

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



Blood Sport Bill Under Fire

For anyone concerned about uses of public land, animal cruelty, exclusive powers being handed to one self-interest group or even professional pest management, the NSW Game Bill is one of the most alarming pieces of legislation that has come before the NSW Parliament in many years.

The Bill allows any public land, including Crown and council owned land, to be declared exclusively available to sporting shooters, pig doggers and other hunters without prior notice. The Pilliga scrubland in the Central West is top of the list for declaration according to the Minister for Agriculture's office, defeating any chance for that to become national park. Although the Carr government has excluded existing national parks from use by hunters at this point, the Coalition has declared that they would open them up if they gained office in March 2003.

The Bill has been sold on the grounds of pest control and regulation of hunters. Both are a lie. Pest control should be managed, systematically and professional. Sporting shooters and hunters are not interested in controlling pests, rather they have a long history of introducing, dispersing and increasing pest species across the state, such as pigs, deer and foxes so they have a continuous supply of game animals to target. As for native animals, some indigenous quail and waterfowl are listed as targets for hunters in the Bill, and most people would be aware that there will be more than a few native wallabies,

kangaroos or any other visible species that will either be caught in the crossfire or will be the target of hunters that can't find anything else to aim their guns or crossbows at.

The Bill creates the Game Council of NSW which is comprised of a majority of hunters in charge of issuing licences, exemption from licences, writing the rules, monitoring, inspecting all hunting and recommending public lands to be given over for hunting.

It endorses animal cruelty by stating that any methods, instruments or animals can be used by hunters to stalk, corner, capture and kill "game". There is no offence for cruelty to an animal under the Act and no opportunity to monitor, regulate or even rescue injured animals from hunting grounds.

The Bill reintroduces "duck" (waterfowl) hunting and allows no opportunity for rescues or independent monitoring of such activity.

It undermines and weakens other Acts, such as the Rural Lands Protection Act, the Forestry Act, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the National Parks and Wildlife Act by removing licensing, control, monitoring or prosecution powers from those agencies and putting them into the hands of hunters.

The Bill has been deferred until April 9 — when it will return to the Lower House before travelling its way through to the Upper House. The only thing that will defeat it is an enormous public backlash against it. So please get pen to paper, fax, email, hassle and argue against it using any of the above information. There is time yet but it needs to be done NOW. **Write urgently to Bob Carr**

house and swamp was to be slashed to give bushfire protection to the house!

Ecological buffers to hanging swamps and any other sensitive vegetation communities need to be intact and at least 60 m to be effective.

Council officers prepared an excellent report to the Council recommending that this development be refused because of the unacceptable impact on the hanging swamp and its buffer. The applicant withdrew the application.

Well done Council, and also to the residents who raised a range of other valid points.

After the Fires

Just six weeks after the bushfires, the bush was bursting with new life. Blackened trunks clothed in fresh green epicormic foliage, masses of new growth sprouting from underground lignotubers, leafy new waratah stems already a metre tall, tiny banksia seedlings...

Walking in burnt heathland near Wentworth Falls, everywhere I looked amongst the blackened stems and branches were all kinds of woody seed capsules, opened up and releasing a multitude of seeds — banksias, isopogons, petrophiles, hakeas, allocasuarinas. I shook a branch of a mallee eucalypt and tiny seeds rained onto the ground below. A real smorgasbord for seed-eating birds, so it was not surprising to find Crimson Rosellas and Red-browed Finches abundant in the burnt area, with a few Beautiful Firetail here and there. (*Blue Mountains Bird Observers newsletter, February 2002*)

New Management Committee

Over 40 members braved the elements on Good Friday to vote at the AGM and see Ian Brown's superb slides of the mountainous World Heritage area of southern New Zealand, and of Cape York.

