



Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society

P.O. BOX 119, SPRINGWOOD. 2777

NEWSLETTER
SUMMER '83/'84

EDITORIAL

WHO ARE WE?

Environmentalists, conservationists, greenies, eco-nuts, plain "nuts", the list is long. Some labels benign even benevolent; other tags are quite hostile in intention and design.

Broad-shouldered bush-loving types accept such descriptions as a matter of course - after all, if logical argument cannot win the day, "call them for what you can", seems to be the catch-cry.

One name that does hurt though is that of "preservationist", as this implies leaving wildlife populations or plant - animal communities "just as they are". The only constant in wildlife management is that there will be change. The dynamic processes inherent in nature must be studied, understood and then incorporated in wildlife management practice.

The "balance of nature" depends so much on the "balance of man"; as those who are at the lighter side of the scale, we must ensure that "preservationists" have little to do with the struggle for "wise use" of the environment.

Members may wish to comment; any material for the newsletter is welcomed. Please send it to 7 Kent Street, Glenbrook. 2773.

KANGAROOS

In view of recent events on the 'kangaroo culling' debate, members may be interested in the Nature Conservation Council's Policy on Kangaroo Management. After 5 hours debate at the 1980 Conference, numerous amendments and re-arrangements, the following Policy was adopted;

- THAT
1. The N.C.C. believes that the aim of any kangaroo management programme in NSW should be to ensure the survival of abundant and viable populations of all species of kangaroo over as much of their present and past range as possible. The Council is therefore generally opposed to the killing of kangaroos but acknowledges that there might be the need to cull certain species of macropod in times of over-population.
 2. NCC supports the establishment of a NSW Kangaroo Management Committee to assess the state of the kangaroo population and to advise the Director of the NPWS on:
 - a) current population levels on a regional basis;
 - b) methods of maintaining desirable levels of kangaroo population;
 - c) research required; and
 - d) culling quotas for each year.

The NCC also supports the establishment of a national kangaroo study group to review the work of the States in relation to kangaroo management and desirable kangaroo population levels and conflicts between grazing and kangaroos.

3. NCC supports the concept that both these groups should include representatives of the voluntary conservation movement. The committee should also include independent scientists, and a majority of representatives should not be from the kangaroo industry or pastoral and land-holding interests combined.
4. NCC believes kangaroo protein and products may be utilised, providing strict controls are exercised over culling, including strict adherence to annual review of culling licences.
5. NCC supports the introduction of an export ban on kangaroo products.
6. NCC opposes any commitment of resources made to the industry for one year in advance.
7. NCC calls for substantial increases in State Government funding of:-
 - a) administration of the State monitoring survey of the kangaroo population;
 - b) research into endangered species; and
 - c) the purchase of marginal farming and other land for wildlife reserves.

CONSTITUTION

The changes notified in the last newsletter were passed at the December meeting. This means that the Constitution is now more flexible. People are taking turns chairing meetings, hosting workshops, organising speakers/entertainment and representing the Society at different inquiries. Functions etc.

COMING EVENTS (see page 4 for Meetings/Walks Programme for this year)

Workshops - to handle business, are held the second Monday evening after each monthly meeting. The next workshop will be held at Molly Edmonds' home;
8 David Street East, (not in the Directory)
Springwood.
Turn left off Macquarie Road into Dechair Avenue, then into David Street East.
Date - 19th March Time - 7.30pm.

Weekend Course - on the local environment.

Cost - \$10.00 for the weekend.

Subjects - Aboriginal History, Geology and Flora of the Blue Mtns.

Date - 10th/11th March.

