

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"

Exhibition for Residential Bushland

Congratulations to Blue Mountains City Council for proposed changes to rules for Residential Bushland Conservation land that will be exhibited following a 10-0 vote of BMCC on 11 March 1997.

The changes relate to 660 ha of land at 90 different locations in the City, much of it (according to a Council officer's report) "on the outer urban edges and in pockets with difficult terrain".

The land in question already has development restrictions including a limitation of eight dwellings per hectare. Council's vote proposed to add building bans on steeper than 20% slope (1 in 5), and (following a successful amendment moved by Councillor Terri Hamilton) building bans within 50 metres of creeks, lakes and sensitive vegetation units.

Council's pro-environment vote overshadowed previous concerns about environmentalists receiving material for

discussion at Councillors' workshops on the issue (see editorial in March *Hut News*). Councillors listened attentively to representatives of Blue Mountains Conservation Society and RAID (Residents Against Improper Development) prior to the vote.

A Blue Mountains Gazette report on 19th March 1997 (page 29) mentioned that Clr. Bob Clarke was unable to attend the Council Meeting but did not mention that Clr. Ralph Williams was also absent from the Chamber during the 10-0 vote, after declaring a possible conflict of interest.

Clr. Williams has been involved with a number of land subdivision projects in the City in his professional capacity as a consulting engineer.

It is important that Society members support the proposed changes during the public exhibition period.



Nature Track Bushcare Group

Lately the bushcare group has been targeting blackberries. We have been cutting the stems back to about 10 cm, scraping the length with a sharp knife, and dabbing on Roundup. Unlike spraying, this method doesn't kill the natives as well.

We have plenty of weeds to choose from. We have been digging up Monbretia, Coreopsis and Agapanthus.

In January we collected seed from the site of Leptospermum polygalifolium, Leptospermum trinervium and Isopogon anemonifolius. These seeds are being propagated in the Society's nursery and will be planted out later in the year on some of the bare patches.

Last Monday we were joined by some friends during our tea break: eastern yellow robin, white-throated treecreeper, thornbills, new holland honeyeaters, white-browed scrub wren, grey butcherbird. Perhaps we were disturbing some insects for them.

The bushcare group meets on the third Monday of every month at 9 am, and works from 9-12. Tools are provided and no experience is required. We would welcome some more members. Feel free to drop by and see what we are up to.

After our next workday on 21 April we will be visiting the Sublime Point bushcare group to see their revegetation work.

Phone Jessica (57.2783) for more information.

Welcome to New Committee

Another successful year is forecast for the Society following the election of a full and eager management committee to serve the society for the coming year. A list of office bearers and contact numbers is at the bottom of this page. Marion Hawley is our new President. Many thanks and congratulations to the previous committee for their dedication and for a job well done.

Welcome to new committee members, Imre Gahl, Norm Harris, Andrew Reiner, Marie McInnes, and Paul Cardon, and welcome again to members of the previous committee who have volunteered to represent the society again this year.

It is going to be a busy year and help from members will be essential. If you can assist in any way, work on a sub-committee, lead a bushwalk, could recommend an interesting guest speaker, write letters, help at the nursery, etc ... **don't be shy!** Contact the Secretary Les Coyne on 57.3327.

Support for RAID

The proposed subdivision and development of environmentally sensitive land at Winnicopoa Street, Blaxland, would not be considered if EMP2 were law. RAID (Residents Against Improper Development) are involved in defending the land against the current development proposal.

This is a very important case, the outcome of which will have impact on Council's handling of other unsuitable development applications in the Mountains. The Society supports RAID and has agreed to assist with legal costs by paying half, up to a maximum payment of \$1,500.

Guest Speakers

At the AGM Graham Alcorn rounded off a year of great guest speakers with his talk about the history of the society, the conservation battles and the people involved. With a bit of Graham's wonderful poetry thrown in (and a song!) it was a very entertaining evening. The first environment plan was prepared 22 years ago — and Council is **still** working on an environment plan for the Mountains!!!

Coming along to a general meeting is a good way to meet other Society members. The format is a general discussion, supper, then the guest speaker.

On Friday April 25 (Anzac Day) guest speaker will be Keith Painter, who has produced a useful pocket book to describe Prince Henry Cliff Walk. Keith is concerned about problems with other Blue Mountains walking tracks, for instance some of the old tracks around Terrace Falls, Hazelbrook, which have suffered from time and neglect and sometimes been forgotten.

