April/May/June 1993



Lower Mountains Eco-News

NEWSLETTER OF THE LOWER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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RETURN ADDRESS: LBMCS P.O. BOX 119 SPRINGWOOD 2777

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Note that these meetings have been changed to the 4th Friday of every month, 8 pm at Springwood Neighbourhood Centre.

Meeting dates:

23 April

28 May

25 June 1 of builds and a shad a sold to any time and

23 July

AIMS

To inform the public on environmental and conservation issues; research into population and distribution of fauna in the Blue Mountains and neighbouring region.

MEMBERSHIPS

Australian Conservation Foundation Nature Conservation Council of NSW

OTHER GROUP INVOLVEMENT
Society for Growing Australian Plants
(Blue Mountains Branch)
National parks Association (NSW)
Upper Blue Mtns Conservation Society
National Parks & Wildlife Foundation
The Wilderness Society
CHANGE
The Total Environment Centre

Glenbrook Lagoon Society
Eastern Escarpment 530A Cmte
Darks Common Trust
Nepean River Committee
The Colong Foundation (Inc.)
Australian Museum

SOCIETY CONTACTS:

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V.Pres: Margaret Baker	(54 1196)
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BRIEF NOTES!!!

⇒⇒ ACTION NEEDED: It is estimated that over 400,000 Australian children are affected by high lead levels. Research has shown that high levels of lead in children have an adverse effect on their mental development. Leaded petrol emissions have been blamed for 90% of lead contamination in Australian cities. Australia currently has the highest lead level in leaded petrol in the western world. Australian levels are 40 times higher than US levels. Greenpeace and TEC have called on the State Govt and the Petroleum Institute of Australia to reduce the lead content from .8 grams per litre to .15 grams per litre (the international standard) by the year 1995. Karla Bell of Greenpeace has stated that any one of the major companies could reduce lead in super petrol by as much as 87 per cent by reducing the level to .15grams. This reduction will cost only 1.5 cents/litre. The Premier has indicated in newspaper reports that the govt will act to bring about a gradual phasedown by the year 2002, with a reduction from 0.4 grams/litre to 0.3 grams/l within the next 12 months. This is considered to be too little too slowly by environmental groups. The PIA must act responsibly on this public health issue. Write to the State Premier, Mr John Fahey, Parliament House, Sydney, demanding that the govt enforces the international standard of .15 grams/l in petrol used by Australian motorists by the year 1995.

- A new Hawkesbury-Cumberland group of the National Parks Association has been formed. This group aims to promote the natural features of the district by organising a series of bushwalks. Among the bushwalks is one to Castlereagh State Forest (of interest to LBMCS for many years). Peter Hind from the Royal Botanic Gardens will lead this easy morning walk. Meet at the carpark south of the watertower on the Northern Road, Berkshire Park at 10 am on Sunday 12 June.
- The PP (6/4/93) has reported a plan to line the Nepean River with rocks along both banks from the Nepean Gorge to Nepean Weir in an effort to stabilise the river banks. This \$11.4m plan is being considered by Penrith Council. State Member Faye Lopo has heard rumours of the plan and promises a series of community consultations before work goes ahead. George Threlfo of the LBMCS was quoted as saying "It will certainly change the character of the river system drastically ... This is not a final solution because there is no final solution. What is built along the river bank goes in a flood." Concern at the negative impact of the plan has also been expressed by Ted Foster, Nepean River Committee Chairperson, Geomorphologist Wayne Erskine, (the work could destroy the food and breeding habitats of several fish species), and David Hughes of CHANGE who suggests that power boats and jet skies should be kept off the river and the river banks should be revegetated. An issue to watch.

Apologies from Ed: Article on POWER on page 4, this issue, Elizabeth Harris should read Elizabeth Harrison.

NOTES ON SAFARI

A Christmas/New Year safari was a wonderful holiday.

There were twenty one on the trip. The leader, John Sinclair (more than well-known environmentalist), his deputy (in charge of equipment) and cook kept the eighteen passengers well informed and well catered for. Catering was really lavish.

My first introduction to the New England Tableland was in 1927 when I spent that year in the Kentucky/Uralla area, with visits to Armidale City and to college playing fields and polo grounds; but most of the time on a sheep farm. At that time I had vague, youthful doubts about the treatment of the country. The intervening years have proved how rapid and drastic can be the effects of it.

In the 1960s I spent odd times criss-crossing some of the tableland, and enjoyed week-end camping in varied scenic spots - always as near to running water as I could get. There was much of beauty to appreciate though the earliest signs of tree die-back were occurring.

Much as I enjoyed these eleven days of safari travel, I must confess to some despondency and depression in regard to the on-going degradation of the country, and massive invasion of weeds.

