

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



The Society's AGM

Our Annual General Meeting is on Friday 26 March, 7.30 pm at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. At the meeting we will elect 18 of our members to form a new Management Committee. This year we have had a great response from people who wish to nominate for positions in the new committee. **Come along and have your say by voting for the people who are going to represent the Society for the next 12 months.**

If you are interesting in nominating for a position or would like to find out more, contact a member of this year's committee (contact details are at the bottom of this page).

Talk About Wollangambe

Following the election of officers, our guest speaker will be Roger Lembit, who will talk and show slides about vegetation and fire in the Wollangambe wilderness.

Roger is a botanist and environmental consultant, and he has been bushwalking in the Blue Mountains for 25 years. During that time he has been surveying rare plants in the Wollangambe area.

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

Living Near the Bush

A successful school launch of the Living Near the Bush Project took place at Blaxland High School on February 22. Pictured below are Kerry Bartlett, Member for Macquarie, Bob Debus, Member for Blue Mountains, Imre Gahl, President, BMCS, Terri Hamilton, Councillor, BMCC, Don Morison, Vice President, BMCS, Ian Tunstall, Chair, Blue Mountains Catchment Management Committee.

The visit by four members of Maitland Youth Enviro Council was a highlight of the launch.



**THE DEADLINE
FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS
WEDNESDAY 17 MARCH**

Conflict Can Be Avoided

At a meeting at Lithgow on 10 February, Dr John Wamsley of Earth Sanctuaries Ltd attacked National Parks and Wildlife Service and environmental groups who oppose the proposed Canyon sanctuary and tourism development in the headwaters of the Grose River and at the head of the proposed Grose Wilderness.

The people of Lithgow who attended the meeting signed a petition to say that they supported an Earth Sanctuaries Ltd tourism development on the Canyon Colliery site which is in the Blue Mountains City Council area — an area which adjoins, was excised from, and is planned to be returned to Blue Mountains National Park in 2005. (This area is outside the Lithgow City Council area, in which alternative sites offered by Lithgow Council have been rejected by Earth Sanctuaries.)

While the meeting supported the concept of sanctuaries to protect rare and endangered species, there was very little discussion about the merits of using Canyon Colliery site, and of its impact on Blue Mountains National Park.

Earth Sanctuaries Ltd stated that they need this site to finance Scotia Sanctuary in Western NSW and that other sites offered by Lithgow Council were not financially viable.

Deputy Mayor of Blue Mountains City Council Jim Angel asked a representative of Earth Sanctuaries Ltd why they had not had formal meetings and discussions with Council's planning department and why they had not submitted a development application and followed normal planning procedures. Earth Sanctuaries' representative said they were first seeking public support for their development.

This meeting was followed by a series of highly emotional and misleading advertisements in the February 17 issue of Blue Mountains Gazette.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is concerned that Earth Sanctuaries Ltd, in its endeavours to obtain public support for their development, is creating divisiveness within the Blue Mountains community.

The area covered by the Canyon Colliery lease was excised from the Blue Mountains National Park and must be returned. It is not appropriate for a private company to be given public land which is destined to be given back to the National Park.

It would be unfortunate if conflict came to divide the Blue Mountains community over this issue. If Earth Sanctuaries were to recognise the importance of this site to the Blue Mountains National Park and to consult with Lithgow and Blue Mountains Councils to find another site, conflict could be avoided.

REMINDER
Weekend Camp at Dunn's Swamp, 13-14 March 1999. (Details were in the February newsletter.) We need to know how many are coming. Phone Mary 4757.4133 or Christine 4787.7246 if you intend coming or need more information.

More Trucks on Hwy

The Federal Government's proposed tax package will have a serious adverse environmental effect on freight transport.

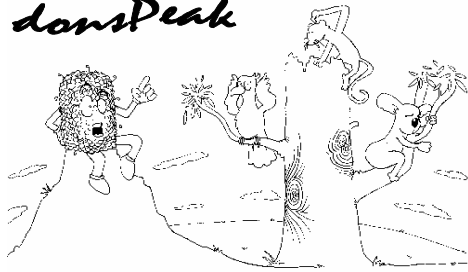
It will reduce diesel fuel excise paid by both trucks and trains from 43 cents and 35 cents per litre respectively, to 18 cents. This has been determined to be a "road user" tax, with all other off-road users such as boats and mining vehicles exempt.

Road transport requires three times more fuel than rail for the same transport task, so cheaper fuel will benefit trucks more than trains. This competitive advantage will cause a significant amount of freight presently on rail to transfer to road.

