

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



Alan Fairley is Guest Speaker

Guest speaker at our October general meeting will be Alan Fairley, co-author of "Native Plants of the Sydney District". Alan will talk about rare plants of the Blue Mountains.

"Native Plants of the Sydney District", produced in association with the Society for Growing Australian Plants, contains colour photographs and descriptions of over 1500 species and is the most comprehensive coverage of native plants in the Sydney basin, an area which extends from Newcastle to Nowra and west to the Great Dividing Range.

Alan Fairley had his first book published in 1972, a pioneering work on bushland walks in national parks around Sydney. Since then his interest in the environment, walking, education and photographs have resulted in books ranging from nature books for children to field guides of national parks of NSW and Victoria.

The meeting will be held at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, on Friday 25 October, starting at 7.30pm. Visitors are welcome.

Environmental Education Conference

'Echoes into the Future' is the theme of this year's conference, to be held at the Christian Convention Centre, Cliff Drive, Katoomba.

Friday, 11 October will open with a talk on *Reducing the environmental*

impact of industry by Graham Collier of the EPA. There will be multiple workshops to choose from, such as *The Role of Education in Preventing Pollution*; *Climbing the Sustainability Tree* and *Making an Environmental Impact*, *Boosting Your Chances for Action*.

Sat 12 October: Hon. Bob Debus will conduct the Official Opening of the Conference. Robyn Williams from ABC Radio Science Show will give the Allen Strom Lecture. *Becoming an Ecological Citizen*, by Prof Stuart Hill, UWS, promises to be a lively and stimulating talk following the opening. There will be afternoon talks and workshops, and a Bush Dance with the Gang Gangs will follow the Conference Dinner.

Sun 13 October: Ian Brown, speaking about World Heritage, will open the day at 9am. Field Trips during the morning include Kedumba Catchment Walk and an Interpretive Walk with Jim Wallace. The conference closes at 2 pm.

The conference is open to all those interested in the natural environment as well as professional educators. 3 days registration without accommodation is \$125, 1 day is \$45. Members who do volunteer work will have free admission—phone Jenny Hill on 4782 1303 if you can volunteer some time.

Application forms can be obtained from Jenny Hill on 4782.1303, or Jasmine Payget, BMCC, on 4780.5739.

Art of the

Environment Exhibition

Katoomba Civic Centre, 11-20 October

The Exhibition will include an open section to exhibit works of the Society's members. You don't have to be an established artist to submit your work—enter images, sculptures etc of your favourite places and bushwalks and promote the beauty of the mountains. To book your work into the exhibition phone Carolynne Skinner 4757 4001.

The Society will exhibit drawings and a painting from the office, *petalura gigantean*—the giant dragonfly sculpture, and our World Heritage Display. The opening will be conducted by Prof Stuart Hill, a lively speaker from University of Western Sydney at 6pm on Friday 11 October.

Original Message Stands

In BM Gazette 18.9.02, Councillor Jim Angel referred to our published information about Councillors' voting patterns as *false, misleading, defamatory* and *politically biased*, but offers no facts to substantiate his claim.

Council's recent Community Survey reports that "Controlling development to minimise environmental impact" is the community's "major concern overall for the city"

In the lead-up to the Ward 4 by-election, the Society felt it was important that the community have information on voting patterns of Councillors on recent major and controversial developments.

We reported the voting by 12 Councillors on 17 developments and one application for deferral (216 votes in all). Unfortunately we erred with one vote and failed to note three occasions where Councillors had left the chamber. We reported Councillor Angel as voting 'for 16' and 'against 1' on these developments. Correct figures were 'for 15' and 'against 2'. We regret these errors, but submit that they make no difference to the conclusions that can be drawn about voting patterns.

We fail to see how our comments can be construed as *misleading* or *defamatory*. We are equally at a loss to see any *political bias*. All we have done is summarise information that we obtained from Council's minutes.

Our original message stands. Seventeen controversial major subdivision and other multi-unit development decisions came before Council between October 1999 and December 2001. All except one were supported by all Liberal, two Independent and most of the Labor councillors. Those are the facts. We leave it to the public to draw their own conclusions.

