

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



Earth Alive! Biodiversity Month

September is Earth Alive! Biodiversity Month, a month to celebrate and promote our local biodiversity. Do something positive! Plant a native garden to create habitat for native birds; build a frog pond; join a bushcare group; care for your pets to conserve native animals; watch out for events in the Mountains to increase our understanding and involvement in biodiversity conservation.

Spring Plant Sale

The Society's Spring Plant Sale will be held on Saturday 7 October, between 9 am and 1 pm, outside the Conservation Hut, Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls.

We will have a good selection of native plants, some in tubes at \$2 each, some in 125mm pots at \$4 each. Make a note on your calendar, and come early to avoid disappointment. *David Coleby, Nursery Manager 4784.1395.*

Biodiversity Workshop

The impact of fire will be discussed at our September workshop, "The Impact of Fire on Biodiversity", on Friday 8 September at 7.30 pm at the Conservation Hut, Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls.

Janet Cohen will speak on the principals of fire ecology and plant life cycles in relation to fire regimes, and Jeremy Little will speak on vegetation structure, fauna habitat and conservation in fire management. There will be an open discussion and an opportunity for questions. Phone Meredith 4782.4823 for more information.

Controlling Urban Runoff

At our General Meeting on Friday 29 September, our guest speaker Lynton Auld will talk about the Blue Mountains Urban Runoff Control Program, its inception, goals and the outcomes from URCP Phase 1, and the continuation of the Program through URCP Phase 2.

The Urban Runoff Control Program has focused on road sealing, drainage, bush regeneration, degraded land rehabilitation, and environmental monitoring. As part of the environmental monitoring component of the URCP, a weed mapping program has been developed in conjunction with BMCC. This is now being implemented to provide high level

CONSERVATION AREAS

Unfortunately our governments have not been able to buy all the land in the Blue Mountains that is worth saving. Many areas with conservation significance which are still privately owned have been identified and zoned "Environmental Protection"; others have been classified as "Protected Areas" on the zoning maps. These areas have additional safeguards which **SHOULD** be protecting them. However, illegal activities such as slashing and clearing, encroachment by development, damage to rock faces for recreation, etc. continue.

The Society is developing a list of conservation areas on private property which are being degraded so that we can help preserve them.

If you know of some significant areas on private property, or on what you thought was a reserve, that you think are being damaged, let us know. Even if you don't know the zoning, phone us and the Land Use Subcommittee will check it. Please ring Lyndal Sullivan on 4782.1635 with the property address.

information on weeds presence, absence and density, and impacts which are causing degradation of bushland.

The meeting at the Conservation Hut, Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls, starts at 7.30 pm. Members are urged to come along to find out what the Society is doing, and to meet other members over supper. Visitors are also very welcome.

Save a Wilderness This Spring!

Do something positive for conservation.

The Wilderness 2000 campaign team needs the help of enthusiastic folk who love the bush, like chatting to people and have a few hours to spare on weekends. The Wilderness 2000 campaign would like assistance collecting wilderness support letters at street stalls located in the Mountains.

The campaign will be collecting submissions supporting a number of wilderness proposals, including such precious areas as the Deua forests near Moruya and Chaelundi forests near Grafton. Placing these least damaged bushland areas under NSW wilderness

laws will stop the damage to these precious areas and help keep nature safe during the 21st century.

Community stalls will be organised on the following dates and venues: **Katoomba** 30 September, 28 October, 18 November; **Leura** 28 October, 25 November.

If you would like to help please contact Margaret Richardson on 0410 435198, or the Colong Foundation on 9299-7341.

Enviro Education

The new education sub-committee intends to focus on participatory learning that engages people in imagination and practical experiences. Following the environmental conference we realised that a new model of education is needed for communities to be inspired to make the changes to a sustainable way of living. There is a proverb:

*"Tell me and I'll forget
Show me and I'll remember
Involve me and I'll understand"*

So watch this newsletter for a range of new activities and free workshops.

Are there some creative members who would like to help us with new visual and sculptural displays and 'hands on projects'?

We would like to hear from members who have native gardens, energy efficient houses, solar power, etc. and are willing to have members visit on organised education tours.

