

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"

President's Report.

The past year has been one of the busiest yet for the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, with activities increasing in every aspect of our work.

The year started wonderfully with the Swamp Dance to help raise awareness of the importance of our unique Blue Mountains hanging swamps. This campaign has gained considerable momentum during the year.

The Society's 40th birthday celebrations were another high note, with a truly memorable dinner at the Hut to which all the pioneer members we could locate were invited. It was followed by a Tree Planting ceremony in the John Buki Garden at which federal, state, council and NPWS representatives planted trees propagated in our own nursery from seed of local provenance.

On a more serious note, just prior to the Federal elections we launched our campaign for the acquisition of inholdings of private land within the World Heritage area. This acquisition program will take years to achieve, but the Society is in there for the long haul.

Numbers of new recruits in both the Land Use and Education sub-committees have enabled many more projects to be undertaken.

The Land Use sub-committee has pursued policy and legislative concerns at state and federal levels, through letters, submissions and meetings with relevant departments and parliamentary representatives. Consultation has occurred with Blue Mountains City Council on a regular basis, and many

submissions have been lodged on a range of land use policy matters, and on particular developments.

The Environment Education sub-committee have prepared visual displays on Blue Mountains swamps, History of the Society, and 'Blue Mountains—World Heritage', researched and published the excellent brochures 'Burning Firewood Burns Habitat' and 'Living in Jamison Creek Water Catchment' and organised two workshops. Calico bags have been a great success financially, as well as raising awareness of the issue of the problem of plastic bags.

The Society's Native Plant Nursery will shortly have to expand in order to meet its commitments to provide the RTA with all the plants it needs for the highway upgrade.

Weekday and weekend bushwalks offer a fascinating smorgasbord of walking in the Mountains, and Interpretive bushwalks continue to be fully subscribed. Valley of the Waters bushcare group is seeing numbers grow after moving to a weekend timeslot. The Quoll Club continues to get kids into the bush to learn about the environment and have a good time.

At our General Meetings we have had an impressive range of guest speakers. This will continue, so if you haven't been lately, come along and check them out!

My thanks to all members of the Management Committee and sub-committees for their great work, and all the other members who have given their support by helping out when

to other websites for more detailed information. Greening your home, energy use and native gardening with photos and plant descriptions are just a few of the other topics available.

Water bugs found by Katoomba Public School in Katoomba Falls Creek as a Streamwatch activity are identified and there are links to other schools involved in Streamwatch and Sustainable Living activities. Games and books are listed in the schools webpages too.

This creative and colourful website must have something for everyone on it. Do have a look and if you don't have a computer take our website address to your local library where a librarian will help you explore some new ideas on the web.

No Charcoal Campaign

We hoped we had put the Lithgow silicon smelter to bed, but we were wrong. It's revived and rearing to go, using timber logged from beautiful native forests west of Bateman's Bay and then burned in a factory to be built just outside the lovely south coast village of Broulee, producing tonnes and tonnes of sawdust, toxic waste and greenhouse gas. Then the charcoal so produced will be transported (we are not sure how) to Lithgow, and you know the rest!

Needless to say, the conservation movement and south coast locals are appalled. They held an enthusiastic rally in the Sydney Domain on Sunday 7 April, with a handful of BMCS members in attendance.

Latest word is that a decision on the charcoal plant is to be made by mid May.

This is a critical conservation issue especially for us in the mountains. Let Bob Carr, Andrew Refshauge (c/o Parliament House, Sydney 2000) and Bob Debus (107 Macquarie Street, Springwood 2777) know how appalled you are. Contact Charcoalition, PO Box 521 Batemans Bay 2536, charcoalition@bigpond.com or www.charcoalition.com

May General Meeting

At our May general meeting ecologist Judy Smith will talk about birds, plants and conservation in western NSW. The focus of the talk will be the Paroo Overflow, in particular the area that is now Peery National Park.

Judy and Peter Smith visited this area on many occasions during the 1990's while it was a leasehold property, Peery Station. It is a fabulous area whose long lasting water sources and valuable stone resources for making tools have made it an important focus of Aboriginal life for many thousands of years.

