

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



Amendment 25: Delaying Tactic Defeated

An attempt by pro-development Councillors to derail Amendment 25 was defeated at BMCC's 10 March 1998 meeting by a 7-4 vote.

Amendment 25 to LEP1991, when passed by our Councillors, will protect land zoned "Environmental Constraint Area" and steep slopes from being over-developed. This will provide increased protection for Blue Mountains streams, sensitive vegetation, endangered animals and fragile soils on steeply sloping land. **It has taken four years to get Amendment 25 to this stage.**

The society has lobbied extensively for Amendment 25. When the amendment first came before Council, the vote was 11-nil in favour. It has passed through the process of public exhibition and public comment, and now has to go back to Council for approval ... **but recently there has been an attempt by some Councillors to further delay the amendment becoming part of LEP1991.**

At the Council meeting on 10 March 1998 Councillor Harris moved that a report should come to Council so that Council may consider sending Amendment 25 to a Commission of Enquiry. This motion, if it had succeeded, and the subsequent Commission of Enquiry, would have further delayed Amendment 25.

The motion was defeated when Councillors Clarke, Kime, Henson, Gaul, Derum, Hamilton, and Angel voted against it (Councillor Berriman was absent). Those who voted to stall Amendment 25 were Councillors **Harris,**

Williams (who has extensive involvement in land development, and whose right to vote was unsuccessfully challenged by Councillor Henson), **Egan,** and **Neale.**

The interesting vote was Mayor Neale's. The Mayor counts the votes, and does not have to put up his hand at the same time as other Councillors. He does not declare his vote until the vote has been taken. When he voted in favour of Councillor Harris' motion, he already knew that the motion had been lost. The Mayor professes strong environmental sympathies, and is regularly featured in the Gazette when he is photographed making various environmental awards. We can find no report of the 10 March voting for Amendment 25 in the Gazette.

We must ask where the Mayor's fundamental obligation lies - to a pro-development group in Council and the people they support, or to the public in general and the Blue Mountains environment?

While Amendment 25 is being delayed, inappropriate developments on environmentally sensitive land are being approved which would not be allowed under the amendment.

Amendment 25 has been too long delayed. Residents Against Improper Development (RAID) are circulating a petition asking Councillors to vote for the amendment. Please sign the petition and/or write a letter to Blue Mountains City Council:

"I/we, residents of the Blue Mountains, respectfully ask our City Councillors to ensure that Amendment 25 is promptly brought back to Council for final determination - and when this occurs, for it to be approved."

Sale of Native Plants

Nursery volunteers recently held a sale of native plants at The Hut, and raised **\$1,681** for the Society. The Society's native plant nursery is open for sales every Tuesday morning from 9 am to 12 noon. Enquiries to David Coleby (4784.1395).

Kids' Club

Who could guess that wallaby and rabbit scats, bits of old rusty relics from a brick-making site and a collection of bones would entertain kids solidly for over three hours! Many thanks Joan and Leigh for organising a wonderful exploratory morning at Bonnie Doon. We all learnt much about mammals, and are looking forward to a future activity about birds.

Our next activity will be on Sunday 19 April, 10 a.m.: **GRAFFITI ARTISTS**

Welcome to New Committee

Contact details for the members of our new management committee are at the bottom of this page. We look forward to another successful year for the society.

Many thanks to Linda Thomas, Jessica Yuille, Les Coyne and Norm Harris for their great work on the last year's committee and their continuing support on sub-committees and other activities.

Guest Speaker in May

Andy McQueen, author of "Back from the Brink — Blue Gum Forest and the Grose Wilderness" will be guest speaker at the general meeting on Friday 29 May.

The meeting, at the Conservation Hut, starts at 7.30 pm. Visitors are welcome.

Digger Cooper Reserve

I will be hosting another Bush Care Day at the Reserve (on the southern side of the highway, west of the Sorensen Bridge) on Sunday 19 April. Bring water, gloves and a hat. See you there at 9.30 am. Ross Coster 4759.1247.

Grasses and Sedges Workshop

There will be a Grasses and Sedges Recognition Workshop on the weekend of Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 April 1998. The workshop will run all weekend at Wentworth Falls College of TAFE and in the field.

Cost will be \$40 for community volunteers, \$60 for part-time professionals and \$100 for full-time professionals. Plus \$25 for optional conference dinner.