Our next meeting is 5 September at 7pm. Contact Vera (4782.5375) or Meredith (4782.4723) for details of this and future meetings.

"Hut News", the newsletter of Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

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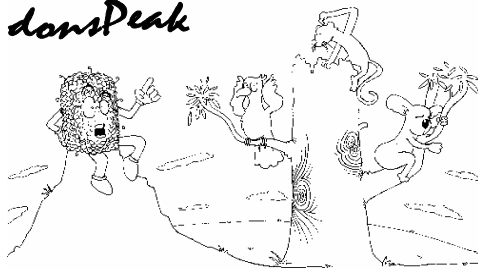
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THE DEADLINE
FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS
FRIDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2000



Number-Crunching and the 'Sandstone Curtain'

Yet to be publicly exhibited is Volume 1 of the 'Maunsell McIntyre' report on main road development in the Blue Mountains and Lithgow. But this State Government sponsored document has been widely circulated and it spells out an 'economic rationalist' position on what should happen to the Great Western Highway and the Bell's Line of Road. It also looks at the 'B-double truck', that infamous cousin of the inland 'road train', which is becoming the mainstay of Eastern Seaboard freight transport.

The biggest environmental plus in the report is that it rules out any main road or expressway construction along Bell's Line of Road, through Wollemi National Park or the northern Blue Mountains National Park. This is welcome, but it has upset Central Western lobbies who see the Blue Mountains as a 'sandstone curtain', holding back the economic development of New South Wales.

The report's big offering to inland development is a proposal for a B-double truck route right along the existing highway through several Mountains town centres, with a major realignment of Mount Victoria Pass. Justifiably, many Mountains residents will oppose this.

In sum, the report is something of a gift to politicians who favour wedge politics, pitting country residents, who are often suspicious of green and urban residential amenity issues, against those trying to preserve natural and township environments in the Mountains.

The by-pass that might solve the dispute is to by-pass the grandstanding politicians, by-pass the economic rationalist number-crunchers, and involve Mountains and inland communities in discussions over more innovatory solutions — these could include more creative use of the railway and existing roads. *Don Morison.*

Threatened Species Conservation

The Blue Mountains Rare and Endangered Species Group has been reinvigorated after maintaining a fairly low profile for the past few years.

The group was established in 1992 as a sub-committee of the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife under its 'Friends of National Parks' program. Following a review of its financial position the Foundation recently decided to concentrate its efforts on fundraising for NPWS projects. Its role in facilitating the Friends program has been transferred back to NPWS. Consequently the R&E group is now

applying for incorporation as an entity in its own right.

The group is currently administering two Sydney Catchment Authority grants for weed removal in the vicinity of the Dwarf Mountain Pine *Microstrobos fitzgeraldii* at Katoomba Falls and Leura Falls. A brochure is being prepared to raise awareness of the threats to this endangered species from urban runoff and weeds.

A website will soon be launched which will ultimately provide a comprehensive reference source on the dozens of rare and threatened plant and animal species in the Blue Mountains. Contributions to the site are welcome.

Other group activities this year have included a fundraising dinner, an information seminar for World Environment Day, a concert to celebrate the Wollemi Pine and to launch James Woodford's book about the Pine, and lobbying for protection of hanging swamps.

If you would like to join the group or obtain further information contact Marg Turton (President) on 4757 3149 or Sue Morrison (Secretary) on 4787 5443, e-mail wollemi@lisp.com.au.

"The Wollemi Pine" Concert and Book Launch

It was a packed Conservation Hut that recently heard songs, poems and music, including didgeridoos ("Didgeridoo Blues"), rejoicing at the discovery of the Wollemi Pine.