Poloko and Peery Lakes which make up 15% of the nature reserve, have a key role in waterbird survival in north-west NSW. More than 28,000 waterbirds, representing 35 species, have been counted at Poloko Lake in a single month, 55 species recorded at Peery Lake.

Find out more and see some beautiful slides at our general meeting at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, on Friday 31 May, starting at 7.30 pm. Visitors are very welcome.

People Water Place

Living in a Catchment

This new website about water can be found on the Society's website www.pnc.com.au/~bmcs

People water place is a website about Sustainable Living, with special emphasis on Water in the Blue Mountains. Many people will be familiar with the booklet "Living near the Bush", a voluntary code and information guide for Blue Mountains residents and visitors. This website has been made to complement and build on that publication.

We hope by engaging and inspiring through story, anecdotes, poetry, photos and cartoons, to take the message to a yet deeper place within us, that nurtures our collective sense of place.

The page "Heartsongs" tells the stories of the Dharug, Gundungurra and Wiradjuri people who were the first inhabitants of the Blue Mountains. Lovely images accompany the stories.

The Water pages have interesting satellite images and describe what a water catchment is. There are also links

"Hut News", the newsletter of
Blue Mountains Conservation Society
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Turning the Transport Tide

(Extract from an article by Linley Kensitt, *Habitat*, April 2002)

While Australia drives its transport spending into larger and swifter roads, western European nations are steering themselves towards less auto-reliance.

On his recent speaking tour of Australia, international transport expert Professor John Whitelegg urged audiences to ask themselves this: do we need a national sustainable transport policy? To help answer, the veteran of 25 years of experience in transport, environment and sustainable development issues, suggested a look at trends and a squint into the future.

In sustainable transport circles Zurich is considered a benchmark. Its transport habits are one-third motorised, one-third public, and one third via bike or foot. Switzerland's rural model is also a shining example, providing excellent public transport to remote areas. In fact, a number of European transport models give cause for optimism.

Of Germany's total transport budget, no more than 50 per cent can be spent on roads. The Dutch invention of the "total journey concept" is another enlightened move. It is a seamless web of transport in which all sustainable modes are linked

— walking and cycling conditions are good, and public transport is accessible and integrated.

These countries, as well as Italy and France, are also experimenting with "car-free" days. On a few days a year, their cities are havens for pedestrians and cyclists. Another progressive concept on the increase in Western Europe is the car share club.

In Britain, traffic reduction is being tackled in other ways. One of these, the "walking bus", is getting children out of cars for the journey to school. The walking bus is pollution-free, builds exercise into children's daily lives, and helps reduce childhood obesity. Supervised by an adult 'driver' and 'conductor', children wearing reflector jackets walk on a route to and from school that passes all their homes.

The British are also taking positive action with the trialling of "home zones". These are residential areas in which the roads are shared between drivers, pedestrians and cyclists, with priority given to the latter two groups. Cars are considered "guests" and must not move faster than the pedestrians. This shift in road ownership is signified through changes to the street layout, including the introduction of street furniture and trees, traffic calming measures, and restrictions on parking.

Whitelegg is buoyed by the phenomenon of "evaporating traffic". While creating more roads generates new traffic, closing a street, or restricting car use through such schemes as home zones, has been shown to make traffic disappear — people decide to travel differently. Through investment in traffic reduction, alternative modes of transport, and local activity, local economies thrive. But more importantly these investments result in socially richer communities, where neighbours know each other and children can play in the streets.

Displays

Blue Mountains World Heritage

The Society's visual display with wonderful photographic images and information is now back in the Conservation Hut Foyer. It has been on tour to Katoomba, Springwood and Blaxland Libraries over the past six months. There is a glossy brochure about World Heritage to take away as well.

Blue Mountains Swamp Communities

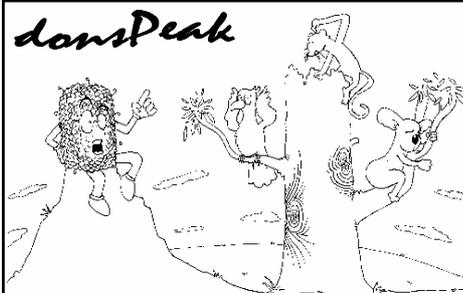
The visual display about swamp communities is now on exhibition in Katoomba Library.