Contact - Bruce Forbes 57-1403(BH)

EXCURSION - to "Belltrees"

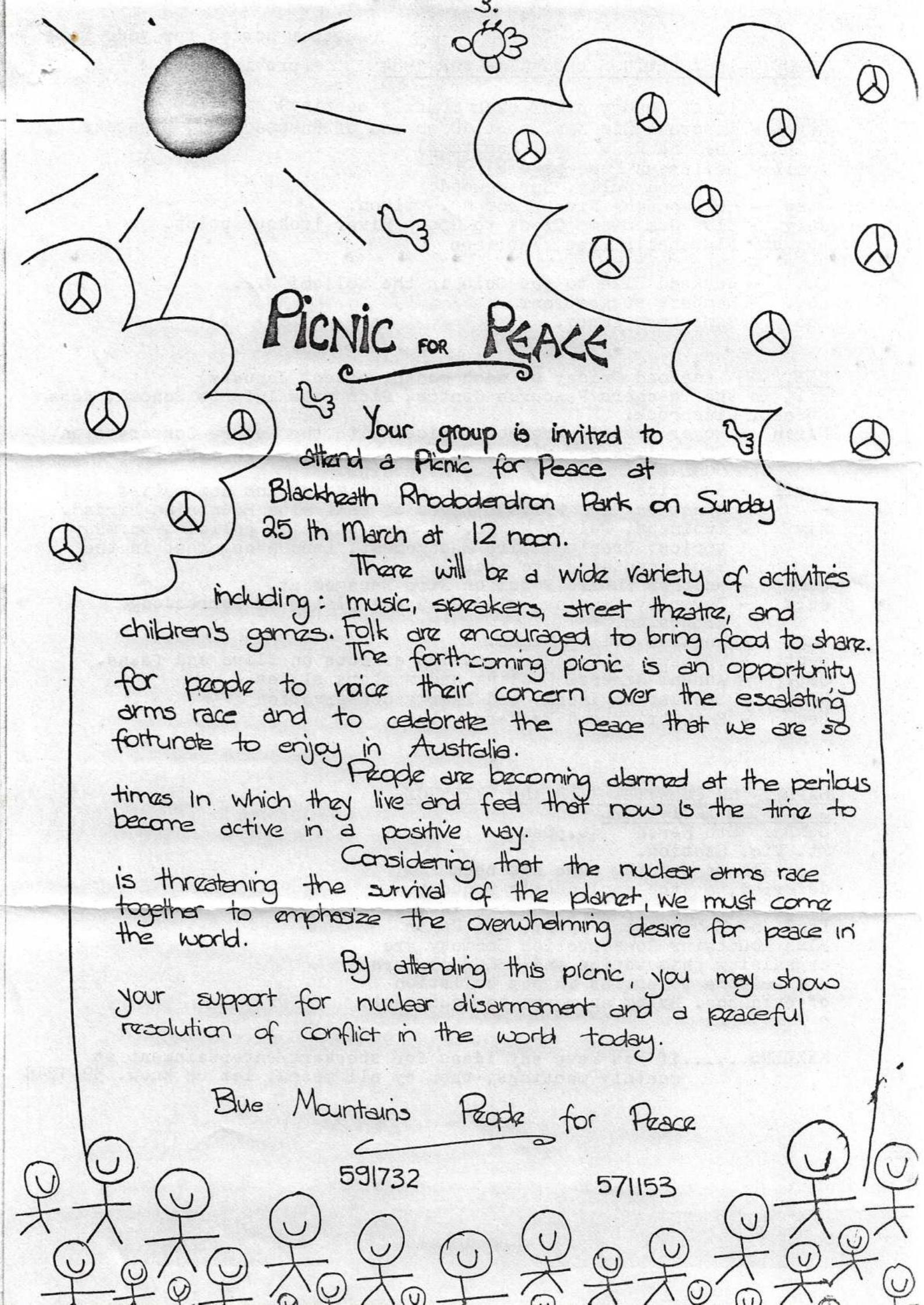
Date - 15th April, to discuss the effects of underground coal mining which threatens this very special place.

How to get there - proceed towards Lithgow from Bell on Bells Line of Road. Turn left near sign which designates boundary between Blue Mountains and Lithgow Councils.

Time - 10 am.

BLUE MOUNTAINS ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Friday, 25th November, saw the first meeting of the Blue Mountains Plan of Management Steering Committee which is to consist of Council, Dept of Environment & Planning and community reps. The LBMCs was invited to provide a representative on the committee and to present a brief written submission outlining our views on the



Picnic FOR PEACE

Your group is invited to attend a Picnic for Peace at Blackheath Rhododendron Park on Sunday 25th March at 12 noon.

