

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



What is happening to frogs in the Upper Mountains?

At our monthly meeting on Friday 28 April guest speaker Dr Alan Lane will discuss his recent study on frogs of the Blue Mountains.

Alan compared the frog communities in five urban habitats and five matched pristine, non-urban habitats in the Upper Mountains and tried to correlate his findings with environmental factors such as water quality, rainfall history, temperature, atmospheric conditions, vegetation, predation or fire history.

He found a total of six species at the urban sites, some of which were highly degraded, with up to four species found at any one site. In contrast, there was a marked absence of frogs from the non-urban habitats, with only one species at two sites and no frogs at all at the other three. This was contrary to expectations and contrary to the findings of previous studies. The absence of frogs from the non-urban sites did not appear to be related to rainfall history, fire history, vegetation characteristics or predation.

Alan collected water samples throughout the study period and found that the quality of water at the urban sites was consistently poor relative to the non-urban sites, particularly during and after rain, when all urban sites showed evidence of sewage pollution.

No explanation emerged for the observed differences between the frog populations at the urban compared with the non-urban sites.

Alan concluded that urban frog habitats are important reservoirs for the diversity of species absent from non-urban sites. However these habitats are vulnerable to progressive destruction from a variety of human activities. Municipal authorities should formally recognise their significance and ensure they are protected from further loss.

Alan's talk will outline the work he did and the results he obtained in his study. He will illustrate it with slides showing his study sites and the frogs he found, and he will play recordings of the calls of the frogs he found.

The meeting and talk at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, will commence at 7.30 pm. Visitors are very welcome.

Council votes to uphold LEP

by Virginia King, on behalf of BRAID (Blackheath Residents Against Improper Development, a subcommittee of RAID Inc)

On March 21, Blue Mountains Council voted to join BRAID's Supreme Court appeal of an interpretation of Clause 10.8(e) of LEP 1991. This interpretation was made by Justice Pain in the Land and Environment Court in August 2005. Clause 10.8(e) requires land zoned Residential Bushland Conservation to be connected to a "reticulated sewerage system" (i.e. the Sydney Water sewer) before subdivision can occur, but Justice Pain determined that this requirement was not a prohibition on subdivision, but a development standard that could be varied, for example with on-site sewage treatment. It was this decision that subsequently allowed the proposed subdivision and development at "Parklands" (Govett's Leap Road, Blackheath) to be approved by the Land and Environment Court in February 2006, with an on-site sewage treatment and dispersal system for 78 dwellings on 11 hectares.

The motion adopted by Council on March 21 states: *That the Council in order to maintain its intended interpretation of clause 10.8(e) of LEP 1991 as a prohibition and to provide the optimum outcome as far as the administration of the plan is concerned, joins the appeal as co-appellant.*

Council also voted to negotiate with BRAID on the option of cost sharing that part of the appeal relating to clause 10.8(e). These negotiations will then form a further confidential report for consideration and Council decision.

On March 22, the Blue Mountains Gazette published an article criticising Council's decision as wasting large amounts of public money to stop a development where the sewer will be connected in 2008 (i.e. "Parklands"), but the article was published before Council could comment on the potential costs of the appeal (closer to 10% of the \$350,000 quoted). The article also failed to inform the readership of the wider implications of clause 10.8(e) to allow subdivision and development (without sewer connection) in sensitive areas near streams and bushland across the Mountains.

In a follow-up article on March 29, the Gazette published the opinions of Council, BRAID and Blue Mountains Conservation Society, all stressing the impact of Clause 10.8(e) beyond the "Parklands" case. BRAID also noted that Council is risking a relatively small amount of money, which in the long run is likely to save the community millions in future court actions, expensive monitoring of on-site sewage systems, and environmental cleanups from effluent contamination.

BRAID applauds Council's leadership in upholding the intention of its own LEP and for voting to negotiate with BRAID to share costs. It was BRAID who took the initiative to file the appeal on behalf of the Blue Mountains community and Council, and Council's vote is both timely and visionary. It states clearly that it is sustainable development that Blue Mountains Council embraces.

1000 X \$10—Help pay the Appeal Costs!

As you have read in the above article, BRAID is a group of residents who are mounting an appeal of Clause 10.8(e) of LEP 1991 on behalf of the whole Blue Mountains Community. Council has voted to join BRAID and share costs for the Appeal, but BRAID still has to fund its own costs.

If 1000 people across the Mountains each donate \$10, BRAID will raise \$10,000 towards its legal bills. Are you in a position to donate \$10? (BRAID also accepts larger donations!)

Please forward your cheque or money order (made payable to RAID Inc) to PO Box 354 Blackheath 2785. Many thanks to those who have already donated.

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Draft Enforcement Policy on exhibition now

Blue Mountains City Council's Draft Enforcement Policy is on public exhibition at Council's Katoomba and Springwood Offices until 19 May 2006 and may also be downloaded from Council's website.

This is your chance to have a say about how Council's Enforcement Policy could be improved so that our hard won planning rules in LEP2005 can be better enforced. The Council needs to know that we care about these matters and want it to act on our behalf.

