

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



From the President ...

Before becoming President, I thought that I knew the extent of our Society's activities, but I am constantly amazed by how much our members are doing and the variety of tasks we are involved with – bushwalking, nurseries, bushcare, stalls, campaigns, press releases, the *Drink Tap Water* campaign. It is inspiring to see what people are up to.

It is often easy to notice the multitude of things we need to stop in order to protect the bush. In contrast, the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 Proposal is an exciting opportunity to create new reserves in order to protect Mt Airly, Mt Genowlan and the Newnes Plateau. In the words of one of our bushwalkers, "This beautiful unspoilt scenery and important local history must be preserved." Although it may be a long haul, the effort to protect these places as National Park/State Conservation Areas is well worth pursuing and I would love to hear from anyone who wants to help!

The goals of protecting both our environment and history have also come to the fore in our opposition to the NSW Government's planning changes. I recently met with the Chair of the Blue Mountains Branch of the National Trust who shares our concerns about the impact of increased complying development (and hence less environmental assessment and community consultation). Hopefully the groundswell of community concern will start to be heard by those in power!

I hope to meet many more of you at our next Monthly Meeting at the Conservation Hut.

Tara Cameron



Climate Change & Sustainability Officer, Helen Deane, with Flint Duxfield of AidWatch, Professor Anu Muhammad, Craig Linn and Tara Cameron at the Katoomba presentation.

Our CCS Focus on Bangladesh

The afternoon of Sunday 18 May was particularly cold and windy in Katoomba, but that didn't stop some sixty Blue Mountains residents (including many Consoc members) attending a presentation by **Professor Anu Muhammad from Bangladesh**. As part of an AidWatch-hosted national speaking tour, BMCS supported and organized the Katoomba leg of the tour. Prof. Muhammad revealed to the audience how one of the largest proposed open-cut coal mines in the world, the **Phulbari Coal Project**, would have dramatic consequences for both Bangladesh and the world.

The impact on Bangladesh will be enormous. The proposed mine site covers some 6,500 hectares and will displace around 50,000 people. AidWatch estimates that between 220,000 and 470,000 people will be directly and indirectly affected. Further, the water table, aquifers, and river systems will all be adversely impacted, and food crops will be decimated. And, for all that, the mine will bring little benefit to Bangladesh. The mine is foreign owned, and the 6% royalty stream on offer will largely be eaten up by loss of some of the country's best agricultural land. Most of the coal will be exported (not used locally), and over the life of the mine will add some 1.2 billion tonnes of CO₂ to the world's atmosphere, thus affecting us all. But for Bangladesh even a one-metre sea-level rise will inundate 15% to 20% of the country! Naturally, there is vociferous local opposition to the mine.

This proposed mine has strong Australian connections, past and present. The site was originally discovered by BHP in the 1990s and the currently planned funding is dependent on the Asian Development Bank (ADB). **Given that Australia is the ADB's fifth biggest donor and our Treasurer, Wayne Swan, is a governor of the bank, Australia will have a big say in whether the mine goes ahead, so the BMCS participation in the tour is our attempt to keep the issue before our Government.** To learn more about this climate-change-driving mine proposal, that offers little but problems for the people of Bangladesh, and a lot more CO₂ for the world, read the full *Problem Project Paper* or the shorter *Fact Sheet*, both available from <http://www.aidwatch.org.au/>

Craig Linn



There is now ample evidence that **Rivers SOS** is escalating into the most active grass roots conservation campaign currently underway in NSW. The **Rivers SOS Alliance** now includes 40 groups, with representation from agricultural bodies as well as from leisure and conservation organisations.

It is a single issue campaign calling for the NSW government to mandate a safety zone of at least 1km around all rivers in the State, to protect them from further permanent damage through the effects of mining under, or too close to, river beds.

Brian Marshall and Kerrie Sebbens represented Consoc at the RSOS AGM at Parliament House on 8 May 2008, after which the excellent expository film *Rivers of Shame 2* was shown.

This updated 30 minute film will be screened for members and guests at our next Monthly Meeting. A forum will follow, after supper, when we will be discussing means by which we can boost the effectiveness of the campaign.

The cause is vital! Please bring family and friends!

Also, **Kylie Madden**, Department of Environment and Climate Change, will speak on **THREATENED & PEST ANIMALS OF GREATER SOUTHERN SYDNEY**

MONTHLY MEETING
7.30pm FRIDAY 27 June, 2008

Conservation Hut, Fletcher Street (far west end)
Wentworth Falls

HUT NEWS

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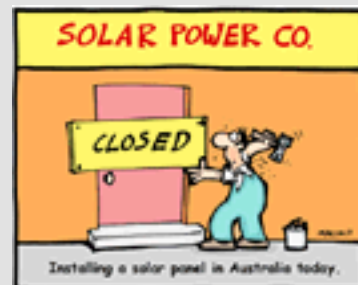
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Letter of the Month – June 2008

Our regular request to members
for campaign action by letter writing

By Robin Mosman & Rosemary Lathouris

SOLAR REBATE – Going, going, gone?



