

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



THE GULLY STORY

Our next general meeting will be a celebration of the Gully declaration as an Aboriginal place.

The Gully's declaration as an Aboriginal place earlier this year is good news as it acknowledges the Aboriginal community's long use and association with this land. Gundungurra oral tradition records that it was a summer camp site prior to European settlement. After European contact Aboriginal people lived in the Gully until they were evicted in 1957 when the Catalina racing track was built.

The Gully is also known as Catalina Park, or Frank Walford Park and is located in the Katoomba Falls Creek

Valley, Katoomba.

The Gully story is also a story of peaceful co-existence between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who lived in the Gully. In recent times, it has become a story of community commitment to protecting the natural environment with bushcare and now the cultural heritage with this formal declaration, which was supported by the Society.

Guest speakers Dawn Colless, Gundungurra elder will speak about *Why the Gully is Sacred* and Joan Cooper, Dharug elder will tell us about *Life in the Gully*. Di Johnson, anthropologist will talk about successful co-existence amongst the Gully residents, and Susannah Power from NPWS will

explain what an Aboriginal place is under current legislation. Community groups who supported the nomination of the Gully will be invited.

After supper there will be a discussion facilitated by Eugene Stockton, archaeologist and author, with time for questions about life in the Gully and how bushcare can be carried out on a site of Aboriginal cultural significance.

The meeting will be held on Friday 26 July at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, starting at 7.30pm. It is a great opportunity to be a part of this community celebration. Visitors are very welcome.

The VMO: Help us Protect Bushland

A leaflet is inserted in this month's Hut News to explain what the Vegetation Management Order (VMO) is.

There has been well publicized opposition to the VMO by a small group of gardeners who are mainly objecting to restrictions already included in the current Tree Preservation Order which the VMO will replace.

Just in case you thought there was some validity to the opposition to the VMO, the leaflet specifically addresses the claims being made.

Your help is needed. Please get informed and talk to your friends about it. Thanks, Lyndal 4782.1635.

It's On Again!

Last year's Swamp Dance was a resounding success. The Gang Gangs were tireless in their provision of wonderful music, with an enthusiastic

crowd of adults and children of all ages dancing the night away. Many said "Let's do it again!".

Well, there will be another Swamp Dance on Saturday 17 August. (See details on this page.)

Make a note in your diary.

It's great way to help raise awareness of the importance of our Blue Mountains swamps, perhaps raise a little money to help the campaign to protect them, and at the same time HAVE FUN.

A Bushcare Group for Wilson's Glen

A new bushcare group is being formed to look after Wilson's Glen at Woodford.

Wilson's Glen is beside Woodford Station, on the southern side. The land was donated to the community by the local storekeeper Wilson in 1932. There is a stone arch at the entrance, concrete steps leading to a pleasant picnic spot on a warm day, and a little creek flowing through rainforest vegetation.

There is an old picnic shed and fireplace and "Tealby Spa", named after the birthplace in England of Wilson's wife, once had a brass lion's head mounted on the stone which squirted water into a basin which is still there. There are wooden bridges and a track leads to a rock overhang where there had been another picnic shed, and there is an old fireplace with a piping frame over it with hooks to boil the billy.

In recent years the walking tracks and picnic area have been neglected, and the area was burnt in a backburn during the January bushfires. Council is presently working on the tracks and bridges in the reserve, and a member has told us that there are lots of little orchids coming up in the burnt area.

A bushcare group can make a big difference to stop the regrowth and

spread of weeds in this lovely little reserve.

Anyone interested in caring for this pocket of bush contact Liz 4782.1119 or Andy 4758.7787.

Bushfire Policy Workshop

Following the January bushfires the Society set up a Fire Management Sub-Committee to discuss and suggest items to become BMCS policy with regard to bushfires and their management. The next step is for a workshop of members to discuss and agree the items.