We need a good Enforcement Policy so that Council is able to act effectively and if necessary immediately, for instance when illegal clearing of bush or other environmental damage is in progress and needs to be stopped before further damage is done.

Submissions can be made either by letter or via email to Council and must be received by 5 pm on 22 May 2006.

Letter of the Month

Global Warming to Increase Cyclone Intensity

Although the ferocity of individual storms such as Cyclone Larry cannot be blamed on global warming, Australian scientists say that "Tropical cyclones will become more intense as the planet heats up" (Sydney Morning Herald Saturday 25.3.06).

Dr Debbie Abbs of the CSIRO's division of Marine and Atmospheric Research says "The scientific consensus is that global warming is expected to increase cyclone intensity, on average, in future because hotter surface waters would feed more energy into the weather systems" (SMH 25.3.06).

Former Defence Chief Peter Cosgrove, now heading the reconstruction effort, has tipped a \$1 billion bill for the long-term recovery of cycle-ravaged north Queensland. Had it hit the coast at a more heavily populated centre like Cairns or Brisbane, the damage and costs would have been much higher.

With extreme weather events such as cyclones predicted to increase in number as well as intensity with global warming, Australia must invest more in combating global warming.

Send a message to the Prime Minister making some or all of the following points:

* Why is geo-sequestration the Australian government's only significant policy for global warming when scientists say the technology is at least a decade away from commercial viability?

* Why has only \$25 million been allocated to be spent on renewable energy projects over the next five years (SMH Friday 13 January)?

* Didn't this government spend \$50 million in 2005 advertising its proposed Industrial Relations legislation?

You can send a short message by post or email: **Post:** Hon John Howard, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2607. **Email:** <http://www.pm.gov.au/email.cfm> (this is the only way you can send an email to the Prime Minister).

The British Prime Minister Tony Blair in his recent speech to the Australian parliament cited climate change as an important challenge on the global agenda. He strongly pushed the thrust of the Kyoto Protocol for measurable benchmarks, saying "There will be no resolution without a clear disciplined framework for action with measurable outcomes" (SMH 28.3.06).

Lawson Golf Course Site

Blue Mountains City Council has extended the public exhibition period of Recommended Concepts until Monday 1 May, with submissions now closing on 5 May 2006. The Society supports Option 6—that the site be used as an Aboeum and Botanical Gardens.

The main criticisms aimed at Option 6 are not valid, viz needs to be funded by Council and Lawson needs a sports field. This option can be funded with money raised outside Council and should be a significant earner for both Council and the community once established. Sporting fields proposed in other options can be better located, e.g. the former Lawson tip at the end of Ridge Street which has to be remediated by Council in the immediate future.

Take a look at some native botanic gardens run by local councils, e.g. Barossa www.barossa.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=286 and Shoalhaven www.esc.nsw.gov.au/gardens/

"A Blue Mountains World Heritage Botanic Gardens – think of that!" (Ron Withington)

Nursery news

Each month in this column we will feature a plant of special interest and for our first example we have chosen *Callitris muelleri* (Mueller's cypress), an example of a conifer.

While conifers are the dominant form

of vegetation in the northern hemisphere, they are much less common in the southern hemisphere. Australia has about 40 species in 11 genera, one of which is *Callitris*, commonly known as Cypress Pines which form extensive stands, mostly in inland areas such as the Pilliga.

Callitris muelleri is a hardy, small tree with a conifer-like silhouette, bright green foliage and makes an ideal contrasting garden specimen. The initially green fruits (nuts, cones) change to a lovely glossy brown, much liked by black cockatoos.

Our nursery has stocks of this interesting plant. If you missed out on the Autumn sale on 8th April, come along to Blackheath (Tuesday morning) or Lawson (Wednesday morning). We have shrubs, rockery plants, ground-covers, climbers to suit all situations and locations in the Mountains. **Enquiries to Kevin Bell, Ph/FAX 47 876 436, khsbell@pnc.com.au**

Welcome to new members

Julie McGill and Kevin Gleeson,
Wentworth Falls.

Mark McGrath, Blackheath
Emma Kennedy, Blackheath
Diane, Richard and Helen Stephens,
Blackheath

Sylvia Wilson, Katoomba
Elizabeth Bateman, Bass Hill
Ann Sharp, Harbord
Rod Quirk, Leura
Guy and Jeanine McIlraith, Katoomba

Bargo State Conservation Reserve to be handed over to shooters

Brian Marshall

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is greatly concerned about any attempt to excise portions of any National Park, State Conservation Area or any other form of reserved area. This is a matter of firm principle, irrespective of what alternative use may be intended. The declaration of substantial areas as National Parks and other forms of reserve is a record commonly cited as a positive result of the Carr Government and Minister for the Environment, Bob Debus. The Society seriously hopes that there is no intention to detract from this record; but current actions seem to suggest otherwise.

Having hurried the *National Parks (Adjustment of Areas) Bill* and the *National Parks and Wildlife (Further Adjustment of Areas) Bill* through Parliament in the Budget Session for 2005, the NSW State Government has gazetted the scope of proposed recreational hunting in a large number of State Forests, and is advocating excision of 1000 hectares from the Bargo State Conservation Area for a shooting complex. None of these actions inspire the confidence of environmental organizations.

