

# HUT NEWS

*"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"*



## The new Draft Native Vegetation Management Order is Good News for gardeners and conservationists.

In the new Draft Native Vegetation Management Order which is on public exhibition until 8 May, Council has responded to community concerns that there be no regulation of existing landscaped gardens.

This new draft focuses on protecting bushland, which was what the community has been asking for all along. The Society will however be proposing some minor changes to the NVMO to provide clearer definitions to address the concerns of the community.

Unfortunately many still think it is the same as the old VMO. It is not. It should be called something different to reflect this radical change, perhaps the Native Vegetation Protection Order.

A Native Vegetation Protection Order is one tangible way of putting all the rhetoric about "sustainability" into action. Through the widest public consultation processes ever undertaken by the BMCC, for the *25 Year City Strategy—Blue Mountains our Future*, it was identified that 94% of residents feel that preserving our bushland environment is the highest priority.

The leaflet in this issue of Hut News explains what the NVMO is and why we need it.

**It is very important that every member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society gets involved in this issue.** Whilst we will make a detailed BMCS submission, it won't be

taken seriously by Council officers or councillors, **unless** they also get hundreds of letters supporting the general idea. That means every member just has to write one letter, and ideally also ring or write to a councillor as well.

Please go to one of the coming meetings and show your support:

- Blaxland Civic Centre at 7pm on Wednesday 9 April, or
- at Katoomba Civic Centre (near the library) at 7pm on Wednesday 7 May.

We are concerned that Council is listening to a very small but vocal opposition and is already talking about watering the NVMO down. Council is considering removing the already generous allowances for clearing around dwellings. The draft allows for the bulldozing of 500 square metres of bushland or up to 35 metres from a house without any assessment by Council being required.

One good feature of the NVMO is that it gives special protection to bushland on steep slopes. Unfortunately, this is another aspect of the plan that is being considered for 'watering down', with a suggestion that areas of native vegetation will be allowed to be ripped up on steep slopes (greater than 20%) to create new landscaped areas, without any monitoring or regulation.

Those opposing the introduction of the draft NVMO are saying it is not needed. Unfortunately they appear not

to understand the value of bushland as habitat and believe that only listed "threatened species or communities" are important. Only a few of our significant vegetation communities are listed under the Threatened Species Conservation Act. Even for those listed, they are not properly protected because of the loopholes in the Act. It has not established a process to protect areas that are being cleared or destroyed independently of a new building being constructed.

Some of the opposition comes from the fear that people will not be able to undertake hazard reduction around their homes. This is not true – this NVMO will not stop hazard reduction. But hazard reduction is not bulldozing huge expanses of bushland. It is intended to create gaps in bushland to reduce fuel loads thus reducing the intensity and rate of spread of fire. Hazard reduction to maintain an approved Asset Protection Zone around a home does not require approval under the NVMO.

If you would like to discuss the issues further please contact Peter Wilson 4754 3038, email: [peterbat@tpg.com.au](mailto:peterbat@tpg.com.au) who is coordinating BMCS's response to this.

Since our enclosed leaflet was prepared, BMCC have announced that there will be an extra public meeting to discuss the Draft Native Vegetation Management Order, on Wednesday 7 May at Katoomba Civic Centre, near the library, at 7 pm.

## Native Plants for Roadworks

Last year the Society's native plant nursery supplied 26,500 local native plants to the RTA for the Soldier's Pinch highway reconstruction. The tube stock was grown at the Lawson nursery from seed collected on site at the commencement of work.

Following delays in the roadworks, planting occurred just before the worst of winter with cold westerly winds prevailing for several weeks, followed by a long dry spell with no rain at all. Small roadside trees in the area turned brown and died.

Despite the extreme weather conditions, the plants had a very high success rate and, as you can see as you pass, they are doing well. A good place to stop and look at the work is at the Brownstown Oval turnoff.

Congratulations to our nursery volunteers who collected the seed and grew the plants. Congratulations also to the RTA contractors who managed to keep them alive in such adverse

conditions. The project earned \$40,000 for Blue Mountains Conservation Society. Plants are presently being grown for the Shell corner upgrade.