On Tuesday 13 May the Federal Budget removed the \$8000 solar panel rebate for households with an income of more than \$100,000.

Environment Minister Peter Garrett justified means-testing the grant saying it would “ensure that the solar rebates would go to those who need them most”. However, with a typical unit costing around \$20,000 for an average home, a householder would still have to pay \$12,000, meaning that only wealthier households are likely to install solar power.

When questioned on the *7.30 Report*, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said: “You’ve actually got to start to draw the line somewhere. At the end of the day, you know, do we want millionaires getting the baby bonus, millionaires getting the solar panel rebate?”

The Federal government has clearly missed the point. This is not an issue of social justice. The key benefits of increased solar power generation are not for the individual, but for the overall reduction of greenhouse emissions and the support of an industry that can help reduce emissions in the future.

The threshold is already having a devastating effect with solar installers estimating that 90% of their grid business will now be cancelled, according to a report in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 22 May 2008.

**Send a letter to the Minister for the Environment, Peter Garrett
PO Box 6022,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600**

Tell him how disappointed you are, making some or all of the following points:

On Tuesday 13 May the Federal Budget removed the \$8000 solar panel rebate for households with an income of more than \$100,000.

You justified means testing the grant saying it would “ensure that the solar rebates would go to those who need them most”.

Your government has missed the point. This is not an issue of social justice. The key benefits of increased solar power generation are not for the individual, but for the overall reduction of greenhouse emissions and the support of an industry that can help reduce emissions in the future.

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- *Will your Government raise the threshold on the solar panel rebate so that it does in fact only exclude “millionaires”, as the Prime Minister stated it should?*
- *What other measures is your Government undertaking to lower Australia’s soaring greenhouse gas emissions?*
- *Why is your Government so unconcerned for the viability of small Australian businesses trying to make a living from solar installation?*

A tribute to Walks Leader Ron Wheeler

A pensive **Ron Wheeler** is joined by Alan McLaughlin, his walking companion over many years, and one of his many furry friends. On Sunday 25 May, fifty Consoc bushwalkers assembled at the home of Judith Dyer to thank Ron for his twelve years of leading bushwalks for the Society. Ron has been a nimble Blue Mountains bushwalker for more than sixty years! As Bob van Reyswood said when making the presentation, “If we want to know anything about the Blue Mountains, its walks or its history, we ask Ron: we have named him our *Blue Mountains Encyclopedia*.” **Liz van Reyswood, Walks Convenor**



Helen Deane is our new Climate Change & Sustainability Officer. She lives in Blackheath and is Secretary of the Blackheath Climate Action Group. Helen also helps co-ordinate the Blackheath Community Markets and has just been accepted into a Masters in Sustainable Agriculture.

2007 was a watershed year in understanding the implications of future climate instability. Al Gore's film *The Inconvenient Truth* and the IPCC reports helped focus governments, businesses, communities and individuals on the challenges ahead.

Unfortunately, all too soon after these reports were released it became clear that the figures they presented were underestimating the threat. The recommendations put forward by the IPCC report, discussions at the Bali conference and ideas detailed at the 20-20 summit are now clearly not enough to tackle the issues that are rapidly facing our global community. Climate change effects that were projected to occur fifty or one hundred years in the future are beginning to unfold now: underestimating the speed of the Arctic ice melt is just one of the more well-known examples.

Recently, a series of global events have converged that demonstrate where some of our biggest vulnerabilities lie: global economic instability, food shortages and energy descent (Peak Oil). These are just three problems that have indicated the interrelated dependencies that have been so poorly managed worldwide.

In just over a year there has been a massive groundswell in grassroots activism in response to these threats. Many groups gained momentum prior to the Federal election but some have since lost steam. There was an optimistic belief that a new government could usher in much-needed change and although symbolic change was immediate, the radical and brave steps that were hoped for from the start, have not been forthcoming. The lack of sufficient action from governments has prompted many individuals and organisations to side step the political arena altogether and take it upon themselves to raise awareness and prepare for a major structural, economic and cultural transition.