Working for the Environment in State Parliament

Guest speaker at our April general meeting will be Rachel Walmsley, Environment Liaison Officer for the peak environment groups at NSW Parliament. Rachel will talk about her job as ELO, and tell us about the varied work done by the groups and some of the legislation which they have worked on amending over the last year. This ranges from minor amendments on small bills, to massive overhauls of legislation, emergency press conferences, submissions to parliamentary inquiries, involvement in the state budget process (and of course gossiping in the corridors of Macquarie Street).

Rachel will also share some anecdotes about some of the crazy things that go on up at parliament house, and some of the amusing and eccentric characters they get to work with! Her presentation will give members an

insight into how environment groups can impact upon law-making processes, and also a perspective on some of our state's unique politicians.

The meeting will be held at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, on Friday 26 April, starting at 7.30 pm. Visitors are very welcome.

Good News for Blue Mtns

Last year Council received an application for a subdivision at the end of Grand Canyon Road in Medlow Bath, adjacent to the National Park. The land contains a pristine hanging swamp on a steep slope which runs down to Katoomba Creek.

The Society lodged a detailed objection on a number of environmental grounds. Our main objections centred around the protection of the hanging swamp. The house was to be located close to the edge of the swamp, and would not have left an adequate ecological buffer to protect it. And then this small strip of bushland between the

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Five Day Activity 2002

Wednesday 14 to Sunday 18 August

(4 nights camping out) 'Wolgan/Newnes Plateau in Golden Wattle Time'. Visit Gooch's Crater, Mt Horne, Deep Pass (2 nights), 'River Cave', Noble Canyon, Glow Worm Tunnel, Newnes.

Join for 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 days. Vehicle supported. No carrying heavy packs more than 1 km. Warm-up activities available. Please register your interest early with Don Morison 4782.3993.

Capertee Valley Tree Planting

Since 1994, the Capertee Valley Regent Honeyeater Recovery Group and its many volunteer supporters have planted over 37,000 trees and shrubs at various strategic sites throughout the valley. In April 2002, another 3500 trees and shrubs will be planted on a property near Glen Davis, with the aid of Natural Heritage Trust funding.

Why not join us on the weekend of 13-14 April. On the spot training will be provided. Accommodation options range from camping at Glen Davis or on a local property to staying in one of the cottages available throughout the valley (usually around \$20 per night), or you may prefer to arrange hotel or motel

accommodation in the nearby towns of Kandos or Rylstone. A Saturday evening meal has been arranged for volunteers (at an expected cost of \$20). This dinner is a great opportunity to socialise and is always a great hit.

To register or for more information, contact the National Regent Honeyeater Recovery Coordinator, David Geering on (freecall) 1800 521056 or email: david.geering@npws.nsw.gov.au

Please register ASAP if you require accommodation and to be assured of a place at the dinner.

See you there! *Carol Proberts.*

Join Mountain Watch

Do you live at Glenbrook, Hazelbrook, Blackheath or in the Megalong? Do you want to help look after your local bushland? All you need is some time to walk around your area and access to an email, or a library computer. We are looking for residents in these towns in particular to join the network of members in Mountain Watch.

We would also welcome members living in other towns to strengthen this network which is keeping watch over developments in the Mountains. We check development applications to see if there are any developments in areas where they shouldn't be. We also check to see if developments are being designed to protect the special features of the area, like creeks, rocky outcrops or swamps.

Mountain Watchers are gaining specialised knowledge of their part of the mountains. This knowledge will be invaluable when the new Local Environment Plan is open for public comment again soon. It is through the LEP that areas of environmental sensitivity can be protected by its zoning.

Local knowledge can be very useful to Council officers when they are trying to assess the suitability of developments and if given at this time, can effect the conditions put on the development.

Join Mountain Watch if you are keen to protect our mountains from any more bad development. *Lyndal Sullivan 4782 1635 or Claire Wilson 4759 1319.*

Draft Catchment Blueprints

Draft Warragamba and Hawkesbury Lower Nepean Blueprints have been placed on public exhibition until 30 April. Together the Blueprints cover the whole of the Hawkesbury Nepean catchment.