Excising 1000 hectares from the State Conservation Area for private development would create a most unfortunate precedent, as it raises the possibility of excisions from other reserves being exclusively ear-marked for private use.

The Society is concerned over the roles of the Shooter's Party and the Minister for Tourism in this matter. There is a suggestion that the Hon. John Tingle MLC of the Shooters Party helped select the site, whilst funds for the shooting complex were apparently allocated through the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation's Shooting Club Development Fund.

One wonders whether this development is being pushed through using the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Infrastructure and Other Planning Reform) Bill 2005*?

The Department of Environment and Conservation's Revocation of Land Policy specifies that the excision of reserves should be enacted only in exceptional circumstances, and where alternative sites outside NPWS lands are non-existent. It is essential that pertinent ministers make public the environmental impact assessment and site selection documents that demonstrate compliance with this policy. In the interim, revocation of the Bargo State Conservation Area should be deferred.

Sydney's International Shooting Centre (as the proposed complex is called) is within the Warragamba catchment and proximal to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and Nattai Wilderness. Potentially, the development would add a lead

contaminant to Sydney's drinking water supplies, compromise the recreational use of the Bargo SCA, adversely impact on Wilderness, and impose additional noise and vehicular pollution on the Hill Top community.

The ill-conceived site selection and decision to proceed would seem to reflect undue haste. Was the Government spurred on by the fact that Melbourne had a shooting complex for the Commonwealth Games, or is it another example

of promoting big-ticket items in an attempt to counteract a procession of adverse publicity and declining 'poll' results?

The Society strongly advocates reconsideration of the proposal. Thought should be given to relocating the complex in a State Forest's pine plantation in the Southern Highlands, where established revocation policy would not be contravened and the environmental impact would be greatly reduced.

Another attack on good planning laws

Lyndal Sullivan

The latest in a series of attacks by our State Labor Government on good planning laws—the **Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Bill 2006**—was passed by one vote in State Parliament on Tuesday 28th March 2006. It will deliver unprecedented powers to the Minister for Planning to override decision-making of local councils and their communities. The increased centralisation of planning power in one person, along with the reduction in transparency and accountability, are a recipe for corruption.

Schedule 2 of the Bill, and in particular section 118(1)(b) will increase the Minister for Planning's ability to interfere with development decisions without a proper process and at the expense of community input. Powers are given to the Minister to take a council's planning powers away if he is of the opinion the council's performance is unsatisfactory *"because of the manner in which the council has dealt with those matters, the time taken or in any other respect"*.

This change will be open to abuse and able to be used against councils like the Blue Mountains City Council which aims to achieve environmental and social outcomes, designed to protect this area from rampant urban sprawl. This Bill will allow the Minister to apply a very subjective test to remove council planning powers where the council was legitimately opposing environmentally destructive development.

Amendments by Greens, Democrats, Independents and Liberal Upper House members have created some minor procedural improvements, one of which was to salvage the retention of a small safeguard against Ministerial abuse of power which the Amendment Bill had sought to remove. The Planning Minister will still have to obtain the concurrence of the Minister for Local Government before taking over a council's planning powers.

The Society sent emails to the relevant Ministers, Shadow Ministers and cross benchers. Peter Breen, Independent, opposed the Bill and summed up the seriousness of the change in his reply to us *"It seems to me that developers will now be able to fast-track their developments by lobbying the Minister and this is a matter of grave concern to Local Government and the people of New South Wales."*

What can we do about it? Tell our State Government representative how unhappy we are with our loss of democracy. Write to Hon Bob Debus MP, Member for Blue Mountains, Shop 3 Greenway Centre, 107-109 Macquarie Road, Springwood 2777. The Society has detailed information. Contact Lyndal Sullivan, 4782 1635 (ah) or lsullivan@efel.net.au (The song below was sung by members of Ecopella at Parliament House during the local government rally against the Bill on Tuesday 28 March)

Put It On The Ground

(Original words/music: Ray Glaser/Bill Wolff (1947?),
new words of the verses: Miguel Heatwole 2006)

The Minister for Planning says that we don't need a voice
He'll listen to developers and then he'll make his choice
He'll change the legislation 'cause he doesn't like red tape
Development is progress. You shouldn't call it rape.

**(Chorus) Put it on the ground, spread it all around
Dig it with a hoe, it will make your flowers grow.**

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act is bad.
It's made some very, very wealthy people rather sad.
Imagine what a tragedy it is to meet dissent
When you only want to do what's best for the environment

(Chorus)

When we need to build a shopping centre in a National Park
Environmental impact statements always miss the mark
The community's unreasonable in wanting to consult
The minister's discretion will ensure the best result

(Chorus)



The Colong Foundation for Wilderness has awarded its 2006 environmental abuse award to the Roads and Traffic Authority for the Sea Cliff Bridge at Coalcliff. This 'bridge' reveals the Authority's profound arrogance and vanity, and a level of environmental insensitivity that was politically impossible just a decade ago. How could this monstrosity be built on top of a rock platform and require a bay to be filled with rocks without even an environmental impact statement? After looking at this horror of planning you would hope that the RTA and its minders would say "Never again"; but no, similar structures are planned for an expressway in the Blue Mountains.

