

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



Living Near the Bush

Environmental Education in Blue Mountains Schools

For the past year the Society has been distributing copies of "Living Near The Bush" to Visitor Information Centres and households in the Blue Mountains.

For those of you not familiar with this project, the publication outlines a voluntary code of practice and provides a wide range of environment related information for Blue Mountains' residents and their visitors. (Copies of the book are available from Ross Coster, phone 4759.1247.)



To complement the booklet are two supplementary publications — Spot the Quoll Colouring In Book for the Infants classes and a Teachers Guide to help foster class involvement.

The book is currently being distributed to schools in the Blue Mountains in conjunction with a travelling display for libraries and an introductory talk in school assemblies.

The program has been warmly received by all schools and their students and will continue in the New Year. It has been heartening to see how knowledgeable the children are about their environment and how eager they are to participate in the informal discussions.

If you would like our Education Officer to visit your school or group, please contact Catriona Gillies on 4782 1235.

Christmas Weed Sale

Saturday 18 December, 8 am to noon, in Jewel's carpark, Katoomba.

Members of the Conservation Society and Bushcare Groups will again join forces with CORE to weed out small radiata pines from reserves and roadsides in the Mountains, and give them away for a donation.



This has been a worthwhile activity over the last seven years in removing this weed as well as providing information to the community. The recent publicity around the removal of mature radiata pines at Darwin's Walk is evidence of the concern there is about the destruction when large trees are removed. It is obviously better to remove these when they are small.

THE DEADLINE
FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS
FRIDAY 17 DECEMBER, 1999

Blue Mountains Hanging Swamps

(from the Hanging Swamp Working Group)

A nomination of "Blue Mountains Swamps" as an endangered ecological community under the Threatened Species Conservation Act was submitted on 12 November 1999.

Haydn Washington has put in a great deal of effort in preparing various drafts and seeking comments on these from a range of experts as well as Society members. Whilst many people made contributions, particular thanks should go to Lyndsay Holme of NPWS who prepared the maps, and to Peter and Judy Smith, Mike Eades (BMCC), Van Klaphake and Linda Thomas for their comments.

The most difficult aspect to resolve has been whether this nomination should attempt to cover the range of swamps known as both 'shrub swamps' and 'sedge swamps' or just try to narrow it down to the 'button grass swamps'. Whilst the value of the nomination would be the greatest in protecting our swamps if we tried to cover a broad range, it was considered more risky than nominating a particular type of sedge swamp. However it was found that swamps did not neatly fit into categories.

The maps available on the extent of swamps have not separated out the various types. In the end it was decided to cover all swamps under the name 'Blue Mountains Swamps'. This community was defined by 30 core species. Whilst not all 30 species occur on all sites they comprise the majority of the biomass.

Our approach will be to see if the Scientific Committee is satisfied with this broad definition, but if it is not we will narrow down the definition during the process. (We understand that this is possible rather than commencing a new nomination.)

The nomination has devoted considerable attention to demonstrating that although 58.8% of our swamps may be in the National Park (of those that remain) that these are not adequately protected.

Any further evidence of swamps outside the Park which have been destroyed or those inside which are in danger would be very useful.

Unfortunately most opponents of their removal are concerned with the visual values of these trees to humans only, and fail to recognise their impact in displacing local native plants and also wildlife by altering the habitat.

You can assist in this event by 'buying' a Christmas tree, or joining in with the cutting on Friday afternoon/

NPWS workshop compound behind the Heritage Centre. Enquiries to David Coleby 4784.1395.

Nursery Christmas Party

Nursery workers and friends will be having a Christmas lunch at 12 noon on Tuesday 14 December at Govetts Leap. Members are invited to come along and

evening December 17. You can also help by letting us know where they are in your local street or reserve (but only those less than 3 m). Anyone with a ute or trailer able to collect a load would also be a great help.

Please ring Ruth or Lyndal on 4782.1635 if you want more information, or if you wish to join in the Christmas Weeding event.

Nursery Notes

Despite appalling weather, the Nursery team's Spring plant sale at the Conservation Hut on 23 October was a huge success in terms of both public relations and fund raising for the Society's coffers. A most satisfactory total of \$1,127 was raised, thanks to the efforts of all who participated.

