

Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society NEWSLETTER

NO 59 - FEBRUARY, 1985 Price 20¢ - P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls

Editor: G. Kerr, 5 Barratt Street, BLACKHEATH.

PATRON: Allen Strom, A.M.

PRESIDENT: Michael Dark (58-7061). VICE PRESIDENTS: Barry Barnes (88.1053); Keith Sherlock (57.1927); SECRETARY: Graham Kerr (87.7139)

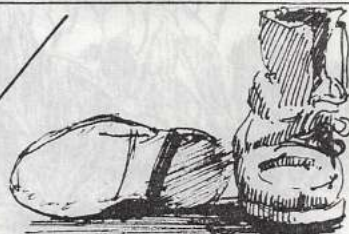
TREASURER: Judy Kerr (87.7139)

COMING MEETINGS: AT THE CONSERVATION HUT, VALLEY OF WATERS RESERVE,
VALLEY ROAD, WENTWORTH FALLS AT 7.30 P.M.

For speakers at coming meetings held on the last Friday of the month, please see Public Notices in the 'Gazette'.



Walks Programme



COMING WALKS:

April, Sunday 7th:- Ruined Castle (by popular request).

Meet at the head of the track to the Golden Stairs on Narrowneck at 10 a.m. Rainforest, eucalypts, shale mining & rock formations.
Leader: Keith Sherlock. 57.1927

April, Thursday 18th:- Evan's Lookout, Blackheath.

Mount Griffith Taylor - Bridal Veil Falls - Braeside Walk - Return by short-cut through Evan's Reserve. Meet at Evan's Lookout at 10 a.m. Leader: Rachel Makinson. 87.1302

May, Sunday 5th:- Rainbow Ravine, Mt. Tomah.

Meet at Mt. Victoria Station at 9 a.m. Rainforest, caves and a delightful creek. Leader: John Noble. 87 8342

May, Thursday 16th:- Medlow Bath, Hydro area: Maxine's Grotto,

Marks Tomb, Sun Bath etc. Meet at the end of Bellevue Crescent.
Leader: Eric Blick. 88.1051

COMING WALKS (Cont.)

June, Sunday 2nd: Bungawarra, Cox's River - Meet at the corner of Cox's River Road & Great Western Highway, Little Hartley at 9.30 a.m. - River, birds and, with a little bit of luck, a platypus or two!
Leader: Paul Nagle. 57.3181

June, Thursday 20th: - Mt. Wilson - Dufors Rock - a circular walk.
A pleasant and not difficult walk. Leader: Grace Bailey: 59.1955

Leaders or participants with any problems please ring Walks Conveners
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MALEE FOWL - ITS FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

A most interesting and informative letter has been received from Society Patron Allen A. Strom, A.M. The letter is reproduced in full for the information of Members.

" Lloyd Jones' excellent article 'A WEEK WITH THE BIRDOS' (November 1984 issue) brought some memories which I thought your readers might like to have.

Lloyd records visiting Pulletop Nature Reserve near Griffith in the mallee between Griffith and Rankins Spring. I wondered whether Lloyd knows the significance of this nature reserve, or whether the National Parks & Wildlife staff went to the trouble to enlighten the visitors.



Typical Mallee-Pulletop Reserve
near Griffith

This is the very area where Harry Frith (later Dr. H.J. Frith, Director, Wildlife Research, C.S.I.R.O.) did his world famous research and studies on the Mallee Fowl. Perhaps some of your members have read Frith's fascinating book on the Mallee Fowl and the work carried out at Pulletop, or perhaps seen the film made under the direction of Harry, about the Fowl.

Early in the 1950s, I took a group of students from the Balmain Teachers' College on a tour of the Riverina, and one of the highlights was to meet Harry Frith at Pulletop and have him show us over the sites he was using to collect the extraordinary story of this mound building bird. At that

time, Frith's major task was a study of ducks, much maligned for their landing on the rice bays in the irrigation lands. His work on the Mallee Fowl was simply a recreational activity! But recreational activity meant often sleeping on the red sand at Pulletop just to be present when the male bird began his scratching activities that provided the mound in which the female might lay up to about 36 eggs in a season. Frith deserved every credit that he got for his famous work..... a masterpiece and guide for all beginners in the study of birds and their relationship with the environment. It is that relationship with environment that is so crucial in nature conservation. There is little purpose in recording large and long lists of birds if we do nothing about managing the environments with which they are linked.

