

## MINUTES OF FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING

Springwood Civic Centre - 9th February, 1973

It was decided to conduct a trapping run at Inga at the first available opportunity. The Society has contributed \$30.00 to the Sydney Environment Exhibition Committee. It was reported that Mr. Pierce of National Parks and Wildlife Service would be coming to a trapping run on 10th March to assist us in the practical application of the trapping programme.

Our president, Mr. Mick Dark, has been appointed as convenor of a special committee to collate suggestions for a regional planning scheme for the Blue Mountains.

Our secretary, Mr. Denis Pain, recently gave an outline of our policy on the eastern escarpment to the members of Hawkesbury District Conservation Society. It was decided to conduct their members on a tour of the escarpment on 25th February.

The secretary has been requested to write to the Prime Minister, the Federal Ministers for D.C.A., Urban and Regional Development, and Conservation and the Environment, asking whether Richmond was still being considered as a site for a second international airport.

A general theme has been decided on for our display at the Environment Exhibition in September. It will be concerned with the Blue Mountains Town Plan or planning in general for the Blue Mountains region.

The committee is to make a study of the government's "Draft Guidelines for Environmental Impact Studies", and report back to a subsequent general meeting.

The assistant secretary is to compile a complete List of Activities for the remainder of the Society year with the assistance of the rest of the committee.



## REPORT ON PENRITH WETLAND HABITAT

- Michael A. Smithson.

### INTRODUCTION

With the Nepean district moving inexorably towards that suburban fate of uniformity a crisis confronts the remaining areas of natural habitat in the district, including wetland habitat. Some swamps and ponds which were havens for waterbirds have already been lost. Almost certainly more will follow.

In this article I hope to identify these habitat sites and discuss them individually. I cannot claim that this report is exhaustive for much information is yet to be collected. But if it creates awareness and concern I think it shall serve its purpose. Most of this information was collected by Nick McGrath, Denis Pain, Adrian Connolly and myself over the last few months. I hope we can continue with this work. I also hope we can try, at least, to save some of these areas for waterbirds and people. For what we are seeing in this district is the crisis that is affecting this nation's waterbirds, in miniature.

### THE SITUATION

"The numbers of Australian waterfowl are declining" (Frith, CSIRO). "There is little doubt that a crisis is now approaching the waterfowl populations. It could be insidious rather than sudden and obvious, but the threat is very real nonetheless... The flow of most rivers has been reduced... many productive swamps drained." (ACF). "The tempo of change is increasing, both in the scale of drainage and agricultural development, and in the mobility of the shooter and his firearms; even the most remote refuges of waterfowl are now freely accessible" (Frith, CSIRO). "If their value as a resource was properly appreciated, it would be obvious that many of the swamps (already) drained were better left in their original use... The knowledge to avoid [the crisis] is available" (ACF).

- Frith, H. "Waterfowl in Australia".
- Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF).  
"Waterfowl conservation".

### WATERBIRDS AND WETLANDS

Although not as spectacular as many Australian wetlands, or as large as the Hawkesbury wetlands, the wetland habitat of the Nepean district is, nevertheless, valuable.



These small ponds, lagoons and periodically flooded lands are havens for a variety of waterbirds. These Australian waterbirds move about erratically, depending mainly upon rainfall which affects conditions for feeding, breeding, etc. Frith notes "a strong bias in the nomadic movements (of waterfowl) towards the coast, particularly in the south-east, each summer. The consistent nature of the rainfall and reliable habitat resulting from this is the attraction".

The swirling masses and formations of ibis and pelicans and sometimes black swans, moving eastward towards the Nepean region at odd times bears testimony to this. In summer ponds and wetlands, from the largest to the smallest in the district, have their quota of waterbirds. Without wetlands there would be no waterbirds.

#### WATERBIRDS WETLAND REQUIREMENTS

A useful guide to what requirements are needed in wetland habitat for many waterbirds may be shown by the following table of the habitats of birds sighted in the Nepean district during this survey. Reference has been made to - SLATER, P.; "A field guide to Australian birds - non-passerines" to supplement our own observations of habitat.



[illegible]



## SPECIFIC SITES IN THE PENRITH AREA

The basic habitats in the Penrith area could be listed as:

- (1) Periodically flooded land
- (2) River
- (3) Lagoons and ponds
- (4) Lakes

Together these contain all the habitat requirements listed previously. Included in '(3) ponds' are farm dams and in '(4) lakes', gravel pits. However both farm dams and gravel pits were not renowned for their bird populations in the survey area during our investigations.

Specific sites are listed below:

Bel-Air: An area of periodically flooded land below Bel-Air estate adjacent to the local playing fields. Contains very good swamp lands and tea-tree swamp. Water remains for some time on site.

Birds recorded during survey:

white faced heron	Japanese snipe
spur winged plover	Royal spoonbill
white ibis	eastern swamphen
straw necked ibis	black fronted dotterel
dusky moorhen	white necked heron
large egret	black duck

Smiths Lane A source of interest when periodically flooded.

Cranebrook: Attracts reasonable numbers of waterbirds. The main land use is connected with dairying.

Birds recorded during survey:

Plumed egret	white necked heron
cattle egret	

Nepean Weir & Nepean River: The Nepean weir area is a real haven for waterbirds. Over the years of quarrying by the silica miners,

a large area of marsh flats, islands, lakes and channels has been created, forming a labyrinth of favourable habitat for waterbirds. For once, perhaps, mining has helped the environment. Large concentrations of birds are common. Unfortunately, concentrations of illegal shooters are not rare.

Birds recorded during survey:

Black fronted dotterel	eastern swamphen
spur winged plover	Australian little grebe
pelican	black swan
little pied cormorant	coot
white necked heron	silver gull
dusky moorhen	royal spoonbill
large egret	cattle egret
white faced heron	Japanese snipe
black duck	darther
yellow spoonbill	pied cormorant