This will increase road construction and maintenance costs, fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions — and truck traffic on the Great Western Highway.

Members are urged to write to Kerry Bartlett seeking his support in removing this totally unjustified tax on rail.

"Hut News", the newsletter of Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
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A Measure of Protection for Wollemi

Premier Carr's announcement of a 283,000 hectare Wollemi Wilderness Area is a first step towards a large and consolidated protected area in the Greater Blue Mountains. It will remove the most serious single threat to the Wollemi area in general (including the grove of Wollemi Pines) by preventing resumption of four-wheel drive tourism on some sections of the Hunter Main Trail. However, as spokespeople for the Premier have indicated, later declarations of further areas will be needed to make the level of protection adequate.

The Premier's decision to publicly exhibit the Grose Wilderness Proposal is also valuable. The State Government is now further separated from the Chikarovski Opposition on three major regional issues:

- It clearly opposes four-wheel drives on the Hunter Main Trail in the Wollemi.
- It clearly supports the Warragamba Spillway which will avoid flooding of the Kowmung Valley.
- It clearly opposes a "super-highway" through Blue Mountains National Park.

Don Morison

Welcome to New Members

- John and Gail Siccardi, Greenacre
 John McManus, Leura
 Laura Hays, Katoomba
 Peta Hudson, Katoomba
 Britta and Alex Stordal, Wentworth Falls
 Mary Bennett, Wentworth Falls
 Susan Hanslow, Warrimoo
 Elizabeth Mitchell, Springwood
 Angie and Craig Moran, Wentworth Falls
 Ellis and Mary Reynolds, Mt Wilson
 Rolf and Gertrud Pohl, Hazelbrook
 Gerrit and Gina Fialla, Leura
 Kaarina Nurminen, Hawkesbury Heights
 Wayne Foster, Wentworth Falls
 Stephen Taylor, Hazelbrook
 I.S. McGregor, Warrimoo
 Martin Beveridge, Woodford
 David Henry, Bullaburra
 Leonie Cameron and Peter Jephcott, Blackheath
 Carolyn Vincent, Leura
 Jane Stevenson, Bathurst
 Geraldine Hood & Mark Watson, Katoomba
 George and Mary Maltby, Double Bay
 Paul Mannings & Kyn Scanlon, Winmalee
 Olive Patterson, Katoomba
 Tera Sweeney, Faulconbridge
 K Walker, Faulconbridge
 Mardi Magree, Faulconbridge
 Sonya and Fred Stanvic, Valley Heights
 The Webb Family, Wentworth Falls

The Importance of Bats

Bats are in rapid decline due to loss of habitat, with many listed as vulnerable or endangered. All species of bats in NSW are protected under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974.

Flying-foxes are the largest of the mega bats. There are four Australian mainland species, distributed primarily along the coast to the north and east.

Although flying-foxes are often referred to as "fruit bats" the main component of their diet is nectar and pollen from at least 40 eucalypts and 66 other native plants. Their feeding behaviour results in pollen and seeds being moved many kilometres from the parent tree. This process is important in maintaining the diversity of our forests and cannot be performed by birds or bees.



Flying-foxes roost in large numbers during the day in "camps or colonies" in the canopy of our forests. They are highly mobile animals who follow the blossoming of our native trees throughout their range.

The health and long term survival of our already fragmented and rapidly diminishing native forests depends on the conservation of flying-fox habitat.

Disturbance of Flying Foxes

If a licence issued to Department of Education and Training to disturb the flying-fox colony occupying the Maclean Rainforest Reserve is allowed to be executed, repercussions for other flying fox colonies will be disastrous.

The case currently being heard before the NSW Land and Environment Court is of interest beyond the actual facts as it may help establish clearly just what the Threatened Species Conservation Act actually means. And whether the law is adequate to protect threatened species.

Maclean High School was built 37 years ago adjacent to a flying-fox colony. Extensions in 1996/97 brought school buildings into contact with trees in the Reserve used by roosting flying foxes.

The colony site was once surrounded by 16 acres of bushland. This has been reduced to 1 hectare.

On 4 June 1998, after the school had been notified of an unusually large numbers of transient flying foxes in the reserve, starting pistols fired 78 times during the course of the school's athletic carnival, held on the oval adjoining the reserve, frightened the flying foxes, causing them to settle in trees away from the oval. Transient animals are restless and easily disturbed. Each weekday morning the school's PA system sent the animals circling over the area, defecating and urinating on students, playground and eating areas.

Students staged an anti-flying fox protest march. Staff held meetings to discuss the health and safety of teachers and pupils in the new buildings. The local member was inundated with complaints.

