

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Wilderness, past, present and future

At our next meeting, we will be celebrating twenty years of the NSW Wilderness Act with a talk on *'Wilderness, past, present and future'* by Peter Prineas, followed by *'A Wilderness Retrospective'* from photographer Henry Gold.

Peter Prineas is Chairman of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness, and writer of *'Wild Places: wilderness in eastern NSW'*, first published in 1982. He has worked as an advocate for nature conservation and the environment since joining the Colong Committee (now Colong Foundation) in 1971. He has contributed in a variety of roles including lawyer, writer and activist and has served as Director of the National Parks Association of NSW and as Chairman of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW.

Henry Gold received an OAM for service to wilderness preservation through the use of photographic documentation. Since 1956, when Henry Gold joined the Sydney Bushwalkers Club and began to appreciate the Australian landscape, his skill as a photographer has opened the eyes of many Australians to its unique wilderness qualities. His photographs have been potent deciders in campaigns to protect our wilderness areas.



You can view some of Henry's photographs at <http://www.colongwilderness.org.au/GoldGallery>

MONTHLY MEETING

7.30pm Friday
30 November 2007,

at the
CONSERVATION HUT,
western end of
Fletcher St,

WENTWORTH FALLS

Visitors Welcome!

Sustainable Development Policy Review

Change of Date - Sat. 1 December

The Conservation Society's LandUse Subcommittee is currently reviewing Blue Mountains City Council's Sustainable Development Policy. Any member interested in having input into the policy review is invited to attend a workshop to discuss the draft policy and express your views.

Please note that due to the announcement of the Federal election the date of the workshop has been changed to Saturday, 1st December.

If you are interested in attending please register your name and contact details with the LandUse Officer, Phillip Morrison, and you will be forwarded the details of the workshop and a copy of the draft policy for review.

Email: pmorrison26@yahoo.com.au

Mail: 97 Sinclair Crescent, Wentworth Falls 2782

Phone: 4757 1393

HUT NEWS

"Hut News" is the newsletter of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
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We'd like to welcome two recent additions to the Management Committee.

- **Dr Rob Baigent** fills a long-standing administrative gap on the Committee. He has worked in the area of atmospheric research and has a long history of environmental campaigning.
- **David Hall** has worked for large companies and other volunteer organisations in the area of publicity. He has a good understanding of political party scale processes.

Letter of the Month—November 2007

Federal Election - How the Parties Rate

At long last, we have the date for the Federal election, Saturday 24 November.

This means that Walk Against Warming will be on Sunday 11 November. The Sydney Walk will start from the Domain at 1pm, and march through the CBD, finishing at the Domain.

So far there has been no mention about climate change from either major party. It is interesting to note that in spite of NSW government research showing that we are more worried about the environment than ever before, the policies of the major parties are not reflecting this concern. Research for the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has shown "There is a gap in leadership and innovation, especially at government level" (Sydney Morning Herald 26.9.07).

ACF have put out a **2007 Federal Election Progress Scorecard** on climate change and our future environment. It shows the Greens scoring 93 out of 100, Democrats 90, Labor 49, Family First 31 and the Liberal/National Coalition 21. You can find out how ACF arrived at their assessment on their website www.acfonline.org.au.

The first election promise by the Coalition was for \$34 billion of tax cuts over the next 3 years. This is in addition to the \$31 billion in tax relief in last May's budget. It will deliver about \$20 a week to the average earner. Within a week it was matched by Labor.

It is deeply disappointing that both major political parties are offering this inducement to voters to put self-interest before the many other important issues facing Australia, including an appropriate response to the threat of climate change.

Send a message to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, making some or all of the following points:

Dear Mr Howard/Rudd,

Now that the election campaign has begun, I find it appalling to note that climate change is not at the top of your party's agenda for urgent action.

Where is the government leadership to tackle the problems set out in the CSIRO Report Climate Change in Australia?

It is deeply disappointing that your party is offering \$34 billion of tax cuts as an inducement to voters to put self-interest before the many other important issues facing Australia, including an appropriate response to the threat of climate change.

(Name)

(Address)

Contact Details: Post to Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600 or email:

The Hon John Howard: <http://www.pm.gov.au/contact/index.cfm>

(This is the only way you can send an email to the Prime Minister.)

