



HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"

Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc., P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, NSW, 2782
President: Thor Schache 57-3272 Secretary: Les Coyne 57-3327 Editor: Christine Davies 87-7246

No. 104

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Our Publication has a Name

There were plenty of good suggestions—thanks to members who sent in their ideas. Vivien Hunter suggested "Hut News" which was chosen for its association with The Hut and for the simplicity of the name.

UBMCS Proposed Name Change

As the Society now represents both Upper and Lower Mountains it is proposed that the name of the Society be changed to **BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.** Members are advised that this motion will be put forward at the March AGM. A 75% favourable vote will be needed to carry the motion.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM is on Friday March 29 at The Hut, starting at 7.30. Play an active role in the Society—come along to the AGM and nominate for an executive position or give your vote to a suitable candidate.

Feathertail Glider

A profile of the Feathertail Glider is on page 2. The Feathertail Glider is **probably common** and **may be living** around houses in the Blue Mountains, **but nobody has ever really tried to find out!**

What an amazing little animal—the size of a mouse, the smallest gliding mammal in the world, and able to glide **20 metres**, can steer with its unusual tail, and has special pads on its feet which enable it to walk upside down on a smooth surface.

I wonder what else is out there that we don't know about?

Help! Help! Help!

The relatively pristine and beautiful Bonnie Doon Catchment needs urgent assistance in the form of letters of concern to Council in regard to the extension of Stuarts Road and development in the fragile heath close to Bonnie Doon walking track.

The double block which is to be developed has its back boundary 140 metres into the heathland. More than half the block is closed heath and the rear of the block is too steep for building. The only possible position for building is on the wet heathland and creekline between the heath and slope.

Of even greater concern, once the road is in place this will open access to 5 large blocks extending even further into the heath and pristine woodland.

The heath is very old and slow growing due to the shallowness and infertility of the soil. This area is extremely erodible. We believe that no restrictions or constraints will be sufficient to prevent irrevocable damage to the catchment.

The Bonnie Doon Catchment contains a wide variety of undisturbed habitat types. To date, 21 Rare, Endangered or Endemic plant species have been located in the catchment. Found here is 25% of the world's population (445 plants) of *Microstrobos fitzgeraldi* (Dwarf Mountain Pine).

The catchment is used extensively for environmental education. If the road were constructed it would be, in places, within 20 metres of the Bonnie Doon walking track

On the verge of World Heritage listing, the Blue Mountains must secure assets like the Bonnie Doon Catchment. BMCC, NSW Dept of Planning, RTA, and Blue Mountains residents have previously acknowledged the intrinsic value of the area by protecting other parts of the catchment.

This is a case of extremely sensitive land being missed in EMP1. We need help to draw BMCC and State Government's attention to this oversight.

THE LAND MUST BE REZONED
Time is very short, please send letters of concern to BMCC as soon as possible.
❖ **Bonnie Doon Fauna Study Group, 82.2218**

Nursery News

The Blackheath Nursery continues to flourish, though not without a few hiccups. Our merry band of planters and potters have made significant improvements in plant care, but we now need to spend money on an efficient and reliable watering system which can cope automatically with sudden changes in weather.

Two trips for seed collection at Kanangra have now taken place, both very social occasions followed by a picnic. Seeds of four different Eucalypts & other species such as *Hakea microcarpa* & *Lomatia myricoides*, are propagating in the greenhouse.

Tubestock specials for the month, at \$1.50 each or 10 for \$10, include *Hakea salicifolia*, *Crowea exalata*, *Crowea*

salicifolia, *Acacia longifolia*, *Lomandra longifolia* and *Schoenus imberbis*. If you can't get to the Nursery between 9 and noon on Tuesday mornings, phone David Coleby on 84-1395. He might be persuaded to bring some plants to the AGM.

It Can Be Done!

When you first stand in a weed-infested gully and look around you, and look at the small amount of work you have achieved that day, it seems hopeless. To clear all the weeds from this area will take forever, and with just a few people working only one morning a month, it's impossible!

Pope's Glen looked like one of those jobs less than four years ago. There were pine trees, laurels, cotoneasters, and holly, and masses of honeysuckle and ivy covered the ground and climbed over scrubs and up trees, thriving in a thick mulch of pine needles.