In the 1950s the great onslaught against the mallee had barely begun. When the student group and I (we were operating under the auspices of The Caloola Club) visited Pulletop, it was difficult to find the way through tracks and vast areas of eucalypts tree that were little more than willow pole and all

called "mallee". But as Lloyd has so well observed in his article..... has the farmer a right to gamble with the nation's resources? But gamble they have, and today, Pulletop is a mere 350ac. oasis of mallee in a vast area of wheatlands of dubious value. It all came about during the early 1960s. I was by then, Chief Guardian of Fauna and boss of the wildlife service in this State not a very grand position despite the name. By various ways and means, the service decided that it must preserve the site where Frith made himself and the mallee fowl famous. The 350ac. were bought back from the landholder and dedicated as Pulletop Nature Reserve the name Pulletop was taken from the name of the parish in which the nature reserve occurs. Why the parish is so named, I have no idea.

Three hundred and fifty acres of mallee is a mere fleabite, but it is wonderful to know that mallee fowl can still survive within it. The story is even more tragic. Despite the occurrence of first class mallee over a wide area of Crown land in this region in the early 1960s (and all known to carry mallee fowl), the Department of Lands point blank refused to make any of it available to the wildlife service for a larger and more effective mallee fowl reserve. There is little purpose in having a wildlife service if the Phillistines refuse to take any notice of its expertise. Perhaps the real lesson is the one I have outlined: Harry Frith is now dead. His work lives on, but the bird he fought to preserve with his knowledge of its management will only survive by the preservation of its linked environment."

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AN ANECDOTE FROM A HUT VOLUNTEER

On the Monday of the hot Australia Day weekend, a recently arrived English family decided to walk from Falls Reserve along the National Pass track and up to 'the Hut'.

The family eventually staggered through the door requesting cold drinks to help quench their parched throats.

Poor old Dad came in a long last. As he flopped into a chair, he was asked what he would like to drink.

" A CAN OF OXYGEN" was his gasping reply !!

Eric Blick

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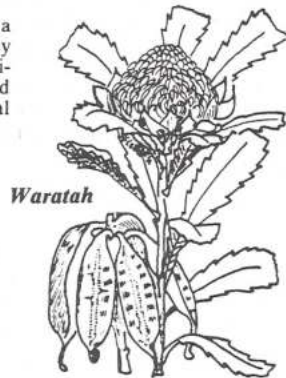
WALK TO BLUE GUM FOREST

The November walk took eleven hikers down Govett's Leap and onto Junction Rock and then to Acacia Flat at the beautiful Blue Gum Forest for a well deserved lunch. An additional six hikers went straight down from Perry's Lookdown which worked out well as it meant we had cars at both ends.

The Grose is slowly recovering from the ravages of the fires of '82 and the variety of flowers was a sight to behold. The purple of the Patersonia and the gold of the Isopogon made a magnificent display. Our State emblem the wonderful Telopea or Waratah, whilst reaching the

limits of their flowering period, made a great show. Blue Gum Forest appeared to be in good shape and escaped the effects of the '82 fires. The trees were all colours, shapes and sizes in the afternoon sun, some with

The Waratah — that spectacular bloom is a mass of small flowers not one single flower. By having all the flowers in one mass it is an efficient way of ensuring pollination by birds and bees. One visit by a bird and several individual flowers will be pollinated.



(With acknowledgement to
National Parks & Wild-
life Service - Blue
Mountains District)

peeling bark all of which sent the camera freaks into a frenzy. Mr Eastman Kodak was no doubt well pleased !

The pull up to Perry's Lookdown was hard going but the thought of a hot cup of tea drove us on. Unfortunately, someone had polluted the tank water at the top, so no tea ! However, all was not lost as one of the younger members of our party had bought along

his bagpipes and proceeded to pipe each weary hiker as he or she panted their way to the top of the track !

Judy & Graham Kerr

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ECHIDNA SIGHTING AT KATOOMBA

Driving to Katoomba recently, we rounded the bend at Shell Corner opposite the Caravan Park and there to our amazement across the busy Great Western Highway waddled an Echidna ! It was so unexpected in such a built-up area. It had no doubt been disturbed by the road works and how it missed being squashed was a miracle.

The only trouble was, that having reached the safety of the other side of the road, it was faced with a wire fence. But not to be deterred, in a matter of a minute, it had burrowed under the fence and down into the safety of the thick bush below.