For a registration form contact Hugh Paterson on 4751.2303 or Richard Bonner on 4722.2555.

NEEDED to stencil drains in Wentworth Falls area with this message:

The idea and equipment for this activity comes from the Blue Mountains Catchment Management Committee. The message should raise awareness of where water from our drains ends up, and hopefully help to reduce pollution of our creeks.

For more information phone Christine 4787.7246 or Jacqueline 4739.8485.

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

P.O.Box 29, Wentworth Falls, 2782. Phone 4757 1872. Fax 4757 1753

Email bmcs@pnc.com.au Web page: <http://www.pnc.com.au/~bmcs>

President: Imre Gahl, Ph.4784-3286 First Vice President: Don Morison, Ph:4759.2471

Second Vice President: Heather Coster {Ph:Home 4759.1837, Work 4759-1247,

Membership Secretary: Ross Coster {Fax 4759-1095, Email haytech@pnc.com.au

Correspondence Secretary: Stephen Macintosh, Ph:4759-2334

Meetings Secretary: Kevin Bell, Ph:4787-6436; Treasurer: Ivica Buc, Ph:4757-3435

Land Use: Jim Warburton, Phone 4759-1312; Walks Conveyor: Jim Wallace, Ph:4784-3305

Plant Nursery Manager: David Coleby, Ph/Fax:4784-1395

Publicity: Catriona Gillies, Ph:4751-7875; Bushcare: Helga Esamie, Ph:Mobile 0418-397-117

Education: Jacqueline Reid, Ph: 4739-8485; Bushfire Rep: Hugh Paterson, Phone 4751-2303

Projects: Philippa Fincher, Ph:4787-6436; Kathy Gott, Ph:4739-8124; Marion Hawley, Ph:4784-1933

Newsletter: Christine Davies, Phone 4787-7246 Fax 4787-7777 Email: hutnews@pnc.com.au

Land Use

Federal Government Must Be Responsible

On April 8, the Howard Government is introducing a bill into the Federal Lower House which would hand vital Federal Environment powers to the States.

The Federal Government would lose control over greenhouse emissions, land clearing, land degradation and water allocation. The bill has already been slammed by Australian Conservation Foundation, Greenpeace Australia, the World Wildlife Fund Australia, the Humane Society International and the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia.

Environmentally concerned voters in marginal seats like Macquarie and Lindsay can play a part in halting this bill if we write to both our Federal Senators and Lower House members.

Sewerage Options With the Right Stuff

The draft Development Control Plans currently under consideration by Blue Mountains City Council would entrench the existing policy that new residential sewerage installation be — where available — connection to reticulated sewerage.

In most cases, there are good environmental reasons for preferring reticulated sewerage — and discouraging residential development where reticulation is unavailable. However as the development of alternative systems proliferates — including composting systems, some using worms — authorities are trying out unusual methods in special situations.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service are using a composting system at Blackheath, and trying out two different alternative systems at Fitzroy Falls. In Byron Shire, an owner-builder couple have been permitted to build a house in a sewerage street with all sewerage and brown waste disposal on site.

There can be cases where sewer connection is available, but to provide it would overload the existing system with harmful results to the environment. In the Blue Mountains we need questions of sewerage to be decided on environmental merit. — *Don Morison.*

Helicopter Menace

Low flying helicopters have been approved by Oberon Council. The 'eco-tour' involves a one way helicopter flight, a 4WD tour through the Blue Mountains and lunch by the Cocks River. The developer, Heliscenic, will start with 1,500 helicopter flights a year over the national parks to a property in the Megalong Valley. The operator provides lunch at a 'restaurant' on the junction of the Little and Cocks Rivers.

A second operation, conducted by Sydney Helicopters on an occasional basis, uses the facilities at Mountain River Riders, and also flies fishermen to the property Konangaroo, on the junction on the Kanangra and Cocks Rivers in the middle of wilderness. Neither operator



has provided information on proposed flight paths for consideration by Council, the NPWS and the local community.

No survey of endangered species, who may be affected by low-level aircraft, has been undertaken along the yet unspecified flight path(s).

Intervention is being sought from the Environment Protection Authority, who must licence the landing site. The EPA previously scrutinised the licensing of excessive helicopter operations that impacted upon our environment.