The Superstupid Bells Expressway proposal dumped again by Keith Muir

The following is the Colong Foundation's denunciation of what Ian Armstrong, the National's Member for Lachlan, describes as the largest infrastructure project now on the drawing board in New South Wales (media release 10 Nov 2005).

The planned Bells Line monster highway across the Blue Mountains will include flying bridges similar to the Sea Cliff Bridge and deep cuttings extending into the World Heritage Area.

This madness expressed in concrete, at a cost of more than three billion dollars, is unnecessary. The upgrade the Great Western Highway is an order of magnitude cheaper and provides for motor transport needs into the foreseeable future.

Bells Line of Road Corridor Study

After sitting on the \$2 million corridor study for a year, the State and Federal Road ministers released the controversial report last November. It is available on the RTA website www.rta.nsw.gov.au. Not surprisingly the new Sinclair Knight Merz study replicates in more detail the findings of the Maunsell McIntyre report of 2000 and makes a very strong recommendation against building the road.

Fortunately the project summary concludes that with marginal project justification, it will be difficult to demonstrate that the regional development benefits of the project outweigh the environmental costs. In response to the release of the corridor study, the former NSW Minister for Roads, the Hon Joe Tripodi, and the Commonwealth Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads the Hon Jim Lloyd, jointly issued a press release stating that "a four-lane motorway for Bells Line of Road is not justified" and that "the cost of the upgrade could not be justified at this stage". So that should be that, but **somehow the project refuses to die**.

Ian Armstrong leads the Bells Line Expressway Group, a lobby group that has been building a broad support base, gaining funding from the NRMA and even a resolution of support from the Blue Mountains City Council and several other councils.

Despite the rejection of the road for the time being, I have been informed that the detailed design drafting is underway for the many massive bridges and cuttings necessary to push a 110 km/h freeway through the rugged Mountains' canyonlands.

Make no mistake, the RTA is still planning to build its biggest ever monument in concrete. Joe Tripodi's public announcement should stop the agency from developing plans for the road, at least for now.

NSW Government and the Environment

by Keith Muir, Colong Foundation for Wilderness

The departure of Bob Carr in July 2005, along with Andrew Refshauge and Craig Knowles, has seen ministers in the NSW Government gain more autonomy under the leadership of Premier Morris Iemma. While the Government is still interested in pursuing some conservation outcomes, due mainly to the dedication of Bob Debus, conflicting development agendas are gaining more attention than ever.

Development has gained a priority on the State Government's agenda with a systematic reduction in planning controls in NSW over the last 10 years. Total Environment Centre reports that regional environmental plans have been reduced from 44 to five, and state environmental planning policies are down from 59 to 25. Local environmental plans are on the chopping block with the reduction of zones to a standard set proposed. Less regulation benefits property developers, but disadvantages the community and nature conservation. The Government has given the Planning Minister more power, making planning more political and less strategic.

To better understand what planning is now like, consider the Emirates' resort proposal in the Wolgan Valley. Emirates have discussed their eco-resort proposal with the community and conservationists but under a new planning approach where an environmental impact statement was not required. Instead, approval of this major project, with no appeals, is based on a design concept, presented before even the utilities (water, power and telecommunications) were sorted out. Why will 50 hectares of the World Heritage Area be transferred to the Wolgan Resort? This need for the national park areas was not flagged in the concept plan. As the World Heritage listing won't be revoked, the Emirates Wolgan Resort will be a World Heritage resort!

Also of great concern is the Government's so-called cost saving decision to turn all crown leasehold lands in the Central and Eastern parts of the state into private land, including leases over wetlands, wilderness and old growth forests. A Coalition Government tried this exercise in the mid-1980s and was howled down by the community and the ALP opposition, leaving some conservationists in an ambivalence trap. The NSW Government is partly good and partly bad and our protests as a result have been less vocal than they should be.

On the flip side, the Government is progressing a conservation agenda in adding to the reserve system. In May 2005, 352,000 ha was reserved in the

(Continued on page 5)

Brigalow Region and in November the new Premier announced a \$426m environment package funded through increasing the waste levy. A quarter of the package will be spent buying back water allocations for inland rivers; buying back water allocations that were privatised by the current ALP State Government (under Bob Carr) with inadequate allowance for environmental flows. Also announced were two marine parks, Crown land acquisition funds, \$24m for a Greenhouse Plan, declaration of the Chaelundi Wilderness and protection of five wild rivers. These announcements were followed by further park additions in February 2006.

The Government is tackling land clearing with new laws that commenced in November 2005, with compliance monitoring and \$406m to fund catchment management authorities to develop property vegetation plans.

Meanwhile, before the Government's Greenhouse Plan is up and running, the coal loading facilities are being duplicated at Newcastle and coal exports from NSW are set to double.