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NATIONAL WOODCHIP CAMPAIGN BEGINS

Decisions will very soon be made which will affect the long-term future of large areas of Australia's forests. The Commonwealth Government is reviewing the woodchip export licences. Its actions will determine the conditions of these forests well into the next century.

Tasmania

The Tasmanian woodchip licences are being reviewed right now. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is being prepared and the Commonwealth Government will decide what licence conditions to impose, if any, by July 1985.

There is much at stake. State Reserves contain only 4% of Tasmania's forests, and do not adequately protect many species and community types. Forestry threatens cool-temperate rainforest, the world's tallest hardwood stands, and the state's last unlogged catchment of dry sclerophyll forest.

The edges of the cherished South West World Heritage area may be ravaged. Logging in the Weld, Huon and Picton valleys would devastate views from Federation Peak, Mt Anne and Precipitous Bluff. Vistas from the Cradle

Mountain overland track would be scarred by operations in the Lemonthyme. Almost a third of Tasmania's wilderness is threatened by forestry: more than was saved in the Franklin victory.

Other States

Woodchip projects in other states come up for review in successive years after Tasmania. First the Eden scheme in south-eastern New South Wales. Next the program in Western Australia's karri and marri forests. There is still a possibility of woodchipping commencing in far eastern Victoria, which includes the famed Errinundra plateau.

A national strategy

Conservationists from NSW, Victoria, WA, Tasmania and the ACT attended a national woodchip summit late last month. It was agreed unanimously that the decision on the Tasmanian woodchip licences would set a precedent for the other states. If the Tasmanian licences are renewed without significant restrictions and environmental safeguards, there is little hope of success in other states. Therefore it was decided that a national campaign should be launched to convince the Commonwealth Government of the need for conditions on the Tasmanian licences. Less than seven months remain to achieve this aim.

<u>Timetable:</u>	December 1983	Review of Tasmanian woodchip licences announced.
	December 1984/ January 1985	Draft EIS released
	January-February 1985	Two months public comment period.
	c April 1985	Final EIS submitted to Commonwealth Government and reviewed.
	June/July 1985	Final decision on export licences.

Strategy

In a similar fashion to the Franklin campaign we must use two types of strategy:

1. Bring direct pressure to bear on Canberra through lobbying, letters, telegrams, etc.
2. Demonstrate through the media national concern over the woodchip issues.

Five steps to saving the forests;

Your organisation and your members are urged to do the following, in particular the first two tasks. Please:

1. Write to the Minister for Primary Industry, the Hon. J. Kerin, asking him to implement ALP policy on woodchip exports.
2. Comment on the draft EIS. "EIS response kits" will be available in January from the Environment Centres. Write to the Minister for Home Affairs and the Environment (presently Hon. B. Cohen) demanding a copy of the draft EIS be placed in your local library.
3. Inform your membership on the issue. Start by displaying these pages and reproducing some or all of them in your newsletter.
4. Write letters to major and local newspapers, Stressing the national importance. Visit newspaper editors to explain the significance of the Tasmanian woodchip licences.

5. Visit your local Federal member and Senators. Again stress the national significance of the current Tasmanian review. Tell them the renewal of the licences should be conditional on the establishment of the F.A.N. reserve proposals. Explain that alternatives to logging the reserve proposals exist which maintain jobs in the industry. Mention the ALP platform commitments.

* * * * *

WELL KNOWN SOCIETY MEMBER RESIGNS

Members will be sorry to learn of the retirement, due to ill health, of Dick Rushton. Dick, who has been a tireless worker for the Society, has written stating how much he has enjoyed his term of membership and wishes everyone well. Dick has now moved to Gympsea Bay in Sydney.

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GUEST SPEAKER FOR FEBRUARY

The Guest Speaker for the February General Meeting will be Hal Gingis, Secretary of the Southern Cross Capital Exchange Ltd. They believe that money and finances are widely misunderstood. The Exchange believes that it is only possible to have a healthy society if there is a healthy flow of money through the social organism.

Hal Gingis has a new and novel slant to offer and we suggest that members and visitors attend what should be a most interesting address.

* * * * *

PAST SOCIETY NEWSLETTERS

In our August 1984 Newsletter an appeal was made for Newsletters missing from Society records. There was a very good response but we are still missing the following:-

No's	1	12	16
	3	14	21
	6	15	30

If you can help to fill in these important gaps, we would be most grateful. Please contact Society Secretary Graham Kerr (87.7139).