By 18 June the flying foxes had returned to the Reserve area, and some of the transients had begun to leave; by July 6 the numbers were down to a resident group of 8,000 animals.

In December 1998 Minister for the Environment Pam Allan and Minister for Education and Training John Aquilina announced on the John Laws radio program that a disturbance would go ahead before students returned from summer holidays (despite the fact that the colony would at that time contain approx 1500 non flying young and 500 Black Flying-foxes protected under Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995).

A new licence was issued to the Department of Education and Training (DET) by NPWS to disturb these animals and a protocol added. Apart from any young who died of starvation as a result of becoming separated from their mothers or died as a direct result of being unable to fly away from the 120-165 decibels which would resound through the colony, any injured or displaced protected species (Grey-headed flying-fox) rescued by NPWS would be euthanased.

The disturbance was not carried out at that time when North Coast Environment Council (NCEC) threatened legal action if the licence was exercised.

On 12 January NPWS amended the licence to remove reference to "disturbance not taking place when there were less than 15,000 animals in the reserve". The Environmental Defender's Office advised that this indicated that the intent was clearly now to clear the reserve.

On 21 January Justice Pearlman of the NSW Land and Environment Court granted a request from NCEC for an urgent injunction to restrain NPWS and DET from any action to remove the flying foxes, and issued an order to the DET not to carry out "... any activities with the object of causing flying foxes in the vicinity of Maclean High school to move away from the school." She also ordered the DET not to carry out any activities pursuant to the licence without the consent of the owner of the Maclean Rainforest Reserve. Both orders were made "until further notice" which means that the restraint is in place until the case has been heard in full, and a final decision made on the challenge to the licence.

In the words of EDO solicitor Chris Norton, "The court found that the NCEC's argument that the licence was invalid raised serious legal issues. It found that the adverse effect of disturbance on the flying foxes outweighed the inconvenience to the school. In particular, the evidence showed that the department of Health believes the colony poses no public health risk, and that the disturbance activities were unlikely to have any effect except to distress the flying foxes and drive them into the school grounds."

Financial help is urgently needed. Please send (tax-deductible) donations to North Coast Environment Council (Flying Fox Fund), C/o P. Wrightson, PO Box 91, Maclean 2463 (Ph/Fax 02.6645.2168).

Meeting on Uranium Issues

Our Federal Government is now out to bribe other countries to support its stand on Jabiluka mine. In its own words, 'to induce other nations on the World Heritage Committee not to list Kakadu National Park as a World Heritage site in danger', and all this with our money, more than \$1 million of it. Shame!

And the Gunjehmi people struggle on, determined, with our help to stop this desecration. And they are not the only ones.

The Arabunna people of Lake Eyre are saying, 'Leave Old Lake Eyre and the waterways alone. No more destruction. That's the message. Leave it! The Country is too old to be mucked around.' Western Mining Corporation is taking 15 million litres of water a day from the Lake Eyre Basin and underground waterways, free of charge ... for the largest uranium mine on earth, Roxby Downs at Olympic Dam.

Update yourself on all these issues. Find out what you can do.

Come to Canberra, Old Parliament House on the 19-20 March to hear the experts and have your say. Phone Sabine, at 0247878784 or 0414890514 for a leaflet. *Sabine.*

The March Election

As we head to the polls in March, the people of NSW have another opportunity to help define the political direction of the state. As conservationists we need to use the elections to strengthen the green will of politicians.

Voting for the Environment without compromising your Labor or Liberal vote:

The way our voting system works, your vote goes to either the Labor or Liberal Party. As long as you put your

preferred major party ahead of the other, it is not necessary to vote that party number 1. Voting a minor party 1 in no way affects the likelihood of your preferred major party getting into government.

In fact, not voting either of the major parties 1 is crucial. Your first preference is your political beacon. Voting Labor or Liberal 1 tells the politicians you think they are doing a good job. Voting Democrat or Green 1 registers a concern on environmental and social issues.

Your primary vote has a big effect on policy development. Just look at the number of times environmental and social issues have been crucified since One Nation registered an 8% primary vote.

Daniel Beaver, Forest Alliance.

Letter to the Editor

On Fire!

The innovative option for the southern "strategic buffer zone" under consideration is of concern to environmentalists.

What is to be done in the zone? Hazard reduction?

We saw the Grose to Faulconbridge strategic zone burned — an area which had suffered fire in recent years: and the damage of too frequent fires is well known.

The southern slope from the townships only burns when fire on the northern side is blown in to it by strong hot winds.

