

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Firewood Collection in the Pilliga

Pictured is a Common Dunnart, a mouse-like marsupial occurring patchily over much of south-eastern Australia and in north-eastern Queensland. A nocturnal species, it rests during the day in a cup-shaped nest of dried grass and leaves built in a fallen hollow log, a clump of grass or a grass-tree. Despite its name, it may be decreasing.

Two major problems facing the Common Dunnart and other animals in the central west are land clearing and firewood collection.

At our June general meeting David Paull, formerly the Western Woodlands Officer for the National Parks Association, now an environmental consultant living in Coonabarabran, will speak about the effects of firewood collection in the central west of NSW and show slides of some of the animals affected.

Most firewood is from private lands, although there are large operators taking their wood from the State Forests of the Pilliga. Two large sources are the forests of Goonoo and Pilliga. The wood is mostly dead standing trees (Ironbarks) and logs and are important habitat for a variety of vertebrates, particularly mammals, also some hollow-dependent birds, including threatened species.

Its destination is the Blue Mountains and Western Sydney. The solution? We can contribute by not burning wood without knowing where it is from!

The meeting will be held at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, on Friday 27 June, starting at 7.30 pm. Visitors are very welcome.

We Need a Publicity Officer

Our recently elected Publicity Officer Ron Withington has had to resign—a result of some unexpected changes in his personal circumstances. We hope that things will quickly return to normal for Ron, and thank him for his willingness to stand for office.

So, we are now without someone to fill this vitally important role.

Perhaps you could help, or you may know someone who could do the job. The requirements for the job are:

- Communication skills—both written and verbal
- A passion for the environment, and
- A wish to “make a difference”

Recent community surveys show that Blue Mountains residents place a high priority on protection of the natural environment. Sadly, they don't have access to much information about what is going on in the environmental world—particularly in our local Council. Our members read Hut News, but its circulation is 1300 copies each month—not much, in a community of 77,000 persons.

The Gazette has been happy to publish our press releases—but we need someone to keep them supplied with good material. Our local radio has also offered us airspace.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is probably the largest regional environmental group in the State, possibly the country. It enjoys respect from the community and from the agencies with which it deals. We are in a strong financial position. This year will be our 43rd year of unbroken service to the Blue Mountains environment.

Please, can you please give very serious consideration to our need for a publicity officer.

- We have a product to market which the community believes is very important.
- There is a lot happening, so there is no shortage of material to write about.
- We have an organisation with strength and credibility to support your activities.

If you, or a friend, can help us, please contact any of the Management Committee (see panel on page 2), leave a message on the office phone (8757.1872) or email bmcs@bluemountains.org.au

Bushland Protection Order

This would be a better name for the battered Native Vegetation Management Order. It would better reflect what it is intended to do and also sound different from the previous “Vegetation Management Order”.

Why, in a City within a World Heritage Area, is there such vocal opposition to a Bushland Protection Order? Similar orders have been welcomed by communities in Sutherland, Kuring-gai, and several other Council areas – even Brisbane!

Opponents continue to spread furrphies and fear, but the debate about adopting a Bushland Protection Order or not boils down to two issues:

The philosophical question. Do you believe that you should be able to do whatever you wish in your own backyard? Do you believe your neighbour should too? Do you think you should be able to light fires at any time of the year? Let off fireworks? Pour paint down the drain? Keep roosters? Slaughter goats?

There are restrictions on many things we can do in our backyard, usually for good reasons. Land ownership has never just entailed “rights”- there have always been “responsibilities”. Australia is paying the price for the belief that everyone has a right to remove vegetation—it is salinity, soil erosion and loss of biodiversity. Australia is currently the world leader in species extinctions. Our land and rivers are degraded.

There is the practical need for this legislation. This tool is needed to make existing legislation more workable.

Previous editions of Hut News have outlined the reasons why the Society is supporting the introduction of a BPO (or NVMO). The Society has been pushing for such an Order for many years.

Let our Councillors know you want something to protect the bush NOW. Tell them we must do more to provide a sustainable future for the city within a World Heritage area. If Sutherland Shire can protect their urban bushland, why can't we?

Councillors are expected to vote on the future of the NVMO at a council meeting on either 24 June or 10 July. Please let them know you support the idea of having a NVMO. Don't let the opposition drown us out.

If you wish to discuss any of the details or the amendments that BMCS is proposing please contact Peter Wilson on 4754 3038 (peterbat@tpg.com.au) or Lyndal Sullivan on 4782 1635 (lyndal@hermes.net.au).