The workshop will be held at Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson, on Saturday 10 August, 2pm to 5 pm. Please contact Ann Fox (phone 4758.6096 or email foxy@zip.com.au) to let us know if you will be at the meeting or for more details.

Vale Sharon Burridge

Blue Mountains First Councillor Sharon Burridge passed away on Tuesday 25 June. She was 40 years old.

Sharon was elected to Council in 1999. One of her goals on council was to protect the environment and retain the uniqueness of the Blue Mountains.

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society has especially valued the interest in and appreciation of all issues to do with the environment of the Mountains that Sharon brought to Council. She was a great support to Society members as we struggled against often very different attitudes in other councillors. We always knew we could count on her to consider our issues reasonably and fairly, with an open mind and without any personal agenda of political maneuvering.

We are grateful for the service Sharon has given so selflessly to the people and the environment of the Blue Mountains.

Swamp Dance

BUSH DANCE with the GANG GANGS

Saturday, 17 August
6.30pm, to 9.30pm.

Mid Mountains Community Centre
Lawson

Adults \$7 Children Free

- ★ Swamp Displays prepared by Blue Mountains Conservation Society
- ★ Door Prizes
- ★ Floor Prizes
- ★ Food and Drink Available

(Any money raised goes to protecting our Blue Mountains swamps.)

Enquiries Jenny Hill 4782.1303

"Hut News", the newsletter of
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Burning Native Forests for Charcoal: There are Alternatives!



This is a charcoal plant, like the one to be built on the beautiful South Coast, near the lovely seaside town of Broulee, burning 200,000 tonnes of our native forests every year, belching out pollutants and greenhouse gases, then the charcoal being transported in heavy trucks over the beautiful Blue Mountains. They must be joking!

The site area is 73 hectares, which is equivalent to 107 rugby league football fields. There will be 5 chimneys about 33 metres (11 storeys) high. The plant will operate 24 hrs/day, 350 days/year.

The company claims that all of the

timber required will come from existing logging "residue" and that no more trees will be felled as a part of the charcoal logging. The reality is that experience all around the country has shown that high volume, low value woodchip and charcoal operations generate major additional logging.

There are alternatives. There are other ways of producing silicon without burning our forests. Burning forests might cost a little less, especially when we virtually give them away, but at what cost to the environment!

Why not write a letter to Bob Carr and Bob Debus (Parliament House, Sydney) and tell them what you think about it.

Will the Threatened Species Conservation Act Amendment Bill 2002 Protect Hanging Swamps ?

The NSW Parliament is currently considering changes to the Threatened Species Conservation Act. Unfortunately these amendments will not offer any effective protection for Hanging Swamps of the Blue Mountains.

The Bill will introduce a new category of vulnerable ecological community under the Act. This should have provided an avenue for hanging swamps to be guaranteed State protection. Unfortunately this category is a 'Claytons' listing. It offers nothing to protect vulnerable communities. It just looks like it does.

It is hoped that the government will consider changes to the Amendment Bill which will give vulnerable ecological communities some real protection, not just symbolic recognition. We need more than symbols to protect these very special communities. We need mandatory assessments of any developments likely to impact on such communities. There is also a need for Recovery Plans which require specific actions to turn around the processes which are degrading them. It does not make sense to wait until the swamps are irretrievably degraded before they are given some effective protection.

The Society along with other environment groups, has been aware of the ineffectiveness of the Threatened Species Conservation Act for some time.

Whilst the Bill offers some improvements, it is disappointing in that it has not rectified other significant shortcomings, it still: **has no clear mechanism to trigger an environmental assessment, and it fails to address incremental development.**

Letters to any state member of parliament about these matters would be useful, and in particular the local Member The Hon Bob Debus MP, who is also the Minister responsible for this legislation as the Minister for the Environment (address is 107-109 Macquarie Road, Springwood 2777). A letter by the end of July would be ideal, but at least before September when Parliament resumes.

If you want further information, contact Ian Baird 4782 or Lyndal Sullivan 4782 1635.