* * * * *

NATIVE PLANT WEEKEND

A Native Plant Sale is planned for Saturday and Sunday, 23rd-24th February commencing 10.00 a.m. and finishing 4.00 p.m. There will be a good variety of native plants on sale.

On Saturday at 11.00 a.m. Jill Dark and Graham Alcorn will show slides and talk about "ATTRACTING NATIVE BIRDS TO YOUR GARDEN."

Then later at 1.30 p.m. on Saturday Jill will lead a 'Botany Walk' along a local track.

We look forward to your continued support. It should be a most enjoyable day so make sure you come along and bring your friends.

For further details, contact Winsome Gregory (57.1573). All proceeds in aid of the Land Preservation Fund Committee.

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A TRIP ACROSS AUSTRALIA

(Editor's Note. This is the second part of an account of a trip to Western Australia by Graham and Wilson Alcorn. Graham went by bus to W.A. where he joined Wilson for the remainder of the journey in Wilson's campervan or 'Wilsonmobile' as it was fondly known. See the latter part of 'A Bird Observer's Notes' in November Newsletter for the first installment.)

How pleasant to be able to stop where the fancy takes you, poke around, cook a meal, stay the night, stop an hour, spend the day - that is what Wilson and I were able to do as we wandered back from Perth last December in his splendid campervan.

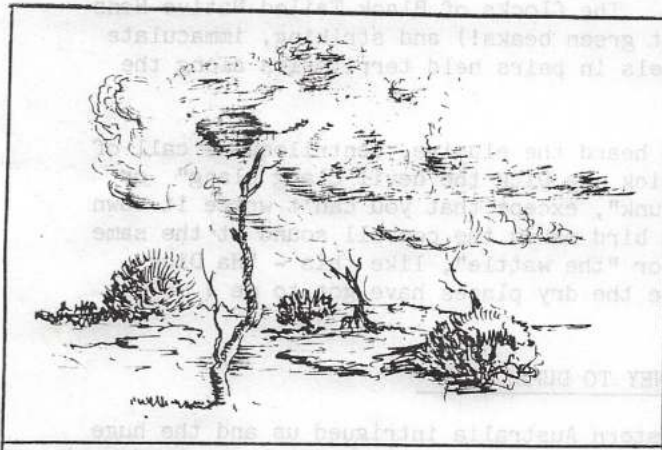
First we stayed 2 days at the Twertup Field Study Centre in the Fitzgerald River National Park in the south of Western Australia. This Park, as their pamphlet says "is justly famous for its bewildering diversity of plants, so many of which are of outstanding beauty or restricted distribution."

Although we had missed the main spring flowering season, there were still many spectacular shrubs in flower.

In the Park there are fifteen species of Banksias - three whose flowers hang down like Chinese lanterns, two prostrate ones whose flowers sit sedately on the ground, one with huge furry flowers, big as a possum, four with globular flowers, one with violet flowers, one with scarlet flowers.

There were acres of showy Banksia (*Banksia speciosa*) in flower. These are large bushes which carry the big, silky lemon blooms in great abundance on the ends of the branches - a spectacular show.

George Duxbury, the ranger, told us that some scientists doing a study on the rare honey possum had trapped 230 of these highly specialised mites over two weeks in a relatively small area of these flowering



banksias. We went out hopefully at night with torches, but didn't see any. George also found in the Park the very rare Dibbler, dead, but in good condition, to the Museum's delight.

We went through whole forests of Royal Hakeas (*H. victoriae*) with their strange red, orange, yellow and green, scallop-shaped leaves.

At Twertup we saw a new bird to us - the Southern Scrub Robin, a perky, grey and brown ground dweller with a long tail and a sweet territorial whistle. At night a Spotted Nightjar swooped round my head, eerily silent with its muted flight feathers. This was my first sighting of this species, also. Obliging, it settled on the gravel road, half spread its wings showing the two White spots in the torchlight.

The Twertup Field Study Centre is in an old house at an abandoned building stone quarry and is run by the Fitzgerald River National Park Association

volunteers who have rebuilt the house and are successfully regenerating the disturbed land.

From here we drove through the Eastern end of the Park to the Coast. We climbed East Mt Barren, which has plants that grow nowhere else in the world ! One, a *Regelia*, with deep crimson brushes and silky grey foliage, was over the whole mountain, tall at the bottom, stunted at the top.

