

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



" We cannot live for commerce alone, nor will our civilisation be deemed great until we thoroughly recognise the fact that the bushlands and all they naturally contain are gifts of Nature far transcending in value all monetary and commercial considerations. The humanising gifts of Nature are necessary for our interests, education, adventure, romance and peace of mind. They constitute an antidote for our semi-artificial existence. As we destroy our bushland environment we destroy just so much of ourselves. The balance of Nature is finely adjusted; upset it, and there will be a desert at our doors. All the glory of the canyons, caves and rolling plateaux of our great Blue Mountains is not nearly so much a commercial asset as it is Nature's heritage for legitimate enjoyment, and our own gift to posterity." (The Katoomba Daily, 24th August, 1934)

Climate Change Conference

The Climate Change conference at The Hague in the Netherlands has collapsed without a deal being reached.

If you would like to read full coverage, have a look at this Web Site: <http://www.planetark.org/dailynewsstory.cfm?newsid=9109> It includes a press release from Greenpeace, as well as links to a number of other stories.

The gist of it all is that the US, Canada, Japan and Australia wrecked the conference by refusing to move on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The US wanted to include the natural absorption of carbon dioxide by their forests as a greenhouse sink, to maximise their 'flexibility' in achieving their targets. In other words they want to continue the current practice where 24% of greenhouse gas emissions are generated by a country with only 4% of the world's population.

Canada, Japan and Australia supported the US stand.

As an Australian, I am ashamed of the stance taken by our Federal Government negotiators. We risk global catastrophe, and our Prime Minister says that we don't want to carry a 'disproportionate burden'.

Ross Coster.

Members! Would you like to be more involved?

This year the management committee has made an extra effort

THE DEADLINE
FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS
FRIDAY 15 DECEMBER 2000

Lithgow Smelter Approved

The State Government has given conditional approval for Australian Silicon to build a silicon smelter at Lithgow.

As part of the conditional approval, the operator will be required to use rail to transport silicon products through the Blue Mountains. The fluxwood for the furnaces will have to be sourced from plantations. The operator will also be required to establish an 8,100 hectare native hardwood plantation to offset some of the greenhouse gases created by the smelter project.

The Society has campaigned that, if it does go ahead, the Lithgow Smelter should be made as environmentally friendly as possible. The Government has gone some way in this direction, and we congratulate Mr Debus for this.

The most surprising condition concerns the production of charcoal for the smelter. The Government requires that the majority of the charcoal be made from timber sourced from outside NSW. This condition will go some way toward protecting NSW old growth forests, but still leaves open the unsustainable logging of forests in other states.

The charcoal manufacture requires 230,000 tonnes of hardwood each year. We will continue to lobby for an alternative source for the charcoal. We understand that CSIRO are investigating this area, and that low-ash coal has potential.

One of our main concerns is the impact of greenhouse gases from the smelter and its related activities.

The greenhouse issue is potentially catastrophic and new, large scale, projects must be greenhouse neutral before they are approved. The smelter project will add about one million tonnes of greenhouse gases each year. The requirement for an 8,100 hectare hardwood plantation to offset some of these greenhouse gases is just a drop in the bucket — it should be ten to fifteen times larger.

There were a total of 659 submissions, of which 14 came from state and local government organisations. The remaining 645 were from the public and community organisations. All 645 opposed the smelter — none in support.

to keep communication channels open to you, the members. Some of the ways you can be involved are:

• **Policy making workshops.** All conservation policy of the Society will

now be discussed and decided at special workshops involving members. So far, we have policies on Urban sprawl/limits to development and Sustainable Energy. These policy workshops are your opportunity to have your say and to discuss conservation matters in depth.

