

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Crossing the Simpson Desert

At our next monthly meeting, guest speaker Alan Lane will tell of how he celebrated his retirement by fulfilling a life-long dream - to walk across the Simpson Desert with camels.

The Simpson has had a fascination for Alan ever since he visited Old Andado south of Alice Springs many years ago in a battered old Land Rover - and looked east across one of the most remote and inhospitable deserts in the world, not crossed by a European until 1936.

With 16 camels and some expert camel-handlers, Alan and a small group of like-minded adventurers set out from Andado Station in the month of August. Some of them came from overseas, attracted by National Geographic listing the trip as one of the world's twelve great adventures. They walked due east for 28 days, covering 404km and 768 sand dunes (Alan counted them each day!), with the camels carrying all the equipment, food and, most importantly, water. Out in the desert, water became the new currency, bartered for anything and everything but particularly the nightly ration of port! And there were other challenges, including someone getting lost, attacks by wild camels, and one camel from the string spitting the dummy and refusing to go on. One highlight for Alan was the realization, half-way across, that there would almost certainly be no other human within a radius of 100 kilometres!

After 28 days of wearing the same socks (but turning them inside out each morning!), the group reached Birdsville, hooshed the camels down outside the Birdsville Hotel and celebrated their accomplishment with the pub's famous "7 course lunch" - a meat pie and a six-pack! Did Alan enjoy the experience? Would he ever do it again? Come along to the talk and find out!

Alan kept a daily diary of the adventure and, suitably edited, turned it into a book for children called *'Across the Desert'*. Based on his experiences and interest in camels, he has also written *'Why Camels Like the Desert'* and *'Camels in Australia'*. All three books are illustrated with lots of Alan's own photos and are suitable for children aged 8-12. The books will be on sale for \$10 each.



The meeting starts at 7.30pm on Friday 24 November at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. Visitors welcome!

A new book, *'Celebrating Wilderness'*, was released by Envirobook in conjunction with the Fifth National Wilderness Conference, held in Sydney in September. More than just a coffee-table book of great wilderness photographs from around Australia, the book includes thought-provoking essays on the value and future of wilderness from 11 writers, including Dr Ian Player, Geoff Mosley, Haydn Washington, Helen Gee, Keith Muir and Milo Dunphy.

The book will be launched at the 24 November meeting, where the editor, BMCS member Ian Brown, will make a brief presentation of some of the images from the book. (See page 6 for a review of *'Celebrating Wilderness'*.)

How to monitor and help save the Giant Dragonfly and Blue Mountains Water Skink



Are you interested in helping increase the knowledge about one of the largest and most enigmatic dragonflies in the world and one of the rarest semi-aquatic skinks in Australia?

We are trying to identify the swamps in which these species live so they can be managed appropriately to ensure their continuing survival. We are looking for community volunteers who are prepared to monitor potential swamps in their locality on a regular basis over the season (Nov-Feb) for evidence of either species.

If you are interested, come to the **presentation** and find out more about where these species can be found, how to identify them, their ecology, what is threatening them, and how you can help survey for them.

Presenters:

Ian Baird is a local Giant Dragonfly enthusiast who has studied their ecology and biogeography in the Blue Mountains since 2003

Michael Hensen is the Threatened Species Officer with BMCC

7.30- 9.00 pm, Tuesday 14th November

**Wentworth Falls School of Arts,
(cnr Adele St & GWH, Wentworth Falls)**

Individuals who can join the survey for the season will receive **field-based training on Saturday 25th November** to further develop their skills in identifying these species in their natural environment.

For more information contact Michael Hensen on 4780 5471 or mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au.



HUT NEWS

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OFFSETTING CARBON

It would be lovely to go on living our indulgent, western lifestyle and fix global warming at the same time. We could continue our overseas holidays, purchasing luxury items and driving our cars while carbon dioxide emissions were going down and the threat of drastic climate change was a thing of the past.

Sadly it is a dream. Offsetting carbon has become a huge international business whose main aim is – wait for it, making money - not lowering carbon emissions. Wealthy people, or just plain concerned citizens all over the world, are paying extra to offset their trip or produce their latest music CD so that it can be "carbon neutral". Supposedly the carbon dioxide created by their endeavour is neutralized when the offset company uses the extra payment on a worthwhile carbon absorbing mission.

Many of these companies use tree planting as their method of absorbing carbon dioxide. Trees do use carbon dioxide, but how could planting 10 000 mango trees in India absorb the emissions created from manufacturing a rock group's

latest album? As small trees they absorb very little carbon and when most of them died from lack of water, who made the money and what happened to the carbon offset?

Humans are releasing carbon by burning fossil fuels and we are deluding ourselves to think tree planting can offset this huge boost of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Other cases tell of tree plantations imposed on indigenous people in poor nations where the locals are pushed off their land and not even allowed to collect wood for their cooking fires. Carbon neutral at the price of someone else's livelihood!