The draft Blueprints provide a strategic framework for natural resource management and investment for the next ten years through setting targets and priorities. The Blueprints will provide real benefits by: bringing together, in one place all the actions that are necessary to improve the catchment; draw together all the state policies that influence catchment management and reflect them at a catchment level; help set priorities for natural resource management investment, bring about a more coordinated and concentrated effort that focuses on priorities; and support

and establish partnerships. The draft Blueprints will focus time, money, skills and knowledge over the next 5-10 years to improve land condition and river health, conserve the diversity of our native animal and plant communities including aquatic habitats, and enhance the community's awareness and capacity to participate in catchment management.

Catchment health can only be achieved by involving the whole community and everyone is encouraged to become aware of the contents of the draft Blueprints and make a written submission to the Minister. *Alison Kniha, Dept. Land and Water Conservation.*

Welcome to New Members

Fiona Campbell, Emu Plains
Kevin and Robyn Stapleton, Leura
Catherine Wallace, Katoomba
Rick Tanaka, Katoomba
Stuart Linley, Hunters Hill

Foxes Introduced to Tasmania

It has been over nine months since Tasmanians started to suspect that the worst imaginable biodiversity disaster had occurred — the introduction of European red foxes to the state. In this time the apparent scale of this waking nightmare has grown from one or two individual animals to a population of as many as sixty in a number of distinct northern Tasmanian locations. Most unbelievable of all was the revelation that a small group of individuals had deliberately introduced foxes to the state. It is thought that up to 19 fox cubs were introduced to at least three distinct locations over a two year period.

The big loser from an established fox population would be Tasmania's biodiversity, with terrestrial mammals weighing up to 5.5 kg, ground nesting birds, amphibians and small reptiles most at risk. There are 77 species in Tasmania that meet these criteria. The decline of the Eastern barred bandicoot, Eastern quoll and New Holland mouse on mainland Australia is attributed at least in part to fox predation and/or competition.

Though slow to react to the scale of the potential disaster, the Tasmanian Government recently announced dedicated funding and a number of fox taskforce positions.

Unfortunately, we still do not know if the fox problem can be contained. It may be that foxes have already dispersed in sufficient numbers to make it all but impossible to totally eradicate them. January 2002 saw credible fox sightings at Somerset in the north-west, Kempton in the southern midlands and on the Tasman Peninsula in the south-east. Only time will tell if these are isolated animals or the heralds of a major decline in Tasmania's biodiversity. (*Source: Article by Craig Woodfield, Tasmanian Conservation Trust, in "The Web", The Threatened Species Network newsletter*)

Barren Grounds Nature Reserve

Wind Power on Our Doorstep

On my way home from the Rydal Show, I drove into the small hamlet of Hampton on the Oberon Road. I looked up to see two giant wind power turbines churning out GREEN POWER — here in the Blue Mountains (well almost). It was just great to experience. We managed to arrive just as an International delegation from China, Solomon Islands, Planet Arc were inspecting them. These 660 kilowatt 'Vesta' wind turbines are made in Denmark, and designed in 1997 (\$2.3 million each), but already the new version in the market place is 2,200 kWatts. On my reckoning these two towers supply the equivalent of 466 households with power for a year. It was an inspiring sight.

Farmers in high wind areas can now consider wind farming if they are lucky enough to have land in a windy area that is close to a road and not far from the electricity grid. Great for decentralisation. The only problem seems to be raising the capital. Maybe a government loan scheme could be set up to help farmers with viable land to get started. I can recommend a visit to any of the following sites.

I was told in 1986 in a university lecture that alternative power would never replace coal powered power stations for this was the only system able to produce the huge amounts of power required for modern society to function well. More than 90% of Australia's energy currently comes from coal-fired power stations, with less than 10% coming from clean renewable sources.

