

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Ancient World of Wollemi Reveals New Treasure

Australian Museum's resident rock art specialist and Principal Research Scientist in Anthropology Dr Paul Tacon will speak at our general meeting on Friday 26 March.

Dr Tacon will talk about the 4000 year old record of stunning and rare rock art discovered only last year at a cave in a remote area of the Wollemi National Park. The site has more than 203 separate depictions and up to 12 different layers of art created over time in different geographic styles.

"It is like an ancient world that time forgot. We've never seen anything quite like this combination of rare representations in so many layers. For instance our analysis has revealed an unusually large percentage of bird related imagery in several layers of the rock art," said Dr Tacon in Australian Museum's Anthropology News.

"The superimposed layers in various colours such as red, yellow, white and charcoal black are in pristine condition and include stencils, drawings and one painting." There are half human-half animal composites arranged in groups and various sorts of human-like figures. The drawings are dominated by a range of birds, lizards and marsupials. There are life-size, delicately drawn eagles, kangaroos and an extremely rare depiction of a wombat. Stencils include hands, hand-and-arms, boomerangs and hafted axes.

The project is part of an investigation into the cultural heritage of the Wollemi and nearby portions of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. It is led by the Dr Tacon, consultant archaeologist Wayne Brennan and included members of the local Darkingung, Darug and Wiradjuri communities and other experts from the Australian Museum. One of the long-term aims of the project is to better interpret and protect the region's rock-art.

The general meeting will be held at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, on Friday 26 March, starting at 7.30 pm. Visitors are very welcome.

Natural Events in the Upper Blue Mountains

During January two special natural events were observed and reported in the Upper Blue Mountains—mating of the Giant Dragonflies at swamps along Mount Hay Road and flowering of pink Flannel Flowers in burnt heathland near Hargraves Lookout on Shipley Plateau.

Petalura gigantea, the Giant Dragon-

Take an Active Role ...

Would you like to take an active role in the management of Blue Mountains Conservation Society or would like to help in any other way. There is plenty of work for all. At our Annual General Meeting on Friday 26 March 2004 members will elect a new Management Committee for the year to 30 March 2005. Members are also needed to help in our sub-committees which play a crucial role in supporting the work of the management committee. Serving on the management committee and in sub-committees can be immensely rewarding, and no experience is necessary.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is one of the oldest and largest regional environmental groups in Australia and enjoys respect from the community and from the agencies with which it deals. The Management Committee tries to spend minimal time on administrative matters. Meeting agendas are structured so that highest priority is given to conservation issues. The Society is in a strong financial position so the committee does not have to be involved in fund-raising. Your time on the committee will be very focused on helping the environment.

There is an insert in this issue of Hut News with details of all Management Committee positions. You can obtain more information from members of this year's committee (see panel on page 2), or you can come along as an observer to one or both of the remaining committee meetings, to be held on 21 February and 20 March at 9am at the Mid-Mountains Community Centre, Lawson. Please give consideration to nominating for a position. Whilst our constitution allows for nominations to be received on the night of the AGM, we really need to be organised before-hand to ensure that there will be at least one nomination for each position. Don't be shy! To be nominated, all you need to do is leave a message on the office phone for our secretary, or contact any member of the present Management Committee.

Residents tell Council the Environment is Important

'Recent community consultation on the city strategy has confirmed that the natural environment, distinctive villages and towns, strong connected communities and local employment are things that are most important to the people of the Blue Mountains. The surrounding bushland, clean creeks and waterways, clean air and the diverse flora and fauna are aspects specifically identified as being of significance to residents.' (source: Introduction, Blue Mountains City Council, Annual Report 2002-2003)

This is irrefutable evidence that Blue Mountains residents want clean creeks and waterways, clean air, diverse flora and fauna and that the natural environment and distinctive villages and towns are top of their priorities. What's more, Council acknowledges this by including it in the introduction to their annual report.