So the message isn't simple. If you want to offset an activity or purchase, you need to take care to whom you give

your money. Greenfleet plant trees to offset emissions of motor vehicles of participants. This may be good for Australia's Landcare, but I would question whether it is actually offsetting much carbon dioxide. With the current drought, how many of these tiny seedlings are surviving anyway. Another group, climatefriendly.com uses your offset to fund renewable energy projects and their website is worth a look.

There is no easy fix to carbon dioxide emissions. Probably the best thing any of us can do is to live more simply and commit to buying green power, as suggested by Craig Linn several issues ago.

Rosemary Lathouris

Letter of the Month—November 2006

What is NSW Labor's Real Energy Policy?

In September we asked you to send a submission to the Department of Planning opposing the proposed Anvil Hill coal mine in the Upper Hunter and coal loader at Newcastle.

Over 700 submissions were lodged, the vast majority opposing the developments because of the massive amounts of greenhouse pollution they would facilitate, and the climate change that would fuel.

In response, the Minister for Planning, the Hon Frank Sartor MP, has appointed an 'independent' panel of experts to advise him on the proposed new coal loader. Not only is there no climate change scientist on the panel, but it includes several environmental consultants to the mining industry.

The terms of reference for this panel do not mention climate change or greenhouse pollution, and do not require the panel to consider the massive expansion of coal mining that would be necessary to feed the coal loader.

Send a short message to our local Member and Minister for the Environment Bob Debus using some or all of the following points:

The 10 year State Plan of the NSW government identifies the need to mitigate the causes of global warming and make 'progress towards our long-term greenhouse gas emissions targets'. However, it also boasts that NSW provides 13% of total world exports of coal, and makes no mention of renewable energy investment.

Ask him how NSW can make such contradictory assertions. What, in fact, is the NSW Labor Government's real energy policy?

Ask him to convey to the Minister for Planning your outrage that:

- the terms of reference for the panel do not include climate change impacts, in spite of this having been the major concern of submissions. The climate change implications are far more serious than the noise, air quality and dust impacts which the panel will consider.
- the panel is not required to consider the massive expansion of coal mining that would be necessary to feed the proposed new loader.
- climate scientists are not represented on the panel.

Contact Details: Post to The Hon Bob Debus at Shop 3, Greenway Centre, 107-109 Macquarie Road, Springwood 2777 or email bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au.

For information on how you can reduce your personal contribution to greenhouse emissions, go to www.acfonline.org.au/greenhome.

Rosemary Lathouris and Robin Mosman



an inconvenient truth

Missed out on tickets for BRAID's fundraising event but still want to see the movie?

The Edge Cinema will be screening "An Inconvenient Truth" for one week from Thursday 30th November.

Visit the BMCS website at:

Climate Campaign Goes Gangbusters

There's been no stopping the Citizens Climate Campaign, the email version of Hut News' Letter of the Month, started by Robin Mosman and Rosemary Lathouris last March. Since these intrepid campaigners handed out 600 leaflets at the talk by Tim Flannery at the Sydney Writers Festival, the numbers took off, and now they have 650 people registered to send a Message a Month to various politicians.

The email format makes it very quick and easy – you can send your message in less than 10 minutes. If you'd like to sign up, just send an email saying "Yes!" to climatemz@aapt.net.au.

Robin Mosman

People Power Petitions

Channel Seven's 'Sunrise' currently has an online petition calling on the Federal Government to keep the solar energy rebate, in an effort to slow Global Warming. The Government has already slashed solar electricity rebates and is planning to phase them out completely by the middle of next year. Does this make sense to you?

Go to <http://sunrisefamily.com.au/current/petition/> and sign up.

Australia emits the most planet-changing carbon dioxide per capita of any industrialised country in the world, but our Federal Government fails to sign the Kyoto Protocol, use carbon trading, or encourage genuine large-scale investment in renewable energy. Does this concern you?

Go to http://www.getup.org.au/campaign.asp?campaign_id=51 and sign on.

The time for complacency is over.

Brian Marshall

Since this article was written, the Government has folded on the 'Sunrise' one - reversing their plan to abolish rebates for installing solar power in homes, businesses, schools and community centres (SMH, October 27, p11) - the 'petition' has worked.

So join 'GetUp', get your family, friends and colleagues to join GetUp, and together we'll get the Government to see sense!

A breath of sanity in a nuclear world by Brian Marshall

The following excerpts are from an article by Ian Dunlop (SMH, October 16, p15). Ian was formerly an oil, gas and coal industry executive. He chaired the Australian Coal Association (1987-88) and chaired the Experts Group on Emissions Trading of the Australian Greenhouse Office (1999-2000).

"Climate change, the peaking of oil supply and water shortage are coming together in a manner which will profoundly alter our way of life, our institutions and our ability to prosper on this planet. Each is a major issue, but their convergence has received minimal attention."

"Population is the main driver. In the 60 years since World War II, the world population has grown at an unprecedented rate from 2.5 billion to 6.5 billion today, with 9 billion forecast by 2050. That growth has triggered insatiable demand for natural resources, notably water, oil and other fossil fuels ... just as the bulk of the world's population is about to step onto the growth escalator, global limits emerge that are real and imminent ... free access and unrestricted demand for a finite resource doom the resource through over-exploitation. The benefits of exploitation accrue to individuals, whereas the costs are borne by all."