Cox's River Concerned Residents Group has asked BMCC to convene a working party on the heliport approval. Members should voice their concerns to Blue Mountains City Council.

If helicopter tours become an established element of commercial tourism in the Blue Mountains, then the amenity and solitude of these parks will decline.

WIRES Needs Volunteers!!!

Blue Mountains Wildlife Information Rescue and Education Service (WIRES) will hold a general training course on 2nd and 9th May, where new members will learn the basics in wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and release. This will qualify them to be licensed by NPWS to handle and foster-care native animals.

New members are urgently needed! The current team of rescuers and foster-carers are struggling to keep up with increased demands. If you would like to do the training course or would like more information, call WIRES on 4754.2946.

Environmental "Reforms"

The Howard Government's environmental track record charts a clear trend of surrender of the Commonwealth's powers (which are sufficient to protect the environment in the national interest), to the States, and increasing influence by industrial interests. Examples include the approval of Jabiluka uranium mine within Kakadu before environmental studies were completed, the gutting of the National Pollutant Inventory, the uncertain future of the Australian Heritage Commission, and enabling States to acquire native title rights and relax land use controls over pastoral leases. **Now the Federal Government proposes to divest itself of most of its environmental powers and hand over responsibility to the states.**

Environment Minister Senator Hill is fast-tracking a sweeping "reform" of Commonwealth environment legislation. The discussion paper severely restricts the environmental matters considered to be appropriate for the Commonwealth to play a part in regulating. **The list of "matters of national environmental significance" fails to include crucial matters such as climate change, vegetation clearance, water allocation or land degradation.** Amongst other changes, "conservation" agreements with developers will deprive the public of the right to be informed about significant developments; under "bilateral agreements", activities affecting threatened species and world heritage areas will no longer require Commonwealth approval.

Senator Hill's discussion paper was released with only 27 days for public

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.

comment, and drafting of the new legislation has started.

Action: Write to Senator Robert Hill, Minister for the Environment and Mr. Kim Beazley, Leader of the Opposition (both at Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600). Ask Senator Hill not to amend any legislation that will weaken the Commonwealth's role in any aspect of environmental protection. Ask Mr. Beazley to raise your concerns in Parliament, to oppose the Government's proposed amendments, and to go to an election with a policy of strengthened national legislation for biodiversity, impact assessment, and heritage protection.

About Nangar N.P.

Last month's "Bunyip" column makes it obvious that some facts are needed about Nangar National Park.

While District Forester for that area, I was requested to supply details of the fauna and flora for the original national park proposal. I recall sightings of the Turquoise Parrot amongst the lists of mammals, reptiles and plants that were handed to the people preparing the proposal. Information supplied contained enough data to present a case for the declaration of the National Park.

The Forestry Commission of those days had the expense of fighting fires in and around the Nangar State Forest for nil or negligible returns from the sale of timber. Sawmillers were not interested in the type of timber on the area, but that did not stop others from stealing posts and poles. (They probably still do.) So, the vegetation has had little disturbance from logging.

The Park does contain a healthy representation of ridgetop vegetation, very close to what it was 200 years ago. These is very little change, especially when compared to areas of the Blue Mountains, except, as inferred by the article, an alteration in the fire regime. I would also be interested to learn about the private properties on the plateau which had been cleared for grazing.

An article describing the assets of Nangar National Park would make good reading. — *Dick Turner, Lapstone.*

Can You Organise a Stall ...

Easter Saturday 11 April, at Wentworth Falls School of Arts — "The Sustainable Village", the opening event of the Songs of the Wind Festival, **OR**

Anzac Day, Saturday 25 April, at Gloria Park, Hazelbrook. There will be an Anzac Day service followed by a family fun day.

Just a card table with a small display and/or information about the Society would suffice. Phone Christine 4787.7246 or Jacqueline 4739.8485.

Spillway Approved

The decision to approve the auxiliary spillway for Warragamba Dam honours the Carr Government's commitment to address dam safety and flood management without increasing the storage capacity of the dam. The decision follows ten years of studies and two environmental impact statements.

