

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



'A sense of Wonder'



At our May general meeting Hadyn Washington will talk about the 'sense of Wonder' humans feel at the natural world. Where does it come from, does everyone feel it? Can it be lost, can it be revived? Haydn uses his own experiences in the wild and in the largest wilderness in NSW—Wollemi and will introduce his talk with some stunning slides to music to share the 'wonder' of this wild country.

'All our environmental problems can be solved—but without a sense of wonder we lack the belief and the conviction to solve them. Rejuvenating our sense of wonder is thus critical to solving our environmental crisis.'

The general meeting will be held at the Conservation Hut on Friday 30 May, starting at 7.30pm. Visitors are welcome.

New Draft NVMO

There is some confusion in the community about the Draft Native Vegetation Management Order (NVMO). Many think it is the same document that

was on exhibition last year.

The current draft is quite different from the first draft Vegetation Management Order. It should be given a new name to avoid this confusion and better reflect that difference. 'Native Vegetation Protection Order' or 'Bushland Protection Order' would better reflect the focus on bushland, and emphasise the difference from the previous VMO.

On page 2 of Hut News is a list of frequently asked questions with answers to help members better understand the proposal. While improvements could be made, the general principles of the NVMO make it a key tool for protecting bushland.

BMCS has been committed to supporting the introduction of such a mechanism for 10 years. Please help ensure that this good idea doesn't get thrown out—write a letter before 9 May, or attend the Katoomba Civic Centre meeting (near the library) on 7 May at 7pm and talk to a councillor.

If you don't have time to make a more detailed submission, write a brief note to Council that you "support the general intent of the draft NVMO to protect bushland within the city area" and that you "urge Council to proceed with it quickly and not delay it any further".

More copies of the NVMO leaflet are available from Veronica Paul 4782 6042 or email veronicapaul@netscape.net

A Ravaged Land

"A ravaged land, 1600 species at risk" was the alarming headline of an article by James Woodford on the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 23 April, with a longer article by Woodford on page 14. He was reporting on the Federal Government's *National Land and Water Resources Audit report*, a copy of which was leaked to the *SMH*.

The Audit is the most detailed stock take of Australia's plants and animals and ecosystems. It reports that there is a catastrophic collapse of Australia's biodiversity and almost 1600 species are threatened. Almost 3000 different types of ecosystem are considered to be at risk and 60 sub-regions have less than 30% of their native vegetation cover left.

The crisis appears to be worsening, a direct result of environmental degradation, especially land clearing and fragmentation of remnant vegetation. The audit identified other important contributing aspects such as overgrazing, weeds, feral animals, firewood collection, salinity, other changed hydrology and altered fire regimes.

The report found that the land clearing practices of New South Wales and Queensland are the single biggest destroyer of Australian biodiversity. The main problem for our animals, birds and insects is homelessness—their habitat is rapidly being destroyed.

Sydney's Cumberland Plain is one of the most endangered ecosystems, with only 13% of its native vegetation remaining. The Murray-Darling basin is another area in crisis. Less than 10% of Australia is protected in national parks and reserves and the Audit found that less than a quarter of all our reserves have a good standard of management. Most of the remaining 90% of our country is in trouble. More than one third of our nationally significant wetlands are in decline (e.g. the Macquarie Mashes and the lower Murrumbidgee floodplain) with drastic reductions in numbers of water birds.

The Audit highlights other important effects of the problems: reduced 'aesthetic' value of biodiversity, problems with pollination of plants, problems with controlling insects and important impacts on ecotourism, which makes a significant contribution to our GDP. Australia is rapidly losing its unique natural heritage.

The Conservation Society will follow up this important and alarming report. It provides strong support for the Draft Native Vegetation Management Order currently being exhibited by Blue Mountains City Council. *Jenny Rich*.

Urban Fox Control Workshop

Tuesday, 20 May, 7pm, at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls

Members are invited to attend a brainstorming and problem-solving workshop for the control of urban foxes in the Blue Mountains.

The physical layout of the Blue Mountains is unique. Two highly urbanised ribbons of development dissect 800,000 hectares of continuous World Heritage declared National Park.

Foxes are well established in the Blue Mountains. The number of foxes found in urban environments is alarming. Fox densities can be in excess of 10 foxes per square kilometre in cities and towns. This density is double the number of foxes found in agricultural environments and quadruple the number found in forest habitats. The Blue Mountains has 26 townships, which cover an area of approximately 40,000 hectares. This gives an estimate of approximately 4,000 foxes living in the immediate town environments of the Blue Mountains.

