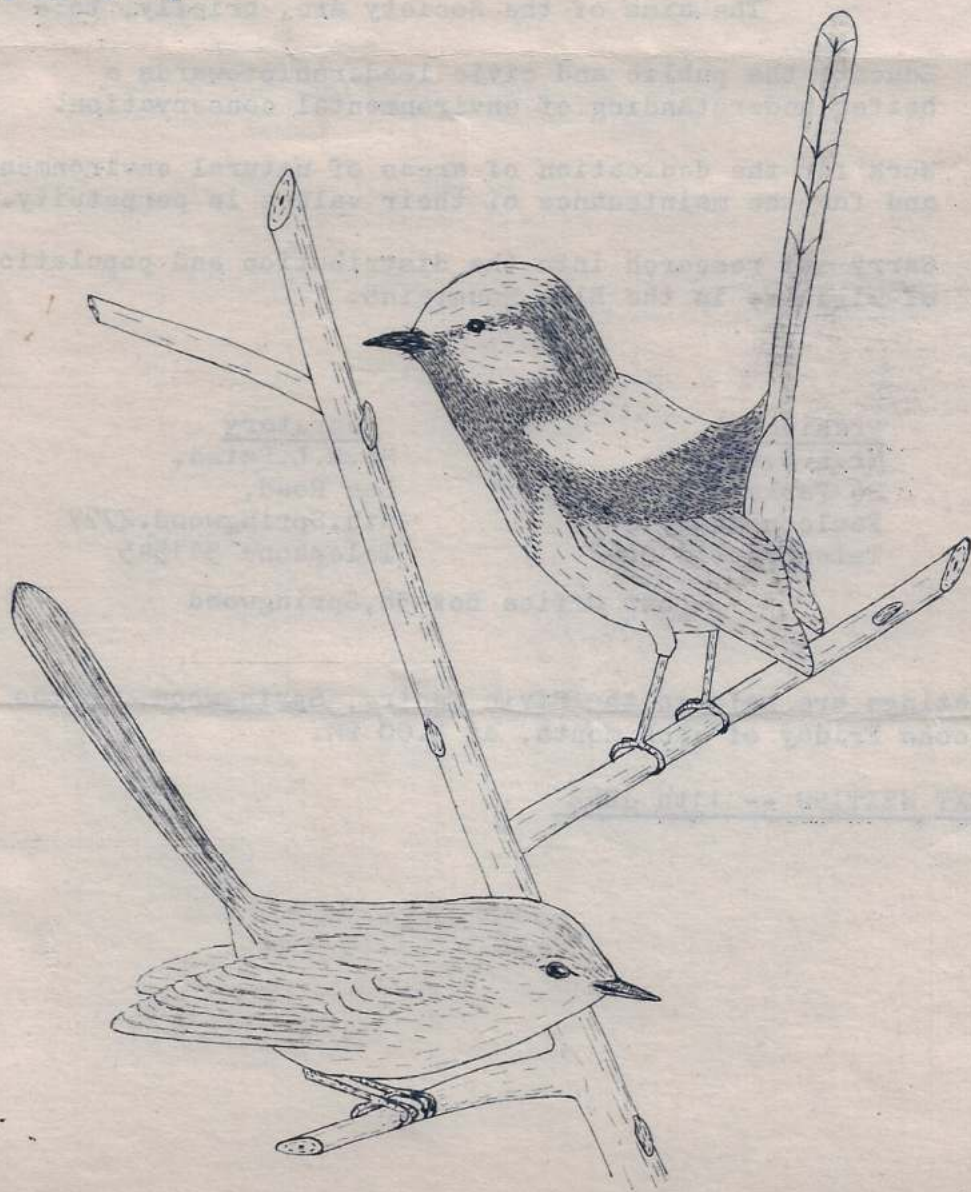


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KALORI

June 1971



Society
Conservation

Lower Blue Mountains Wildlife

"Man is confronted with the difficult and complex problem of finding out how he can fit into his environment so that it will not deteriorate but continue to provide what he needs."

R.G.Downes

Kalori is published monthly by and for the members of the Lower Blue Mountains Wildlife Conservation Society.

The aims of the Society are, briefly, to:-

1. Educate the public and civic leadership towards a better understanding of environmental conservation.
2. Work for the dedication of areas of natural environment and for the maintenance of their values in perpetuity.
3. Carry out research into the distribution and population of wildlife in the Blue Mountains.

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Meetings are held in the Civic Centre, Springwood, on the second Friday of each month, at 8.00 PM.