Please write to any or all Councillors c/- Blue Mountains City Council, Locked Bag 5, Katoomba 2780. Or you could phone them on the following numbers: (Ward 1) Jim Angel 4782.4185, Terri Hamilton 4787.6549, Herman Kozelj 4782.1129 (Ward 2) Carol Gaul 4759.2243, Adam Searle 4757.4586, Chris Van der Kley 4757.2376(h) 4758.6254(w) (Ward 3) Angelique Henson 4754.2095, Colleen Kime 4751.9087, Daniel Myles 4751.4928 (Ward 4) Fiona Creed 0414.404.494, Jeff Egan 4739.0246, Mark Greenhill 4739.0274.

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No Retrospective Approval This Time

Last year the Gordon Falls Bushcare Group, having spent many hours weeding and revegetating Gordon Falls Reserve, received a certificate of appreciation from Blue Mountains City Council for 10 years service to the community. Regeneration work on creek-lines in the Reserve has been funded through the Urban Runoff Control Program. Members who remember the mass of weeds and land degradation in the reserve and on the approaches to the lovely old bushwalk through Lyrebird Dell and the Pool of

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Siloam have commented on the improvement. But is all this work to be in vain?

Four years ago, on land adjacent to the reserve and without Council approval, the steep, fern-covered sides of Gordon Falls Creek were bulldozed and significant areas of important creek-line vegetation were destroyed. This vegetation, immediately upslope of the National Park, had acted as a barrier to water and sediment flows for a creek which runs through Lyrebird Dell and the Pool of Siloam. The removal of large pine trees on the property had been approved, but the bulldozing of the creek-line had not.

Since the removal of the pines and the excavation of the creek banks, pine logs, needles and sediment were noticed in the creek as far down as the Pool of Siloam. Creek banks have collapsed, associated vegetation has been lost, and sediment deposits downstream have dramatically increased.

A Land Use Application for landscaping work on the property has been lodged and will soon be considered by Council. The Applicant claims the development will have a 'positive impact' on the natural environment by stabilising disturbed land—but the land wasn't disturbed until it was unlawfully bulldozed by the applicant! The application is of serious concern and should be refused for a number of reasons.

- The proposed restoration of the riparian vegetation does not go far enough—a much larger area was destroyed than the proposal indicates and needs to be restored.
- The development will have an adverse impact on the National Park. The proposed landscaped gardens are likely to increase the nutrients, sediment and weeds which enter the creek-line, and therefore the National Park, because of the inadequacy of a buffer to the creek-line.
- The unauthorised work and proposed Landscape Plans contravene a number of requirements of Council's LEP91.

We urge Councillors NOT to give retrospective approval to this environmental vandalism.

Bushcare at Braeside

Braeside, at Blackheath, is a beautiful area. Its location also means that there is a high potential for weeds in the creek area to impact upon the Grose Valley. NPWS has established a bushcare group at Braeside to give some special attention to the area, targeting gorse and other nasties!

We would love you to join us, on the last Saturday of each month, 9.30 am to 12.30 pm. Meet at the start of the dirt road at the end of Braeside Street, Blackheath. Bring gardening gloves.

No experience is necessary and supervision is provided by trained bush regenerator Susan Johnston. Morning tea is provided. Contact Ranger Katherine Crawford 4787.3112 for more information.

Bulldozers or Bush?

Draft Development Control Plan 35

Do you think it is a bit odd that a council that boasts of its bushcare program does not inform a bushcare group of a development next door or upstream of where they work? This very bushcare group is probably working to repair the damage done by previous developments in the sub-catchment. They may have something valuable to say? You might have something valuable to say, but you will not be informed unless your property is one whose views, privacy, streetscape quality etc. might be affected by the proposed development.

Draft "Development Control Plan No 35: Community Consultation for Land Use Management and Manual of Procedures" is on public exhibition now. This DCP deals with who gets informed about development proposals, what developments get advertised, how to make submissions, how long the community has to consider plans and make submissions etc. Council has not extended rights of notification to those people who can be identified as being affected by or concerned about impacts on the environment, such as quality of water downstream or impacts on bushland.

Most developments in the mountains are called "General Local Development" which do not have any mandatory requirements to notify the community. However many councils do this and some require notices in front of all proposed development properties. Blue Mountains City Council has ceased advertising all developments in the local paper.

The draft policy also outlines what documents you may inspect and what you may take copies of. It is important that residents can copy plans and pertinent sections of the proposal in order to give proper consideration to what are often complex matters. The NSW government has given us the right to inspect and take away copies of development applications and associated documents in section 12 of the Local Government Act—it appears that Blue Mountains City Council wishes to remove this right.

