

Lower Mountains Eco-News



Newsletter of the
Lower Blue Mountains
Conservation Society

JUNE - JULY , 1988.

EDITORIAL

This issue deals with a number of areas that have come up over the past three months. The elections are well and truly behind us and we are now starting to see just what is in store for the Conservation Movement both Statewide and locally. It would seem significant, with the projected increase in development activities both in the Mountains and in the outer West, that this Government sees fit **NOT** to include at least one member from the West in the Government Cabinet Ministry. Is this to be the way that those who resoundingly supported the Griener electoral victory are to be treated? Only time will tell.

The Society continues to grow. At least fifteen new members have been added to the Society since the last newsletter. Sadly, one of the stalwarts of the Society over the past few years, Eunice Holmes, has left us to spread the Conservation Gospel in Tahmoor. Her quiet efficiency as Treasurer was greatly appreciated by the rest of the Committee, and the systems she initiated have made it much easier for the interim Treasurer to take over.

COCKY'S ESCAPE ??

By Bessie Bramsen

On the morning of April 21 this year, I went out the front of my house in Springwood (around the Charles Street and Boomerang Road area), and was astounded to see what looked like a family of unusual black Cockatoos. They appeared different to the glossy Black Cockatoo normally seen in this region.

A quick whip inside to the Cayleys confirmed my suspicions. They were in fact, or at least were very similar to, the White-tailed Black Cockatoo *Calyptrorhynchus baudini*. There appeared to be a male, distinguished by his dirty white head patch near the eye, his mate, recognised by her brilliant clear white patch, and a smaller male who could have been their chick. The distribution of these birds, according to the book, is basically the south-west corner of Western Australia, from Esperance to the Murchison River in the North.

Now, we all know that the Sandgropers are making deadly inroads in the share markets and the entrepreneurial stakes, but in the realm of ornithology, some birds just don't have expansionary tendencies in their territories. Now this sighting led me to ask myself a number of questions,

and, like Sherlock Holmes, started a train of deduction going through my head. My first reaction was that I had made a unique sighting and would go down in the annals of the bird watching fraternity as the lady who confirmed previous unheard of migrations of White-tailed Cockatoos.

However, being a modest person, this was dismissed (almost) as quickly as it appeared. So, the fanciful notions of glory and grandeur were discarded and a more logical approach was taken. Firstly, these birds shouldn't have been here. Secondly, they were here, so what was a realistic reason for their being here? The only satisfactory answer I could come up with was that they were either escapees from some private aviary in the area, or had been released from captivity following recent publicity given to bird smuggling.

I'm not sure what procedure is used by the Authorities to return smuggled birds to the wild. If they are just released where they are found, I think that would be a bit dangerous environmentally. If, on the other hand, they are returned to their home environment, which is what I suspect, then it narrows down that this little family must have been in flight (excuse the pun!)

After settling down in some stringybarks out the front until about 3.30pm, they then up and flew off over Birdwood Gully, and have not been seen again to this day.

If anyone else noticed them then or after, please let me know so that we can find out exactly what the real story might have been.

THE FAULCONBRIDGE WALK

By Margaret Essen

Sunday April 24 was perfect, weatherwise, and some 26 of the 34 people who booked, enthusiastically enjoyed a few hours in the bush.

Banksias and heaths in flower were - *Banksia spinulosa*, *B. oblongifolia*, *B. ericifolia*, *Styphelia tubiflora*, and *Epacris tubiflora*.

Many interesting fungi were also observed. These ranged in colour and size. Large, small, purple, blue, brown and buff - the rains seem to have certainly encouraged their growth.

A most unusual encounter occurred along the track, where the gyrating rear half of a brown snake was found. It was left by a feral cat, which hastily made its exit as we approached.

Mosses and ferns - *Todea barbara* (tree fern) *Blechnum nudum* (fishbone water fern) and *Adiantum aethiopicum* (maiden hair fern) - so green and healthy - have also benefited from the rains.