"Solutions require that we move beyond narrow national self-interest, take a global view and place our society and economy on a genuinely sustainable footing ... It requires realigning our ethical framework, moving away from the winner-takes-all individualism ... to a more co-operative individualism ... Rather than the negative focusing on supposed job cuts and the fear of change, we should focus on the positive: we have a unique opportunity to set humanity on a new course, built around ethical renaissance and sustainable societies ... the tools and technologies are ... available, the cost is less than we have been led to believe, and the benefits greater ... change can be achieved rapidly given the right impetus."

"The missing ingredients for change are acceptance of the problem, the collective will for action, and genuine long-term vision and leadership."

Ian Dunlop's level of enlightenment has yet to infect our governments, particularly at Federal level where it is most needed.

Alexander Downer now accepts climate change, and the Prime Minister has finally conceded that SE Australia's drought could reflect climate change (SMH, October 24, p6), a probability further enforced by data from the Bureau of Meteorology (SMH, October 21-22, p7), but their actions and

rhetoric suggest scepticism and are more consistent with political or economic exploitation. For example, whilst strong social and humanitarian arguments can be made for supporting farmers and rural communities during drought and maintaining a presence back of the divide, this should be tempered with realism. Well over \$2 billion have been allocated since 2001, and some of this must be flowing to unsustainable or increasingly marginal properties. Surely it would be better to buy out such properties and focus funds into combating climate change. This would tackle the cause not the symptom, and should ensure that drought-afflicted but still viable properties do not become decreasingly viable or marginal. It would also make accusations of protecting the rural vote less credible.

In the meantime (SMH, October 17, p6), Nick Minchin has warned that nuclear energy can only be competitive if the coal and gas industries are so heavily taxed that they cease to be viable, yet Messrs Howard, Downer, and Macfarlane continue to advocate the nuclear solution for bridging the emerging economic gap between Australia's economic development and its environmental impact. Indeed, John Howard maintains that, as the holder of very large uranium reserves, Australia must consider the nuclear option. This suggests that the real agenda is to export Australia's very large uranium reserves and have a token nuclear plant to salve Australia's conscience.

In contrast, Kim Beazley, sensing a political edge and failing to confront the many unanswered problems, says "Our future is about renewables not reactors" (SMH, October 17, p6). I agree that this is part of a multifaceted approach to climate change (Hut News, October, p3), but wouldn't it be refreshing for all elected members to recognise the real problems confronting Australia and the World, and develop comprehensive non-partisan solutions? Coalitions are used in time of war and national emergency, and isn't that what we are facing in the war against climate change?

Ian Dunlop indicated that:

"Given the dominance of short-term pragmatism in our political leaders and corporate cultures, it is likely our leaders will continue to procrastinate and not rise to the challenge. The pressure for change must come from the community at large..."

We must neither disappoint him, nor ourselves, nor our children, nor our grandchildren. Be diligent in the application of people power.

Tell (letter/email) John Howard and Kim Beazley to rise above short-term national and personal self-interest and eschew partisan 'solutions'. Join the petitions and make the politicians listen.

Support builds for Gardens of Stone proposal

Around one hundred people attended the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 Katoomba public meeting on Friday 20th October. The meeting was a great success, and included a spirited welcome to country by Aunt Mary, a dazzling presentation of the campaign and outline of recent developments by David Brazil and Brian Marshall, followed by a wide range of questions.

Haydn Washington provided an incisive summary of the outstanding



botanical and geological importance of the reserve proposal, and Karen McLaughlin's DVD left people with a lasting impression. The audience was uplifted by Sonia Bennett's stirring songs and many thanks are owed to Joan Domicelj of the World Heritage Advisory Committee for her skilful facilitation of the meeting.

The meeting heard Colong Foundation for Wilderness and Blue Mountains Conservation Society congratulate Minister Debus for recognising the importance of the full Gardens of Stone reserve proposal. Following recent meetings and site inspections by National Parks and Wildlife Service staff and members of the NPWS Blue Mountains Advisory Council, the possibility of a longer term positive response to the proposal by the Department of Environment and Conservation was applauded.

However the need to maintain pressure on the Government, raise the profile of the issue and to continue to send letters and petitions in the face of opposition to the reserve proposal from high impact recreational user groups remains strong. A campaign brochure with a detachable letter is included with this edition of Hut News, and members are urged to send this into Bob Debus.

If anyone would like more copies of the brochure, please contact David Brazil



Above: Aunt Mary Cooper-King
Left: Sonia Bennett

(Photos: Brent Hoare)

on david@dbrazil.com or phone 4784 3496.

For further information and to register for campaign updates be sure to visit the soon to be launched website <http://www.gardensofstone.info>

**Brent Hoare & David Brazil,
Colong Foundation for Wilderness**

Gardens of Stone Stage 2: a reality check!