There will be a wide variety of activities including: music, speakers, street theatre, and children's games. Folk are encouraged to bring food to share. The forthcoming picnic is an opportunity for people to voice their concern over the escalating arms race and to celebrate the peace that we are so fortunate to enjoy in Australia.

People are becoming alarmed at the perilous times in which they live and feel that now is the time to become active in a positive way.

Considering that the nuclear arms race is threatening the survival of the planet, we must come together to emphasize the overwhelming desire for peace in the world.

By attending this picnic, you may show your support for nuclear disarmament and a peaceful resolution of conflict in the world today.

Blue Mountains People for Peace

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LBMCS WALKS/MEETINGS PROGRAMME FOR 1984

(provisional)

WALKS (first Sunday after each monthly meeting)

- March - Lapstone Zig Zag, meet 10 am end of Knapsack Rd, Lapstone
(behind RAAF Base, Lapstone)
- April - Belltrees (see page 2)
- May - Birdwood Gully, Springwood.
- June - Wollongambe River from Mt. Wilson.
- July - Blue Gum Swamp Creek to Grose River lookout point.
- August - Florabella Pass, Warrimoo
- Sept - Spotlighting.
- Oct - Weekend Hike to the Colo in the Wollemi N.P.
- Nov. - Members suggestion?
- Dec - Christmas Party.

MEETINGS (second Friday of each month, except January)

Held in the Teachers Resource Centre, Glenbrook Infants School, Ross Street, Glenbrook.

- March - Roger Lembit, Project Officer with the Nature Conservation Council of NSW will talk and show slides on Exploratory Bushwalking in the Blue Mountains.
- April - Beatrice Palmer, well known Blue Mountains naturalist will speak on "The Private Lives of some Blue Mountains Birds".
- May - Business, Policy Night. We need official policies on many topics; Uranium, Fire Management, Land Management in the Blue Mountains etc etc.
- June - another Public Forum on Fire Management.
- July - Beverley Fiedler, slides on the plants of Burrendong Arboretum.
- Aug. - Another Policy Night.
- Sept. - Speaker on Forestry and its effects on flora and fauna.
- Oct. - Annual General Meeting and members slides.
- Nov. - Speaker on Energy and Energy Conservation
- Dec. - Eat, Drink and Be Merry.....

SANDMINING OVERVIEW WALK AND EVIDENCEGATHERING ACTIVITIES

SUNDAY 18th March 10.30am

Mt. Vic. Station.

The Bell sandmining case has been deferred, at the applicant's request, to April, when it will be heard in the Land and Environment Court. The Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society are organising this action and LBMCS members are welcome to assist in the collation of evidence. Bring appropriate equipment.

MEMBERS.....if you have any ideas for speakers/entertainment at monthly meetings, then by all means, let us know, 39-1748

from page 2.

5.

desired nature of any future planning instrument for the Blue Mountains. This we did with the main points of our submission being the need for,

- formal protection for environmentally-sensitive areas.
- a halt to subdivision and alienation of crown lands.
- guidelines to limit extractive industries.
- better sewage treatment facilities to stop creek degradation.

The morning session, which consisted mainly of submission presentations, made it abundantly clear that everyone knew what the mountains' environmental problems are. Differences arose, however, in regard to the best solution. The most notable difference being Jim Smith's proposal to sell off land in the Warrimoo - Valley Heights area in order to purchase what he sees as more important land in the Upper Mtns. This clearly isn't the most enchanting of options as far as we're concerned.

The afternoon session was a lot more concrete with D.E.P. laying it's cards on the table to a certain extent. Gabrielle Kibble, a very senior D.E.P. representative, made the following official announcements;

- DEP is prepared to co-operate with Council in the preparation of an environmentally-sensitive management plan.
- \$20,000 will be made available this year and more next financial year.
- some DEP staff to assist Council in the short term.
- long term assistance with staff (eg. environmental officer) was ruled out fairly clearly.