The giant Mountain Blue Gums - *Eucalyptus deanei* were admired by all, and the Faulconbridge Malles, *Eucalyptus burgessiana*, were inspected with interest.

Last, but not least, after lunch by the pool, the high escarpment was contemplated - the possible site of 29 houses which may one day dominate the skyline.

PIED CURRAWONG STUDY

Blue Mountains Gazette
13.4.88

Many people are familiar with the pleasant calls and perhaps mischievous behaviour of Pied Currawongs throughout the Blue Mountains.

Generally, during the spring and summer months, these birds form breeding pairs which stake out territories throughout bushland and visit urban areas on occasions.

When winter arrives, this changes, as flocks of Pied Currawongs arrive in many of the Lower Blue Mountains

towns. These flock to feed on the fruit of exotic plants growing in neighbourhood gardens, along with general scavenging and an occasional dip into an unguarded milk bottle.

To try and track the movements of these flocks and also to establish what birds make up the flocks, a study has been commenced with the approval of both the NSW and Australian National Parks and Wildlife Services. Three colour bands are being placed on the birds' right legs and a metal band and one colour on their left legs. These identify individual birds and the location they frequent.

Assistance is sought from any reader who sees one of these banded birds.

The colour combinations on both legs and their order from top to bottom should be noted, along with the date and location of the sighting.

This information can then be relayed to the project's coordinator, John Farrell of 73 Ellison Road, Springwood (51-2806), or directly to the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, Bird and Bat Banding Schemes, GPO Box 8, Canberra ACT 2601.

If perchance a dead bird is discovered wearing these bands, the above procedure should still be followed but the

bands should be removed and returned to either of the above addresses.

PLANNING NOTES

By Malcolm Hughes

Regional Environmental Plans Galore !!!

Within the last few months there have been a number of Regional Environmental Plans either gazetted or placed on public exhibition in a draft form.

Sydney Regional Environmental Plan No. 13 - Mulgoa Valley.

This Plan was gazetted last December. It replaces a local planning control that was outdated and did not give Council the statutory power to refuse developments that today are considered incompatible with the historic and landscape values of the valley. Apart from some changes to permissible land uses, the other major changes are the inclusions of aims and objectives, the listing of development consent criteria, heritage controls and design and management guidelines.

The development consent criteria specifically relate to those aspects of the valley that are desirable to be retained undisturbed such as ridge tops, extensive stands trees, vistas of heritage items etc. The heri-

tage controls prevent a person from doing any work on a heritage item, including demolition, without the approval of Council. The design and management guidelines are an innovative feature and provide detailed advice on design, siting and land management issues covered by the plan.

The advantages of the regional plan over the previous controls are :-

- the authorities have greater power to control development.
- there is a clearer framework for the assessment of proposals.
- the historic items and landscapes of the valley should be preserved and
- the public has a more defined method of assessing whether authorities are correctly policing development

The draft Regional Environmental Plan for the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley was recently placed on exhibition until August. The draft plan proposes a single overall framework to guide future planning and development throughout the river valley. The plan applies generally to the valley minus the headwaters above the Water Board dams, but more specifically to the immediate river margins.

The draft legal instrument contains a large number of

aims to guide planning in the river valley and a relatively small number of specific controls. It also contains a large number of heads of consideration which Councils must take into account either when considering applications for development or when they are preparing unit management plans. These apply in addition to the heads of consideration identified in section 90 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1979). These extra considerations have been specially devised for the environment of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River and its valley.

Of particular interest to conservationists are the issues of water quality, extraction, recreation and tourism, and environmental heritage, all of which receive considerable attention in the plan.

Some innovative aspects of the plan are that the various authorities who must assist in implementing the plan are identified. Reports prepared by various agencies to control pollution, preserve vegetation etc., are given statutory power.

The Society will need to make a submission, as the plan will to a large extent assist in the preservation and enjoyment of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River for many years to come.