An interesting fact I discovered — the wind blowing across south western WA could supply 45 times Australia's energy needs!

What is wind energy? Wind energy is created by energy from the sun that reaches the lower atmosphere. Differences in atmospheric temperatures and the earth's rotation cause air to move, generating the wind. Depending on climatic conditions and surface topography, wind varies significantly in intensity over a day, a season, or a year.

We can harness the wind's energy through 'wind farms' of modern wind turbines that generate electricity. A successful wind farm needs a site that has strong and steady wind throughout the year — usually more than 6.5 metres per second (23 km/h) on average.

A Growing Industry. Wind energy is one of the fastest-growing energy technologies in the world. At the end of 2000 the total installed capacity of global wind energy exceeded 18,000 MW, compared to under 2,000 MW ten years ago.

Wind energy in NSW. The



total wind energy capacity in NSW has been estimated at well over 1,000 MW. If this resource was fully exploited, wind energy could supply over 2,200 GWh of electricity, reducing NSW carbon dioxide emissions by 2,200 million tonnes per annum.

Wind energy costs are directly related to available wind speeds. For this reason, reliable wind assessment is required to predict generation costs. However, a typical figure in NSW would be in the range of 8 to 12 cents/kWh generated. Costs of establishing wind farms in NSW are approximately \$1.8 million per megawatt of output. These costs are expected to fall as more wind farms are built.

Blayney wind farm has 15 wind turbines, each with a capacity of 660 kW. It was commissioned in October 2000, and will produce enough electricity annually to power 3,500 homes. Crookwell Wind Farm was the first grid-connected wind farm in Australia when installed by Pacific Power in 1998. It consists of eight 600kW turbines giving a total capacity of 4.8MW.

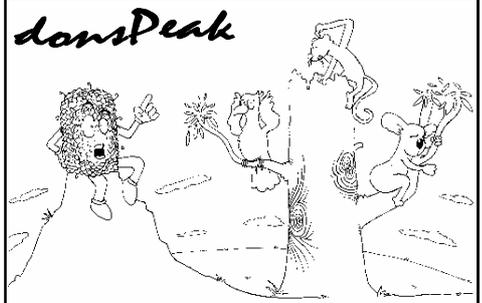
Hampton Wind Park is the newest wind farm in NSW. It supplies electricity to Integral Energy's Green Power customers. Kooragang Island's (Newcastle) single 600kW wind turbine has been operated by Energy Australia since its installation in 1997.

It is fascinating to ponder this fact: if you double the wind speed you increase the available power by a factor of eight. Thus, a turbine operating at a site with an average wind speed of 12 mph will generate about 29% more electricity than one at an 11 mph site.

Wind Energy in the Future. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the world's winds could theoretically supply the equivalent of 5,800 quadrillion BTUs (quads) of energy each year — more than 15 times current world energy demand. (A quad is equal to about 172 million barrels of oil or 45 million tons of coal.) The potential of wind to improve the quality of life in the world's developing countries, where more than two billion people live with no electricity or prospect of utility service in the foreseeable future, is vast.

What is the "energy payback time" for a wind turbine? A wind turbine typically takes only a few months (3-8, depending on the average wind speed at its site) to "pay back" the energy needed for its fabrication, installation, operation and retirement. What's more, the machines at Hampton can pump out their 660Kwatts for 98% of the year (non stop). They require very little maintenance.

Now consider this — if you combine the wind power contribution together with wave power from the ocean (being constructed now at Wollongong), solar electric power, geothermal power from underground, and many other alternative clean energies we really do start to see a paradigm shift in how we create our energy the "clean, green way". *Mike Purtell.* (More information: Sustainable



Political Football Number One

When Labor Minister Richard Amery abolished the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust in 2001, the non-Labor majority in the NSW Upper House carried a censure motion against him. Greens MLC Ian Cohen referred various terms of reference to a Standing Committee (also with a non-Labor majority).