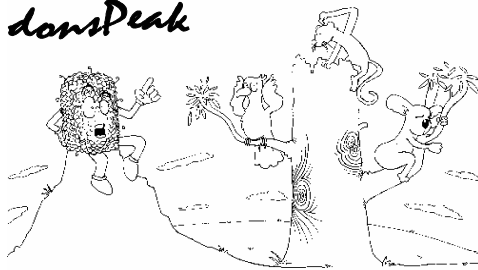
• **Sub-committees, bushcare groups and the nursery** are ongoing group activities where members are needed. Sub-committees have been given more emphasis this year and in our view, are an excellent way of being involved in the Society, learning how the organisation works and acquiring skills and knowledge in your area of interest.

• **Meetings:** Monthly committee meetings are open to members. General Meetings are designed to entertain and inform, and involvement and feedback from members is welcome. Phone calls, emails and letters are also welcome.

• **Bushwalking** continues to be an important experience for environmental learning and communication amongst members.

Join in, have some fun, make friends and have your say through the various channels of communication. Effective communication makes our organisations strong. *Meredith Brownhill.*

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

APACE: A Better Way

As the founding member, in 1976, of APACE, a non-government organisation specialising in appropriate technology for people living in remote rural areas, I attended the official opening in April of this year of a micro-hydro electricity system that had been designed, built and installed by APACE in cooperation with the villagers of Bulelevata on the island of New Georgia in Solomon Islands. APACE's original *raison d'être* was to help villagers to find a source of revenue that did not involve the selling off of their rainforests. Electricity would enable them to light the schools and churches and house, to power refrigerators, bakeries, cool rooms and drying sheds for copra and to start small industries such as making furniture.

The Solomon Islands Ombudsman explained the dilemma confronting so many villagers in the South Pacific. 'People always need money. They want and need money for children's education, transport and the luxuries of life. For many people, all they have to sell are their trees, and logging companies will give quick easy money for them.'

The prevailing economic development strategy for a 'developing' — what a misnomer! — country is for the government to open up its economy to the world and identify its 'comparative advantages', that is to say the country's main resources — from the outsider's point of view, of course — and exploit these so that the resulting revenue can enable the government to carry out the developmental activities that are required in order to raise the people's standard of living. 'Open economy' and 'comparative advantage' are also the basic principles of the World Trade Organisation. Most of these activities are capital intensive and are carried out by foreign corporations. The villager in whose territory the trees are cut down or the minerals extracted may receive a temporary benefit and even a clinic or school but when the operation is over they are left with a devastated environment and no means of maintaining the facilities they have acquired.

The environmental devastation is appalling and well documented. A Solomon Island government report for the World Bank in 1998 states that: 'log production in Solomon Islands has been pushed to more than three times higher than sustainable levels. In 1994 and 1995 log purchases by Japan were alone greater than the sustainable yield. ... Of equal concern is the inability of the Solomon Islands Division of Inland Revenue to prevent or counteract corporate schemes to evade taxes.' It also reports that 'remissions of duty to the loggers amounted to S\$25million in 1995 alone'.

It is no different with fisheries. It is estimated that the total landed catch of fish for the South Pacific Exclusive Economic Zones was valued at US\$1.5

billion; 'however, the countries which under international law own the resources get about 5% of this or less'. There was also gross under-reporting of the size of the catch to the countries's authorities.

APACE has five micro-hydro systems in action in Solomon Islands, all run, maintained and repaired, where necessary, by villagers who have been trained on location and in Sydney. There is now a national committee that is planning a strategy to bring electricity to as many villages as possible all over the country. APACE needs more funds to enable this plan to be carried out. Every dollar we can raise will be matched by three dollars from AusAID, the government's overseas aid program. You can help by making a (tax-deductible) donation to 'APACE Overseas Development Fund', PO Box 123, Broadway NSW 2007. All donations will be gratefully received. I should add that because APACE is largely run by volunteers and underpaid staff its overheads are minimal, probably the lowest of any NGO. *Robert Waddell.*