## Catastrophe or Catharsis?

Jim Pittendrigh will discuss fire at our general meeting on Friday 25 April. Jim has been involved in bushfire organisations for 35 years and is an experienced group leader. He takes a down to earth approach to fire and during his discussion on the subject he will tell a few stories about fire.

The general meeting at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, on Friday 25 April starts at 7.30 pm. Visitors are welcome.

## Management Committee

A new management committee was elected at the Society's AGM on Friday 28 March. Contact details are on page 2.

The position of MINUTES SECRETARY remains vacant. The minimum requirements of the job are

preparing agendas and minutes for management and general meetings. If you have skills which might fit the position and would like to find out more about joining the Management Committee, please contact our Senior Vice President Heather Hull, or Administration Officer Joy McDonald (contact details are on page 2). You can also find out more by coming to the next Management Committee meeting as a spectator at Lawson Community Centre at 9am on Saturday 19 April.

## Native Plant Sales

The Society's nursery volunteers will hold an autumn native plant sale on Saturday 12 April 2003, 9am to 1 pm, outside the Conservation Hut at the end of Fletcher Street in Wentworth Falls.

Plants may also be purchased at the Blackheath nursery which is open every Tuesday morning, 9am to 12 noon.

Enquiries to David Coleby, Nursery Manager, (4784.1395).

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## Welcome to New Members

Liliane Berceron, Blackheath  
 Janet Kirkpatrick, Katoomba  
 Belinda Edwards, Wentworth Falls  
 Sally Peyou, Katoomba  
 Barbara Cameron, Katoomba  
 Valerie Keates, Wentworth Falls  
 Margaret Beal, Leura  
 Marc Marshall, Leura  
 Zoe Mosman, Wentworth Falls  
 Frank Martin, Leura  
 Catherine Scott, Hazelbrook  
 Alfred Rose, Bullaburra  
 Birgitta Sandstrom, Leura.  
 Jo Hillyard, Glenbrook  
 Sally Wray, Glenbrook  
 Les Scharto, Leura  
 John and Veronica Low, Leura

## The Road More Travelled

(Extract from an article by Kate Read in Autumn 2003 issue, *Environment NSW*)

Ask residents of urban centres what they love about their towns and they'll list a range of things that keep them in their urban setting. Speak to them concerning what irks them about their cities and odds on they'll say the traffic.

There have been a plethora of government reports recognising the need to redress the imbalance between road infrastructure and more sustainable transport approaches in this state. Unfortunately on-ground infrastructure funding over the past decade continues to prioritise private motor vehicle use over mass transit, walking and cycling.

In our major cities in particular, this bias is having huge impacts. Car use in Sydney (measured in vehicle kilometres travelled) grew last decade by 24% compared to the population growth, which is 7%. High car use contributes to the fact that Sydney residents frequently breathe in pollutants at levels that fail World Health Organisation standards.

The provision of more and more road infrastructure in our cities is unfortunate because each freeway or tollway constructed woos more of us off public transport and into our cars—cancelling out any promised benefits. When the Sydney Harbour tunnel opened in 1992, an additional 9,300 trips a day were made across the Harbour, enticed to join the daily jam into the city by the short-term relief that the tunnel provided. In only eight years Harbour Bridge congestion was back to exactly what it had been when the tunnel opened, and increased traffic in East Sydney would eventually lead to the construction of the Eastern Distributor.

Cities that lock us into spending more time and money on travel, make our lives more harried. Excessive road noise on our city streets does not invite us to use the surrounding pavements for outdoor cafes and green space. We spend far too much time planning for vehicles, and far too little time planning for people.

The rail links listed in the Carr government's Action for Transport 2010 document need to be brought forward and prioritised over road development projects. Light rail deserves far more attention from our politicians and transport chiefs, having had enormous success in cities around the world in increasing public transport use and contributing to more liveable cities. Highway proposals such as the superhighway proposal across the Blue Mountains should be abandoned in recognition of the huge environmental impact they will have.

The government needs to seriously consider travel demand management programmes, as a way of decreasing the distances needed to be travelled to access services and jobs, and encourage people to make different choices about the way they travel. In Perth, one such program—the Travelsmart program—succeeded in reducing car use by 10%. The program also saw a near doubling in

cycling and a 25% rise in public transport use amongst participants.