Wyn Jones narrated and linked three hours of uplifting and joyous words and music. Sonia Bennett's hit song "The Wollemi Pine", played by Ian MacNamara on "Australia All Over", climaxed the crowded evening, with a roaring fire keeping the hand-clapping crowd warm. Sonia also sang "Oolooloo" with words by Victorian bushman W.J. (Billy) Wye, "Then, Now and Forever", and "Minnamurra". Denis Kevans sang his popular songs about the Blue Mountains' Valley of the Waters — "Moss's Gentle Fingers" and "Blow Leaves". He sang about Robin Bell, a farmer who contour ploughs and plants thousands of native trees to keep permanent water, while his neighbour farmers, near Tumut, are facing the tussock scourge. Denis got the enthusiastic crowd laughing with his poem "Concrete is Bewtyful!"

The friends and discoverers of the Wollemi Pine, Dave Noble, Jan Allen, and members of the Blue Mountains Rare and Endangered Species Group worked hard and long to make "The Wollemi Pine" night the resounding success that it was. Local Member Bob Debus spoke and made a presentation (prepared by the Blue Mountains Rare and Endangered Species Group) to Wyn Jones, for his inspiring work as Chief Botanist, Blue Mountains. And author, James Woodford, almost ran out of copies of his book.

Threatened Species Day

September 7 has been chosen as Threatened Species Day because is the date when the last Tasmanian Tiger died

in captivity. How many other species have we lost, knowingly or unknowingly? How many other species are threatened?

There will be a Threatened Species information display at the Wild Plant Rescue stall at Clairveux Centre, Katoomba, 9 am to 12 noon on Saturday 9 September. Come along and find out more about threatened species in the Blue Mountains.

Gunnedah Charcoal Plant

A charcoal plant is proposed for Gunnedah. It will consume 230,000 tonnes of wood a year for the next 40 years. The charcoal will then be taken to Lithgow and used to make silicon metal. Trees will initially be sourced from public forests right across north-east NSW and from private lands on the New England Tablelands and western NSW. In a few years western public lands will also be incorporated, including the Pilliga — the largest expanse of western woodland remaining.

Another proposal has come to light for burning massive amounts of wood from native forests for power operation.

If you think it is a dumb idea to burn our native forests and woodlands for charcoal and energy production, then add your voice to those putting their objections in writing. Write to the Premier Bob Carr, Parliament House, Sydney 2000. Underneath is an extract from a letter written to the Premier, on behalf of the Society, by Ross Coster.

"We understand that it is your Government's intention to allow large scale burning of native forest timbers for charcoal and energy production, and to claim this burning of timber as a green energy initiative.

We firmly believe that this is a completely unacceptable use of our native forests. While we would agree that plantation timber may be used in this way and be labelled sustainable, continuing to cut old-growth native forests for such activities is not sustainable and not acceptable.

It is a basic belief of the conservation movement that new industries must be sustainable from the outset, and that existing industries must be made sustainable in the long term.

We condemn any attempt to use our native forests as a fuel resource and ask that your government pursue new, sustainable plantation forestry on degraded farmland to supply future demand for hardwood timber.

We also ask that your government pursue 'real' green energy initiatives, such as construction of new solar and wind power stations for the electricity grid, and renewable liquid transport fuels from crops."

Membership Enquiries
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Pagoda Country

Staggering down the rocky road
of pagodas....

....and Love!

Wondering, wanderingly lost
Found a warm rock.

Heard a green song.
Never counting the cost,
of

always stretching above!
Crusty iron-stone crunches my
heart,

until the Wollomi Pine Mother
eases my erotic erosion
with her earth, her fire
and her Wise Woman's
art.

*Bernadette Hodgson,
17 August 2000.*

Blue Mountains Bird Observers

New Members are Welcome

I believe one of the reasons birdwatching is so popular and absorbing is that it is never completely predictable. Birds have a habit of surprising us, and this year has been no exception.

After an unusually small number of migrating honeyeaters seen on passage through our area in autumn (see the May Hut News), for the last three months our upper mountains heathlands have been inundated with the largest concentrations of wintering honeyeaters I can ever remember. This is no doubt mostly due to a good banksia flowering season, especially *B. ericifolia* and *B. marginata*.

Areas rich in these banksias, for example the Transit of Venus track, parts of the Katoomba-Leura clifftops, Narrow Neck, Shipley Plateau and Hassan's Walls, have been abuzz with the constant movement and calling of over a dozen species of honeyeater, including some which are normally rare in our area. Any muddy puddles beside the road have become the focus for dazzling displays of acrobatic high-diving by these birds. They really love to bathe — in droves. And it's fascinating to watch!