Then why do so many our Councillors vote to do things which destroy these aspects that the residents value so highly and continue to vote against policies which will help to fully protect them? There will be a chance to redress this balance at the Council elections on 27 March. The new council will be responsible for setting the directions for a revised Local Environment Plan. Will council be dominated by those who wish to see this major policy document as a toothless tiger? This will be a real opportunity for council to make clear and workable rules which will put a halt to degradation.

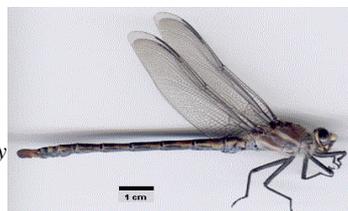
fly, is listed as endangered under the Threatened Species Conservation Act in New South Wales. Unlike other dragonflies, the larvae of *Petalura gigantea* do not swim around in permanent ponds or open water. They make a permanent burrow in suitably soft ground/swamp/bog/mud and live much like a trap-door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

Actinotus forsythii, the pink Flannel Flower, is rarely seen because of its restricted distribution and because it appears only sporadically. After producing seed between April and May, the plant dies off and is blown away by the

winds. It is believed that an important factor in the subsequent germination is fire, followed by suitable rain. Flower heads are unmistakable as they are about 25mm across with pink flowers in the centre and white bracts around the central flowers.

Its distribution is restricted to a few locations in the higher Blue Mountains and it has also been recorded on the south coast and southern tablelands between Nerriga and Sassafras.

Petalura gigantea, the Giant Dragonfly



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A Community Consultation Draft Framework 2004

Do you have ideas about how Council should consult with you and other members of your community? Have you ever attended a public meeting run by Council or workshop about your local area or town?

The Community Consultation Draft Framework 2004 prepared by Blue Mountains City Council is a welcome first step in more effectively involving the community in Council decision-making. It is to be hoped that the draft will be developed considerably to make it a meaningful policy document to guide the actions of all sections of council.

Membership Enquiries
Contact Elizabeth van Reyswoud
Phone 4757.2694
Email: mcreysw@bigpond.net.au
Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

For example when a public meeting is held, it would be beneficial to all attending if there were a specifically designated person to 'chair' or facilitate the meeting. Meetings can be very frustrating for those attending if you don't get a chance to have your say or get an answer to a question because the person presenting Council's position is also theoretically chairing the meeting.

Other practices that the draft could address are the length of time that notice of a meeting should be given prior to that meeting. Short notice, that is less than two weeks, can preclude many people.

It would be good if Council recognised that the community consists of more than individuals pursuing their own private interests (that is, only concerned about the look of their property or street). Recognition that the community includes people with broader interests, skills and experience could change some of Council's current practices. For example, there may be widespread interest from the "wider" local community about a house being built near a creek line. Whilst the immediate neighbours may not care about this, it is likely that other people in the area may have deep concerns. Certainly the local bushcare group will. Does this broader community learn of the proposal before the bulldozers come?

The draft framework establishes a hierarchy of levels of involvement. Do you agree with the sort of matters you are now only informed about after they have been decided? Do you think Council consults too much? Are there some matters where council could collaborate more with you? Do you wish to be more involved at the Council meeting level? Do you think more council business should be conducted in Committees open to the public rather than in closed briefing sessions? Are the guidelines for closed meetings too restrictive?

We encourage members of the Society to obtain a copy of the Framework from Council or their local library so that an informed debate on the Draft Framework can be held.

As the deadline for submissions to Council is 12 March 2004, please send your comments to Alan Harris (PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782 or email pamal8@bigpond.com.au) by 28 February so that he can compile the Society's response to Council. Alan can also be contacted on 4757 4545. As well, why not send off your own personal comments to Council on this matter?

Funding Cuts Threaten National Parks Association

The largest green group in NSW is under threat after funding cuts to a federal environment program.

The National Parks Association of NSW had received federal funding since the Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations Program was set up by the Whitlam government in

the 1970s. The NPA works to protect and conserve landscapes and species across the state.