Weed of the Month

Thanks to Lindeman Road Bushcare Group and Council for taking on and expanding our Weed of the Month idea.

This month's Weed of the Month is Cotoneaster, with lots of bird-attracting red berries now ripening.

Inside this newsletter is a copy of the excellent brochure which is being distributed at libraries.

Who needs to grow a weed!!!



"Hut News" , the newsletter of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.	
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Land Use

Mt. Sion Park, Glenbrook

The latest twist in the Mt Sion Park saga was not as disastrous for the park's natural bushland as some had feared. But BMCC's vote of 11 March 1997 raises worrying questions.

BMCC will seek to re-zone a section of the park, equivalent in size to one normal building block, so it can sell the resulting lot to a private buyer. The section is currently **community land** and provides the only public access to the park from Mitchell's Pass Road. It contains a natural watercourse. A "private property" sign facing Mitchell's Pass Road is incorrect.

Adjoining owners wish to negotiate purchase from Council if the block is rezoned and state their wishes to preserve it in its natural state. But what would happen when these owners eventually want to pass the block on? And what will happen if BMCC forms a habit of rezoning Community land for sale, simply to raise revenue?

Ross's Cave, Mount Victoria

BMCS is investigating a problem created by a house under construction over the Carlisle Crescent entrance of the Ross's Cave/Reinert's Pass walking track at Mount Victoria. Unfortunately this part of the track was built on private land. An alternative might be found.

Scripture Union/Federation Push Walk

Federation of Bushwalkers representatives have met with prominent BMCS member Jim Smith to discuss a continuous East/West walking track across the Mountains. The concept was suggested to the Federation by Scripture Union bushwalkers. It is timely that the issue is being discussed now that the NPWS study of National Park tracks is underway.

— Don Morison



Planting Weekend at Minna Ha Ha Falls Reserve

This April marks the sixth anniversary of the Minna Ha Ha Falls Landcare Group working at the Reserve in North Katoomba. To celebrate this, there will be a planting of hundreds of seedlings on the **weekend of 19-20 April**.

Members of the Society are particularly welcome, because of the advice and support given in the first years of the Group's operation.

Planting will start both days at 9 am and go on till mid afternoon. Morning tea will be provided each day. (Find out for yourself why the unrivalled reputation for scones has been earned!)

Everyone is invited to come along. Bring a picnic lunch, the kids and the dog. Start and finish whenever it suits you. Just wear good shoes/boots and a hat, and bring gloves.

The Landcare Group's regular workdays on the fourth Sunday of each month starting at 9.30 am. will recommence in May. Anyone able to give a hand, even for just an hour or two, will be welcome.

More information from Lyndal Sullivan on 82.1635 or David Butler on 82.5489.

Death of a River

Mining at BHP's Tower Colliery has killed big parts of the Cataract River.

The effects of inappropriate mining can make a river sick from polluting runoff or mine drainage. But in this case the river had died. Its waters now leak underground. All life in the mined area was killed when deep cracks appeared in its bed as the coal was removed below the river.

Sydney water has begun a daily release of five megalitres of water into the Cataract River from the Cataract and Nepean dams.

The release will continue for six months and allow measurements of water loss through cracks in the river bed.

The study will also indicate the effect of drought on flow and the impact of Sydney Water's upstream dam activity. There has been a dramatic fall in flow, from about 45,000 megalitres annually in the period 1983 to 1992 to just 5000 megalitres a year.

State of the Environment

Blue Mountains City Council's 1995/96 SoE Report is now available from Council Chambers, cost \$10.

State of the Environment reporting by Councils has the potential to revolutionise local environment management.

Liverpool City Council's 1995/96 SoE Report used a geographic information system to determine that: "In the last ten years Liverpool has lost approximately 626 hectares of native vegetation. That is, Liverpool has lost its vegetation at a rate of 2.5 football fields per week on average for the past ten years."

Liverpool Council are taking strong measures to identify and protect remaining native vegetation, and has initiated "One Million Trees for Liverpool", a five year community tree planting program.

(Extract from: "Riverpost", February 1997.)

Membership Enquiries: The Society is keen to have new members who are concerned about the welfare of the Blue Mountains natural environment. Contact membership secretary, Ross Coster: Work (047)59.1247, Home 59.1837 FAX 59.1095, or write to P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.

Practice Must Cease!