Welcome to New Members

- Elizabeth Benson, Lawson
- Susan Orem, Wentworth Falls
- Thomas Lodewyke, Wentworth Falls (Kids Club)
- Peter and Elizabeth Lonergan, Warrimoo
- Jacqueline Thomas, Springwood
- Steven and Melissa Drakeley, Springwood
- Karen Reid, Katoomba
- Dorothy Huolohan, Springwood
- Lori Boleyn and Monica Finetti, Leura
- David Patfield, Wentworth Falls
- Ben and Susan de Silva, Katoomba
- Rex Morris, Katoomba
- Lyn York and Bruce Reoch, Blackheath
- Raoul and Kathleen O'Brien, Lawson
- Jill Hogwood and Adrian Leighton, Faulconbridge
- Patricia Boyle, Mt Riverview
- Maureen Williams, Glenbrook
- Camille and Andrew De Picot, Katoomba
- Rachel Merton, Hazelbrook
- Ray Kennedy, Bullaburra
- Ian Olsen, Blackheath
- Chris Graves, Lawson
- Gwen Bocci, Ben, Jacob, and Gemma Sheppard, Lawson
- Gary Spurway, Springwood
- Kevin and Bernadette Sinclair, Hawkesbury Heights
- Denis Compston, Katoomba
- Rex Marshall, Katoomba
- Dieter & Erika Bensch, Wentworth Falls
- Judith and Jan Van Der Wal, Lawson
- Jay Turner & Dr Chris Ireland, Medlow Bath
- Jane Hamilton and Ian Baillie Leura
- Susan Cornwell, Faulconbridge
- Margaret Sleath, Bullaburra

Making the Century Greener

At a recent BMCS project meeting, we reflected on past efforts to gain more protection for natural areas of the Greater Blue Mountains.

Failure greeted a nineteenth century effort to ban development along the north side of the railway from Katoomba to Bell. However, in the 1930s, Myles Dunphy, Allen Rigby, Wallace Roots and others purchased the Blue Gum Forest through private fund-raising, and the modern conservation movement had been born.

Restricted access due to the flooding of Lake Burragorang delayed development of the Southern Blue Mountains until Kanangra-Boyd National Park was established. The 1980s and 1990s saw the NSW Wilderness Act declared and applied; Wollemi, Gardens of Stone, Abercrombie River and Nattai National Parks declared; and the management of Jenolan and Wombeyan Karst Reserves improved.

Clearly, we face a major challenge to make the 21st century a consolidation and extension of the 20th century's conservation gains.

Re Ferals To The Minister

Presently, feral horses and cattle are only a minor problem in our neck of the woods. But they could become a much greater state-wide problem if certain rural interests have their way — they want to declare a herd of feral horses in northern New South Wales a classified heritage item.

It is taking sentimentality about the Man from Snowy River, Simpson and his donkey, etc. a bit far, to seek protection of four-hoofed ferals. Most of Australia's four-hoofed fighters in World War One were shot for convenience's sake at war's end ... and early 1900s brumbies were chased until they were injured or their lungs burst ... but that was for fun and profit, not to protect native wildlife, so I suppose it was all right.

Our ALP National Parks Minister, Bob Debus, has encouraged these misguided equestrophiles by implying that talk-back radio callers influence him more than scientific advice on the subject of feral horses. The horseback grand-standing by National Party MP, Andrew Fraser is even less helpful, while, for the moment, the Liberal Party's Peta Seaton is the voice of reason on this issue.



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Greenhouse Corner

Sustainable Energy for the Blue Mountains: A Policy Statement by Blue Mountains Conservation Society

At a (poorly attended) workshop on Tuesday 21-Nov-2000, Members discussed the first draft of our Sustainable Energy Policy. What follows is a precis of the Second Draft. Please send any comments to me.

The full policy statement can be found on our website, <http://www.pnc.com.au/~bmcs/Policies/Energy.htm> or phone me on 4759.1247 and I will send you a copy. *Ross Caster.*

Policy Statement:

It is a key belief of the modern environment movement that all human activities must be sustainable. To put this in simple terms, we should only be doing those things which we can do indefinitely. So any activity that depends on a resource that will ultimately run out is not sustainable. Sustainability is changing human activity so that it becomes sustainable.