But after a review of the program, the NPA will no longer receive about \$20,000 a year, which is used to write submissions to government inquiries and to cover administration costs. (Sydney Morning Herald, 20 November 2003)

The National Parks Association is one of NSW's peak environment groups, its major functions being to protect our national parks from inappropriate use and to campaign for other special areas to be designated as national parks. It also has an extensive activities program for members.

The National Parks Association can only continue to do its vital work with a sound financial base and a strong membership.

These Federal Government funding cuts leave a massive hole in an already tight budget. National Parks Association of NSW is appealing for more members and help by way of donations to continue its vital work.

Find out about membership or send a donation to National Parks Association of NSW, PO Box A96, Sydney South 1235, phone 9299.0000, fax 9290.2525, email npansw@npansw.org.au, internet www.npansw.org.au

Welcome to New Members

Leonie Kelly, Narellan
Matthew Rudge, Valley Heights
Graham Nelson, Wentworth Falls
Lesley Gersen, Bullaburra
Jennifer Morrison, Katoomba
Maureen Rogers, Lawson
Stephen Marsh, Blackheath
Nacko Iwahashi, Blackheath
Christian Harrington, Blackheath
Steve Alton, Katoomba
Ian Marshall, Katoomba
Trish and David Hammill, Dubbo

Hut News by Email

A few months ago we asked members who would prefer to receive their Hut News by email to advise us. However at that time our membership secretary changed her email address and people would have been unable to respond. Please contact Liz van Reyswoud on mcreysw@bigpond

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

General Meeting: Friday 27 February
7.30 pm, at the Conservation Hut,
Wentworth Falls. (see page 1).

Management Meeting: Saturday 21
February, 9 am, Mid Mountains
Community Centre, Lawson. Members
are welcome to attend as observers.

Bushcare: Saturday 14 February. Valley
of the Waters Bushcare Group meets at
9am on the 2nd Saturday of every month.
Tools are provided. Bring morning tea,
gloves and drinking water. Contact Karen
4757.1929.

**Blue Mountains Conservation Society
Bushwalking Group** organises a variety
of activities for all ages. See page 4.

Sewage and Sewerage:

by Ross Coster

In previous articles I have discussed Sydney's (and the Blue Mountains') water supply, where it comes from, how it is processed and delivered, what is wrong with it and how to minimise your use. Now it is time to discuss the other end of the matter (pun intended)—sewage.

First some terminologies: Sewage is the liquid waste that leaves your home. The pipes, pumps and tunnels that carry sewage are called sewerage, or reticulated sewers. The place where sewage goes is called a sewage treatment plant or STP.

What is Sewage? Most people think of sewage as what you flush down the toilet, but this is only a small part of the picture. Sewage is human wastes and toilet paper, but it is also soap, shampoo, dishwashing detergent, washing detergent, dirt, grease, hair, skin, disinfectant, surface cleanser - all of the by-products of washing and flushing. Sewage also may contain paint, sanitary products, toxic chemicals, industrial waste, oil etc. You are not supposed to put any of these items into the sewers, but people being what they are (lazy?), these things do get in. But mostly sewage is water. Over 98% of sewage arriving at the STP is water.

What is Sewerage? Sewers are simply pipes, right? Wrong.

When constructing reticulated sewers (or sewerage), authorities (in our case, Sydney Water) try very hard to use gravity to transport the sewage. But in difficult terrain (eg: where we live!), this is not always possible. So sewers also include storage wells, pumping stations, micro-bores and tunnels.

Some years ago a tunnel was drilled from Winmalee to North Katoomba, in places up to 3 metres in diameter. This tunnel carries sewage from all the towns from Katoomba through to Winmalee, down the mountains by gravity, to the STP at Winmalee. In your town, the job of the sewers, pumping stations, and micro-bores (bored tunnels too small for people to access) is to deliver sewage

into the main tunnel to Winmalee STP. The drilling of the tunnel, and subsequent connections in each town, have enabled under-performing STP's to be de-commissioned and demolished, and the sites rehabilitated. These STP's included Springwood, Hazelbrook, Wentworth Falls, South Katoomba and North Katoomba.

