

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



Draft Local Environmental Plan 2002: Deadline for Submissions Extended until 17th January, 2003

Thank you to all those members who seized the opportunity to protect our beautiful mountains and have already lodged submissions to the DLEP. There's been a solid response to the society's request for submissions and information on local issues. For those of you who were intending to have a say and thought you'd run out of time, or have thought of something else to add - good news! Council has extended the closing date until 17th January, so you still have time to comment. If you still have the form letter that was included in the last Hut News you could use it, but a personal letter would carry a lot more weight.

Can there be Environmental Protection Zones on Private Land?

Yes - there are two types of EP in this plan - "General" and "Open Space". Both will stop development on environmentally sensitive land. EP-General zoning is applied to privately owned land. It shows up on the DLEP2002 maps in a dark yellow/mustard colour.

The EP-General zone is applied to the parts of private property that are very steep, contain significant vegetation, or are very near to a watercourse. Development, including building a house, is not allowed on land zoned EP. Land zoned EP-General does not become a public park or reserve - it remains private property.

For those people who have been working hard to restore or to keep their land in good condition, it is important to know that the next owner of the property

won't just bulldoze it. An EP zone would help. If you own land that has been zoned EP, it is crucial that you let Council know you support the zoning of your property. If your land isn't zoned EP you should ask for it over that part which is good bushland.

It doesn't matter whether you have been working on your own land or together with neighbours like some of the new landcare groups, it would be useful to have an EP zone. If you're aware of land that needs this protection but hasn't been mapped under DLEP2002 you need to tell Council.

Will the DLEP give Council the power to stop the destruction of our environment?

Yes - if the community supports this draft and it is gazetted in its current form. A lot of environmentally sensitive land will be protected (excluded) from development if DLEP2002 is approved by Council. All the more reason to write to Council, if you haven't already done so, to tell them you like the environmental protection the draft offers and that it needs to be implemented without delay.

Where can you get more information?

The November and December editions of Hut News carried articles about the DLEP. You can also check the BMCS website or contact Monica Nugent on 4784 1631 (email - monican@bigpond.com.au) or Lyndal Sullivan on 4782 1635 (email - lyndal@hermes.net.au) for the BMCS guide to making a submission.

It will also be on the NPWS website at <http://www.npws.nsw.gov.au>, with a link from the BMCC website to the NPWS website.

Members are Invited to a Management Meeting

At our Annual General Meeting in March 2003 members of the Society will elect a new management committee.

Members who are interesting in finding out what is involved in helping with the management of the Society are invited to come along to our next Management Committee meeting at the Lawson Community Centre on Saturday 25 January, starting at 9am. If you cannot come to the meeting but would like to find out more, contact Joy McDonald (contact details page 2).

Effects of Drought on our Birds

Droughts are a natural and inevitable part of the Australian environment. We hear much about the hardship experienced by farmers during drought times, but very little about the effects on our wildlife. For a birdwatcher, these effects can be startling and extreme.

At our general meeting on Friday 31 January 2003 Carol Proberts will talk about the effects of the current drought on bird numbers and diversity from the perspective of a professional birdwatching guide. Carol is a long-time member of the Conservation Society who has been studying the birdlife of the Blue Mountains for almost 20 years. Much of her time is now spent guiding visiting birders around the Blue Mountains and Capertee Valley, and in her 'spare' time she participates in endangered species research and habitat conservation.

Carol will share her own personal insights and anecdotes and will invite the audience to contribute to the discussion.

The meeting will be held at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, starting at 7.30 pm on Friday 31 January. Visitors are very welcome.

Black Canyon of the Gunnison

Recently Joan and I returned from Colorado, USA where we explored the awesome Black Canyon.

Mark Warner, a pastor of the Montrose Presbyterian Church, found inspiration in the majesty and rugged beauty of the canyon and worked tirelessly for its preservation in order to share with all the natural wonders of this unique feature of Western Colorado.

His address to the Montrose Game and Fish Protection Association in 1928 may well apply to us today in the 21st century. I quote ...

It is the old story repeated over and over again of wanton destruction without any thought of conservation. So much for the past. What about the present and the future? Will we follow the example of the past? Will we rob our children of their rightful heritage of wild things of nature as we have been robbed of ours? No. We must keep the faith with coming generations. You may drink from the fountains of nature and come back again and again to satisfy your thirst. But if you destroy the fountain, you destroy the stream that the fountain feeds. Nature gives abundantly, but does not give inexhaustibly. You cannot exterminate and still possess. All life about us testifies to this fact.

(Eric Dunkley, Thursday Interpretive Bushwalks Group)

Public Lands:

Development or National Park?