Bird feeding at the tourist information centre at Echo Point is perceived to be having an adverse impact on the bird species' health and local biodiversity. Large numbers of Crimson Rosellas and King Parrots attracted to the area probably discourage other species.

The concentration of nutrients from the faeces of the many feeding birds is encouraging weed growth in the national park. Feral rats, which are flourishing on the dropped grain, present a threat to our small native fauna.

In the interest of the natural environment, this bird feeding practice must cease.

... Feeding Foxes!!!

It appears that the Blue Mountains' fox population has had a good year for breeding. There have been reports from north Wentworth Falls and Blackheath where foxes have been coming up to houses in search of food. **It is believed that some people have been feeding them!**

Young foxes may appear to be "cute and cuddly", but the species has an awful impact on our native fauna through predation and carries diseases into native populations.

Last Chance for the Snowy

When the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme was built, no-one thought about what would happen to the wild and scenic Snowy River. It was granted a meagre 1% of its original flow and is now close to complete ecological collapse, choked by weeds and algae.

The Governments of NSW, Victoria and the Commonwealth will be corporatising the Scheme in the next few months (privatisation may follow). Special legislation is to be introduced into the three parliaments.

The Snowy River must have environmental flows that sustain it in perpetuity. Once the scheme becomes part of a purely profit making operation, independent of Government, it will be impossible to save the Snowy. Only your letters can help.

Please write to the three governments demanding: A guarantee in the corporatisation legislation of environmental flows to sustain the River in perpetuity and their immediate allocation; The water is publicly owned and there should be charge for it; An annual independent and public auditing program of the state of the River.

Send letters NOW to Bob Carr, Premier of NSW (Parliament House, Sydney), Jeff Kennett, Premier of Victoria (Parliament House, Melbourne), John Howard, Prime Minister (Parliament House, Canberra). (From: Total Environment newsletter, Feb. '97)

Welcome to New Members:

Leanne Simpson, Hazelbrook

K Plummer, Hazelbrook

Lorna Bennie, Bullaburra

Katirona and Tim Herborn, Blackheath

Harriet Pocock, Bullaburra (Junior Member)

Pete O'Malley, Wentworth Falls

Michael Sanders, Hazelbrook

Kathy Gott, Blaxland

Colleen Sattler, Bullaburra

Marie Tulip, Glebe

Jutta MacIntyre, Mount Riverview

Vivienne Reiner, Glenbrook

The Hall Family, Lawson

Bert Davies, Drummoyne

Steven McIntosh, Lawson

Sarah Kamarudin, Springwood

Pattie Powell, Wentworth Falls

State Library of NSW

Norman Harris, Leura

Robert Stanley Jones, Hazelbrook

Paul Cardon, Springwood

Di Shanks, Medlow Bath

Vale Greta

Greta Vanry, a founder member of the Society, died on Sunday 23 March.

Greta worked hard for the society and to protect the bushland and environment of the Blue Mountains which she loved. She raised funds for the Society by propagating native plants, and spent many weekends working as a volunteer in the Old Hut kiosk where the Society provided refreshments and information for tourists and bushwalkers..

Allen Strom

We have been informed of the death of Allen Strom, also on 23 March. Allen had a great knowledge of Blue Mountains flora and fauna and helped frame the Society's original constitution. (More next month.)

Porter's Pass Walk

After a week of non-stop rain, four determined raincoat-clad bushwalkers arrived at Blackheath to find that the clouds had parted to reveal a clear blue sky.

The bush is so beautiful after rain! In the heath above Wall's Ledge native grasses, casuarinas and spiders' webs sparkled with diamonds of water.

Along Wall's Ledge, with lovely views of the valley and distant mountains, and into Centennial Glen, Yellow-tailed black cockatoos flying above, beneath numerous waterfalls, most usually absent, perennial waterfalls magnificent in the volume of water they carried, past (and beneath)

numerous rock climbers, down the steps beside the rapidly running creek to Collier's causeway, and a leisurely lunch on some rocks overlooking the valley. The dams in the valley are full, a sight not seen for a long time.

Further on we saw a water skink with a cricket in its mouth, and then met Meredith coming the other way, having missed us at the station. This seemed like a good excuse for another long break to soak up the sights and sounds of this lovely place.

A delightful walk! — Christine Davies.

Rock Climbers

Some rock-climbing areas in Centennial Glen are looking very ragged! The growing number of climbers could be a danger to walkers and must be a worry to the birds of prey who nest on the ledges in the cliffs and to the other creatures whose home is there. What controls do Council have?

