

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



FROM THE PRESIDENT...



THANK YOU to everyone who attended our 'Meeting the Decision Makers' event on tourism and development in National Parks and Wilderness Areas. Our voices were heard and the timing was important. See the report on page 2.

Whilst we received some positive reassurances, we are still concerned about pressures for development and less funding for conservation in these precious areas. To address these concerns, we have started a sub-committee and would love more members. PLEASE contact me if you would like to be involved, dontara@ozemail.com.au

Thanks also to everyone who came to our monthly meeting to hear ecologist David Keith discuss swamps. It was great to work with Michael Hensen and the 'Save our Swamps' group from Blue Mountains City Council who jointly hosted the evening.

Our Society gains its strength from the energetic involvement of its members which was exemplified by the response on these two occasions.

On Wednesday 1 October, we will be taking Gerard Martin, the Member for Bathurst, Karyn Paluzzano, the Member for Penrith, and hopefully Phil Koperberg, on a tour of Newnes Plateau. This is a superb opportunity to discuss the case for greater protection through the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 Proposal.

Of course, the most immediate threat facing Newnes plateau is the scheme to build a four-lane highway through it!! We are extremely worried about the impact of a road on the giant dragonfly, numerous threatened plant species, and the upper Wollangambe catchment.

We obviously believe that new roads are not needed in the context of climate change and peak oil, and are certainly not advocating any particular route for the Mt Victoria bypass – funding for rail would be a much better option!

Extinct volcano area to erupt in November!

BMCS plans to hold a **Summer Family Picnic** for all members on Sunday 9 November, 2008, at Sun Valley Reserve (above). I am hoping that this will be an occasion when members, particularly those who are unable to attend our Monthly Meetings, can mingle in a festive way with one another and perhaps have a chat with members of the Management team.

Please put the date in your diary. We will provide full details in October Hut News.

Tara Cameron

*Note: Sun Valley Reserve is situated in semi-rural land, just off the GWH heading east between Warrimoo and Valley Heights. The soils have been formed from diatremes (pipes of volcanic material). The reserve is dominated by the endangered Cabbage Gum (*Eucalyptus amplifolia*), with Thin-leaved Stringybark (*Eucalyptus eugenioides*), Mountain Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus deanei*) and Rough-barked apple (*Angophora floribunda*). The understorey includes Parramatta wattle, Tickbush, Blady grass, Wallaby grass, *Microlaena*, Basket grass, *Lomandra*, Hard bracken Blue flax lily and Hyacinth orchid.*

Blue Mountains Tourism's Perspective

Wendy Dolan has been working in the Tourist Industry for more years than she sometimes cares to remember. First, with Tourism NSW where, among many activities, she wrote a paper on Farm Tourism.

She has been with Blue Mountains Tourism Ltd for 14 years where she is Deputy CEO (and acting CEO during Kerry Fryer's absence through illness).

What motivates Wendy? "People," Wendy replied. "I am a people person and I like to work with people of all interests to get things done that benefit the community." The challenge? "The day you think you know it all in Tourism is the day you should get out," said Wendy. "What interests people and the best way of responding to those needs is changing all the time."

Wendy will be speaking at our September Monthly Meeting about the Greater Blue Mountains Drive, the National Landscape Program and Blue Mountains Tourism.

This is also part of our ongoing response to the NSW Government's plans to introduce commercial tourism into National Parks. The Government's O'Neill Report talks about the need to develop Gateway Facilities, but these already exist in the streets of our National Parks Service Towns and are called Cafés, Galleries, Hotels and Camping Equipment Shops. Ministers have called for a 20% increase in visitor numbers to National Parks by 2016, but is enough being done to attract members of Ethnic Communities to the National Parks and adjoining Service Town facilities? **David Hall**

Monthly Meeting 7.30pm, Friday, September 26, 2008

Conservation Hut, Fletcher St (far western end) Wentworth Falls

Note: The role of Kerry Fryer, CEO of Blue Mountains Tourism Ltd is somewhat restricted while she undergoes medical treatment. BMCS extends best wishes for her full recovery.



Tribute to the building of the road across the Blue Mountains, the 'dawn' of our tourism, and a gateway tourist attraction in its own right — detail of Terrance Plowright's magnificent cast bronze road gang, in Lilianfels Park, Katoomba.