Next we went to Cape Le Grand National Park and did some lovely walks over the rugged, coastal hills. We saw another new bird here, the Rock Parrot - plain, gentle little olive green birds feeding on the seeds of succulents where the sandhills met the beach.

Then off to cross the Nullabor. Beyond Cocklebidy a flock of 3-400 Budgerigars circled over a small trench full of water beside the road. Small flocks of 10-20 birds kept joining them from all points of the compass. Passing cars kept disturbing them and they all settled on a dead tree, instantly converting it into a live tree with bright green leaves. Then a small flock of Quarrions arrived, imperiously took over the top branches from the Budgerigars. So now the tree was crowned with grey and yellow flowers. What a sight.

Nothing much of interest till we passed Peterborough, in South Australia. From here, through Broken Hill to Cobar, the dry, semi-desert country fascinated us.

At one place we saw three fully plumaged male Variegated Wrens (*Malurus lamberti*) sitting together on a bush. Then, later, four adult male Splendid Wrens (*M. splendens*, rare *melanotus*) together, a splendid sight indeed ! Except for a patch of black, these birds are various shades of gleaming, enamel blue all over.

The dry creek beds seemed the best places. In one we investigated we found chirruping Wedgebills and a flock of 60 or so Orange Chats, a new bird to me. They certainly are orange, and sit on the top of the bushes so you get a great view. Other interesting birds we saw were White Backed Swallows, a pair of White Browed Tree Creepers, a Red Backed Kingfisher, Whitefaces, Blue Bonnet, Mulga and Mallee Ringneck Parrots. Just past Wilcannia, at Lake Wogchugga, a great place for water birds and land birds also. Here we saw a pair of Ground Cuckoo Shrikes. The flocks of Black Tailed Native Hens were new to us (they have bright green beaks!) and striking, immaculate black and white Red Kneed Dottoels in pairs held territories along the lake shore.

Right across the dry country we heard the elusive, ventriloquial call of the Crested Bell Bird - "Ha Dick Ha Dick the devil clang clang" or "Tip Top of the Wattle Clunk Clunk", except that you can't write it down because it seems to me that the bird makes the cowbell sound at the same time that it sings "the devil" or "the wattle", like this - "Ha Dick Ha Dick the devil" or maybe the dry places have got to me !
clang clang"

JOURNEY TO DUMBLEYUNG

(The place-names in Southern Western Australia intrigued us and the huge tracts of land cleared for wheat growing in this unique area appalled us.)

From Jerramungup to Ongerup
And through Lake Grace to Dumbleyung
We travelled in our campervan
Through wheatfields golden in the sun.
We saw three regent parrots there;
We saw a *calamanthus* wren;
But mostly we saw fields of wheat
And wondered what it was like when
All of the land was clothed in bush
And the black people walked along
From Jerramungup to Ongerup
And through Lake Grace to Dumbleyung.

Graham Alcorn

A BIRD OBSERVER'S NOTES

Luck was with us recently when we were able to observe two very interesting patterns of bird behaviour within the confines of our neighbours and our front gardens.

The first observation was of a group of five Yellow-winged Honeyeaters which were feeding on our free-flowering Grevillia Longifolia.

Having unwillingly disturbed the birds, I noticed that four immediately took off to the safety of a tall eucalypt nearby. The fifth bird, apparently operating on a particularly succulent flower, delayed its flight to safety by a few seconds.

On arrival at the safe position the latecomer was immediately siezed by the foot and dragged some distance along the branch by one of the earlier arrivals. I can only assume that this was a family group and that one of the parents was admonishing one of the young for being careless in observing safety precautions.

Some days later we were disturbed by the repeated calls of a galah which seemed to us to be in distress. We soon located the bird, perched in a eucalypt next door. It appeared to have a dislocated or broken wing. Having put food and water as near to the bird as we could get, we went about our daily tasks. That was at about ten a.m.

After an absence of about five hours we found on return that the bird remained in the same position but had ceased to call. At about 5 p.m. the galah was joined by another and a good deal of preening and close body contact took place.

About half an hour later, a third galah arrived on the scene and soon started a vigorous flapping of wings while holding tightly on to a branch. Not long afterwards, all three birds took off and vanished into the sunset.

The questions arising from this action are numerous; but I wonder how far some birds will go to assist their fellows?

Keith Sherlock.

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STOP PRESS

The Australian Museum is holding a Bush Fire Exhibition which tells the story "Why does Australia burn?" It starts with the evolution of Australia, the arrival of the Aborigines and their use of fire and on through to European settlers and how they have changed the landscape.