I rather wonder how many of the big tourist excursions would be as educative as ours; and how many metropolitan minded people would be impressed by such information anyway.

On the long climb from coastal to tableland altitude the miles upon miles of cleared steep slopes exhibiting obvious land-slip had such impact on my mind that it was necessary to concentrate hard on the better scenes to enjoy the day. And of course there were many wooded hills, rainforest folds between them and deep gullies with streams below.

At our campsite of Tia Falls we were away out in surroundings of nature. The sound of the falls and scene of the great rocky rift below and the surrounding growth of gold flowered Jacksonia were delightful.

A quick walk through the rainforest of Werrikimbee on Christmas day took us right away from the stress of human living. Though a hint of sadness was to find a couple of glorious, tall eucalypts in the outskirts, meaning the impending demise of rainforest. It is to be hoped that will be delayed by the locking up of Werrikimbee in National Park, as it is now secured.

Our next camp, in Washpool National Park, was deep in rainforest. Many species of birds were there, from the tiny twittering things in the thicket to the black cockatoos and hawks overhead. Morning and evening paddymelons grazed and bandicoots hurriedly scratched for their prey close about us. We saw one rare possum by torchlight, and on one trip out saw a mother koala with baby on her back.

On further visits to other national parks and forests we saw three mobs of grey kangaroos and three different species of wallabies.

Forests again were sights of decimation - overlogged and strewn with waste to the extent where they will never recover without many millions of dollars being spent on regeneration. John stressed the weakness of Bob Hawke's ambition in the planting of a billion trees in the decade. We need more than a billion trees per year being planted to keep up with the rate of cutting and give anything like a start to forest recovery.

We need many people to bring a lot of pressure on government to get rational management of forestry and land care. Such excursions as ours should be an aid in alerting folk to this necessity.

But long with serious environmentalism, we did have a marvellous trip. Having visited nine national parks, waterfalls, cascades and lookouts, taking in grand scenery, we saw much of interest and beauty - and had a great lot of fun!

Besse Bramsen ... March '93.

SLENBROOK LAGOON UPDATE

LMBCS member Aleen Hanley is a member of the Lagoon Committee. The lagoon has recently come under a lot of attention from government funded programs.

A fence has been erected along Haymet Street and Glenbrook Road (streets bordering the lagoon) by Skillshare trainees. fence is designed to close some of the eroded tracks, allowing for natural regeneration.

The Landcare and Environment Action Program (funded by DEET) has a group regenerating the bush around the lagoon. A group of Bush Regeneration students from Werrington TAFE has also spent some time there.

Meanwhile, studies into water quality and the catchment area continue and experts on the control of salvinia and other water weeds are being consulted.

Anyone interested in helping out at the next working bee should phone Aleen Hanley (39 4079) or Ian White (39 4220).



SPECIAL NOTICE!

GARAGE SALE

Saturday, 24 April

7 David Street Glenbrook

Donations of bric-a-brac etc. welcome. Phone Aleen 39 4079

Elizabeth Harris of POWER reports that a new EIS is to be undertaken by Prospect Electricity on the running of electricity lines from Winmalee, through Warrimoo to Blaxland. POWER hopes that this study, to be undertaken by a new consultant, will take into account all the factors which have come up in the course of the debate on this issue, and that Prospect will adopt routes which avoid the problems originally identified. The POWER struggle has pointed out the poor consultation and factual flaws contained in the original EIS, particularly in relation to the possible effects of electro magnetic fields. A great achievement of POWER has been to ensure the ongoing process of community involvement in decisions which affect our lives.

A recent radio news item (2BL 6/4/93) has revealed that Fairfield councillor Chris Aquilina has accused Prospect of ignoring the findings of a Swedish study which shows a link between overhead power lines and an increase in the risk of childhood leukaemia. A copy of this report has apparently been with Prospect since September last year. Prospect has claimed there is no definite link and disputes the report findings, saying there might be a possible link rather than accepting the report conclusive

DEANEI FOREST, SPRINGWOOD

Members of the LBMCS and the Fairy Dell Restoration Committee are currently lobbying for the attention of Council and State Govt. to be focused on the Deanei Forest area at Springwood. This land (bordered by Hawkesbury Road and close to the highway) was part of a grant to the explorer Lawson - the first grant of land on the Blue Mtns. The name 'Deanei' derives from the fact that the engineer Deane, who was working on the early rail line, observed that the type of eucalypt in the area was different from trees he had previously seen. Eucalyptus deanei is listed on the Register of Significant Trees. It is considered by some to be the

It is considered by some to be the significant tree of the Springwood area.

In the late 1970s local residents recognised that the area should be preserved in its natural state. It was pronounced "worthy of preservation" by Dr Johnson (Curator) and Don Blaxell (Chief Taxonamist) of Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney. In 1979, after lobbying by local groups and protracted law suits, it was declared 'open space' by the Labor Minister, Paul Landa, and purchased by Blue Mtns Council.

