

U.B.M.C.S. NEWSLETTER

"Nature Conservation Saves
for Tomorrow's People"

Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society, P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, NSW, 2782.

Secretary: Les Coyne 57.3327 Editor: Christine Davies 87.7246

No. 102.

December, 1995.

RESIDENT'S MESSAGE

At a time when environmental issues and concerns are demanding more attention than at any other time in human history it is difficult to keep abreast of the events, facts and opinions which surround a subject. It is our aim to present a balanced view to our members.

The UBMCS has been at the forefront of the conservation movement in the Blue Mountains for many years and intends to continue the founders' dreams. Our members feel pride in seeing the rewards of their efforts in so many areas: land acquisition, native plant nursery, education, care of the bush. Speaking on a personal note, I feel a tug of satisfaction whenever I hear young bushwalkers admire the Blue Gum Forest down from Blackheath - when before the war I went to dances and other events organised by the Sydney Bushwalkers Federation to raise money to buy and so prevent the logging and destruction of this wonderful stand of Blue Gums.

This is what we are all about:- Long-term thinking; preserving things that matter for the future; educating people by opening their eyes and minds; but mainly enjoying one another's company and making new friends while achieving our goals of loving and understanding by living *with* rather than *on* our part of the world.

Wishing you a happy Christmas and a wonderful and rewarding New Year.

- Thor Schache.

**AUSTRALIA DAY
BUSH DANCE**
with the VINEGAR HILL
BUSH BAND
at THE HUT
on Friday 26 January
7.30 Start Tickets \$10
Enquiries to Thor Schache 57.3272
and Christine Davies 87.7246

Welcome to the UBMCS newsletter. This issue is the 102nd issue of the newsletter and the first monthly newsletter with a new editor on a new computer.

What's Going On?

The answer is: **PLENTY!**

Here are a few of the current matters extracted from recent Management Committee minutes.

- Work Stands were purchased for the Nursery
- A computer was purchased for newsletter production
- The newsletter will be published monthly starting with this issue
- Friday was confirmed as the day for the monthly meetings
- A feasibility study is underway into the rehabilitation of the land on the south side of the GWH, between the Sorenson Bridge and the Leura pedestrian overbridge. The intention is to plant suitable natives, including Mountain Ash. Early indications are that the project is a goer.
- The society is in discussion with four other groups with a view to a joint venture to rehabilitate the Blackheath Quarry
- A weed clearing day on the Nature Trail saw the removal of 16 large bags of Broom
- \$50 donations have been sent to each of the Nature Conservation Council and The Total Environment Centre
- The society has participated in the recent Environment Summit and the Katoomba Falls Creek Valley Management Plan
- All members who didn't renew their membership in the past two years have been requested to re-consider their decision not to renew
- Rehabilitation work is to commence in the first quarter of 1996 on the Jamison Creek, immediately south of the GWH. A possible role for society members is being sought. Most of the work will be performed by INTELIFE trainees, but we believe there is a role for society members, too, perhaps in

an advisory capacity. (Those interested in this project should contact Thor Schache on 57.3272)

- The Nursery is hoping to extend its operations by opening on Thursday and by having a weekend sales point at Wentworth Falls School of Arts.
- A corporate plan for the society is being prepared. The second draft will be discussed at the January Management Meeting.

Bush Dance in January

It was decided by the majority of members to keep our general meeting day as Friday. The January general meeting falls on Australia Day and we are going to have a **Bush Dance** instead of our normal meeting.

The Vinegar Hill Bush Band has been booked for the occasion. Dinner and refreshments will be available from the restaurant (bookings required for dinner).

Vinegar Hill is one of the best bush bands around and it will be a great night, so come along and bring your friends.

Tickets are available from P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls.

Find a Name Competition

The UBMCS Newsletter - what a mouthful! Let's start the new year with a new name for our publication.

There will be a prize of a dinner or lunch for two people at the Conservation Hut restaurant for the name which is judged by the committee to be the best.. Send your suggestions to P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, before 19 January, and we'll judge the winner at the next committee meeting.

Morning Tea at The Hut

At 10 am on the First Friday of each month. Come along and have a cup of tea and meet new and old members.

Friday 2 February.

**DEADLINE for the
JANUARY ISSUE
is JANUARY 19**

The Grose Valley - a Wild Survivor

Everyone has gazed in wonder from Govetts Leap, into the depths of the Grose Valley. The more adventurous have wandered into those depths, perhaps to marvel at Blue Gum Forest, to scale the cliffs, or to undertake the arduous journey through endless ravines to reach the Hawkesbury.