Draft Local Environment Plan 2002

If you are concerned about urban sprawl and overdevelopment of the Blue Mountains you need to take an interest in Draft LEP 2002. It is coming soon.

Local Environment Plans are the means of addressing the issues of development and the environment by establishing the rules for all future developments. It is far better to get involved now, than wait till the bulldozers move in down the street.

Council is asking residents to have their say about the draft plan, which will be on public exhibition at Katoomba and Springwood Council offices from 16 October to 13 December. There will be a series of public meetings and displays before and during the exhibition period—the first two meetings at Springwood Civic Centre on Wednesday 9 October, 7.30pm, and Wentworth Falls School of Arts on Thursday 10 October, 7.30pm. Watch the Council page in the Gazette for more information.

The Blue Mountains Local Environment Plan has been 18 years in the making. Council voted to prepare it in 1984. The first half was completed in 1991. A lot of environmentally destructive development has occurred which could have been prevented by having a good LEP in place.

Members are asked to look at the proposals and assess how good these are for the Blue Mountains environment in the long term. The committee wants feedback from members on how the draft will effect each town. We are urging you to look at the draft before the end of October so there is time to give us your feedback and allow us to compile a Society submission.

It is inevitable that there will be loud opposition to the draft LEP from people whose speculative ventures may be threatened. It is essential that the good aspects of the DLEP are supported by letters from each of us as individuals as well as the Society as a whole.

Those of us who care about the long term future of the surrounding World Heritage Area will need to get informed and speak up about the positive and negative aspects of the Plan. It is critical that we are not drowned out by the shouts of those with their own short term financial motives. Contact the Land Use subcommittee with your ideas and questions: phone 4782.1635 or email lyndal@hermes.net.au.

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

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**NOTE: Please send editorial items for
November Hut News by 21 October, 2002**

Planning for Bushfire Protection

Opposition to the new planning legislation has been vocal. Firefighters and conservationists have been saying for years that it is madness to continue to allow development in bushfire prone areas. Not only are the lives of the future residents in danger, but so are the lives of firefighters who have little choice but to attempt to protect these people and their property.

By having more people living in high risk areas there is also more pressure to undertake hazard reduction burns. Frequent hazard reductions have an adverse effect on flora and fauna, can cause soil erosion and can open up bushland for weed invasion. Hazard reduction is also a dangerous activity and fire fighters have been injured, and sometimes killed.

In addition to avoiding putting more people and their properties at risk, there is also the issue of the cost to the community. The Christmas 2001 fires cost the community \$106 million. It makes good sense to prevent building in areas of extreme danger. There is of course the issue of those people who have bought land and may be unable to build – fair solutions need to be found.

But is it a fair option to put anyone's life at risk?

Much of the Blue Mountains is a bushfire prone area. Former planning laws have allowed many of us to build on fire prone land. The new legislation will allow Council to refuse development or to impose conditions which will provide satisfactory protection. The Rural Fire Service has been given a formal role in providing this advice.

All councils must produce maps to define where bushfire prone areas are. These maps are to be released soon by Council. Proposed developments in these areas need to have approved Asset Protection Zones (ie cleared and fuel reduced areas) and also need to incorporate design features to give protection (ie. comply with the construction standards in AS 3959).

Many proposed new dwellings in the mountains have slopes within 100m and will require Asset Protection Zones of 60 or 70 metres. These are outlined in the guidelines produced by Planning NSW. Councils will be able to assess the environmental impact of the proposed clearing in the APZ, but will they refuse development on this basis?

Native plants and animals are confined to limited areas in the landscape of NSW. They face the greatest risk of population loss or extinction through too frequent bushfires, hazard reduction burns and clearing of native vegetation and need to be considered in the 'bushfire debate'.

Members interested in the changes to the assessment process should read "Planning for Bushfire Protection" either by obtaining a copy from Planning NSW or looking at a copy at Council offices.

