

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Natural Corridors

Andrew Cox of the National Parks Association of NSW will speak at our monthly meeting at the Conservation Hut on Friday 27 August. The subject of his talk will be **The Melbourne to Brisbane Conservation Link**.

The value of protected corridors connecting our large undisturbed parks is emerging as a fundamental conservation task for the new millennium. In 1997 the international Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas initiated a 10 year plan for the establishment of Global corridors, with potential areas canvassed in North and South America and Asia.

New South Wales has the opportunity to develop Australia's contribution to providing protected natural corridors of global significance through the protection of the areas outlined in a proposal which has been compiled jointly between National Parks Association of NSW, Victorian National Parks Association and The Wilderness Society – **The Melbourne to Brisbane Conservation Link**.

It is underpinned by Wild Country, a national concept that seeks an Australia-wide, comprehensive system of interconnected core protected areas, each surrounded and linked by lands managed under conservation objectives. The Nature Conservation Council of NSW has given its support.

NPA NSW has produced a report on the best means of achievement of long distance reserve networks through our eastern highlands, with numerous linkages to the coast and western slopes.

Among the major gaps and physical barriers to be overcome are the Hunter Valley, far northern tablelands, extensive park acquisition targets for the Liverpool Ranges and improvements to the presently wildlife-unfriendly main highways (including the Great Western Highway locally).

The meeting at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls will commence at 7.30 pm. Visitors are very welcome.

Nursery Management Team

In our June newsletter we discussed splitting the Nursery Manager's job into different components.

Kevin Bell has volunteered to manage the Blackheath Nursery. BUT we are still looking for a volunteer with a knowledge of growing native plants (or somebody who is willing to learn) to manage our Lawson Nursery and somebody who can communicate with outside organisations to gain contracts.

We need to find volunteers to complete the Nursery Management Team now so that the members can work with David for the remainder of the year, to enable a smooth transition in March next year.

If you are interested in finding out more come along to the Lawson Nursery any Wednesday morning between 9am and 12noon. Contact David Coleby, 4784 1395, dcoleyb@pnc.com.au

Oxfam Community Aid Abroad Fundraiser

BMCS member Ian Brown is in a team (The Bush Chooks) for the coming Sydney Trailwalker (27-28 August), along with Geoff Luscombe and Tony Garbellini of NPWS and master track builder Colin Delap. Trailwalker traverses 100 km of bush tracks in 48 hours (or 20 they hope).

Last year Sydney Trailwalker raised \$1.2 million for the community development work of Oxfam Community Aid Abroad. The Bush Chooks contributed \$5,000 and this year they hope to raise \$10,000.

People wishing to sponsor the team with a tax deductible donation can either contribute online (preferred: go to www.oxfam.org.au/trailwalker/Sydney and follow directions—**note they are Team No. 171 The Bush Chooks**), or you can call Ian on 4787 1420 or email him on ianbrown@lisp.com.au

Broom Explosion *

It might sound like science fiction ... Alien organisms, aided and abetted by flood and fire, have colonised the creek and river banks and are all set to multiply and go forth, down the waterways, beyond the banks and over the braes, metre by metre, year by year ...

But unfortunately it's not science fiction. There are 1.6 million Scotch Broom plants along the creek-lines in the upper Grose catchment, their seeds carried there by past floods, their germination triggered by recent fires, ready to flower and set seed between September and December this year. (Full story with lots of information about broom on page 5)

We need to make a major effort NOW to stop them seeding. We need hundreds of volunteers to help during August and September in the Great Grose Weed Walk.

Please come to one or more of the activities. The locations of those in burnt areas marked * can be found on the map on page 5. Tools will be provided.