There is of course always a place for lobbying governments: it is unfair and unrealistic to expect individuals and communities to shoulder the whole burden of climate change adaptation. Previous government campaigns instructing individuals to change their light bulbs and turn off their appliances are not only missing the point, they are also a dangerous distraction from the largest and most destructive industries responsible for our poor emissions record. Government and big business should always be hit with consistent and vigilant questions regarding their policies and practices, but this lobbying has to be conducted alongside community action. The reality is that government is moving much too slowly and it is fairly safe to say that no government will implement a much-needed zero emissions policy any time soon.

Some people may believe that technology will save us or government will step in if the situation becomes truly dire. But do we want to wait for that eventuality? How are we supposed to afford new energy-intensive technology when resources continue to be stretched and how will different emergencies be triaged? Who will judge who needs help the most? Holding a vague and optimistic belief that some anomalous group will save us from disaster is not only a strange philosophy but also an untested one. If we are to be responsible members of our community we have to wake up to the reality that many of these magic bullets will never be fired, and that while governments have their conferences and policy brainstorming sessions we can act in their place to ensure our own welfare.

Many people can become confused and discouraged by governments, businesses, scientists and individuals arguing about the accuracy of economic, peak oil or climate change projections. These arguments can quite literally continue until the end of time. Some believe it is a conspiracy to enable governments to raise

prices, others believe it is scientists chasing grants or right wingers breeding fear or greenies advocating a return to the wild or any number of other ulterior motives. No doubt many groups have seized upon the current crisis as a way to further their agenda, but this does not change the reality of our situation.

Whether or not the climate change predictions turn out to be as bad as predicted, whether or not oil peaked last year or will in thirty years, whether or not the food availability issues will strike home is irrelevant. If we act now and nothing happens, we will have helped create more responsible governments and business by persistent lobbying and activism. We will have helped to free ourselves from polluting energy sources by supporting Green Power, leaving the car at home and demanding no more coal-fired power stations. We will have encouraged local employment by supporting local business and lobbying for better broadband. We will create healthier local produce by supporting our community gardens and markets, food co-ops and local producers. We will demand cleaner and more reliable public transport through our lobbying groups and our votes. And in many ways, most importantly, we will have created more sustainable homes and communities through education, communication and co-operation. These are just a few of the options available to us now to act upon. If on the other hand, we don't act now and even half of what is predicted unfolds, the consequences are truly tragic for our families, our communities and our world. I know which gamble I would rather take.

To join the Climate Change & Sustainability sub-committee or for more information please contact me at helen.deane@gmail.com



The Blue Mountains Need You...

on our **Land Use Sub-Committee** to ensure each and every land development takes place under legitimate environmental scrutiny and regulation.

A new member had this to say of her experience:

"I have now been to three meetings of the Consoc Land Use Sub-Committee and it is not as daunting as I feared – no, you do not have to write submissions to Council and no, you do not have to have a thorough understanding of Council policy, rules and regs – a healthy respect for the magic environment that we are lucky to live in and an attentive eye and ear to what is going on around you is enough to ensure lively participation in ways and means to maintain it."

If you are interested in joining this group please ring Tara Cameron (BMCS President) on 4751 1130.



CONSERVING LORD HOWE ISLAND

In their passage to this (Norfolk) Island 'Supply' fell in with an Isle in the Latitude and Longitude which had never been before discovered. Lt Ball named it Lord Howe's Island, on Landing they found a great many Turtle, 18 or 20 of which they brought away with them, they likewise, met with several Birds of the Dovekind, which they come so near to, as to knock down with a short stick...Trees of the Palm kind were numerous. In this his February 1788 account, First Fleet Surgeon, **George Bouchier Worgan**, doesn't mention eating the Woodhens, but he and his company certainly dined merrily on the turtles.

Here then was a fantasy island, 760km northeast of Sydney, 10km long and 2km wide, remnant of extensive volcanic system, uninhabited, coral reefed with fishes, having 23 land bird species, 239 species of indigenous vascular plants, populated by organisms arriving by wind and wave dispersal, a convergence zone for warm tropical waters and cooler southern currents – a proper paradise.

Steal forward 225 years to 2003, and all is not so Edenic. This pimple in the Pacific has 21 years of World Heritage Listing, but the Lord Howe Island Board has appointed **Terry Wilson as its Manager– Environmental/World Heritage**. Why? To lead an environmental unit addressing such problems as threatened species, pest species, weed invasion, revegetation, quarantine management, community education, volunteer participation and external grant utilisation. Terry, who has just completed his five-year contract, came to the Hut to tell us what his unit with Board

compliance was able to achieve.

Firstly, Terry admits to being “adequately” endowed with funding – a NSW Environment Trust gave \$1.2m over 04-07, the Commonwealth gave \$650,000 over 06-07, and there is recurrent funding from the Board, some \$400,000 raised through a bed tax levy on every tourist visitor to the island! And that was just for weed eradication!! These revelations brought an audible gasp from the audience and a silent resolve to promptly “Twist” our state and federal guardians on behalf of our Blue Mountains.