Living in a catchment project.

The Living in a Catchment project includes the development of the water website and a water display. The water display is now on view in Katoomba Council Chambers.

Management Committee

The Society has vacancies on the management committee for Meetings Secretary, Publicity Officer, and National Parks Officer.



We Who Obstruct the Fast Track

The old chestnut about building developments not being approved quickly enough has been on the menu during the past month.

First, the New South Wales Chamber of Commerce complained about major developments being delayed while residents were consulted!

Then Australia's Glenn Murcutt won the Pritzke prize for Architecture (evidently very prestigious). During his wave of post-announcement publicity, Mr Murcutt made some general criticisms of New South Wales Councils. Mr Murcutt had extensive debate with officers of Blue Mountains Council, over a house proposed to be built to his design at Mount Wilson. The house was eventually approved but the episode clearly annoyed him.

The browbeating of Councils is nothing new. In the mid-1990s, a tabloid television program pilloried Blue Mountains Council for having a house at Blackheath demolished. The house had been constructed by an amateur without a Building Approval and its features included total absence of a toilet, meaning that the occupant used a creek that ran through the grounds instead.

Only last year, the NSW Government rejected an important series of amendments which environmental groups had proposed to Acts governing the Land and Environment Court.

So should Councils go back to 'roads, rates and rubbish' and should residents' groups and environmental organisations mind their own business?

Well ... no! Residents and environmentalists offer a series of perspectives that don't occur to developers and architects, even the world-renowned. Despite the presence of some excellent practitioners in Australia, the collective result of their recent work is depressing. Look-alike subdivisions skirt Sydney, the Blue Mountains, Canberra and Melbourne, as well as major country towns.

The houses in the new subdivisions are far larger than the

Membership Enquiries

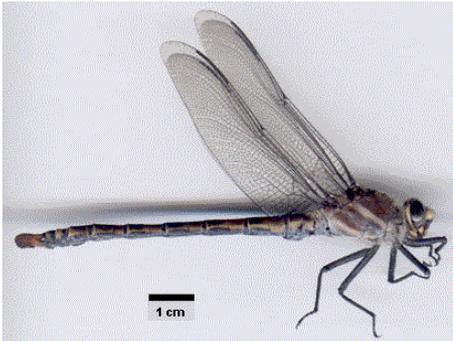
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Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

Blue Mtns Swamp



Dwellers

Petalura gigantea: "Giant" Dragonfly

Petalura gigantea is listed as endangered under the Threatened Species Conservation Act in New South Wales.

Unlike other dragonflies, the larvae of *Petalura gigantea* do not swim around in permanent ponds or open water. The larvae are **burrowers**. They make a permanent burrow in suitably soft ground/swamp/bog/mud, and live much like a trap-door spider, catching small animals as they pass by the entrance. They are nocturnal predators and may use underwater burrow entrances sometimes to hunt among aquatic vegetation as well as above ground. The larval stage may last for 10 years!

Petalura gigantea are known from swamps and streamlines or seepages in more-or-less natural condition, with short or moderate vegetation on a deep soil base. Known examples occur in the Blue Mountains and Southern Highlands, in the Clarence River catchment, and on a few coastal swamps from north of Grafton to south of Jervis Bay. There may or may not be others. The important habitat is the larval habitat as this determines where the species can breed and survive.

Petalura gigantea is a member of a family of dragonflies considered to be the most primitive in the world. Only 10 species are known worldwide, five in Australia, one in New Zealand, one in the Andes, two in North America, and one in Japan. Fossils (two, both from Europe) are known from the Jurassic period.

Information on how to identify *Petalura gigantea* can be found on the web at www.anu.edu.au/BoZo/trueman/labsite/petalura.htm. A pamphlet is available from NPWS.

Request for Volunteers

October Conference

The Sydney Environmental Education Network is holding their Annual Conference in the Blue Mountains this year — and it's the International Year of Mountains!

The conference is to be held in Katoomba from Friday 11 October, through to Sunday 13 October (the last weekend of the school holidays). BMCS

is one of the conference sponsors.