The Hon Kevin Rudd: Kevin.Rudd.MP@aph.gov.au

Rosemary Lathouris and Robin Mosman

Welcome to our new members

Anne Rickwood, *Blackheath* — Arwen, Fabiano & Luca Ximenes, *Lawson* — Belinda Selke, *Blackheath* — Christine Hill, *Dargan* — Deborah Scott, *Engadine* — Felicity Aldritch, *Katoomba* — Glen & Leanne Simpson, *Woodford* — Helen Deane, *Blackheath* — Jeremy Hill, *Lawson* — Jo Flanagan, *Leura* — Jo-Anne McGowan, *Katoomba* — Lisa Clement & Brent Hoare, *Katoomba* — Maureen Scott, *Wentworth Falls* — Miriam Brooks, *Springwood* — Narelle Higham, *Blackheath* — Nerida Burton, *Katoomba* — Olga Rumble, *Wentworth Falls* — Phillipa Stott, *Springwood* — Renee Bittoun & Rod Madgwick, *Mt Victoria* — Rowan & Jeanette Holmes, *Leura* — Sandra Ebbeling, *Blaxland* — Tara & Pixy Maclachlan, *Blackheath*

Visit the BMCS website at: www.bluemountains.org.au

Open Burning in the Blue Mountains

Council is currently conducting community consultations in three different areas in the Blue Mountains to ascertain peoples reaction to their Open Burning policy.

In determining the Society's stand on this issue I would be interested in hearing from any members who are aware of abuses of the current or previous systems, or indeed have strong feelings about this issue.

Please email me at hilaryhughes@optusnet.com.au or ring me on 4787 6240.

Hilary Hughes, Project Officer (Climate Change)



Save our Blue Mountains Swamps

In August 2007 Blue Mountain Swamps were listed as a vulnerable ecological community under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act, thanks largely to the efforts of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society. To celebrate the listing BMCC will be running a series of activities for volunteers to find out more about Blue Mountain Swamps and the threatened species that inhabit them and to provide opportunities to get involved in preserving our vulnerable Blue Mountain Swamps and their unique inhabitants!

Lyndal Sullivan instructs new Swampcare recruits on the appropriate bush regeneration techniques to use in a Blue Mountains Swamp environment.

Blue Mountains Swamp-related events

Swampcare workday- Saturday 10th November 10am-3pm

The second of two Swampcare workdays is planned for Kittyhawk Swamp, Wentworth Falls, as part of the Great Grose Weed Walk program which will roll back an emerging Tutsan and Erica invasion into a near intact Blue Mountain Swamp system that is home to both the Blue Mountains Water Skink and the Giant Dragonfly. To book contact Michael Hensen on mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au (preferred) or 47805471

The Giant Dragonfly and Blue Mountains Water Skink Monitoring Program 2007-8

This years monitoring season will kick off with a field workshop at Minnihaha Reserve on **Saturday 17th November 9am-1pm** to train volunteers on how to identify and monitor for the Giant Dragonfly and the Blue Mountains Water Skink and to plan the upcoming monitoring season. The monitoring program will extend for 10 weeks and involves a weekly commitment of 1hr monitoring in selected Blue Mountain Swamps. To book contact Michael Hensen on mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au (preferred) or 47805471

Blue Mountain Swamp Bushcare Biodiversity Workshop Sunday 25th November 10am-4pm

Come along to Minnihaha Reserve in North Katoomba and hear Clive Barker explain the main features of Blue Mountains Swamps, let Ian Baird shed some light on enigmatic swamp inhabitants such as the Giant Dragonfly, and listen to Lyndal Sullivan outline how the Minnihaha Falls Bushcare group has helped preserve the Blue Mountains Swamps in the Minnihaha Reserve. To book contact Nathan Summers on nsummers@bmcc.nsw.gov.au



Swampcare website launched

If you are interested in finding out more about Blue Mountains Swamps and swamp related events being organized by BMCC visit swampcare.com.au. If you'd like to get updates on swamp related events and information send an email to mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au requesting to be put on the Swampcare email distribution list.

Michael Hensen
Threatened Species Officer
Blue Mountains City Council



Membership Matters

A new email address has been set up for members to give feedback to the Management Committee. If you would like to comment on issues such as the monthly meeting program, Hut News, BMCS policies, membership matters, the website, bushwalking, new things you would like us to do, etc., simply send a message to feedback@bluemountains.org.au. You can also give feedback using the old reliable postal system—just write to Feedback, BMCS, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls NSW 2782. (Many of you will have already heard about the feedback facility via email, if not and you would like to receive future email updates, please send an email asking for your name to be added to the notification list.)

The second edition of *Strobos* is available at <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/HutNews/0711strobos.pdf>. *Strobos* is edited by Stacey Reynolds, Shane Cameron and Fiona Yates, all Katoomba High School Students. It is aimed at 12 -18 year olds but older readers will probably enjoy it as well.

Please contact me if you would like to receive future editions of *Strobos* with your *Hut News* or if you'd like to be notified by email when it becomes available on our website each month.