Despite Newtonian physics, action and reaction are not always equal and opposite in swaying public opinion and government.

Gardens of Stone Stage 2 (GoS2) advocates have met with Minister Debus (Sep 11), had field meetings with NPWS and the NPWS Advisory Committee (Sep 22 and 23) to evaluate the DEC Assessment Report, held discussions with the NSW Mineral Council and Centennial Coal (Oct 19), have further discussion planned with the Department of Environment and Conservation, have encouraged emails and letters to Minister Debus and had relevant petitions tabled in Parliament (Aug 30).

The first of a series of public meetings was held in Katoomba (Oct 20) and is reported elsewhere in Hut News. It was a success. Such meetings encourage and enhance community support, and help dispel deliberate untruths and inadvertent misconceptions.

This is not enough!

Those opposing GoS2 are (at least) equally active. For example, they held meetings in the Greater Lithgow region in March, have heavily lobbied Gerard Martin (the local member) and Minister Debus, have received support from Lithgow City Council, coal interests, and

some 4WD and trail-bike interests, and Jon Jenkins of the Outdoor Recreation Party recently tabled an opposing petition in Parliament (Oct 19).

The scenario for this 'action and reaction' comprises the upcoming election and the need to shore up ALP seats, the 'don't rock the boat' option represented by 'concessions' on parts of the proposal already being pursued, whilst rejecting the largest and most significant part (Newnes Plateau), and several easily magnified issues regarding potential sand resources, management of irresponsible high-impact recreation, and the future of forestry on Newnes Plateau.

So what am I advocating?

Continue to send letters and emails to Minister Debus and Gerard Martin if you live in his electorate. Every communication is important, regardless of whether you have previously signed a petition or sent in a letter. You only need to make minor changes to ensure each communication is considered. Do this monthly while the campaign is ongoing. GoS2 and particularly Newnes Plateau deserve your support.

Go outside your immediate family and get friends and contacts to make brief submissions. Do they go to parks and native forests for 'nature and stillness' or

to listen to 4WD engines and unsilenced trail bikes? Do they oppose recreational hunting in regions frequented by families and bushwalking groups? Do they recognise the unsurpassed values of this western portion of the Blue Mountains, and that it is part of the 'lungs' of Lithgow and Sydney? And acknowledging climate change, do they realise that GoS2 will have an increasingly important role in CO₂ capture, and that its high cool plateaus will become a haven for endangered species?

**A level playing field doesn't exist;
action MUST exceed reaction!**

Brian Marshall

Contact Details:

The Hon Bob Debus

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107-109 Macquarie Street,
SPRINGWOOD NSW 2777

bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Mr Gerard Martin, MP

Ground Floor, State Office Block,
140 William Street,
BATHURST NSW 2795

gerard.martin@parliament.nsw.gov.au

How you can help the Macquarie Marshes

How the Cascades Dam in Katoomba links to the Macquarie Marshes

As a Blue Mountains resident you can help restore water to the Macquarie Marshes. If you live between Mt Victoria and Springwood you get your water from the Cascades Dam in Katoomba. In addition to run-off from the catchment which supplies about one third of the water used, the Cascades Dam is topped up with 3,650 megalitres (1 ML = 1 million litres) each year from the Fish River Water Supply Scheme¹ (the other ²/₃ that we use²). The Fish River is a tributary of the Macquarie River, which supplies the Marshes only *if there is enough water*.

If we reduce the amount of water we take from the system then the amount taken from the Fish River would also be reduced and made available for the Marshes.

Need for local grey water recycling

Remember when we weren't allowed to have rainwater tanks? Now they are subsidised. Queensland now allows recycled water to be used on gardens. Singapore and London have been drinking recycled water for decades. It is only a matter of time.

By 2026, it is estimated that 1,424 ML per year will be released into the Hawkesbury-Nepean River from the Upper Mountains towns of Mt Victoria, Medlow Bath and Blackheath alone. If this quantity of water were locally treated and reused the amount taken from the Fish River would be reduced by 40%.

The recycled water could be sensitively released into our creeks and streams which are being cemented over, piped, and redirected, and so maintain flows more equitably. The Hawkesbury-Nepean would be saved from huge in-flows and "false loads" which will certainly have unanticipated effects.

(By the way, isn't it odd that the Blue Mountains with its annual rainfall of 1398mm in Katoomba is being supplied with water from Oberon which has an annual average of 844mm? Even allowing for population differences, it is a concern that we cannot live well within our annual rainfall budget of 1398mm.)

Reducing water consumption

You can help the Macquarie Marshes by reducing your water consumption. *We can all use less water and we can also reuse water.*

Test for reducing water consumption (How many can you answer YES to?)

1. Only flush the loo a maximum of 3 times per day?
2. Put a plug in the bath and use this water to flush the loo
3. Use laundry balls and redirect washing-machine water to the veggie garden
4. Use the final rinse water from the last washing-machine

- load for the first wash of the next load
5. Have low-flow delivery shower head
6. Have a timer in your shower
7. Have low-delivery washers on all taps
8. Only wash-up when there are no clean dishes!
9. Use washing-up rinse water for veggie garden
10. Use tank water for all other garden needs, birdbath and dog bowl etc
11. Run water from hot water tap into jug
12. Empty hot water bottle water on garden

I did all this and reduced my daily use from 85 to 2 litres/day.