On top of all this ambivalent behaviour toward the environment comes the revocation of 1000 hectares of the Bargo State Conservation Area. Once a Government starts to hack out large chunks of parkland to accommodate the political pressures of the day, all parks are at risk. Never before has a large piece of park in a core area been excised for a single interest group to clear and develop. This is a land grab for a private interest. With this decision goes the government's approval of the 25ha Newnes Junction sand quarry hard up against the World Heritage Area, on a site where mining was previously refused due to impacts on the national park, and prior to the release Sydney Construction Materials Strategy. This is the worst site for a sand quarry within 300km of Sydney and demonstrates, along with the shooting facility revocation, that the Government has lost respect for national parks.

The Government and Coalition Parties need to establish a social contract, not with the voters, but with the future generations, to curb the global warming and respect the land before it is all too late. A promise that national parks and state conservation areas will remain permanent, protected and public; never to be revoked for logging, mining, tourism or other private interests, such as shooting facilities, would make a good start.

NSW Government Planning Minister Frank Sartor announced on 20 March, 2006 that he had approved a 20 million tonne sand/kaolin open-pit mine at Newnes Junction, near Dargan and Clarence villages, in the western Blue Mountains. The site abuts the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and Blue Mountains National Park, and is within the catchment of the magnificent Wollangambe River.

The run-of-mine material, predominantly sand, will be extracted over the next 21 years at an annual rate up to 1.3 million tonnes, thereby approaching one-fifth of Sydney's annual 6.5 million tonne demand for construction sand. The run-of-mine product will supposedly contain up to 120,000 tonnes per year of kaolin. No processing will occur on site; the 'untreated' run-of-mine material will be transported by rail to Sydney for separation and concentration. This would seem to preclude servicing the 'local' market by trucks.

Minister Sartor emphasised that the development will be adjacent to two existing sand quarries and the Clarence Colliery. **This seems to imply that once sand mining damages an area, more depredation is acceptable. But it disregards the exponential nature of cumulative impacts, and certainly is against the wishes of residents of Dargan and Clarence.**

Stringent conditions that supposedly protect the nearby Blue Mountains National Park include a small buffer zone and a water management system to capture run-off from a one-in-100 year storm. Visual impacts are to be ameliorated by progressive planting of native vegetation. **These matters were considered in principle at meetings on the Sydney Construction Materials Strategy (SCMS) of the Department of Planning. There was little agreement on the width of buffer zones and the impact of open-pit mining on the hydrologic regime. There was extreme disagreement on the capacity to rehabilitate/disguise a deep rectangular pit with 80° walls.**

The package includes significant green compensation measures, such as protection of at least 25 hectares of compensatory vegetation, and assistance with rehabilitating 864 hectares of Dargans Creek Crown Lands, and five hectares of Newnes Plateau Shrub Swampland. **The Society is totally opposed to the concept of new environmental damage being 'offset' against rehabilitation of past damage.** All developments should be required to make a *pro rata* environmental contribution, but approval of a development should reflect its merits and lack of direct environmental damage; it should be totally uninfluenced by either *pro rata* or 'offset' contributions.

PREVIOUSLY REJECTED! The Department of Planning's 1990 Management Strategy for Newnes Plateau specifically excluded this site from its areas of least environmental and social constraint. Indeed, a proposed open-pit mine was rightfully rejected in 1996 because of unacceptable impacts on the National Park and Wollangambe River.

WHY THE HURRY? The aim of the SCMS is to ensure Sydney's supply of construction sand over the next 20 years plus. The decision of the Government and responsible Minister pre-empted completion of the SCMS (originally scheduled for mid-2006 and now for late 2006). Existing sand supplies will last for 5-10 years, so what is the hurry? Why the pre-emptive strike by the Government and responsible Minister? **Could it be that the SCMS wasn't producing the 'required' answer? Could it be that 'unpleasant' decisions need to be distanced from the upcoming election? Or is there another agenda?**

A CYNICAL THOUGHT. If all 'existing' applications for sand extraction are rushed through before completion of the SCMS, there will be sufficient construction sand for 20 years, and the SCMS becomes irrelevant. New sand mines will exist in areas that the completed SCMS might have heavily constrained or totally excluded from sand extraction. They will have 'snuck in' before the bar is raised!

COLLATERAL DAMAGE! The Government's decision:

- betrays the Government's commitment to protect the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and National Park by exposing them to noise, dust and visual pollution;
- betrays the Department of Planning's staff that were conducting the SCMS process with much integrity;
- betrays residents of Clarence and Dargan by undermining their property values and ruining their quality-of-life;
- betrays the environmental integrity of Newnes Plateau, despite knowing that a proposal (Gardens of Stone Stage Two) is before Government to properly protect the Plateau's iconic values;
- betrays the Wollangambe River by risking its pollution with clay and silt; and
- betrays endangered swamps and their ecosystems by permitting disruption to the local hydrologic regime.

The 'Sand' God is truly appeased, but the 'Environment' and 'Fair Play' Gods are Not Happy! Who will be sacrificed at Election time?

WHAT CAN YOU DO? Please write to the Premier, and Ministers Sartor and Debus at Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney 2000 expressing your outrage at this decision.

