

LOWER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION
SOCIETY NEWSLETTER.

MARCH 1970

P.O. BOX 119, SPRINGWOOD, 2777

President; B. Bramsen Ph. 512787 Secretary; A. Hanley 394079

NEXT MEETING: Friday, April 20th. 8 p.m. Glenbrook Primary School. An evening not to be missed! Dave Noble is coming from Sydney to show his magnificent slides of the Colo Wilderness, taken from a bushwalkers viewpoint. Let's make this a successful night, bring along your friends and spread the word to anyone who may be interested.

EXCURSIONS: Saturday and Sunday, 21st-22nd April.
A camp at Wirrimbirra Sanctuary on the Hume Highway at Bargo. This is a National Trust Property managed by the David Stead Wildlife Research Foundation. Help is always needed, and the Society plan to spend one day weeding, with the other day free to explore the wild flower garden or the walking tracks through the natural forest on the 90 ha. Sanctuary. There is a native plant nursery where seeds may also be bought, a display of pamphlets and books on conservation as well as picnic/barbeque facilities. For those not wishing to camp, accomodation is available in five cabins at a charge of \$3 per person per night. Enquiries about these should be made by phoning 046-841112.

Sunday May 13th. Walk to Bedford Pool, Victor and Terrace Falls. Meet at Hazelbrook Station at 10 a.m.

COMING EVENTS. "Ecofest" is a "coming together and learning to appreciate our environment"; it is a series of schools run by the University of New England. This year's activities include schools at Dorrig National Park, Mt. Kaptutar, Tweed Valley, Macquarie Marshes with two coastal schools on Plant Identification and Wild Food, plus two River trips down the Namoi and the Wilson. There is also a folk song school covering all aspects of the Australian Ballad. For further information about the program that starts at Easter, contact the Society's secretary, Aileen Hanley.

June 11th, Monday night. The National Parks Association general meeting is preceded by a lecture on the "Ecology of Glider Possums" given by Win Rohan Jones of the Forestry Commission. This will be held in Room 1, 7th floor, GUOOF Building, 149 Castlereagh Street, Sydney at 6.30 p.m. There is a charge for the lecture, being one in a series.

May, 15th, Tuesday night. "Off-road vehicles in the natural environment - a forum of speakers from bushwalking and off-road vehicle associations." Australian Conservation Foundation meeting; the Activities Room, The Australian Museum, Sydney, at 7 p.m. Enter through the William Street door.

1980. June 9th - 13th. The World Wilderness Congress will be held in Cairns. Organizers are seeking delegates for the conference and a comprehensive program/brochure is available from P.O. Box 111, Broadbeach, Queensland.

RECENT ACTIVITIES.

Despite the rain and prospects of not too successful a night, a few intrepid members took their barbeques to Murphy's Glen and had a very good night spotlighting, finding a number of breater glider possums, a diamond python, and lots of frogs. Another such night will be planned soon to enable more to see some of our nocturnal fauna.

The Berrima Branch of the National Parks and Wildlife Association were met on their walk to Norton's Basin in February. They were concerned about the threats to the Basin posed by the development of the land at Fairlight, and offered to assist in writing to the appropriate Government departments.

Peter Thomas led a successful walk to Blue Gum Swamp at Springwood, when everyone was on the look-out for birdlife. Some thirty-seven different birds were seen, including a few rare birds, and an unseen lyre-bird performed a beautiful variety concert.

Sunday 18th was another day for weeding down at Glenbrook Lagoon. The Ivy Market held the day before at Springwood was again a worthwhile event for the Society, with Besse's blackberry pies selling like "hot cakes".

Diamond Hill, the site over which a mining application was being considered, has been given a reprieve. Paul Landa made the decision not to mine this area at Kurrajong, and it is hoped that the Planning & Environment Commission will further recommend a rezoning of the land to preclude any future application to mine the area.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

The Society needs your support financially, and cannot run without the backing provided by our annual membership subscriptions. If you have not paid this year's subscription, please do so now.

LAKES SCHEME.

There has been some positive response to the article in the last newsletter about the Penrith Lakes Scheme, with a press article, and some questioning at a Penrith City Council Meeting by A ld. Peter Anderson. He was concerned about the strong public reaction to the suggestions to dam Glenbrook or Erskines Creeks in order to supply water to the Lakes. The City engineer stated that "every possible effort was being made to ensure the success of the Lakes Scheme" and that "one of the greatest environmental impact statements ever to be drawn up" will be presented to Penrith citizens, when the scheme comes closer to fruition.