HUT NEWS

Hut News is the newsletter of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc. PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls, 2782 Phone 4757 1872 Fax 4757 1753 Email: bmcs@bluemountains.org.au

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

President: Tara Cameron

4751 1130, dontara@ozemail.com.au

Senior Vice President: Heather Hull

4739 1493, hhull001@bigpond.net.au

Second Vice President: John Haydon

0403 797 585, jhaydonmc@optusnet.com.au

Treasurer: Bart Beech

4739 9947, bbeech@invensys.com.au

Administration Officer: Rob Baigent

4759 3104, robbaigent@iprimus.com.au

Environ. Education Officer:

Chris Yates, 4784 3407

christopher.yates@education.nsw.gov.au

Climate Change & Sustainability Officer:

Helen Deane

4787 6797, helen.deane@gmail.com

Land Use Officer: vacant

Lithgow Regional Subcommittee

Co-ordinator: Chris Jonkers

6355 1179, chrisandjulie@activ8.net.au

Meetings Secretary: Heather Hull

4739 1493, hhull001@bigpond.net.au

Meetings Convenor: David Brazil

4784 3496, david@dbrazil.com

Membership Secretary: Ilan Salbe

4759 2372, ilan.salbe@bigpond.com

National Parks Officer: Brian Marshall

4784 1148, marabeni@optusnet.com.au

Plant Nursery Manager: Kevin Bell

4787 6436 (pf), kevinbell@eftel.net.au

Publicity Officer: David Hall

0404 123 001, david.delegate@idx.com.au

Threatened Species/Bushcare Officer:

Clive Heywood-Barker,

4782 3345, ozbundu@hotmail.com

Walks Convenor: Liz van Reyswood

4757 2694, mcreysw@bigpond.net.au

Web/Technical Officer: David Bowskill

4757 3416, davidbow@tpg.com.au

World Heritage Officer: John Haydon

0403 797 585, jhaydonmc@optusnet.com.au

Bushfire Officer: Hugh Paterson

4751 2303, goodbush@pnc.com.au

Hut News Editor: Ron Withington

4757 3984, ronwit@ozemail.com.au

Hut News is printed on 100% recycled paper

www.bluemountains.org.au

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW!

Submissions to the *Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks* have closed. We hope you responded! See report on page 6.

There is still opportunity to write to Minister, Carmel Tebbutt (?), Phil Koperberg, Bob Debus and Nathan Rees, endorsing the BMCS motion as set out in August *Hut News*, AND making use of the comments & undertakings by Bob and Phil as set out on this page. The addresses are on p.3 of August *Hut News*.

And yes, you can also join Tara's Sub-Committee to fight the proposed legislation...

Meeting the Decision Makers

in our fight against

Tourism and Development in National Parks and Wilderness

This well-advertised public meeting at the Conservation Hut on Friday 22 August attracted, as it should have, a large gathering. It was unfortunate that the Deputy Director-General of Parks and Wildlife Group of the DECC, Sally Barnes, was unable to attend as programmed. She had been caught up in the failed rescue of an orphaned baby whale and in the media frenzy which accompanied the inescapable euthanasia of the creature.

Bob Conroy, Executive Director Parks Management, attended the meeting as keynote speaker in her stead. Phil Koperberg joined the panel, along with Keith Muir of the Colong Foundation and Ian Brown, former NPWS ranger and field manager, and now author and environmental consultant.

Ian set the scene with a pithy summary of the situation in respect to the proposed amendments to the Wilderness Act and the National Parks and Wildlife Act by sections of the tourist industry and Government. Bob Conroy responded at length, and Phil Koperberg contributed a number of comments, specifically in answer to questions from the floor.

Following the meeting, Ian forwarded to BMCS a summary of the key statements or undertakings given by the two Government speakers, and his informed notes certainly represent the most succinct way we can convey the effectiveness or otherwise of our "political" meeting. Here they are:

BOB CONROY:

1. Acknowledged tourism to be a current emphasis for NPWS;
2. Confirmed that funds expended on tourism/visitation projects will be an opportunity cost to direct conservation programs;
3. Argued that expenditure on tourism/visitation also assists conservation outcomes;
4. Pointed out the need to 'market what we have better';
5. Stated that Minister Verity Firth had provided clear direction to NPWS: increased visitors/tourism but only compatible with protecting natural/cultural values, and with the prime purpose of building support for conservation, 'democratisation' of NPs in terms of appealing to under-represented visitor groups (e.g. NESB, disabled), doing up historic buildings;
6. Stressed that (3 above) is what they are looking at;
7. Said "we are not talking about new developments";
8. Said there were "no current proposals" for commercial development in NPs;
9. NPWS mainly interested in private partners in relation to adaptive reuse of historic structures, etc;
10. Argued that allowing commercial recreation in wilderness was logical (using a hyperbolic example of a large, damaging private group allowed in but not a small, well-guided commercial party);
11. Visitation plans for all four field branches have been prepared, but are not publicly available.