The best prevention of fire in any zone is early recognition and prompt extinguishment.

The 1968 holocaust is an example. There was a spiral of smoke showing up in the Grose Valley for a few days before a hot westerly wind blew up —

must be holding the water.

It is impossible to avoid but causes little inconvenience.

I have left this article short to allow the insertion of a rough map which shows the order of the ridges running south from Bells Line of

Road to the Grose.

The whole area is free of tourists, trippers and tins. It has magnificent views of sandstone cliffs, massive swathes of wild flowers in the appropriate season, fairly level walking — what more is needed! *The Bunyip.*

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with the well known result. A couple of bushwalkers with backpack sprays could have prevented such happening.

There should also be more vigilance and moral fortitude regarding the known arsonist who "cannot be caught".

Besse Bramsen.

Apology

A brochure distributed with *Hut News* in 1998 has offended a resident of Capertee, Mr Colin Ribaux of "Airly Mountain". He has alleged that we have defamed him by implying his track cutting activities at Mt Genowlan were illegal. It was never our intention to offend or defame Mr Ribaux. If Mr Ribaux was offended, we are truly sorry.

The Quiet One

Modest grey bird, the quiet one, sitting inside the bushes, silently, avoiding, or avoided by, his own kind, ostracised youngster, seeking small companions — thornbills, scrub wrens, fantails, robins, red and yellow.

In winter, find a mixed flock feeding: midst all the chirpings and the flutterings, the hoppings and the dartings here and there, goes the grey quiet one, unobtrusively.

Does he know in springtime he will blaze like wattle? Shining, yellow-gold bright singer, Golden Whistler.

— *Graham Alcorn.*

In the Bush

Last issue I was so busy speculating on seed regeneration and timber gathering on Yilleen Ridge that I did not finish the stroll. So it's back to the track.

Because of the trees the views to the Grose are not as grand as those to be enjoyed from other ridges. There is however a reward for persevering on to the end of the ridge. Most impressive rock outcrops rise up from the heath. Their bases have been eroded to such a degree that one could shelter comfortably along the resulting overhangs and on clean white sand.

Another interesting feature on this ridge is an ankle wetting depression astride a saddle on what would normally be the driest of sites. A saucer shaped rock formation

Bush Regeneration

What does it take to become a 'bush regenerator', besides a passion for our native flora and fauna?

Optimism and a **sunny disposition**, with a **philosophical bent**, are the first qualities. A **faith** that it's good to do a little for the environment in a practical way, with a **realization** that you can't do everything.

Patience and **humility** are also handy as the best work is done where you can't actually see what has been done.

A **sense of humour** helps (see above).

Much of our work requires little physical stamina or strength, although more demanding physical work can always be found for those into exercise.

What do we gain? First, satisfaction — we all like to do a little for our society and environment. Second, being in good company. Third, broadening our knowledge of native plants, and, fourth, finding hints on more effective weed control in our own gardens. *Elizabeth Mitchell.*

(Come along and join our bush regenerators, at Digger Cooper Reserve, and Valley of the Waters — details are in 'Dates for Your Diary')

Bushwalks for All Seasons

In the Blue Mountains there are walks for all weathers and all seasons, and there is always something new to see.

Some people don't walk in the rain. How much they miss! — waterfalls at their most magnificent (and many more of them), glistening tree trunks, jewelled spider webs, rising Mountain mists, beautiful rock formations and colours ...

Some people don't walk in the winter: "It's too cold." Winter is a lovely time to walk, with mild winter days ahead of chilly nights beside a cosy fire, clear air for magnificent views, lyrebirds singing, Banksias, honeyeaters, bush plants starting to bud with a promise of spring ...

Some people don't walk in the summer: "It's too hot." In the summer you choose your walks more carefully, walk in the rainforests, in the valleys, beside creeks where deep pools beckon for a quick swim. And it's usually not that hot in the upper mountains.

A long-time member of the society, Meredith Brownhill, sent in these short descriptions of enjoyable summer walks.

Christmas Lunch at Wentworth Falls

Late on Christmas morning four of us met at the Hut and strolled along Overcliff/Undercliff tracks admiring all the lovely native grasses in flower and a flowering orchid in a gum tree.

We had lunch, with champagne and Christmas crackers, at Weeping Rock where it was cool and shady. This was followed by a quick skinny dip for two under the cascading waters of the rock. A delicious afternoon tea with fresh raspberries and cream on the verandah of the Hut, and an evening walk along the Nature Trail completed a lovely day.