Maintaining water purity

Eliminate all but the simplest soaps and use laundry balls - you will save money and the water you use will be almost free of soap remnants.

Send in your ideas to the next issue of Hut News and we'll send you a copy of Craig Linn's Sustainability booklet.

Rosemary Morrow

¹ Sydney Catchment Authority (May 2005) 'Dams of Greater Sydney and Surrounds; Blue Mountains'

² The average daily output from the Cascade Dam system is 15 ML. The inflow from the Fish River is 10 ML, except during the current 'drought' when only 8 ML is supplied.

A series of public meetings on

New Ideas for Australia 2007

Checking our Ecological Footprints

Professor Bob Douglas, a leader of the Canberra SEE-Change movement, a grass-roots movement for Society, Economics and the Environment.

2pm Sunday 19 November

Uniting Church Hall, cnr Grose & Megalong Sts, Leura.

"So whose hospital is it, anyway?"

Professor Stephen Leeder, Professor of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of Sydney, with Neall Blewett on the interface of public health and private medicine.

2pm Sunday 26 November

Mid-Mountains Community Centre, New St, Lawson.

Dealing with America: the UN, the US, and Australia

Professor John Langmore, former Federal Parliamentarian and Director of the UN Division for Social Policy and Development

2pm Sunday 3 December

Mid-Mountains Community Centre, New St, Lawson.

All are invited. Donations are welcome to cover expenses. For more information, contact Dr Jim Tulip on 4758 8104

Delta Electricity to take even more water from the Macquarie Marshes

At a time when the Macquarie Marshes need every drop of water they can get, it was disappointing to read a Confidential Item on the Agenda of the Lithgow City Council Meeting on 16 October 2006 - Proposal to Trade Part of Fish River Water Allocation.

It appears that yet more water will be diverted east from the Fish River, to cool Delta's two coal-fired power stations. Lithgow Council has a 2,092 ML annual allocation from the Fish River Supply, but currently only uses about 30% of its allocation. The water Lithgow didn't use was available to users further west in the Macquarie River system, as well as for the Macquarie Marshes.

But not any more. It now appears Delta Electricity will be taking up Council's unused allocation, on top of the 8,184 ML it already takes from the Fish River annually, further depriving drought-stricken farmers and the Macquarie Marshes of desperately needed water.

This deal makes a mockery of Delta's claims for the recently approved modification (read expansion by 23%) of Mount Piper

Power Station, that all additional water requirements would be met from the Springvale Colliery dewatering system, and that no additional water would be extracted from the Cox's or Fish River systems.

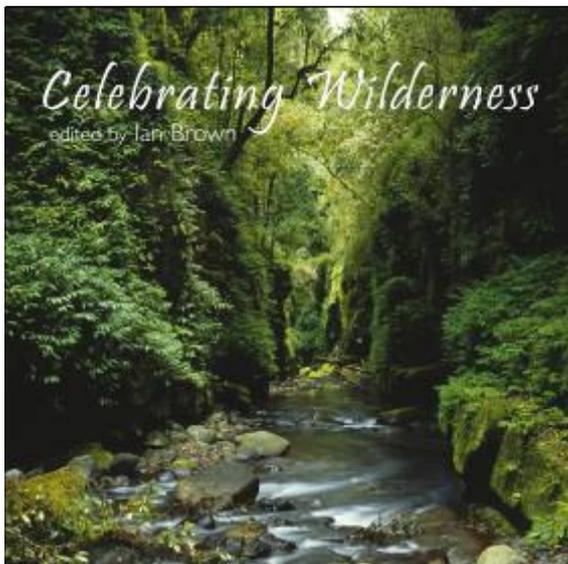
The Cox's River is already in strife because of Delta's insatiable water demand. Lake Lyell has been at 30% capacity since 1997, now they want to take more water from the Fish River system and more groundwater from aquifers beneath Newnes Plateau as well.

At a time when Delta's water use is already unsustainable, the Labor-dominated Lithgow City Council and Labor Member for Bathurst, Mr Gerard Martin, are actively lobbying to double the size of Mount Piper Power Station.

And it will be the long-term health of the Macquarie Marshes which will pay the price, once again.

Chris Jonkers

**Lithgow Regional Sub-committee Coordinator
(Lithgow Environment Group)**



Book Review:
Celebrating Wilderness
edited by Ian Brown
RRP \$60

Envirobook, with the support of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness, published this glossy large-format work of writings and colour photographs to coincide with the Fifth National Wilderness Congress, held in Sydney recently.

It is a superbly presented book, with 46 full-page colour wilderness photographs by Rob Jung, David Neilson, Rob Blakers and Ian Brown.