The area is now in a degraded state, owing to urban run-off and the subsequent weed infestation due to the increase in soil nutrients which favour weed growth. The dense mass of privet (why isn't this plant declared a noxious weed by Council??) is causing young deanei and natural understorey to be starved of light. Young trees are dying and the forest is not regenerating. If this degradation is allowed to continue, the value of this unique area will be lost.

Concerned conservationists have therefore made an approach to local member, Barry Morris and Environmental Officers at the BMCC to press for the release of funds necessary to undertake a study of the area with a view to regenerating and preserving it as a natural asset of Springwood. Barry Morris has given verbal support to this application. The application for funds submitted by Virginia Bear, BMCC Bush Regeneration Officer, takes in the Else Mitchell Park area. We await developments with interest.

Total Environment Centre Tours

Sunday - 30 May - 10 am CLIFFWALK - COOGEE TO BONDI

Walk conducted by Bruce Mackenzie, Landscape Architect on the Foreshore Project. The walk takes in Gordons Bay, Clovelly and Waverley Cemetery. After lunch Douglas Cumming, President of the Waverley Historical Society leads an exploration of Waverley Cemetery. Irene Morphett will share her lifelong interest in geology when describing the sandstone cliffs between Bronte and Bondi.

DONATION TO TEC: \$20 includes lunch. Please contact Sue Kennedy at TEC (02) 690 1411 to book.

Wednesday - 30 June - 10 am ASPECTS OF SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

Meet at the Clock Tower. Look at the historical features of the main quadrangle, including the Great Hall, Maclay Museum of Natural History, the Nicholson Museum and the Senate Clocktower. After lunch be entertained by a talk by Trevor Howells, Director of Postgraduate Studies in Conservation from the Faculty of Agriculture.

DONATION TO TEC: \$25 includes lunch. Please contact Sue Kennedy at TEC (02) 690 1411 to book.

OUR WATER SUPPLY

A recent SMH report on the Warragamba Dam (SMH 13/3/93) revealed that the State Govt proposed flooding parts of potential wilderness areas on a short-term basis to enable a new dam wall to be built to protect lives and property downstream during a major flood. This upgrade proposal was revealed in a letter sent from Robert Webster, Minister for Planning and Housing to the Premier John Fahey. Ms Pam Allan, Opposition Spokesperson on the Environment, was quoted as saying that the letter confirmed the govt's intention to increase Sydney's water supply by stealth. Dr Judy Messer of the NSW Nature Conservation Council called on the Premier to place all choices before the public immediately. George Threlfo as Spokesperson for the LBMCS has made the following points on the issue:

- 1. The reason why Tim Moore as Minister for the Environment (and earlier for the Water Board) did not sign off the Plans of Management for the Kanangra-Boyd and Blue Mountains National Park is now clear. This also applies to the wilderness applications on the western side of Burragorang Dam and the draft Nattai Park Plan of Management. Obviously he could not resolve the flooding issue from a dam upgrade! (In the letter, Webster suggests that no decision be made about the proclamation of wilderness areas until the dam safety and flood mitigration proposals have been taken into account and protected.)
- The bottom line here is the option of upgrading Sydney's water supply through a raised Warragamba dam. A decision on upgrading appears to have been made after the disclosure of this letter.
- A new dam height would flood rare and possibly endangered Eucalyptus benthamii for short periods - inundation for even a few weeks would kill them. Most were in the Burragorang Valley before it was flooded. Isolated stands now remain elsewhere.
- 4. Does the State Government (through an agency such as the GIO) put aside \$35m pa to cover floods in the Hawkesbury/Nepean? (\$35m is quoted as the average expected annual flood damage for the valley based on current development within the catchment.)
- 5. Why can't floods be covered in normal insurance cover as are bushfires?

The LBMCS calls on the State Government to place all the possible choices before the public immediately. An EIS on either the proposed spillway or dam wall should not be prepared until this public consideration is completed.

The Water Pricing Tribunal has recently changed from charging on land values to a partial user-pays system which will incorporate the Environmental Levy component. The LBMCS believes a strong public information campaign on the wise use of water is essential if we are to counteract the excesses which lead to more environmental destruction.

It doesn't take a great leap of logic to wonder if the ball-passing on the World Heritage listing for the Greater Blue Mountains National Park is due to the implications revealed in this exposure.

HELP??

Is there a local issue you would like to launch or get more involved in?? Have you any suggestions for more information on an issue you particularly want to know about? Do you have any poems, cartoons, drawings, etc. you could submit for the newsletter?

We would like to hear from you. Phone Julie on 39 6465 after bus. hours.