What is an STP? The job of a Sewage Treatment Plant or STP is to remove all of the 'contaminants' from sewage to produce two output streams, water and sludge. This is a virtually impossible task, as there are a number of contaminants in sewage that cannot be removed. So what we get out of an STP is lightly-polluted water, or effluent, and sludge, or 'bio-solids' as they like to call it in the industry.

Most bio-solids (99%) are recycled by Sydney Water and are used as fertiliser or soil conditioner in agriculture or forestry. Have you ever seen an 'Australian Native Landscapes' truck crossing the Mountains and wondered about that smell? ANL are contracted to deliver sludge to re-use activities west of the mountains. Tip—don't follow an ANL truck in an open-topped vehicle!

The effluent stream from STP's is generally released to a water body, such as a river or the ocean.

In the Blue Mountains we now have four STP's. The big one at Winmalee processes about 18 million litres per day, and is here to stay. It uses latest technologies, very high contaminant removal rates, and 99% sludge recycling. But it releases the effluent into the Nepean River. There is a small STP at Mt Victoria, soon to be replaced by a pipeline to the tunnel access portal at North Katoomba. There is also a larger STP at Blackheath, also soon to be replaced by the North Katoomba pipeline. Last of all, there is an STP at Glenbrook (next to the RAAF base, which explains that smell!) which is soon to be replaced with a pipeline down to the STP at Penrith.

Next month I will discuss how STP's do their job, and how they could do it

The Mynah Menace

by Christine Davies

The Indian Mynah population in on the increase in my part of Blackheath, on the edge of the National Park. A pair moved into the area two years ago and they have bred several times. The problem is not confined to Australia. The following extract comes from an article by Narisha Davids in South Africa's *Sunday Times*.

Johannesburg is under attack - by birds! Thousands of Indian mynahs are ruffling the feathers of hundreds of homeowners, especially in the more affluent suburbs. Residents complain that the aggressive mynahs chase away other birds and attack their pets. Gardeners hate the invaders because their droppings poison plants.

Geoff Lockwood, manager of the Delta Environmental Centre in Joburg, said Indian mynahs were particularly hard to fight because they were anything but bird-brained - they are among the world's brightest birds and can even speak better than parrots. "They have learnt to avoid anyone doing strange things around them because they know they might be in danger," and "They feed on anything so it is very difficult to get rid of them." "They are particularly fond of feeding on lawns and therefore they will prefer more affluent suburbs where there are larger gardens and lawns."

Indian mynahs were brought to Durban more than 100 years ago by Indian labourers who kept them as pets and taught them to speak. Today they are found throughout the country, and their population is growing all the time. One resident said she saw just two Indian mynahs in her garden a year ago. Now there are "more than 1 000 of them" roosting in her trees.

One obvious solution is not to have lawns. I don't, but the neighbours do, and the Mynahs come into my native garden to find food and water and chase the small birds away.

Do you have any Indian Mynah stories and ideas on how to get rid of them? Write to Christine, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.

***"We have lots of information ...
but what really helps people to take more action?"***

**Education for Sustainability Workshop
Saturday 21 February, 11am to 4 pm
Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson.**

Come along to this workshop if you are interested in how to connect with the broader community on how to communicate about your issues. Both environmental and community based organisations will be represented. Workshop participants will have an opportunity to hear about recent research and understandings about sustainability messages. Participants will also be able to influence the direction Council will take regarding their Education for Sustainability Strategy.

There have been numerous campaigns and information brochures and workshops directed at environment improvement and community building but only some of these have been successful in reaching "the unconverted". While many Blue Mountains residents value community and the environment, this workshop is a step to help council and community groups develop and deepen partnerships. It builds upon the consultations on "The Map for Action"; the future visioning for the Blue Mountains, to

provide a practical and specific educational program.