***Henson Glen, Govetts Creek activity:** Wed 8th Sep, 9-5. Easy day's walk and weed. ☎ NPWS 4787 3112.

***Katoomba Creek Broom Blitz:** Sun 15th Aug, 10-3. ☎ Brit at BMCC 4780 5623 or Lyndal 4782 1635 (ah).

***Katoomba Creek Bushcare:** Sun 19th Sep, 9.30-1. Short walk to beautiful location. ☎ Lyndal 4782 1635 (ah).

***Minnehaha Falls Bushcare:** Sun 26 Sep 9.30-1. Short walk along the creek. ☎ Jill at BMCC 4780 5623.

***Combined Bushwalking Clubs Day:** Katoomba Creek, Sat 11 Sep 8-4. A vigorous days walking and weeding. ☎ NPWS 4787 3112. (Our weekend bushwalkers will be participating in this activity which will be followed by a BBQ supplied by NPWS at Minnehaha Falls Reserve. See meeting and contact details on back page.)

Other Activities: (not in burnt areas) are:
Pearces Pass/Blue Gum Forest: Sat. 4th to Mon 6th Sep. Remote area walk. ☎ NPWS 4787 3112.

Upper Braeside Water Reserve: Mon. 13 Sep, 9-2.30. ☎ NPWS 4787 3112.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monthly meeting: Friday 27 August, 7.30pm, Conservation Hut (story page 1)

Management meeting: Saturday 21 August, 9am, Lawson. Members are welcome to attend as observers. (Contact any committee member.)

Bushcare: Saturday, 14 August. Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets at 9am on the 2nd Saturday of every month. Tools are provided. Bring morning tea, gloves and drinking water.

Blue Mountains
Conservation Society's

SWAMP STOMP Bush Dance

Saturday 4 September, 7pm

Mid Mountains Community Hall
New Street, Lawson

Adults \$5

Children (with adults) Free

Dance to the music of the
Gang Gangs

Light refreshments available

Children's entertainment

Free child care available

Phone Christine 4787 7246
to book childcare.

All welcome

Invite your family and friends

Enquiries: Christine 4787 7246 or
Heather 4739 1493

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NSW Land Sale by Brian Marshall

The Crown Lands Legislation Amendment (Budget) Bill 2004 was introduced to the Lower House as a cognate Budget Bill. This ensured that it passed through without debate. It has now passed through the Upper House where, being a money Bill, it was debated but could not be amended.

The Bill enables the Government to sell, for a pittance, more than 1 million hectares of public land, some of it in the Blue Mountains! How can this happen? The Department of Lands (under Minister Tony Kelly) will facilitate conversion of up to 11,500 individual leases, including 2,500 perpetual leases, from leasehold to freehold with a purchase price set at 3% of market value.

Even more alarming than the giveaway prices is the loss of habitat. Many of the leases cover remnants or corridors of bush habitat in otherwise

Tasmanian forests update by Jenny Rich

Logging and clear felling of high conservation value forests in Tasmania have temporarily ceased or slowed over winter because of the weather and because the Tasmanian government does not want bad publicity before the forthcoming federal election. The issues of wood chipping old growth forests, destroying wildlife habitat, killing native animals with 1080 poison and the long term economic benefits of eco tourism instead of destroying Tasmania's natural heritage are receiving a lot of publicity in mainland media, eg recent issues of Australian Geographic, Living Now (free at health food shops), Earth Garden and the Womens Weekly.

ABC TV's 7.30 Report on 19 July gave details of recent destruction of oyster farms in George's Bay near St Helens. Toxic chemicals were sprayed on local forest plantations by planes and polluted nearby waters. Scientists described the spraying as 'a breakdown of the level of care.'

As the federal election draws near, local groups are becoming active on the mainland. In NSW there are groups in Newcastle, Wollongong, Mullumbimby, Bathurst/Orange and here in the Blue Mountains. The local group of Australians for Ancient Forests recently had a successful film night, with proceeds going to the Tarkine National Coalition, Huon Valley Environment Centre and the Friends of the Blue Tier. A deputation recently visited local federal MP Kerry Bartlett. Sunday afternoon letter writing sessions, combined with walks in the local area, are being held in various people's homes. Letter writing

street stalls are also being held.

A fund raising raffle is being organised with three wonderful prizes: a six-day guided and fully catered Tiger Trails tour of the Tarkine area for two people, a weekend at Kinie-Ger Bush Cabins at Blackheath and a weekend at Potters Cottage in the Kanimbla Valley. Funds raised will be sent to the Wilderness Society, the Tarkine National Coalition, the Huon Valley Environment Centre and the Friends of the Blue Tier. Tickets will be on sale in late August.