New BMCS Brochure

We have a new brochure to help promote the society. The brochure was prepared by the Education subcommittee. Very special thanks to Barbara Harley who volunteered many many hours of her time and expertise to create the brochure and to Meredith Brownhill who put the ideas together.

Draft VMO

Two members of the Society met recently with the Mid Mountains Garden Club to discuss the draft VMO. The outcome was very positive. Garden Club members who were present recognized the importance of such an instrument to protect our local native vegetation. They too had horror stories of unchecked over-clearing on nearby properties.

BMCS and MMGC agreed that the VMO should protect remnant native vegetation in the urban area but not include exotic vegetation. If this amendment were made to the draft VMO it would bring the focus back to the original purpose which is to protect all levels of native vegetation.

Public meetings organised by Council on the VMO demonstrated that there is wide support for this position. Council's inaction since then has led to many misleading statements and unnecessary attacks being made.

The draft VMO is currently being

reviewed with the knowledge that there is common ground. An update from Council on the draft VMO would be able to quash fears and inform people of the process.

Please contact Council if you believe that there should be more consultation with the community.

No Easy Solution

The wind generators at Hampton have attracted great interest among environmentalists as an example of how we might produce renewable energy in order to reduce our reliance on fossil fuel. Our interest in these generators needs to be in context.

The two Hampton generators are 'rated' at 600kW. This means that when wind conditions are ideal they will produce electricity at a rate of 600 kW. Many generators in other parts of the world are larger, rated at 1000kW, and they may be 90 metres high.

This sounds like a huge quantity of power but it needs to be placed in context. Suppose 1000 of the larger generators were constructed on various high points in this area, yielding one million kilowatts when wind conditions were suitable. This amount of power is the DIFFERENCE in Sydney's electricity consumption between a warm winter's night and a cold one. In other words, if coal fired plants were producing enough electricity for a warm night and the weather changed, the wind turbines could cater for the extra demand—provided wind conditions were suitable. If conditions were not suitable, of course, the wind generators might contribute almost nothing.

Around the world 'wind farms' produce on average about 20% to 50% of their 'rated' power when measured over a period, with some months falling as low as 15%. Winter in this district is usually very windy but in some weeks, had we all been dependent on wind generation, we would not have watched much TV and would have done a lot of hand washing.

Most of us give little thought to our dependence on fossil fuel, and do not stop to think what life might be like when it is exhausted. Being able to use electricity only when the wind is blowing or the sun is shining would cause an enormous difference to our daily lives, economy and society.

Jill Curnow.

Western Woodlands

Earlier this year five of our members visited the Pilliga scrub in western NSW and wrote of its beauty. Unsustainable logging of this area provides firewood for Blue Mountains homes. Support the Western Conservation Alliance in their campaign for improved conservation and an environmentally sustainable future for what is left of the western NSW woodlands. A brochure is enclosed.

Membership Enquiries

Contact Elizabeth van Reyswoud

Phone 4757.2694

Email: ereyswoud@hermes.net.au

Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

Blue Mountains Swamp Dweller Southern Water Skink, *Eulamprus heatwolei*

The Southern Water Skink is the commonest water skink in the upper Blue Mountains. It uses swamps, but also creeks, woodlands, etc. (It is likely that many amateur recordings of the rare Blue Mountains Water Skink, *Eulamprus leuraensis*, are this species.)

The Southern Water Skink is a medium-sized skink, length 10-20 cm, coppery-brown above with numerous flecks of black on the head and scattered black spots on the body and tail. A pale stripe extends from above the eye to above the forelimbs. It occurs in central and eastern Victoria and southern NSW to the upper Blue Mountains where it is moderately common.

The Blue Mountains Water Skink, occurs only in the upper Blue Mountains swamps. It is a similar size, dark brown on the back with conspicuous narrow whitish longitudinal stripes. There is a wide black band with white spotting along each side of the body.

