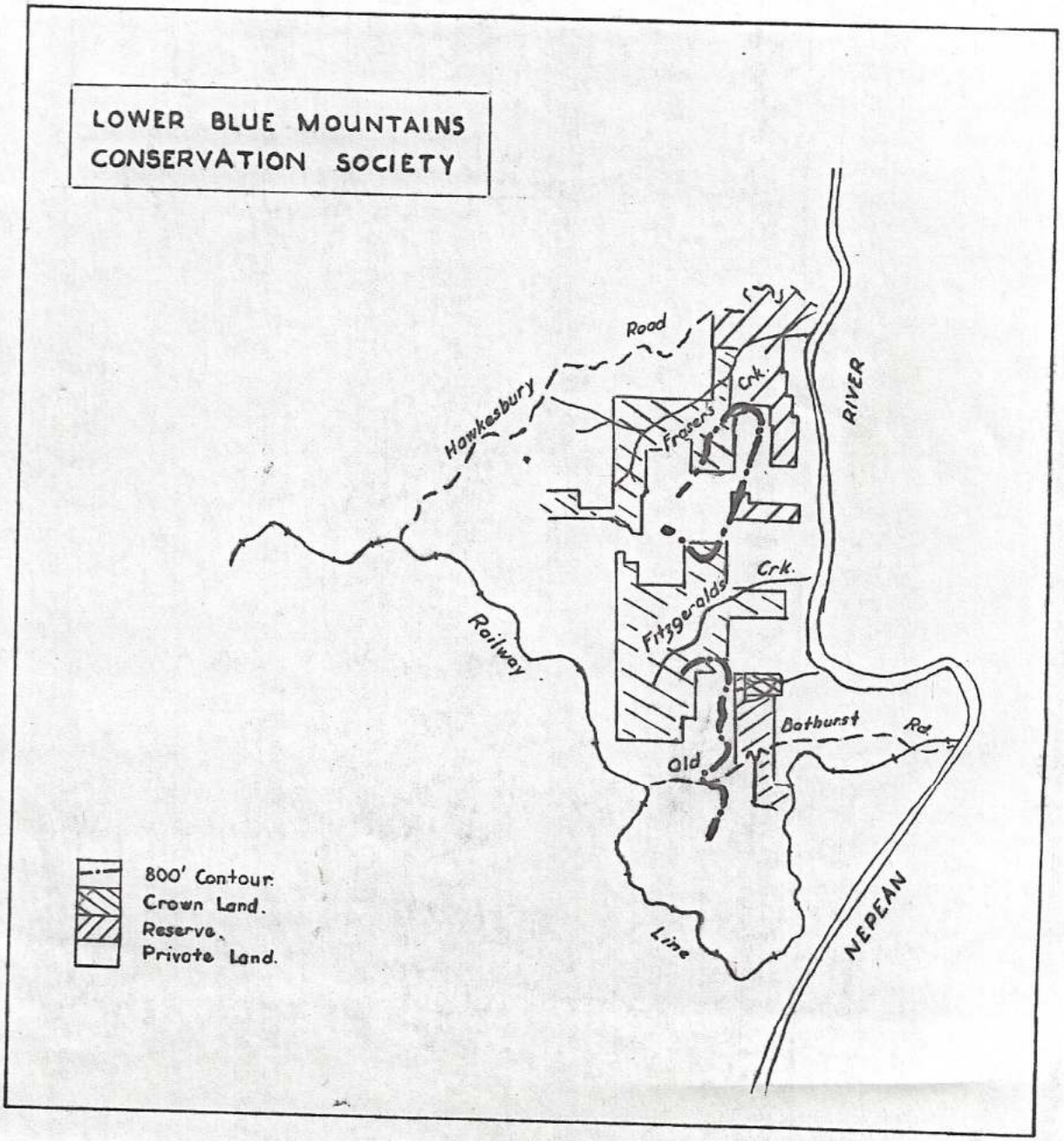
A Policy for the Escarpment

Kalori



KALORI: JOURNAL OF THE LOWER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

OCTOBER, 1972

THE ESCARPMENT - A NEW VIEW?