Now is a crucial time in the campaign to protect Tasmania's old growth forests. Please write (or write again) to Prime Minister Howard and to Mark Latham (Parliament House, Canberra) asking them to intervene in Tasmania on behalf of all Australians and on behalf of the native wildlife which is under threat. Draft letters are available from the local group.

If you would like information or could help with any of these activities please phone Jenny Rich 4787 6243, leave a message with Christine Davies 4787 7246 or email Chris Mason monkeysee@monkeysee.com.au.

Post card from Tassie by Lizzie Vesely of Katoomba May 2004

Driving along Tasmanian highways
 Weapons of mass destruction
 Log trucks
 Gunning us down
 Day and night
 Another habitat destroyed
 By insatiable human greed
 I wanna scream
 I wanna cry
 Grief stricken I write
 Love Lizzie

cleared land. Some will contain threatened plant and animal species, and endangered ecosystems, while others provide the migration routes that ensure genetic diversity. Indeed, due to their high conservation values, some 2000 of the leases were placed under a moratorium from sale in 1990. Mr Carr, then leader of the Opposition, secured the moratorium from the Greiner Government. It marked the turning point of a protracted battle during which Mr Carr consistently opposed the sale of Crown lands on a range of environmental arguments. For example, in 1983, he argued that the Liberal Government's plan to sell Crown land would court disaster. In his own words:

"There may not be a decision in this parliament that will reverberate down through the years like this one ... If that land is sold and much of it cleared, then there is no comeback. ... If there is environmental degradation ... as a result of that land passing into private ownership, there is no way a future government, no matter how good its environmental intentions, can rectify that wrong..."

How right he was then! The

reverberations continue, but the shoe is now on the other foot.

Contrary to what you may hear or read, there are no safeguards in the Bill to prevent conversion to freehold and sale of leases with high conservation value. Much will rely on the environmental integrity of the Minister for Lands. The popular expression of 'putting Dracula in charge of the Blood Bank' springs to mind!

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society strongly opposes the sale of public lands and anticipates campaigning against such sales in the Blue Mountains.

If you wish to register a protest, please urgently contact Premier Carr, the Minister for Lands Tony Kelly, and the Minister for the Environment and Conservation Bob Debus (Parliament House, Sydney 2000) and tell them that:

as a stakeholder in public lands you are opposed to their conversion to freehold and sale; the moratorium on the conversion of leases to freehold, as originally secured by Bob Carr, must be retained; and, any lease proposed for conversion and sale should be listed and adequate time given for public consultation.

Bushfires, Broom and the Grose Valley

The fire that blazed through Medlow Bath in December 2002 spread into Katoomba, Yosemite and Govetts creek-lines where it triggered the germination of huge numbers of Scotch Broom seeds (*Cytisus scoparius ssp. scoparius*).

Now there are many thousands of young broom plants along eleven kilometres of these creeks.

Over the past 13 years 4000 hours of voluntary work and \$37,000 spent on professional bush regenerators had succeeded in controlling the broom in most of the areas which burned. However the seeds still in the soil have now germinated.

What is being done?

* Two bushcare Groups have been working hard every month since January this year. *50 volunteers treated one kilometre of Yosemite Creek during the Big Broom Blitz in May. *Bushcare Groups have been working closely with Council and NPWS in developing a co-ordinated strategy. A Plan has been drawn up, funds pooled and grants applied for. *Two local bush regeneration teams are currently working in less accessible sections of the creek-line. *Council has contributed over \$53,000 and helped attract a further \$13,600 from the Australian Government and part of \$37,700 from the NSW Government.

At the end of July 2755 hours of work had been done out of 4700 hours needed. Over 870 of these hours have been by volunteers.

More funds and more volunteers are needed to weed out the broom before it forms seed—this year!

Why is it urgent?

Most of the plants triggered by the December 2002 bushfire are **expected to flower this year** between September and December.

If we can treat the problem now and prevent the broom seeding we will be able to keep these creeks and the Grose River clear of broom with only a minor effort in the future.