Ilan Salbe, Membership Secretary

Outwest '07 Part 2 by Meredith Brownhill

Six BMCS bushwalkers journeyed through the vast, drought-stricken landscape of western NSW at the end of July 2007.

Continued from last monthThe six travelers left the Warrumbungles and sped onwards into western NSW.

Onwards to Louth via Bourke, we drove along a road of red bull dust, with goats, sheep and kangaroos crossing in front of us in the fading light - all eyes were on the road in an effort to avoid an accident. Driving through the Gundabooka Conservation Reserve we noticed the contrast to the heavily grazed land around. At Louth, we turned west and crossed the last river for the day - it was the Darling.

Our driver's Ros and Bob did a mighty job and just on dark we arrived at the sheep station on the banks of the once mighty Darling River. The bunkhouse was quite flash for shearer's quarters with lino on the floor, electric blankets and plenty of hot bore water in the showers. The walls in the living areas displayed many historic photos of the River Darling from the 1850's.

It was a jolt being amidst the bare, grey cracking-clay floodplains. The air we breathed was dry. The bore water was unpalatable to drink and it took us a day before we found the rain water tap in the kitchen. The deep country quietness was everywhere: there was always a big blue sky in the day, whilst a red sunset sat on the western skyline with a silver moon rising in the eastern sky, in the evening.

It was a thrill to be up walking along the banks of the River Darling before breakfast, listening for birds in the River Red Gums and watching the grey water, low in the river. Was it flowing? It was hard to tell. It was certainly very low in comparison to the levels in the photos, where the water was up near the top of the banks and met the vegetation. Nowadays, the banks are bare and domestic animal tracks have worn into the landscape. Drought is ever present and only 25mm of rain have fallen over 84 months up to May this year.

We spotted several raptor nests in the River Red Gums and saw plenty of Spiny-cheeked and White-plumed Honeyeaters and Ringnecked Parrots in the area. One afternoon we were walking through sandhills looking for the rare Bourke's Parrot and clouds of tiny white butterflies flew up around our feet with each step. Then we spotted the millions of caterpillars feasting on sparse ground herbs. It was hard not to tread on them. Are these silent sandhills newly formed from the shifting sands of overgrazing and drought?

We found some Leopard wood trees, famous for their spotted bark and strange spiky juvenile form which is unpalatable to stock. *Eremophila* and *Acacias* were in flower and herbs, shrubs and trees were very sparse in grazing areas. Here and there, patches of herbaceous plants bloomed with small white and yellow flowers.

Goats are everywhere out west! Feral goats that were once a pest are now known as Rangeland Goats and have become a valuable resource to landowners. Australian goats have adapted to the harsh environment; they are resistant to parasites and have a high kidding rate, commonly with triplets. From time to time they are rounded up in thousands, sold and trucked to Albury.

Where will it all end? In 1937, Ion Idriess wrote of Sir Sidney Kidman's properties that *'Stock and vermin were eating him out Millions of hoofs, trampling over the land, billions of claws rooting into the land, billions of teeth ceaselessly night and day eating deep into the roots of things.'*

'The roots of grasses, herbage, vines, bushes, shrubs, trees, all that had bound the topsoil together had been eaten and destroyed year by year for seventy years.' The dust storms are more frequent and *'.....like faint bald patches on a man's head, new claypans began to appear. On each of these, no grass would ever grow. It began to be noticed that waterholes were silting up. It really was worse than this. For with each infrequent flood the old riverbeds themselves were silting up.'* (I. Idriess, 1937, *The Cattle King*)

Our day trip to Gundabooka National Park was too short as there was plenty to

explore with the Park recovering from its pre-park grazing days. On top of the Gundabooka Range, we opened our spirits to spaciousness - as far as the eye could see over the plains, were Mulga, Mallee, Bimble Box and Cypress Pine woodlands. The rocky range had its challenges without a walking track: Gwen's knee, with a magnet strapped on, carried her over the rocks, and Vera took a different ridge down, however it was OK as we found her down on the plain.

We were challenged in many ways by this country and questions kept forming in our minds, such as, can more National Parks protect remnant vegetation and Indigenous history before it is too late? Is tourism a good enough economic return to rural communities?

After 3 days in the Louth area, we started our return journey and set out on a dusty road to Cobar. To our delight Cobar had coffee shops! We saw a gold mine and read in the Cobar Weekly that climate change will increase the temperature, and the number of hot days above 35 degrees, from 41 up to 128 days per year by 2070. That's bloody hot and probably in drought too!



The Darling River
(Photo: Bob van Reyswoud)

Travelling south through goat and cypress country, we stopped at Mt Hope for beers and icecreams in the local pub. It has seen a lot of history on the Kidman Way. All too soon we were back in the green countryside of Cowra and the chilly air of the Blue Mountains.