Putting the cash issue aside, here is a chronicle of the remarkable things Terry, his team and the Board have done:

Cats, pigs and goats have all been removed. Cars have been limited. Healthy Kentia palms continue to earn good export dollars. Woodhens have been brought back from near extinction on the heights of Mt Gower to more than 127 birds across the island. Although 9 of the original land bird species are extinct, the most recent bird extinction was the Boobook owl in the 1950s.

The impact of the resident *homo sapiens* species has been capped at 350. Only 16,000 visitors of this same species are allowed in each year, and the number of such nesters cannot exceed 400 at any time. Weed control has targeted major woody weeds, *Cherry Guava*, *Pitosporum undulatum*, *Ochna serrulata* and *Cottoneaster glaucophyllus*. Bitou bush has been sprayed from helicopters. Re-vegetation has been focused on Sallywood Swamp Forest and Mangroves.

There is a plan for 2011 for eradication of rats and mice, the first attempt on a populated island. This is underpinned by clever quarantine management at source rather than at destination. For waste management, new world best practice has meant that recyclables are separated,

compacted and sent off to the mainland as a revenue source. Plastic bag usage has fallen due to bulk storage of commodities in lieu of packaging and a levee of 50c per bag. Burning and burying waste has ceased: food, cardboard, green waste and septic pump-out is composted in a Vertical Composting Unit. Eco-volunteers are welcomed. Solar or wind power to come?

So we have here, as Terry suggested, a fascinating example of a full-ranging ecological recovery program operating hugely free of financial fetters in a naturally controlled territory. Not quite Eden revisited, but although such an approach cannot be readily exported to mainland NSW, it does allow us to believe that when, as it must, government focus and money irrevocably switch to sustainability, then much can be achieved.

Come back, George, and take another look, and do have another bowl of turtle soup!

Ron Withington

No country for old anglers...



This delicate insect was spotted by our Interpretative Bushwalkers on 18 May 2006 at Edinburgh Rock, and Christine Davies had it identified by the Australian Museum as the **Bird of Paradise Fly (Callipapus sp)**. The male fly seen here (the girls are bigger but have no wings) was photographed by John Massar on 8 May 2008. Christine calls it a **Feathertail Fly** – a really happy appellation. It appears to be true that the bug enjoys its one-day lifespan only during the fifth month of the year. Seems a great pity that the name ‘Mayfly’ had already been taken!



Vale Dorothy Butler 1911-2008

Dorothy (Dot) Butler has died at 96. The ‘Barefoot Bushwalker’ had many accolades. In 1936 she climbed Crater Bluff in the Warrumbungles with Dr Eric Dark, a first. It is there that her ashes have been scattered. Dot gained Honorary Memberships of the Sydney Bushwalkers and the NZ Alpine Club, and became an active member of the Colong Foundation. She helped Myles Dunphy set up the Garrawarra National Park as part of the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council, and also helped celebrate another major victory in the declaration of the Tallowa Primitive Reserve. The Colong Committee which was formed in 1968 (later the Colong Foundation for Wilderness) saved Colong Caves from limestone mining and prevented massive damage to the Kowmung River as well as preventing the destruction of the Boyd Plateau native forest for pine plantations.

Dot also worked for Myles Dunphy's vision of a Greater Blue Mountains National Park and saw the dedication and celebration of the listing of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area in 2001. Colin Putt's foreword to her autobiography, *The Barefoot Bushwalker*, says that “she involves, encourages and teaches others, who, but for her leadership, might never get into adventuring at all, and leaves them, hundreds of them, capable and innovative adventurers in their own right.” A wonderful example to both bushwalkers and activists alike. *Shirley Dean, Colong Bulletin, May 08*

A bigger dose of GVEHO

GVEHO might sound like a pharmaceutical for depression but it in fact stands for optimism – Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations by the Federal Department of Environment and Water Resources. And the news is great! Due to the high quality of our activities as documented by our Treasurer Bart Beech and the team, and perhaps because of a more empathetic government, our grant for this year has been increased from \$2500 to \$4500. This reverses the down trend of the past five years. More funds for the fight!

Bushcare Officer in print

A double act by Clive Barker, our Threatened Species and Bushcare Officer. Clive has replied to a request for comment on a draft of the new edition of *Grow Me Instead* by the Nursery & Garden Industry Association. He says it is great that this horticultural industry body is now taking the weed threat from horticulture much more seriously and spreading the word within the industry itself as well as to the public. Clive has also begun writing a regular column in the BMCC Bushcare Newsletter, *Gecko*, in which he is identifying weed invaders new to the Blue Mountains. His first attack is on bluebell creeper ex Western Australia.