The community also needs to be far more involved in the processes that decide what sort of city our decision makers create for us. We need to heed the words of Jamie Lerner, the Mayor of Curitiba (in Brazil) who brought vision and courage to the planning of his city. Of the importance of transport to city planning he said: "Transport is so important; you can't leave it to the experts. They will solve the problem of transportation, but they won't link it to the problem of the city. So many cities have been killed by traffic engineers." (Kate Read works for Kuring-gai based environmental group STEP Inc.)

## Swan Lake

Belmont Lagoon, near Newcastle, is surrounded by swamps and reeds with mosquitoes and who knows what else. There is a broad pipe stretching across the middle of the lagoon, the top of the pipe being at water level. Swans perch on the pipe during the day—a line of swans stretching to the far shore, across the middle of the lagoon.

In March 2003 we stayed at a caravan park near Belmont Lagoon. Just before sunrise I walked to the lagoon. The swans were not there, only a few ducks which moved further away as I approached. The full moon was about to set. The rising sun was just starting to brighten the clouds on the horizon, casting their reflections onto the lagoon, and fish caused ripples on the smooth surface.

The clouds at the sunrise became etched in gold, the reflections brightened, and three swans, with necks outstretched, wings beating strongly, and flying in formation, came from the direction of Lake Macquarie. *And so the dance began!*

The swans came to the lagoon in twos and threes and fours and fives, sometimes larger groups of 12 or more, with necks outstretched, wings beating strongly, and flying in formation. And there were flocks of other birds: large birds and small birds; birds coming to the lake, or circling above it, or flying over it towards the ocean; birds flying in formation; birds darting through the air; birds soaring high on the air currents; a solitary pelican coming to land ...

After a while I had to retreat to our cabin to escape the mosquitoes and continued to count the swans as they flew over – 200, 300, and still they came.

In the brightness of morning, the swans were spread out across the lagoon, sailing gracefully on its surface, heads dipping to feed. Later many of them will rest on the pipe—a line of swans stretching to the far shore, across the middle of the lagoon. *Christine Davies.*



## Bernard O'Reilly, Author and Naturalist

*Extract of an article by Don Morison. (References are to 'Green Mountains' and 'Cullenbenbong' by Bernard O'Reilly, with reliance also on lectures and walk commentaries by Jim Smith.)*

Bernard O'Reilly was born on 3 September 1903 in a cabin at Long Swamp Creek, Kanimbla Valley, NSW, to the pioneer couple Peter and Jane (nee McAviney). He died in 1975 and is buried in the Catholic Cemetery, Kerry, Qld.

O'Reilly was a remarkable salesman for simplicity of lifestyle, for the love of nature and for family bonding. In 1908, a rammed-earth schoolhouse was built by volunteer labour on Long Swamp Creek, halfway between the homesteads of the O'Reilly and Cullen families who had supplied all of the thirteen prospective pupils. It operated for about a decade and was one of three tiny schools which at various times bore the name 'Ganbenang Public School'. O'Reilly's aunt, Teresa Carlon, was the first teacher.

O'Reilly was later to describe his love of his daily walk to school in a chapter called 'The Magic Road'. Although he did not rate himself as an attentive scholar, he was to show outstanding skills of observation, reasoning and memory. In 1910, a holiday to mark the coronation of George V saw him packed off to his relation's property, 'Green Gully' in Megalong Valley. This is documented in the chapter, 'The Grand Tour' and his most affectionate passages of writing about nature describe Green Gully and the Cox's River:

"All the peace and beauty of a clear winter's evening was upon Green Gully as I first saw it; blue smoke from the chimney hung in the still frosty air. Early dusk, tinged with reflected purple from the giant cliffs above, softened the naked willows and touched the timbered hills with mystery".

"There never could be a river as lovely to me as Cox's River. Not the placid beauty of long mirrored reaches which are the poet's dream, but a wild untamed loveliness different from the usual beauty of rivers as the majesty of a turbulent coastline differs from the gentle perfection of a spring meadow."