Later speakers for the DEP outlined what they meant by "Env. Management Plan", this being,

1. Immediate Policy development
2. Implementation of this Policy in the form of Development Control Plans.
3. Development of a Local Environment Plan that will protect, by zoning, environmentally-sensitive areas. The draft should be of exhibition for public comment by mid-1984. This Plan will use the "Heritage Study" as supporting documentation.
4. On-going Local Env. Studies and an exercise (already started) to pull together all existing studies.

In conclusion, the following points should be noted. Although there was a lot of talk about protecting the environment using a Local Environmental Plan, one must remember that this form of instrument can be changed and amended virtually at the whim of Council. For this reason, the Society will push for formal legislative protection of such areas thus affording these areas a degree of long term protection. Lastly, comments by the BMCC Town Planner regarding "land capability studies to assess the potential for the active employment of rural lands" are nothing but euphemisms for "development" and should be watched carefully.

Craig Linn.

STATUS OF THE W.A. UNDERGROUND ORCHID

A W.A. University botanist, Dr Kingsley Dixon, has become the first person to germinate the underground orchid, *Rhizanthella gardneri*.

Dr. Dixon, who studied the orchid for nearly 2 years under the sponsorship of the World Wildlife Fund, recently received a \$2000 grant from the Australian Orchid Foundation to continue seeding experiments.

WWF Newsletter.

"LIBERAL PARTY"

from NPA newsletter.

As many conservation groups grow disenchanted with the NSW Labor Govt attention is turning to the policies of the NSW Opposition Parties, and in particular the Liberal Party. At the same time Opposition Leader, Nick Greiner, has begun courting the now important environmental vote. Strategists within the conservation movement believe that a Liberal-led

govt will be in power in the late 1980s. In this article, Grahame Wells, examines the policies, rhetoric and actions of the alternative govt.

The Liberal Party.

In response to approaches from the State Council of the NPA and the Illawarra Branch of the NPA to the organisational and Parliamentary wings of the Liberal Party, conflicts in their attitudes to rainforest and national parks became evident.

On July 19, 1983, State Council wrote to Stephen Litchfield, State Director of the Liberal Party of Aust - NSW Division, asking if the Party endorsed comments made in the Grafton Daily Examiner of May 28, 1983, by Leon Punch, Leader of the National Party, that inter alia the Liberal Party would permit logging in "Washpool and many national parks". Mr. Litchfield replied as follows:

"The Liberal Party also supported the selective logging of the Washpool State Forest as proposed by the State Forestry Commission, because it considered the proposal to be a balanced approach to both environmental and employment aspects. The Party has not recently considered the question of logging in other national parks, but I have asked the State Leader to consider the issue and advise me".

But in a letter to the Illawarra Branch of the NPA, Mr. Greiner said: "I wish to assure you that the Liberal Party does not support wholesale logging in national parks, whether they compromise rainforest or other timbers. Far from opening the parks to logging, mining, grazing and other forms of development, we will give top priority to strengthening the adequate financial support for the existing system of parks. Indeed, we will ensure the payment of all landholders who are still awaiting compensation for lands resumed for national parks. You may be assured that the NSW Liberal Party under my leadership is far from being an anti-conservation party".

National Parks.

In an address to the 1983 annual conference of the Nature Conservation Council, Mr. Greiner called for a comprehensive review of the policies of both acquisition and management of national parks in NSW.

He said the Liberal Party was committed to,

- always make decisions about land being considered for park purposes within a period of not more than 12 months so that those affected will know what is proposed as quickly as possible;
- enacting legislation for the payment of just compensation for landholders whose land is subject to acquisition by the State.

He also said all land currently under proclamation must be reviewed and a final decision made within that 12 month period.

What does this mean? Does proclamation mean areas proclaimed under the National Parks and Wildlife Act? Is the Liberal Party going to put up every National Park, Nature Reserve, Historic Site, Aboriginal Area and State Recreation Area to the highest bidder in the greatest land grab since 1770?

Management Plans.