The Southern Water Skink is found along creeks or seepages and swamps in a wide range of habitats including woodland, wet and dry sclerophyll forest, heathland and tussock grassland, it is usually seen basking or foraging. It feeds mainly on invertebrates but occasionally on vertebrates such as small skinks, small fish and tadpoles. Females produce two to six young.

References: "Fauna of the Blue Mountains", Judy and Peter Smith; "Snakes and Other Reptiles of Australia, Gerry Swan, The Australian Museum.

Inviting the Croakers Home

(An extract of article by Trevor Blake in ACF's *Habitat Australia*, August 2002)

Sounds around a home can be restful and entrancing if they are from the natural world. Bird calls can add another dimension to a garden and so can those marvelous environmental health indicators—frogs. A garden with frogs almost completes the perfect connection with the natural environment but you will have to do a little work to entice and encourage them to stay. If the conditions are right, frogs will move in and spawn eggs. Just what is needed to achieve a frog population in your garden?

Simply, water. Not necessarily a

huge area, but a pool with at least one gradual side so the frogs can get out. In the warmer months of the year, tadpoles will move towards the deeper, cooler water and in the cooler months they will seek warmer water on the edges. Sand or gravel at the bottom of the pond will allow plants to take hold.

Some water loving plants in pots and partly submersed in the pool or planted around the edge can provide the cover required and help the pool blend with the surroundings. Oxygenating aquatic plants such as water lilies will help minimize algal growth and provide food and cover from birds.

Create the habitat and the frogs will find it. It's frowned upon to collect any frogs, tadpoles or eggs from any public lands as all frogs are protected. Mosquitoes will probably breed in your pool, but the tadpoles regard them as delicious tucker and will demolish the wrigglers before they change and have a chance of flying off. Do not introduce any fish as most species just love tadpoles and they will not have a chance of survival.

If the habitat is good you will almost certainly attract water beetles, snails, dragonflies and mayflies and the ecology will become dynamic and balanced.

Welcome to New Members

James & Rita Corrie, Springwood
Gayle Greenhill, Winmalee
Shelley Greer, Leura
Billie, Cale, Macklin Johnstone, Woodford
Lourdes St. George, Burwood
Mari Eisenhuth, Maryong
Rachel Swinden, Lawson
Nathan Summer, Katoomba
Alan, Patricia Cortissos, Wentworth Falls
Mary Camden, Springwood
Phillip Somerville, Lawson
Lyn Bevington, Lawson
Clare O'Hagan, Woodford
John & Ingrid Haydon, Wentworth Falls
Annette Coulter, Wentworth Falls
Nicholas Todd, Wentworth Falls

The Value of Bushcare

When it comes to Landcare or Bushcare activities, protecting remnant bush is the best, cheapest and most effective activity anyone can do. While planting lots of plants may make us feel good, they are in most cases, just that—plants. Saving your bush, even if it is in poor condition, means you have an entire ecosystem made up of countless millions of different components, both above and below the ground, all interacting quite happily together and forming stable ecosystems. Systems that are so complex we can't even begin to understand them, let alone create them by popping a few plants into the ground.

The average piece of bush will have millions of insects, hundreds of thousands of arachnids and thousands of plants on each hectare of land. Indeed, each hectare of land (an area measuring 100 metres x 100 metres) has at least 4.5 million spiders alone living in the trees, shrubs, grasses and underground. (from: *Bush remnants—can you afford not to protect them?* By Rae Glazik. Found in *Citizens Wildlife Corridors* newsletter, July 2002)

Travelling in a 'Carfree' Manner

About six months ago my beloved Glenys and I decided to get rid of our car and try life without one.

Before I elaborate on some of the unexpected benefits, I must say that recently I was pleasantly surprised how easy it was for me to get from our Springwood home to the Conservation Hut using my bicycle and CityRail.

I should also add that our children have long since grown up and flown the nest, and that Glenys and I live within walking distance of the Springwood shops and railway station – which takes about 25 minutes. We do appreciate that going carfree is neither practical, viable or desirable for most people, and therefore we regard ourselves as being very fortunate to at least have the option of doing so.