Printing Green

Consoc received extensive coverage in the *Think Green* section of the colour *BMG Review*, published on 21 May, inclusive of a note from Tara, our bushwalking program, our Monthly Meetings, the Nursery achievements and sustainability hints. Another very able compilation by our Publicity Officer, David Hall.

False Hope says Greenpeace

Clean Coal technology has been labelled a “scam” by Greenpeace. The Greenpeace report *False Hope* (6 May 08) said that Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technology would not be ready on a commercial scale until 2030 at the earliest. “If CCS is ever able to deliver at all, it will be too little, too late,” the report concluded.

Greenpeace said carbon dioxide emissions must peak by 2015 and drop by at least 50% of 1990 levels by 2050.

Carbon Capture and Storage is a yet-to-be-proven technology to store power station emissions deep underground.

“It is insanity verging on criminal negligence to pass over clean energy and pin hopes on an unproven technology,” said author Emily Rochon at the report’s launch in the United States.

The Greenpeace report accused the power

industry of using CCS to legitimise constructing new coal-fired power stations by labelling them “capture ready”.

Greenpeace Australia marked the publication of *False Hope* by delivering a petition of 30,000 signatures to the Treasury calling for more spending on renewable energy.

Gardens of Stone Stage 2

In its latest initiative, Consoc is commissioning a report on current and future benefits to recreational and ecotourism activities for the GoS2 Proposal and adjacent parks and wilderness. Our present document covers the ecological aspects, and we want to stiffen this with a number of socio-economic arguments. We are also contacting bushwalking clubs for feedback on their experiences with hunting, hooning, trail bikes and 4WDs on Newnes Plateau.

Lithgow Regional Subcommittee

Since September 2006 the Lithgow Regional Subcommittee has been undertaking arguably the most comprehensive water quality monitoring program ever undertaken for the Upper Cox’s River catchment, an integral part of Sydney’s drinking water supply. Regular monthly *Streamwatch* monitoring at 28 sites on all major tributaries has identified some serious breaches of ANZECC (2000) water quality guidelines for a range of physical water quality parameters. The most serious appear to be emanating from industrial sources licensed under the Protection of Environment Operations Act 1997.

Under Section 120 of this Act it is an offence to pollute waters. However, both the EPA and SCA seem powerless to address the issue. **BMCS has therefore agreed to fund professional advice from the NSW Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) to see whether legal action can be taken. If so, BMCS will also fund follow-up water testing by experts in the field.** This is an example of the way in which co-operative endeavour between LRS and BMCS was anticipated when the regional subcommittee was formed.

Companion Animals

Newcastle student Amy Pettinger has prepared a fine submission on behalf of BMCS on the Draft Companion Animals Management Plan (Cats & Dogs) 2008-11. The submission, reviewed by President Tara Cameron, reinforces and expands on the points raised in the *May Hut News*.

Sustainability

The excellent BMCS booklet *Sustainability: concepts and action* is available in hard copy and also via the website. Do you have your copy yet? Yes, this is a twopeat!

Kanagaloon Borefield

BMCS through Brian Marshall has submitted a comprehensive response to the Upper Nepean (Kanagaloon) Borefield Project Consultants Environmental Assessment which has been prepared for the SCA. Eight major deficiencies have been identified. The Society’s main concerns relate to the hydrologic regime comprising the groundwater and surface water, and the extent to which any changes to the regime may impact on flora and fauna within the swamp and riparian habitats. BMCS holds that it is the responsibility of SCA to prove there will be no adverse environmental impacts, and concludes that additional investigation must be undertaken prior to any approval or rejection of the borefield.

Strobos No.7

The May edition of *Strobos*, the environment magazine published for and by high school students, is available on our website. Well worth a look! The **BM School Environment Network**, which is a joint initiative of the Sustainable Schools program and the BMCC Education for Sustainability program, has further supported the schools’ **Drink Tap Water Campaign**.



It has sponsored 1000 Network/Consoc labels to be handed out at Winter Magic in July. Our Education Officer, Chris Yates, is co-ordinating Consoc’s funding of 2000 additional labels for distribution within Blue Mountains Schools.

Coffee with Karen Paluzzano

Tara and David Hall met with the Member for Penrith for a discussion of the Planning Bill where it concerns complying development, private certification and ministerial discretion. BMCS voiced criticism of the North-West Subregional Strategy in respect of the 7000 additional dwellings designated for the Blue Mountains LGA and the employment targets. Karen suggested that the figures were rubbery! BMCS also expressed dissent with the view that LEPs should be standardised across all LGAs. A plug was made for the GoS2 proposal in a productive meeting, even if the member’s focus seemed to remain mainly on the Penrith basin. Meanwhile the Department of Planning has, in late May, sent Tara a Planning Reform Bills Guide, which is yet to be assessed by Consoc.