It was good to see quite a lot of other people enjoying this beautiful place on Christmas Day too.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
MARCH						
						7 CleanUpA. 7 Bushcare
8 Leis Walk					13 CAMP	14 CAMP
15 LeisWalk	16 Bushcare				20 MCMMeet	21 Bushwalk
22 LeisWalk				26 GenMeet	27 Bushwalk	
29 LeisWalk						
APRIL						
		7 Kids Club				4 Bushcare
12 LeisWalk						11 Bushwalk
19 LeisWalk	20 Bushcare				24 MCMMeet	
				30 GenMeet		

MARCH

07 (Sun) **Clean Up Australia Day.** Come and help clean up the bushland in North Katoomba. Go to corner of Wattle Tree Road and First Avenue, and look out for signs to the meeting place, approximately 500 metres north. Contact Ruth Ley 4782.1635. Bring gardening gloves.

13-14 (Sat/Sun) **Weekend Camp at Dunn's Swamp.** (See page 1)

KIDS' CLUB (Parents are welcome to come along.)

MARCH

07 (Sun) **Kids' Club Clean-up** at Bonnie Doon. Meet at the shelter shed, beginning of the Six Foot Track (near Explorers Tree) at 10 a.m. Bring morning tea and a drink, and gardening gloves. Contact Jessica 4757.2783.

13-14 (Sat/Sun) **Kids' Club activities at the Weekend Camp (Dunn's Swamp).**

APRIL

07 (Wed) **Looking at Bats.** Starting at 6 pm, (in the school holidays). A video, followed by Bat Watching at Echo Point. Contact Jessica 4757.2783.

BUSHCARE (Tools provided — bring morning tea and gloves. Contact Blue Mountains City Council to find out about other bushcare groups in your area.)

MARCH

07 (Sun) **Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group.** Meet 9 am at the Reserve. Contact Ross Coster 4759.1247.

16 (Tue) **Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group.** Meet 9 am Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. Contact Jessica 4757.2783. (following Tuesday if wet)

APRIL

04 (Sun) **Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group.** (Details as above)

BUSHWALKS (Usually day walks — bring lunch and **minimum 1 litre water.**) Walks have been graded: 1-3 easy; 4-7 medium; 8-10 hard. If coming by train or in need of transport, contact the leader. If you would like to lead a walk or organise an excursion, contact the Bushwalks Co-ordinator, Jim Wallace 4784.3305.

MARCH

21 (Sun) **The Devil's Hole.** Meet Katoomba Railway carpark 9.30. Contact June Baxter 4787.7312. Grade M5.

27 (Sat) **Lawson's Long Alley.** Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.30. Contact Liz Stark 4754.4966. Grade M4, but a fairly long walk.

APRIL

11 (Sun) **Fairy Bower/Mount Piddington.** Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.30. Contact Mary and Terry Flynn 4787.6918. Grade M4.

(Leaders are needed for other April bushwalks — contact Jim Wallace 4784.3305.)

LEISURE WALKS (Usually morning walks — bring a drink and morning tea.)

MARCH

01 (Mon) **Birdswood Gully, Springwood.** Meet Boland Ave at 8.30 a.m. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.

08 (Mon) **Red Gum Park.** Meet Bullaburra Station, 8.30. BYO BBQ afterwards. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.

15 (Mon) **Rocket Point.** Meet 8.30 Stockyard carpark, Wentworth Falls Station, Contact Lee Tredennick 4757.4030.

22 (Mon) **Horseshoe Falls.** Meet Hazelbrook shopping centre carpark. Contact Fay Arnold 4758.9917.

29 (Mon) **Pulpit Rock.** Meet 9.30 Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. Contact Norah Gaynor 4787.6071. (**Note: 9.30 start**)

APRIL (With daylight saving ended, leisure walks start at 9.30 am)

12 (Mon) **Rylstone Bus Trip.** Details to follow.

19 (Mon) **Bonnie Doon.** Meet at the Gearins Hotel 9.30. Corrye Brook 47574574

Grand Canyon Cruise!

The New Year started with a leisurely cruise to Beauchamp Falls and through the Grand Canyon. The seven of us ate lunch underneath flowering Coachwood trees in cool shade while Jim showed us a sketch of the rock face at the falls. It was interesting to learn that the two coal seams we had seen were the Katoomba and Lithgow seams.

Keen eyes saw Lyrebirds, several

yabbies and fish. Lots of water dragons were sunning themselves on the walking tracks and rocks. A quick shower under a waterfall cooled us for the ascent up Neates Glen.

A proper walking track beside the road between Neates Glen and Evans Lookout would add to this pleasant walk and would make it a lot safer than walking on the road.