The Pope's Glen Bushcare Group works on the last Saturday morning of every month from 9 to 1. At the end of every month heaps of ivy and honeysuckle, and enormous stacks of holly and laurel and cotoneaster have been collected from the road above by the Council; small pine trees browned off and died; one weekday a number of large pine trees were cut down by contractors and their wood stacked beside the road.

What a transformation! Tall Eucalypts and other native trees are recovering their strength after the long struggle to survive under the weight of the parasitic ivy. Freed from the creeping weeds, luscious tree ferns spread their fronds, and on the seemingly bare ground, ferns and tiny seedlings had been waiting for the chance to start growing. Gahnias have been planted beside the creek, and Eucalypt saplings. Weed mats have been put down on the steep bank near the road and wattles planted. Steps have been built down the bank and a track marked to the creek, and eventually there will be a walking track along the creek to join up with the present Popes Glen track so people won't have to walk along the road.

Today you can stand in the gully and look around you and see the patches of good reclaimed bushland steadily increasing. In years down the track no-one will remember the weeds and people will walk through a pretty gully of tall eucalypts with

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

an understory of tree ferns and other native shade and moisture-loving plants.

What a wonderful result a small group of volunteers can achieve!

(Blue Mountain Bushcare and Landcare groups are listed on page 4.)

Feathertail Gliders

"Are there many Feathertail Gliders in the Blue Mountains?" It's thought that this unique species is moderately common throughout the area, but they are not often seen. Like some of our furtive bird species, frogs and smaller mammals, they could be declining without us even realizing. There have been few studies of wild populations.

Feathertail Gliders were thought to be related to the Pygmy Possums, now they and a relative from New Guinea are classified in a family of their own - *Acrobatidae*. This tiny creature is the size of a House Mouse (6-8cm), weighs 10-14 grams. Its fur is brownish-grey above, whitish below. A gliding membrane extends from elbow to knee. It has remarkable feet adaptations, with finely grooved pads on its toes which enable it to cling upside down from flat surfaces such as glass, like some geckos.

The most extraordinary feature of this unusual animal is its rudder-like tail. The flattened tail is as long as its body with very short fur on upper and lower surfaces and edged with a conspicuous fringe of coarse, stiff hairs. This amazing structure assists the animal in steering, braking and anchoring itself. This tiny marsupial can glide more than 20 metres. (*This is 300 times its head and body length, or the equivalent of a human leaping 6 football fields!*) Their manoeuvrability is such that they can slow down mid-glide and end the glide in a spiralling series of turns around a target tree.

Feathertail Gliders forage at night in the canopy of Eucalypt forest and down into the shrub layer (almost to ground level) in search of insects, sap, nectar and pollen. Little is understood of the importance of small mammals as plant pollinators. It is believed that marsupials and lorikeets were the earliest pollinators of species like *Banksias* (60 million years ago).

During the day Feathertails shelter in ball-shaped nests of dried eucalyptus leaves constructed inside tree hollows, or they may take over other animal's abandoned nests. They have also been reported nesting in boxes on telegraph poles, and once, in an old coat hanging in a tree! Communal life is important to these animals and up to 16 individuals have been found sharing the one nest. During cold weather this species may enter periods of torpor (a deep sleep).

Breeding begins in late winter and 2-3 young are carried in the female's well developed, forward opening pouch. The hairless young soon become too heavy to

carry and are left in the nest while the mother feeds. More than one litter may be raised each season.

Feathertail Gliders may live and feed quite close to houses in the Blue Mountains. Populations are at risk from land clearing, tree felling (hollow dwelling mammals have also suffered chainsaw injuries) and general habitat interference. They are vulnerable to predation by cats and foxes. Shelter dreys may be accessible to curious domestic cats. If startled, Feathertails take fright easily and may misjudge a leap and fall to the ground. Once on the ground it may scamper towards the nearest tree or 'freeze' in an attempt to conceal itself.

Recently, there has been a lot of attention paid to rare and endangered species, but little consideration given to loss of diversity and the potential for local extinctions. *Unless we inform ourselves of the habitat needs of wildlife, the rare and endangered list will continue to increase.*

❖ **Bonnie Doon Fauna Study Group, 82.2218**

PS. We would be interested in hearing of any Feathertail Glider sightings.

Amendment 20 to LEP 1991

A number of society members expressed concern when BMCC advertised in the Gazette that they planned to make the following amendment to the Local Environment Plan 1991: **THE TERM "DEVELOPMENT" DOES NOT REFER TO "SUBDIVISION" FOR THE PURPOSE OF CLAUSE 30.** What does this cryptic statement mean, and what are the consequences of making the amendment?