In this issue, the committee presents a recommendation which will be forwarded by the Society to the Lands Department of New South Wales, for the establishment of a scenic park covering the eastern escarpment of the Blue Mountains. This is an area of great local interest, of geological interest and scenic quality. It is truly a unique local resource of naturalness; one resource that, in the coming years, we cannot afford to lose in this region.

The existence of large blocks of crown land, able to be consolidated into one reserve, makes such a recommendation tantalising indeed. Tomorrow may be too late, so imagination, wisdom and drive are needed by authorities to secure for New South Wales this wonderful landform.

Alas, the Lands Department has shown much drive, but little imagination and wisdom, with their proposed crown land subdivisions lately. Their subdivision plans have raised wrath all over the Sydney and Blue Mountains area. It has been condemned by the National Trust and many other bodies.

In this real estate juggle, the Lands Department will take:

(i) A section of Public Reserve (R No. 77066)

(ii) Land below the top of the escarpment, thus ruining a superb view for all but the few who will purchase it.

(iii) Blocks of land able to be consolidated into a reserve for dedication as a national park.

(iv) Valuable ridge top land much needed in such a national park.

In return, apparently, they will give:

(i) Acres of cheap gully land for open space to replace the economically and ecologically valuable ridge land.

(ii) Small, isolated and ecologically unstable reserves.

(iii) Many platitudes.

We know (or should know) the impact of more Lapstones and Mt. Riverviews on the escarpment. The Government obviously does not!

The escarpment is not faced with a Clutha-type threat nor anything like it. It is being nibbled and whittled away. A subdivision here and a powerline there. How it will end is purely a matter for our planning authorities. But unfortunately, to date, they give us crown land subdivisions.

We now have over the Blue Mountains a very commendable tree preservation order. We have been asking for a tree preservation order for the last three years to my knowledge. But it took a protest over an infamous subdivision proposal to secure it. I hope it has not been invoked primarily to attempt to demolish arguments against the subdivision proposals. I, for one, would hate to see this much needed regulation put to such misuse.

So we ask the New South Wales Government and the Lands Department not for noble, stirring, "last paragraph" prose about the escarpment and governmental attitudes towards it, and how it sympathises that development should be limited, but for concrete protection. In short - dedication to the people!

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This month, we present the "new-look" Kalori. It is, we hope, full of interesting information about Conservation in general, and the Society in particular. This format should appear quarterly at least. A newsletter format will be used at other monthly intervals. Remember - this is your publication, so please contribute.

ATTENTION: SUBS ARE NOW DUE!!

Look to your envelope as to your financial situation. We need your money to finance your conservation representations - so don't delay; the Developers won't!

FINANCIAL REPORT

The financial report of the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society for the financial year 1/7/71 to 30/6/72.

Receipts		Payments	
Balance 30/6/71	$ 131.26	Subscriptions	$ 5.00
Subscriptions	56.00	Hall rental	16.00
Donations	10.80	Postage	24.38
Sales	12.95	Sundries	39.80
Dividend (A.P.C.M.)	.03	Balance 30/6/72	127.62
1972 Bank Interest	1.76		
	$ 212.80		$ 212.80

- A. Connelly,
Hon. Treasurer

AT OUR AUGUST MEETING:

Our new constitution was again declared "law" by President Mick Dark. Copies will be sent out as soon as they are available.

Our stand on the escarpment is now embodied in a policy passed at this meeting. Opposition to any development below the top of the escarpment (the 800 foot contour) on crown land, opposition to any alienation of Public Reserve No. 77066, and the belief that the escarpment should be preserved in a natural condition to the fullest possible extent for the people of New South Wales are the main points of the policy. This policy, however, is not the end. In this issue of Kalori is a full submission, embodying the policy, for an escarpment national park. This is taking a positive step in opposing the crown land subdivisions and ensuring that the escarpment will be saved for the people of New South Wales.