The draft Regional Environmental Plan for Orchard Hills was placed on public exhibition in February for a two month period. The plan applies to the area within a kilometre North and South of the F4 Freeway, between South Creek and The Northern Road. The draft plan aims to encourage the maintenance of large rural holdings while allowing rural residential development in such a way as to enhance the rural and scenic qualities of the area. The plan also identifies some areas for open space acquisition.

The major benefit of the plan to those persons who live outside the immediately affected area is that it will assist in the preservation of a scenically attractive area

State Environmental Planning Policy No 26 Littoral Rainforests

This recently gazetted policy applies to mapped areas of littoral rainforest located along the coast of New South Wales. The aim of this policy is to provide a mechanism for the consideration of applications for development that is likely to damage or destroy littoral rainforest areas with a view to the preservation of these areas in their natural state. The policy makes any development which affects the littoral rainforests a designated development and

accordingly an environmental impact statement is required. The policy is very similar to State Policy No 14 - Coastal Wetlands.

The (previous - ED.) State Government should be congratulated for bringing into force such a policy that helps to protect the very fragile and geographically isolated stands of littoral rainforests.

At the same time we should request that State Policy No 19 - Urban Bushland - be extended to cover the Blue Mountains in order to provide added protection for the bushland in and adjoining open space areas.



Walks :

June 19 St Helena Gully. Meet at Blaxland Station at 11.00am

CONTACT :
Richard Phillips 39 2568

July 17 Jack Evans Track. Meet at Glenbrook Station at 10.00am

CONTACT :

Peter Mobbs 51 2884

Talks:

July 8

"Wheat Today, What Tomorrow". Not really a talk but a video by the "Clown Prince" of conservation David Bellamy. An entertaining, heart-breaking, challenging, whirlwind tour of what we had always assumed were golden productive farmlands. PLUS a surprise second feature, a video to gladden the heart of every conservationist !!

August 12

Underwater World - Jane Little's outstanding studies of marine life.

September 9

Surveying the Murray River. Peter and Judy Smith give us an account of a recent important study into the ecology and environment of this fragile river.



Notes from the Minutes

1. National Estate Listing for the Eastern Escarpment.

After nearly twelve months work, all the required information has been gathered together. Malcolm Hughes has generously offered to prepare the submission, a mammoth task with which you'd have to agree Malcolm could do with a hand on. Any volunteers? The submission will cover the area bounded by Glenbrook Gorge to the Old Bathurst Road. This is the first of a series which we hope will cover the whole Eastern Escarpment.

2. Draft Local Environment Plan for Mc Donalds.

Again, Malcolm Hughes has prepared the Society's submission on the proposed Mc Donalds redevelopment at Blaxland. The submission basically states that the Society, while not welcoming this establishment, will at least tolerate it if suitable controls are placed on the resultant litter problem and adequate 'tasteful' landscaping. Also, the heritage aspects of the Pilgrim

Inn would have to be taken into account, as well as the protection of the existing mature trees on the existing Nursery site.

3. Nepean River Committee.

Our Society is a member of this Committee as reported in the last issue of EcoNews. In recent weeks, our delegates have addressed Penrith City Council and met with the new Member for Penrith, Guy Matheson. The Committee is confident that the measures written into the draft Blue Mountains National Park Management Plan will be implemented in the not too distant future (i.e. - re-imposition of an 8 knot limit in Fairlight Gorge south of Glenbrook Creek).

4. Flora and Fauna Park.

Members of LBMCS were members of a Blue Mountains Environment Council delegation to the head of the Department of Planning was successful in gaining a stay on the release of the draft Local Environmental Plan until further studies on the effect this development may have on the region are considered.

5. Newnes Plateau.

State Conservation Groups, through our actions, may have a representative on the current working party examining various options for this area. The BMEC will press a Regional

Environmental Plan to be completed on the area.

BMCC deserve a bouquet this issue for the Environment Management Plans they have started to prepare for the fringe areas of the City. However, we are concerned at the possible changes to environment protection Zone 7 (e), which Council will consider shortly.