Game Bill Passed By Deception in Marathon Sitting

National Parks Association of NSW today condemned the Government and Opposition parties for supporting the Shooters Party *Game Bill* that was passed by the NSW Upper House just before 6am this morning, after a marathon all-night sitting and more than 12 hours of continuous debate. In an act of deception, the Bill was renamed the *Game and Feral Animal Control Bill*.

"This Bill has nothing to do with feral animal control and everything to do with hunters regulating their own sport across public lands," said Andrew Cox, NPA Executive Officer. "Feral animal control is a serious issue, and one that needs a coordinated approach by NSW Government land managers. But to suggest that the *Game Bill* will assist in feral animal control is wrong."

"Hunter regulated hunting is a sure way to undermine strategic feral animal control measures. Hunters are well known for deliberately releasing feral animals in new locations, so they can come back and shoot them later, and there was plenty of evidence given during the Parliamentary debate supporting this," said Mr Cox. "Hunters will shoot animals where it is most convenient and satisfying for them, not where feral animal problems really need to be tackled."

"The *Game Bill* has no links to threat abatement plans for threatened species, such as the recently complete plan for fox control, or existing pest control programs in operation by government agencies. Input by wildlife experts and environmental representatives is subverted by the interests of hunters."

"The Game Council, stacked with hunter representatives, oversees administration of the *Game Bill*. The Game Council issues game hunting licences and polices breaches of licences. This is a one-sided, hunter friendly shooting regime that won't control feral animals but will result in more shooters roaming public lands."

"The Government did remove from the *Game Bill* provisions that would have allowed hunting of ducks and other native animals, and delegation powers that could have seen petrol station attendants issuing hunting licences."

Rejected were amendments that: Allow RSPCA representation on the Game Council; Strengthen penalties for the deliberate release of game animals; Provide an independent chair of Game Council; Require two-thirds majority decision-making on the hunter stacked Game Council; Prevent Parliamentarians, such as Shooters Party John Tingle, from being on the Game Council.

"NPA will closely monitor the implementation of the *Game Bill* to ensure that the new licensing system that overrides the present Government regulated hunting licences is not corrupted by the hunting and shooting fraternity," concluded Mr Cox.

National Parks Association of NSW,
28 June 2002

Blue Mountains Swamp Dweller
Blue Mountains Water Skink, Leura
Skink. *Eulamprus euraensis*



The Blue Mountains Water Skink is listed as an endangered species on Schedule 1 Part 1 of the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. The species is also listed as an endangered species on Sch.1, Part 1 of Commonwealth *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992*.

The Blue Mountains Water Skink is a medium sized lizard that grows to a maximum total length of approx 200mm. Surveys to date suggest that its distribution occurs entirely within the Blue Mountains. It is currently known from 30 locations extending from Newnes Plateau in the north and west to just south of Hazelbrook in the south and east. Of the 30 known locations, 16 occur primarily in the Blue Mountains National Park, the remainder primarily on land managed by other local and State Government agencies. A total of seven locations occur, in part, on privately owned land. It appears to be restricted to an isolated and naturally fragmented habitat of sedge and shrub swamps that have boggy soils and appear to be permanently wet.

Little is known about the biology and ecology of the Blue Mountains Water Skink. It is semi-aquatic and is active on warm sunny days from September until late April.

From scats it has been established that skinks mainly feed on grasshoppers, flies, moths, weevils and wasps. Females give birth to live young in late December.

The small number and apparent isolation of populations in conjunction with the limited geographic distribution of the Blue Mountains Water Skink make it vulnerable to the operation of threatening processes. Clearing for urban development as well as associated disturbance to habitat has resulted in the reduction of the area of known and potential habitat as well as the apparent extinction from areas where this species previously occurred.