Clause 30 of LEP 1991 applies to areas greater than 4,000 square metres that are zoned **Residential Bushland Conservation**. This clause specifies that development on these lots can only occur within a **Principal Development Area** of no more than 2,500 square metres.

Clause 34.4 specifies that land zoned **Residential Bushland Conservation** can be subdivided in accordance with the Density Control Provisions set out in the LEP 1991 map, and the provisions of clause 34.1. These Density Control Provisions can go as high as 8 lots per hectare.

These clauses can be in conflict with each other. For example, take a 6 hectare lot with a Density Control Provision of 8 lots per hectare. **Under clause 30**, the lot has a 2,500 square metre Principal Development Area and all development must occur within this area. Subdivision would result in, say, 4 building lots.

Under Clause 34, the lot could be divided into 8 lots per hectare. After allowing for land with steep slope, and other sensitive areas, there may be 5 lots per hectare, giving a total of 30 lots.

Whilst we would obviously prefer the first interpretation, the courts have invari-

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ably allowed the second interpretation.

Extensive discussions have been held between members of the management committee, outside experts and BMCC officers, to gauge the impact of the amendment. The conclusion reached was that, were the amendment defeated (not made), there would be no beneficial environmental impact. The point was made that absolutely nothing will change, except that an ambiguity in LEP 1991 will be removed.

There is a genuine inconsistency between clause 34 and clause 30. The harsh reality is that the courts would rule in favour of clause 34 in preference to clause 30 in cases where these two clauses were in conflict.

At its February meeting, the Management Committee decided to take no further action in connection with amendment 20.

Hawkesbury Catchment

Nepean

Robert Crawford, Chairman of Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust gave a very interesting and inspiring talk at the February general meeting. 3-5 years ago the Hawkesbury-Nepean was "dead, dying, finished". Now there is an air of expectation and pride—**we can do something!**

The whole of the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment is under enormous pressures, from population densities and rural activities. The Blue Mountains is part of the catchment—what we do up here has an impact there, and what is good for us is good for the catchment.

Our challenge is to get together as a group and design and create rather than sit back and react to events as they happen. Fighting a rearguard action is exhausting and unproductive. We must get principles and guidelines in place to challenge pressures and put restraints in place.

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New Members

The following members have joined the Society during January and February:

Don Morison, Katoomba; Patricia Mindt, Mount Victoria; Gillian Janus, Blackheath; Matt Gray, Medlow Bath; R & E Van Reyswood, Lawson; H & R Smyth, Faulconbridge; Chris Hannocks, Katoomba; Helen Lambert, Springwood; Nanette Crawshay, Collaroy; Towers family, Wentworth Falls; Sandra Martins, Blackheath; Lee Tredinnick, Wentworth Falls; Alan & Virginia Lane, Parramatta.

These LBMCS members are now members of UBMCS: Geoff & Nancy Allen, Mr. R. Bigland, Mr. C. Dean, Richard Phillipps, of Blaxland; Colin Anderson, Lapstone; Marie Baldwin, Besse Bramsen, Mr. & Mrs. B. Dickinson, Mrs. M. Edmonds, Mr. & Mrs. M. Hughes, Mr. & Mrs. J. Hill, Frank Winternitz, of Springwood; Bob Chapman, Paul Godfrey, Aleen Hanley, Mr. & Mrs. J. Parbery, George Threlfo, of Glenbrook; Adam Curry, Ken Ozanne, Faulconbridge; Eunice Holmes, Tahmoor; Mr. & Mrs. L. Leslie, Winnalee, Mr. & Mrs. F. Morrison, Mt. Riverview; Wynne O'Brein, Woodford; Alison Roberts, Leura; Mr. & Mrs. H. Roper, Valley Heights; Mr. & Mrs. J. Rickard, Linden; Chris Stickley, Warrimoo; Garry Tooth, Sans Souci.

(Other LBMCS members were already members of UBMCS).



What a Night!!!!

At the Conservation Society bushdance, Frank O'Gallagher, effervescent MC and dance caller of Vinegar Hill Bush Band, "most people get tired after a couple of hours of this. These people just want to keep on dancing...."