It is remarkable that an area as large as the Grose catchment, so close to Sydney, has survived in a substantially natural state, despite numerous proposals for roads, railways, and resource developments. Ironically, preservation of much of the catchment can be partly attributed to one of the very resource developments which threatened it.

In the 1860s, when Sydney needed more water, the Grose was one of several sources under examination: a dam site was identified just downstream from the junction of Govetts Creek and the Grose (Blue Gum Forest). The water quality was superior to the other alternatives, as the catchment was substantially pristine. When the option was still under examination in 1875, the government, recognising the need to preserve the water quality, reserved from alienation all the crown land in the catchment upstream from the damsite.

This reservation - a remarkably enlightened and forward thinking move for its day - remained in force until the Blue Mountains National Park was created in 1959. Without the reservation, today there would be far more ribbon development on the ridges of the upper Grose, and quite likely there would be private lands in the valley itself.

The Grose has had many scrapes with development. In the 1850s, it was proposed to put the western railway up the river instead of over the ridges, and the Royal Engineers spent two years building a track and undertaking surveys to that end. In the 1920s, a development syndicate proposed a major coal mine in the valley, with associated power station, railway and timber industry.

In more recent times, the Grose has been primarily of interest to bushwalkers - especially since, in 1931, bushwalkers paid out a lessee, Mr Clarrie Hungerford, so that the Blue Gum Forest reserve might be created. The Forest might well be regarded as the genesis of the Blue Mountains National Park.

Bushwalking historian Andy Macqueen has for some time been exploring and researching the Grose Valley, and plans to publish a book in 1997. He has spoken to many bushwalkers and local residents, some with memories extending back to the 1920s, but would still like to hear from anyone with interesting tales or discoveries in the Grose. Andy can be contacted on 51.2556, or at 39 Bee Farm Road, Springwood 2777.

First Seed Collection at Kanangra

On Friday 10 November five Members of the Society (David and Elvene Thomas, Joan and Imre Gahl, and David Coleby) visited the plot of land, Lot 5, on the Kanangra road that the UBMCS purchased and gave to the NPWS. We went to collect seed of local native species. After we have grown them at the Blackheath Nursery, we hope to plant them at Kanangra.

Along the Kanangra Road we passed Mt Wiburd, Mt Whitely, Mt Bailey, Mt Lakeman, and Mt Dunn, and arrived at Lot 5 half way between Mt Whalan (1 km to the east) and Mt Budthingeroo (1 km to the west). The map reference of Lot 5 is Kanangra 8930-111-S 266 467. The journey took 1 hour 40 minutes by car from Leura.

The swampy Luther's Creek runs parallel to the road about 100m to the east: 300m further on the road crosses this creek, and it is here that there is a convenient but faint track to the southwest less than 100m to an area suitable for a picnic under the trees.

The surrounding land is easily identified by the total tree clearance on both sides of the road. The land was formerly used for grazing cattle, and there are remains of fences and yards.

The slopes of the paddocks have numerous small outcrops of granite boulders, and affixed to one of these is a metal plate commemorating the UBMCS land purchase and gift. It is located about 100m up the open hill to the west, about 200m before the creek crossing.

We collected some seeds, but more will be required, so another picnic trip is planned for the New Year. **Let me know if you would like to come along on a Monday or Thursday in January.**

David Coleby, Nursery Manager,
(Phone 84-1395)

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Thanks to Grace Bayley

The committee would like to send a special thank you to Grace Bayley for her many contributions to the work of the conservation society and for producing the newsletter illustrated with her lovely drawings.

Grace has lots of friends in the Society and she will be missed by all. We wish her and Fred well in their new home in Geringong on the South Coast.

Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society

At a Special General Meeting, held on November 24, 1995, members of the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society agreed to incorporate with the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

This arrangement was ratified at a joint meeting between the Management of both societies on December 18, 1995.

Thor Schache, President of UBMCS welcomed the members from the lower mountains. "We have common aims and objectives - to preserve the wonderful environment in which we live, and to hand it on to future generations in a pristine state", Thor said.

Members of the LBMCS will be receiving this newsletter - the first issue of our new venture into monthly publishing. LBMCS membership of the UBMCS is automatic, with renewals due on March 1 next year. Life members of LBMCS will receive free UBMCS membership for the next two years.

*This newsletter is
photocopied
Courtesy of*
**BLACKHEATH AREA
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PHONE 87.7770 FAX 87.7777**
*Serves the communities of
Blackheath, Megalong
and Mount Victoria*
REOPENS JANUARY 15, 1996

A REMARKABLE LIZARD

(Kings Table, November 1995)

The old clifftop walk starts above Vera Falls and winds along the cliff to Rocket Point. Views are magnificent (it's probably the only place where you can see Vera Falls) and a more beautiful display of wildflowers would be hard to imagine. Last month's Boronias were starting to fade and the Kunzea was the most abundant flower and there were many other flowers, too numerous to list. The name coined by Grace Bayley, the "Hanging Garden" is very appropriate.

