

KATOOMBA AND DISTRICT WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER NO. 45. AUGUST 1981 - PRICE 20¢.

Editor: R. W. Alcorn, 43 Rutland Rd., MEDLOW BATH.

PATRON: Mr. Allen A. Strom, A.M.



LACE MONITOR

"World population growth, the degradation of the earth's natural resource base and the spread of environmental pollution collectively threaten the welfare of mankind"
National Wildlife Oct. 1980

OUR SOCIETY

COMING MEETINGS

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Visitors are welcome and our walks are leisurely rambles and we usually have a few knowledgeable people to answer any questions on the Flora and Fauna.

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ABOUT HERMAN HESSE.

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Yours truly,

Frank Vanry."

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Their Secretary has written that any of our members are welcome to join them. Their members are indepently arranging their own Motel or Caravan Park accomodation and are meeting at the Arboretum Office at 1 p.m. on Saturday, 26th September. (There is a caravan park - camping ground in the National Park at Burrendong Dam)

For further information ring Mrs. R. F. Barnes, Secretary, Mt. Tomah Society. (045) 67-2170.

LAND USE SUBMISSION ON JAMISON CREEK.

(In February, Mary Collins, then Convenor of our Society's Land Use Committee, prepared a 22 Page Ecological and Historical Assessment of Jamison Creek, Wentworth Falls. This was sent to Mr. J. Wickham, Administrator of the Blue Mountains City Council, who has informed us that he is carefully considering its contents. For members' information, we publish excerpts from the submission)

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The shales have been washed away for almost all the Blue Mountains and therefore, only a thin layer of soil covers the sandstone. These soils are grey to yellow-brown uniform sands. They drain rapidly and water storage is small. Low fertility is another characteristic yet these low nitrate soils support a very distinctive flora which is not lush. There is a very delicate ecological balance between the flora and the supporting soil. By its nature, the vegetation modifies but does not obscure the stark

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Boldness of most of the landscape.

It is generally agreed that soils derived from sandstones are poor in plant food, whilst those resulting from erosion of shales, granites and basalts are progressively better. Plant fertility also depends largely on the humus contents and also on the texture and drainage. Only patches of land near Mt. Wilson, Bilpin and Kurrajong can support agriculture. The great economic resources of the Blue Mountains is its contribution to maintaining future water supplies.

Secondary to this and conforming to it, is its tourist resource as a natural scenic area for fresh air and leisure.

PROTECT STREAM CATCHMENTS.

In order to maintain the permanency of streams, it is necessary to protect their source of supply; the swamplands and the upland forests. F.A.A.Craft, geographer, predicted that the artificial drainage of the swamps and the deforestation of the highlands will result in the drying up of the stream's sources, in increased erosion and sterility of the tablelands. The future development of these streams in semi-arid conditions subject to violent floods alternating with periods of little or no flow can only result in complete silting of these courses.

Craft's predictions came true in north western Victoria when the Mallee ecosystem was opened for settlement about seventy years ago. In recent years, the application of methods to remedy the man-induced conditions of erosion, salination and loss of water storage have provided stability in this dry ecosystem. In this instance, the operation has been outstandingly successful but a very costly exercise to correct bad management.

Since August, 1977, this Society has been very concerned with Council permitting the dumping of fill at Plantation Street, Wentworth Falls, which has adversely affected the embankment and creek. Members have discussed with Council, this problem. Although these discussions succeeded in producing an order against the Department of Main Roads to stop further dumping, the site has become progressively worse because the order has not prevented others from dumping rubbish in this area.

MUDDY FILM.

Disturbed vegetation of the embankment is one of contributing factors for the muddy condition of the creek's water in this location. For the same reason, flow rate was greatly diminished because of siltation which also produced a muddy film on the root and stem systems of the natural water-tolerant vegetation reducing transpiration. Death and decay follow. Siltation and retarded water flow rate with decaying vegetation can cause the dissolved oxygen in the stream to fall below 30-50% of saturation. Re-aeration capacity of the stream can only occur with increased water flow rate; otherwise, anaerobic conditions leading to stagnation will prevail. Water quality is adversely affected and it may become septic.

A random bacteriological examination of the water in this location yielded the presence of *Escherichia coli* and other species of enteric habit.

WEED INTRUSION

Weed intrusion, embankment erosion, rotting garbage, cat and dog faecal contamination has made the area adjacent to the highway a potential breeding ground for vermin. On the south side of the highway, a fine film of scum covered the water and supported

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decaying leaves of the weed population, e.g. willow and blackberry. This debris of decaying leaves chokes the stream leading to further siltation and further reduction in water flow rate. Evidence of the scum indicated that the water has very little chance of reoxygenating. Microscopic examination of the water revealed decaying organic matter and oil droplets. Bacteria were also present.

Protozoa or related groups that inhabit fresh water streams were not evident.

The decaying School of Arts, because of its historic significance and location has the potential of becoming a Civic Centre. Now that it is in Council's control, this solid-structured building could be restored. The blue metal etc. dumped at the back of the building should be removed so that a landscaped garden, preferably with native plants indigenous to the area could surround the whole building.

The following considerations, comments and recommendations are suggested in order to rehabilitate Jamison Creek from its present degraded state:

CONSIDERATION 1.

"Protect the natural character of the Blue Mountains as a vital part of the National and State heritage and as an attraction to residents and visitors, by eliminating creek and stream pollution caused by inadequate sewerage and excessive clearing of bushland"

SECOND OBJECTIVE - CONSERVATION, B.M.C.C. "Statement of Objectives, Policies and Priorities for Action". 1/6/'76.