If you're interested in finding out more about local birds, why not join the

Blue Mountains Bird Observers. Every month a list of all species recorded throughout the area is produced and interesting patterns are emerging thanks to our keen-eyed network of observers.

In addition, two club walks are held each month and a meeting every three months. Annual membership is \$17 and all members receive a monthly newsletter and the bird list. For more information contact Chris Todd on 4751 3482 or email me at origma@lisp.com.au.

Carol Proberts.

Revolution for Recycling

Have you ever felt as though no one is listening to what you have to say? That people think caring for the environment is just another phase that you're going through? I recently decided to show people that I was serious.

My school was purchasing paper products made from virgin forest fibre — literally flushing Victoria's Otway forests down the toilet! I made it my mission to have the school take responsibility for recycling and to replace all toilet and photocopy paper with products made from 100 per cent post-consumer waste.

Round one — The letter to the principal. I write to the principal and informed her of my distress, provided the evidence on the culprit paper companies, AMCOR and Kimberley-Clarke, and listed all the alternative brands of recycled paper products. The reply I received reported that the alternative products were 'bad quality and bleached with harmful chemicals'. I maintained my ground and immediately contacted the environmental authorities and paper manufacturers, who assured me that the products were the best quality and naturally bleached.

Round two — Meeting in the principal's office. Two companions and myself, armed with our ethical buyers' guide and a will to succeed, discussed options with the principal for an hour, and although the principal was in favour of the recycling concept it was left up to us to put it into action.

Round three — Negotiations are continuing. We are looking forward to the school finalising arrangements with a responsible paper manufacturer soon.

Greenhouse Corner

Petrol Can Grown on Trees

As the greenhouse effect starts to bite, and domestic oil and gas reserves run out, Australia could replace its petroleum-based fuels with ethanol and methanol distilled from vast plantings of deep-rooted trees, providing a new fuel source while also tackling dryland salinity.

That's according to a new CSIRO Wildlife and Ecology report, which looks at how Australia could change over the next 25 to 50 years from a petroleum-based economy to one fuelled by millions of hectares of oil mallee and similar tree crops, planted on former crop and pasture land.

The report estimates that between 12 and 31 million hectares would need to be planted with trees and shrubs to provide feedstock for new fuel-processing plants, creating an industry with up to 400,000 jobs by 2050.

It estimates ethanol or methanol would cost about 80 cents per litre to produce, four times more than unleaded petrol, so a decision to move to biomass-based fuel systems would need to rest on more than simple price arguments.

Instead it says the rationale would be a mixture of creating new industry and jobs for rural Australia, rehabilitation of degraded farm landscapes, reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and replacement of petroleum imports.

The report says a transition to a biomass-fuelled economy could link two seemingly unrelated issues confronting Australia over the next half-century, run-down of domestic oil and gas stocks, and the 25-100 year task of remediating dryland salinity.

Titled "Beyond 2025: Transitions to a Biomass-Alcohol Economy Using Ethanol and Methanol" is available from CSIRO Wildlife and Ecology on 02-9246-1600 (www.dwe.csiro.au/research/futures). *Ross Coster*



Whatever happens we won't give in. All schools should be using sustainable products and recycling paper. It doesn't matter how big the organisation is, if you stand up for your beliefs you will be heard! (Sarah Rennie is a 15 year old Melbourne student and a member of Australian Conservation Foundation. Source: "Revive", ACF Next Generation newsletter for age 14-25).

Welcome to New Members

Stuart James, Wentworth Falls
Robert Seaborne and Glenys Livingstone, Faulconbridge
Verley Kelliher, Blackheath
Timothy Withers, Faulconbridge
Genevieve Carey, Hazelbrook
Gusta Radovich, Hazelbrook
David and Jeanette John, Mt Riverview
Anthea Stock, Wentworth Falls
Judith Gaskin, Hazelbrook
Miss DS Ramsay, Roseville
JK and CL Howes, Faulconbridge
Robert and Kye Porritt and Family, Woodford

Snippets from a "Haiku Journey" (Diana Levy)

A sweep of white over the
distant blue hills-snow clouds.