During the walk we saw many lizards: a Blotched Blue Tongue near the start of the walk; a Red-throated Cool Skink near Rocket Point; Cunningham's Skinks living in the rock wall of a lookout near Den Fenella (we fed them and another little skink which showed amazing speed when a passing bird cast its shadow on the rock); and numerous unidentified small skinks - but the most amazing of all was the *beautiful golden She Oak Skink*.

At first glance he looked like an Eastern Brown snake, but was only half the length of a snake of that thickness. On closer inspection I saw tiny legs which, when the skink wanted to move faster, were folded in - *and he moved like a snake*.

I'm told that when threatened this

skink will imitate an Eastern Brown, standing up on its tail in the typical S-shape, and looking quite aggressive. -CD.

BIRDS OF THE MEGALONG

(Bird walk with Graham Alcorn)

"Hooray" said Graham. "It's a fine day". This referred to cancellation of his last two trips when he broke the drought!

In the rainforest at Coachwood Glen we recorded 11 birds, including a rufous fantail and the golden whistler, and a magnificent sighting, for some of us, of a rose robin.

During the day we added more birds to our list, making a tally of 27 birds seen or heard. At each stop, Graham delighted us with recitations of his poems of birds as we saw them.

An extra bonus was thanks to Graham's keen observation of birds and their nesting habits. In the rainforest he showed us the long and slender nest, suspended over the creek, of the yellow-throated scrub wren. In open forest he had watched a yellow-faced honeyeater going in and out of a clump of tea trees. Sure enough there was the nest with two pinkish coloured eggs. Also in tea tree nearby were old nests of the beautiful and the red-browed firetail finches. We are grateful to Graham for giving us a most enjoyable and informative day.

- Ruth Milton.

New Members

We welcome the following new members to our society:

Joanne Armstrong, Springwood
Joan Wright, Katoomba
Fred Wright, Katoomba
Simone Liebergreen, Wentworth Falls
Betty Price, Warrimoo
Pat Lovegrove, Hartley Vale
Dave Lovegrove, Hartley Vale
Bobbi Mildren, Wentworth Falls
B I Darmanin, Carlingford
Denis Kevans, Wentworth Falls
Patrick Martin, Blackheath
Carla Billingham, Blackheath
Joan Williams, Wentworth Falls
Deborah Shaw, Leura
Helen Raphael, Hazelbrook
Hugh Patterson, Springwood
Robert Murray, Blackheath
Don Sheehan, Katoomba
Ruth Ley, Katoomba
Lyndal Sullivan, Katoomba

BE CAREFUL
The Powerful Owl
Has a powerful scowl.

It's quite intimidating.
I wouldn't go close if I were you.
Just think what those massive
claws could do.
Well goodbye, I won't be waiting.
- Graham Alcorn.



In the Bush

Welcome reader to what I hope will be an interesting addition to our monthly newsletter. My qualifications for launching this page are certainly not based on academic knowledge. All I can claim is a long-standing interest and enthusiasm for what we see in the bush.

The flowers for the month (November) in the upper heath country have been the *Isopogons* and the *Kunzeas*. The *Isopogons* are now (December) past their peak. They are a genus belonging to the Proteaceae.

Isos Gr. equal, pogon, a beard. Refers to hairs on fruit (evenly hirsute). The species I write of are *anemonifolius* (*Anemone-leaved*) and are commonly and

aptly named *Drumsticks*. I find the symmetry of the flower most appealing.

In November we suddenly see a sea of pink to lilac colouring flaring by the pathways and realise it's from an ordinary-looking bit of scrub I've taken for granted up until now, the *Kunzea*. It has a most attractive fluffy flower. It belongs to the *Myrtaceae* family and the genus was named after Gustav Kunze, a professor of medicine and botany in Germany in the

mid 19th century. The species name *capitata* means with a head, of the flowers. I don't know of a common name.

Now for the birds, more often heard than seen. No doubt many subtle sounds

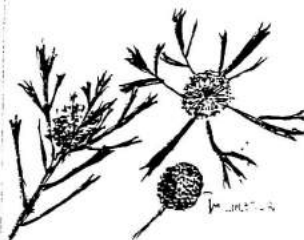
from November arrivals pass unnoticed to the average walker's ear, but the joyous spilling over of sound which emanate from the *Rufous Whistler* reminds all that spring is here.