Current use of energy in the Blue Mountains is not sustainable. The majority of energy used depends on fossil fuels that will ultimately run out. Examples include oil, natural gas, coal and remnant native timber.

In order for Energy Use to become sustainable we must: Use the minimum amount of energy possible; Use only renewable energy sources. In this way we are not wasting energy, and we are not depending on fossil fuels for our energy production.

Heating Food. At present food is heated primarily by either electricity or by natural gas. Using electricity to heat *anything* is very inefficient due to the cost in energy and environmental impact of generation and transmission of electricity from power stations to the heat sink. The obvious way to improve the efficiency and reduce the environmental impact of home cooking is through the use of natural gas. While natural gas (methane) is presently produced from fossil sources, it can and will in future be manufactured from renewable agricultural sources.

Heating Water. The most sustainable method of heating water is solar water heating with a natural gas booster.

Space Heating (Homes and Business Premises). The most energy efficient methods are Passive Solar, Electric Air Conditioning, Gas, and Slow Combustion Wood Fires. Air conditioning has the drawback that almost all electricity is produced from fossil fuels. Gas has the drawback that Natural Gas is at present a fossil fuel. Slow combustion wood fires have two drawbacks: The majority of firewood in use today is not harvested in a sustainable manner; Poorly designed and maintained wood fires can produce toxic gases and smoke consisting of particulates, with adverse health effects.

The ideal sustainable fuel mix for space heating would be: Sustainable plantation hardwood used in efficient and well maintained slow-combustion heaters; Natural gas derived from renewable agricultural sources.

Light, Entertainment, Office Machines and Power Tools. The dominant and most flexible way of powering the majority of domestic and business devices is electricity.

Electricity is produced and distributed by a variety of methods, but predominantly by burning coal in massive power stations and distributing the resulting electricity through 'the grid'. Production of electricity in this way has two major drawbacks: Burning coal is not sustainable - it will eventually run out; Burning coal produces large amounts of carbon dioxide, the dominant greenhouse gas.

There are two things that can be done to make electricity use become gradually more sustainable: Reduce the amount of electricity used; Use renewable sources of electricity generation

How Do We Use Less Electricity? Every resident of the Blue Mountains, and indeed the world, owes it to the planet to do as much as possible to reduce electricity use. *Never* use electricity directly for heating *anything*; Install compact fluorescent bulbs in place of incandescent lamps; Turn off lights and appliances that are not being used; Buy energy efficient appliances.

How Can Electricity Production Become Sustainable? In order to become sustainable, electricity will need to be produced from renewable sources. The most promising renewable electricity generation sources are Wind Power, and Solar Photovoltaic Panels.

Transport Energy Use.

Liquid and gaseous fuels used for cars, motor cycles, buses, trucks, locomotives and aircraft are fossil fuels that are *not sustainable*. All of these fuels release carbon into the atmosphere and contribute to the greenhouse effect and global warming. All of these fuels must be phased out within 25 years if we are to have a sustainable energy system.

The only liquid or gaseous fuels that are sustainable in the long term are those derived from renewable agricultural sources. Methane (natural gas) can be made by biological digestion of waste animal and plant matter, liquefied, and used as a liquid vehicle fuel. Ethanol can be made by fermenting and distilling crops, and then used as a liquid vehicle fuel. Both of these fuels should be pursued by energy producers as a method of achieving long-term transport fuel sustainability.

The obvious way to reduce use of liquid and gaseous transport fuels is to not drive our cars! Walking, cycling and public transport all result in far less energy use than driving a car. Similarly, freight should be transported in bulk by rail rather than by truck wherever possible, as rail is far more energy efficient due to lower friction and economies of scale.

The Blue Mountains: What Can We Do?

All residents of the Blue Mountains should do their best to reduce their energy use.

Blue Mountains City Council should be introducing Development

Control Plans that encourage: Energy-efficient building designs; Solar hot water systems; Reduced distance to public transport, especially for medium-density housing (townhouses and units); High efficiency and pollutant standards for wood heater

Blue Mountains City Council should also be moving to renewable fuels for all Council fleet vehicles.