The impact foxes have on our small native animals is well documented. Australia has the highest extinction rate of small native animals in the world. One fox eats about 375 grams of food each night. This is equivalent to 100 Ring-tailed Possums or 100 Bandicoots a year. The two ribbons of development across the Blue Mountains containing some 4,000 foxes is a "predator mine field" to any animals straying from the surrounding bushland.

Our local State member Bob Debus has pledged \$30,000 for the establishment of an urban fox control program next financial year. With multi land tenures, government control authorities, legislation and the rich cocktail of community interest groups in the Blue Mountains we need to carefully think the way forward to establish this program. You are urged to come along to have your say. It may be your idea that captures the imagination and forges a direction forward.

An audio visual presentation on foxes and their control will be given prior to the workshop. Tea and cakes will be provided. Chris Banffy NPWS, Les Moore BMCC and Andrew Dillion, Central Tablelands RLPB will facilitate the Workshop.



MANY OF OUR NATIVE ANIMALS HAVE NO FUTURE WITHOUT CONTROL OF URBAN FOXES

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The New Draft NVMO

Some Questions (and the Answers)

Will the NVMO restrict activities in established gardens? The NVMO is not intended to restrict activities in existing gardens in any way. Any suggestion to the contrary is wrong. For example, it is not meant to restrict removing an exotic "Robyn Gordon" Grevillea as some vocal opponents seem to suggest. It is true that there is some lack of clarity in the definitions and so it could be argued that there will be restrictions on the removal of a single remaining waratah in a garden. This is clearly not intended in the stated purpose or aims. Senior council officers have also stated at public meetings that the intention is to protect areas of bushland

not isolated native plants.

The Society's Land Use sub-committee has already suggested an improved definition to Council which will overcome this problem. Council should be commended on planning community meetings to allow such problems to be identified and solutions discussed. If there is any lack of clarity in the wording of the draft NVMO that causes any confusion on this issue, it must be addressed so that it is absolutely clear that the NVMO only applies to intact native bushland.

Will the NVMO prevent larger gardens being developed - for example, a new "Everglades" or "Sorensen" garden? The draft NVMO doesn't prevent these sorts of developments and it is simply wrong to say that it does. If a Sorensen garden is being planned in an existing exotic garden or cleared area, the NVMO will not effect it in any way. The NVMO only effects gardens being planned where bushland is to be removed and only if you want to go beyond the 500sq.m/35m limits. Only then do you need development consent from Council and to detail potential environmental impacts, etc.

This is exactly what is required now by law under the combined operation of the Local Government Act (for major structural engineering works such as retaining walls), Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and Threatened Species Conservation Act. The NVMO does not prevent another "Everglades" being developed. It makes it clearer as to when a STANDARD development application is required!

Does the NVMO form an important part of Council's strategic aim of "sustainable living" within a World Heritage Area? It is supposed to be a key part of it! We cannot possibly be living sustainably if we destroy all of the native vegetation and the habitat of the native animals which live in the Blue Mountains urban area. The best way to protect the World Heritage national park surrounding us is to retain a significant buffer of bushland around all edges and all creeklines. The other way to stop weeds moving into the Park is not to plant them and leave the local native plants in place.

At the recent public meeting in Katoomba, senior Council officers suggested that they might consider relaxing the proposed restriction on developments on slopes of 20% or greater. Removing vegetation from slopes greater than 20% creates a highly erodible situation. Loss of soil cannot be considered sustainable either for the land it leaves or the creeks it clogs up. **Would relaxing the restriction on slopes of 20% or greater contradict Council's commitment to sustainable living?** Yes! **Do soil erosion guidelines set down by the Department of Land and Water Conservation set the limit at a 20% slope for many soil types in the mountains?** Yes! Future generations would certainly not thank us for this legacy.

Has the community been asking for protection of bushland or, as has been suggested by a few vocal residents, is Council "imposing the NVMO on residents"? Council's own surveys in 2000 and 2002 showed that the Blue Mountains community considers that bushland protection is very important. In 2000 over 94% of surveyed residents rated it in the category of the highest importance. In 2002 "protection of natural bushland" was again nominated by over 88% of residents, making it one of the top six concerns of residents out of a possible 46.

Since its inception in 1962 the Society has constantly heard from its own members and others in the community of their distress when bushland is destroyed and no action is taken by Council. We know Council also hears these complaints, but until now Council's response has been that nothing can be done.

Will the NVMO impose restrictions on residents who want to remove or minimise a bushfire threat? No. The Rural Fires Act overrides any other conditions set in the NVMO. If residents wish to undertake hazard reduction works they need to abide by the guidelines under this Act. If residents wish to clear more bushland than is necessary for hazard reduction to create a lawn or landscaped area then that would come under the draft NVMO.