NEXT MEETING -- 11th JUNE

MYALL LAKES REVISITED

On Good Friday three members of the Society set out on a "pilgrimage" to an area faced soon with destruction - the Myall Lakes. Armed with cameras, binoculars, fieldbooks and Volkswagens the three moved towards the Lakes for the second time via the Putty Road and Tea Gardens.

Along the way we noted many species of wildlife, perhaps the best being the sighting by Denis Pain of a dingo fleeing across the Putty Road. Happily none of the usual dead wombats or wallabies were seen along this road; often the scene of a grand slaughter of fauna by cars. A stop along the way in a scenic spot cum rubbish dump gave us the far from uncommon observation of chronic littering by some of the tourists "doing their thing".

Around Maitland and Raymond Terrace many water birds were present as a result of the recent floods. Quite numerous were the usual white faced herons and large egrets. At Tea Gardens we waited for the punt while doing more birdwatching, noting large egrets, white faced herons, white ibis, silver gull, little pied cormorants and an osprey. Once across the punt we journeyed into mining country.

This last leg of our journey was perhaps the most interesting as an introduction to the impact on the lakes area by beach sand mining. The road seemed originally to cut through forest, dominated by *Banksia serrata* and eucalypts, at the back of the fore-dune area. Land east of the road had been mined. This could be seen in various developments - cleared, mined, reformed and regenerated - the last being the mining companies offering to the rising of environmental activists.

Some areas had a resemblance to a suburban housing block after sale to a young couple, and others to Bondi Beach. Most interesting were the areas of 'restoration' as the miners refer to it. This seems from observation to be a process of retaining the topsoil of the area to be mined, and after mining, reforming dune contours and then covering all with the retained topsoil. Natural regeneration takes over quite well. This has produced very good results in areas we had examined although the fore dunes were still, it seemed, rather unstable and largely unaffected by regeberation. There also seemed to be a problem with weeds which was to be expected in the disturbed areas.

The area affected by the mining works programme had advanced still further towards the Mungo Brush as was, of course, to be expected. One now saw the whole

countryside dotted with the white posts of Mineral Deposits Ltd. The mining plants were going even on Good Friday - the brown arcs of sludge spewing forth from the plants clearly visible.

Once entering the relatively untouched lands surrounding Mungo Brush we were at once struck with the place - alien to anything on the Mountains. It would indeed be many decades before the miner's 'restoration' would measure up to even the scruffiest part of this area.

Although based on sand the forests of *B. serrata* took on a surprising lushness climaxing in the basalt based rainforest - the Mungo Brush. On the lakeside *Melaleuca quinquinervia* and *Casuarina glauca* were the dominant species.

The rainforest was an amazing area. Thick with growth it looked quite a barrier, however a track led up into the Brush which showed that once on the heights of the basalt the forest was quite clear underneath with only buttress trunks and delicate ferns to obscure the ground. On the 'summit' the Brush had been cleared and a house and sheds built. A large amount of exotics had been planted and some would later pose problems. No doubt, however, many animals would regard this encroachment and the ensuing increase in brush border and grassland as beneficial, but the loss of rainforest is a tragedy. Another clearing at the base of the basalt hill is now choked with weeds and is but slowly regenerating - we have found that this area seems extremely prone to weed infestation wherever soil disturbance has occurred.

The lakeshore is also interesting. Glades of *melaleuca*, cabbage tree palms, swamp mahogany and *C. glauca* on saturated ground stretch between the Mungo Brush reserve and the far camping area we inhabited. Piles of the large leaves of the cabbage tree palms looked an interesting environment for small native mammals in the glades.

We camped almost in the same area as we had last October. Unfortunately the Easter weekend proved a better time interval than a long weekend and we had to bear with the roar of beach buggies. At once we grasped the significance of the myriad small tracks towards the beach as holidayers, more evolutionarily advanced than we (having lost the power of walking) travelled the 400 yards to the surf.

Contact was made by a Land Rover driver with us as we lay sprawled exhausted before our tent after a long journey. We gathered that he was a conservationist

and he spoke of opposition to the proposed Myall Lakes National Park from residents on the western side of the Lakes. This seemed to be a reaction against the loss of their freehold land which if resumed would cut off the promise of soaring development prices which they can expect in the near future.

During the night there was a sighting of a small brown animal leaping from a *B. serrata* to the ground. And later we fell asleep with the buzzing of a tawney frogmouth close to the tent. The morning saw us visiting the Mungo Brush reserve. Apparently this reserve, (controlled by our friends in development - Stroud Shire) has been the venue of a ski school. Here we discovered the lair of the beach buggy, The hiss of scores of gas stoves and the absence of camp fires made us primitives quite restless.