Blue Mountains City Council and the State Government have been looking into the management of public land in the mountains for several years to decide what should remain public and who should manage it. This project is known as the Public Lands Rationalisation Project. It has involved developing a framework to assess proposals for transfers of land from DLWC (Crown lands), Council and the NSW Dept of Planning to national parks.

The Public Lands Rationalisation Project's recommendations will be on public exhibition in January and February at Blue Mountains City libraries and in the foyers of Blue Mountains City Council's Katoomba and Springwood Offices.

"Hut News", the newsletter of
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Inc.

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Council Gives Retrospective Approval to Weeds Planted near Swamp in Breach of Development Consent Conditions

The December meeting of Council saw a debate by Councillors about whether or not they should insist on a landscaper sticking to the Landscape Plan which was part of Council's development consent conditions. What happened was:

- A Landscape Plan proposed by the developer was approved by Council in June 2001 as part of the development consent conditions.
- The developer did not appeal against the consent conditions.
- The landscaper went ahead around May 2002 and didn't stick to the plan.
- Council officers tried to get landscaper to comply with plan.
- The developer now asks Council to change the consent conditions (ie move the goal posts to make it OK).

Unfortunately Councillors Angel, Creed, Egan, Kime, Myles and Van der Kley think this process is OK and voted for it.

The Society became aware of this development from the website listing of development applications. We have corresponded with Council and spoken at two meetings now on this issue.

This Landscape Plan had given some protection to the swamp on the property

by having a 10 m buffer of non-invasive native plantings immediately above it. However the landscaper proceeded to plant a known weed, Tall Fescue (*Festuca elatior*)

This is a well documented invasive weed grass particularly of swamps in the Upper and Mid Mountains. Considerable funds have been spent both by Council directly and also through the State Governments Urban Runoff Control Program in removing this weed as part of bushland regeneration projects, not to mention all the volunteer time!

Unfortunately this case is not isolated. It is also another case of where council officers must wonder why they bother in the first place, if the elected Councillors are just going to keep changing the rules to satisfy those with the most influence. Why do they bother taking time in the first place to carefully consider the original consent conditions?

The process of appeal against development consent conditions that is now more firmly established is:

- **break the rules;**
- **approach council to change the rules.**

Now the Invitation: There is to be a Saturday afternoon **experiential workshop** in February called "**Working with Shame**". This will explore this other way of seeing and feeling and thinking about shame and how we can use this in our lives and for social change and environmental campaigning. Facilitated by BMCS member Tony Webb who has spent 30 years building local, national and international campaigns in the UK, Europe, USA/Canada and Australia (Resources, Energy, Anti-nuclear, Peace and Disarmament, Radiation and Health, Food Irradiation among others).

The workshop will be held on Saturday 8 February in Lawson (venue to be advised). You pay \$20 to cover costs (scholarships available if needed). There will be a limited number of places, so bookings are essential. For more information and to book a place contact Tom Colley on 4759.1112, or e-mail zebedee@d130.aone.net.au.

Welcome to New Members

Marjorie Leggatt, Lawson
Ross and Maria Kelly, Paddington
Michael Karas, Carlton
John and Kate Cowper, Leura
Caroline Newman, Faulconbridge
Celeste Salter, Hazelbrook
Garry Binder, Hazelbrook
Mary Yong, Katoomba
Karen Dryden, Cammeray
Colleen Danzic, Hazelbrook

Seen from the Train

On a train trip from Parramatta to Blackheath yesterday, there were reminders of bushfire all the way: remnant patches of bush on the plains,

scorched and brown; the national park at Glenbrook looking sparse with trees wearing their year-old new growth after last December's fires; bronze leaves on scorched trees at Wentworth Falls.

Seen from the train, the trees at Medlow Bath had a certain beauty, blackened trunks cloaked in white mist.

Christine Davies, 19/12/02.

RAIN

Thunder rolls at Wolgan Gap,
The ribbon barks are stirring;
Shadows mirror scudding cloud,
And wings are homeward bearing.

Plaintively, from far below
On thermal draughts ascending,
Call the plovers to and fro
As cliff and sky are blending.

The subtle colours changing
As the showers draw their veil,
And misty grey is ranging
On bluffs of stone and shale.

Secret creek and shallow pond
Awaken from their sleeping,
And pass the torrent farther on
To Wolgan River sweeping.

Memory drifts to tender years,
And now the scudding showers
Become a million lovers tears
To bathe the Wolgan bowers.

Like tears of love and tears of joy,
Though pain be in their shedding;
To nurse the grove and grassy bank
For future lovers treading.