It's "business as usual" at Blackheath with plenty of stock for summer planting. Why not pay us a visit? The nursery operates on Tuesdays from 9 am till 12 noon off Govett's Leap Road, Blackheath, in the

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

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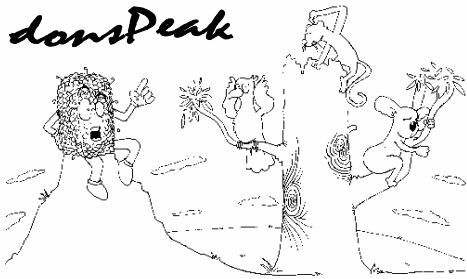
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Nationalism is no help to conservation!

I am writing this, standing on the steps of Buckingham Palace, partly because no-one has invited me inside yet. Even so, regarding the outcome of recent voting, I think that, if every country had the same Queen, it might help to suppress the evils of nationalism.

Nationalism is that strange ideology which invites people like me to bask in the glory of Cathy Freeman's victories. I congratulate Cathy but we were born more than 1,500 kilometres apart and our backgrounds could not be more different. On the other hand, Hitler and DeGaulle were able to prolong and intensify this century's worst conflict by fanning the flames of competing versions of nationalism, although their ethnic and geographical origins were very similar.

Relating nationalism to conservation, I fear that the Blue Mountains World Heritage nomination has suffered because of the Howard Government's actions on Kakadu and greenhouse gases. Although it is primarily the NSW Government's project, it appears to me that Blue Mountains conservation is losing out because of what people in other countries perceive to be the sins of the Australian nation as a whole.

In fact, given the vastly different qualities of inspiring natural areas around the world, the whole idea of making the World Heritage list a kind of "top forty" of desirable landscapes is worrying. Equally worrying are narrow and pedantic views of Australia's interests and identity. So imagine my feelings when I walked into Madame Tussaud's in London and was confronted by Dame Edna Everage and John Howard. *Don Morison.*

Is the Cox's our local "Snowy River"?

What is happening on the Cox's River? It looks to me like a miniature version of the fight over the Snowy River. This year the river is beautiful... Last year it was sick — stagnant for much of the year. What will it be like next?

It appears that a decision is due on Delta Power's licence for Wallerawang and Mount Piper coal-fired power stations at Lithgow and this will include a minimum flow of water from Lake Lyell into the Cox's. What concerns me is that many key issues are not being considered as part of this decision, including:

? How much the current flow is due to the collapse of the "rubber wall" Delta used to increase water storage in the lake and what happens if this is replaced?

? How much water does Delta

actually need for cooling the two stations? It does seem that the current use is inefficient and/or metering grossly inaccurate so that it is hard to judge how much water could be available for the river.

? Who actually owns the lake — if not Delta, when and how was it sold, to whom and when and how can the wider community stakeholders get it back?

? Why does Delta insist on such a large water reserve and ridiculously low minimum flows when there has been only one year in the past 100 when drought would have limited access to water for cooling the stations?

? Why does the Cox's river "catchment management" stop at the Blue Mountains escarpment and exclude Warragamba dam when a third of the water in this, Sydney's largest drinking water reservoir, comes from the Cox's river.

? How much of last year's water contamination scandal in Sydney was caused by flushing large volumes of stagnant water from the upper Cox's river?

? Why are groundwater reserves and essential coalmine de-watering not included in the available water catchment equation for sharing between power generation and river health needs? Why is this water pumped out of the catchment? Why isn't an integrated pipeline (carrying both water and coal direct to the power stations — rather than by road) not being considered as part of a comprehensive solution?

? Why hasn't the community, particularly the Blue Mountains community, been consulted over the Cox's river issue or the proposed Aluminium smelter to be built alongside the power stations at Lithgow? What will be the environmental impacts on air and water quality of this development? Is it planned to haul bulk ore over the Blue Mountains — and the waste back down? What impact will this have on road and rail services and homes close to the highway and rail line? How many jobs will it actually create — or be lost in Lithgow and the Mountains growing eco-tourism industry?