We had driven 2,348 kilometres per car, in 10 days; 2 cars were used, using a total of 450 litres of petrol and producing CO₂ emissions of 1 tonne approx. So the grim conclusion is, we produced a lot of CO₂, increasing the greenhouse effect, heat and other byproducts and we had depleted the atmosphere of a considerable amount of oxygen.

The upside is, we had a great time and learnt a lot. Now we are off to the BMCS nursery to buy and plant trees to offset some of the car emissions.

THE SYDNEY CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS STRATEGY:

Sand in the eyes of communities and the environment

In May 2005, DIPNR (Department of Industry, Natural Resources and Planning) issued a paper entitled Sydney Construction Materials Strategy (SCMS), Newnes Plateau – Draft Issues Paper. DIPNR circulated it to stakeholders, sought feedback via a stakeholders' meeting (June 16, 2005) attended by other government departments, sand producers, Lithgow Council, Gundungurra Tribal Council, and concerned environmental organisations. The aims were to highlight the need for a Sydney Construction Materials Strategy, identify six regions (Maroota, Shellharbour, Somersby Plateau, Southern Highlands, Newnes Plateau, Port Stephens) with potential to supply construction sand and aggregate, explain the evaluation process commencing with Newnes Plateau (hence the draft paper), identify deficiencies of the Draft Issues Paper and work towards developing a second draft, and establish conditions under which portions of Newnes Plateau might be exploited. Although Newnes was the first area to be considered in this way, the other five regions were to be subjected to the same process before reaching final decisions.

DIPNR produced (September 30 2005) a revised Draft Issues Paper and a paper entitled Constraints and Local Rules for Sand Extraction. Stakeholders provided feedback by October 20, so that the next workshop could finalise stakeholder and agency input to the Newnes Plateau component of the SCMS. By the time the workshop took place, Minister Knowles had resigned and DIPNR was split into the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) (Minister Macdonald) and Department of Planning (DoP) (Minister Sartor). DIPNR staff handling the SCMS were mainly transferred to the DoP.

Revised 'final' papers following the second stakeholder workshop were never received!

A further sign of the new regime was a DoP email (November 2) stating that, although Newnes Plateau would not be assessed in isolation from the other five areas, the consent process for current development applications would continue. BMCS indicated (November 2) that, although it had no problem with DoP continuing the assessment of current development applications for sand mining, it would strongly object to any final approval being granted before full finalisation of the SCMS process. BMCS was concerned that prior approval would devalue the SCMS process since several major developments could 'sneak in under the bar'. BMCS reiterated that no sand mine should be approved before the scheduled completion of the comprehensive SCMS processes by mid-2006.

There was no reply to the November 2 email. BMCS therefore wrote to Minister Sartor (January 29, 2006) seeking his assurance that sand-mining DAs undergoing concurrent assessment would not be approved before completing the comprehensive SCMS process. BMCS pointed out that to do otherwise would be an affront to all those participating in the SCMS process. The Society also noted that, if the major 'current' developments were approved, Sydney would have enough 'unconstrained sand exploitation' to last for the next 20 years!

A reply was never received! But all became clear on March 20 2006, when Minister Sartor approved a 20 million tonne sand/kaolin open-pit mine at Newnes Junction in the western Blue Mountains. The approval was for 21 years at 1.3 million tonnes per annum, thereby amounting to one-fifth of Sydney's annual 6.5 million tonne demand for construction sand.

On March 31 2006, DoP advised that the Government was awaiting Issues Papers for all six potential regions before putting forward an overall plan. It further advised that Government had given priority to developing 'Best Practice Guidelines for Quarries' and a 'Substitutes and Recycling Strategy'. The Society was assured that these drafts would be available for

public comment by mid-2006 and that SCMS completion would be by late 2006 or early 2007.

The Federal Government called in the proposed development on Newnes Plateau because of the site's proximity to the World Heritage Area and the potential impacts on Temperate Highland Peat Swamps, classified as 'endangered' under the Commonwealth *EPBC Act 1999*. The Society's submission to the Federal Minister (May 2 2006) requested that a determination be deferred until completion of the SMCS by early 2007. **Despite the supposed progression of the SCMS, the federal Department of Environment and Heritage approved (August 22 2006) the Newnes development, but at least imposed more rigorous constraints.**

Nothing was forthcoming about the 'Best Practice Guidelines for Quarries' and a 'Substitutes and Recycling Strategy' by late November 2006. BMCS therefore wrote (November 28 2006) to the Premier, and Ministers Debus, Macdonald and Sartor asking (*inter alia*):

- When will the drafts of the Best Practice Guidelines for Quarries, and the Substitutes and Recycling Strategy be available for public comment?
- What is the present status of the SCMS in respect of Port Stephens, Shellharbour, Southern Highlands, Maroota and Somersby Plateau and when will the Draft Issues and Constraints and Local Rules papers for these areas be completed?
- Why, when the SCMS for Newnes Plateau was nearing completion, was it decided to temporarily(?) abandon the process?