More importantly, it is a book of very different and thought-provoking papers by eleven Australian and overseas writers, ranging from historic words by Myles Dunphy, to an appraisal of the ongoing battle for the Tasmanian forests by Helen Gee. Geoff Mosley tackles the

‘wilderness and the future’ question, while Ian Brown stimulates us from the Antarctic wilderness.

But what exactly is being celebrated? Gee hasn’t much to celebrate, except that she has been ‘uplifted and enriched by the experience of the extraordinary teamwork and perseverance of some of the best people on this planet’. In these days of climate change, habitat loss, and the rampages of the ever-growing consumer society, what is there to celebrate? Some might ask: is wilderness even relevant now?—especially in the face of arguments that wilderness is an outdated concept, that it is a human exclusion zone, that it denies indigenous occupation and is linked to the colonial doctrine of terra nullius.

Answers to all these questions, I am happy to say, are to be found in the book. For a start, we in Australia can celebrate that we still have large amounts of country which is substantially in wilderness condition, even if much of it is not formally reserved or even recognised. In his excellent paper (also presented to the 8th World Wilderness Congress in 2005), Keith Muir takes us around the nation to see ‘where we are at’, and canvasses all the important issues.

We are in a better position to celebrate if we clear away all the misunderstandings surrounding the word ‘wilderness’ and see it for what it is. In his comprehensive paper, Haydn Washington does just that. Wilderness should simply be regarded as a ‘large

natural intact area’—or ‘lanai’ as he calls it. It is the most natural end of the conservation spectrum; the part least impacted by modern society.

For me, the issue of past and present indigenous custodianship is a key one. Importantly, Washington acknowledges that while wilderness advocates have never denied such interests, ‘the past history of wilderness campaigning in Australia may not have given explicit recognition to social justice and the rights of indigenous peoples’.

Muir also tackles this theme. Inter alia, he states: ‘... those concerned with environmental justice should close ranks with those who support social justice and use their collective talent to fight for the Earth. This isn’t a dress rehearsal where we can split hairs over the meaning of wilderness while the bulldozers push exploration roads into remote river catchments. Those concerned with social and environmental justice will learn respect for the different perceptions of wilderness most quickly when joined in a common struggle. As the world’s resources run out, these beautiful, precious undamaged areas will be on the front line for those environmental issues climbing to the top of the political agenda: energy and greenhouse policy.’

And therein is something else to celebrate: that many in the conservation movement and many Aboriginal people too, are coming to recognise that if we don’t find the common ground, all is lost. There are pathways ahead. We must proceed along them together, and celebrate each forward step.

This book will look nice on your coffee table. It’s also vital reading, for wilderness advocate and doubter alike.

Andy Macqueen

Nursery News Kevin Bell

Our featured pea genus this month, *Gompholobium* (Wedge-peas), differs from the previous ones in that the name is not derived from a foreign botanist but refers to the shape of the globular seed pod.

The bush in the Upper Mountains is ablaze at the moment with the brilliant yellow pea-flowers of *Gompholobium latifolium* and *G. grandiflorum*. These medium sized shrubs are easy to identify as they have the only uniformly-coloured pea-flowers and the leaves are arranged in three leaflets, like three fingers of the hand. Surprisingly, the flowers of *G. grandiflorum* are smaller than those of *G. latifolium*, perhaps reflecting the order of discovery and naming. Currently, we have both species for sale and are planning to add two others, *G. huegelii*

(also yellow flowers) and *G. uncinatum* which has pretty all-orange flowers.

We did brisk business at our Spring sale, held on 14 October at the Conservation Hut, raising \$1345. This equates to 538 plants sold over the three hours of the morning or 3 plants per minute or one every 20 seconds. Our team of volunteers worked hard, not only on the morning, but in the weeks leading up to the sale. We were at the Lawson Magpie markets the next day and sold another \$345 worth of plants. A highly successful weekend!

But does this mean that we have no stock left? Certainly not and our Blackheath and Lawson sites have plenty of plants to tempt you. If you can’t get there during the week, we will be at the Magpie Markets on Sunday 9th November for the last time this year. And don’t forget, we have gift certificates

which make a wonderful present for any keen gardener.



The bright yellow flowers and unusual steel-grey buds of the Large Wedge-pea, *Gompholobium grandiflorum*, stand out against the soft grey-green of its foliage.

(Photo: www.opac.hornsby.nsw.gov.au)

New book by
Jim Smith

The Last of the Cox's River Men – Ben Esgate 1914-2003

Ben Esgate was born in between the deaths of the Gundungurra elders Billy Lynch and Billy Russell. From his youth, he instinctively sought out the ancient Aboriginal pathways and campsites of the Blue Mountains. He developed, in particular, a deep knowledge of the country of the Therabulat or middle Cox's river clan of the Gundungurra. He closely studied the plants, trees, wildlife, fish, weather patterns and natural cycles of the region. Ben was the last living naturalist to have known the world of the Cox River before the devastating environmental changes brought about by the drought years of 1935-1942, the effects of erosion caused by rabbits and floods, excessively frequent fires, fox predation and the damming of the river to create Lake Burragarang. For about 40 years he carried out a one-man fox extermination campaign to try and save the last colony of Rock Wallabies in the Megalong Valley. No one understood better than Ben Esgate the ecology of the fish species of the Cox and Duckmaloi River catchments.