Pursuing a hand to mouth existence from farming, the family moved to the Megalong Valley and then the Lamington district of Queensland. It was there that O'Reilly married and his only child Rhelma was born. In 1937 he became fascinated when an aircraft, carrying seven persons, disappeared en-route from Brisbane to Sydney. Eight days of intensive searching found no trace.

The incident became a showcase for O'Reilly's bushmanship. Using isolated reports and his observations of local climate and vegetation patterns, he deduced the likely crash site, set out alone and with only a few provisions, located the wreck and two survivors, then organised a rescue.

Why have O'Reilly's books stayed in print for up to sixty years? It is not

because he is considered a great literary stylist, nor even because the plane crash rescue provided a sensational news story in 1937. The fact that his family established an icon tourist destination, O'Reilly's Guest House, after Lamington Plateau proved unsuitable for farming, has played a part. Mainly, it is because the ideas in his books have captured the imaginations of several generations of Australians.

### On the 'Black Line'

On 27 March Frank Winternitz guided the Thursday Interpretive Bushwalkers on a walk at Faulconbridge. The walk was along part of the 'Black Line' —a line on the map, in many places following the power lines, where a series of temporary fire trails were constructed with the help of the Army during the 1994 bushfire emergency, to allow back-burning towards the Grose Valley. Some of these fire trails were reopened during this year's fires.

This section is broad and hard-packed and was not allowed to revegetate after the 1994 fires, I don't know why. It is gated and goes nowhere, ending at the top of a steep hill which descends to Linden Creek which flows into the Grose River a short distance away. Frank told us that in 1996 it was used to start a hazard "reduction" burn which closed the highway at Linden and seriously threatened three houses in Faulconbridge.

The soil at Faulconbridge is as thin and poor as it gets anywhere in the Blue Mountains. The usually tall Peppermint gums are stunted, sometimes forming a mallee habit. There are other true mallee species including the Faulconbridge Mallee. There are some lovely Hawkesbury sandstone outcrops, a great diversity of wildflowers in the spring—even quite a few in March—and from one of the outcrops we noticed what looked like hanging swamps which we thought were restricted more to the upper mountains.

Where the road ended in 1994, a huge turning circle was bulldozed during the latest bushfires, on the very edge of the steep hill which descends to Linden Creek, I don't know why. A road which goes nowhere and is wide enough for tanks now has a huge turning circle so they can turn around and come back again. Sand is washing from the bare surface of the turning circle, down the hill to Linden Creek which flows into the Grose River. There was also an attempt to continue the road downhill for another 100 metres or so. I don't know why. After just a few months it is showing signs of gully erosion, with more sand washing down into Linden Creek.

It seems that when there are

bushfires the rule books are thrown away and anything goes, doing untold damage to the National Park and its creeks and rivers. We choose to live in the Blue Mountains even though bushfires are a fact of life. There must be a better way.

We noticed a layer of sandstone which looked like insects had been burrowing into it—our resident geologist suggested worms. We were looking at what had been the casts of ancient worms which lived in the sand hundreds of thousands of years ago.

We noticed Christmas Bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*) flowering out of season. When the little white petals of the Christmas Bush flowers fall off, the white sepals remain and enlarge, turning pink and then red, usually in December in time for Christmas.

The final drop to the creek looked a bit steep for some of us, so while the intrepid few, including Joan Gahl, continued down to the creek, the rest of us relaxed on a sandstone shelf, looking into the canopy of the tall trees growing in the valley, and enjoyed a leisurely morning tea and some of Frank's home-grown apples. Thank you Frank for an enjoyable and interesting walk.

A new series of Thursday interpretive bushwalks will commence on 1 May. Enquiries: Christine Davies, 4787.7246.

### Wyn's Walk

When Baghdad Washington  
want to split apart the world  
uncurl yourself  
push away the layers of litter  
the soil burying you walk forth  
what lives together on the Newnes Plateau?