Apart from the more obvious benefits of having considerably reduced our travel expenses, getting more exercise and fresh air, our worldview and sense of time and place has also changed for the better. Though Glenys and I have long since regarded ourselves as environmentally sensitive people, after only six months of walking, cycling, and train travel, we are literally sensing, and receiving our world from a more refreshing perspective. In a way it is as if we have returned to the world we knew when we were a lot younger—prior to owning a car, and that time is on our side again. Our world has in many ways become more attractive to us again.

Our decision means we are also deliberately walking in the face of economic rationalism's rhetoric, and this too is proving to be an unexpectedly enriching experience. With a little stretching of this and that – physically and psychologically, there is not only life after the car, but there can actually be more of it.

Taffy Seaborne and Glenys Livingstone.

Vale Ewart Collings

Many old hands of the Conservation Society will have feelings of nostalgia and loss when they learn that Ewart Collings died at Bodington Nursing Home on 20 September at the age of 92.

Ewart and his wife Betty joined the Society shortly after retiring to Wentworth Falls. As he was a graphic artist with the ABC's publications section his skills were utilized in our Society in conservation matters when design and layout were required. He took on the job of our newsletter editor in 1985 until 1990, and introduced the classic print of the black cockatoos which graces the cover of *Hut News* at this moment. The novel illustrations in Graham Alcorn's "Bird Baths of Umbigumbi" were his work. He had a whimsical sense of humour which endeared him to members. I never heard him pass an unkind word about anyone.

Our sympathies go out to Betty, his loyal and staunch helpmate of 67 years standing, herself very active in the Society's work, taking on various committee positions during those years.

Lloyd Jones.

Point Piper, 29/8/2002

Sun-beam-riding road dust
lifts a lizard's view.
Greenly paused in dragon pose,
she winks a movement
of interest through the haze.

Car-riding walkers, colourfully clad
in fleece and poise,
blink a moment of contact
with their lizard-lovers gaze.

Bernadette.

Tenth Anniversary of Monday Leisure Walks

This month ten years ago, Christine Davies, with the help of Ruth Milton, started the Monday Leisure Walks through the Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre. The walks became part of the Society's walks program six years ago, and have become an institution.

We are dedicating the walk on Monday, 11 November and follow-up lunch at the Bacchante Rhododendron Gardens to celebrate the anniversary.

Members and friends are invited to join in the walk (meet 9am at the Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre), or if unable to come on the walk, meet for lunch at the Bacchante Rhododendron Gardens at 12 noon. Bring a plate of finger food.

We would especially like to hear from people who participated in the early walks, up to the present. If you know of any former leisure walkers who may not read this newsletter please let them know. Contact Bill 4759.1692 or Christine 4787.7246 for more info.

Thursday Interpretive Bushwalks

Interpretive Bushwalks will resume on Thursday 17 October.

The last two walks of this series were day walks/trips, the first to Gooch's Crater with Wyn Jones, the second to Jenolan Caves.

At Gooch's Crater the walkers were stunned by the beauty of the pagoda country and the knowledge and passion of Wyn Jones who was so generous in sharing it with them.

At Jenolan we were fortunate to have a interesting talk from Grant Commins who told us about the management of the karst area and answered our many questions about environmental and other matters in relation to the Jenolan Caves. Then we walked past the Blue Lake and beside the Jenolan River. The walk was described as 1½ hours return—perhaps true for those who don't loiter to admire the magnificent rock orchids and listen the birds, and there were so many of them! Ron listed 24 species of birds. We sat on a grassy bank for lunch surrounded by the calls of Bellbirds. It was magic.

The next series of walks will commence on Thursday 17 October and continue through to mid December. They will be mostly morning walks, expert guests on some, and some day walks, usually finishing around 3 pm. Numbers are limited. Cost is \$20 for the series. Contact Christine Davies 4787.7246 for more information.