The Hanging Rock Walk

On a very pleasant day eight Society members set off for Hanging Rock. The surrounding bush was flourishing after the recent rain. Upon reaching the lookout the view was breathtaking.

A short scramble down for a closer look at the Hanging Rock which stands like a sentinel, with colours so vivid. A brown hawk soaring on a thermal from the valley below kept us entertained.

Then back up to the lookout for lunch and to soak up the view and swap stories and enjoy great company—which all adds up to a great day. — Ron Amos.

In the Bush

Before extolling the pleasures of distant billabongs, Bunyip is moved by the current local surrounds to give them first mention. A fifteen minute walk along a track servicing the power lines at the eastern end of Lawson View Road leads the walker to a most colourful display of Angophoras shedding their bark. A vivid orange army of trees looks most spectacular against the grey-olivey background formed by their neighbours. The old bark is flaking off the parent trunk in interesting scaly patterns. On the ground a fallen bright coloured bark mosaic circles each tree. It is a localised annual event worth seeing.

The height of the land on which these groves grow is about 800m. Much of the land on the south side of Wentworth Falls is slightly higher than this (about 880m) and Angophoras are noticeably absent. Why should this be? Much the same can be said for the Christmas Bush. They grow vigorously enough when planted as seedlings at the 880m contour but the flowers are meagre.

There is another phenomenon which arouses my curiosity. To what age can some shrub reach? Council fire decrees forced me to push back the offending bush a further twenty yards from the house. In the process of grubbing out *Lambertia formosa* (Mountain Devil) I was introduced to their massive ligno-tubers. Relatively small specimens had them the size of a soccer ball—tough lumps deep enough to survive the hottest fire and no doubt could provide enough sustenance to see the shrub through the longest drought. Maybe they could be centuries old.

And now to Bunyip's wandering since the last issue, with emphasis on conservation. The journey went through the richest pastoral country of Australia, i.e. the S.E. corner. Again I state grass is the sacred herb of the pastoralist. Cattle and

sheep graze on the lushest of paddocks—a pleasure to behold from a painter's point of view. Purple ranges with a foreground of golden summer grass the upper

Watching the Birds

Over the road is the bush where I go walking, watching the birds.

Along dry ridges scratched by xerophilous bushes, across swamp gullies torn by tangles of teatree, through a young forest, mountain ash saplings after some bushfire sprouted in great profusion, slim trunks white fingers reaching for the light; out to a hanging swamp above Lake Medlow where orange banksia candles glow in winter, dripping not wax but nectar, bringing the birds.

(once saw a Blood Bird there, a sight to remember, so slight, so scarlet, rare at this altitude); on to a flat where eight species nested last spring: Varied Sitella high in a tree, Flame Robin lower; in a forked trunk, Grey Thrush; Yellow Faced Honeyeater in a low bush, Grey Fantail also; Red Browed Firetail higher up and sited almost on the ground Variegated Wren, Brown Thornbill. Is there, perhaps, advantage in proximity? A multitude of eyes to watch for raiders, of ears to listen, throats to sound a warning? There's much we don't yet know about the birds.

Over the road is the bush where I go dreaming into the birds' world; into the bustle of morning, stillness of noon, various matters to be attended to in the afternoon, calling at evening and in the dusk settling to roost. Here there is order and a niche for each, instinctive urges, conflict but not chaos, a balance of days and seasons and fulfilment, and sometimes a gleam as if there is an answer.

Graham Alcorn, "The Bird Baths of Umbigumbi"

Murray and eastern Victoria are a picture. However while clearing of steep country is a no-no, the four legged bulldozers make sure no trees will ever make a counter-attack.

As for replanting: one does see neat orderly rows of seedlings extending further out along roadsides from country towns and many farm houses are ringed by dense clumps of new plantings but will these efforts be enough to counter the rising salt tables?

Dense, well-guarded forests flanked our route to Wilsons Promontory, especially around the upper Yarra area and Healesville and Warburton, for these areas are the source of Melbourne's water supply.

Once past that area however, pastoral and agricultural country reappeared. The rolling hills were reminiscent of Dorrigo but with even fewer trees. Years ago I saw a few tall skeletal trunks and brush filled gullies—all that remained of the once lofty forests of Gippsland. Now not even those relics are seen.

In the next issue my observations of Wilsons Prom will be presented.