If we don't it will require a major effort by bushcare groups and bush regenerators for the rest of this century.

What is Broom ?

Scotch Broom has been declared a noxious weed in NSW. It is a shrub that can grow to three metres. It has rigid branched stems and tiny green leaves with three leaflets and bright yellow pea flowers in the spring.

The seed pods look a bit like our edible pea, but black. When the seed pods are ripe they can **EXPLODE**, ejecting seeds as far as four metres.

Each broom plant can produce up to 6000 seeds each year and each seed can remain viable in the soil for 70 years.



Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius ssp scoparius*)

How Broom spreads.

Scotch Broom can spread rapidly into good bushland and completely take over huge areas. In the Barrington Tops World Heritage Area near Gloucester it has taken over 10,000 hectares.

The **EXPLOSIVE** action of the seed pods spreads the seed as far as four metres from the parent plant. **During rain the very light seeds are easily washed down into creek-lines and left on the banks where it quickly establishes to crowd out the native plants.**

Lack of funding to fix the problem.

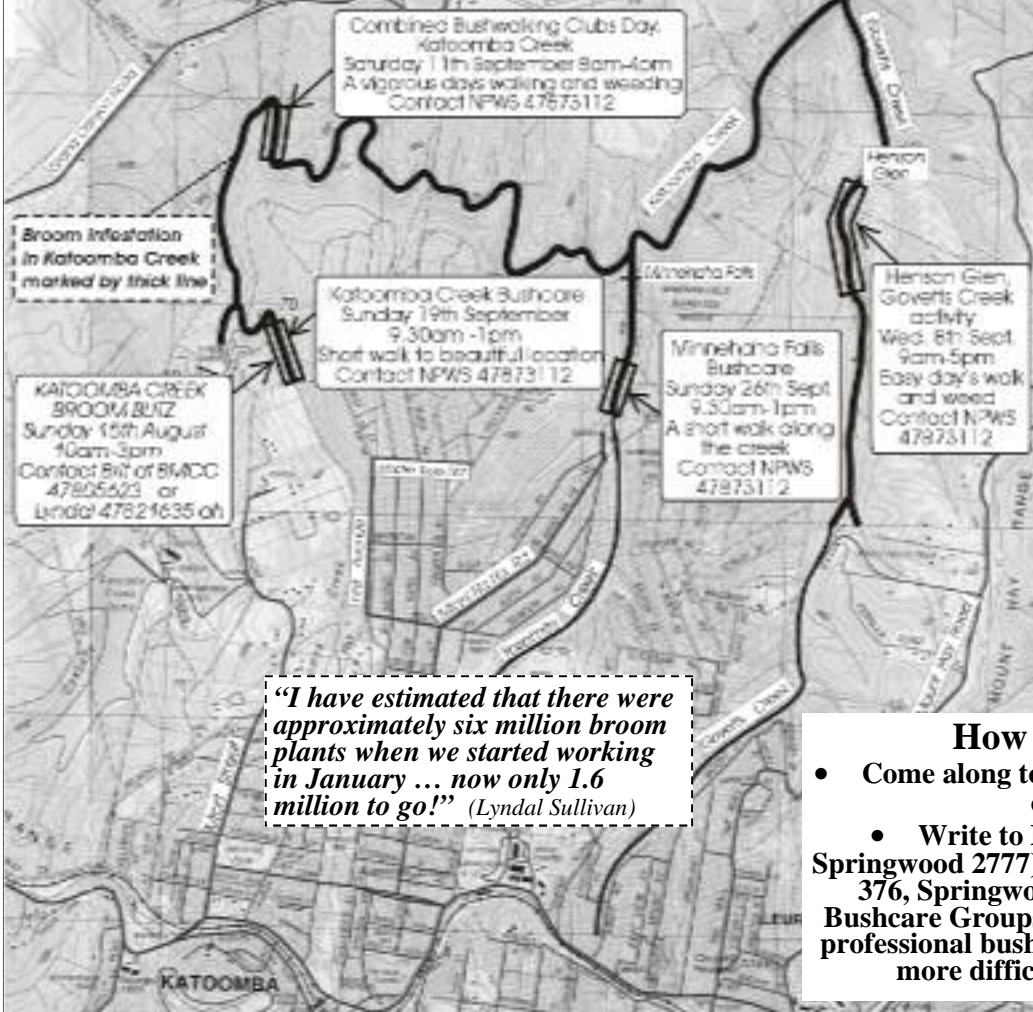
There are no specially designated funds available from Government to address the problem of weed spread resulting from fire. Whether it be wildfires, arson attack or hazard reduction, if there are weeds present most will spread rapidly into bushland that would otherwise have been in good condition.