Mr. Greiner correctly pointed out that the development of appropriate management plans for our national parks has been allowed to fall badly behind schedule. But then he went completely off the beam by stating that "nowhere has this been more obvious than in Kosciusko National Park". The Minister for Planning and Environment, Hon. E. Bedford, adopted the Kosciusko Plan of Management in 1982. That Plan is still in force.

Rainforest.

"I recognise without qualification the vital importance of the forests of NSW and the special significance of the rainforest

areas. Their continued existence must not be put under threat." Mr. Greiner then went on to endorse the now discredited "Indigenous Forest Policy" of the Forestry Commission of NSW which in relation to rainforests, states:

"The broad objective for all rainforest areas is to reduce harvesting to selective felling for specialty logs, at a level low enough to maintain canopy rainforest structure. This would require the phasing-out of general purpose timber harvesting in most rainforest areas.....where selective logging is successfully carried out without destroying the ecological viability of the rainforest, this may be continued to meet current market commitments. However, these commitments should be reduced where necessary in time to avoid the need for logging above the sustained yield level after the first cutting cycle."

He also endorsed the report of the Senate Standing Committee on Trade and Resources on Australia's Forestry and Forest Products Industries which recommended that,

"All areas of rainforest in Australia be conserved, maintaining the characteristic diversity and vitality of the original forests. Where publicly-owned rainforests are managed for timber production, management prescriptions must include as a minimum standard,

- the attainment of sustained yield as a high priority;
- selective logging;
- canopy retention provisions appropriate to the rainforest type;
- marking by forest staff of each tree to be removed;
- tree marking to ensure the maintenance of the species mix of the forest in its original proportions.

The margin between royalties applying to rainforest species and those to other species be increased to ensure that rainforest timbers are used sparingly and only for purposes where other timbers and other materials are not suitable substitutes."

In politician's gobbledegook, Mr. Greiner concluded:

"While decisions will always have to be made on a case by case analysis of the situation, I believe that those broad guidelines should establish a clear regime for the preservation and conservation of our vital rainforest resources".

Really?

Attitude to Wilderness

Nick Greiner believes that "while there are strong cases to be made for the preservation of genuine wilderness areas which should remain entirely untouched, these will be rare and exceptional cases". However, in a clear reference to the Franklin Dam case, Mr. Greiner said the Liberal Party rejected the use of the external affairs power of the Commonwealth "to impose upon the States obligations which they do not accept, and which their citizens do not accept".

Planning

"As in all other matters, a Liberal Government will require the Government itself to conform to all the requirements that it places upon those in the private sector, and planning decisions are included in this."

However, Mr. Greiner gave no assurances that the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act would not be tampered with.

The National Party Connection

There seems to be little room for common ground between the national parks movement and the National Party, given the Party's stance on environmental issues. The biggest credibility gap for the National Party lies in its attempts to revoke the Goulburn River National Park.

On September 20 last year the National Party Member for Upper Hunter (Mr. Fisher) proposed:

"That this House disallows the Proclamation made pursuant to

section 33(3) of the National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974, reserving certain lands as part of Goulburn River National Park, as set forth in the Notice appearing in the Govt Gazette No.28

of 11 February 1983, a copy of which was laid upon the Table of this House on 25 August, 1983."

In speaking to this unprecedented motion, Mr. Fisher claimed that he did not "in any way oppose the proclamation of national parks, nor have I done so in the past."

Later the Leader of the National Party Mr. Leon Punch, said the Opposition would continue to support the establishment of national parks, "but will not support their proclamation if that will affect water conservation".

However, Mr. Punch was quoted in the Grafton Daily Examiner that the National Party was terrified at the rate of growth of National Parks.

"We see them squeezing out the public by taking up private property and freezing private lands."

I'm willing to give a firm undertaking that if we (National Party-Liberal coalition) are returned to power - Washpool - will be reopened to the timber industry."

The Daily Examiner said Mr. Punch was prepared to support the selective logging of some national parks and a stop to further land acquisition by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Mr. Greiner and his liberal MPs voted with the National party giving a total of 25 in favour, and 57 against (Labor and 2 Independents). Goulburn River was saved; but what of the future?

A Blue Mountains Political Round-Up will be forthcoming in future newsletters; after all there will be a State election soon.