Tom Grant, a teaching fellow at New South Wales University, gave a talk on kangaroo behaviour to over forty people. With the aid of slides, he described the results, observations and heartbreaks of his work on wild and captive grey kangaroos.

The orchid book was won by Mrs. Pye, of the Hawkesbury Conservation Society, who was a guest at the meeting.

AT OUR SPETEMBER MEETING:

Discussion on the Nature Conservation Council conference and dinner, and information on destruction of land adjoining fire trails in the Blue Mountains National Park, were two major points well worth reporting from the crushing amount of business processed that night.

Michael Smithson is our delegate to the N.C.C. conference to be held at the North Sydney Council Hall, Blues Point Road, McMahon's Point, Saturday, October 21. We have two resolutions dealing

with the escarpment and tree preservation. If you wish to accompany us to the dinner and conference, tickets can be obtained via Denis Pain, 8 Rickard Road, Warrimoo for $3.50 each. Judith Wright will address the dinner.

Jill Dark drew our attention to the widespread destruction of bush adjoining the Woodford Trail within the National Park where filling for roadworks was bulldozed out. This act seemed inconsistent with proper park management. A letter has been sent to Park Service.

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NEXT MEETING: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday, October 13 8.00 p.m. at Springwood Civic Centre

Please make the effort and come. One more person always helps.

ADDITIONS TO YOUR LOCAL PARKS

Listed here are additions to local parks (e.g. Blue Mountains National Park, Kanangra-Boyd National Park) as notified in the Government Gazette since January, 1972.

Blue Mountains National Park - Jan 28 1972 - 190 acres

Formerly private land projecting into the National Park situated $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of Springwood on Chapmans Ridge.

Kanangra-Boyd National Park - Feb 25 1972 - 42,500 acres

An addition promised in early 1971 that has taken a year to be gazetted.

The extension is to the north and north east of the old park. The northern boundary has been pushed 5 miles north and now follows the Black Range from Jenolan State Forest to the Cox's River, then along the west bank of the Cox's to Kanangaroo Clearing, thence along the west bank of Kanangra River and Kanangra Creek to a point east of Mt. Paralyser. After following the Shire boundary to Mt. Karooba-Karoo, it swings east in an arc north of Mt. Cloudmaker to Mt. Ti-willa-too, where it rejoins the Shire boundary and proceeds to the Kowmung River at the end of the Gingra Range and follows the northern bank of the Kowmung to join the Park boundary, where it crosses between Root's Ridge and Denis Range. Mt. Cloudmaker and Dex Creek are now within the Park.

Blue Mountains National Park - May 5 1972 - 3 acres

A road passing through the middle of the 190 acre addition made on Jan 28 1972. This road is now closed as a public road.

Blue Mountains National Park: the total acreage, as of 1st March, 1972, was 249,074 acres.

Kanangra-Boyd National Park: the total acreage, as of 1st March, 1972, was 140,680 acres.

The total acreage of National Parks in New South Wales was 2,639,176 acres, State Parks 27,144 acres, Historic Sites 2,193 acres, Nature Reserves 555,923 acres, at the 1st March, 1972. This amounts to an overall total of 3,224,436 acres reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

(- From National Parks Journal)

MYALL LAKES NATIONAL PARK - how it came to be

On the nineteenth of April, Nineteen Seventy Two, the Myall Lakes Park proposal ceased to be a proposal and became the National Park. Gazetted on the 28th of that month, Cabinet approval was given in the middle of the previous year.

Consisting of 38,127 acres, which possibly consists of 13,000 acres of Sim Committee area, the balance being lake, it is well below the proposals made by conservationists, notably the Myall Lakes Committee.