We are now calling for volunteers from the Society's membership to help out at the conference. Volunteers will be given free admission (this does not include accommodation) and will be asked to help in a variety of ways — field trips, greeting people as they arrive, helping with morning and afternoon teas, etc.

If you are interested in coming to the conference and can volunteer some of your time please keep the dates free and contact Jenny Hill 4782.1303.

BMCS Displays and Stalls

As you know, the Society is often asked to have a display or stall at events around the mountains. In June, for example, we have the World Environment Festival and Magic Winter Festival. We already have a short list of names of people who when available are happy to be contacted to help at these stalls. It's a great way to meet people in our community, to give the Society a human face and to educate people about conservation issues. If you would like to help out and you are happy to have your name added to our list of volunteers please contact Jenny Hill 4782.1303.

S E D A Conference

The Society was represented at the recent SEDA conference held at Medlow Bath. SEDA is the NSW Government's Sustainable Energy Development Authority. The conference theme was: Achieving a sustainable future in NSW.

Blue Mountains City Council General- Manager, Michael Willis, presented a paper at the conference. In his speech he stated that Local Government is at its best, when it's one with the community, outlined the "dilemma of achieving opposites" and provided an overview of the City Strategy. His paper included statistics from community consultations undertaken in 2001 as part of the City Strategy which show that 94% of Blue Mountains residents feel that preserving natural environment is their highest priority.

Other papers and workshops included information on Wind power, Green power, Investing in sustainability, Energy Smart homes and Designing sustainability into our lives.

Professor Ian Lowe from Griffith University gave the luncheon address. In

OLEGAS

A song by Bruce Watson, paying tribute to Olegas Truchanas (1923-72).

Chorus:

Olegas, you went walking through the mountains of Tasmania
Rolling down her rivers free and wild
Your camera and your lenses at your side.

He fled from Lithuania in 1945
Fought in the Resistance, lucky to be alive
Came out to Tasmania to start his life anew
A ten pound fare, two years with a mining crew

To most the South West wilderness was empty and unknown
But to him it was a chance to be with nature, all alone
Down the Denison River, up the Western Arthurs peaks
He'd go out on his own for weeks and weeks

The first to navigate the Gordon river all its length
A tribute to his spirit, his courage and his strength
Treading paths that no white man had ever trod before
Taking photographs to show this land to all

Of grey forbidding mountains, etched in golden setting sun
The crashing of the rapids, where the wild rivers run
Silhouettes of trees against the mounting tempest's cloud
The trickle of the spring, the tiny flower

He led the fight to save Lake Pedder from the HEC
Too precious to be flooded, he said the world just had to see
To the music of Sibelius, and his voice so rich and bright
Thousands saw his slides and joined the fight

Olegas died the same year that Lake Pedder was destroyed
And now those photographs are all that's left to fill the void
But the Franklin runs today because of

his address, Professor Lowe asserted that if we are serious about sustainability we must stabilise our populations; to live sustainably we must know more about natural systems and our impact on them; if we leave decisions to market forces then we exclude two things: all other species and all future generations.

A copy of all papers and information from the conference is available from our office at The Hut. For more details about the conference, contact Jenny Hill, 4782.1303.

Welcome to New Members

Susan Crick, Wentworth Falls
Lesley Edwards, Glenbrook

Pilliga Scrub Camp

Who would like to come camping in the Pilliga Scrub?

The Pilliga Scrub, north of Coonabarabran is a fascinating place with a long Indigenous and European history. Surrounded by farming land it has been described as "a sandy island of Australian Native Pines and black-trunked Ironbarks with a rich understorey of wattles, peas, orchids and cycads. It is a place where flannel flowers from the coast and rainforest remnants meet the emu-bushes and woods of the inland. Cradling a 126,000 hectare wilderness, the Pilliga is the largest Native Pine-Ironbark woodland left in Australia".

The Western Woodlands Officer of National Parks Association, David Paull has offered to show us around, take us for walks and tell us the natural history of the area. Even though some fauna are now lost to the Pilliga, there are still mammals, reptiles and a good diversity of birds present.

We can expect lovely sunny days and a frost on the ground in the mornings.