The draft NVMO attempts to make this clear. If it doesn't, then the wording needs to be fixed.

Perhaps more importantly, there is misinformation being put about that current Rural Fire Service guidelines for hazard reduction impose or require radical clearing of native bushland. They do not. In a designated Asset Protection Zone (APZ), these guidelines detail how to create gaps to slow fire runs in strong winds. They definitely do not say "bulldoze to bare earth" nor do they say "create a barren lawnscape". To suggest that the NVMO will interfere with the operation of bushfire safety works is simply wrong.

Is the NVMO needed if there is already State legislation to protect sensitive communities? All bushland is important as habitat for native animals. It is particularly valuable to keep large continuous areas. The bushland does not have to be threatened or special.

Hanging swamps are one example of a rapidly disappearing community. Bob Debus is proposing listing BM swamps as a Vulnerable Ecological Community under the recently amended NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act. However, under this Act a Vulnerable Ecological Community listing does not provide any protection by itself or trigger a need for consideration during the Development Consent process, or protect against incremental damage.

Membership Enquiries
 Contact Elizabeth van Reyswoud
 Phone 4757.2694
 Email: ereyswoud@hermes.net.au
 Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

Environmental Education

Under the leadership of new EE Officer Richard Phillipps, our Environmental Education Sub-committee is off and running, but more members are needed. Are you are interested in environmental education? Would you like to find out more about what is planned for the coming year? **There will be a meeting on Tuesday, 13 May, 7pm, at 24 Banksia Road, Wentworth Falls. Visitors will be welcome.**

In past years the EE subcommittee has had a wide brief, with lots of projects. One focus in 2002 was education about swamps, with visual displays, talks at events, a leaflet, a guided walk and the swamp dance.

The 50-page book *Living Near the Bush* was produced in 1998 at a cost of \$30,000 and 20,000 copies were printed. Funding came from the Urban Runoff Scheme and the Natural Heritage Trust. \$9000 of this cost was to pay the consultant editor and researcher. The project also included a children's colouring-in book. It is now due for rewriting and John Haydon has volunteered to be its project officer.

The subcommittee has looked after displays at the Hut, also stalls at such events as World Environment Day and the Winter Magic Festival. It wrote a new membership leaflet for the Society and produced and sold calico bags with the Society's message on the side. A major project was organising the donation of \$2000 worth of books to set up an environmental research section of the library at Katoomba.

This year we will concentrate on four or five main goals, such as:

- New edition of *Living Near the Bush* and colouring-in book;
- Education about swamps, with displays, study walks, talks, a dance;
- Visual display for libraries with \$8000 funding from Sydney Catchment Authority already provided;
- Eco tours of native gardens;
- Land care training day with demonstrations of bush regeneration.

The sub-committee will continue to look after the Conservation Hut foyer display and sale of calico bags. It could also continue to help at stalls for events such as World Environment Day in June and Winter Magic Festival, but these are for other Society members to organise.

Sub-committee members could write regular articles for Hut News, also review new books on the environment. Katoomba library research section needs updating and eco research reference sections need to be set up at Springwood and Blaxland libraries.

If you would like to become involved but cannot come to the meeting, or if you would like to find out more, contact Richard Phillipps 4739.2568.

Future Campaigners

Sometimes the volume of work and time required to run major environmental campaigns is beyond the resources of the most dedicated volunteers.

Last year the Society was able to use

its funds to employ a part-time campaigner to organise and run the Society's campaign in support of draft Local Environment Plan 2002. This was a very effective campaign—and there will be other projects where the Society will wish to employ people with campaign skills.

We are compiling a register of campaigners who could be approached directly when the opportunity arises. We are particularly inviting members interested in working with the Society, but the register will not be restricted to members only. The work may involve doing some background research, speaking to community groups, designing leaflets, press releases etc.

For further details of what you should include in your 'expression of interest' or for more information contact Lyndal Sullivan on 4782.1635 or email lyndal@hermes.net.au.

Welcome to New Members

Kevin and Jenny Carter,
Greenwich
Philip Doumit, Katoomba
Robert Meyer, Katoomba
Helena Wong, Leura
Len Sharp, Ryde
Ruth Siewert, Lithgow

Cox's Catchment Capers

20 members took part in the multi-day activity for 2003. We attempted walks of a wide variety of difficulty levels from 8 to 12 April. Twilight walks on the Shipley Plateau began the activity. Sunset was shared with small bats and a wallaby near Hargraves Lookout. Later our torches picked out a Greater Glider in a large Eucalypt by the Old Kanimbla bridge trail.