**Letters to the Editor
(Short)
Always Welcome**

Stall no longer a wingwong

Our request last month for a member to assist with the modification of our metal stall frames was promptly met by longstanding member, **John Siccardi**, (at right) who has a phantasmagorical workshop at his home in Wentworth Falls. A few plugs, sockets and pins later and the frames had become transportable on a simple car roof-rack. Thanks John! **Kevin Bell** was on hand with our nursery truck to pick up the frames and to later deliver them back to **Ilan Salbe** for storage at the Hut. Then from Blackheath Nursery Kevin filed this report:

“Although the nursery volunteers are taking a break over winter, our plants are not at rest. Warmed by heating beds and refreshed by regular sprays of water in the comfortable conditions of the glass-house, numerous seedlings and cuttings will be growing nicely, ensuring there will be plenty of work for the volunteers when they return. We have just secured another contract with the National Parks and Wildlife Service for 2000 plants to rehabilitate sites around the Wentworth Falls Picnic Area (now closed) following construction work there over the latter half of this year. Other contracts with Blue Mountains City Council and the NPWS are well in hand and we try to



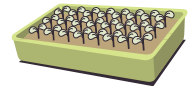
keep a good variety of plants available for our regular and valued customers. Next month I'll be describing plants suitable for rockeries, an essential feature of any garden, so start preparing an area now!"

Gunns Mill loses its key financial backer

The \$2 billion Tasmanian pulp mill has lost its key financial backer, the ANZ bank. The new Tasmanian Premier, David Bartlett, replacing Paul Lemon, said on ABC Radio, "I believe this project, largely now, will stand or fall on the basis of whether the company can get finance for it." Peter Garrett is still considering the mill's environmental impact, but he gave his approval in mid-May for the developer to begin building accommodation for the mill's construction workers! *The Age, 28 May 08.*

BMCS with many environment groups opposes the project.

GREAT PLANTS NEEDING A HOME



Can you help? The Society's nurseries are looking for an area over which to construct a shade-house to store around 30,000 plants from forthcoming RTA contracts. Preferably mid- to lower-mountains because of a more favourable climate to enhance growing. A disused Council-owned site or a private block we could lease for several years would be ideal.

Please contact:

Kevin Bell 4787 6436 or kevinbell@eftel.net.au if you have any ideas.

Out For A Walk — an insider's take on the mysteries of distance, slope and grading

“How far is it?” you ask. “Just over that rise and round the next bend,” comes my laconic reply, echoing every bush-walk leader since David Livingstone. Distance is not my special problem: keeping them alert and interested and getting them back in one piece on time is the aim. I wish, oh, how I wish, that all my walkers would heed my constant refrain – “Look, it's not how far we walk that matters, but the fact that we are going to walk for X hours today in this glorious bushland, and love every minute of it.”

But of course, ever prudent, I do check the distance before setting out, and maybe make it known in the walks guide. And this is how I was told, many moons ago, to go about it:

Drag out the topographical map of the proposed route and place it over a copy of the *Blue Mountains Gazette*. Raid a sewing basket and extract a bunch of pins, those little ones with the coloured heads. Procure a length of string. Now focus on the linear scale on the map, and with a pen mark off on the string intervals of half a kilometre. Line the string out along the route, inserting pins at changes of direction. The string takes into account the bends along the way. There is no need to be too precise as an estimate is all that is required. Remove the pins and count the distance markers. Not only will you have measured the distance, but you will finally have discovered how long is a piece of string! Put the pins back in the basket before they are missed.

Of course a kilometre on Lawson Ridge fire trail is very different from one up Koorowall Knife Edge, and it is in making that sort of adjustment that we arrive at a consideration of steepness, and a counter to the accusation, “You said it had

short rises, so why is it so bloody steep?” So this is what to do:

Go back to the topo and note the number of major hills climbed, also checking the number of contour lines and the contour interval. Work out the rough height gained by noting the contour height at the foot and the top of the climb. If there are several major climbs simply add the figures together. Forget about small climbs and don't try to be too exact, but provide potential walkers with an indication of steepness. The ascent/descent is actually of lesser importance than the steepness. Steepness can be more hurtful to knees and lungs than the actual length of the climb.

So far so good, but none of these basic measurement and surveying fiddles replaces the elementary idea of walking the route yourself (maybe with GPS at the high port) before taking others out potentially to suffer your abstraction and confusion.