Integral Energy should be introducing: 'Real' green-power schemes whereby residents can buy renewable electricity; Local solar panel power systems at schools and community buildings.

City Rail and State Rail should be introducing: More frequent services between Penrith and Lithgow to encourage local transport by rail; Electric locomotives with regenerative braking; More efficient electric trains.

The NSW State Government should be spending large sums of money to ensure that the electricity grid moves progressively to wind, solar and waste powered electricity generation.

The Sustainable Energy Development Authority should fund a scheme to lease gas-boosted solar hot water systems to householders, with the lease payments collected by Electricity Retailers in place of electric hot water bills.

The Federal Government should be encouraging: The development of renewable electricity generation systems; Research into more efficient and cheaper solar photovoltaic panels; The development of renewable liquid fuels such as ethanol; The gradual phase out of local and imported fossil fuels.

Eco Site Tour

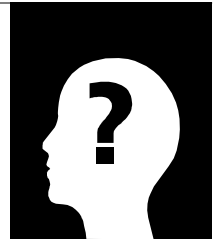
Sunday 21 January, 2001

We will visit several properties that have implemented ecological design features and gain valuable insights into what constitutes sustainable design and practice. These people are really "living it" and have put their body and soul into building their places. Not to be missed!

There will be more information in January *Hut News*. We will need to know number of people coming. Phone Vera 4782-5375.

History of the Federal Pass

Jim Smith is currently completing a history of the Federal Pass. This will be the most detailed history of any Australian walking track. Only a small number of copies will be printed. These will be for people who have placed an order by the end of January 2001. To secure your copy send a cheque for \$25 to Jim Smith, 65 Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls, 2782. This includes delivery and GST. The books will be delivered in February 2001. Add \$5.50 for Jim Smith's other Jamison Valley walking track history: The Blue Mountains Mystery Track — Lindeman Pass.



In My Backyard ...

At last the rain has finished. After weeks of living in a cloud, summer has arrived. Yesterday evening there were swarms of insects.

During the day, Caper White butterflies are migrating, thousands of them flying north. (I wonder how far they travel? How long do they live? Why do they migrate? Do they lay their eggs before they go, or do others fly south to make the new population for next year's migration? Does anybody know?)

Mother Magpie now brings her baby to the door, and what a noise he makes! The Wattle Bird baby, who was demanding food from his parent a week ago, is now on his own. Today I heard the lovely song of a thornbill, so loud for such a little bird, foraging on the branches of the scribbly gum. The birds have looked quite bedraggled in the wet weather, and like us they rejoice in seeing the sun return. This morning I found Mother Magpie sprawled out on a pile of mulch, flat on her back with wings outstretched — sunbathing!

Last Thursday we walked at Glastonbell. On the ridge were masses of wildflowers — most noted were the Waratahs, just past their prime, and the Native Iris. Below the ridge we wandered past marvellous caves, with water falling, dripping and splashing down the rocks, then, in a more exposed place, through masses of Boronia, their perfume strong in the heat. Finally we reached the Cathedral Cave — such a beautiful place.

It was a wonderful walk! Many thanks to the owners who allowed us to walk "in their backyard". Christine Davies 28/11/2000.

A Walk at the Zig Zag Railway

On Sunday 29 October we went on a fascinating walk with Ron Wheeler on a track only constructed several years ago, from the State Rail's Zig Zag railway station, 10 km east of Lithgow, up a hill to the Zig Zag Railway Trusts Clarence Station on the Chifley Rd. and back down again via some picturesque lookouts.

Anyone who has done a walk with Ron Wheeler (regardless of whether he is leading!) will know that he is a mine of information on anything and everything in the Blue Mountains, so this walk was made all the more interesting with his knowledge of the Zig Zag Railway, built late last century to enable rail access between Sydney and Australia west of the Blue Mountains. One of the lookouts we visited, Viaduct Lookout, where we had lunch, gave a good overall view of the whole Zig Zag, made up of three viaducts (sandstone multi-arched bridges) and at least one tunnel from what we could see. As it was a Sunday, one of the busier days for the Zig Zag trust, a steam train and a diesel traversed the Zig Zag throughout the day.