Clive R. Roebuck
"Under the Scenic Hill"

New Tools for Environmental Campaigns?

A few thoughts and an invitation.

Thought 1: Been campaigning for years? Feel like we're going backwards or that going forward is a long hard slow process? Somehow having the best rational argument about the need to see the world in ecological terms doesn't seem to work does it? Fact is emotions have evolved alongside thinking and both are part of being human. What would knowing how to work with emotions – not as manipulation – but as part of the tool-kit we use for environmental campaigning look like for you?

Thought 2: What's the hardest emotion to deal with? OK now if that was anger or hurt or fear what comes with or is covered up by this first one? Keep digging and most people will get down to the level where we recognise some aspects of shame (embarrassment, guilt, humiliation) as the core issue.

Thought 3: What if shame wasn't the unpleasant emotion that it is for most of us, most of the time? What if it were a natural, healthy feeling that we could feel comfortable showing – because it produced such wonderful effects in terms of building connections between people.

The Waratah

"The Waratah is one of our best known plants and is the floral emblem of the State of New South Wales. Its botanical name is most appropriate as it means 'most beautiful plant seen from afar.'" (*Native Plants of the Sydney District, Fairley and Moore.*)

We all love the Waratah, *Telopea speciosissima*. It is such a thrill to come across the magnificent red flower in the bush. Waratahs were once very common in and around the mountain towns. Can you imagine what a wonderful display they would have made in the springtime? I quote from early mountain newspaper articles supplied by Jim Smith.

"Waratah plants were common in October and November and the bush was gay with them, but they were dug up by the grubber who thinks that to clear land it is necessary to only leave sand and rock; or the blossoms picked till the poor plant, which can only throw out new blooms through the heart of the old ones, gives up the hopeless struggle and dies." (*Blue Mountains Echo, 11.5. 1910*)

"Two thousand waratah blooms were forwarded to Melbourne for use as decorations at the ball given by the Governor-General during Cup week, all gathered within a few miles of Blackheath station. Waratahs are plentiful this year about the locality, and large bunches were gathered every day by visitors to this mountain resort." (*Lithgow Mercury 6.11.1912*)

By October 1924 there had been an ordinance put in place to protect the waratah, "making it an offence for which severe penalties are provided for the plucking of waratahs growing on lands owned by the Crown or by any statutory of public body, or the removal of plants therefrom, during the period 1st September to 30th November in each year" (*T N Ayling, Town Clerk, Katoomba, 10.10.1924*)

However in the same month the Katoomba City News (17.10.1924) reported that "Every day witnesses hosts of travellers embarking on the trains laded with the rich ruddy bloom of the State's most distinctive flower. It is carried into accommodation houses by the armful. It stands in vases in public refreshments rooms. It adorns the mantels of private residences. It is ravished wholesale from remote gullies by motorists. On every hand we watch it being carted away, yet an alleged stringent enactment prohibits it from being plucked between September 1 and November 31. ... The protective (?) ordinance is so faultily worded, that it almost is essential to catch the ravisher in the act to secure a conviction. Unless he or she deliberately or thoughtlessly chooses to incriminate himself or herself, the precious flower may be taken with impunity ..."

In 2003 the Waratah is protected in our national parks and public reserves. There are places where they can be seen in abundance. However there would be few who can remember that there were multitudes of waratahs easily found

"within a few miles of Blackheath station", or any other mountain town.

Blue Mountains Interpretive Bushwalks

The Thursday bushwalks will commence again on 6 February. As usual for the first walk we will meet at the commuter carpark at Blackheath Station at 9.30 am. There will be an interesting program with special guests including Jill Dark, Carol Proberts, Wyn Jones, and Alan Lobb (reptiles). Walks will be conducted at a leisurely pace, and will be mostly morning walks, with one or two longer day walks.

Cost will be \$20 for the season and numbers will be limited. Contact Christine on 4787.7246.

Some Enjoyable Bushwalks

Some of our Spring and early Summer interpretive bushwalks were disrupted by hot weather and bushfires.

Jim Smith has done a Plan of Management for Hassan's Walls and was keen to show us what he had learned during the project. Because of bushfire he took us instead to Mt Piddington, Fairy Bower and the "Kinderan" Track. (Kinderan was the Gundungurra name for Mount Victoria). There are extensive well-made walking tracks in the area, and many stone steps which have been beautifully carved.

The waterfall in Fairy Bower was almost dry, barely a trickle of water glistening on the black rock. Cedar Wattles were flowering and new-growth leaves on Coachwood trees were mauve. We scrambled down the beginning of the Kinderan track. There was a chert mine and timber mill down here, the chert and timber carried up to Mount Victoria on a funicular rail. The chert was mined by the Aborigines for tools and trade, and by the Europeans for road base.