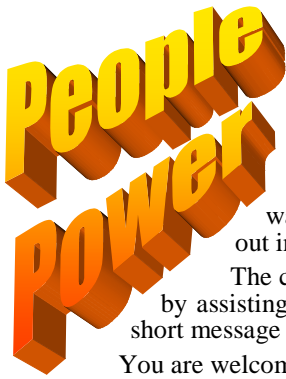
MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Elizabeth van Reyswoud

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Citizens Climate Campaign

Robin Mosman and Rosemary Lathouris

As "Letter of the Month" took off in Hut News, we realised that the idea had the potential to also involve people outside the Society.

The Citizens Climate Campaign operates in a similar way to "Letter of the Month", except that the message goes out in a monthly email.

The campaign aims to put climate change on the political agenda by assisting thousands of ordinary people all over Australia to send a short message every month to the Government – either by email or letter.

You are welcome to sign up for the email group and please tell your friends who are not Society members about it. To join this campaign just send an email saying "Yes!" to climatez@bigpond.net.au

We will then email you each month with information on some aspect of climate change and contact details of politicians. Write your own message or use our suggestions.

If you have any questions, contact us by email or phone Robin on 4757 1354.

Songs for the Forest Miguel Heatwole

Ecopella—an environmental singing group based in Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra—has just completed a series of concerts to raise money for Tasmania's old-growth forests. A woodchip company called Gunns is suing twenty individuals and organisations because they spoke against the company's clear-felling and burning of Australia's natural heritage. As one demonstrator's placard put it: "People Don't Kill Forests - Gunns Do!"

Concerts were held in each of the three regions where the choir has a presence, in such widely differing venues as Glebe Town Hall, the Hotel Gearin in Katoomba, and the Wombarra Sculpture Gardens. They were well attended, raising around \$2,000 dollars for the Gunns Twenty's legal costs.

In Katoomba, poet Diana Levy started the show by taking a thoughtful stand with well-chosen words, and was followed by some stunningly beautiful songs by Tony Eardley, a resident of Blackheath and member of Ecopella. The main support act was a teenage family group from Springwood called the Westgirls whose extraordinary skill as singers delighted the audience, and left many amazed that such confident and elegant harmony could be produced by such young people. Future recruits for the choir perhaps?

Ecopella's own performances featured many of their original compositions and other well-chosen and skilfully arranged pieces in a wide variety of styles. Sometimes solemn, sometimes satirical, their repertoire reflected the group's concern with environmental issues but placed special emphasis on forest issues with songs like South Australian writer Wendy Joseph's *Of Trees And Humankind*.

And now here we sit on the land
The children of children of children of ages
If only together we'd stand
With courage and love we could turn back the pages
The Earth and its fullness are ours if we try
Raise a cry, raise a cry!
And see the trees grow high!

To contact Ecopella, whether to join us or to ask us to sing for you, please phone the group's director Miguel Heatwole on 9810 4601 or email mheatwole@bigpond.com



NGOs count

There will always be things that you wish were different. But because of the rise of non-government organisations in a world that is more democratic, where the internet gives people more access to information, we don't have the excuse that we can't do anything about the problems we care about because the people we voted for in the last election didn't win.

(Bill Clinton, in an address to the Global Business Forum. Source: *Colong Bulletin*)

Bushcare

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets at 9 am on the 2nd Saturday of every month. Tools are provided.

Bring morning tea, gloves and drinking water.

Contact Karen 4757 1929 for meeting place and more information.

GREEN SCHOOLS

By Rosemary Lathouris

Many mountains school are becoming active in environmental studies and caring for their school environment. With the help of Blue Mountains City Council, school are receiving assistance with their programs and sometimes prize money to reward their involvement in environmental education.

Most schools recycle paper and cardboard through a free scheme initiated by the State Government.

Wentworth Falls Public School, where I teach, not only recycles paper but also PET bottles, food scraps and garden waste. Being involved and learning about composting teaches students about nature's cycle of decomposition and helps them to see their scraps as a resource for the school gardens.

A healthy canteen is operated through the tireless efforts of Fiona Addison and other parent helpers. Children line up to have their apple "slinkied" – peeled and sliced into a spiral by a special gadget. Other parents operate the 2nd hand uniform shop helping fellow parents economise while saving on resources.

Over the last ten years, the amenity of the school environment has been enhanced through the generosity of active teachers and parents. Teacher, Tina Clayton has involved students in a huge painting, a mosaic and a mural which all make the school a more pleasant environment. My husband Arthur Lathouris has led innovative work in the grounds where all the work has been done by parents and students. These include play areas, quiet relaxation and seating areas. As well as looking good, these also address problems of erosion and weed infestation.

Bushland at the rear of the school is looked after by student groups as part of their environmental studies. Planting, weeding and mulching plants is a wholesome experience which engenders a love of the environment and a responsible stewardship of the beautiful place in which we live.

Informative/Interpreted/ Guided Walks

There is a demand for extra Interpreted Walks (since the group led by Christine Davies is always at capacity).

This is a very important conservation activity.

In order to meet this need, it is proposed (at least initially) to add this function to the Thursday (easy) walkers group.

Would anyone willing to help in this regard please contact the Walks Convenor, David Bowskill. Ph 4757 3416, email davidbow@tpg.com.au



BLACKHEATH C.A.K.E. CLUB POWER TO THE PEOPLE

By Lis Bastion

Climate Change is high on the agenda of the newly formed Blackheath C.A.K.E. Club. Standing for Community and Kool/Klean Energy, the Club's goal is to be an umbrella group for all the other groups and individuals in the town.