Funding is needed to respond quickly after a fire to ensure the spread of weeds does not become a HUGE problem for the people of the future to deal with.

How can you help?

- Come along to one of the activities marked on the map.
- Write to Bob Debus (PO Box 172, Springwood 2777) and Kerry Bartlett (PO Box 376, Springwood 2777) and support the Bushcare Groups' request for \$21,200 to pay professional bush regenerators to work in the more difficult areas **immediately**.

"I have estimated that there were approximately six million broom plants when we started working in January ... now only 1.6 million to go!" (Lyndal Sullivan)



Welcome to New Members

Steven Rolfe, Blackheath
Guy Sim, Lithgow
Julie Senior, Blaxland
Paul Bailey, Winmalee
James Bevan, Hazelbrook
Phil & Victoria Davey, Hazelbrook
Simone Baumgarten, Glenmore Park
Jocelyn Williams, Leura
Dudley Sampson, Faulconbridge
Kay Burton, Springwood
Elizabeth Francis, Mt Victoria
Wendy Scott, Blaxland
Jacqui Davies & Mark Hyslop,
Faulconbridge

Bushwalkers Levy

Costs to the Society for bushwalkers' insurance and Confederation of Bushwalkers affiliation fees has been increased. The Bushwalkers Levy will now be \$15 per annum, payable by all adult bushwalking members whether you participate in one or 100 walks during the year. Please pay with your membership renewal. If you have renewed your membership in the past few months and forgotten to include the Bushwalkers' levy, please forward payment to our Membership Secretary.

Exploring the past

by Christine Davies

On 29 July Lester Ives led our Thursday Interpretive bushwalkers on a ramble along the old roads and tracks hidden in the bush near Blackheath's Hat Hill. The bush shone with the scattered gold of Sunshine Wattle and Gang Gangs (the feathered variety) watched us from the Eucalypts.

Lester showed us the ruins of Mr Murphy's cottage, not far from Hat Hill. 'Old Mr Murphy' who built the stone cottage and lived there in the 1920's was the subject of a song by Jim Low.

We walked around a huge hanging swamp to a superb vantage point with a panoramic view of golden cliffs, basalt-capped Mounts Banks and Hay and heath-covered hilltops and landmarks of Mount Hay ridge—beneath us the magnificent Grose Valley. Not far from here is a pass into the Grose Valley, Surveyors' Gully, probably used by the engineers surveying the railway proposed through the Grose in the mid 1800's. In the 1930's brothers Tim and Eric Wallace built a flying fox into the Valley for the purpose of collecting timber. A steam engine was used as a power plant to operate the flying fox and to pull water in skips from a nearby creek. After a bit of a scramble we came upon the rusted remains of the old steam engine (see photo).

We made our way back to our cars near Hat Hill by a more circuitous route in order to admire the beautiful swamp. A little further along Hat Hill Road Lester showed us ancient rock carvings of emu feet at the head of a gully which leads into the Grose Valley.

At the Wind-eroded Cave Lester produced his didgeridoo and some clapsticks for the bushwalkers to accompany him. The sound of the didge echoed into the Grose Valley, bounced off the sandstone cliffs and returned several seconds later.