Such remarks make one wary of a foregone conclusion, and such an Environmental Impact Statement must be studied with close scrutiny.

Concern is being expressed amongst the Aldermen about allowing the gravel companies to continue extracting when, indeed, a suitable water supply may not be found to maintain the water level in the lakes.

Concern, too, has been expressed by the National Parks Association about the turbidity of the Nepean/Hawkesbury River due to the gravel mining, and the likelihood of flooding a number of historic buildings along the River!

OFF-ROAD VEHICLE INQUIRY.

The State Pollution Control Commission has invited the Society to make submissions to a new inquiry to be held into the recreational use of off-road vehicles. A joint submission is being prepared by the National Trust, National Parks Association, Australian Conservation Foundation, Total Environment Centre, the Colong Committee and Friends of the Earth. A report from the Commission is expected mid - 1979. Those interested in this question may like to refer to the talk mentioned previously on May 15th. held by A.C.F.

GLENBROOK PRIMARY SCHOOL.

The Society wishes to support the use of Glenbrook Primary School as a depot and organizing centre for recycling. Mr. Bernie Powell is supervising the operation, whereby the school children collect the rubbish to be recycled from their streets. If anyone could help on Saturday mornings with a car and trailer, it would be greatly appreciated.

A general assistant at the school is currently looking after the Nature Corner, such that Society working bees are not needed for the time being.

S.G.A.P. and EVAN'S LOOKOUT.

The Society for Growing Australian Plants has been approached by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Blue Mountains City Council to plant natives around the picnic area at Evans Lookout. Planning has begun, there will be some 1,200 plants to be located in the area.

ARMY EXERCISES.

The Society has written to the N.P.W.S. in protest of the use of the Glenbrook National Park for Army exercises, when there are adequate areas already set aside for such Army exercises.

THE COLO WILDERNESS.

Background.

Myles Dunphy began walking in the area he was to propose for the Greater Blue Mountains National Park, in 1912, but it took ten years "to appreciate all the damaging forces at work in this country and to become aware of the need to protect it." In 1922 Dunphy put forward the proposal for a national park to be dedicated in a number of divisions; Central, Northern, Southern, and Nattai. Most of the Wilderness in that early plan is still intact, barring some gems of areas flooded by the building of Warragamba Dam.

With only eight members, the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council set up by Myles in 1931, advanced some 40 park proposals, 20 of which have been realized. There went hand in hand, a continuing campaign to educate the decision makers in the Government and Public Service, (a campaign being carried out today by son Milo Dunphy at the Total Environment Centre). The Central and part of the Southern sections of this Greater Blue Mountains National Park have been dedicated, but it is the Colo Wilderness, the Northern Division, that is in immediate danger, and about which a decision is imminent as to its future.

Why have a National Park?

This Colo - Hunter region is unique in the world in that here is a wilderness so close to the major metropolitan areas, 70 km from Sydney. Only 1.3% of the total land area in New South Wales is Wilderness, and one quarter of this is the Colo; itself three times the size of any other wilderness area. Size alone is a vital asset in how some regard the qualities of a wilderness, hence the Colo becomes all the more valuable in its natural state.

Not only is our own National Park ravaged by power lines and roads, there is the further assault on urban parklands, making the availability of a natural untouched area for recreation within easy distance of the cities all the more desirable. Even in 1968, the Royal, Blue Mountains, and Kuring-gai Chase National Parks "were showing signs of over-use".

Society's values are changing from a work-ethic complex towards a search for a deeper meaning in life, and with those changes, come a greater emphasis on recreation. With the pace of city living, there is a necessity to escape to the quietness, solitude and reassurance of a natural environment. Now, too, we have a greater ability to "get away from it all." About 80% of the population of New South Wales can reach the Greater Blue Mountains National Park within a return day trip.

If there is no dedication of this area as a National Park, piecemeal development will continue to destroy this region of great beauty.

What are the threats?

Only recently in a local paper, the Associated Country Sawmillers of N.S.W. expressed their great concern over any

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attempt to cut off their supply of timber from this region. They have called upon the State Government to undertake that they will not be forced to sack any employees because of the proposals of a National Park. Minister for Planning and Environment, Paul Landa, has given no reply.