Orange termite houses,  
burnt trees, new growth on their black trunks  
like burgundy ball-gowns spilling out,  
fungi, large creamy mushrooms  
floating through the road surface  
small brown dots soft upon the crunching black  
buff frills on the other side of a fallen log,  
the rough feel of my friend's hand  
as we walk along singing "Jack and Jill",  
the child leaping up the glinting pagodas,  
the tops of the coachwoods' heads down in the canyon,

Be given cake chocolate  
fresh-brewed coffee muffin with raspberries in it

Stride out to find the canyon  
enter it through a hole in the rock  
inside find rock walls holding like elder brothers  
a hush of leaves thick-layered fire fodder  
a purple flower with a yellow heart  
an overhang for a wombat find peace,  
the conviction that rocks are alive

Lie beside a dry creek bed  
look up into the tea-trees at the flood detritus  
*Abandoned finches' nests* says Wyn

The bombs are about to fall on Baghdad  
our leaders are crazy  
today I can do nothing more about it  
some of us would like to argue  
but we restrain ourselves,  
the drooping tired child is distracted with  
"This Old Man" and "There was an Old Lady" —  
on the way home Don falls asleep.

Diana Levy, 20/3/03

## Pre-school Children's Walk

Wednesday, 5th March was dull and mild and threatening rain when four adults and five children—one of them three months old and asleep in a pouch most of the time—met for our monthly Preschooler Walk. We were going on part of Darwin's Walk so we met in Wilson Park where the children could play before we started. Then we drove two of the cars to the end of Fletcher Street where an easy track goes down to join the Walk.

The creek was flowing quite well after the recent rain and the children enjoyed exploring the beaches and crossing the bridges, playing Pooh Sticks on some of them. We sat on a bench for a snack and the sun came out briefly. The sunshine was hot but did not last long and soon it was raining and we had to hurry on, finding shelter under trees and bushes when the rain became heavy. We noticed how the bush is growing back where the radiata pines had been cut down, their trunks merging into the ground where they had fallen.

By the time we climbed the last steps and came to the park we had been on the track for an hour. The rain stopped and there was time to eat and drink and play again. At about 12.30 we left for home after arranging to meet for our next walk in Redgum Park at Bullaburra in April. *Megan.*

## Our Endangered Animals

### Spotted-tailed Quoll

This baby quoll, photographed at 44 days, was one of six born in care of wildlife rescue group FAWNA after its mother was caught in a chook pen and injured. The Spotted-tailed Quoll is an efficient predator, taking prey ranging from small wallabies to insects. It also eats carrion and, unfortunately, likes fresh chicken. Other present threats to the species whose distribution is now disjunct over much of its range include competition with introduced predators such as the fox and feral cat, continued land clearing and loss of habitat, and primary and secondary poisoning from wild dog, fox, rabbit and bandicoot baiting. (Photo supplied by Sonya Stanvic, Blue Mountains WIRES.)



### Membership Enquiries

Contact Elizabeth van Reyswoud  
Phone 4757.2694

Email: ereyswoud@hermes.net.au  
Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Apl 19 (Sat)** Management Meeting, 9am, Mid Mtns Community Centre, Lawson.  
**Apl 25 (Fri)** General Meeting at the Conservation Hut, 7.30 pm. See Page 1.  
**Apl 12 (Sat)** Native Plant Sale at the Conservation Hut. (See page 1)

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

- Apl 12 (Sat)** Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group. (9 am, 2nd Saturday of every month) Tools provided. Bring morning tea, gloves and drinking water. Contact Karen on 4757.1929 for the meeting place.

### **QUOLL CLUB** (Activities for 12 and under) ☎ Jessica 4757.3686 for more info.

- Apl 27 (Sun)** Threatened Species, with a focus on the Blue Mountains Water Skink, craft, and a bushwalk into potential habitat. Meet 10 am at the end of Alexander Ave, off Winbourne Ave, Hazelbrook. Wear walking shoes and old clothes for painting in. Bring water and a snack.  
**Note:** Please book in by 16 April, Jessica 4757.3686.

### **BUSHWALKS:**

#### **Pre-School Walks, for parent/grandparent/carer with children under 6 years.**

Short, easy walks, approx 1 hour, 1st Wednesday of every month, starting at 10.30am. Bring a snack and a drink. Contact Megan 4782.5898 or Kathy 4759.3669 for more information or if the weather is doubtful.

