

KATCOMBA AND DISTRICT WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Newsletter No.44 June 1981 Price 20¢

EDITOR W.ALCORN 43.Rutland Road MEDLOW BATH 2780.

PATRON ALLEN A. STROM A.M.

COMMON
BIRD-ORCHID



The

.....They struggle with all the force of their lives for one thing only, to fulfil themselves according to their own laws, to build up their own form, to represent themselves."

Herman Hesse on trees

O U R S O C I E T Y

.....at The Hut Valley of Waters wentworth Falls at 8PM.

FRIDAY JUNE 26th Dick Turner of N.S.W.Forestry Department is to be the speaker.

FRIDAY JULY 31STThis is a Members' Night, so brings slides or items of interest

FRIDAY AUGUST 28th..... A speaker on the Bradley System of Native Bush regeneration. Speaker to be obtained

Other speakers for the rest of the Year are being lined up and ,we feel they will be very interesting.

WALKS PROGRAMME

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August 1st Red Hand Cave. Meet at National Park entrance. Glenbrook. 10am.

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Lloyd Jones, who knows these mountains well, has agreed to become Walks Convener, a job which Ken Gorringer has done so well for so long. Many thanks Ken and to you Lloyd

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Our Society has done quite a bit to support World Environment Day this year. On the theme, OUR TREES PROTECT US... CONSERVE THEM. Winsome and Markita have organised a display in the Hut.

Our President sent a press statement to the Echo, which devoted an editorial and centre page spread to the event, and another to the Gazette, which published a double column Article and a photograph of a Blue Mountain Ash by our Secretary.

The May Monthly meeting decided, as a contribution to World Environment Day to donate \$100 to the West Australian Conservation Movement's Jarrah Class Action. A legal action in the U.S. Courts to restrain the giant international monopoly Alcoa from ripping the innards out of the W.A. Jarrah forests for bauxite. Also to donate \$100 to the ACF campaign to preserve rain forests. Our President and Secretary addressed the Wentworth Falls Lions Club and showed slides of trees and forests.

Our President addressed the senior students of the North Katoomba Primary School

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The aim of this conference is to highlight the main concerns for preserving, planting and maintaining trees and forests in Australia and win support for 1982 as the Australian Year of the Tree.

HELP PRESERVE THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

Having run out of copies the Management Committee has updated the wording and revised and reissued this leaflet, with a really splendid cover design drawn by our member Lloyd Jones.

The leaflet outlines reasons for our concern for preserving the natural environment of the Blue Mountains and also outlines the activities of our Society and Conditions for joining. Copies available at the Hut. Take some and give them to your friends.

LAND PRESERVATION FUND COMMITTEE REPORT

Fundraising. The sale of native plants at the end of February raised \$400 for the Fund, and all plants were sold. A further sale will be held on one Saturday in late Spring

Land: The Committee is concentrating its efforts mainly along Jamison Creek. Members who wish to come to an inspection are very welcome

In April, a small party from the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society walked along the Upper Jamison Creek with two of our Society's members acting as guides. The visitors showed their concern for the area by spending part of their lunch break removing weeds. President Bessie Bramson predicted that it would take 10 years to restore the natural vegetation by gradual and systemic removal of weeds -- the Bradley method. This is the only known way of ensuring success.

INGAR PLANT REGENERATION STUDY: This study, on the edge of Ingar Swamp in the Blue Mountains National Park, was started in 1974 after a control burn had got away. The area was again devastated in December 1975 by a wild fire.

At our 16th inspection a few weeks ago Ingar bore evidence of fire and drought, the Eucalypts deformed and struggling, bare blackened branches of shrubs not yet concealed fully by new growth. However some plants looked healthy enough and the swamp wattle was in bloom, and Banksia asplenifolia with its yellow brushes (in the early stage these are a strange combination of blue and grey and green).

Plants of a species we had been watching for, had appeared. At our first inspection in 1974, a number of dead bushes of Hakea teretifolia showed that it had been growing there prior to the fire. It was then four months after the fire and young seedlings of this shrub had already sprung up. They had not reached the fruiting stage before the next fire swept through, killing them all. This time it was over two years before seedlings appeared.

Were the seeds buried so deeply in the soil that they had to wait for erosion to bring them close enough to the surface before germinating? Perhaps some of the woody seed cases (they look like mountain devils) had not opened because they remained damp? Maybe birds were responsible? We shall have to wait for scientists to give us the answer.

At our recent morning gathering it was decided to have a shorter walk beside our usual monthly walk and the first to Lyre bird Dell on Thursday July 16th. Meet at Gordon Falls Park Leura, 10am

Be there 10 am Gordon Falls Leura.... A little walk will build your muscles for bigger and bigger walks.

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OBITUARY ***

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Our Society was indeed fortunate that Kay made time, amid her professional and service commitments, to fill the office of Treasurer during the early years of the Society's life. She was a thorough and business-like treasurer but her value to us was even more in her quiet but bright disposition, in her responsive temperament and in her sense of fun and humour.

Many of our earlier members will remember, too, her beautiful slides of Sunrise taken when she was on night duty at Bodington Hospital. Kay had an unusually close affinity with things of nature.

The Society shares with Elsie and Reg and Dulcie their sense of loss and their gratitude for such a worth-while life.

The Start of The Hut Project

The Society really got off the ground at the meeting on 1/2/62 when a committee was appointed and a draft constitution adopted.

Then at the Committee Meeting on 13/4/62 John Buki raised the question of using the old disused kiosk at The Valley of Waters as a centre for the Society's activities. Now the rest of the Committee knew only that there was an old vandalised building at the spot and that seemed rather remote from where they were sitting in Alan Hawke's SHOP AT KATCOMBA.