(There was graffiti on the rocks
on the way in to Anvil Rock)
How to understand
these crude rock drawings
and "Abos sux"?

Lester Ives:
"They all speak a bit differently"

Two short deep blasts
a kangaroo leaping
didgeeridoo speaks

Lyrebird footprints
engraved in the rock -
did they sing here?

Blue Gum Swamp
with Carol Provets
Bubbling up
out of winter:
the yellow wattle

Medlow Bath, where
Sylvia broke her wrist,
I wrote for her:
The mosses thick
your footing missed...
a broken wrist...

Long before us
rubbing at the sandstone
making emu footprints

Springtime Bushwalks

During our Thursday bushwalks, Diana Levy has been writing a series of Haiku. A selection is on page 3. Overheard, a few comments from other walkers: "There's a lovely little paper daisy - just tucked in there ..." (Margaret, near the Pagodas); "We saw a Golden Whistler - and then I saw one in my garden" (Bill, after a walk with Carol Proberts).

Spring bushwalks will start on Thursday, 5 October. This is a wonderful time of the year to go walking in the Upper Blue Mountains. As usual, cost will be \$20 for the eight walks, with special guests on some. Numbers will be limited. Phone Christine on 4787.7246.

Beyond the Quoll Club

Some members of the Quoll Club have outgrown the activities which are mostly suitable for 3 to 10 year olds. I therefore think it is time to develop an extension to the Quoll Club for members of 10 years and older. I have in mind bushwalks for the school holidays with the occasional activity such as spot-lighting. I am also open to any ideas young members or parents may have.

For the September school holidays I have organised a walk to the waterfalls of south Lawson. Meet 10am at the corner of Livingstone St and Honour Ave. If you are interested please give me a ring on 4757 2783. Thanks, Jessica.

SOME WOODY PEAR MEMORIES

(Bob Jones, 12.12.1999)

There will come a time when I'll hang up my pack
And see in my memories my friends of the track
I'll dream of pagodas and deep ferny canyons
Of Olive and John, great walking companions.

Of Woody Pear walks in rain forest places
The morning sun sparkle on spider web laces
Of moss covered rocks on leaf padded trails
Glimpses of valley through morning mist veils.

Of Asgard Swamp, abandoned shale mines
Mt Tomah Gardens; Olive's Wollemi Pines,
Di with his poems spell-binding us all,
Coaxing a bird with his low trilling call.

Deep feelings of wonder in that canyon named Dry
Sun slants on the ferns in the valley nearby,
In a crater called Gooch's is a lake with tall reeds
Where safe from the Wedge-tail the wild fauna breeds

Spit Bridge to Manly, by a harbour-side trail,
Sighting the spray of a visiting whale.
Bondi to The Gap and the Harbour's wide gate
A fishing bird dives, its folded wings straight.

I'll remember Newnes Plateau, native flowers that bloom
Amid mighty pagodas; Olive's Temples of Doom.
John's mystery walks, some dry and some wet,
The real jewel in our mountains, undiscovered yet.

Lunch-time breaks on the plateau's high edge
Watching a kestrel at home on his ledge,
Way down in the valley a miniature farm
And the gleam of a river brings a feeling of calm.

These will be good memories, not memories of pain
For I'll dream in my dreams I'll be walking again
And the faces I knew will clearly come back
I'll welcome those ghosts, my friends of the track.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Sept 08 **Workshop: The Impact of Fire on Biodiversity.** (See page 1)
Sept 23 **Management Committee Meeting.** 9 am, Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson.
Sept 29 **General Meeting.** 7.30 pm, Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. Guest speaker will be Lynton Auld — Blue Mountains Urban Runoff Control Program (See Page 1)
(Fri)
Oct 07 Native Plant Sale, Conservation Hut, 9 am to 1 pm. (See page 1)

QUOLL CLUB (Activities for 12 and under)

- Sept 13 **Exploring our Wonderful Biodiversity.** Meet 10 am at Intelife, corner of Blaxland and Cook Roads, Wentworth Falls. Drive down the long drive to the carpark and then walk to the office.
(Wed)

For more information contact Jessica on 4757.2783. For a copy of the Quoll Club Newsletter, phone Ross Coster 4759.1247.