Despite determined work by the pro-dam raising lobby backed by those keen on more residential development in low lying areas, the responses on the spillway EIS were overwhelmingly in favour of the proposal. The 1867 flood has been used as a bench mark. There is, however, no strong evidence that the 1867 flood came from the Warragamba River. Even if the dam wall was raised it would not stop the floods on the other rivers in the Hawkesbury-Nepean River catchment.

Opting for the spillway means that the flow down the Hawkesbury Nepean River will be more natural, the down-stream fisheries and wetlands will benefit from more natural flows, urban development will remain contained by current flood planning levels and the southern Blue Mountains wilderness areas remain safe from flood inundation. (Source: *The Colong Bulletin*)

Welcome to New Members

Ruth van Luyt, Faulconbridge
Scott McGilchrist and
Cathe Macpherson, Katoomba
Denis Rice, Katoomba

The Martyr Tree — by Henry Parkes

Right through its heart the fire's red teeth
Had gnaw'd and torn their cinderous way;
The sap still mounted from beneath,
Its tortured ribs to bind and stay.

And there the grand old tree remains,
In garniture of glistening leaves,
Rejoicing in the winds and rains;
But o'er the past it never grieves.

And still it rears its martyr form,

And still it wears its crown of green,
And still it braves the thunder-storm,
Though through its heart the fire has been.

(This poem was addressed to a turpentine tree in the Sassafras Valley at Springwood. The bush fires had burnt a hole through its giant trunk large enough to admit the passage of a man, yet it was flourishing in growth and foliage. *Thanks to Jim Smith for a copy of the poem.*)

the Annamarie Houterman, Lawson
Simon Livingston, Faulconbridge
Margaret Gough, Mt Victoria
Colin Andersen, Lapstone
Melissa Berthold, Ryde
Henia Kaspar and Rob Curtis, Katoomba
Amanda Butler, Blackheath
Peter Hodgkinson, Katoomba
Michael Jensen, Wentworth Falls
Powell Family, Blaxland
Ron and Margaret Hyslop, Springwood
Elaine Horton-Jones, Wentworth Falls
Andris Heks, Megalong
Ivica Buc, Wentworth Falls
Ian Tunstall, Lawson
Christine Lewin, Orange
Suzanne Reddy, Blackheath
Helga Esamie, Blackheath

History of Our Walking Tracks

The first constructed walking tracks in the Blue Mountains were probably rough tracks cut by the keepers of the Weatherboard Inn and Gardner's Inn to the Weatherboard (Wentworth) Falls and Govett's Leap. We continue the story, with excerpts from Jim Smith's Draft Historical Report for the Walking Track Heritage Study.

Private Track Construction

There was a remarkable period of private track construction on freehold land that became a fashion among wealthy residents of the Blue Mountains from the 1870s.

Martin, the NSW Premier of the time, had stood together with Henry Parkes and Prince Alfred on Prince's Rock in January 1868. Eleven years later they (Parkes and Martin) acquired properties near each other between Faulconbridge and Linden and erected their summer homes. Over the next five years, their gardeners were to build some 3.7 km of tracks to lookouts over the nearby glens and to local waterfalls.

Their example probably inspired their neighbours in the Central Blue Mountains as far as Woodford to construct over 16 km of walking tracks, mostly on their own freehold land but sometimes encroaching onto adjacent vacant crown land or neighbours' properties.

The private walking tracks were designed as part of the garden's landscaping. An almost invariable feature of these private tracks was that they led to the nearest waterfall, nearly always to the base of the fall if possible.

Within the period 1877 to 1882, two similar sets of tracks were constructed by James Neale at Katoomba and William Piddington at Mount Victoria. After a lull of some seven years, there was a new wave of enthusiasm for private walking tracks possibly inspired by Sir Frederick Darley's tracks at Echo Point begun in 1889. In all nearly 45 km of walking track was constructed by wealthy private individuals as adjuncts to their summer homes.

(Next Month: The pinnacle of private track building — The Hydro Majestic.)

burst will add a spot of interest to a bush walk.

While on the subject of summer and bush walks I reveal for the sake of new chum walkers and at some embarrassment to my ego, a discovery forced on me by my reluctance to carry water. On stretching out after a recent hard hot walk I was suddenly hit by incredible painful cramp in my thigh muscles as I attempted to rise. The cramps eventually vanished but the memory remains.