In addition, glaring faults are apparent in the park structure as it stands now:

- mining is still allowed in the Park

- the road built through the scientific area and right through the barrier plain has scarred the Park.

- the failure to include lands on the northern and western side of the lakes in the park. This, in later years, will be a threat to the ecological integrity of the Park.

But at least the Park is there on paper.

Two later additions to the Park were 70 acres in the McGraths Hill area and 146 acres between Mungo Brush and the coastline. The latter area is well known to those who accompanied the Society's field trips to the Lakes. These additions were notified in the Government Gazette August 11, 1972.

THE COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ROAD VERGES

Colin Ferguson.

Anyone driving through western areas of our State often discovers that the only stands of native forest remaining are those situated immediately along the roadside. It seems these road verges automatically diminish or disappear when road widening takes place, even in Sydney suburbs, whilst in new Crown subdivisions the practice is to clear all vegetation between the kerbside and the lot front.

In 1969 a Committee who comprised members drawn from Federal and State Departments whose activities deal with road verges was set up in Western Australia to consider the conservation and regeneration of native flora along highways and to come to grips with unsightly debris left by road works and the provision of utilities viz; power lines telecommunications or natural gas reticulation.

It was apparent that little proven data concerning retention, survival or regeneration of endemic roadside flora was in existence and that most comment arose from visual differences caused more by development of adjoining farms than by changes in roadside reserves. Without agricultural development the observer sees a deep belt of vegetation (a double row of willow gums is used in Israel to hide defence installations) beside roads but this "verge in depth" disappears with farm clearing so that the observer can now see right through the verge. This "see through" increases rapidly with increased vehicle speed.

With today's growth in traffic and demands for wider roads, narrow road reserves, satisfactory in the past are no longer adequate and in future wider road verges will be required to maintain visual amenity. In Western Australia it was the custom to provide a road verge of a chain in width. The clearing of the verge resulted in the following:-

(a) An increase in wind strength of up to 15 m.p.h. above normal winds under a vegetative canopy.
(b) Increased air temperatures.
(c) Increased evaporation and reduced soil moisture in upper levels.
(d) Reduced humidity.

The overall effect is a hotter drier climate which would result in many local species unable to withstand the harsher conditions, declining and eventually disappearing. These are replaced by noxious weeds; in Sydney privet or paspalum could be expected.

With expanded development, rising affluence and the trend towards informal roadside landscapes, the need for more recreational space is with us. Future highway development will need to cater for incidental needs of the travelling public from the family picnic to the long distance haulier seeking rest out sight of the highway. The selection of historical scenic or botanical areas

within road verges and the effect of roadside verge burning is being looked at. Our State could well benefit from a Committee for the Preservation of Road Verges.

- From National Parks Journal, June, 1972.

NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS -- BOON OR BLIGHT?

(Adapted by National Parks Journal from NATIONAL WILDLIFE pub. by National Wildlife Federation of America, April-May, 1971.)

Australia already has experienced the murmurings of proposals to build nuclear power plants on the east coast - proposals which, after some airing in a partly hostile atmosphere of public opinion, were then filed away, at least temporarily. But these proposals must inevitably come forth again, and before complacently accepting them and drifting into the 'nuclear state', Australians should see to it that they are well informed as to not only the benefits but also the dangers associated with the use of atomic energy.

People who advocate the expanding use of nuclear power plants have high hopes for them, feeling confident that the 'nukes' pose no appreciable danger to man. Others equally qualified to judge, disagree and say nuclear power presents a real threat to health.

Because of the vital significance of this subject, the National Wildlife Federation of America, joined by the Sierra Club and more than 40 Maryland Conservation organisations, has filed a lawsuit against the Atomic Energy Commission (America), contesting the AEC's environmental safeguards for nuclear power as being grossly inadequate. The suit asks for a halt to all current nuclear power plant construction, pending completion of studies required by the National Environmental Policy Act. National Wildlife asked two distinguished scientists with opposing views to explain their position about nuclear power plants.