Our one-day walks took us to Porter's Pass and the Wonderland Track. Porter's Pass was lush and unburnt—still one of the Mountains' most beautiful rainforest and waterfall areas. The Wonderland Track, in contrast, was an excellent place to observe regeneration after fire. Ferns, fungi and Xanthorrhoea sprigs were very prominent in the understorey while epicormic growth along the Eucalypt trunks and branches was highly noticeable.

A highlight of the activity was the very comfortable accommodation at Kanimbla View Cabins, run by BMCS members Hilary and Gary Wersky, which has won an award for environmental tourism. Congratulations to participants on their contributions to the food roster and the quality of wine they brought.

The activity ended with a 2-day wilderness walk by six members. An early morning start along Carlon's Creek led to a crop of bird sightings including Whipbirds, a mature male Satin Bowerbird and numerous Bell Miners.

Our steepest climb was up Black

PASSING MIST

Parched orchids smile to the passing mist
Mist that's the memory of a vanished ocean,
Mist that's tears that have often fallen,
Gleaming on the rock
Gleaming on the rock
That is the face you cannot remember
Who is walking in the mist with their sandals in their hand?
Who is crouching to see the orchid smile,
Who pauses to hear the bracelet of notes
Thrown by the harmonica bird at the covered sun?
Whose voices are under the waterfall,
Whose voices are muffled by the mist?
Whose voices drift with the white mist
Passing, like the ghosts of ocean waves?

—Denis Kevans

(Most poets get their poetry inscribed on stone only after they've died, but Australia's 'Poet Lorikeet' and Conservation Society member Denis Kevans has recently had the distinction of being inscribed at Echo Point—and the last time he was seen he was well and truly alive. A quote from Denis's 'Bushland Gardens' shares a plaque with a quote from Henry Kendall, and a quote from Denis's 'Passing

Horse Ridge where thousands of caterpillars were descending on their tiny threads. Past the huge conglomerate outcrops, Mobb's Soak camping cave was surrounded by Casuarina forests. Two of us made an early morning climb to Splendour Rock where a plaque commemorates bushwalkers who served in World War 2. We enjoyed a panorama of the wildest areas of the Cox's River catchment, with the Wild Dog Mountains in the foreground.

Thanks to everybody who contributed. The 2004 multi-day activity is expected to be advertised in November Hut News. *Don Morison.*

Nuclear Waste—No Way!

**Blue Mountains Unions' Council
POLITICS IN THE PUB
Gearins Hotel, Katoomba
Saturday, 17 May at 2pm**

TOPIC: Transport of nuclear waste through our World Heritage Blue Mountains and the broader nuclear issues that threaten our environment.

SPEAKERS will include:

- **Genevieve Rankin**, a Sutherland Shire councillor who has been a strong and vocal opponent of the second nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights;
- **Darryl Snow**, President of the NSW Fire Brigades Employees Union whose members are in the front line in the event of a radiological accident;
- **Leslie Sammon and Jeanette Carrol** of the Blue Mountains Nuclear Free Zone Group.

... ALL WELCOME ...

Winter in Wollemi

Fri 6 to Mon 9 June (Long Weekend)

Winter retreat in Wollemi National Park. Stay in a fully equipped log cabin (sleeps up to 8) or camp nearby if you are brave! Day walks in the Newnes area plus evening camaraderie around the fire. \$40 p.p. per night. Contact Jenny Rich 4787.6243.

Bushcare at The Hut

Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group will be working in the vicinity of the Conservation Hut on Saturday 10 May.

All are welcome to attend even for a short time. Full training and equipment is provided, although provision of your own gloves is advisable and appreciated.

Meet at the Conservation Hut entrance at 9am, or look out for us in the vicinity of the Conservation Hut. You will see our new banner on display.

Bernard O'Reilly Centenary

On Sunday September 7, to celebrate the centenary of Bernard O'Reilly's birth, we will organise an event in the Kanimbla Valley, led by Jim Smith. There will be details next month. Below is an extract from Bernard's description of 'The Magic Road' - the way to school.

"There was more to this school journey than just the joy of running through the bushland to school and looking at anything unusual that crossed our paths. There was much rivalry for the honour of recording the most interesting bit of Natural History at our Observation or 'What did you see on your way to school?' lesson. This sharpened our eyes and our wits and sent us probing Nature's secrets with the fervour of bearded professors chasing new bacteria.