The *Currawongs* have broken away from their flocking habit to breed, but there are still plenty about and yesterday I heard the Koel, returned from wintering in the tropics, called loudly outside our back door.

And last but not least - our creepy crawly friends are now out and about and the frogs and the wrigglers. In all "*in the bush*" is a much more lively experience this month than it was last month.

The Bungip



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

JANUARY:

- 07 (Sun) **Excursion - Neates Glen.** Meet at Blackheath Station commuter car-park at 9.30 am. Contact David Thomas (047)84.2121. Grade 5.
- 17 (Wed) **Excursion - A stroll around Wentworth Falls Lake** - history of the area and feed the ducks. A level and leisurely stroll. Meet 10 am at Stockyard Parking Area, Wentworth Falls Station. Contact Lloyd Jones (047)57.2270. Grade 1.
- 19 (Fri) **Closing Date for Name our Publication competition.**
DEADLINE FOR JANUARY ISSUE.
- 20 (Sat) **Excursion - The River Cave. Wet walk - bring spare shoes.** Meet Mt. Victoria Station at 8.30 am. Contact Dave Lovegrove (063) 55.2133. Grade 4.
- 22 (Mon) **Committee Meeting** at The Hut at 2 pm.
- 26 (Fri) **Australia Day Bush Dance with the Vinegar Hill Bush Band** - at The Hut, starting at 7.30. (More details on Page 1).

FEBRUARY

- 02 (Fri) **Morning tea at The Hut - welcome to new members.**
Come along and meet old and new members - maybe a short walk. 10 am. at The Hut.
- 04 (Sun) **Excursion - The Jungle.** A beautiful and easy walk in the Grose Valley. A slow ascent to Govetts Leap will be in the shade of the afternoon.. Meet at Blackheath Station commuter car-park at 8.30. Contact Olive Noble (047)87.8342. Grade 6.
- 17 (Sat) **Excursion - Burro Korain Head** from an access point on the road to Baltzer Lookout. Magnificent views; about 7 hours duration; participants should be reasonably fit. **Can you do twenty full knee-bends?** Contact Lloyd Jones (047)57.2270 Grade 7.
- 19 (Mon) **Committee meeting** at The Hut at 2 pm.
- 21 (Wed) **Excursion - Old Point Pilcher.** Meet at Northern side of Medlow Bath Station at 9.30. Contact Christine Davies (047)87.7246. Grade 4.
- 23 (Fri) **General Meeting** at The Hut at 7.30 pm.

MARCH

- 01 (Fri) **Welcome to new members** - 10 am at The Hut.
- 03 (Sun) **Clean Up Australia Day..**
- 16 (Sat) **Excursion - The Hut, Roberts Pass, Lillian's Bridge, Nature Trail, The Hut..**
- 20 (Wed) **Excursion - Braeside Walk and Evans Lookout.**
- 25 (Mon) **Committee meeting** at The Hut at 2 pm.
- 29 (Fri) **Annual General Meeting** at The Hut at 7.30 pm.

The Annual Meeting

Our next AGM will be held on **Friday 30 March, 1996.**

Each year, we have difficulty in getting a full complement of office bearers. It is even rumoured that some members deliberately stay away from the AGM - for fear of being coerced into standing for office, or because the proceedings are too embarrassing.

This year it was some months before all the management positions were filled, and this included a number of starters who say they were "press-ganged"

In 1996/97, we need willing and enthusiastic volunteers who are prepared to serve our society faithfully and competently for the year.

Next month's newsletter will include a description of the duties for each position on the Management Committee, together with a request for nominations. The Management Committee will meet 12 times in 1996/97 on the Tuesday night immediately preceding the Friday monthly meetings. The change to nightly Management Committee meetings is designed to allow members in full-time work to be an effective part of the society's management.

Without a full and competent Management Committee, the society will not be effective.

Please consider whether you are able to help the society by nominating for office, and look out for the list of duties in next month's newsletter.

Bushwalk Excursions

As a general guide, walks have been graded on a scale of 1-10: 1-3 easy; 3-7 medium; 8-10 harder.

Walkers are required to carry 1 litre of water and it is advisable to carry warm clothing, rainwear, and to wear sensible footwear.

Walkers participate at their own risk.

UBMCS Native Plant Nursery

The nursery is open for plant sales on Tuesday mornings from 9 to 12.

Volunteers work in the nursery on Tuesday mornings, and we are considering having an additional work morning on Thursdays. Please phone David Coleby on 84.1395 if you would like to work at the nursery on Thursday mornings.