The sawmillers are especially turning their attention to Wirraba Range, which was due to be selectively harvested in the next 12 months. However, the sawmillers have been unable to make plans to log the Range pending the outcome of a N.P.W.S. study. Mr. Tomkins of the Blue Mountains branch of the Sawmillers of N.S.W. states; "if we don't start planning the harvesting soon, it will be too late to save us. That will mean unemployment, a drop in the supply of timber to the community from our native forests, and the commitment by the Government, of the area to National Park by default". Roads into the Wirraba Range needed to be planned by the sawmillers.

Hence the threat is close and real. Completion of a study of the "timber resources" of the Colo by the Forestry Commission is currently holding up a decision by the Government departments. Hayden Washington, of the Colo Committee, says that the timber is not particularly good, and perhaps there would be enough resources to enable a 5 year program of logging, involving 50 - 60 jobs.

Coal mining is a major threat, although there is an agreement between the N.P.W.S. and the Mines Department to mine from outside the boundaries, and then under the Park. However, the pollution of the Rivers is a major issue here. Construction operations will cause siltation of streams, and a washery could result in further siltation problems and the discharge of detergents. Collierys, apart from the massive on-site developments, generate heavy traffic, meaning increased pressure for large scale road development.

The Electricity Commission proposes to construct a dam on the Colo River and a pipeline from the dam to Wallerawang. Hayden Washington feels that the Electricity Commission have opted for "go - slow" approach for the next year or two, hoping all the "conservation fuss" will die down.

Furthermore, the Dept. of Public Works plan to dam the McDonald River.

There is still the possibility of construction of a powerline across the wilderness, depending on the outcome of an inquiry.

The Army has caused considerable damage to Gosper's Mountain through the installation of a helicopter port with construction of a full runway elsewhere, with its access road scarring the land.

What are the features of the Colo?

Vegetation ranges from small rainforest patches, to dry sclerophyll forests, to drier forests with stands of cypress pines. There are tea tree thickets, Melaleuca fringed lagoons and wet sclerophyll forests.

There are 150 species of birds (found to date); there are large populations of kangaroo and wallaby, some rare; there are the 120 kilometres of the sandstone Colo Gorge. There are dark canyons and tunnels lined with glow worms, and where daylight is totally excluded. The canyons feature waterfalls, with pools, sandbars and boulders forming their floors. "It is impossible to describe the incredible beauty." Come and see Dave Noble's slides!!!

What is being done?

Our Politicians are now very aware that there is a great deal of public support for the Colo - Hunter proposal for a National Park (every member of State Parliament has received a copy of the "Colo Wilderness" by Peter Prineas). The Colo Committee conduct walks into the region, give talks to schools and community organizations, hold local discussion groups; all to increase public awareness. Hayden Washington is feeling confident, and believes that Paul Landa will make a decision about the wilderness within the next two months.

"In terms of conventional economic resources this is one of the poorest areas in the State. Any loss of these resources by the freezing of development would be heavily outweighed by its preservation as our most vital catchment area. If its wilderness is protected, it will be a recreational resource for everybody. Otherwise it will deteriorate into a badly damaged and unattractive urban hinterland."

References;

The National Parks Journal, Dec. 1976
Special issue, "The Greater Blue Mountains
National Park Proposal".
Articles by: Milo Dunphy, Lesley Hodges,
Alex Colley, Peter Prineas.

The National Parks Journal, March 1979.

"The Colo Wilderness" by Henry Gold and Peter Prineas.
Kalianna Press. 1978.

Available at the Environment Centre,
399 Pitt Street, Sydney. \$6.95 (includes
postage).

112 pages, with sensitive black and white
photographs by Henry Gold.

Writes Richard Thompson: The book has chapters dealing with the geology, flora and fauna, settlers, both black and white, and wilderness features of the area. Of particular interest is the section describing the long history of threats to the wilderness nature of the area. Among these threats was a proposal by William Townsend in 1870 to construct a railway through the Colo Valley out to the west. This proposal aroused a good deal of enthusiasm both locally and also in Sydney, but fortunately the scheme came to nothing as people realised the difficulties of pushing a railway through such rugged country. A second proposal in the 1890's, was for a hydroelectric scheme. This involved constructing a dam to impound a lake some 21 miles in length. Fortunately this plan also came to nothing, this time due to financial problems.