This book is based on almost 20 years of Ben's walks and talks with Jim Smith as well as the author's historical research into such topics as the history of the Cox's river settler communities, the activities of the Volunteer Defence Corps in the Blue Mountains and the Aboriginal and environmental history of the region.

The most important project carried out by Ben and Jim was the interpretation of the Aboriginal legend of Gurangatch and Mirragan. Ben was the only living person able to identify the locations of important Dreamtime landmarks in this Gundungurra creation story of the Blue Mountains.

This book describes the life of Ben Esgate from his first trip to the Megalong Valley in 1919, his struggles to survive the

depression when he learned to live off the land, his close relationship with the Carlon family of "Green Gully" Megalong, his career as a builder and his explorations of the Blue Mountains over 80 years. Ben thought deeply about the mystery of time and expressed his life's philosophy, during his last years, in the creation of a sculpture from an ancient fallen Red Cedar tree that he called the "Tree of Life".

The book is well illustrated with early pictures of the Katoomba and Megalong Valley areas and Ben's bushwalking activities. It includes three of Ben's own sketches of historic bush huts, two wonderful caricatures of his weathered face by cartoonist Mick Joffe and a reproduction of a magnificent drawing by artist Elizabeth McAlpine of the "Birrimbunnungalai" waterhole on the Cox, being used by Gundungurra people for freshwater herring harvesting, as interpreted by Ben. The book also reprints all of Ben's own writings, including his own autobiographical notes and the three articles he wrote for bushwalking magazines.

This book is being produced as a limited edition of only a few hundred copies. It will not be sold in bookshops. It is only available by prepaid mail order. To order a copy send \$27.50 (includes postage and GST) by **24 November 2006**, to:

Jim Smith
65 Fletcher Street
Wentworth Falls NSW 2782

Make cheques and money orders payable to Jim Smith. Institutions can be invoiced. Books signed and receipts issued on request. Full refund is available if not satisfied.

Jim Smith

Unveiling of the New Glasshouse

Past and present nursery volunteers, members of the Management Committee and invited guests from the NPWS and Blue Mountains City Council celebrated the unveiling of the new glasshouse at Blackheath by former long-serving manager, David Coleby on Tuesday 26th September. The look of surprise on David's face when he pulled the curtain aside and saw the plaque inscribed "The David Coleby Glasshouse; Nursery Manager 1993-2005" was a joy to see.

The new glasshouse doubles in size that of the former and has separate computer controlled irrigation systems for cuttings and seeds, both of which are in thermostatically controlled heated beds.

The Society first offered local plants for sale in the late 1980s at the old wooden hut at the Valley of the Waters. These were raised at home by enthusiasts, among whom were Jill Dark and Robyn Corringham, co-authors with Margaret Baker of books on the plants of the Blue Mountains.

Robyn became the first nursery manager when the NPWS offered space at the Blackheath works compound under the encouragement of the manager, Gregor Manson, in 1990 and the first glass- and shade-houses were constructed.

Robyn retired in December 1993 and David Coleby assumed the position for the next twelve years, during which time large contracts for the Roads and Traffic Authority were filled, bringing in considerable revenue for the Society.

The current manager, Kevin Bell, took over in March 2005



Front Row (L to R): Kate Cowper, Kevin Bell, David Coleby
Back Row: John King, Margaret Withington, Rae Druitt, Joamy Smith, Vera Hartley, Diane Stephens, Sue Nicol, Ray Kennedy.

and the new glasshouse and work-shed were constructed in 2006. These have enabled an expansion of the range of plants grown.

Currently the nursery has contracts with Blue Mountains City Council, the NPWS, and North Katoomba Bushcare Group among others as well as selling to the public on Tuesdays at Blackheath, Lawson on Wednesdays and at the Lawson Magpie Markets every third Sunday. The complete plant list can be found on our web-site.

Kevin Bell

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING GROUP

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. **Cost of insurance and affiliation fees is \$15 per member.**
For further information, contact the Walks Convenor, David Bowskill (4757 3416, davidbow@tpg.com.au).

BEFORE ATTENDING, PLEASE DISCUSS THE WALK WITH THE LEADER (listed below)

- THIS IS ESSENTIAL IF THIS IS YOUR FIRST WALK OR YOU ARE UNSURE OF THE CLASSIFICATION.

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS

Usually 'Short Day' walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of average fitness. Graded **MEDIUM**, these walks may include some short rock scrambles or sections off track. Bring morning tea and lunch. Carry at least 1 litre of **WATER**, 2 litres on warm days.