? What is the best ecologically sustainable development plan for the upper Cox's river catchment, Lithgow and the Blue Mountains and how does the question of water for this river fit into the wider picture? Where's the plan for a full and proper EIS (the 1994 EIS doesn't address any of these issues) and if such a comprehensive review isn't being undertaken, why not?

The questions have barely been asked let alone answered. So far all we know is that a decision is imminent. I'd like to hear from anyone who knows more about this. *Tony Webb, Hazelbrook, 4758 7143*

Australia's Biggest Environmental Decision Ever

Australia's biggest environmental decision ever is likely to be determined in the next few weeks. Broad scale habitat destruction for agriculture so

called 'land clearing', remains by far the greatest threat to biodiversity in Australia.

The state of Queensland is the worst culprit. Queensland currently clears more land than any other country in the western world and is responsible for roughly 80% of the clearing in Australia. Habitat destruction has actually increased in the last two years as farmers try to clear as much as possible before the government introduces new clearing controls. Close to two football fields for each minute of every day are currently being lost — about 3,400 square kilometres (340,000 hectares) each year. Extinctions of species are already occurring in Queensland because of over-clearing.

The Beattie Government in Queensland will decide shortly whether to introduce controls to radically slow and eventually stop clearing. However, they are under strong pressure from agribusiness interests to allow clearing to continue at massive levels. At stake are several million hectares which are at risk from future clearing.

This issue is not only of importance to Queensland. Many migratory birds which summer in southern Australia and Tasmania depend on woodland habitat in Queensland during the winter. In addition a large proportion of the clearing is occurring in the Murray Darling catchment — increasing the water quality problems in other states for this already degraded river system. The clearing and burning of the woodlands and forests is also a major contributor to greenhouse gases.

Very simply, the current levels of clearing are a national and international disgrace. Cessation of, or strong controls on clearing would be an enormous environmental win and would increase the momentum for stronger controls in other states.

Urgent pressure is required to support the Queensland Government in making the right decision for the environment and for the long term future for agriculture. You can help by writing to the Queensland premier, Peter Beattie (PO Box 185 Brisbane Albert St. 4002, fax 07 3221 3631). Using the points above politely point out to Premier Beattie the need for strong and enforced controls on both freehold and leasehold land to stop broad-scale clearing in Queensland.

For further information contact Barry Trill, Australian Woodlands Conservancy, RMB 1207 Chiltern 3683, woodland@albury.net.au

More About Land Clearing

The Bureau of Rural Sciences has conducted a huge survey, using 50 scientists and satellite mapping to monitor the rate of clearing during the 5 years 1990-1995. Their report concluded that the annual average was 309,000 hectares. In other words over 1.5 million hectares of "woody vegetation" (i.e. bush), just in those 5 years. Can any of us imagine what 1.5 million hectares looks like? Or more particularly, what it looks like now? There is a photo in the report showing flattened trees stretching to the horizon. Will we ever learn? (From: Alan Lane, Pope's Glen Bushcare Group)

Ah, White Man, Have You Any Sacred Sites?

Ah, white man, I am searching for the sites, sacred to you,
Where you walk, in silent worship, and you whisper poems, too,
Where you tread, like me, in wonder, and your eyes are filled with tears,
And you see the tracks you've travelled down your fifty thousand years.

I am searching round Australia, I am searching, night and day,
For a site, to you so sacred that you won't give it away
For a bit of coloured paper, say a Church you're knocking down,
Or the Rocks, your nation's birthplace, by the Bridge, in Sydney town.

Your cathedrals I have entered, I have seen the empty aisles
Where a few knelt down in sorrow, where were all the children's smiles?
Big cathedrals, full of beauty, opal glass, and gleaming gold,
And an old man, in an overcoat, who had crept in from the cold.

Your schools, I drifted through them, heard the sound of swishing canes,
Heard the yell of angry teachers crushing flowers in their brains,
Heard the bark up on the rostrum where the powers had their say,
Wouldn't children's hearts be sacred, though they're made, like mine, of clay?

Where's your wonder? Where's your worship? Where's your sense of holy awe?
When I see those little children torn apart by fear of war,
What is sacred to you, white man, what is sacred to your clan?
Are your totems rainbow-feathered? Is there dreaming in you, man?