The letter was generally acknowledged and referred to Minister Sartor, who has yet to reply. Presumably he considers that the 'correspondence slate' is wiped clean by an election!

Now it is the turn of Somersby Plateau. The Somersby Fields Partnership lodged an application to extract 450,000 tonnes of sand a year for up to 18 years from a site at Somersby adjacent to Peats Ridge Road. The estimated total extraction is 7.4 million tonnes. The proposal is a 'major project' under Part 3A of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and the approval authority is Minister Sartor. Submissions closed on 12 September 2007. Should the sand mine be approved (and the role of Part 3A seems to be one of 'constrained' facilitation), this will be the second of the six original SCMS areas to carry the ministerial imprimatur. Clearly, by picking off these areas one at a time, Sydney will have enough sand resources to last for the next 20 years! Nothing, least of all the amenity of residents and fragile groundwater systems, must stand in the way of development.

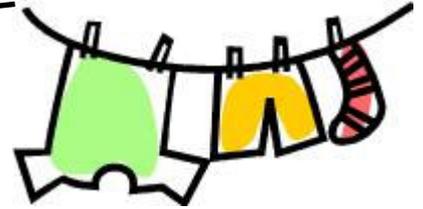
What of the SCMS in October-November 2007? The SCMS, including the once-prioritised Best Practice Guidelines for Quarries and the Substitutes and Recycling Strategy, has apparently slipped through the cracks as the Government stumbles from one inept decision to another, pausing along the way to pay lip-service to climate change whilst it concurrently promotes 'dirty' coal, desalination, and developments with inadequate infrastructure. Why should this be so, when large amounts of government, council and community time were spent formulating and reacting to a strategy that had the hallmarks of integrity? Perhaps there was too much integrity, thereby providing the wrong answers and taking too long? Whatever the reason, it has apparently been superseded by the 'Part 3A approach'; so much easier to take a decision and toss a few 'constraint' bones to the community and environment.

Vale the SCMS: lost in the sands of time through expedience?

Brian Marshall



GREEN-HINTS to COMBAT GREEN-HOUSE in the LAUNDRY



- The energy used to run an average clothes washer produces about 90kg of greenhouse gas; to heat the water adds another 457kg. Front loading models on the whole use 50% less water, 30% less energy and 33% less detergent.
- If you need to wash in warm or hot water and your washer is a single-hose model, it must heat it's own water using expensive and high impact electricity—having a two-hose model that uses water from a gas or solar hot water heater is preferable.
- A typical dryer used once a week adds another 150kg of greenhouse gas.



- Detergents made from natural substances do not generate as much greenhouse gas in their manufacture - and are usually free of phosphates and petrochemicals - better for us and our waste water, wherever it goes!

In Summary:

If possible, wash in cold water in a front-loading machine with a natural detergent, then dry clothes in the sun
*... OR better still,
 maybe some clothes may not need to be washed at all and a light "sponge" would do the trick!!!!*

**Susan Girard,
 Climate Change Subcommittee**

Wandackmalai Walls and Beyond

Recently I took the Interpretive Walkers down Wicketty War creek to look at the Wandackmalai Walls, which are a feature in the Gurangatch Mirragan songline. This is the Gundungurra story about the creation of river systems, told to RH Mathews which he published in 1908. Duckmaloi, as in the Duckmaloi River, is a corruption of Wandackmalai, and feeds in to the Fish river. We were in the headwaters of the Murray river - the Fish flows to the Macquarie, which flows to the Lachlan, which flows into the Murray Darling system. We were just the other side of the Great Divide and the Walls are on Mt Bindo near Hampton with its state forests.

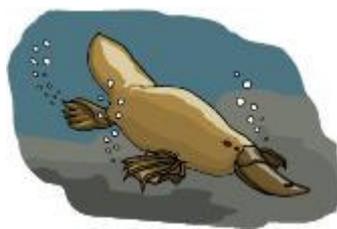
Later I took two friends down the same track, and we spotted trout in the creek. We were in fact walking past the Fish River all the way down the creek, only the river was contained in a shiny pipe running the other way, all the way back to the upper mountains where it fills the Cascade Dam. At the ruins of a hut we found a dead fox, the remains of a kero fridge, and a lot of spent shells.