The Colo Wilderness has a history of development plans which for one reason or another, have failed to be realised. One hopes that this last statement will remain as true in the future as it is today.

What you can do!.

On March 22nd., Milo Dunphy and Hayden Washington convened a meeting of the conservation societies of the Blue Mountains at Springwood Civic Centre to discuss the actions to be taken in a strong united campaign to express the conservationist support for the proposal of a Colo National Park. This is to be an all out concerted effort, and your help is needed.

A decision is imminent within 6 weeks.

There are perhaps 4 effective weeks left during which each of us can make our voice heard.

There is a lot of strong opposition to the Colo proposal, votes, that easily influence politicians. Opposition from the Associated Country Sawmillers and the Colo Land use Committee, together with the off-road vehicle associations, with their often mis-interpretted press statements, have done a lot of damage, so much so that the Mountain's State Member, Mr. Clough is against the idea of a National Park.

Local members do have a lot of sway over Cabinet decisions, and it is especially important that a strong vote in support of the Park comes from its own region; the Blue Mountains.

It is vital that we let Mr. Clough know just how strong the support for the Colo is, within his electorate, and just indicate the number of votes that are involved.

Write a handwritten letter to Mr. Clough supporting the Colo National Park proposal, and send a copy to the premier, Mr. Wran, and to Mr. Paul Landa.

Ask your friends to write, or give them the enclosed post card to send to Mr. Clough. Handwritten letters are much more effective, of course.

Have a letter writing bee with a group of friends, on the train perhaps!

Those living in the Lower Mountains could write to Mr. Peter Anderson, or the Penrith residents can write to Mr. Mulock.

Write a letter to your local newspapers supporting the proposal, and tell why it is so important to have the Colo a National Park.

Letters should be sent by the end of April, and if possible, follow up with a telegram in the middle of May, to the appropriate ministers.

Other conservation societies in the city are following a similar course of action, but the voice from the Blue Mountains will be extremely important.

This society is arranging to send a deputation to our local members and Aldermen, as well as manning a display in Penrith Plaza on a Thursday night, in the coming weeks. If you could give your time to assist then, please ring Mick Dark, 391764.

Future Program.

- April 20th. Friday night. Meeting at Glenbrook School, at 8 p.m. to see Dave Noble's magnificent slides of the Colo Wilderness. This will open a new world of Blue Mountain scenery, to you and your friends.
- April 21st - 22nd. Saturday and Sunday. Camp at Wirrimbirra Sanctuary, Hume Highway, Bargo.
- May 13th. Sunday. Walk to Bedford Pool, Terrace and Victor Falls. Meet at Hazelbrook Station, 10 a.m.
- June 8th Friday night. Meeting at Glenbrook Primary School at 8 p.m. Phillip Simpfendorfer will again enthral us with his beautiful photography, from his recent trip to India.
- June 16 - 18th. Long Weekend camp to Munghorn Gap near Mudgee. Details to be arranged.
- August, 10th. Friday night. Meeting at Glenbrook Primary School at 8 p.m. to hear a talk given by John Argent, Lecturer in Ecology at Nepean College of Advanced Education.
- July 13th - 15th. Easy day walks around Kanagara Tops, Boyd River and Boyd Falls. Contact Martin Haley 513037 or Karl Bossard 210712. Hosts are the Springwood Bushwalking Club.

Working bees are being held around Glenbrook Lagoon as the need for weeding arises.

Planting around Glenbrook Theatre is still awaiting available finances from Blue Mts. City Council.

Stop Press! Penrith Lakes Scheme.

The Society has just received a letter from Paul Landa which reads in part;

" it is the Service's (N.P.W.S.) responsibility to protect the park's environments, and any use of water which might disturb the park in any way should not even be considered except as a last resort."

"....the Blue Mountains National Park Advisory Committee ...is equally opposed to such disturbance..."

"The responsibility for establishing that no economic alternative method of supply of water exists, rest clearly with the consultants for the developers and until clear evidence of this is provided, the Service will remain unequivocally opposed to any proposal for work on any catchments in the park, either at this stage or as subsequent sources of supplementary supply.

Any firm proposal will be the subject of an environmental impact statement which will be made available for public consideration."