Blue Mountains City Council has a Mission Statement about "working in partnership with our diverse communities ..." and has a Vision of "respecting our heritage and safeguarding our fragile environment". Glossy documents and expensive community planning days need to translate into day to day action.

The draft policy also covers the procedures for Draft Local Environment Plans and Plans of Management for Community Land and other matters.

Get a copy of this draft policy and see what you think of it. Let the Society know and let Council know too. The closing date for comments is Friday 20 June at 5pm. Contact the land use sub-committee to discuss ideas or for more information through Lyndal Sullivan 4782 1635.

The Noisy Miner: A native gone feral?

Noisy Miners now dominate a large number of suburban gardens and parks. They will exclude all other honeyeaters and can become so confident they will mob adult kookaburras. Their group territorial activity makes it impossible for smaller birds to feed and breed. In our part of Blaxland the smaller honeyeaters such as Eastern Spinebills, New Holland Honeyeaters etc. and even the larger wattlebirds have disappeared from our garden.

In a study of Noisy Miners carried out by Professor Douglas Dow of Queensland University, a mob of Noisy Miners were seen to harass a pardalote for twenty minutes until it fell dead from pecks to the head; a sparrow was killed after six minutes and a Sacred Kingfisher was dead after over five hours. Dow listed sixty-five species that were seen being harassed by the Noisy Miners. These included kites, ravens, magpies, magpie-larks, parrots, plovers and other honeyeaters.

Because Noisy Miners exclude birds that feed on leaf-eating insects there tends to be a preponderance of small leaf-eating insects in their territories. The whole impact of these birds on insect populations is not understood. Many native birds are known to move about in multi-species feeding flocks. The hunting or nectar seeking activities of some birds flushes out insects that are then predated by more agile species. This enables the birds to more effectively exploit their environment and maximise food gathered. The effect of Noisy Miners on this interaction must be disruptive and it is entirely reasonable that it results in lesser predation of some insect species.

The rise of Noisy Miner numbers has been put down to the creation of cleared areas to make parks and back yards and the growing of large nectar producing plants such as Grevillea and bottlebrush. Not only are the nursery-bought versions of these plants open leafed and therefore unsuitable as cover for small birds but they have longer flowering periods which encourages sedentary, territorial birds. One of the few remedies available to garden owners to discourage this pest is to plant dense nectar producing shrubs such as Hakeas, heaths and prickly Acacias. Preferably these shrubs should be indigenous to your area. But that is another story. (Extract of an article by Peter Foster in Blue Mountains WIRES newsletter 'Hello Possums' Autumn 2003. Visit Blue Mountains WIRES website at www.bluemts.com.au/wires)

Bernard O'Reilly Centenary

On Sunday September 7, to celebrate the centenary of Bernard O'Reilly's birth, Jim Smith will lead an excursion in the Kanimbla Valley to the O'Reilly home and a walk along 'The Magic Road' to the ruins of the little school house—all so vividly described in Bernard O'Reilly's books 'Green

World Environment Day Celebrations

Sustainability Future Search

An exploration of what it will take to evolve a world that works ...

Friday 13 June, 7-9pm, Springwood Neighbourhood Centre, 108 Macquarie Road.

Put your thinking hat on and join us for a good-hearted and gutsy exploration of the main patterns that shape our world today. Our intent is to get a clear overview of what it will take to make the world work, and to identify constructive long-term points of change that can enable the necessary changes to come about. Heady stuff, and lots of fun if you like this sort of thing. It is also a need of our time. As Louise Porter said, "If you want to change direction you need a theory." We need to move beyond the bits and pieces and put it all together.

The idea of the think tank is to do this interactively rather than as a lecture or presentation from the facilitator. We want to engage people to extend their own thinking, do further reading and research, and finally take action to make their own contribution to our positive evolution. At this point in time reading, thinking and discussing these things are important contributions. They develop the general understanding required for larger cultural and political shifts. An uninformed and apathetic population can never achieve sustainability. This work will be an investment in citizenship, a contribution to making democracy work for community well-being.

Andrew Gaines is the lead facilitator. He is a member of EcoSTEPS, and has been thinking seriously about these issues for years.

More details: Andrew Gaines 4787 1675 (andrewgaines@bigpond.com)

Blue Mountains World Environment Festival 2003

Saturday 14 June, 9.30am to 4.00 pm, Springwood Library, Springwood Neighbourhood Centre and Buckland Park, Macquarie Street, Springwood.