We recommend this Exhibition, which will be open till the end of March, to members. The Australian Museum is situated at 6-8 College Street, and is open 12-5 p.m. Monday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through to Sunday.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Members are reminded that membership fees are due from the end of March 1985 and those who are two or more years in arrears will be removed from the membership list. Should you have any queries, ring Treasurer 87.7139.



This version of the Newsletter was re-typed from the original by Phoebe Coster in January 2023 to enable search engines to 'see' the text. Minor changes have been made to correct typographical errors and to add clarity.

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Judy & Graham Kerr

NATIONAL WOODCHIP CAMPAIGN BEGINS

Decisions will very soon be made which will affect the long-term future of large areas of Australia's forests. The Commonwealth Government is reviewing the woodchip export licences. Its actions will determine the conditions of these forests well into the next century.

Tasmania

The Tasmanian woodchip licences are being reviewed right now. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is being prepared and the Commonwealth Government will decide what licence conditions to impose, if any, July 1985.

There is much at stake. State Reserves contain only 4% of Tasmania's forests, and do not adequately protect many species and community types. Forestry threatens cool-temperate rainforest, the world's tallest hardwood stands, and the state's last unlogged catchment of dry sclerophyll forest.

The edges of the cherished South West World Heritage area may be ravaged. Logging in the Weld, Huon and Picton valleys would devastate views from Federation Peak, Mt Anne and Precipitous Bluff.

Vistas from the Cradle Mountain overland track would be scarred by operations in the Lemonthyme. Almost a third of Tasmania's wilderness is threatened by forestry: more than was saved in the Franklin victory.

Other States.

Woodchip projects in other states come up for review in successive years after Tasmania. First the Eden scheme in south-eastern New South Wales. Next the program in Western Australia's karri and marri forests. There is still a possibility of woodchipping commencing in far eastern Victoria, which includes the famous Errinundra plateau.

A national strategy.

Conservationists from NSW, Victoria, WA, Tasmania and the ACT attended a national woodchip summit late last month. It was agreed unanimously that the decision on the Tasmanian woodchip licences would set a precedent for the other states. If the Tasmanian licences are renewed without significant restrictions and environmental safeguards, there is little hope of success in other states. Therefore it was decided that a national campaign should be launched to convince the Commonwealth Government of the need for conditions on the Tasmanian licences. Less than seven months remain to achieve this aim.

<u>Timetable:</u>	December 1983	Review of Tasmanian woodchip licences announced.
	December 1984/ January 1985	Draft EIS released
	January-February 1985	Two months public comment period.
	April 1985	Final EIS submitted to Commonwealth Government and reviewed.
	June/July 1985	Final decision on export licences.

Strategy

In similar fashion to the Franklin campaign we must use two types of strategy:

1. Bring direct pressure to bear on Canberra through lobbying, letters, telegrams, etc.
2. Demonstrate through the media national concern over the woodchip issues.

Five steps to saving the forests.

Your organisation and your members are urged to do the following, in particular the first two tasks. Please:

1. Write to the Minister for Primary Industry, the Hon. J. Kerin, asking him to implement ALP policy on woodchip exports.

2. Comment on the draft EIS. "EIS response kits" will be available in January from the Environment Centres. Write to the Minister for Home Affairs and the Environment (presently Hon. B. Cohen) demanding a copy of the draft EIS be placed in your local library.
3. Inform your membership on the issue. Start by displaying these pages and reproducing some or all of them in your newsletter.
4. Write letters to major and local newspapers. Stressing the national importance. Visit newspaper editors to explain the significance of the Tasmanian woodchip licences.
5. Visit your local Federal member and Senators. Again stress the national significance of the current Tasmanian review. Tell them the renewal of the licences should be conditional on the establishment of the F.A.N. reserve proposals. Explain that alternatives to logging the reserve proposals exist which maintain jobs in the industry. Mention the ALP platform commitments.

WELL KNOWN SOCIETY MEMBER RESIGNS

Members will be sorry to learn of the retirement, due to ill health, of Dick Rushton. Dick, who has been a tireless worker for the Society, has written stating how much he has enjoyed his term of membership and wishes everyone well. Dick has now moved to Gympsea Bay in Sydney.

GUEST SPEAKER FOR FEBRUARY.