We had permission to walk right down to the Fish River, which flows through farmland.

The boy mooing
 at the staring cows –
 they don't reply

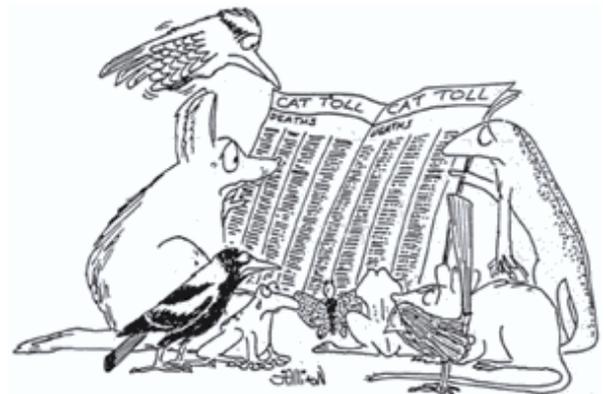
On our way across the paddocks we saw a huge echidna. It attempted to hide itself by sticking its head in a clump of grass. But the best encounter was just for me – while they ate their lunch I went exploring up the waterhole.

Platypus floating
 takes fright
 upends



Diana Levy

How to Build a Cat Enclosure



www.dse.vic.gov.au

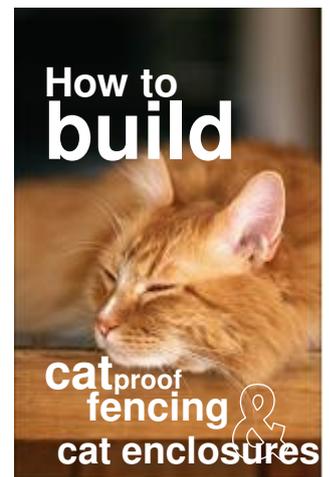
Are you a wildlife lover with a pet cat and wondering how to contain your cat? Well, there are new ways to contain pet cats and besides, cats have a longer and healthier life if they are contained on the owner's property.

'How to build cat proof fencing and cat enclosures' is an excellent colour booklet with good diagrams and photos and provides instructions for building -

- * cat proof fencing
- * a cat enclosure attached to a shed or house
- * a free standing cat enclosure

FREE copies are available from the Victorian Government on 13 61 86 or can be downloaded from <http://www.pets.info.vic.gov.au/community/catenclosure.htm>.

Meredith Brownhill



Is there room for individual integrity?

We supposedly get the politicians we deserve, but this is much too simplistic, both with respect to the electorate's culpability and the politician's 'flexible integrity'. Many enter politics with good intentions, but they quickly succumb to the need to appease uncommitted voters in marginal electorates, whilst concurrently retaining the 'rusted on' supporters. Unfortunately, this means that the closer a party comes to retaining or gaining control of government, the less room there is for individuality, expression of true beliefs and adherence to principles.

The relationship whereby truth and integrity become the casualties of political expedience seems particularly apparent when there are buckets of our money to squander. And please don't believe that buckets of money represent fiscal rectitude. Some comprise money stripped from universities, the public schools, dental health and the public hospital system; others witness a lost opportunity during 'good' times to upgrade infrastructure and plan for the future; and still others constitute leadership failure in the face of climate change. Australia has the natural resources that feed the rapidly expanding Indian and Chinese economies. The financial benefit from these should be used wisely and not dissipated as targeted electoral bribes.

Yet politics is the art of retaining power, or perhaps the art of retaining one's seat for sufficiently long to qualify for the lucrative superannuation and other perks. Such perceptions lead many to the view that, despite being personable and individually pleasant, politicians are unappealing en masse. Party constraints require that politicians rarely answer the question asked, invariably respond with a party-approved mantra (e.g. unions, unions *ad nauseam*) or sound-bite, and invariably resort to half-truths and distortions. Perhaps this is why the adversarial system of law provides a suitable training for politics. It may also be why unionism (labour versus bosses) provides an equally suitable training!

Why has this shameless pattern of behaviour become endemic? Three things are apparent. First, increasingly selfish and greedy voters invite 'what's-in-it-for-me' exploitation – at its simplest level, "*of all my mother's children I like myself the best, and when my belly's full then bugger all the rest*". Second, the roles of spin doctors and the media – the former aim to ameliorate and misrepresent even the most adverse situations (e.g. how can failing to honour some pre-election commitments be justified in terms of non-core promises?) – the latter aims to turn minor matters into a media circus (e.g. failing to recall a tax rate or being at a lunch attended by Brian Burke) – clearly, as spin intensifies, the media work harder to expose and magnify even the most trivial of errors. Third, self-interested politicians of the principal parties see buck-passing, politicisation of the public service, and a lack of ministerial responsibility as the norm – nothing is a 'hanging offence' and, should a public servant not fall on his/her sword, an inadequate minister can look forward to a lucrative local or overseas appointment. The similarity to failed chief executives exiting with payments amounting to millions of dollars is striking!