Further research is needed to provide information that is valuable to the recovery of the species or relevant to its management. These include research into the life history, population dynamics, home range and movement patterns, habitat requirements and response to

disturbance. NPWS has prepared a recovery plan for the Blue Mountains Water Skink which will identify the actions required to protect and maintain known populations and identify potential habitat. *Source: Threatened Species Information, NPWS.*

The possum no-one noticed for 200 years

By Richard Macey, 7 May 2002

A native mammal that somehow survived unrecognised in the bush for more than 200 years emerged into the limelight yesterday. And its survival in parts of NSW may be in jeopardy.

Scientists had always thought the mountain brushtailed possum, found in eastern rainforests from Melbourne to Gladstone, was one species. But a decade of research led by scientists from Canberra's Australian National University has found that the southern possums are a distinct, and only distantly related, species.

"This is fantastic," David Lindenmayer, from the university's Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, said yesterday. "Every so often we end up with a new species of frog or a reptile. But it's extremely unusual to discover a new mammal, especially one so large."

"This really charismatic animal has gone unnoticed for 200 years," he said, adding that the newly discovered species, which lives in tree hollows, was "feisty. It has a bit of spunk about it".

Since 1991 Dr Lindenmayer's team has trapped and measured all the vital statistics of 400 brushtail possums, which weigh up to four kilograms. They found the possums living in forests north of Sydney had "different facial shapes and different ears" to those from south of Sydney. DNA analysis proved they were two distantly related species.

The scientists have named the newly recognised southern mountain brushtail possum *Trichosurus cunninghamii*, in honour of their statistician, Ross Cunningham, who recognised the differences. The northern possum remains *Trichosurus caninus*. The new species went unnoticed because no-one had previously undertaken the huge amount of measuring needed to separate the two possums.

Dr Lindemayer said that while the new possum was "not uncommon ... the way that Bob Carr is planning to manage the forests in southern NSW, with this absurd charcoal plant, won't do them any good".

The possum, with a passion for clean accommodation and meeting other possums, moves house at least 20 times a year, always into another hollow tree.

"Hollow trees take many years to develop," he said, adding that the controversial charcoal plant, to be built near Mogo, would burn 4 million tonnes of timber over 20 years, greatly reducing the number of nest sites needed by mountain brushtail possums.

Story found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/05/06/101944147260.html>

DonPeak

It's All Territorial Behaviour

The Sydney Morning Herald recently expressed concern about Australia's failure to ratify the Kyoto Treaty for the reduction of greenhouse gases. Its editorial predicted that we could suffer international unpopularity and economic sanctions if Australia and the United States continue to be the only major countries not to take the greenhouse problem seriously. How will George W Bush and John Howard respond to this kind of comment? Probably by calling their critics dupes, biased or unpatriotic.

At few moments in history has the contrast between 'us and them' been so starkly highlighted by politicians. Those who call on us to act in the interests of the international community, even at a trivial cost to our own short term self-interest, are depicted as agents of dark, threatening hordes of 'others'.

Can this be compared to what is occurring in local politics, in the debate over the proposed Vegetation Management Order, for example. Yes it can. Some landholders think they are being asked to make very slight changes to present practices in the interests of the ecology of the World Heritage area as a whole. Opportunistic politicians are attempting to blow this into a classic 'us' and 'them' style conflict. One male councillor used the word 'ecofascism' in debate.

While extreme territorial angst is usually attributed to a male animal awash with hormones, you do find examples of a female politician adopting a similar position. It's all a form of 'the politics of division'. Statesmanlike politicians should continue to speak out against it whenever it rears its head. *Don Morison.*

Winter Visitors

Flying in undulations, like speed boats crossing the sea,
 Crying in ululations, currawong, currawang, currawee,
 In winter the currawongs come to my house
 Beady eyes gleaming, ready to pounce
 On any weak creature — bird, lizard, mouse.
 But they eat all the grubs that eat my lawn,
 And sing such a sweet chorus, nostalgic, forlorn.