COMMENT 1.

The whole of Jamison Creek including the Plantation Street area is a vital part of the National and State heritage yet it is unsightly. As already stated, the creek's water contributes to the Sydney catchment area yet the natural filtering of its water is not protected.

RECOMMENDATION 1.

- Reclaim the creek and land adjacent to it by:-
- (a) removing rubbish.
 - (b) Gradually clear the stream and banks of exotic trees and bushes as well as weeds.
 - (c) restore natural vegetation by establishing plants indigenous to this particular area.

The National Trust is willing to assist anyone who is prepared to understand the Joan Bradley method of weeding and replanting natives in natural areas.

CONSIDERATION 2.

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COMMENT 2.

- (a) Enteric bacteria was not recovered from the creek in the area of the sewer pipe which bridges the stream in the vicinity of Armstrong Street. However, samples of sand taken from a depth of six to nine inches around the sewer manhole on the western bank yielded a higher count of related bacteria on selective media than was found on control samples of sand taken from the bank. This does cause concern because when raw sewerage does spill from the

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system, it is being absorbed by the silt covering the bank. Because of constant disturbance, the natural vegetation is sparse and ineffectual to assist natural filtration in retaining and diluting the sewerage before release into the creek. Instead, there will be a discharge of effluent directly into the creek after heavy rain as well as the adverse effects of erosion, flooding and reduced flow rate in dry periods.

(b) The creek's water is already contaminated with sewerage. Wentworth Falls Lake is unfit for swimming. Patches of green slime established on rocks and sand beds near Weeping Rock are indicative of eutrophication. *Microstrobilus fitzgeraldii* (a rare plant) at the base of the Falls is adversely affected by pollution of silt and slime carried in the spray which also sprays people walking on the tourist tracks in this area.

(c) Recent clearing of the bank has taken place just east of the spillway of Wentworth Falls Lake near the dam wall. This swamp area did contribute to absorbing water runoff from the road.

(d) It is now impossible to secure a depth of at least 100 metres of natural vegetation between the creek and the existing development especially in Plantation Street.

RECOMMENDATION 2.

(a) Reduce health hazards by having all buildings in the catchment area seweraged as an alternative to the septic tank systems which pollute the creek.

(b) Maintain repairs on leaking sewer pipes.

(c) Signs to be placed at points where tourist paths cross Jamison Creek warning visitors not to drink the water.

(d) Plan to acquire the land adjacent to creek and add to the Council Reserve so that a reserve continues on both sides of the creek from the Lake to the Falls.

(e) There should be no further clearing of land in the catchment area.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS.

All creeks are life support systems for the fabric of the delicate web of life into which is woven all plant and animal species including man - therefore, the ecology of the whole creek must be taken into consideration.

FURTHER COMMENTS.

(a) The denudation of the banks of Wentworth Falls Lake adversely affects the whole stream

(b) The receding banks in Plantation Street and on the edge of Wilson Park need stabilization. The large dam behind the tennis courts in Wilson Park is of no scenic value and could be a hazard to children.

(c) Since May (1980) the Society has been corresponding with the Council regarding the adverse effects of siltation from the new playground at Wentworth Falls Primary School which is now covering the adjacent reserve with six inches of silt.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS.

(a) Implement Wentworth Falls Lake Management Plan produced by Council.

(b) Allow receding embankments to regenerate. A retaining wall might be necessary to stabilize these banks.

(c) Build a retaining wall around the new playground at Wentworth Falls Primary School. Suitable walling materials are cured cement blocks, uncemented stones or logs. Fresh cement kills native plants.

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Our Society has written to the Minister for Environment and Planning, Hon. Eric Bedford, M.L.A., supporting the submissions opposing mining in national parks from the Nature Conservation Council of N.S.W. and from the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

We specifically expressed support for the request that the Policy Document "Resolution of Conflicts" be withdrawn, that the Ministerial Agreement of April 1979 between the then Ministers for Planning and the Environment and Mineral Resources and Development be revoked; that the internationally accepted definition of a National Park be reaffirmed; that support for the National Parks & Wildlife Act 1974 Section 72 (4) (C) be reaffirmed and abided by; that the N.S.W. Government apply more stringent control measures, especially in regard to such things as subsidence, cliff collapse, stream pollution etc.

Further, we submitted that mining within the Blue Mountains area, in whatever Land Zoning, is contrary to the best use of this important catchment, residential and world famous tourist area and requested that no further exploration or development of mining take place within it, and that control measures applied to established mines be particularly stringent in this area.

Our Statement continued:

"Water, in Australia, is of highest priority. The Blue Mountains form an important sector of the catchment areas of the Warragamba, Nepean and Hawkesbury rivers. Creek pollution, creek subsidence or blockage, erosion and any alteration of drainage patterns into swamps and creeks and through rock strata may have drastic consequences. All land zonings in the Blue Mountains area (reserve, rural, residential etc.) are interconnected because all share the same creek systems, and the same rock strata underlie all zones."

"The Blue Mountains is a tourist area renowned for its scenic topography, waterfalls and bushland character. Interference with these, direct or indirect, will detract from an outdoor leisure recreation area very necessary for the people in the urban areas around it."

"The unprecedented attendance of approx. 700 people at the Wentworth Falls School of Arts, and 1,000 at the Springwood meeting to protest against the Clutha Mining proposals during the period of the Askin Govt., is an indication of the strength of local feeling on this matter."

In conclusion, we requested that the public be informed ahead of any present and future proposals that might involve the Blue Mountains area.

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This version of the Newsletter was re-typed from the original by Phoebe Coster in July 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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