Launched with a pub knitting night on the 1st April, the Club was initiated by members of the Blackheath Chamber of Commerce, Blackheath Public School P & C, the Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre and concerned individuals, including representatives from Planet Ark. It aims to be a think and action tank of community members wishing to tackle issues of climate change while having a laugh and strengthening the community at the same time.

Some of the goals of The C.A.K.E. Club include disseminating up to date information, finding creative ways to turn Blackheath into a "Cool Town" (Blackheath's Not Cold, It's Cool Campaign), brokering deals for bulk discounts to purchase solar panels, watertanks etc (Watson's Hardware is already supplying discounted fluoro light bulbs), encouraging Blackheathens to switch to Green Power to reduce carbon emissions and to increase demand for renewable energy, turning Blackheath Public School into a Green School (the back page of the school newsletter now has a green tip and cartoon each week) and transforming the 8th annual One Van International Festival of Puppetry into an arts event that commissions shows on Climate Change that can then go on to tour the rest of the country. The theme for the January 2007 Festival will be "Cool Ideas for a Hot World".

The group hopes that its actions will help to trigger the massive groundswell of community concern necessary to save our world at this critical stage. For more information contact Lis Bastion at Stop Laughing This Is Serious Gallery Ph. 47877533 or email ebastian@stoplaughing.com.au

PASSING MIST by Denis Kevans

Parched orchids smile to the passing mist
Mist that's the memory of a vanished ocean,
Mist that's tears that have often fallen,
Gleaming on the rock
Gleaming on the rock
That is the face you cannot remember
Who is walking in the mist with their sandals in their hand?
Who is crouching to see the orchid smile,
Who pauses to hear the bracelet of notes
Thrown by the harmonica bird at the covered sun?
Whose voices are under the waterfall,
Whose voices are muffled by the mist?
Whose voices drift with the white mist
Passing, like the ghosts of ocean waves?

*This poem was published first in Hut News, January 1997,
part reproduced on stone at Echo Point.*

Autumn haiku

Haiku poems (short moments of nature) often make a reference to the season. In Japan the references are all part of a cultural understanding – everyone knows that cherry blossoms refer to spring – or that water refers to summer. But what about here? My walks with the Interpretive walkers have greatly added to my knowledge of what is going on, in this place, at what season. The very first time I joined the walkers, it was autumn and we explored Murphy's track behind the Hydro Majestic hotel at Medlow Bath. I wrote this:

Down the "black's ladder"
sliding muddily past
purple-blue fungi

A black's ladder is a place in an apparently unclimbable rock-face that has been known to the Aboriginal inhabitants for thousands of generations—it may have a tree trunk ladder to assist in climbing.

In late summer this year, the walkers went on the rainforest walk in Coachwood Glen. The Dianella was fruiting, and to my somewhat European sensibility, fruit equals autumn.

Deep Purple berry
yet so bland!
only just sweet

We are environmentalists, which also means we are "nature lovers". What is the balance between scientific knowing (to which there are limits) and other ways of knowing?

Not knowing its name
we can only admire
the yellow flower

All over the world autumn is the time of fungi. This haiku was written near Bathurst – my friend has a lot of feral goats on his property (and they tasted delicious).

Up the goat highway
little black pellets and
shrivelled fungi

But what is particular to Australia is the burn-off (though it could also refer to spring).

Small fires
all along the hill –
smoke streaming skywards

Diana Levy 30/3/06

Farewell from Christine

This is my final Hut News. I started producing a monthly newsletter in December 1995—that makes this one No 122.

In December 1995 our then President Thor Schache wrote: "The Society has been in the forefront of the conservation movement in the Blue Mountains for many years and intends to continue the founders' dreams. Our members feel pride in seeing the rewards of their efforts in so many areas: land acquisition, native plant nursery, education, care of the bush. Speaking on a personal note, I feel a tug of satisfaction whenever I hear young bushwalkers admire the Blue Gum Forest down from Blackheath—when before the war I went to dances and other events organised by the Sydney Bushwalkers Federation to raise money to buy and so prevent the logging and destruction of this wonderful stand of Blue Gums.

"This is what we are all about: Long-term thinking; preserving things that matter for the future; educating people by opening their eyes and minds; but mainly enjoying one another's company and making new friends while achieving our goals of loving and understanding by living *with* rather than *on* our part of the world."

I have tried to do my bit for the Blue Mountains environment by attempting to produce an interesting and informative newsletter and organising bushwalks to show people the wonderful natural biodiversity of our beautiful Blue Mountains. The Thursday interpretive bushwalks will continue.

Welcome to the new newsletter editor, Juli Boddy.

Regards, Christine Davies.

Lord Howe Island

By Christine Davies and friends

In February the Society's Thursday Interpretive bushwalkers organised a trip to Lord Howe Island. We walked, rode bikes, swam, cruised at sunset, some snorkelled. It was a wonderful week and already seems like a long ago dream.

Thousands of sea birds come to Lord Howe Island to nest during the spring and summer. On the windswept off-shore Admiralty Islands there are so many ground-nesting birds that their droppings are washed down the sea cliffs, streaking them white.