Winter Comforter

In winter the Grey Thrush comes to comfort me.
 'Cheer up', he calls.
 It doesn't matter if the bleak winds blow,
 It doesn't matter if it rain or snow,
 Or if the temperature is two below,
 He calls 'Cheer up'.
 I know in springtime he will sing a melody
 So sweet and rare.
 But now he hops around the garden quietly
 With spritely air.
 'Cheer up', cries he.

Poems by Graham Alcorn
 "The Bird Baths of Umbigumbi"

Membership Enquiries
 Contact Elizabeth van Reyswoud
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The Six Foot Track

We have four or so starters already for a three-day walk along the Six Foot Track in September or October 2002. Phone Bill on 4758.8545 and we can decide dates as a group. At the moment the thought is to start at Jenolan and walk Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

Crossing the Blue Mountains of NSW

Jim Percy's walk along the historic trail got off to a good start on Saturday 8 June with 18 eager walkers following the road from Emu Plains to the Knapsack Bridge, then down the Zig Zag and over the hill to Lennox Bridge, built of sandstone and still used by vehicles today, then on to Blaxland Station.

The next section of the walk will be Lawson to Wentworth Falls, including part of Bruce's Walk, on Saturday 3 August. (See walks program.)

The Pilliga Story

The Pilliga scrub is a large piece of land, a small part of which is nature reserve and the rest forestry. There is a wide variety of fauna within the area, the flora predominately the Callitris and the iron barks which are being forested for the combustion stoves that keep us warm in winter. Water that falls in the Pilliga flows through its creeks into the Namoi river and so into the mighty Murray-Darling Basin.

There were five of us heading there for a week of solitude and being in the bush. Meredith organised the trip and Heather, Judy, Peter and myself met at Coonabarabran and thence to the Salt Caves Dam to set up camp. I was horrified when we arrived there, having camped at this place at Easter 2001 when the dam was full and plenty of greenery around. This year there were but two holes in the muddy base of the dam with just a small amount of water in each and no greenery, even all the bottom leaves off shrubs had been eaten. Predominate birds at the campsite were a couple of yellow robins who kept their eye on us, grey crowned babblers and some white winged choughs.

On the Monday, David Paull called in to visit and took us on a very interesting tour giving us much information and ideas on where to go next. David is a naturalist who has had a great deal to do with the Pilliga over many years and wrote a thesis on the Pilliga Mouse

During our visit we saw eight koalas in the trees along the dry sandy creek beds, only 19,992 left to see. I was amazed at the exposed parts of the trees that they chose to sleep in; Meredith said it could be that they ate the cover where they sat. There was a lot of evidence in trees of the leaves eaten and some trees seemed to be left almost denuded. It gave us all a thrill to see a small koala crossing a road in the afternoon; they have quite a cumbersome gait but move quickly.

On two afternoons we went to Dunerian dam to watch the Glossy black cockatoos come in for their drink. There was still a lot of water in

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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

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

Aug 17 (Sat) Swamp Dance. (See page 1.)

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

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

July 13 (Sat) Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group. (9 am, 2nd Saturday of every month) Tools provided. Bring morning tea, gloves and drinking water. Contact Karen on 4757.1929 for the meeting place.

BUSHWALKS:

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

July 08 Bell to Wollangambe. Meet Mt Vic Station 9am. ☎ Jock 4758.6346. Medium. Bring lunch/BBQ.

July 15 Terrace Falls. Meet Hazelbrook Station carpark 9am. ☎ Kees 4759.1958. Medium.

July 22 Lawson's Long Alley and Lockyers Line of Road. Meet Mt Vic Station 9am. ☎ Bill 4759.1692. Long walk. Medium. Take lunch and extra water.

July 29 Euroka Clearing to River. Meet Glenbrook Station carpark 9am. ☎ Allan 4739.2767. Bring lunch/BBQ.

Aug 05 Turpentine Walk to Murphy's Glen. Meet Woodford Station 9am. ☎ Jock 4758.6346. BBQ after.

Aug 12 Bus Trip to Taronga Zoo. Book with Kees 4759.1958.