Les Robinson of Social Change Media will speak on what enables people to make changes. Richard Davies of NPWS will speak on the research that has led to the Backyard Buddies program. The afternoon session will focus on particular topics such as protecting water catchments and companion animals and will draw together people from different interests. The afternoon session will reflect the interest of participants so please RSVP early.

Lunch will be provided. **RSVP by 18 February 2004** to Jasmine Payget 4780.5739, email jpayget@bmcc.nsw.gov.au. Workshop organised by Education for Sustainability program, Blue Mountains City Council.

Travelling North

by Christine Davies

In January 2004 I holidayed with my daughter Sophia and her family at Eagle Heights on Tamborine Mountain, above the Queensland Gold Coast. It's a beautiful place, the volcanic soil supporting tall trees and rainforest – and so delightfully noisy!

Our rented cottage was surrounded by tall trees with understorey Burrawangs trying to compete with Morning Glory and other weeds.

Colourful butterflies fluttered by and brush-turkeys scratched quietly, while all around were the songs of many birds including kookaburras, crows, whip birds, leatherheads, currawongs, bower birds, cockatoos, Rainbow Lorikeets, a Barking Owl, a pair of Pheasant coucals high in the trees (gathering nesting material?) and numerous Spangled Drongos which make a variety of sounds and imitate other birds (one morning it seemed the treetops were full of whip birds until I realised that whip birds don't usually call from treetops).

Add to this the sounds of cicadas and other insects, daytime was rather loud!

In the late afternoon cicadas would strike up in chorus with a chirping song, joined by crickets and tree frogs and the cackle of kookaburras roosting for the night. Around dusk their songs were drowned by a roar of sound—bright green cicadas whose transparent green abdomens puffed up and enlarged and made a sound like a gas jet.

The chirping cicadas would strike up in chorus a few times and then give up. The gas jet cicadas would eventually tone down their song or perhaps were replaced by another species of smaller green cicada which was active at night and the sounds would continue more quietly into the night.

We walked in the national parks on Tamborine Mountain and moved very quickly when a large goanna plummeted, legs and claws outstretched, towards us when it lost its grip on a tree trunk. We drove to O'Reilly's on a narrow mountain road past falling rocks and walked along the canopy boardwalk in pouring rain.

We swam at Currumbin Beach and visited Seaworld which was hot, crowded and expensive but made worthwhile by a fabulous display of underwater frolicking by polar bears and a two-year-old's delight at the dear little Fairy Penguins.

On the way home we stayed at Urunga. At dusk the sky was filled with thousands of flying foxes. "Wow", I thought. "Vermin", said an old man. (We conservationists have a different view of our world!) Next morning we swam in the crystal waters of the Nambucca River at Nambucca Heads.

It was a good holiday and one I will remember, although the coolness of my beautiful Blue Mountains was welcoming.

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING GROUP

Our Bushwalking Group provides a range of activities. Membership of the bushwalking group is available to members of the Society. For further information contact the Activity Leader/Coordinator (listed) or Bushwalks Conveyor Bob van Reyswoud 4757 2694 (phone/fax), email mcreysw@bigpond.net.au Membership details are on page 4. **Cost of insurance and affiliation fees for bushwalkers is \$12.50 per member.**

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 Liz Riley 4787.6637 for more information or if the weather is doubtful.

Mar 03 Darwin's Walk, Wentworth Falls. Meet in Wilson Park on Falls Road.

Apr 07 Wentworth Falls Lake. Meet at the playground on Sinclair Crescent.

Monday Leisure Walks: Usually 'Short Day' walks of 3-5 hours suitable for walkers of average fitness. Graded Medium, i.e. can include some short rock scrambles or some short sections off-track. Bring morning tea and lunch, plus carry at least 1 litre of WATER, 2 litres on warmer days.

Feb 09 Red Gum Park, Bullaburra. Forest Walk and BBQ. Meet 9am Bullaburra Rly Stn Car Park, South Side. ☎ Kees 4759 1958.

Feb 16 Explore the secrets of Mt Wilson. BBQ. Meet Mt. Victoria Rly Stn 9.15 am. ☎ Bill 4759 1692.