Our bird walk with Carol Proberts was at Hartley Vale. There were some good bird sightings, the highlights a pair of Glossy Black Cockatoos, a Noisy Friar Bird building a nest, and a Olive-backed Oriole on a nest.

Reptile expert Alan Lobb took us to Terrace Falls. What a lovely bushwalk! It was a cool day, the wildflowers were fantastic and there were many birds, including Black-faced Monarchs at Victor Falls. Reptiles were elusive until the very end of the walk when Alan discovered a little Mountain Dragon beside the track.

The Walls Lookout in late November was cloaked in cloud, the mist rising and shifting to reveal glimpses of the cliffs of the Grose Valley. Wildflowers were still lovely, white flowers predominant. We walked in a lovely cool mist, and admired the colours and textures of the damp tree trunks and rocks.

Wyn Jones led us to the Newnes Plateau and the lovely pagoda country, along with some botanists from Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens. On the way a wide swathe of vegetation has been cut beside the road, possibly for fire control purposes, and there were numerous kangaroos and wallabies grazing, and

don'sPeak

Green Years

2002 was a year in which (I hope) travel has broadened my mind. I have admired the natural area management in Yellowstone National Park (USA), Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, South Australia's Coorong, Victoria's Great Ocean Road and NSW's Mount Warning.

Several experiences cause me disquiet. At Green Cape (NSW) I saw the speeding boats of abalone divers driving recklessly close to swimming fur seals. At Mount Hotham (Vic) huge resort buildings were constructed well above the treeline, while, above Thredbow, feral horses dominated the fragile alpine landscape with their presence and their manure. On the rim of the Grand Canyon (Arizona) a home-grown American tourist tormented a native squirrel to the point where it bit him. (I have since learned that that squirrel population is suffering from a rabies epidemic.)

Perhaps the greatest privilege of travel is to meet other people with a commitment to preserving the natural and cultural world. I remember the native Canadian who spent his afternoon commuter train trip in Toronto telling me about his work education young native Canadians. I recall speaking to Adam Cohen at his native animal sanctuary near Gosford and the women who were working to keep writer Mark Twain's hometown beside the Mississippi River in its nineteenth century condition.

During 2003, I hope to join with other members of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society in preserving the best things about our planet through whatever small contributions we can all make. *Don Morison.*

there were lots of "dancing" orange butterflies, flitting around above the firetrail.

It was very dry out there. We noticed that some large trees were dying, their leaves brown. Some Scribbly Gums had splits in their trunks from the dryness, and Isopogons were releasing their seeds as they do after experiencing a bushfire.

At Mount Wilson we walked to Boronia Point, above the Wollangambe River. The river does a mighty S-bend at that point. When we arrived a bird of prey which was nesting on the cliff below was much distressed by our presence. We had lunch in the garden of Sefton Cottage. There were many birds in the garden, an unusual sight an Eastern Spinebill, usually seen in the shrubs and trees, hopping around on the grass finding insects.

Our final walk for the year was a short walk beside the Nepean River at Emu Plains. There were water birds on the river and lots of Water Dragons on the rocks, trees and on the path. As usual our keenest birdwatcher Ron was lagging behind finding more and more birds, an unusual one for us a Scarlet Honeyeater. *Christine Davies.*

Weekend Bushwalks 2002

Looking back on the weekend walks over the past year, the perfect weather each day we walked probably should have hinted at the fires to come. I know that my rain jacket is still new and untried! We came close to getting wet while walking along the Wonderland Track on 1 December. In fact, thick mist at Katoomba caused one of the group to turn around to go home, but as it turned out, it was our last chance to enjoy the area before fire burnt it out and damaged adjoining houses the following weekend. And then the rain came and the bush regained its beauty, if somewhat blackened.

Jim Percy's series of walks "Crossing the Blue Mountains of NSW" were a highlight of the beginning of each month, and attracted quite a following of determined walkers out to enjoy a walk off the beaten track. Be aware that the completion of the series, walking from Blaxland to Woodford, is still coming up when the weather is cooler.

Cheers and best wishes for the New Year. *Bill Tocher.*

Very Easy Walks on Thursday:

Meeting: Thursday 30 January.

The attendances and reactions during last year were very favourable and I am encouraged to continue with a similar program in 2003, commencing in February. Thank you to the walkers who came. For those and new intendants, we will have a discussion meeting to review the program at the Conservation Hut on Thursday 30 January at 10 am. Please attend and contribute your ideas. No walk included that day. The walks for February 6 and 13 are listed. Happy new year. *Bill Graham.*

Bushwalkers Christmas Picnic

A happy feast for lunch was shared by the weekend bushwalkers at Bacchante Gardens to celebrate a good year of walking in the bush.