On reading on the subject of cramps I learned that lack of water is the prime cause and also lack of vital sodium and potassium salts. Ordinary household salt is now condemned. There are several brands of powders on the market which when made into a drink replace the vital salts lost by sweat. Believe me it works.

PLATY=Greek for flat. CASE=shield, referring to shape of the fruit.

— The Bunyip.

In the Bush

The record hot summer confirmed and convinced Bunyip that there was no better billabong than the Blue Mountains. Despite the fact that our maximums were at times on a par with Sydney, Lismore and Kempsey, the evenings gave quick relief. And still the local bush takes it all without showing much signs of stress and many shrubs sport fresh growth.

The only conspicuous flowering shrub at the moment (mid March) is the Platysace linearifolias. It is scattered about everywhere. With the support of its fellows quite attractive sparkles of white can add visual interest to a walk. As it is on its lonely ownsome one can read up some interesting facts about it without being haunted by the possibility of false identification and that breeds a little confidence.

Fairley and Moore supplies the following facts. It belongs to the Apiaceae family and it includes Actinotus or Flannel Flower among its many relatives. The family is widely distributed throughout Europe and much of Asia ... "and partly because of the distinctive umbellate inflorescence of many of the species, was one of the first plant families to be recognised and studied. The herb hemlock, remembered as the cause of the death of Socrates, is one of a number of poisonous species. Other species such as parsley, celery, coriander, caraway, anise, fennel, dill and cummin have been cultivated for centuries as culinary herbs and for oils present in the seeds and fruits. Carrots and parsnips are the best known of a number of species used as vegetables Their identity can often be established in the absence of flowers by the odour of the crushed leaves and stems which is sometimes offensive and more frequently 'carrotty'. The family is a large one consisting of about 300 genera and 3,000 species widely distributed in temperate zones of the world." Maybe that little

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Saving the Bush From Us

Part 5: Health in Bushland — Edges of the Bush

Where there are no settlements and no agriculture, small and large ecosystems drift into different ones, often imperceptibly. However, natural breaks between ecosystems occurred where there were cliff edges, rivers, or the sea and so on. But, where towns, farms, roads and other disturbances have taken place, bushland and wilderness ecosystems finish abruptly and artificially. This has led to islands of natural vegetation and animals.

Shape of Islands: Everywhere whole ecosystems have been broken up by paddocks, houses, roads, clearing, dams, and recreation fields into mosaics of islands. This has created an insular ecology which limits the ability of species to live and migrate, and migration is the key to species survival. Some of the islands are big like the Blue Mountains National Park, and others are small like fragments of bushland in townships or strips along roadways. (It is almost impossible for local indigenous species to migrate from south to north Leura because of the Highway and lack of wildlife corridors across the township.)

The more the island is shaped like a long narrow strip, the more likely it is to be vulnerable to weeds, pests, and destruction because it has a very long boundary enabling the unwelcome access of foreign species. The nearer the island shape is to a circle, the smaller the perimeter, and the less boundary there is for plant and animal pests to move in. Of course roadside vegetation is very important for survival of some species as a corridor but any species living in a four or five metre wide strip is exposed and in danger of predators or destruction. Corridors need to be short and to link quickly with larger pieces of bushland.

How Ecosystem Edges Work: Before disturbance, the edge or ecotone worked as a transition zone between ecosystems and provided a rich mix of species and nutrients. The edge of a forest was wind pruned to an angle close to 45° and closed the forest while collecting nutrients from the air and the wind. The edge also often protected the forest from foreign infiltration (including pathogens) by thorny, sticky or dense plants. You can think of the edge as a skin or barrier. The forest integrity could be maintained. Once the edge is destroyed, predator animals, virus, humans, and strong winds penetrate the bushland ecosystems, and weeds, erosion, diseases and species loss follow. Edges attempt to reinstate themselves. You can see this easily through small species such as *Acacia terminalis*, and other pioneer species which are among the first to regrow along cleared land. However weed edge species, such as *lantana* and *blackberry* also flourish

Edges and Species Survival: Habitats are now isolated and insularity leads inevitably to loss of ecological diversity. Some species are lost because

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

APRIL (Note: Leisure Walks commence at 9.30 am)

- 06 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Crayfish Pool, Glenbrook National Park. (BBQ after, BYO).** Meet 9.30 at the carpark, Glenbrook Picture Theatre, Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.
- 16 (Thu) **Committee Meeting.** Mid Mountains Community Centre, 7 pm.
- 20 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 4757.2783.
- 20 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Point Pilcher.** Meet 9.30, Medlow Bath Station, North side. Contact Gillian Janus 4787.6181.
- 24 (Fri) **General Meeting** at The Hut, 7.30 p.m. Guest speaker Andy McQueen, (see page 1)
- 27 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Mount Boyce.** Meet 9.30, Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. Contact Christina Jones 4784.1101.