BUSHCARE (Tools provided — bring morning tea and gloves.)

- Sept 12 **Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group.** Contact Jessica 4757.2783 for the meeting place. (following Tuesday if wet).
(Tues)
Sept 10 **Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group.** Meet 9 am at the Reserve
(Sun) (GWH, West of Sorenson Bridge). Contact Ross Coster 4759.1247.

BUSHWALKS: Carry drinking water (minimum 1 litre), bring morning tea, and lunch for day walks. Wear shoes with a good tread.

- Monday Leisure Walks:** Usually half day walks, easy/medium, leisurely pace.
Sept 04 **Glenbrook Crown Land Circuit.** Meet Glenbrook Station carpark 9 am. Contact Allan Macaulay 4739.2767. Wildflower walk. BBQ after.
Sept 11 **Kings Tableland to McMahons Lookout.** Meet Wentworth Falls Station, 9 am. Contact Jock McKechnie 4758.6346.
Sept 18 **Blue Gum Swamp Circuit and Bird Watch.** Meet end of Whitecross Road, Winmalee, 9 am. Contact Bill Graham 4759.1692. BBQ at carpark.
Sept 25 **Evans Crown then Tarana/Shiloh Farm.** Carpool meet at Leura Station carpark 8.30am or arrange pickup with Bill Graham 4759.1692 or Jan Cutler 4784.3079. Pub lunch. **No space limits.** (Public Holiday — No walk planned)
Oct 02 **Weekend Bushwalks:** Walks of various grades, full or half day.
Sept 02 **Engineer's Track to Grose River.** Meet Mount Victoria Station 9 am.
(Sat) Contact Jock McKechnie 4758.6346. **Day, Medium.**
Sept 09 **Mount Twiss.** Meet Linden Station 9.30 am. Contact

- (Sat) Liz Stark 4754.4966. **Day, Medium.**
Sept 16 **Valley Heights to Blaxland via Sun Valley and Cripple Creek.** Meet Valley Heights car park at 9.30 am. Contact Ron Wheeler 4757.1526. **Day, Medium.**
(Sat)
Sept 23 **Glenbrook Historical Walk and Old Zig Zag.** Meet Glenbrook Station 9.30 am. Contact Wende Vanamois 4739.1658. Finish at Wende's for afternoon tea. **Day, Easy.**
Oct 07 **Burgess Falls.** Meet Hazelbrook Station carpark 9.30 am. (Sat) Contact Kate McManus 4758.7936. **Half Day, Medium.**

Walks have been graded. **Easy:** Mostly good surfaces, but some rough or steep sections. Suited to people of average fitness. **Medium:** Includes rough or steep sections, some of which may require clambering over natural obstacles. Discuss with leader if in doubt. **Hard:** Strenuous walks, suited to fit and experienced walkers. **If this is your first walk,** or you are in any doubt, contact the leader or Bushwalks Convener Bill Graham 4759.1692.

BUSHWALKS

Protege Needed:

Any bushwalking member who is interested in organising our bushwalks and would like to assist in this with a view to arranging weekend walks this year, is invited to phone Bill Graham on 4759.1692 to discuss this vital and interesting role.

Lessons Not Learned from History ...

Members might be interested to read this excerpt from "Europe - a History" by Norman Davies.

"Ecological devastation had already caught the attention of Greek rulers in the early sixth century. Solon the Law-giver proposed that the cultivation of steep slopes should be banned to prevent soil erosion; and Peisistratus introduced a bounty for farmers who planted olive trees to counteract deforestation and over-grazing. Two hundred years later Plato noticed the damage inflicted on the land in Attica:

"What now remains compared with what then existed is like the skeleton of a sick man, all the fat and soft earth having wasted away ... There are some mountains which now have nothing but food for bees, but they had trees not long ago ... and boundless pasturage."