PHIL KOPERBERG

1. Said he would oppose insertion of tourism into NPW Act;
2. Had the same argument as Bob for allowing commercial recreation in wilderness;
3. Was confident that the 'guardians' of NPs would prevent the negative outcomes we fear: "common sense will prevail";
4. Said that he could agree with all the points from the motion passed previously at the BMCS monthly meeting;
5. In response to a question about whether he was concerned about escalation of activity in wilderness if commercial recreation is allowed (e.g. heli access) he said: "Of course I'm concerned, but it won't happen".

RW



A Workshop to consider the BMCS Draft Transport Policy is to be held on Saturday 27 September 2008, 9.00am to 12 noon at the Mid-Mountains Community Centre in Lawson.

The sub-committee members who assisted me with the drafting of the document thus far include Don Morison, David Bowskill, Ray Kennedy, Chris Jonkers and Julie Favell, and I thank them sincerely. An invitation is now extended to all Consoc members to come along and make a contribution.

The draft document is set out below so that you can identify those issues we saw as crucial and maybe pick up some aspects that have been overlooked. Note that care has been taken to avoid too much detail, which would quickly date the policy.

If you cannot attend the meeting, the sub-committee will be more than pleased to accept your written submission.

**Heather Hull 4739 1493 hhull001@bigpond.net.au
Sub-committee Convenor**

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY TRANSPORT POLICY On Selected Regional Transport Issues

1. Preamble

(a) Blue Mountains Conservation Society (BMCS) is primarily interested in nature conservation plus fuel and energy conservation.

(b) BMCS is formulating a policy in response to widespread heightened concern about a number of regional transport problems.

(c) In pursuit of solutions to these problems BMCS seeks further co-operation with:

- (i) The Lachlan Regional Transport Committee;
- (ii) Representatives of the NRMA;
- (iii) Local Councils;
- (iv) Current members and those hoping to be members of the NSW and Federal Parliaments during their next terms;
- (v) Researchers from Universities investigating regional transport problems and other appropriate academics;
- (vi) Other community groups.

(d) BMCS urges a conciliatory bi-partisan approach to solving Regional Transport problems.

(e) BMCS condemns the aggressive championing of competing transport solutions at the expense of a conciliatory approach.

(f) BMCS advocates serious consideration of an expanded role for Rail Freight Transport, Public Passenger Transport and environmentally friendly two-wheeled vehicles.

2. Railing of Freight To/From the Bathurst/Oberon Area and Westward

(a) Blue Mountains Conservation Society supports the following:-

- (i) An upgraded main east-west rail route via Cootamundra, and
- (ii) Further upgrading and greater general freight use on the Gulgong to Sandy Hollow

to Newcastle Rail Line;

(iii) The NSW Government to quarantine sufficient coal reserves in the Lithgow region to ensure future supply for the life of the two local power stations, rather than export those coal reserves overseas now, and then having to import coal into Lithgow in the future.

3. Preservation of the Kandos to Gulgong Railway

(a) BMCS favours prevention of any further deterioration of the Kandos to Gulgong Railway and advocates regular review of any opportunities to economically reinstate its use for transport of freight.

4. Other Rail Issues

(a) BMCS calls for the transport of all bulk and hazardous freight across the Blue Mountains to be by rail.

5. Problem Sections of the Great Western Highway in General

(a) BMCS calls for the response to problem sections of the GWH to avoid damage to National Parks and other environmentally sensitive areas. BMCS supports updating environmental data used by the RTA in the light of climatic changes.

(b) BMCS recognises the fuel savings that

can be made by improving the horizontal and vertical alignments of some Great Western Highway sections.

(c) Where a Great Western Highway section can cope with traffic projections for several years with less than four lanes, but needs short-term upgrading for safety, civil defence or environment protection. BMCS calls for the upgrade to be less than four-lane width.

(d) BMCS recognizes that upgrading road sections may aid civil defence environment protection and safety (especially for pedestrians and cyclists). However, BMCS advocates restraint in the degree of environmental disturbance and resource consumption tolerable in road designs, acknowledging that:

- (i) Appropriate climate change policies may reduce road traffic demand;
- (ii) Fuel prices may rise substantially;
- (iii) Political pressure exists to build wider and straighter roads than can be justified on economic and environmental grounds.

(e) BMCS calls for the improvement of revegetation practices after road upgrading and more consultation with environment groups.