The rest of the day was spent in the lakeside glades and on the beach. In the glades we observed an Osprey in a tall tree. This bird of prey - a fish eater - is common in the area and is a magnificent sight. Nick McGrath sat alone in the rainforest verge and made an observation of a small mammal, possibly a native cat. Lewin honeyeaters and golden whistlers were quite abundant and a female koel was also observed.

On the beach crested terns and silver gulls constantly searched for food. Wandering albatrosses off the shore gave an impressive display of diving in search of food. The beach is quite magnificent with a view of Broughton Island in the east - the length of the beach is striking and it is almost deserted along its length. Tracks of wallabies were seen on the beach upon which they descend at night.

The Sunday was set aside for a trip to Johnsons Hill. In our trusty, go-anywhere Volkswagon we set off along a track that ran along the lakeside. Numerous stops were made to admire different plants and associations along the way. The size of some *Xanthorrea* growing on the sand was remarkable and the *quinquineria* either solitary or en masse in the swamps were always striking

The road passed through heath plains and then cut into hills covered with open forest. We reached Johnsons Hill which was one of the hills covered with open forest with an almost impenetrable marsh on the flats below it.

Immediately two grey kangaroos fled across the car's path into the marsh, while a lace goanna leapt up a tall dead tree. We decided against driving the car

into this peaceful area and so started to walk along the base of Johnsons Hill towards an old farm I had discovered on our previous trip. We again sighted an osprey soaring near the top of the hill.

The cleared strip opened up into large paddocks quite clear and after visiting this deserted farm we moved across them and up a ridge towards the top of Johnsons Hill. Here we split up and two of us took to the ridge sides while one stayed on the top. After a few minutes I had sighted a Red necked wallaby ten yards away - his rufous shoulders clearly visible. A large grey kangaroo was sighted almost at once. Nick McGrath flushed two white throated nightjars, a very seldom seen nocturnal bird and quite an observation. I also had the luck of a detailed observation of a spotted quail thrush. Having met again on the ridge top we saw a small red necked wallaby, moving at an amazing rate, and another grey kangaroo.

Denis Pain had a meeting with a red bellied black snake which resulted in both retreating. Our party did some fossil fossicking on the hill but but did not surpass last trip's finds.

On the way back, shots brought us to a halt and a gun-toting speedboatsman was sighted. After a short inquisition he relented and our journey was resumed.

The night was spent spotlighting and the results were quite pleasing. Four brushtailed possums were sighted - two in the midst of a very loud domestic quarrel. The night however was made with the sighting of a koala in a swamp mahogany tree. The koala was almost in the same tree in which we had sighted another during our last trip.

The next morning I walked towards the Brush area and sighted two grey kangaroos on the road. Flock (topknot) pigeons were seen while a female satin bower bird was observed feeding off the fruit of the native grape in the rainforest.

We left the lakes with the omen of the mining company burning heaps of bulldozed vegetation and the dredges working hard in their pools of sludge.

All in all another fine time had been experienced. However we were always reminded of the proposed fate of this Park - its destruction by mining. Soon there will be no koala, no littoral rainforest, no grey kangaroo and no place for the visitor. Of the 96 000 acres proposed by the Myall Lakes Committee the New South

Wales Government has given the people of N.S.W. 36 500 acres and then delivered up most of this public land to a private enterprise. That the Park will be completely destroyed does not bother miners or the politicians - the former hope to resurrect the land after mining. This, assuming that miners are human, is ludicrous - it probably will destroy the present ecology of the whole area forever. Meanwhile the area which many say should not be made into a wilderness reserve with limited facilities will become an area with entrance impossible and no facilities at all - the Myall Lakes National Mining Park.

You, as a conservationist, can help save Myall Lakes. The facts are available on request from your Society's library (ring Nick McGrath 391035, 4 Ross Cres. Blaxland.) and more trips to the area are likely to be planned by your Society.

But most importantly write to the representatives of the people who should concern themselves with public opinion, and register your protest.

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Premiers Department
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Sydney 2000

Your local Member --

Nepean: Mr R.Mulock MLA
Blue Mtns: Mr Coates MLA

The Myall Lakes Committee may be contacted through the Secretary:- Dr. Ron Dolton

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Lane Cove
NSW 2066

M. Smithson.

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SPACE HAS RUN OUT, REPORTS OF OUR ACTIVITIES WILL BE IN NEXT MONTH. MR SLADE COULD NOT MAKE IT FOR LAST MEETING DUE TO ILLNESS, BUT HE WILL BE AT THE NEXT ONE AND WILL TALK ABOUT MOSSES AND FERNS. PLEASE BE THERE. 11TH JUNE -- DONT FORGET.