A one week camping trip is planned to leave on Sunday 2 June and return on Saturday 8 June. All participants will need to be completely self-contained with food, equipment, water etc. Can we minimize vehicles and share vehicle space? For more information ring Meredith 47824823.

Crossing the Blue Mountains

Mr Jim Percy has offered Blue Mountains Conservation Society weekend bushwalkers the chance to enjoy a mix of history, scenery and good bushwalking during a series of six walks over the next six months. Walks will range from twelve to sixteen kilometres and will be graded medium to hard. Each walk will commence and finish at a railway station for convenience.

The walks will kick off from Emu Plains railway station on Saturday 8 June at 8.30 am, an early start, but then weekend bushwalkers are a hardy lot. We will finish day one at Blaxland Railway Station.

Further walks will work their way up to Mount Victoria, finishing at Mount York. Please check the Walks columns in *Hut News* for starting times each month. More information will be available on Blue Mountains Conservation Society web site www.pnc.com.au/bmcs.

Short Term Reprieve

Blue Mountains train travellers might be relieved that implementation of the new CityRail timetable, due to commence 21 April, has been deferred until more train drivers are trained. The new timetable needs more drivers, but it's clear that none of them will be on mountains trains! The new mountains timetable contains only one of the common requests of mountains passengers and fails in all other ways.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

May 25 (Sat) Management Meeting, 9 am, Mid Mtns Community Centre, Lawson.

May 31 (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.)

May 11 (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.*

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. No vacancies.

May 27 Birdwood Gully. Meet Springwood Station carpark, GWH side, 9am. ☎ Kees 4759.1958. Medium.

June 03 Berghofer Pass. Meet Mt Vic Station 9am. ☎ Norah 4757.4058. Easy.

June 10 Mt Piddington/Hornes Point. Meet Mt Vic Station 9am. ☎ Kees 4759.1958. Easy/medium.

Very Easy Walks on Thursdays. Slow pace walks for the older walker, parent or grandparent with an infant, family groups or recovering from illness. Walks start at 10 am with lunch at noon. ☎ Bill Graham 4759.1692 for a program.

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.*

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.

May 18 (Sat) Narrow Neck. Start to finish 16km. Detour to Carlons Head. Meet Katoomba Station, Gearin's Hotel car park 9.30 am. Contact Bill 4758.8545. Long easy walk. Bring extra water/lunch.

June 02 (Sun) Bennett's Lookout. Meet Blackheath station car park, west side, 9.30 am. Contact Ron 4757.1526. Medium. Bring lunch.

June 08 (Sat) Crossing the Blue Mountains of NSW: Emu Plains to Blaxland. Meet Emu Plains Station 8.30 am. Contact Jim 4758.6009. Medium. Bring extra water/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

We wanted an hourly service all the way to Mt Victoria — no change, the same terrible Monday to Friday pm 2½ hour gap between trains, the same problems for weekend visitors.

We wanted more trains stopping at Kingswood, because of UWS, TAFE and the Nepean Hospital. In the new timetable, the one train that now stops at Kingswood will no longer stop there!

We wanted pm commuter trains from Sydney to stop at Penrith, to pick up mountains commuters from Penrith. It seems that one more pm train will stop at Penrith.

We assumed there would be the same number of morning trains, but the crowded 6.26 am and 6.45 am trains from Mt Victoria will now become one train leaving at 6.38 am. It will be chockers by Springwood!

One step forward, two steps back. Meanwhile, we're all forced onto the roads! *Jan Craney.*

Australia's Population

In the April edition of *Hut News* Don Morison raises the interesting issue of the impact of population size against the management of environmental resources. He suggests the latter is the more important.

He is entirely correct provided people are prepared to modify their consumption. It has been calculated that wealthy humans like Australians need to reduce consumption to about one tenth of present levels in order to allow fair distribution of the world's wealth among poorer nations. This would require such a drastic change in lifestyle that it is hard to see people welcoming the suggestion.

Each Australian has an ecological footprint of between five and fifteen hectares. This is the area needed to provide for our consumption and it has all been totally cleared or at least greatly modified for human purpose. Other species are permitted on this land only if they are useful to us.

If our numbers keep growing so will our total footprint and it is hard to see how even the most skilful management of resources can maintain water, air, soil