6. Marrangaroo to Mt Victoria Section of the Great Western Highway

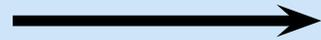
(a) BMCS questions the need to commit to a realigned Highway other than fulfilling the promised Mt Victoria by-pass.

(b) BMCS questions the need for an upgraded highway west of Soldiers Pinch.

(c) BMCS opposes the adoption of Highway designs that could in future encourage a Bells Line of Road Expressway.

(d) BMCS calls for a further investigation of subsidised rail freight as a means of postponing extensive highway upgrading west of Soldiers Pinch.





The Blue Mountains Conservation Society generally enjoys a good and fruitful relationship with the Blue Mountains City Council and its Officers. However, it must be recognised that under the democratic process, from time to time there are elected to Council those representatives whose interests and ultimately whose voting record do not accord with the aims of the Society, while there are others who are in almost total accord.

With this in mind and because of the approaching Local Government election, the Management Committee felt it would be in the public interest and in support of our

endeavours, if we drew attention to the voting records of the existing Council members on development proposals which have a real or potential negative effect on the environment.

The advertisements on this theme shown opposite, at a reduced scale, and the supporting chart, are thus self-explanatory.

We trust that this analysis will assist both you, our members, and the voters of the wider community in the consideration of the future intentions of those aspiring to a further term, and for those candidates who are newly facing the ballot box.

Bart Beech and Tara Cameron

Ongoing Environmental Education

In relation to the *Drink Tap Water Campaign* we have addressed one Year 8 class at Blue Mountains Grammar in the hope that the students involved will now seek a wider audience through their school's Representative Council. Public Schools at Katoomba, Blackheath and Mt Victoria were visited during August.



A Campaign presentation was made to the *Blue Mountains School Environment Network* meeting this term at which Richard Zogelmeier from one of the Springwood schools expressed an interest. We will be planning an approach to the Lower Mountains schools, to utilise our stock of labels; meanwhile it is satisfying to note that we have effectively visited all schools from Wentworth Falls to Mt Victoria.

Chris Yates seen here demonstrating the contrast between non-sustainable effluent management and the alternative efficient, sustainable process, using an ingenious interactive model developed by Blue Mountains City Council.

Students from the Upper Mountains schools participated in the *Climate Torch Relay* on 13-14 August. Thanks to Rosemary and Arthur Lathouris for coordinating that. The August edition of *Strobus*, the magazine published by and for high school students, contains a report on the relay and other environmental initiatives. It can be viewed and downloaded from the Consoc website. **Chris Yates, Environ. Education Officer**



KEY GROUP'S SUBMISSION TO THE TASKFORCE ON TOURISM AND NATIONAL PARKS

The final NCC/NPA/BMCS Submission to the *Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks* contains sixteen recommendations covering the following key (and positive) messages:

- Reinforcing the 'nature of Australia' concept as unique, fragile, a basis of our identity and a biological support system for our wellbeing;
- Highlighting the role of national park and protected area systems as the cornerstones in 'caring for country' for the present and future (including the recognition of aboriginal 'ownership' and culture), and especially as a critical element of the landuse spectrum;
- Acknowledging a whole-of-landscape approach through regional planning as an important component in tourist appeal as well as in sustaining the nature

and character of our lands and waters;

- Emphasising the importance of improving understanding and enjoyment as motivator for caring and also for personal/communal well-being (the healthy parks, healthy people aspect), the environment movement sees scope for the development of new and better nature tourism products;
- Recommitting to the intent and purpose of the existing National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974, and the professionalism of the NPWS;
- Well-managed national parks with effective conservation programmes and effective visitor infrastructure will help facilitate greater visitation;
- Supporting the enshrinement of public participation rights in the management of public protected area lands in NSW; and:
- Strongly supporting the development of rural economies by the provision of recreational and tourism facilities, including accommodation off-park on less-sensitive lands, through regional and local government planning instruments.

And the full submission has 59 pages!

MEMBERS' MEMORANDA

BMCS MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES:

Ilan Salbe 4759 2372 membership@bluemountains.org.au

Council Watch Advertisements

Councillor Voting on Larger Developments – a Report by Blue Mountains Conservation Society

COUNCIL WATCH: The forthcoming Blue Mountains City Council election provides an opportunity to review the environmental credentials of current and potential Councillors. In particular, what is the record of Councillors voting on larger developments? **The Blue Mountains Conservation Society has checked this by reviewing minutes of Council Meetings since the last election.**



which were not unanimously determined. Those which fell within Council guidelines and were supported by all Councillors, and those which were so bad no-one supported them, are excluded.