All of which brings us to that contentious issue of walks grading, and here a naughty secret must be revealed. **I grade Walks Leaders instead of the Walks.** The trick is to go out with a number of different leaders to establish what types of walks they put on and grade them in your diary accordingly.



You see, **Leader A** walks as though she wants to get home to watch the Swans play that Saturday arvo at the ANZ Stadium. **Leader B** smells (and discusses) all the flowers, launches into gourmet morning tea, as he seems to extend a morning dawdle to the end of the rainbow. **Leader C** keeps a slow steady pace for every hour, stops for five minutes for a breather and then heads off as soon as tail-end-Charlie catches up. **Leader D** has his nose buried in a GPS, compass and topo, as he studiously guides you up the wrong ridge towards a torch parade and a cold baked dinner when you finally get home.

Yes, in a world where all leaders have their quirks, my grading A to D to Z approach clearly outranks the One to Five system. It has never been known to fail! Make your choice.

Now who's for my next outing: 9.17am at Gearins': Skip down Sublime Point's Copeland Pass, backtrack to Gordon Falls, return around Lindeman Pass to Dash's Cave, glide up Gladstone Pass, total distance about 1.3km, all track, full pack, some uneven ground, no steep sections, *Gregory's 2002 Sydney & Blue Mountains Large Print*, bring one Popper (apple-orange flavour), Dolphin lamp, lunch at Fairmont. Ron 0011 61 0000 0000.

Really! It's on 9 August, 2008: this is a sneak preview!! **Leader?**

Ron Withington with more than a nod to my former leader, Brian Everingham of NPA.



Discovered on a 'Leader B Walk', this is the Giant Grass-Tree Forest in the relatively new (1996) Coolah Tops National Park, up north near (er) Coolah. The Park has been visited by an official Consoc Walking Group, and by at least two of our members' groups in the past month or so.

These creepy sentinels of *Xanthorrhoea glauca* tower over our local examples. Is it the basalt soil? They have probably lived for centuries, often standing dormant and then within just a few weeks suddenly sending up a 3m slender green spear that soon erupts with hundreds of cream flowers. Early settlers used the yellow resin as a cure for bowel complaints, as a constituent in perfume and for furniture polish. (Such alarming versatility). However ominous these trees appear they won't attack, but beware, the resin was also harvested for making explosives.

The stout eucalypts in the Park were extensively logged for railway sleepers, fencing and packing material, and the logging roads provide access right across the 12,117ha plateau.

The massive, but brittle, Giant Snow Gums (at left) remain largely untouched. One such *Eucalyptus pauciflora* measures 4.3m around the trunk and its canopy after 150 years reaches to over 32 metres. These are the tallest known Snow Gums in the world. The trees sport white flowers from October to January, to enhance the grey-cream smooth bark, with its ribbony basal skirting.

The Park has superb, secluded campsites with the desirable triple address, www (wood, water, wc), and is beautifully maintained. Warning: It is high enough to receive snowfalls and quite exposed, so every Walk could become your 'Leader A'!

BUSHCARERS' LAMENTATION

I see follies of Holly midst sweepings of Broom
And the flush of Montbretia
That we try to exhume.

I see patches of wilt and pockets of bother
While I dreamt of swampland
Where Giant Dragonflies hover.

I see backaches of Trad and rows of depress
Where to thoughts of Grevillea
I have to confess.

I see pangs of Lantana and Daisies of pink
When I check the Coreopsis
For a black Leura Skink.

I see remorse of Gorse and hardies of Laurel,
Where a stand of E copulans
Won't raise a quarrel.

I see a staggers of brown and a struggle of hedge
In the place I had wished
For a Sticky Sword-sedge.

RW (who couldn't rhyme Agapanthus)

SO:



How about participating in...

BMCS BUSHCARE

Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group, part of the Bushcare Network, meets on the second Saturday morning of each month, 9am till noon.

Tools and gloves are provided, instruction on weed identification and treatment is given. You bring morning tea, drinking water and sacks of enthusiasm!

Please contact Karen Hising: 4757 1929

But if you can't make it to our site in Wentworth Falls, please consider joining a Group nearer to your home.

This is the way to find one: Google: www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/bushcare_groups.asp or phone Lyndal at:

BMCC Bushcare Group 4780 5528



June cold is blustering out all over, a wonderful time to make your \$2.00 plus, plus, deductible donation to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society and enjoy that warm inner glow. Cheques please to: The Treasurer, BMCS, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls, 2782

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING ACTIVITIES

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. The BMCS Bushwalkers' Guide, which explains the numbered Grades, can be found on the Society's website www.bluemountains.com.au, or will be posted on request.

For further information please contact the Walks Convenor, Liz van Reyswood, on 4757 2694, email bushwalks@bluemountains.org.au, or by mail at PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.