Entertainment, workshops, stalls, no dig garden demonstration, story telling, launch of bushfire video, and more. There are a number of workshops and activities to keep children busy all day.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society's stall will be in the Library. Drop in and say hello. If you can help out on the stall for an hour or so, contact Heather Hull 4739 1493 (heatherhull40@hotmail.com)

More details: Contact Jasmine Payget at Blue Mountains City Council 4780 5739 (jpayget@bmcc.nsw.gov.au)

Mountains' and 'Cullenbenbong'. We will meet at Mt Victoria Station to pool cars at 8.30 am. Enquiries to Christine 4787.7246, email hutnews@pnc.com.au.

"The whole of the visual landscape about the house was our playground—the garden, the sheds and yards, the two creeks, the flats, and the ridges; but starting above the pigsties and winding off around the ridge from where you could look down into the bed of Long Swamp, was a narrow track. It was our road to adventure and knowledge: it was the way to school.

"It was a magic journey, that daily walk to school, and its freshness and wonder never dimmed for us. There were place names at every few yards—every big boulder, every creek crossing, every old twisted water gum had its name and history.

"The track would never grow monotonous. All varieties of weather, light and shade; the march of the seasons; the colourful passing show of brilliant birds and their music; the clouds to which a child's spirit soars as he gazes aloft to a twelve foot eagle riding the breeze; the gay little clouds of spring rolling on a merry wind, tumbling and somersaulting across the azure sky; or perhaps snow on the Divide with small clouds running on the bitter wind like black hounds against a leaden

ceiling—all these were features of that magic road.

"There was no weather too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry, each had its own charm and variety and all were part of the vast patchwork quilt of contract that made every day something that was fresh and new."

(Extract from 'Cullenbenbong', chapter 12, 'The Magic Road'.)

The Bushwalker's Birthday

The future holds the best things from the past
If simple fantasies are realized
The bush mountain-sides can lure us back
Familiar sights and new are holding hands.

The brown-leaf underfoot recalls the green
The patterns of its youth so well preserved
The rock once virginal now shows its age
Wears mosses, lichens, axe grooves and firm pride.

The tree-trunk smashed to splinters by a storm
Evokes its days spent thrusting heavenwards
The canyon's tender neck admits the light
To depths near where the stream first caused its birth.

A pool mirrors the walker's leaning face
Fine features in its gently rippling glass
The sun's rays touch the drops on strands of web
And golden twirls within the walker's hair.

Like freckles on fair shoulders are the flowers
That bloom across a shelf of mountain sand
A sun-dew turns up like a button nose
A bird's wings like a sigh's breath part the air.

In timeless cave or chasm make your claim
That you indeed have lived another year
Look downward on the ferns without regret
The future holds the best things from the past.

Don Morison.

Bus Trips

A member has suggested that we organise a bus trip for those who enjoy getting out into the bush but can't handle the walking. If you would be interested in participating please contact Bill Tocher on 4758.8545.

The Warrumbungles

In May 2003 thirteen of the Thursday bushwalkers visited the Warrumbungles near Coonabarabran. Our accommodation was in two comfortable cottages on the edge of the Warrumbungle National Park. Towering behind the cottages is Timor Rock, a Trachyte lava dome. In the paddocks the grass was green but there had not been enough rain to soak through into the creeks and rivers which were quite dry—the 'green drought', a local called it.

A walk to the Grand High Tops: The path got rougher and rougher and steeper and steeper ... twisted Angophoras ... tall Ironbarks and White Gums ... stands of ancient Xanthorrhoea ... clusters of maidenhair fern ... Kurrajongs, like Christmas trees with multiple black decorations, the ripe seed pods ... native Callitris pines ... the most beautiful tiny flowers, their stems so thin and fragile.

We were on top of the Warrumbungles surrounded by peaks and rocks of the ancient volcanoes with a glimpse of the plains far below, and we met four-month-old Matthew with his mother and father. There were two Wedge-tailed Eagles riding the thermals, soaring over and below us and we looked down at a Small Black Kite also riding the thermals.

We were above a volcanic feature called The Breadknife—17 million years ago a crack in the rocks was filled with lava, and now all that's left is the crack, the rest has eroded away. Ron recorded 23 species of birds. The Fantail Cuckoo and Spotted Pardalote were calling all day, and a new bird for us was the pretty White-plumed Honeyeater.

On the way home there were kangaroos everywhere, and two Wedge-tailed Eagles beside a small dead kangaroo.

We organised a tour of Sidings Springs Observatory. This involved a two-hour, three kilometre walk around the top of the mountain with views to vast distances, to Gulargambone, Coonamble and Mt Kaputar near Narrabri. Some of us had imagined a hub of activity at the Observatory at night, but we learned that all the telescopes operate by remote control with the information being fed onto computers. There is no-one there looking through them or even operating them! A raven called Fred followed us all through the tour.