A Member of that Committee recalled; "I looked across at George Batty and George was looking at me and we were both groaning inwardly at the thought of what John was wanting to get us into". Objections were raised as to the amount of labour involved but John pressed the point that if they were to become something worth-while they must work for it.

The last and strongest objection was with regard to finance. The Society had virtually no funds and it was certain that the materials needed would entail much expenditure. The rest of the committee thought that this would put a stopper on John but he assured them of his confidence about getting much of the materials donated. So it was decided to go ahead on condition that there was a major donation of materials. Some, at least, at that Committee meeting felt safe that this condition would not be met.

The minutes of the meeting record that "it was resolved that the Society apply to BMCC asking permission to start activities (labelling existing native plants, shrubs, trees; planting new native species) and to improve facilities at the Valley of Waters, Wentworth Falls, that the Society offer one shilling per annum nominal rent for the former tea-room building which could be used as a Natural History Museum and general information for the public".

It is recalled that at this Committee Meeting serious misgivings were expressed about having the 'HUT' (as John Buki termed it from the start) manned continuously by volunteers after the initial enthusiasm had worn off. Events have shown that these misgivings have been unfounded. One of the most heartening features of the work of the Society has been the unselfish service in Hut duty of so many past and present members; e.g. Alf and Ada George and Mrs Butcher were in each case never failing in their and her once a month attendance for years. The Molineaux family regularly came from their home in suburban Sydney to do their Hut duty; and Frank and Greta Vanry are doing a great job.

The Committee inspected the site on the next Sunday morning 15/4/62 and the secretary was instructed to write an application to the B.M.C.C.

A reply from the B.M.C.C. was received in May granting the application for use of the Valley of Waters Reserve conditional on the Society's nomination of a Committee of Management. The Society accepted this and appointed Alan Hawke, John Bukian and Fred Astle as this Committee. The first job was to nominate to B.M.C.C. its area of control, which it did, and so the way was cleared - so far as legalities were concerned - for getting the Hut project underway.

The surroundings of the kiosk were neglected and untidy and overgrown, there were two old dingy E.C. toilets, and there were no steps on any of the close by paths.

The kiosk itself had been seriously vandalised and there had been much termite infestation. Most of the walls were unlined and any lining remaining was delapidated, the place was bare of any cupboards or showcase; There was no ceiling; there was no storeroom; an old fuel stove filled the fireplace, the windows on the South and East were small (later replaced by the large windows now there). The pillars supporting the ceiling bearers were termite eaten and they and much of the structural timbers had to be replaced. The roof was leaking and much of the roof iron corroded and loose.

It was a daunting situation, but there proved to be many hands and if "many hands" did not make "light work" they were to show certainly "Unity is strength".

Fred Astle

CATS ELIMINATED ON ISLAND

On a recent visit to New Zealand it was exciting to learn that the Wildlife Service has this year destroyed the last feral cat on Little Barrier Island.

This bird sanctuary in the Bay of Islands, North Auckland is the largest remaining area of completely untouched rain forest in the South Pacific. Cats went wild there years ago from lighthouse keepers' pets.

The trapping programme took 3 years!. Since the last cat went, the stitch bird, a rare honeyeater found only on this island has increased in numbers 5 times. This allowed Wildlife Service Officers to trap some of the birds and release them on other islands! also, a rare petrel, almost eliminated by the cats, has started to build up in numbers. Petrels which live and breed in burrows are very vulnerable to cat predators.

The N.Z. Wildlife Service has eliminated cats from a number of smaller islands around the N.Z. coast and also the other great pests the wild goat and the rabbit

ENVIRONMENTAL HARMONY

Outside our kitchen window a white throated tree creeper hops up the posts of my boundary fence, seeking insects. With its long sharp toes the bird has no difficulty in clinging to the smooth wooden posts.

This cheerful, sprightly bird lives on insects it finds in the crevices of the bark of trees. Another species, the sitella shares this food supply, but they usually start from the top branches downwards, while the tree creeper flies to the foot of the trunk and works upwards.

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-- Granam Alcorn --

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1. General works on the environment, including both natural resources and wildlife.
2. Specific works on Australian trees and plants

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HUT ROSTER SOCIAL

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The proposals from the discussion are to be put to the next Management Committee meeting. It was felt that the Hut roster social should be restored as an annual event.

MID-MONTH NATURE RAMBLE

The proposal for a short, mid-month walk was received with much enthusiasm. So it was decided to plan one for July on the spot. The idea is that the walks should be on the third Thursday of each month.

ON Thursday, July 16th, meet at Gordon Falls Park, Leura at 10 a., to walk to Lyrebird Dell. Leader Graham Alcorn.

CRITICISM OF BIRDS ROCK COLLIERY Criticism of the N.S.W. Electricity Commission for its inadequate Environmental Impact Statement for the Birds Rock Colliery has come from both Federal and state Departments. This is stated in an article in the Mining and Oil Review.

The mine, 51% owned by a subsidiary of the Commission and 49% by a group of Japanese companies will be one of the largest operations in Australia when producing at its maximum annual output of 3 Million tonnes of raw coal. The pit-head will be in the Wolgan River catchment on the Newnes Plateau near Lithgow, it will be adjacent to two major National Parks - The Blue Mountains and Wollemi, in a natural bushland area for the most part undeveloped, except for forestry operations.

Objectors are the Federal Department of Home Affairs and Environment which threatens to refuse an export licence, the N.S.W. Dept. of Mineral Resources and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

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This version of the Newsletter was re-typed from the original by Phoebe Coster in June 2022 to enable search engines to 'see' the text. Minor changes have been made to correct typographical errors and to add clarity.

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EDITOR W. ALCORN 43 Rutland Rd MEDLOW BATH 2780

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