It is difficult to pick highlights from such a beautiful place. "Close encounters with nesting White-capped Noddies at North Bay were pretty special. Then at 209 metres on Malabar Hill, sharing this special spot with the graceful, acrobatic Red-tailed Tropicbirds as they soared majestically above us were magic moments. Pairs alternate in courtship displays in which they appear to fly backwards. It was very hard to leave this spot". (Ron Hyslop).

"Checking each day on the progress of my favourite White Tern chick balanced precariously on a branch of a Norfolk Island Pine and seeing it gradually getting bigger and stronger and gaining its adult plumage...and just gazing at the beautiful view of the two mountains across the lagoon from that same spot. Also the 360 degree view of the island as you climb Malabar Hill" (Jenny Rich)

"I was snorkelling at Settlement Bay and saw the elusive turtle I had heard so much about. There was a sandy hollow amid the coral and he swam peacefully past grazing on the sea grasses." (Jenny Miller)

For me? ... the sheer number of sea birds and their joy of flying as they soar on the air currents beside the cliffs ...the wonderful variety of colourful corals and fishes on the reef ... If I have to choose I guess it would be exploring the rock platforms at low tide and discovering a most amazing array of little sea animals that inhabit them.

Lord Howe Island is a World Heritage Area governed by an elected Board. Most of the supplies come in fortnightly by ship, the Island Trader. All the garbage is sorted, vegetable matter composted on the island, and recyclables and rubbish shipped to the mainland. The water supply is tank water. Tourist numbers are limited. There are few cars and the speed limit is 25 kph. Individuals don't own land and only locals (people who have lived there for 12 years or so) can own a house, so there is no pressure from opportunistic developers who just want to make a million and move on.

The Wood Hen has been brought

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 Coordinator (listed) or Bushwalks Conveyor Bob van Reyswoud.. **Cost of insurance and affiliation fees is \$15 per member.**

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 section off track. Bring morning tea and lunch, plus carry at least 1 litre of WATER, 2 litres on warmer days.

Apr 17 The Waterfalls, Lawson. Meet 9am Lawson Bowling Club, next to Lawson Railway Station. Ron 4757 1536

Apr 24 Birdwood Gully, Springwood. Wind eroded rocks and Angophora forests. Meet 9.15 Spring Station, entrance to multi storey car park. Laurel 4784 1554.

May 1 Ikara Head. Upper mountains heath. Meet 9.15 Mt Vic Rail Station. Marie 4787 1257.

May 8 Peggy's Pool, Faulconbridge. Meet 9.15 Faulconbridge Rail commuter car park. Allen 4751 7953.

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.

Apr 13 Ikara Head, Mt Victoria. Mainly level walk on ridge. Heathland. Meet Mt Victoria Station 10am. Marie 4787 1257.

Apr 20 Lyrebird Dell. Some step descents and ascents on good tracks. Meet junction of Leura Mall and Megalong Street 10 am. Joan 4782 2218.

May 4 Walls Cave off Evans Lookout Road. An old mountain walk, some scrambling involved. Meet on highway outside Hydro Majestic Hotel, Medlow Bath 10am. Joan 4782 2218.

May 11 Pope's Glen, Blackheath. Car shuffle to start at Govett's Leap end, walk to Memorial Park. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 10am. John 4757 1558.

May 18 Radiata Plateau. Level walk through this controversial area. Views and possible exploration of cliff edges. Meet Gearins Hotel, Katoomba 10am. Joan 47822218.

Jun 29 ADVANCE NOTICE of Bus Trip to Taronga Zoo.

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, email mcreysw@bigpond.net.au

Apr 15 Baltzer's Lookout. Meet Blackheath Station carpark 8.30. Grade MEDIUM. Lawna 4751 1529.

Apr 22 Grose River via Faulconbridge Point. Meet Faulconbridge Station car park 9.30. Medium grade but long walk. Liz 4754 4966.

Apr 29 Breakfast Creek to Cox's River. Meet 8.30am at Blackheath Station car park. Long and HARD. June 4787 7312.

May 7 Narrow Neck. Meet Gearins Hotel, Katoomba 8.30am. Long but EASY walk, 22km. Meredith 4782 4823.

May 13 Gooch's Crater. Meet Mt Vic Station 8.30. MEDIUM. Bill 4758 8545.

back from the brink of extinction. Winter weeding programs are ongoing. Goats have been eradicated. Rats are being poisoned but will be difficult to remove completely. There are tight controls for domestic dogs and there are no cats on the island.

And among the highlights I forgot to mention were dinners at Humpty Mick's restaurant or sitting around the BBQ at Somerset with a wonderful group of 16 people and the delicious fresh Kingfish cooked to perfection by our BBQ experts.

Lord Howe is a jewel in the Pacific whose inhabitants seem to be doing their best to treasure and preserve it and present it to the visitor for what it is – a beautiful place to spend a friendly and relaxed holiday.



The White Terns don't build nests. They lay their egg on an indent on a horizontal branch. This fluffy grey chick balances precariously on a branch of an introduced Norfolk Island Pine.