Membership Enquiries
Elizabeth van Reyswoud
Phone 4757.2694

Email: mcreysw@bigpond.net.au
Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING GROUP

Our bushwalking group provides a range of activities. Membership of the bushwalking group is available to members of the Society. For further information contact the Activity Leader/Coordinator (listed) or Bushwalks Conveyor Bob van Reyswoud. For membership enquiries contact Membership Secretary Liz van Reyswoud. Contact details are on page 2. Cost of insurance and affiliation fees for bushwalkers is \$15 per member. **PLEASE PAY WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL.**

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 Liz Riley 4787 6637 for more information or if the weather is doubtful.

Sept 01, Horseshoe Falls, Hazelbrook. Meet at the end of Alexander Ave.

Monday Leisure Walks: Usually 'Short Day' walks of 3-5 hours suitable for walkers of average fitness. Graded Medium, i.e. can include some short rock scrambles or some short section off track. Bring morning tea and lunch, plus carry at least 1 litre of WATER, 2 litres on warmer days.

Aug 09 Blue Gum Swamp, Winmalee: Walk in open forest. Meet 9.00 end Whitecross Road, Winmalee. BBQ. Contact ☎ Jock 4758 6346.

Aug 16 Gooch's Crater, Wollangambe: A longer wilderness walk. Meet 9.15am Mt Vic Rly Stn. Bring lunch, 2 litres water. ☎ Allan 4739 2767.

Aug 23 Wogo Track, Valley Heights: A new walk. Meet 9.00 Valley Heights Rly Stn, commuter car park. ☎ Ron 4757 1526.

Aug 30 Lapstone Zig Zag, Glenbrook. Historic Railway works. Meet 9.00 Great West Hwy, Glenbrook, opp Information Centre. BBQ. ☎ Bill 4759 1692.

Sept 06: Gordon Falls to Sublime Point, Leura: Views of Jamieson Valley. Meet 9.00 Leura Rly Stn commuter car park, Cnr Mall & GWH. ☎ Mary/Terry 4787 7649

Thursday Pleasure Walks: These easy to medium grade walks are conducted to suit the walkers on the day. Times given are approximate. Slower walkers are catered for and on longer walks there is an option of a slower group to complete a section of the walk. Phone the contact for any enquiries about the program, starting times and transport issues. NOTE: Walks to commence at 10 am unless stated otherwise.

Aug 12: Centennial Glen, Blackheath. Walk with great views on bush tracks with some steps. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Ctr. ☎ Bill 4759 1692

Aug 19 Radiata Plateau, Katoomba. Exploratory walk in northern section of this area. Meet Gearins Hotel, Katoomba. ☎ Joan 4782 2218.

Aug 26 Walls Ledge, Blackheath. Round trip with magnificent views, path protected with safety fence along ledge. Short steep section. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. ☎ Phil 4787 5560

Sept 02 Ikara Head, Mt Victoria. Mainly level walk on ridge. Length determined by walkers on the day. Meet Mt Vic Station. ☎ Marie 4787 1257.

Weekend Bushwalks: 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 Bob van Reyswoud, 4757 2694, email mcreysw@bigpond.net.au.

Aug 07 (Sat) Numantia Falls. Meet Faulconbridge Station, 9am. Medium/hard. ☎ Liz 4754 4966

Aug 14 (Sat) Mt Airlie. Meet 9am, Mt Vic Stn. Med/easy. ☎ Meredith 4782 4823

Aug 21 (Sat) Porters Pass. Meet Blackheath Stn 9am. Med/hard. ☎ Don 47876447.

Aug 28 (Sat) Royal National Park Bus Trip. \$10 each, bookings essential. Meet 8am, Katoomba Depot, arrange pick-ups with Mary. Medium. ☎ Mary 47876918.

Sep 04 (Sat) Faulconbridge Point. Meet Faulconbridge Stn 9am. Medium, long walk. ☎ Bob 4757 2694.

Sep 11 (Sat) Great Grose Weed Walk: Combined Bushwalking Clubs Day at Katoomba Creek. 8am to 4pm, followed by a BBQ provided by NPWS. A vigorous day's walking and weeding (in a beautiful place, of course), with an opportunity to meet members of other bushwalking clubs. Meet at the corner of First Avenue and Wattle Tree Road, North Katoomba at 8am. Contact Mary 4787 6918 before 8 September so that provision of tools can be organised.



Photograph by Graham Nelson