Dr. Glenn Seaborg, Chairman of the AEC and President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, says: "Nuclear power represents the promise of an almost unlimited energy source. Nuclear power is an essential member of the energy team; not only because it is an unlimited energy source, but also because it can contribute substantially to the reduction of air pollution. Air pollution resulting from both fossil-fueled and nuclear power plants must be examined, and here I believe nuclear power has the distinct advantage. Nuclear power plants release small amounts of radio active effluents. These releases are very carefully controlled in U.S.A. by Atomic Energy Commission regulations. The new Environmental Protection Agency now has the responsibility for setting these standards. What about the safety of operation of the reactors themselves?

"Commercial nuclear power plants have caused no injury to the public. There have been no radiation exposures to the public in excess of standards established.

All steam electrical plants, both nuclear and fossil-fueled, must return waste heat to the environment, at present usually into a body of water. The effects of this waste heat are in some cases detrimental to aquatic biota in localised areas. In many situations artificial ponds or cooling towers can be used if needed to reduce the amount of heat discharged into the water. Other arrangements may be necessary to avoid undesirable discharges. Nuclear plants can be operated safely, in a manner such that radio active effluents will lead to average radiation exposure. The breeder reactors of the future and improved methods of waste heat dissipation will help alleviate the thermal pollution problem."

Barry Commoner, Director of the Institute for the Study of Natural Systems, George Washington University, says in reply: "The AEC has thus far failed to justify the construction of any nuclear reactors (70 are operable or under construction in U.S.A.) All present nuclear plants release some radio active materials to the environment. Leakage becomes worse with age. All radiation is harmful to living things. Natural radiation is responsible for a certain incidence of harmful effects on living things. For example, some harmful genetic changes and cancers. Any additional exposure to radiation, however small, increases the risk of biological harm. Dr. K. Morgan of the AEC's Oak Ridge National Laboratory, estimates that radiation actually emitted from reactors now in operation will probably increase the lethal effects of radiation induced disease among the population by about 1.2 to 7 per cent. (that is a 1.2 to 7 per cent. increase over the lethal effects of background radiation). Similar considerations apply to the radiation hazards to organisma that comprise environmental ecosystems. Radiation risks could be reduced by added technical improvements - at added cost. A nuclear plant of the present type will release more waste heat to the environment than does a conventional power plant. All electricity is eventually converted to heat which may become an increasingly serious environmental hazard in urban areas.

"From the above, it can be seen that there is indeed a risk to human health and environmental integrity from the operation of nuclear reactors.

"In determining whether a particular type of power plant is to be built, a judgement must be made which balances the expected benefits against the expected costs, both economic and environmental. There is no scientific principle which can guide this judgement. It is rather a question of ethical, moral or social outlook. The judgement is a decision which belongs in the hands of society as a whole; it is not a matter for 'expert' decision.

"In my opinion, the AEC has thus far failed to justify the construction of any nuclear reactor by means of a sufficiently complete, explicitly stated,

evaluation of the relevant costs and benefits. Dr. Seaborg claims that 'we know that the benefits we gain will far outweigh the risks of the potential hazards'. I believe this claim is invalid. One reason is that the full environmental risk is unknown. For example, very little is known about the multiple effects on human health and the ecosystem of exposure to combinations of radiation and other environmental hazards such as pesticides, mercury and lead. The report of the U.S. Office of Science and Technology on 'Electric Power and Environment' states: '... much more information is needed on the relationship of environmental improvement programmes to electrical demand before a basis can be found to decide whether the historical rate of electrical power growth should rise or fall'. On these grounds I seriously doubt that anyone knows that the benefits of reactors outweigh their risks, and I therefore believe that reactors ought to be limited. In my opinion the proper judgement requires a total revaluation of the nation's need for power, of the environmental effects of all the potential means of producing power, of the social cost of power produced by different means. I believe that in the absence of this evaluation, the nation's course of nuclear power development is imprudent and unwise".