The Guest Speaker for the February General Meeting will be Hal Gingis, Secretary of the Southern Cross Capital Exchange Ltd. They believe that money and finances are widely misunderstood. The Exchange believes that it is only possible to have a healthy society if there is a healthy flow of money through the social organism.

Hal Gingis has a new and novel slant to offer and we suggest that members and visitors attend what should be a most interesting address.

PAST SOCIETY NEWSLETTERS

In our August 1984 Newsletter an appeal was made for Newsletters missing from Society records. There was a very good response but we are still missing the following:-

If you can help to fill in these gaps, we would be most grateful. Please contact Society Secretary Graham Kerr (87.7139).

Note: All Newsletters have been located, scanned and filed.

NATIVE PLANT WEEKEND.

A Native Plant Sale is planned for Saturday and Sunday, 23-24th February commencing 10.00 a.m. and finishing 4.00 p.m. There will be a good variety of native plants on sale.

On Saturday at 11.00 a.m. Jill Dark and Graham Alcorn will show slides and talk about "ATTRACTING NATIVE BIRDS TO YOUR GARDEN."

Then later at 1.30 p.m. on Saturday Jill will lead a 'Botany Walk' along a local track.

We look forward to your continued support. It should be a most enjoyable day so make sure you come along and bring your friends.

For further details, contact Winsome Gregory (57-1573. All proceeds in aid of the Land Preservation Fund Committee.

A TRIP ACROSS AUSTRALIA.

(Editor's Note. This is the second part of an account of a trip to Western Australia by Graham and Wilson Alcorn. Graham went by bus to W.A. where he joined Wilson for the remainder of the journey in Wilson's campervan or 'Wilsonmobile' as it was fondly known. See the latter part of 'A Bird Observer's Notes' in November Newsletter for the first installment.)

How pleasant to be able to stop where the fancy takes you, poke around, cook a meal, stay the night, stop an hour, spend the day – that is what Wilson and I were able to do as we wandered back from Perth last December in his splendid campervan.

First we stayed 2 days at the Twertup Field Study Centre in the Fitzgerald River National Park in the south of Western Australia. This Park, as their pamphlet says "is justly famous for its bewildering diversity of plants, so many of which are of outstanding beauty or restricted distribution."

Although we had missed the main spring flowering season, there were still many spectacular shrubs in flower.

In the Park there are fifteen species of Banksias – three whose flowers hang down like Chinese lanterns, two prostrate ones whose flowers sit sedately on the ground, one with huge furry flowers, big as a possum, four with globular flowers, one with violet flowers, one with scarlet flowers.

There were acres of showy Banksia (*Banksia speciosa*) in flower. These are large bushes which carry the big, silky lemon blooms in great abundance on the ends of the branches – a spectacular show.

George Duxbury, the ranger, told us that some scientists doing a study on the rare honey possum had trapped 230 of these highly specialised mites over two weeks in a relatively small area of these flowering banksias. We went out hopefully at night with torches, but didn't see any. George also found in the Park the very rare Dibbler, dead, but in good condition, to the Museum's delight.

We went through whole forests of Royal Hakeas (*Hakea victoriae*) with their strange red, orange, yellow and green, scallop-shaped leaves.

At Twertup we saw a new bird to us – the Southern Scrub Robin, a perky, grey and brown ground dweller with a long tail and a sweet territorial whistle. At night a Spotted Nightjar swooped round my head, eerily silent with its muted flight feathers. This was my first sighting of this species, also. Obliging, it settled on the gravel road, half spread its wings showing the two White spots in the torchlight.

The Twertup Field Study Centre is in an old house at an abandoned building stone quarry and is run by the Fitzgerald River National Park Association volunteers who have rebuilt the house and are successfully regenerating the disturbed land.

From here we drove through the Eastern end of the Park to the Coast. We climbed East Mt Barren, which has plants that grow nowhere else in the world! One, a *Regelia*, with deep crimson brushes and silky grey foliage, was over the whole mountain, tall at the bottom, stunted at the top.

Next we went to Cape Le Grand National Park and did some lovely walks over the rugged, coastal hills. We saw another new bird here, the Rock Parrot – plain, gentle little olive green birds feeding on the seeds of succulents where the sandhills met the beach.

Then off to cross the Nullabor. Beyond Cocklebidy a flock of 3-400 Budgerigars circled over a small trench full of water beside the road. Small flocks of 10-20 birds kept joining them from all points of the compass. Passing cars kept disturbing them and they all settled on a dead tree, instantly converting it into a live tree with bright green leaves. Then a small flock of Quarrions arrived, imperiously took over the top branches from the Budgerigars. So now the tree was crowned with grey and yellow flowers. What a sight.