At the Conservation Society bushdance, everyone dancing and smiling. It doesn't matter if you make a mistake in the dance. Bush dancing is such fun. It is fun to dance and fun to watch.

What a magic night, the night of the Conservation Society bushdance. Over 100 people of all ages came to dance and to listen to the music of the Vinegar Hill Bush Band. The tables and chairs were moved outside to the verandah to make room for the dancers and in between dances people were able to watch the changing colours and shadows over the Jamison Valley and Mount Solitary and the distant mounts. As the sunset faded the stars started to appear until there were a mass of stars in the milky way, bright beside a quarter moon.

During a break the silence of the bush was shattered and Jamie Carlon of Vinegar Hill Bush Band marched in playing the pipes to introduce Denis Kevans to sing "The Green Ban Fusiliers" from his new CD. Denis was superb, inspired by the magic of the venue, and riding high with the excellence and success of his wonderful CD. (Phone Denis on 57.3119 to order a copy.)

During another break singer Denis Rice, on a short trip home from his work in Burma, sang for Australia Day, "My Country", Dorothea McKeller's words, his tune.

At the end of the evening, someone said "let's do this every month".....well, definitely next year!

In The Bush

A week away from the Blue Mountains is a great way to appreciate them. Such has been my lot this month—over the Range and down the Western Slopes to Wagga. That area is referred to as "The Bush". It may have been so in the dreamtime but now it's not more than a manicured paddock.

Once past the National Park boundaries the groomed paddocks take over—no logs, few dead trees with hollows and no understorey. Now and then a belt of timber crowns a slope, runs up a ridge or forms attractive scattered shelter belts. And they are mature, venerable and picturesque but most are grandpas past the age of reproduction. The majority of the paddocks are bereft of saplings. Stock nip off the descendants of the fertile. Grass is the sacred herb.

The process has been proceeding since white settlement began and deforestation must accelerate as the eucalypts reach their life span. A sea of grassland will stretch, except for a few islands of National Parks, to the arid lands.

Every conservation magazine warns of the outcome—salination, erosion, dead rivers, altered rainfall. Our way of life demands the earth to give unceasingly.

An unsolicited demonstration of what could be done was evident on stock routes and country lanes. A run of good seasons without roadside grazing gives young

native pines and eucalypts a chance to grow above nibbling height and as a result, long continuous chain wide belts of native vegetation have developed.

A drive along these lanes just before sunset can give great visual pleasure. The various textures of different species glow in the penetrating soft side light. Choughs,

apostle birds, babblers, crested pigeons, red-rumped parrots, galahs are among the many bird species which fly up from their evening foraging to shelter in the plentiful cover. Over the adjoining fences the bare farm paddocks stretch forever, void of anything but close-cropped grass.

We pass through numerous country towns and hamlets—"tidy" towns, respectable towns, towns addicted to bowls, golf and tennis and RSL activities. We wonder how we could survive in such places.

So one returns to the 'City within a Park' with a fresh appreciation of one's surroundings and a realisation of the value of one's well-being are the walks and talks "in the bush".

The Bunyip.

The bleak hills of Blayney

Roadside Verge

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

MARCH

- 01 (Fri) **Morning tea at The Hut.** 10 am.
- 03 (Sun) **Clean Up Australia Day** - UBMCS bush regeneration site. 9 a.m. start, until about 12.30 p.m. Bring a plate for picnic lunch at Wentworth Falls Lake afterwards. Contact Christine Davies (047)87.7246.
- 09 (Sat) **Early Morning Bird Walk—Blackheath Centenary Wildflower Reserve.** Meet outside the Reserve, opposite Cleopatra's Guest House in Cleopatra Street (turn right off Govetts Leap Road) at 7.30 am. Bring picnic breakfast. Contact Kerry Kirk 87.8592 (weekends only) or Christine Davies 87.7246.
- 16 (Sat) **Bushwalk. The Hut, Roberts Pass, Lillian's Bridge, Nature Trail, The Hut.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Les Coyne (047)57.3327. Grade 7.
- 18 (Mon) **Monday Morning Leisure Walk - Fort Rock.** Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre at 9.30. Contact Christine Davies 87.7246. Grade 2.
- 20 (Wed) **Bushwalk. Braeside Walk and Evans Lookout.** Meet at Blackheath station commuter carpark at 9.30 am. Contact Imrie Gahl (047)84.3286. Grade 4.
- 22 (Fri) **DEADLINE FOR APRIL ISSUE OF HUT NEWS.**
- 25 (Mon) **Monday Morning Leisure Walk. Darwin's Walk, "Looking for Birds".** Meet cnr. Falls Road and G.W. Hwy at 9.45. Bring Binoculars. Contact Ruth Milton 57.3584. Grade 2.
- Committee meeting** at The Hut at 2 pm.
- 29 (Fri) **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** at The Hut at 7.30 pm.