PROTECTION FOR ABORIGINAL RELICS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

In order to preserve as much as possible of our Aboriginal heritage, and to awaken an appreciation of the culture of the Aborigines, legislation (in the form of amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1967) has been passed. This law protects Aboriginal relics and archaeological sites in New South Wales. The law makes the National Parks and Wildlife Service responsible for all Aboriginal relics in New South Wales. To explain and clarify this Act, the most important provisions are as follows:-

1. Anyone who discovers a relic whether it is the property of the Crown or not, must report the discovery to the Director, National Parks and Wildlife Service, within reasonable time of the discovery.
   It is an offence to knowingly damage or deface such a relic, without the Director's written consent.

2. Relics are classified into two types:-
   a) movable: Any movable relic that you find is the property of the Crown. This means that relics such as stone implements collected since the Act was gazetted (13th April 1970) are the property of the Crown, and may not therefore be sold, removed from the State or, of course, damaged in any way. If you collect such relics, it is your responsibility to properly catalogue and store them, and to inform the Director of their existence.
   b) fixed: These are relics that are attached to the ground in some way, such as cave paintings, engravings, and carved trees. These are also

the property of the Crown unless found on privately owned land, in which case they are the property of the owner. If the owner wishes, he may protect these relics by having them declared as Protected Archaeological Areas, under the guardianship of the owner, who may be appointed an Honorary Warden. The Service will give advice and may give financial aid for their protection, if this is requested by the owner.

3. Areas of unoccupied Crown land which contain important relics may be dedicated by the Governor as Aboriginal Areas. These are managed entirely by the Service, in the same way as the National Parks and Historic Sites.

4. Anyone who wishes to excavate, or in any way disturb land to discover relics, must obtain a permit from the Director of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. This applies whether the land is freehold or Crown land.

5. An advisory committee on Aboriginal relics (with representatives of a New South Wales University, the Australian Museum, the Anthropological Society of New South Wales, the National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.), the Department of Mines, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and two prehistorians working in New South Wales) has been appointed to advise the Director on any matters concerning the preservation of relics and archaeological sites.

In these ways it is hoped that the aim of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, "to conserve those things both natural and historical which are the heritage of all Australians", will be fulfilled.

- From Parks & Wildlife (N.P.W.S.) Aug., 1971.

SICK AND INJURED BIRDS

Michael Carins.

- From Australian Bird Bander, Sept., 1971.

Banders will almost certainly encounter both sick and injured birds at some time or another and if attempted, treatment may be successful in some cases. But sick, injured or rehabilitated birds should never be banded without the prior approval of the Secretary of the Banding Scheme; in the event, any recovery will be of doubtful value unless complete details of the pre-release circumstances are available.

Disease.

Disease in birds may be difficult to detect but may be evidenced by an excessive number of ecto-parasites, dull dirty plumage, very low weight for the species, excessive lethargy, sores or blebs on the feet or facial flesh, or a discharge from the eyes, nostrils or mouth. Birds so affected should be handled carefully since some infections can be transmitted to humans.

The danger of infection is not great, but this should not be neglected since a non-human disease can be very difficult to diagnose and treat.

If a bird dies and a suitable pathological or veterinary research centre is known, it may be sent there as little is known about disease in wild birds.

Treatment of diseased birds is rarely successful.

Shock.

Trapped birds which go into a state of shock may be either placed in a darkened box or cage and kept quiet or placed in a quiet, safe spot near the banding site until they recover.

Most honeyeaters respond very well to sugar and water mixture. Dr. McClure (of MAPS) also uses for any shocked bird that he can get to accept this.

Injured Birds.