MAY

- 04 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Braeside Walk.** Meet 9.30 am, Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. Contact Lee Tredinnick 4757.4030.
- 11 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Lawson Waterfall Circuit, South Side.** Meet 9.30 am War Memorial, Honour Avenue, Lawson. Contact Anna Marie 4759.2353
- 18 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 4757.2783.
- 18 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Newnes Dry Canyon.** Easy. **Meet EARLY to see the kangaroos,** 8.30 am, Mount Victoria Station. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.
- 21 (Thu) **Committee Meeting.** Mid Mountains Community Centre, 7 pm.
- 25 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Evans Crown** (near Tarana), Lunch at Tarana Pub. (Bus leaves Katoomba at 8 am). Contact Mervyn Bird 4787.7959.
- 29 (Fri) **General Meeting** at The Hut, 7.30 pm.
- ** We have a new bushwalks co-ordinator. Lately we have had lots of followers but few leaders. If everyone would agree to lead (say) two walks a year, we could have a great bushwalks programme. If you don't feel confident about leading a walk for the first time, we can get an experienced leader to help you. If you would like to take a turn leading a bushwalk during a weekend please telephone Jim Wallace on 4784.3305. (Remember, no leaders means no bushwalks!)

they become prey to predators. Others are lost because they cannot migrate in times of hardship or disaster. Others are lost because the reserve is simply not large enough to accommodate their territorial or other resource requirements. Artificial barriers such as roads mean that not only are islands able to contain few individuals but they reduce the number of species. Small changes in climate or water supply in islands render local populations extremely vulnerable. Careful reinstatement of natural edges provides a buffer to areas of natural vegetation, and animals species. — *Ro Morrow.*

Next Time: We begin a series of five talks about how to repair our ecosystems.

Kids' Club at the Lake

A cold misty day at Wentworth Falls didn't deter us from having heaps of fun catching and examining the aquatic fauna of Wentworth Falls Lake. With our nets we caught lots of fresh water shrimp (like little prawns, but transparent), some dragon fly and one cadis fly larvae, two young yabbies, and some little fish.

Most water samples were taken near the picnic area. One person (in a canoe) took a small sample from near the reeds on the other side of the lake, and there was a difference. The sample from the other side of the lake had proportionally a lot more life — lots of freshwater shrimps and the cadis fly larvae, and many micro-organisms. On the lake there were Pacific Black ducks, and a large cormorant who was holding out his wings to dry. There were geese at the picnic area, very hungry because the visitors who normally

feed them had not come on this misty day. The introduced geese and ducks who do not belong there cause bank erosion and put lots of fertilizer into the water, making the water murky.

We put the water creatures into water in ice block containers and used magnifying glasses to identify them. The creatures who live in the water, just like the creatures who live on the land, all play a part in their little world. Among them are ferocious predators who prey on some of the other creatures — you can pick them out because of their strong mouth parts. The yabbies use sharp nippers to tear up their food. At the end of the morning we released the water creatures back into the lake.

"City of Green"

The "Green Ban" Movement in the early seventies in Sydney sent ripples around the world.

It was based on the ability of a Union, the NSW Builders Labourers, led by Jack Munday, to put green bans on areas like Kelly's Bush, at Hunters Hill, when approached by the local community.

Green Bans were placed on historic buildings, and historic areas like The Rocks and Woolloomooloo.

This movement, an historic first for Australia, produced many songs.

Denis Kevans' new CD, "City of Green — Green Ban Songs and Beyond" has these songs, songs of the Blue Mountains, and others. Artists include Bob Fagan, Kate Fagan, Denis Kevans, the Blue Mountains "Crowd Around" Choir, and Sonia Bennett. Jack Munday speaks and recites on the CD. The CD costs \$20 and is available from Denis (4757.3119).