No Go in MOGO

Australian Silicon's announcement that it would not be building a charcoal plant at Mogo near Bateman's Bay has been a great victory for forest conservation groups and the local community who fought to protect the natural beauty of the area and the South Coast tourism industry. However, the

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Oct 19 (Sat)** Management Meeting, 9am, Mid Mtns Community Centre, Lawson.
Oct 25 (Fri) General Meeting at The Hut, 7.30 pm. (See page 1.)
Oct 11-13 Environmental Education Conference (See page 1).
Oct 11-20 Art of the Environment Exhibition (See page 1).

QUOLL CLUB (Activities for 12 and under) ☎ Jessica 4757.3686 for more info.

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

- Oct 12 (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.

- Oct 14** Newnes Historic Ruins Bus Trip. Book now with Kees 4759.1958. 8am start from Katoomba Council Depot. Full day. Easy.

- Oct 21** Evans Lookout to Grand Canyon. Meet Evans Lookout, Blackheath 9am. ☎ Kees 4759.1958. Medium.

- Oct 28** Glastonbell Circuit Walk. Meet Mt Vic Station 9am. ☎ Allan 4739.2767. Medium.

- Nov 04** Porter's Pass. Meet Blackheath commuter carpark 9am. ☎ Kees 4758.1958. Medium/hard.

- Nov 11** Tenth Anniversary Walk. (See story on this page). Meet for walk at Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9am. ☎ Terry and Mary 4787.6918, or meet for lunch at Bacchante Rhododendron Gardens 12 noon.

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.

- Oct 10** Blackheath Parks in Spring. Meet as above. BBQ lunch.

- Oct 17** Dunn's Swamp (car pool). Meet Blackheath commuter carpark 9am. Full day, bring lunch.

- Oct 24** Murphy's Glen Turpentine Walk. Meet Woodford Station 10am.

- Oct 31** Baltzer's Lookout and Hanging Rock. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 10am.

- Nov 07** Mount Annan (car pool). Meet Springwood commuter carpark 9am. Full day, bring lunch/BBQ.

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. 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 you are in any doubt, discuss with the contact or Bushwalks Convener Bill Tocher 4758.8545.

- Oct 12 (Sat)** Crossing the Blue Mountains of NSW: Blackheath to Mount Victoria. Meet Blackheath Railway carpark (west side of station) at 9.13am. A hard challenge. We walk along the Kanimbla Valley Escarpment below the cliff top to the old incline railway site. Lunch is in the vicinity of Fairy Bower, then up to the top of the rail site and on to Mt Victoria, passing the old Toll House en route. ☎ Jim 4758.6009. Bring extra water and lunch.

- Oct 20 (Sun)** Mount Banks. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. ☎ Bill 4758.8545. Medium. Bring lunch.

- Oct 26/27** No walks this weekend. Bill and others are looking forward to a 3-day walk along the six foot track this weekend.

- Nov 02 (Sat)** Crossing the Blue Mountains of NSW: Mount Victoria, Mount York, Mount Blaxland. Meet Mt Victoria Station 9.50am. Day six in the series involves some bus travel as well as approx 12km of walking. As private cars cannot cross some property and bus seats are limited, booking is essential. Priority will be given to walkers who have completed the five previous walks. ☎ Jim 4758.6009 by 30 October. Bring extra water and lunch.

- Nov 09 (Sat)** Glow Worm Tunnel in the old coach road Newnes. Meet Mount Victoria Station 8.17am. ☎ June 4787.7312. Medium. Bring lunch and a torch for the tunnel walk. The early start is necessary.

*** NEW VOLUNTEER WALK LEADERS for day walks are essential. Phone Bill Tocher 4758.8545 for discussion.

company claims to be still considering alternative sites 'on the east coast'.

This means that conservationists and communities in NSW and Victoria are still threatened by this archaic proposal despite it having been resoundingly rejected first in the western NSW woodlands and now on the South Coast.

Premier Bob Carr recently announced that he would not allow burning of native

forest 'residues' for power plants as it would be environmentally irresponsible, yet he continues to champion the South Coast charcoal operation even though the timber supply contract was revealed to specify whole logs—200,000 tonnes of native forests a year, including mature and old growth forest trees.