As we enter the current election campaign, who can fail to be impressed with Peter Garret's capacity to spout the party line despite his personal views, or Howard and Turnbull's poll-driven realisation that nuclear energy is electorally damaging, or the two main parties adherence to 'dirty' coal as they grasp the 'clean' coal pipedream?

Closer to the Blue Mountains and Central West, Kerry Bartlett spruiks his party's \$20 million commitment to reinvestigating the feasibility of the Bells Line of Road Expressway (BLoRE), and his strong belief in this \$3-5 billion

dollar environmental catastrophe. Wasn't he the Chief Whip for the Federal Government when it decided the BLoRE was economically, socially and environmentally unacceptable? Most definitely, but that was before we entered the dollars-for-votes contest that marks the upcoming election.

Similarly, Bob Debus suggests that past feasibility studies on the BLoRE will be re-examined as part of a wide-reaching infrastructure review by a 'Rudd' government. Yet Bob Debus was Minister for the Environment when the State Government deemed the BLoRE economically, socially and environmentally unacceptable. The State Government still holds this view, but Bob Debus is now running for Macquarie! He needs the 're-examination' commitment, together with the comparatively realistic proposal for the Great Western Highway to by-pass Mt Victoria and the River Lett Hill, as a basis for counteracting the Bartlett bucket of money and firm commitment that (Lithgow Mercury, Sept 29, p7): "Only a Liberal-National Government will make this happen".

I suspect that neither Bartlett nor Debus believe the BLoRE will ever be built. The Great Western Highway is far from finished and needs the resources available for the region, global oil production peaked last year and is expected to halve by 2030, and global oil reserves will be exhausted in 40 years at present consumption rates. This is hardly the scenario to encourage massive investment in long-distance trucking and the BLoRE, yet the perceived need to appease voters in the west of the Macquarie electorate apparently necessitates lip-service to the 'probability/possibility'.

Both the Coalition and Labor are purportedly committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Advocating and funding, or even contemplating, a super highway over the Blue Mountains for gas-guzzling trucks is inconsistent with this. It would make far more sense for both parties to demonstrate integrity and agree that the BLoRE will never be built, thereby defusing it as an election issue.

Unfortunately, the lower house electoral system whereby a major party can achieve power with less than 50% of the vote after distribution of preferences, and minority parties fail to be represented despite attracting a significant percentage of primary votes, does not encourage integrity. It in fact promotes focussing on marginal seats, determining wedge issues, pork-barrelling and the pursuit of half-truths, outright lies and various deceptive practices. So, until Australia moves to proportional representation, regrettably something that is not in the interests of the two main parties whose political altruism (perhaps an oxymoron?) is conspicuously absent, politics will remain a dirty business and a majority of politicians will toe the party line.

How sad it is that they must continuously do battle with their consciences.

A Polly's life is not a happy one, happy one!*

Brian Marshall

**With apologies to Gilbert and Sullivan*

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING GROUP

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. The BMCS Bushwalkers' Guide, which explains the Grades (#), and the Spring Program can be found on the Society's website www.bluemountains.org.au or will be posted on request. For further information contact Walks Convener, Christine Davies on 4787 7246, email bushwalks@bluemountains.org.au, or by mail at PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.

Before attending a bushwalk, please discuss the walk with the leader or group co-ordinator (listed below). This is essential if this is your first walk or you are unsure of the classification.

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS: 'Short Day' walks of 3-5 hours, for those of average fitness. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. Co-ordinator: Norm Harris (4784 1554).

Nov-12	Erskine Creek (2) <i>Lower mountains wilderness.</i>	Ros	4733 3880	Glenbrook Stn carpark	9.30am
Nov-19	Darwin's, Overcliff Walks, Nature Trail (2) <i>Mary</i> <i>Start of Grand Cliff Top Walk.</i>		4787 6584	WWFalls Stn carpark, near clock	8.45am
Nov-26	BUS TRIP to Sofala (2) <i>Fare: \$12, required when booking. Gold mining town. Lunch at pub.</i>	Birgitta	4784 3191	Depart Springwood 8am, pick up along Hwy <i>(Leader: Mary)</i>	
Dec-3	Red Hands Cave, Campfire Ck Circuit (2) <i>Heather</i> <i>Aboriginal hand stencils.</i>		4739 1493	Glenbrook Stn carpark	9.30am
Dec-10	Empire Pass, Lawson (2) <i>Glens and waterfalls.</i>	Ron	4757 1526	Lawson Bowling Club carpark	9.15am
Dec-17	Christmas Party <i>BBQ provided, bring salad or dessert to share.</i>	Mary	4787 6584	Outside Lawson swimming pool	10.30am

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS: Walks conducted to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, lunch if noted & adequate water. Group Co-ordinator: Simone Bowskill (4757 4316, simbow@tpg.com.au).