APRIL

- 07 (Sun) **Excursion - Vera Falls.** Meet at Wentworth Falls Station at 9 am. Contact Ron Wheeler 57.1526. Grade 7.
- 17 (Wed) **Excursion - Elphinstone Plateau.** Meet at Gearins Hotel at 9.45. Contact Shirley Brown (047)84.3348. Grade 4.
- 20 (Sat) **Excursion - The Hut, Valley of the Waters, National Pass, Slack Stairs, The Hut.** Meet at The Hut at 9.30 am. Contact David Thomas 84.2121. Grade 6-7.
- 23 (Tues) **Committee Meeting** at The Hut at 7 pm.
- 26 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut at 7.30 pm. Guest speaker Carol Probert - Bird Sights and Sounds.**

MAY

- 05 (Sun) **Bushwalk and Picnic at Kanangra site.**
- 15 (Wed) **Bird walk.**
- 18 (Sat) **Bushwalk. Blue Gum Forest.**
- 28 (Tues) **Committee Meeting** at The Hut at 7 pm.
- 31 (Fri) **General Meeting** at The Hut at 7.30 pm.

Walks have been graded:
1-3 easy, 4-7 medium, 8-10 harder.
If in doubt contact the leader.
Walkers must carry 1 litre of water.

WHAT'S NEW? Monday Morning Leisure Walks, starting 18 March.

BUSHCARE WORKERS

The contact people listed here are volunteers involved in hands-on environmental restoration work. Some projects are large and include regular work sessions, others involve individuals or small groups. **Bushcare volunteers usually welcome any offers of assistance!** For general information contact Virginia Bear or Eric Mahony at Blue Mountains City Council on 82.0768.

| <u>Area</u> | <u>Contact</u> | <u>Regular Work Days</u> |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Birdwood Gully, Springwood | Elizabeth Mitchell 51.2405 | Second Saturday 1.30 - 4.00 |
| Bonnie Doon Fauna Study Group | 82.2218 | |
| Centenary Reserve, Blackheath | Kerry Kirk, 87.8592 | Second Sunday 9.30 - 12.00 |
| Deanei Forest, Springwood | Virginia Bear (BMCC) 82.0768 | Fourth Saturday 9.30 - 12.30 |
| Else-Mitchell Park, Springwood | Michael Purtell 51.2143 | Third Saturday 9.30 - 12.30 |
| Fairy Dell, Springwood | Gisela Chorley 39.1427 | Third Sunday 9.00 |
| Katoomba Falls Creek Valley | Linda Thomas 82.1291 | |
| Glenbrook/Lapstone, local areas | Megan Birmingham 39.3510 | First Saturday |
| Glenbrook Lagoon | Ian White 39.4220 | |
| Gordon Falls, Leura | Norm & Laurel Harris 84.1554 | First Saturday 9.30 - 12.30 |
| Jamison Creek, Wentworth Falls | Josephine Adam 57.4125 | Third Saturday |
| South and North Lawson Parks | Erst Carmichael 59.2058 | Fourth Sunday |
| Leura Park (Peter Carrol Field) | Karen Beckley 82.4883 | |
| Linden (Dawes Park) | David Ford 53.1018 | |
| Lindeman Rd. Reserve, North Leura | Marcia Ferguson-Roa 82.6756 | First Saturday 9.00 |
| Minnahaha Falls, Katoomba | Chris Woods 82.3419 | Fourth Saturday 9.30 |
| Popes Glen, Blackheath | Eric Mahony 87.7830 | Last Saturday 9.00 - 1.00 |
| Red Gum Park, Bullaburra | Kathy Veel 59.2096 | Third Sunday |
| Sublime Point, Leura | David Coleby 84-1395 | Yet to be decided |

MEMBERSHIP: The Society is keen to have new members who are interested in the welfare of the Blue Mountains environment. Write to P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, or phone the Secretary on 57.3327.