Before attending a bushwalk, please discuss the walk with the contact person or group co-ordinator (see below)

SATURDAY WALKS

Usually a full day, longer walks at a faster pace. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. Before attending ring the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Jim Percy, 4758 6009 or email jp34@tpg.com.au

June-21	Carlons Ck, Bellbird Pt, Carlons Farm (2) – 8km	Bill	4758 8545	Map: Jenolan	Meet: Blackheath Stn	8.35am
June-28	Mailes Ridge, Wollemi NP (3) – 18km	Meredith	4782 4823	Map: Mt Lagoon	Meet: Mt Victoria Stn	9.00am
July-5	Martins LO, Perch Ponds, Wiggins Tk (3) – 8km	Liz	4754 4966	Map: Springwood	Meet: Springwood Stn	9.05am
July-12	Crossing the Blue Mts, Day 7 (3) 7km. Mt Victoria to Mt Blaxland. Walk and bus trip. Booking required. Cost \$12. Ask leader for departure time.	Jim	4758 6009	Map: Hartley	Meet: Mt Victoria Stn	Contact
July-19	Grose Head South (3) 15km. Walk to lookouts via Blue Gum Swamp. Views to Mt Yengo. Some steep rocky sections, but all on track.	Ros	4733 3880	Map: Sprwd, Kurra	Meet: Springwood Stn (n)	9.15am

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS

'Short Day' walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of average fitness. Bring morning tea and lunch and adequate water. The Group Co-ordinator is Norm Harris, 4784 1554.

June-23	Cox's Cave & Boronia Point (2) Views over Kanimbla Valley	Phil	4787 5560	Meet: Mt Victoria Station		9.45am
June-30	Water Nymph's Dell and Darwins Walk (2) Rainforest and Historic Walk	Ron	4757 1526	Meet: Wentworth Falls Stockyard Carpark		9.00am
July-7	Porters Pass, Blackheath (2) Heathland	Bob	4787 6584	Meet: Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre		9.00am
July-14	Noble Canyon, Wollemi NP (2) Bus Trip – Fare \$12. Book and Pay Birgitta 4784 3191	Phil	4787 5560	Meet: North Katoomba Council Depot		8.30am

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS

Walks conducted to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, lunch if noted, and adequate water. The Group Co-ordinator is Simone Bowskill, 4757 3416, email simbow@tpg.com.au or ring Maurice Kerkham, 4739 4942.

June-19	Blue Gum Swamp (2) A Blue Gum Forest	Maurice	4739 4942	Meet: Springwood Station		10.00am
June-26	Mountain Lagoon, Wollemi NP (2) Bus Trip – Fare \$12. Book & Pay Maurice.	Maurice	4739 4942	Meet: North Katoomba Council Depot		8.30am
July-3	McMahon's Lookout (2) Views of 'green' Sydney's water supply.	Marie	4787 1257	Meet: Wentworth Falls Stockyard Carpark		10.00am
July-12	Empire Pass Short Loop (2)	Phil	4787 5560	Meet: Lawson Station		10.00am

LEADERS' THANK-YOU & BBQ ON SUNDAY 8 JUNE 2008 AT WOODFORD ACADEMY

MEMBERS MEMORANDA

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Lynda Barling-Day	Lawson
Dianne Brehaut	Blackheath
David Bush	Blackheath
Benjamin Catt	Leura
Kimberley Catt	Leura
Kate Hamill	Mt Victoria
David Heaton	Chipping Norton
Lyn Heaton	Chipping Norton
Lesley Hooton	Seven Hills
Vince McInerney	Lithgow
John McLaughlin	Lawson
Marian Moore	Blackheath
Sandra Nicholson	Leura
Harry Ostendorf	Leura
Astrid Stephens	Hazelbrook
Stuart Taylor	Leura

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST IN PURCHASING CERTIFIED FIREWOOD

The Firewood Association of Australia (FAA) has been assisted by a \$500,000 grant from the Commonwealth Government to support a more sustainable firewood industry. The accreditation scheme tries to ensure that firewood "has been collected legally and according to sustainable management principles to protect biodiversity and ecosystem processes."

At this stage no Blue Mountains firewood seller is a member of FAA. In a bid to either get one to join FAA or a Sydney member to do a Blue Mountains delivery run, I am asking for expression of interest from members in buying FAA certified firewood.

If you are interested could you email me at the address below, stating the quantity in cubic metres you use in a season and whether you will be ordering more firewood this season.

Your reply will not put you under any obligation to actually purchase the firewood.

I will follow up on the logistics of supply if there is sufficient demand.

Ilan Salbe

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES: Ilan Salbe 4759 2372 membership@bluemountains.org.au