The day was complemented even more from the various wildflowers we saw on the hill above Zig Zag station

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Dec 16 (Sat) Management Meeting.**
(There will be no General Meeting in December)
- Jan 26 (Fri) General Meeting,** at the Conservation Hut, 7.30 pm. Guest speaker will be David Geering, National co-ordinator of the Regent Honeyeater Recovery Program.

QUOLL CLUB (Activities for 12 and under)
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.)

Dec 10 (Sun) Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group. Meet 9 am at the Reserve (GWH, West of Sorenson Bridge). Contact Ross Coster 4759.1247.

Dec 12 (Tue) Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group. Contact Jessica 4757.2783 for the meeting place. (following Tuesday if wet).

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.*

Dec 04 Mount Boyce from Blackheath. Meet Blackheath commuter carpark 9am. Contact June Baxter 4787.7312. BBQ after.

Dec 18 LEISURE WALKERS CHRISTMAS PARTY, after walk at Lawson. Meet at Lawson bowling club carpark 9am. Contact Jan Cutler 4784.3079.

Bushwalks: *Walks of various grades, full or half day.*

Dec 02 (Sat) Terrace Falls and South Lawson Falls. Meet Hazelbrook Station 9.30. Contact Kate McManus 4758.7936. *Medium, half day.*

Dec 16 (Sat) BUSHWALKER'S CHRISTMAS PARTY, after walk at Hazelbrook. Meet Hazelbrook Station 9.30. Contact Kate McManus 4758.7936.

Next year's walks start in the second week of January, but your walk leader will give you a "Walks Survey for 2001" to participate in planning for next year. If not, ask me for one. Have your say! Return to me direct or to the leaders.

Merry Christmas. Bill.

Walks are generally Easy to Medium Grade, unless otherwise noted. **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.

(local known as Coronary Hill!). We saw some purple orchids in such large numbers that some of us had never seen so many. We took our time wandering back among the heath, down in time for some afternoon tea at Bottom Points Station near Zig Zag Station, and a brief tour of the rail yard nearby, viewing various steam trains from Queensland, Tasmania and an American one, which they hope to have restored up to running status one day. It was one of two that were shipped out by the U.S. during World War II, to supplement Australia's lack of trains at the time — unfortunately while being transported to Australia, the transport was bombed by the Japanese near Fiji, so the other train is currently on the bottom of the Pacific Ocean!

Catching the train home was rather a novel task, because the train only stops there if required (the platform only being around 4m long!). A stick is provided on the station with a green disc on top which is held out when the train is approaching, to inform the driver that you want to get on! I think we were all glad to get on as we were a bit worried that the little platform we were on wouldn't be able to take all our weight!

Overall it was a good day, it had a good mixture of nature and history, the wildflowers and the Zig Zag and its trains, and the extensive information provided by Ron made it all the more worthwhile. *Matthew.*

From the Bushwalkers ...

Some haiku and quotes from the Thursday walks with Christine Davies Elphinstone Plateau with Don Morison

Going native
the pine trees
daubed in lichen

Wentworth Falls with Jill Dark

"I'm not quite sure how it all works, but left alone, it works fine." (Jill on the symbiotic relationship between certain fungi and orchids)

To Cathedral Cave with C.D.

This faint track
under the vertical wall-
isopogon (Bill Graham)

Days and days of rain
now the cliffs weep
onto red waratahs

Jordan to Bernadette: "Mummy - the drops are falling and then breaking into heaps"

In Name Cave The very air
almost trickling
over my skin

Diana Levy.

Diana Levy will be teaching the art of writing haiku as part of Camp Creative at Katoomba High School in January. Her one-day course is on 9th January. Further details ring the C.C. organizers on 4788-1591 or Diana on 4751-3935.