In its March 2002 report, the Committee recommended reinstatement of the Trust. It also made a number of other recommendations which the Carr Government could adopt without eating humble pie. These include re-establishing community representation, establishing a volunteer network and appointing a River Manager to co-ordinate government agencies.

The report takes some space to justify these recommendations. Overall, it provides a reasonable balance between looking to the future and caning a former minister who had presented the appropriate target to green oriented politicians and activists.

Not So Fast

The new train timetable from 21 April ushers in slower train trips over most of greater Sydney than have been experienced for a number of years. Reasons include increased patronage since 1996 and a desire for improved on-time running. Nonetheless, advocates for environmentally friendly transport have a right to be disappointed.

The Blue Mountains Commuters and Transport Users' Association and 'Action for Public Transport' are among the groups criticising the new timetable. With all the federal and state funding that has been put into maintaining and improving car trip times, both governments need to make a commitment to fast and safe rail travel.

Political Football Number Two

The 'Population of Australia' debate is turning into an unproductive slanging match: "Sydney is too crowded" (Bob Carr); "More migrants would help the economy" (Simon Crean and Victoria's Steve Bracks). However,

Membership Enquiries

Contact Elizabeth van Reyswoud

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Very Easy Walks Program

The new program of Very Easy Walks got off to a good start with seven walkers. The first walk was a walking tour of Blackheath Gardens and Parks on Thursday 28 March. These weekly walks each Thursday, meeting at 10.30am with lunch at noon, will be a series of 10 walks from Woodford to Mt York.

Please join in our very slow pace walks if you are an older walker, parent or grandparent with an infant, family groups or recovering from illness. Call Bill Graham (4759.1692) for a program.

Interpretive Bushwalks

The next series of Thursday interpretive bushwalks will start on May 2. Contact Christine Davies 4787.7246 for more information. Below is a description of two recent walks.

Bird Walk with Carol Proberts

Lake Wallace, near Wallarawang, is sometimes cold and windswept, but we chose a particularly nice day and the lake was calm.

There were THOUSANDS of birds — on the lake, floating, swimming, diving, wading, on the banks, sheltering in the reeds, circling over the lake (a Little Eagle), in the surrounding trees and grass. Carol identified 34 different bird species.

We wondered about an insect on the bank, crawling towards the reeds. It had a long slender body and wings still unopened. Then we discovered many more clinging to the reeds — newly emerged dragonflies.

We went to the trout farm at Marrangaroo for lunch, in a beautiful setting, beneath the arches of the stone railway viaduct built around 1870. We brought plates of food to share, and barbecued fresh trout which were delicious.

Fungi Walk with David Burrell

Along the gentle walk through the rainforest at Mount Wilson there was lots of excitement as we discovered all sorts, colours and shapes of fungi. David told us about fungi, an ancient group of plants which feed on and break down organic matter. What we see is the fruiting body; the fungi themselves are slender threads within the organic matter.

The first waterfall was stunningly beautiful. The filtered sunlight touched the water droplets, turning them into shining emeralds of water cascading downwards through the green moss.

We had lunch in the garden of Sefton Cottage, a real banquet. Through David's microscope we were able to look at the diverse shapes and textures of the fungi we had collected, to see the white and golden threads of the fungi itself, and some of the microscopic creatures who inhabit this miniature world. While we were lunching a kookaburra demonstrated its expertise on fungi, selecting and eating part of our

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Apl 20 (Sat) Management Meeting, 9 am, Mid Mtns Community Centre, Lawson.

Apl 26 (Fri) General Meeting at The Hut, 7.30 pm. (See page 1).

QUOLL CLUB (Activities for 12 and under - contact Jessica 4788.1200).

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

Apl 13 (Sat) Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group. (9 am, 2nd Saturday of every month) Contact Karen on 4757.1929 for the meeting place.