Very Easy Walks on Thursdays. These walks are conducted at a slow pace to suit the walkers on the day and are usually 2 hours starting at 10am. Lunch follows for those so inclined. Contact Bill 4759.1692 for any enquiries about the program.

July 11 Wonderland Track. Meet Hydro gates, Medlow Bath.

July 18 McMahon's Point. Meet Wentworth Falls Station carpark.

July 25 Lapstone Zig-Zag. Meet Glenbrook Station carpark.

Aug 01 Anvil Rock. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre.

Aug 08 Cox's River. Meet carpool at Blackheath Station carpark (over railway crossing) or arrange pickup with Bill 4759.1692.

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.

July 06 (Sat) Faunconbridge Point. Meet Faulconbridge Railway carpark 9.30am. ☎ Liz 4754.4966. Easy. Bring lunch.

July 13 (Sat) Terrace Falls. A walk through bushfire regeneration and views from Arthur's Lookout. Meet Hazelbrook Station carpark 9.30am. ☎ Bill 4758.8545. Medium. Bring lunch.

July 21 (Sun) Euroka Clearing and further if desired. Meet for walk at Glenbrook Rail carpark 9.30am. ☎ Jim 4784.3305. Medium, bring lunch.

July 27 (Sat) Grose River via Victoria Falls. Meet Mt Victoria Station 9.45 am. ☎ Meredith 4782.4823. Medium with steep sections. Bring lunch.

Aug 03 (Sat) Crossing the Blue Mountains of NSW: Lawson to Wentworth Falls (Includes Bruce's Walk). Meet Lawson Railway Station, north side, 9.08am. ☎ Jim 4758.6009. A long day walk, hard in parts. Bring lunch and extra water.

Aug 11 (Sun) Dante's Glen, Empire Pass. Meet Lawson rail carpark, north side of station, 9.42am. ☎ Bill 4758.8545. Medium. 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 very fit walkers but it is conducted at a moderate pace. Always discuss with the contact if the walk you would like to do is Medium/hard or Hard, before attending. **If this is your first walk,** or in doubt, discuss with the contact or Bushwalks Convener Bill Toccher 4758.8545.

this dam and we were able to observe kangaroos, a variety of wallabies, emus and other birds. On two occasions we watched kangaroos drinking and timed them. They drank almost without stopping for 20 minutes. Diamond firetails, white-cheeked honeyeaters and a ground cuckoo shrike were also observed.

At about 4.40pm one or two Glossy blacks arrived, very noisily, and sat high on a tree letting the world know they were there. After a while other groups arrived and as the community built up there was much shuffling of positions in the tops of trees and lots of noise. They

seemed to wait for all to arrive and then one flew down to the edge of the dam, other groups followed then moved on to be replaced by others. They didn't seem to drink much. Then, when all had been sated, more position shuffling, the groups started to leave in different directions. There seemed to be quite an organised system and the maneuvering took about 30 minutes.

It was a great experience being alone in the bush. I'm sure this won't be the last trip to the Pilliga that Meredith organises; there are many areas left unexplored. *Mary Shaw.*

The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD: I am suggesting quite simply that the utopian approach of "every species has a right to survive" is a serious impediment to modernisation and to cultivation, most particularly of the land, and in that sense the ability of the world as a unit to even feed people. One of the most threatened species in this country is farmers. To suggest that we should just get out of the way for some toad-redheaded or whatever it might be-or some plants, is, as far as I am concerned, just completely illogical and unsustainable.
One Nation, Threatened Species Conservation Amendment Bill 19/06/02.

There really is some stiff competition for the dumbest thing said at parliament last week...

The Hon. Malcolm Jones: "Commissioner, has the Rural Fire Service considered commissioning what the Americans referred to as terror torches, which enable hazard reduction burns throughout the year as they can set fire to and ignite moisture-laden undergrowth?"

Mr Koperburg: "We really try to avoid the use of Nepalms wherever we can! There is quite a strong community reaction against that!..."