The bushland and the Rhodo's had all perked up a bit after some rain. A lovely Callistemon, with trailing branches and red flowers, was near our picnic spot.

Thanks Bill for being such a good walk's organiser. *Meredith.*

Diary Note—Nov 11, 2002

This morning it was my privilege to join new and regular walkers for the 10th anniversary of Monday Leisure Walks.

Leaving Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre (BANC) in Gardiner Crescent shortly after 9am we were bathed in a beautiful cool-moist mist, so different from the few previous hot, dry mornings, as we began walking. After a brief tea break near the duck pond in the pools park we journeyed along to Pope's Glen track. Going into that bush and seeing leaves and trunks glistening with moisture was a glorious sight; walking on water-softened ground so welcome after the sharp crunch of past weeks. I mostly find Australian bush

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Jan 25 (Sat) Management Meeting, 9am, Mid Mtns Community Centre, Lawson.
Jan 31 (Fri) General Meeting at the Conservation Hut, 7.30 pm.
Guest speaker will be Carol Proberts (see page 1).

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

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

Jan 11 (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.*

Walks may be cancelled due to Safety Closures of National Parks walking tracks during the fire season. We request walkers call the contact or Bill G (4759.1692) before 8pm the day before the walk to verify whether the published walk is on, or an alternative arranged. This arrangement will continue for the duration of the season.

Jan 07 Lithgow Water Supply Walk. ☎ Jock 4758.6346. Meet at Mount Victoria Station 8.30 am for car pool to Lithgow, walk to dam for swimming, lunch at Lithgow Workman's Club.

Jan 13 South Lawson Waterfalls. ☎ Kees . Meet Lawson Pharmacy, Honour Avenue 8.30 am. Easy. Bring lunch.

Jan 20 Radiata Plateau and Lookout. ☎ Bill . Meet Katoomba Station (Gearins) 8.30 am. Easy. Bring lunch.

Jan 27 Oaklands Falls—Burgess Falls. ☎ Jock . Meet Oaklands Road, Hazelbrook 8.30 am. Easy/medium. BBQ lunch.

Feb 03 Breakfast Point to Den Fenella. ☎ Bill . Meet Wentworth Falls Station 8.30 am. Easy. Bring lunch or lunch at The Hut.

Feb 10 Dargan Creek Dams. ☎ Allan . Meet Mt Victoria Station 8.30 am. Easy. BBQ at Mt Victoria.

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.

Feb 06 Cox's River. Meet Blackheath Commuter carpark for carpool 9am. BBQ after.

Feb 13 Berghofer's Pass. Meet Mt Vic Station 9am. Take lunch.

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.

Feb 08 (Sat) Spit Bridge to Manly. 6.39 am train from Lithgow to Central, then bus to the Spit. ☎ Mary/Terry 4787.6918. Medium, shady walk. Bring lunch and water as we will have lunch along the way, catching ferry at approx 2.30 pm from Manly to the Quay. Meet 2nd carriage.

Blue Mountains Interpretive Bushwalks: The next series of interpretive bushwalks will start on Thursday 6 February. More information on page 3.

harsh, but not today. Surviving wildflowers gleaming cheekily, rocks glistening, creeks tinkling and pleasant company ... surely these are pleasure walks, undimmed even by the steep ascending steps approaching Govett's Leap which let me know how out of condition I'd become. Looking over into the great Grose Valley we were met by swirling mist unabated.

Owing to prevailing weather Christine Davies generously offered to have the celebratory lunch in her nearby home, so while most of us walked to her place, others went to Bacchante (now Campbell) Gardens to bring back those who would be arriving there for the lunch. Once gathered together we delighted in the many reminiscences, anecdotes and shared tales, not to speak of the food and wine.

Back in 1992 the then co-ordinator of BANC, Diane Jacobus, asked Christine Davies to organise and lead local walks from the Neighbourhood Centre on Monday mornings. With the help of

Ruth Milton the walks flourished, with many others joining in to observe and learn about plants, birds and other fascinating aspects of our bush. In intervening years Leisure Walks has undergone a few changes, most notably becoming auspiced by Blue Mountains Conservation Society and recently being led by BMCS' Bill Graham of Bullaburra.

We are surely indebted to Christine for her dedication in keeping these walks going and creating a piece of history in our special place ... Australia's Blue Mountains.

Congratulations all.

Suzanne Reaney, Blackheath.

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