BUSHWALKS:

Monday Leisure Walks: *Usually half day walk unless noted, leisurely pace.*

Apl 08 Baltzers Lookout and Hanging Rock. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9am. ☎ Bill 4759.1692

Apl 15 Forgotten Walk No2. Meet Faulconbridge, 50 metres into Georges Cres. 9am. ☎ Alan 4739.2767.

Apl 22 Echo Bluff and Empire Pass. Meet Lawson Bowling Club carpark 9am. ☎ Jock 4758.6346

Apl 29 Mystery Walk. Meet Medlow Bath Station, opposite Hydro 9am. ☎ June 4787.7312.

May 06 Lockleys Pylon. Meet Leura carpark, cnr GWH 9am. ☎ Ron 4757.1526.

Bring lunch for longish walk, may the weather be kind!

May 13 National Pass to Conservation Hut. Meet Wentworth Falls Station 9am. ☎ Kees 4759.1958.

May 20 Bus Trip to Hill End and Sofala. To avoid disappointment, must be booked and paid with Kees 4759.1958 as limited numbers available.

Weekend Bushwalks: *Bushwalkers are requested to phone the contact before 8 pm the day before the walk. The walk may be cancelled if fewer than 4 walkers register. or if other circumstances make conditions unsafe.*

Apl 13 (Sat) Kedumba Pass. Meet Wentworth Falls Rail carpark 9am. (NB time) ☎ Kees 4759.1958. Hard day walk. Bring extra water/lunch.

Apl 20 (Sat) Megalong to Cox's River on Six Foot Track. Meet Blackheath Station commuter carpark 9am. ☎ Bill 4758.8545. Medium day walk. Bring lunch.

Apl 27 (Sat) Mount Solitary. Meet Katoomba Station, Gearins Hotel side, 9am. ☎ Warwick 4757.1354. Long and hard with climb both ends. Bring extra water/lunch.

May 04 (Sat) Gray's Lookout, Bluegum Swamp. Meet Springwood Rail carpark northside 9am. ☎ Elizabeth 4754.4966. Easy/medium. Bring lunch.

May 12 (Sun) Ikara Head. Meet Mt Vic Station 9.30am. ☎ Judy 4787.1191. Easy/medium, good views. Bring lunch.

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. Suited to people of better than average fitness, but discuss with the contact if in doubt. **Hard:** We occasionally arrange a walk considered most suited to experienced and

collection.

Leisure Walkers Bus Trip

Ferntree Gully, near Rylstone

The day dawned fine and bright, but by 8 o'clock it had clouded over, the rain was pouring down and a thick white fog or atmospheric mist with which we are all so familiar had shrouded the whole of the Upper Blue Mountains. So it was not surprising there were only six intrepid bushwalkers.

We fitted comfortably into Anna Marie's van and set off hopefully for the west. By the time we had passed Lithgow the rain had cleared and it seemed to be an ideal day for walking.

From the area of Pearsons Lookout, near Capertee, we were able to look at a fine panorama of the landform of the Blue Mountains. In this same area we visited Ploughman's Lavender farm, had a cuppa and bought some different varieties of Lavender plants. We were all interested in "The Last Straw" Dance Hall at this same farm. It is a straw bail

building and as it is not yet finished we were able to see the process of construction.

From here we journeyed on to Rylstone where after some discussion with the cooks we arranged to have our hot lunches at 2pm. So off we went up the Bylong road to find Ferntree Gully. This was a marvellous place for a walk. The chasm winds through the rock formations, filled with the myriad variety of temperate rain forest plants, including ancient eucalypts and thick fig roots like organ pipes on the cliff faces. The rocky cliffs were covered with rock lily plants, native orchids that we would love to see in flower. We calculated that we will need to come back in September or October when they should be in bloom. We took the Gully Track and returned via the Lookout track. From Flat Rock Lookout we were able to see the whole of the gully we had just walked through.

The Globe in Rylstone, built in 1884, proved to be a great place for our lunch and a drink, and we enjoyed a quick look around the old town.