Nov-13	Empire pass, Lawson <i>Magnificent waterfalls, creek walk.</i>	Ron	4757 1526	Lawson Station carpark	9.00am
Nov-20	Bus trip. Seacliff Bridge, Coalcliff <i>Local walk, swim and BBQ lunch. Fare \$10, pay when booking.</i>	Birgitta	4784 3191	BMCC Depot, South St, N.Kat.	8.30am
Nov-27	Hanging Gardens, Wentworth Falls <i>Another new walk for our group.</i>	Heather	4739 1493	Wentworth Falls Station carpark	8.30am
Dec-4	Mermaids Cave, Blackheath <i>Rainforest walk.</i>	Norah	4757 4058	Blackheath Station carpark	8.30am
Dec-11	Lithgow Water Works, Lithgow <i>Walk through forest to dam, swim. Lunch at Lithgow Workers' Club.</i>	Jock	4758 6346	Mt Victoria Station	8.30am

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS

EASY to MEDIUM grade walks conducted to suit walkers on the day. Slower walkers are catered for; on longer walks there may be an option for a slower group to complete only a section of the walk. Carry at least 1 litre of **WATER**, 2 litres on warm days.

Nov-16	West Katoomba Lookouts <i>Easy cliff-top walk to lookouts over Megalong Valley. Suited to those of limited ability.</i>	Joan	4782 2218	Gearins Hotel carpark	10.00am
Nov-23	Cooks River Walk <i>Full day walk from Tempe Station to Canterbury Station. Take lunch</i>	John	4757 1558	Top of escalators at Central Station	10.35am
Nov-30	A walk through time* <i>Interpreting the geology, past and present, of the Jamison Valley along the Overcliff Walk, with the option of doing the Undercliff Walk as well.</i>	Meredith	4782 4823	Wentworth Falls carpark (nr clock)	9.00am
Dec-7	Leura Cascades round walk <i>Easy walk to various lookouts on Prince Henry Cliff Walk. Some steps, great views.</i>	Joan	4782 2218	Cnr Megalong St & Leura Mall	9.00am
Dec-14	Advance notice of Christmas Party at Wentworth Falls Lake Contact Simone on 4757 3416				

* Part of the **THURSDAY INFORMATIVE WALKS SERIES** - a full program can be found on our website.

WEEKEND WALKS

Before attending, please discuss the walk with the leader or the Weekend Walks organiser, Jim Percy (4758 6009). Carry at least 1 litre of **WATER**, 2 litres on warm days.

Nov-18	Victoria Falls, Burra Korain Flat MED <i>Jim is unable to lead his Mt Banks adventure, so Meredith will lead this walk via Victoria Falls to the Grose River, lunch at the junction of Victoria Creek and the Grose. Swimming opportunities in delightful pools.</i>	Meredith	4782 4823	Mt Victoria Station carpark	8.30am
Nov-25	Mt Boyce cliff-top walk EASY/MEDIUM <i>Delightful short walk in this picturesque area. Spectacular views into the Kanimbla Valley</i>	June	4787 7312	Blackheath, south side carpark	8.30am
Dec-2	Sassafras, Glenbrook, Magdala Cks MED <i>Victory and Magdala Tracks, possible detour to Numantia Falls. A cool walk even if the day is warm.</i>	Karen	4751 9695	Victory Track, Faulconbridge (opposite Corridor of Oaks)	9.00am
Dec-9	Murphy's Glen EASY <i>Murphy's Glen Firetrail, Turpentine Track to Bedford Ck for a dip in the pool. Early start as a warm day is anticipated.</i>	Bill	4758 8545	Woodford Station carpark	8.00am
Dec-16	Mt Wilson and Christmas Lunch EASY <i>Short walk to October Creek bogey hole to work up an appetite for lunch at Sefton Cottage - expected to be \$30 each. Bookings with \$5 deposit essential.</i>	Bob	4757 2694	Mt Victoria Station carpark	11.00am

If you would like to lead a walk, or if you haven't seen your favourite walk on the program for a while and you are not confident to lead it yourself - let me know and I will try to get someone to lead it with you.

Jim - Phone 4758 6009 or email jp34@tpg.com.au

Multi-Day Activity: DORRIGO 30 April - 4 May 2007

These activities have been organised annually since 1999 to allow BMCS Members to learn more about the environment of a part of NSW and become better acquainted with fellow members. They operate on a non-profit basis and members contribute voluntary labour to organise them.

Next years' first activity includes four nights at the Lookout Motor Inn, Dorrigo, with day visits available to the Never Never Track System, Syndicate Ridge, Rain Forest Skywalk, Birdwalk, Bellinger River Valley, State Forests between Bostobrick and Cascade, and the townships of Dorrigo and Bellinger.

Organisers will consult with participants to provide walks from easy grade upwards depending on participants needs. Transport will be by sharing private vehicles and there will be a food preparation roster.

Enquiries to Don Morison (02) 8230 2116.

To book, send a money order to Box 170, Katoomba 2780 - \$40 per person.

BMCS Bushcare

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare group works in the Blue Mountains National Park at Wentworth Falls on the 2nd Saturday of each month.

Tools are provided but bring morning tea, gloves and drinking water. New members are always welcome. Contact Karen on 4757 1929 for more information.

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Rod Quirk

Phone 4784 1711

Email: rod.quirk@exemail.com.au

PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782