- May 07** Mabel Falls, Woodford. Meet end of Woodbury Street, Woodford.  
**Jun 04** Dark's Common, Lapstone. Meet at end of Emu Road.  
**Jul 02** Marge's Lookout, Glenbrook. Meet at Lennox Bridge on Mitchells Pass.

#### **Monday Leisure Walks:** Usually half day walk unless noted, leisurely pace.

Walks are all graded Medium and suit walkers of average fitness.

- Apl 07** Braeside Walk. Meet 9am Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre.  
☎ Bill 4759.1692. BBQ lunch at Duck Pond.  
**Apl 14** Blair Athol Mine and Ikara Head. ☎ Kees 4759.1958. Meet Mt Vic Station 9am. Medium. BBQ lunch at Mt Victoria park.  
**Apl 21** Red Gum Park to Boronia Road. ☎ Kees 4759.1958. Meet at Bullaburra Station 9am. Medium. BBQ lunch at Kees'.  
**Apl 28** Blue Gum Swamp Circuit. ☎ Allan 4739.2767. Meet 9am Winmalee shops, Whitecross Road, Winmalee. Medium, take lunch.  
**May 05** Mudgee Bus Trip/ Fern Tree Gully. ☎ Mary/Bob 4758.7882. Three day bus trip 4/5/6 May, bookings required, limited vacancies.

#### **Easy Walks on Thursdays:**

These walks are conducted at a slow pace to suit the walkers on the day and are usually 2-3 hours. Lunch follows for those so inclined. Contact Marie 4787.1257 for any enquiries about the program, starting times and transport issues.

- Apl 10** Dunn's Swamp. Full day; car pool, choice of walks at destination to suit ability. Bring BBQ lunch. Meet Mt Vic Station 9am.  
**Apl 17** Leura Cascades. Round walk via Prince Henry cliff walk. Some steps. Lunch follows for those inclined. Meet Leura Falls picnic area 10am.  
**Apl 24** Blu Gum Swamp, Winmalee. Easy walk on fire trail. Meet 10am at junction of Hawkesbury Road and Singles Ridge Road, Winmalee.  
**May 01** Shipley Plateau. Short walks to Wall's Ledge and Hargreave's Lookout. Meet at Blackheath commuter carpark 10 am.

**Weekend Bushwalks:** Bushwalkers are requested to phone the contact before 8 pm the day before the walk. The walk may be cancelled if fewer than 4 walkers register, or if other circumstances make conditions unsafe. Always discuss with the contact if the walk you would like to do is medium/hard or hard, before attending.

**If this is your first walk, or you are in any doubt, discuss with the contact or Bushwalks Convener Bill Tocher 4758.8545.**

- Apl 05 (Sat)** Hassan's Walls, Lithgow. Meet Lithgow Rail Station 8.45 am.  
☎ Bill 4758.8545. Uphill walk. Medium/hard. Catch 3.39pm train from Lithgow home.  
**Apl 12 (Sat)** Roberts Pass. Meet Leura Station carpark, cnr. GWH, 9.30 am.  
☎ June 4787.7312. Medium/hard with rough section and many stairs. Bring extra water.  
**Apl 19 (Sat)** Glastonbell, Dargans Gardens. Meet Mt Victoria Station 9.51 am.  
☎ Dave 4735.2027. Medium grade, cool walk. A coin donation will be wanted as this is private property. Finish Mt Vic. 4pm.  
**Apl 26 (Sat)** Leura Cascades to Sublime Point. Meet Leura Railway carpark, GWH, 9.30 am. ☎ Mary/Terry 4787.6918. Medium grade, returning to station 3 pm.  
**May 03 (Sat)** Rennets Pass and Sunset Rock. Meet Mt Vic Station 9.30 am.  
☎ June 4787.7312. Medium grade. Finish approx 3 pm. Bring lunch.  
**May 10 (Sat)** Furber Steps and Board Walk through the rainforest. Meet Katoomba Railway carpark at Gearin's Hotel 9.30am. ☎ Mary/Terry 4787.6918. Medium grade. Return via Furber Steps or Railway if preferred. Finish 3pm approx.

**Bushwalkers are required to carry a minimum of 1 litre of water on all walks. Bring a snack for morning tea on all walks and lunch for day walks.**