garden, "the jungle" my grandson Keith called it as it swallowed up and hid all his tennis and soccer balls. It is sad to think of the birds and lizards and other little creatures who will lose their home when much of the garden is "tidied up". This year (for the third year) the Eastern Spinebills reared a baby in the garden, and a pair of Red Wattle Birds took up residence to raise their young. By the way, the Wattle Birds are very pushy. I saw them being aggressively nasty to a baby Satin Bower Bird who was too young to fly to escape their pecks.

The bushland behind our new home is

Dirrawan, the Song-maker James Devaney

Dirrawan went into the bush to spear waat,
But he forgot about waat the red wallaby.
He thought about dirridirri the small bird and deereeree the wagtail,
He thought about winning the lightning and tumberumba the thunder.
He did not spear anything at all.

Dirrawan went to the Long Brown Water to catch makora.
He thought about balleballea the silence of the night,
He thought about ballanda the long time ago,
He did not catch any fish, he brought back a new song to the gunyahs.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
JANUARY	11 Bushcare				15 Bushwalk	
17 LeisWalk		19 Bushcare			22 MCM Meet	23 Bushwalk
24 LeisWalk				28 GenMeet	29 Bushwalk	
31 LeisWalk						
FEBRUARY					5 Bushwalk	
7 LeisWalk	8 Bushcare		10 Summer Bushwalks		12 Bushwalk	13 Course
14 LeisWalk		16 Bushcare			19 MCM Meet	20 Bushwalk
21 LeisWalk			(8 weeks)	25 GenMeet	Bushwalk (to be advised)	
28 LeisWalk						

JANUARY

- 22 (Sat) **Management Committee**, 9 am, Mid Mountains Community Centre.
28 (Fri) **General Meeting**, 7.30 pm, at the Hut. Guest: Danny Wotherspoon, "Clancy the Koala" (see page 1).

FEBRUARY

- 13 (Sun) **A One-Day Bushcare Course** (Details on page 3)
19 (Sat) **Management Committee**, 9 am, Mid Mountains Community Centre.
25 (Fri) **General Meeting**, 7.30 pm, at the Hut.

KIDS' CLUB

Activities for Under 16s are in the Kids' Club Newsletter. Phone Ross Coster 4759.1247 for a copy of the newsletter. Contact Jessica 4757.2783 for more info.

BUSHCARE (Tools provided — bring morning tea and gloves.)

JANUARY

- 11 (Tues) **Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group.** Contact Jessica 4757.2783 for the meeting place. (following Tuesday if wet).
19 (Wed) **Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group.** Meet 9 am at the Reserve (GWH, West of Sorenson Bridge). Contact Ross Coster 4759.1247.

BUSHWALKS (Usually day walks — bring lunch and **minimum 1 litre water**.)

JANUARY

- 15 (Sat) **Vera Falls.** Meet Wentworth Falls Railway Station 9.45 am. Contact Meredith Brownhill 4782.4823. **Medium/Hard.** Slow, scenic, watery ascent.
23 (Sun) **Gladstone Pass — Old Leura Coal Mine.** Meet Leura Railway Station 9.30 a.m. Contact Jim Wallace 4784.3305. **Hard.** Steep sections.
29 (Sat) **Lawson's Long Alley.** Meet Mount Victoria Railway Station 9 a.m. Contact Liz Stark 4754.4966. **Medium.** Easy walking, but steep sections.

FEBRUARY

- 05 (Sat) **Horseshoe Falls.** Meet Hazelbrook railway carpark (southern side) 9.30 am. Contact Kate McManus 4758.7936. **Medium.**

LEISURE WALKS (Usually morning walks — bring a drink and morning tea.)

****Slippery and uneven surfaces. Please wear shoes with a good tread.**

If this is your first Leisure walk with the Society please contact the leader.

JANUARY

- 17 (Mon) **Undercliff/Overcliff Walk.** Meet Wentworth Falls Station, Stockyard carpark, 8.30 a.m. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.
24 (Mon) **Bus Trip to Northern Beaches.** Contact Mervyn Bird 4787.7959.
31 (Mon) **Darwin's Walk and Rocket Point.** Meet Stockyard carpark 8.30 am.

FEBRUARY

- 07 (Mon) **Clifftop Walk, Gordon Falls to Leura Cascades.** Meet Leura Station carpark 8.30 a.m. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.

beautiful and very peaceful. Trees are scribbly gums and peppermints, with lots of tea tree in the understorey. A cleared patch is highlighted by a spray of bright calleopsis and other white daisies spreading along a drainage line into the National Park. The garden is very pretty — lots of roses and lavender — but quite sterile. The only birds to visit are Currawongs. A load of agapanthas were the first casualties, consigned to the rubbish bin. Others soon to go will be a pair of hybrid brooms.

The garden at Olive Cottage evolved over seven years. It seems a daunting task to begin again, but the first ten natives are in a tiny section of the garden — all it needs is another ten every week for the next ten years or so.

Christine Davies.

Suggestion for Bushwalks

A member has suggested that we hold some special weekend bushwalks with the aim of introducing more knowledge to participants on vegetation, geology, wildlife, history, etc, or to visit areas under contention. For instance there could be a "Ten Trees" or "Ten Birds" walk. Would anybody with expertise be interested in leading such walks. Contact Jim Wallace 4784.3305.

Bushwalks have been graded: **Easy** — Relatively easy grades and good surfaces. Suited to most people. **Medium** — Mostly good surfaces, but some rough or steep sections. Suited to people of average fitness. **Medium/Hard** — includes rough or steep sections some of which may require clambering over natural obstacles. **Hard** — Strenuous walks involving steep ascents or descents over rougher terrain. Suited to fit and experienced walkers. **If this is your first walk**, or you are in any doubt, contact the leader or Bushwalks Convener Jim Wallace 4784.3305.