World Wildlife Fund Project 55 - Conservation of the Eastern Narred Bandicoot

Work on this important project has now commenced. The two year study being conducted by Peter Brown will investigate various aspects of the bandicoot's biology. The proposed research includes studies of the population dynamics and reproductive biology of the species, their dietary habits, the effects of introduced predators and the utilisation of natural and artificial habitat. Hopefully, data gathered from this research will aid in the formulation of a management strategy aimed at stabilising the only mainland population at Hamilton, and enable the successful reintroduction of the species into suitable areas of their former range.

The recent drought has been the cause of major concern as the number of bandicoots known to be alive at Peter's study site has dropped dramatically. This, combined with the fact that the bandicoots, which normally breed throughout the year, had not bred since November '82, gave rise to some real fears for the populations future prospects. However, Peter reports that the bandicoots resumed breeding again shortly after the drought broke in March '83. In fact, 50% of the females were carrying pouch young within a matter of weeks after the first rains. It is now hoped that the population will return rapidly to its former level with the recruitment of juveniles into the population. As Peter says, "the effect of the drought on the bandicoots serves to highlight the precarious nature of their existence and that of any endangered species which has been reduced to a single, small population".

The recent events also emphasise the need to establish a captive colony which can act as a reserve population in the event of any natural or unnatural disaster affecting the wild population. A captive colony would also provide accurate data on reproduction and growth, as well as evaluating use of artificial shelters by bandicoots, and factors affecting

"Fire and the Australian Aborigine - an enigma."

by Phyllis H. Nicholson.

This is a condensed version of Chapter 3, from "Fire and the Australian Biota", Editors, A.M. Gill, R.H. Groves, I.R. Noble. Australian Academy of Science/

Australia two hundred years ago was a continent unique in being inhabited by people who lived directly from the natural resources of the land. They were hunter-gatherers whose exploitive economy required only a simple but a versatile technology. Fire was their common tool and this was supplemented by tools cleverly shaped from wood and stone; later, some small tools were made of bone and shell. They were the owners of the land which had nurtured their forebears, and across the continent a close relationship had evolved between Man, his environment and his social and religious life.

Accurate estimates of the population of Australia when European man landed on its shores vary considerably and consequently calculations based on populations can only be approximations because of the limitations of the original data. Radcliffe Brown estimated it at 300,000 and this figure may be an underestimate. They had evolved a tribal organisation and Tindale delineated the boundaries of about 700 tribes. A tribe was a group of contiguous bands that shared the same language and culture; 'they were people of one blood'. Birdsell's magical numbers include 5 as the average family size, 25 for the average band size, and about 500 for a dialectal tribe.

Birdsell calculated that the population density of the Aborigines was highly correlated to the biological resources as measured by effective rainfall. Populations were maintained at approx. constant levels by cultural practices of the women (infanticide, abortion and other family-spacing procedures) and these in turn were probably influenced by environmental resource limitations. An 'ecological balance of man, nature and low controlled population density' prevailed.

The 'savages' who were so rapidly displaced by European man were a healthy virile cultured race. Unfortunately we have no picture of the Australian scene when the original Australian first populated this continent. Lightning may have been the frequent source of fire. Nor is it easy from the sources available to form an accurate picture of the country when the Aborigines were displaced.

From present evidence it can be assumed that the original Australians were familiar with fire when they first arrived, perhaps 40,000 years ago.

Methods of Making Fire

Before European man introduced matches from 'white mans tinder box', fire was produced from friction. Heat was produced either by a rubbing or a drilling action between two pieces of wood, or by the less frequently observed percussion method of producing sparks when two pieces of stone were struck together. The dry tinder needed to produce a flame came from a variety of sources such as fur, feathers, shredded dung, dried fungi or finely teased parts of plants such as bark. Tribes from different habitats used different woods and tinder but the basic friction procedure remained similar to those described and photographed by Baldwin Spencer (1928).

Fire is made in one of two ways, by rubbing and drilling. Any native will make fire in, at most, a minute and a half by either of these methods.

End of Part One, Part Two next issue...