Sacred ... sacred ... sacred ... gee you chuck that word about,
And when echoes answer sacred ... sacred louder still you shout,
And the echoes come in patterns, and then, louder, every one
Till they meet, like waves together, and go bang! just like a gun.

Sacred ... hesitating ... now, a film is reeling through
My brain, and through my memory, of our sacred rendez-vous,
Of our meeting, of our parting, of my tears, as sweet as ice,
Of my numb incomprehension of a shattered paradise.

Sacred, oh so sacred, was our sacred rendez-vous,
And your ferocious anger when you found we weren't like you,
But if I should make an act of faith, in a voice, both firm and clear,
That there's something sacred to me, you start drowning in your beer.

What is sacred to you, white man, what is sacred to your heart?
Is Australia just a quarry for the bauxite belts to start?
Where the forests are forgotten, and the tinkling of the bell
Of the bell-bird in the mountains, is just something more to sell?

Ah, brother, I am searching for the sites, sacred to you,
But the rivers, clear as crystal, smell like sewerfuls of spew
From the pipe and pump polluters, and the nukes that fleck the foam,
Would you let a man, with dirty boots, go walking through your home?

Sacred means that ... sacred ... it's a place where spirits rise,
With the rainbow wings of sunset, on the edge of paradise,
Sacred ... that's my father, that's my mother, that's my son,
Sacred ... where the dreaming whispers hope for everyone.

In the silence of the grottoes of Australia's mighty land,
Stand together with the kooris, stand together, hand in hand,
Open eyes to endless beauty, and to spirits, far and near,
For Australia is my country, it is sacred to me here.

Ah, white man, I am searching for the sites, sacred to you,
Where you walk, in silent worship, and you whisper poems, too,
Where you tread, like me, in wonder, and your eyes are filled with tears,
And you see the tracks you've travelled down your fifty thousand years.

DENIS KEVANS

Gregory Terrace, Lapstone Bushcare Group: Featured this month is one of the smaller bushcare group's run by concerned neighbours. It shows what a group no matter what size and do for their local area.

Though only a small group, some progress has been made in the gully managed by the Gregory Terrace Bush Care Group. Commencing in January this year with a training day organised by Nathan Summers, the group has made slow but steady progress in gaining bush care skills and attacking the worst of the weeds.

Workdays have seen the removal of

Cassias, Lantana, Privet and many garden escapees including Banana plants and Asparagus Fern. We have seen the return of native Wandering Jew along the creek edge and a small patch of Weeping Grass. Residents, armed with knowledge after the training day, have discovered Cheese trees, native flax and native peach in their gardens.

The group plans more workdays, building on the good start made in 1999. For more information about joining this eager group in the lower mountains ring Keryn Hogan 4739 8897.

Greenhouse Corner

Home Heating

Fuel and electricity used for home heating and cooling can generate up to 15 tonnes of greenhouse gas and cost up to \$1,000 each year. What can you do?

Limit heat flows through roof, walls,

windows and gaps: Seal out draughts by sealing cracks and gaps, fitting dampers to fireplaces, and blocking unnecessary vents: cut annual greenhouse gas emissions by hundreds of kilograms. Cut heat flow through windows by shading them from hot sun and installing close-fitting blinds or curtains with pelmets. In extreme climates, install double glazed windows with 'low emissivity' insulating glass. If building or renovating, put in north windows to catch winter sun. Avoid unshaded roof glazing, large west windows and large skylights: save tonnes of greenhouse gas each year.

Choose efficient cooling: In climates with dry heat, evaporative coolers provide comfort with low greenhouse gas emissions and running costs — but ensure cooling outlets seal automatically when not in use. Install ceiling sweep fans, or use portable fans. Fans improve comfort, even in air-conditioned rooms, while generating less than a kilogram of greenhouse gas every ten hours.