Nov-15	Leura Cascades round walk (2) <i>Easy cliff top walk via lookouts. Some steps, great views.</i>	Joan c/o	4757 3416	Cnr Megalong St & Leura Mall	9.40am
Nov-22	Mt Boyce environs (2) <i>Views of Kanimbla Valley.</i>	Terry	4787 6918	Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre	9.45am
Nov-29	Mt Wilson Boronia Point (2) <i>Late spring visit to this scenic area.</i>	Marie	4787 1257	Mt Victoria Stn (to car pool)	9.50am
Dec-6	North Hazelbrook Waterfalls (2) <i>Walk to view 3 waterfalls along bush path.</i>	Maurice	4739 4942	Cnr Hazelbrook Shops and GWH	9.10am
Dec-13	Christmas Party (1) <i>Ingar Picnic ground, bring plate and drinks to share.</i>	Simone	4757 3416	WWFalls Stn carpark, near clock	11.00am

WEEKEND WALKS: Usually full day, longer walks at a faster pace. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. Before attending, contact the leader or Group Co-ordinator, Jim Percy (4758 6009, jp34@tpg.com.au).

Nov-17	Wentworth Falls Circuit (3) <i>Darwins Walk - National Pass - Nature Trail. Spectacular walk with newly completed trackworks. 10km, all on track.</i>	Ros	4733 3880	Wentworth Falls Stn carpark	8.30am
Nov-24	Mt Solitary Golden Stairs-Ruined Castle (3) <i>Bill</i> <i>280M climb up to Mt Solitary with spectacular views into the Jamison, Cedar and Kedumba Valleys.</i>		4758 8545	Gearins Hotel carpark	8.00am
Dec-1	Crossing of the Blue Mountains -Day 4 (3) <i>Jim</i> <i>Lawson to Wentworth Falls (Bruce's Walk). 11km, all on track.</i>		4758 6009	Lawson Stn carpark (N side)	8.00am
Dec-8	The Grand Canyon (2) <i>Cool and shady summer walk, 4km on track, steps. Bring a short poem to read whilst relaxing under rainforest canopy.</i>	Meredith	4782 4823	Blackheath Stn carpark	9:30am
Dec-15	Mt Wilson and Christmas Lunch (3) <i>Meal \$30 - \$5 deposit with booking essential. Short walk to October Ck Bogey Hole to work up an appetite for lunch. 4km, some off or rough track. Shorter walks in the delightful grounds of Sefton Cottage between courses. Ring leader if you need a lift.</i>	Bob	4757 2694	If doing the walk: Mt Vic Stn (if not, Sefton Cottage, Mt Vic 12noon)	9:30am

New BMCS member, Hugh Speirs, sent in this account of his first bushwalk to the Newnes Plateau, part of the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 Proposal area, on Saturday 27 October....

The walk was a beaut! Arranged by Meredith and guided by Andrew and Karen (much thanks to all three), out to the pagoda-encrusted gorge of Carne Creek. Startling scenery, bush swamps, pagoda daisies, great company. At one stage I was manoeuvring towards 'the edge' to take a sensational photo when clumsy right boot tripped against what could have been no more than a 2cm high ridge of stone. Valiant left boot was shooting forward, as you'd expect, to save me from a fall, when it was impeded by a small rock overhanging 25 or 30cms off the ground. And so ensued the spectacular swan dive, though some less kind thought it more reminiscent of a telegraph pole falling flat. Not a good move at age 59, or any age.

I lay prone for a moment to ensure that not too many bones were broken, listening to the screams of the rest of the party. Well, I believe there was one - couldn't find out who it was (a pity, I was hoping for some sympathy!) - and some loud chortling coming from the direction of Ron who says he'd not seen such entertainment since 'Fiddler on the Roof'! Incidentally, in a walk of many distractions, Ron was the only one who saw the wedge-tailed eagle land on my backpack and cause me to trip.

The event was apodeictic of the old walkers' advice to keep back from the cliff edge by at least the distance of one's height!



BMCS Bushcare

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare group works in the Blue Mountains National Park at Wentworth Falls on the 2nd Saturday of each month.

Tools are provided but bring morning tea, gloves and drinking water.

For more information, contact Karen on 4757 1929.

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Ilan Salbe 4759 2372

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