"There were interesting things to see, such as lizards laying their eggs in the hot sand. We used to dig up the eggs and take them home to rebury them in sand nearer the house, so that they could hatch under observation. Sometimes when digging for lizards' eggs we would find the eggs of a black snake, round and white and stuck together like bunches of grapes.

"We watched too for the tracks of things which had crossed our way in the night. It was easy to distinguish between the tracks of snake, lizard or goanna. There might be wallabies, too, or kangaroo rats, and you could usually smell a fox in a damp gully where the air was still.

"There would be tell-tale scratches on the trunk of a gum to show the presence of the fast-disappearing, silver-blue possum; or if the scratches were the work of a larger hand-like claw we would look anxiously up the tree for the koala which might be snoring in a fork, but was more likely in a large hollow, safe from the ravenous wedgetail eagles which were always sweeping down from Table Rock and patrolling the sky above Cullenbenbong. Black man called Table Rock, 'Mulyaan,' which literally means, 'Eagle he go'." (extract from 'Cullenbenbong' by Bernard O'Reilly)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- May 12 (Mon) Environmental Education Meeting.** 7.30 pm. See Page 3.
May 17 (Sat) Nuclear Waste—No Way! 2 pm, Gearins Hotel. See Page 3.
May 20 (Tue) Urban Fox Control Workshop, Conservation Hut, 7pm. See page 1.
May 24 (Sat) Management Meeting, 9am, Mid Mtns Community Centre, Lawson.
May 30 (Fri) General Meeting at the Conservation Hut, 7.30 pm. See Page 1.

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

May 10 (Sat) Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group. (9 am, 2nd Saturday of every month) Tools provided. Contact Karen 4757.1929.

QUOLL CLUB: Activities for 12 and under. ☎ Jessica 4757.3686 for more info.

May 24 (Sat) Night Walk in Centennial Glen. Meet 6.45 pm for 7 pm departure at War Memorial park, Great Western Hwy, Blackheath. Bring walking shoes, warm clothes, torch for each person, water, snack if you need it and binoculars if you have them.

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.

May 12 River Lett Waterhole. ☎ Kees 4759.1958. Meet Mt Victoria Station 9 am. Easy. Take lunch.

May 19 Red Hands Cave—Kanuka Brook. ☎ Allan 4739.2767. Meet Glenbrook Station 9am. Take lunch. Long walk.

May 26 Hartley Vale/Lockyer's Pass/Lawson's Long Alley/Hartley Vale.

☎ Bill G 4739.1692. Meet Mt Victoria Station 9am. Take lunch.

June 02 Bank's Wall. ☎ Jock 4758.6346. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9am. Take lunch.

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.

May 08 Prince Henry Cliff Walk. Walk from Solitary Restaurant to the Three Sisters. Car shuffle to return. Meet at Solitary Restaurant carpark, Cliff Drive, 10 am.

May 15 Mt Piddington. Mt Piddington to Fairy Bower on bush track. Return to Mt Piddington via Toll House and streets. Meet Mt Vic. Station 10am.

May 22 North Hazelbrook. Walk to view 3 waterfalls. Can be extended to the Amphitheatre depending on walkers' abilities on the day. Meet Hazelbrook shops 10 am.

May 29 South Glenbrook. Visitors' Centre to Glenbrook Gorge, some steps. Drive to Euroka Clearing, then Portal Lookout. Short descent to Nepean River. Meet Glenbrook Station 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.

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.

May 17 (Sat) Woodford to Blaxland. Last but not least, part of Jim Percy's series "Crossing the Blue Mountains of NSW". Meet Woodford car park, south side 9.01 am. ☎ Jim 4758.6009. Hard grade, long walk. Some of the track with a steep downhill/uphill. Finish at 4pm approx. Bring gloves to protect hands from scratchy bushes and 2 litres of water.

May 24 (Sat) Megalong to Cox's River along the Six Foot Track. Long walk, easy grade. Meet Blackheath commuter car park 8.30 am. ☎ Ron 4757.1526. Bring extra water.

May 31 (Sat) Vera Falls and exploration if possible. Meet Wentworth Falls Rail carpark 9.17 am. ☎ June 4787.7312. Med/hard with many steps. Finish 4pm approx. Bring extra water.

June 07 (Sat) Mt Twiss and Environs. Meet Linden Rail carpark, north side, 9.30 am. ☎ Liz 4754.4966. Medium grade. Rail car park. Great day in the bush. Finish 3.30 pm approx. Bring extra water.

All bushwalkers need to carry water, 1 litre minimum, a snack for morning tea and lunch for all day walks.