Choose an energy-efficient heater using a low greenhouse impact fuel: Wood heating has very low greenhouse gas emissions (as long as the trees are replaced!) but burning wood may add to urban air pollution problems and reduces habitat for animals. Natural gas, LPG and electric reverse cycle air-conditioners generate around a third of a kilogram of greenhouse gas per unit of heat, depending on appliance efficiency. Electric fan heaters, radiators, oil-filled heaters and off-peak electric heating (slab heating, heat banks) generate around a kilogram of greenhouse gas per unit of heat supplied. Avoid gas heaters with continuous pilot lights: save 200 kilograms and \$30 or more each year. A unit of heat = 1 kilowatt hour or 3.6 megajoules as much heat as supplied by a single bar radiator running for an hour.

Install efficient equipment: Energy labels on gas heaters and electric air-conditioners help you choose an efficient model. Install zoned heating and cooling systems: the smaller the area heated or cooled, the less greenhouse gas generated and the lower the bills. Ensure ducts of heating and cooling systems are insulated to R1.5 and hydronic heating pipes have a 20mm thick insulation: cut greenhouse gas emissions by 10% for heating and even more for cooling. When disposing of an old air-conditioner, make sure the refrigerant is recovered and recycled as it is a strong greenhouse gas.

Use heating and cooling efficiently: Don't overheat or overcool: 1°C difference in temperature between indoors and outdoors adds 10% to heating or cooling bills and greenhouse gas emissions. Switching off heating or cooling appliances when you go out generates less greenhouse gas and is cheaper than leaving them on low. House Energy Rating computer programs rate the energy efficiency of proposed or existing houses and show how they can be made more efficient. *Ross Coster, Membership Secretary*



REMINDER

Bushcare Christmas Party:

Sunday 12 December, 12 noon onwards, Megalong Valley Hall.

The day will include free food and drink, lots of games (cricket, frisbee, hackie sack), prizes and giveaways. All members are invited to come along and enjoy a great bush picnic. More info: Christine 4787.7246.

Welcome to New Members

Colleen Noonan, Leura
Peter and Erzszi Gimes, Woodford
Shane Grundy, Springwood
Richard & Bronwyn Hynson, W. Falls
Peter Furnell, Katoomba
Col & Pat Jennings, Springwood

Living With Our Wildlife

Snakes: Give Them a Fair Go!

While the weather has been warmer in recent weeks, WIRES have been relatively busy with snake rescues. One of several reasons for these rescues is when snakes venture onto people's property where the snake's natural habitat has been affected, usually through clearing of land for development.

Some residents are still going out of their way to kill these very much misunderstood native animals. Not only are these ecologically valuable animals fully protected by law, but a hefty fine has been set to those who kill them. All we ask is that snakes are left alone.

However, if you have given the snake sufficient time to move on and it refuses to go, WIRES snake handlers are ready to receive your call, so the snake can be rescued and relocated into a safer environment. This is a free service. Please call WIRES on 4754.2946.

Entanglements have become a major problem to our native wildlife in recent times as well. Nylon mesh, which some people use to cover their vegetable patch and fruit trees, has been responsible for many wildlife deaths. Snakes in particular are caught in this environmentally unfriendly product, with a slow and agonising death resulting as the mesh gets tighter and tighter around the snake causing massive external and internal injuries.

If you use this mesh please consider using an alternative. If you see a snake or native animal caught in mesh please call WIRES immediately on 4754.2946. Alan Lobb, Blue Mountains WIRES.

Distributing Hut News

Two of our members are mailbox dropping 100 newsletters each month in Winnalee (different streets each month). Membership Secretary Ross Coster is presently mailbox dropping 200 each

Membership Enquiries

Contact Ross Coster
(Phone - Work) 02 4759.1247
(Phone - Home) 02 4759.1837
(Fax) 02 4759.1095
(Email) haytech@pnc.com.au
(Post) PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
DECEMBER					4 Bushwalk	
6 LeisWalk					11 Bushwalk	12 Picnic
13 Leis	14 Bushcare 14 Nursery	15 Bushcare			18XmasFree 18 MCMeet	
JANUARY	11Bushcare				15 Bushwalk	
17 LeisWalk		19Bushcare			22MCMeet	23 Bushwalk
24 LeisWalk				28GenMeet	29 Bushwalk	

DECEMBER

- 12 (Sun) **Bushcare Picnic**, 12 noon, Megalong Valley Hall. (See page 1)
- 14 (Tue) **Nursery Christmas Party**. Govetts Leap, 12 noon. (See page 1)
- 18 (Sat) **Christmas "Weed" Sale**. Buy a Christmas tree. See Page 1.
- 18 (Sat) **Management Committee**, 9 am, Mid Mountains Community Centre.