—The Bunyip.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY NATIVE PLANT NURSERY
OPEN TUESDAY MORNINGS 9 am to 12 noon
PLANT SALES VOLUNTEERS ARE WELCOME TO HELP
CONTACT DAVID COLEBY 84.1395

APRIL (Leisure Walks 9.30 start)

14 (Mon) **Leisure Walk —Gipsy**

Pool. Meet 9.30 Woodford Station carpark (topside). Contact Sue Morrison 59.1932.

16 (Wed) **Bushwalk — Pope's Glen.** Meet at the War Memorial (opposite Blackheath Station) at 9.30. Contact Imre Gahl 84.3286. 4 hours. Grade 4.

17 (Thurs) **Committee Meeting** at Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson, 7 pm.

19 (Sat) **Bushwalk — Mount Piddington/Hornes Point/Fairy Bower.** Meet 10 am at Mount Victoria Station. Contact Valerie Collins 59.2472. Grade 4.

21 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 57.2783.

21 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Darwin's Walk.** Meet 9.30 at Wilson Park (Cnr. Falls Road and Great Western Highway). Contact Lee Tredinnick 57.4030.

25 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut at 7.30 pm.** Guest speaker will be Keith Painter, "Are We Losing Our Walking Tracks?"

28 (Mon) **Leisure Walk —Blair Athol Mine.** BRING A TORCH. Meet 9.30 Mount Victoria Station. Contact Christine Davies 87.7246.

MAY

04 (Sun) **Bushwalk — Wonderland Track and Beyond.** Meet 9.30 at Medlow Bath Station (Highway side). Contact June Baxter 87.7312. Grade 6.

05 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Castle Head. (Too nice to rush back — BRING LUNCH).** Meet 9.30 (finish around 2pm) at Cnr. Cascade Street and Bathurst Road, Katoomba. Contact Millie Rogers 82.6631.

12 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Mount Banks.** Meet 9.30 at Mount Victoria Station. Contact Christina Jones 84.1101.

14 (Wed) **Bushwalk — Six Foot Track, Megalong Cemetery to Cox's River.** Meet 9.30 am at Blackheath commuter carpark. Contact Gillian Janus 87.6181. Grade 5.

17 (Sat) **Weekend Bushwalk — Mount Solitary.** Option 1: Walk to Solitary on Saturday (via the Golden Stairs), camp overnight in Chinaman's Cave, return home via The Landslide and Scenic Railway on Sunday.

Option 2: Walk to Solitary on Saturday, camp overnight in Chinaman's Cave, explore Solitary on Sunday, camp overnight, return home on Monday. (We can probably organise both options). Contact Christine Davies (87.7246) BEFORE 30 APRIL if you are interested.

19 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.**

19 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — The Nature Trail.** Meet 9.30 at The Hut, (Wentworth Falls). Contact Jan Cutler 84.3079.

22 (Thu) **Committee Meeting.** 7 pm at Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson.

26 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Mount Boyce.** Meet 9.30 at Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. Contact John Gaynor 87.6071.

30 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut.**

Clean Up Australia

A considerable amount of rubbish was collected from 40 Blue Mountains sites by approximately 450 volunteers. An encouraging sign is that volunteers found a lot less rubbish at many revisited sites.

Our Katoomba Falls Reserve site was reasonably clean. With a willing band of 21 helpers we were able to finish at 11.30, before the rain came down.

A sign of the times! — most common items collected were empty water bottles. Seems that these supposedly health-conscious individuals are not conscious of the environment around them.

Most yukkie ... a (recently) used disposable nappy.

There were two black spots, notified to Council — disused toilets behind the kiosk full of rubbish. A rope was needed to remove two shopping trolleys from Katoomba Falls Creek.

Many thanks to all participants, young and old.

A Possum Story

Once upon a time, in a far-away part of the Blue Mountains called Banksia Flats, there lived a little possum. This little possum was very mischievous. She was called Jacqueline and she lived in a beautiful tree. Her mother and father were dead so she was an orphan, but she was happy being an orphan. She ran from tree to tree, but one terrible day she crashed into a fence and she was sent to the vet straight away. The vet had to fix Jacqueline's back leg. She had to stay in the vet's for eight weeks and when she was set free she raced to her tree, but someone else was in her tree! It was her friend Lucy! and they lived happily ever after. The End.

Story and pictures by
Harriet Pocock, aged 8