It rained that afternoon so we decided on a short easy walk along Wambelong Nature Track. The walk description lists Wambelong Creek as one of the few reliable creeks in the Park, but it was dry except for the occasional green puddle.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Jun 13/14 World Environment Day Celebrations. See page 3.
Jun 21 (Sat) Management Meeting, 9am, Mid Mtns Community Centre, Lawson.
Jun 27 (Fri) General Meeting at the Conservation Hut, 7.30 pm. See Page 1.

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

Jun 14 (Sat) Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group. (9 am, 2nd Saturday of every month) Tools provided. Contact Karen 4757.1929.

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

Jun 29 (Sun) Craft, games and walk with a Discovery Ranger. Meet at the end of Alexander Ave., off Winbourne Ave, Hazelbrook. Wear walking shoes and old clothes for craft activity. Bring water and a snack.

BUSHWALKS:

Pre-School Walks, for parent/grandparent/carer with children under 6 years.

Short, easy walks, approx 1 hour, 1st Wednesday of every month, starting at 10.30am. Bring a snack and a drink. Contact Megan 4782.5898 or Kathy 4759.3669 for more information or if the weather is doubtful.

Jul 02 Marge's Lookout, Glenbrook. Meet at Lennox Bridge on Mitchells Pass.

Monday Leisure Walks: Usually half day walk unless noted, leisurely pace. Walks are all graded Medium and suit walkers of average fitness.

Jun 16 Warrimoo to Valley Heights via Sun Valley. ☎ Ron 4757.1526. Meet Warrimoo Station north side 9.10 am.

Jun 23 Sandy Hollow to Duckhole. ☎ Allan 4739.2767. Meet Glenbrook Station carpark 9am.

Jun 30 Birdwood Gully. ☎ Laurel 4784.1554. Meet carpark at Springwood Station 9am.

Jul 07 Victory Track. ☎ Bill 4759.1692. Meet at Falconbridge carpark 9am.

Easy Walks on Thursdays:

These walks are conducted at a slow pace to suit the walkers on the day and are usually 2-3 hours. Lunch follows for those so inclined. Phone the contact for any enquiries about the program, starting times and transport issues.

Jun 12 South Lawson Park. Circuit bush track to view waterfalls, some steps. Meet junction of Honour Avenue and Orient Street Lawson 10am. ☎ Simone 4757.3416.

Jun 19 West Katoomba lookouts. Drive and walk to lookouts over the Megalong Valley. Very easy walk. Meet at Katoomba Station carpark near Gearins Hotel, 10 am. ☎ Joan 4782.2218.

Jun 26 Leura Cascades. Round walk via Prince Henry Cliff Walk. Some steps. Meet cnr Leura Mall and Megalong Street 10 am. ☎ Joan 4782.2218.

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.

Jun 14 (Sat) Falconbridge to Linden via old sawmill site. Meet Falconbridge rail carpark 8.57 am. ☎ Jim 4758.6009. Hard grade, some off track. Bring lunch, gloves, 2 litres of water.

Jun 21 (Sat) Ikara Head. Meet Mt Victoria Station 9.30 am. ☎ Judy 4787.1191. Grade easy, mostly level, great views. Finish 3pm approx.

Jun 28 (Sat) Lockyer's Pass and Cox's Road. An historic walk. Meet Mt Victoria Station 9.30 am. ☎ June 4787.7312. Medium grade. Finish 3.30 pm approx.

Jul 05 (Sat) Murphy's Glen to Bedford Creek. Meet Woodford rail carpark, south side, 9.50 am. ☎ Liz 4754.4966. Medium grade. A chance to marvel at giant gums and cheeky Bower Birds. Finish 3 pm approx.

Jul 13 (Sun) Lawson Cascades and Terrace Falls. Meet Honour Avenue, south side of Lawson railway station, 9.42 am. ☎ Bill 4758.8545. Medium grade with hard climb up steps, spectacular rain forest and waterfalls. Finish 3 pm approx.

NOTE: All bushwalkers need to carry water, 1 litre minimum, a snack for morning tea and lunch for all day walks.

Tall 100-year-old Sheoaks in the creek-bed were dead through the long dryness. River Red Gums seemed unaffected by the drought—magnificent trees with colourful mottled trunks.

The rain stopped as we drove away and the River Red Gums sparkled in the sunlight with diamonds of moisture. Later the moon was near full with a huge circle around it. (Thursday Bushwalkers)

Moonlight Halo

In the middle of the night ...
Gazed upon the dark sky
Found a moonlight
Shielded by a halo

Full of light
Serene moments ...
Peaceful heart ...
Truly comforting ...

(Dina Lee)