Leg injuries are the most likely ones encountered and these do not appear to unduly incapacitate most birds. I have records of a Pied Oyster Catcher (Haematopus ostralegus) with both feet severed, incubating and getting about quite well on the healed stumps; I have also seen many birds which apparently suffer little inconvenience from a single badly damaged or missing leg.

If a bird has a simple broken leg it may be splinted with matchsticks and thread and the bird cared for until the leg has healed. If the leg is badly broken and the bone protrudes through the skin it should be amputated at the next joint and treated with antiseptic before releasing the bird.

Some birds, particularly waders seem prone to entanglement of the feet and legs with wool or string etc.; gulls and terns also are very prone to such entanglement by nylon fishing line. Frequently these obstructions are so tightly worked into the leg that it is impossible to remove without cutting; this should be done carefully using the tip of a scalpel or a small pointed sharp pen knife blade (usually most pen knife blades are too large and blunt).

When a bird is incapacitated by the loss of a wing or has an obvious disability which could prevent it leading a normal existence, but it is otherwise healthy, the following courses are open. It may either be kept in an aviary (see Editor's note), sent to a zoo or museum or released. If released it will probably quickly fall victim to a raptor or other predator.

Badly injured birds, particularly those suffering from gunshot wounds or ones struck by cars should be destroyed as soon as possible. Small birds may be killed by pressing the thumb strongly on the left side of the breast until the heart stops. Larger birds may be killed similarly by pressing with the knee or foot. Do not try to wring a bird's neck; apart from being very

difficult it is frequently unsuccessful. Any necessary killing should be done in seclusion in the interests of public relations and out of deference to anyone who may be upset by such process.

Oiled Birds.

Until the Torrey Canyon disaster in Britain it was believed that oiled birds could be successfully rehabilitated. But after the massive rescue operation on that occassion by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds it has been shown that the success rate is extremely small.

If only slightly oiled a bird may be treated with a good chance of success, but the treatment must be done and the bird released quickly without damage to the waterproofing of the plumage. Slightly oiled birds should be fed, kept warm and dosed with a small quantity of castor oil to assist in the purging of any oil which may have been swallowed. After this has been done, Fullers Earth (a moisture absorbing substance) may be worked into the feathers to remove the oil.

If other than slightly oiled, treatment is likely to prove a waste of time and it is probably better to destroy the bird.

PROBLEMS

The birds one is most likely to encounter will be nestlings which have "exploded" from the nest prematurely, those taken from cats, ones hit by vehicles or those that have flown into obstructions such as overhead wires or windows. Nestlings can often be reared and some injuries can be treated successfully but success is rare with small birds.

Such an interest may become a problem in itself. In England one of my friends became known as a "bird doctor" and after five years in the area he had become the keeper of a large flock of half-tame gulls which found it easier to wait for him to feed them than to forage for food. When I left the area he was under constant siege from this ever increasing flock.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

As mentioned earlier, it is not the birds one normally encounters during banding for instance which prove difficult, but those which are brought in usually by a child or a parent. Frequently such birds are too badly injured or too young to be treated and must be destroyed. Where children are involved it is best to tell the parent what must happen, delaying the inevitable until after the child has left. A young child can be advised subsequently that the bird "died".

Disposal of Bodies

Dead (fresh) birds should be taken to a museum or institute for preservation. Even if sufficient specimens exist in a collection there may be a requirement for skeletal material, spirit specimens or exchange skins.

Bodies can usually be kept in a regrigerator for well over a week without deterioration; they should be wrapped first in newspaper, then placed in a plastic bag.

Conclusion.

Treatment of sick and injured birds requires great patience and considerable time. In many cases the prospects for recovery are minimal and numerous disappointments will occur.

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NOTE.-- The fauna protection l·ws vary in each state or territory. However, usually the keeping of protected species without approval from the appropriate fauna authority is illegal. Anyone intending to keep sick or injured birds for more than a few days should seek the advice and/or ·pproval of the fauna authority in the state or territory concerned.