Nothing much of interest till we passed Peterborough, in South Australia. From here, through Broken Hill to Cobar, the dry, semi-desert country fascinated us.

At one place we saw three fully plumaged male Variegated Wrens (*Malurus lamberti*) sitting together on a bush. Then, later, four adult male Splended Wrens (*M. splendens*, rare *melanotus*) together, a splendid sight indeed! Except for a patch of black, these birds are various shades of gleaming, enamel blue all over.

The dry creek beds seemed the best places. In one we investigated we found chirruping Wedgebills and a flock of 60 or so Orange Chats, a new bird to me. They certainly are orange, and sit on the top of the bushes so you get a great view. Other interesting birds we saw were White Backed Swallows, a pair of White Browed Tree Creepers, a Red Backed Kingfisher, Whitefaces, Blue Bonnet, Mulga and Mallee Ringneck Parrots. Just past Wilcannia, at Lake Wogchugga, a great place for water birds and land birds also. Here we saw a pair of Ground Cuckoo Shrikes. The flocks of Black Tailed Native Hens were new to us (they have bright green beaks) and striking, immaculate black and white Red Kneed Dottoels in pairs held territories along the lake shore.

Right across the dry country we heard the elusive, ventriloquial call of the Crested Bell Bird – “Ha Dick Ha Dick the devil clang clang” or “tip Top of the Wattle Clunk Clunk”, except that you can’t write it down because it seems to me that the bird makes the cowbell sound at the same time that it sings “the devil” or “the wattle”, like this – “Ha Dick Ha Dick the devil”
clang clang”

or maybe the dry places have got to me!

JOURNEY TO DUMBLEYUNG

(The place-names in South Western Australia intrigued us and the huge tracts of land cleared for wheat growing in this unique area appalled us.)

From Jerramungup to Ongerup
And through Lake Grace to Dumbleyung
We travelled in our campervan
Through wheatfields golden in the sun.
We saw three regent parrots there;
We saw a calamanthus wren;
But mostly we saw fields of wheat
And wondered what it was like when
All of the land was clothed in bush
And the black people walked along
From Jerramungup to Ongerup
And through Lake Grace to Dumbleyung.

Graham Alcorn

A BIRD OBSERVER’S NOTES

Luck was with us recently when we were able to observe two very interesting patterns of bird behaviour within the confines of our neighbours and our front gardens.

The first observation was of a group of five Yellow-winged Honeyeaters which were feeding on our free-flowering Grevillia Longifolia.

Having unwillingly disturbed the birds, I noticed that four immediately took off to the safety of a tall eucalypt nearby. The fifth bird, apparently operating on a particularly succulent flower, delayed its flight to safety by a few seconds.

On arrival at the safe position the latecomer was immediately seized by the foot and dragged some distance along the branch by one of the earlier arrivals. I can only assume that this was a family group and that one of the parents was admonishing one of the young for being careless in observing safety precautions.

Some days later we were disturbed by the repeated calls of a galah which seemed to us to be in distress. We soon located the bird, perched in a eucalypt next door. It appeared to have a dislocated or broken wing. Having put food and water as near to the bird as we could get, we went about our daily tasks. That was at about ten a.m.

After an absence of about five hours we found on return that the bird remained in the same position but had ceased to call. At about 5 p.m. the galah was joined by another and a good deal of preening and close body contact took place.

About half an hour later, a third galah arrived on the scene and soon started a vigorous flapping of wings while holding tightly on to a branch. Not long afterwards, all three birds took off and vanished into the sunset.

The question arising from this action are numerous; but I wonder how far some birds will go to assist their fellows?

Keith Sherlock.

STOP PRESS

The Australian Museum is holding a Bush Fire Exhibition which tells the story "Why does Australia burn?". It starts with the evolution of Australia, the arrival of the Aborigines and their use of fire and on through to European settlers and how they have changed the landscape.

We recommend this Exhibition, which will be open till the end of March, to members. The Australian Museum is situated at 6-8 College Street, and is open 12-5 pm Monday and 10 am to 5 pm Tuesday through to Sunday.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Members are reminded that membership fees are due from the end of March 1985 and those who are two or more years in arrears will be removed from the membership list. Should you have any queries, ring Treasurer 87.7139.