JANUARY

- 22 (Sat) **Management Committee**, 9 am, Mid Mountains Community Centre.
- 28 (Fri) **General Meeting**, 7.30 pm, at the Hut. Guest: Danny Wotherspoon, "Clancy the Koala".

KIDS' CLUB

Activities for Under 16s are in the Kids' Club Newsletter. Phone Ross Coster 4759.1247 for a copy of the newsletter. Contact Jessica 4757.2783 for more info.

BUSHCARE (Tools provided — bring morning tea and gloves.)

DECEMBER

- 14 (Tues) **Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group**. Contact Jessica 4757.2783 for the meeting place. (following Tuesday if wet).
- 15 (Wed) **Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group**. Meet 9 am at the Reserve (GWH, West of Sorenson Bridge). Contact Ross Coster 4759.1247.

BUSHWALKS (Usually day walks — bring lunch and **minimum 1 litre water**.)

DECEMBER **Please read notes on grading of walks

- 04 (Sat) **Edenderry Falls**. Meet Blackheath Station carpark 9.30. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958. **Hard**.
- 11 (Sat) **Leura Forest**. Meet Leura Station carpark 9.30. Contact Ron Pendred 4782.1978. **Medium (many steps)**.
- 18 (Sat) **Christmas Party at 9 Levy Street, Glenbrook**, 7 pm. Contact Wende Vanamois 4739.1658. Plenty of soft green lawn, BBQ available. Night walk to nearby lookout to see the lights. BYO drinks, food, chair, children.

JANUARY

- 15 (Sat) **Vera Falls**. Meet Wentworth Falls Railway Station 9.45 am. Contact Meredith Brownhill 4782.4823. **Medium/Hard**. Slow, scenic, watery ascent.
- 23 (Sun) **Gladstone Pass — Old Leura Coal Mine**. Meet Leura Railway Station 9.30 a.m. Contact Jim Wallace 4784.3305. **Hard**. Steep sections.
- 29 (Sat) **Lawson's Long Alley**. Meet Mount Victoria Railway Station 9 a.m. Contact Liz Stark 4754.4966. **Medium**. Easy walking, but some steep sections.

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

****Slippery and uneven surfaces. Please wear shoes with a good tread.**

If this is your first Leisure walk with the Society please contact the leader.

DECEMBER

- 06 (Mon) **Mount Piddington**. Meet Mount Victoria Station 8.30. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.
- 13 (Mon) **Christmas Party at Leura Cascades**. Sausages, salad and drinks provided. Meet Leura Station carpark 11 a.m. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.

JANUARY

- 17 (Mon) **Undercliff/Overcliff Walk**. Meet Wentworth Falls Station, stockyard carpark, 8.30 a.m. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.
- 24 (Mon) **Bus Trip to Northern Beaches**. Contact Mervyn Bird 4787.7959.

month in Springwood and will start on Valley Heights soon. 200 newsletters per month are distributed through The Hut, and 60 at Wentworth Falls TAFE.

If any members would like to mailbox drop one or two streets near them, contact Ross Coster (4759.1247) and he will send you some extra copies of Hut News.

Books for Library

In recent years the Society has donated books on a regular basis to Blue Mountains libraries. It would be helpful in selecting books for our next donation if members could let us know of recent books on the environment which may be suitable for inclusion in Katoomba Library's reference section. Contact

David Coleby 4784.1395.

Bushwalks have been graded: **Easy** — Relatively easy grades and good surfaces. Suited to most people. **Medium** — Mostly good surfaces, but some rough or steep sections. Suited to people of average fitness. **Medium/Hard** — includes rough or steep sections some of which may require clambering over natural obstacles. **Hard** — Strenuous walks involving steep ascents or descents over rougher terrain. Suited to fit and experienced walkers. **If this is your first walk**, or you are in any doubt, contact the leader or Bushwalks Convener Jim Wallace 4784.3305.