Feb 23 Dante's Glen, Lawson. Cool glen with ferns and lichens. Swim in Lawson Pool. Meet 9am Lawson Bowling Club car park, north side next to railway station. ☎ Ron 4757 1526.

Mar 01 Terrace Falls, Hazelbrook. Walk beside a creek. Meet 9 am Hazelbrook Rly Stn car park (south side). ☎ Kees 4759 1958.

ADVANCE NOTICE FOR 22 MARCH: Bus trip to Barren Grounds Nature Reserve on Illawarra escarpment. Fare \$10 when booking. Limited numbers.

Thursday Pleasure Walks: These easy to medium grade walks are conducted to suit the walkers on the day. Times given are approximate. Slower walkers are catered for and on longer walks there is an option of a slower group to complete a section of the walk. Phone the contact for any enquiries about the program, starting times and transport issues. **NOTE: Walks to commence at 9.30am unless stated otherwise.**

Feb 5 South Lawson Waterfalls. Circuit bush track to view waterfalls, some steps. Meet at junction of the Highway and Honour Avenue Lawson. ☎ Marie 4787 1257.

Feb 12 Wilson Glen, Woodford. Old track to cave and waterfalls, some steps. Meet at Woodford Station. ☎ Simone 4757 3416.

Feb 19 Lyrebird Dell and Pool of Siloam. Some steep descents and ascents on good track. Meet junction of Leura Mall and Megalong Street, Leura. ☎ Joan 4782 2218.

Feb 26 Mt Piddington to Fairy Bower, Mt Victoria. Bush track down to Fairy Bower via rainforest and waterfall, car shuffle to return. Meet at Mt Victoria Station. ☎ Marie 4787 1257.

Mar 4 Red Gum Park, Bullaburra. Easy walk to Red Gum Park and Minnatonka Falls, return to 1 Cottle Road for BBQ lunch. Meet at corner of DeQuency Road and Genevieve Road Bullaburra. ☎ Bill 4759 1692

ADVANCE NOTICE FOR 25 MARCH. A bus trip is planned to visit Wolgan View Canyon and the Glow Worm Tunnel on Newnes Plateau at a cost of \$10 each. Numbers are limited. Please book and pay for your place by 21 Feb so that the bus can be reserved in time. All members welcome. ☎ Simone 4757 3416.

Weekend Bushwalks: 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 Bob van Reyswoud 4757.2694.

Feb 7 (Sat) Dalpura Canyon & Jinki Gully. Meet Mt Victoria Station 8.30am. Medium Hard with scratchy sections but wonderful views of the Grose River. ☎ Jim 4758-6009

Feb 8 (Sun) Giant Dragonfly and Swamp Walk. Easy morning walk, bring morning tea. Meet Mt. Hay Road, Near Leura public school. 9am. This is a special walk to see this rare species of dragonflies. This summer they have been seen in swamps in the Upper Blue Mountains. There is much to learn about the relationship between swamps and dragonflies. This is a nature study walk, so bring binoculars, notebook, pencil and morning tea. For bookings ring Meredith 4782-4823.

Feb 14 (Sat) Spit Bridge to Manly. Medium 8km walk. 6.39am train from Lithgow to Central. Meet 2nd carriage or top of escalator Central Station. Train to Wynyard, bus to Spit. Swim at lunchtime. Return by ferry from Manly to Quay. ☎ Mary & Terry Flynn 4787-6918.

Feb 21 (Sat) Camel's Hump. Medium. Meet Mt. Victoria station at 9 am. ☎ June 4787-7312.

Feb 28 (Sat) Bedford Creek. Medium. Bring swimming costume. Meet Woodford Station (south side) at 9 am. ☎ Liz 4754-4966.

Mar 6 (Sat) Overcliff/Undercliff, Slacks Stairs, Wentworth Pass. Hard, steep descent. Swim in pool below waterfall. Meet 9am Wentworth Falls Station carpark. ☎ Meredith 4782-4823