There were fifteen developments meeting the criteria determined since April 2004, many of which were opposed by the Blue Mountains Conser

| Party | Liberal | | | Labor | | | | Blue Mts First | | Greens | | Indp't | Indp't |
|---------|---------|-------|--------------|-------|---------|---------|--------|----------------|--------|---------|---------|----------|----------|
| | Creed | Myles | Van der Kley | Angel | Frappel | McLaren | Searle | Brown | Henson | McInnes | O'Grady | Hamilton | Trindall |
| For | 10 | 17 | 16 | 15 | 14 | 13 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 2 |
| Against | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 12 | 2 | 14 | 15 | 7 | 8 |
| No vote | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 |

The voting shows a consistent pattern whereby the three Liberal Crs Creed, Myles and Van der Kley plus Labor Crs Angel and Frappel consistently voted for the developments, while Greens, Blue Mountains First and Independent Crs Brown, Henson, McInnes, O'Grady and Trindall invariably voted against. Labor Cr McLaren normally voted for but sometimes against developments. The remaining Labor Cr Searle and independent Cr Hamilton were more mixed in their voting. Because of this pro-development bias, all but one of the fifteen controversial developments were approved. **The full voting results and details of the developments can be inspected on the BMCS website at www.bluemountains.org.au.**

Fig.1 Advertisement published 3 September, 2008

| BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR VOTING ON DEVELOPMENTS - APRIL 2004 TO JULY 2008 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|-------|-------|----------|-------|---------|---------|--------|-------|----------|--------|---------|---------|----------|
| INCLUDES ONLY MULTI-UNIT RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS OF 3 OR MORE UNITS WHERE VOTING (EITHER FOR OR AGAINST) WAS NOT UNANIMOUS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| DATE | DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT | Creed | Myles | v.d.Kley | Angel | Frappel | McLaren | Searle | Brown | Hamilton | Henson | McInnes | O'Grady | Trindall |
| 27-Apr-04 | Seniors development 16 dwellings at 1-5 Hope St/8-10 View St Blandand | Y | Y | Y | N | N | N | N | N | A | N | N | N | N |
| 10-Aug-04 | 1 into 13 and 1 into 8 lot subdivisions at 227 Cliff Dr, Katoomba | A | Y | Y | Y | A | N | N | N | A | N | Y | Y | Y |
| 21-Sep-04 | Seniors development 12 dwellings at 90 Great Western Highway, Blandand | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | N | N | N |
| 15-Feb-05 | Integrated residential/tourist development at Parklands, Blackheath (BMCS OBJ) | N | Y | N | A | N | Y | N | N | N | N | N | N | N |
| 2-Aug-05 | Development of 9 townhouses at 9-15 Waratah St, Lawson (BMCS OBJ) | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | A | N | N | N | N |
| 13-Dec-05 | Seniors development 12 dwellings at 90 Great Western Highway, Blandand | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | N | N | N | Y | N | N |
| 31-Jan-06 | 23 unit retirement village at 108-120 Narrow Neck Rd, Katoomba | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | A | N | N | N | N | N | N | N |
| 11-Apr-06 | Plant Nursery, Child Care and Housing Dvpt at 8 Herbert St, Leura (Sorensen's Nursery) # | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | A | Y | N | N | N | N |
| 7-Nov-06 | Seniors development 15 dwellings at 346/348 Katoomba St, Katoomba | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | N | N | A | N | N | N |
| 21-Nov-06 | Seniors development 10 dwellings at 33 Falls Road, Wentworth Falls | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | N | N | N | N |
| 15-May-07 | Residential /comm'l development inc 60 dwellings, 3-7 Goldsmith Place, Katoomba (BMCS OBJ) | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | N | Y | N | A | N | Y |
| 5-Jun-07 | 4 into 15 lot subdivision at 49 Pauline Avenue & 59-79 Waratah Road, Wentworth Falls | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | N | N | N | Y | N |
| 7-Aug-07 | Mixed retail, commercial, residential development at 12-20 Ross St, Glenbrook | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | N | N | Y | N | N | N | N |
| 30-Oct-07 | 6 Townhouses at 193 Lurline St, Katoomba | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | N | N | N | N | N |
| 30-Oct-07 | One into 7 lot subdivision at 85-99 Burrawong St, Katoomba (BMCS OBJ) | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | A | N | N | N | N | N |
| 11-Dec-07 | Integrated residential/tourist development at Parklands, Blackheath* | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | A | N | N | N | N | N |
| 29-Jan-08 | Development of 3 seniors' dwellings at 32 Wascoe St, Glenbrook | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | N | N | Y | N |
| Y | For the development | 10 | 17 | 16 | 15 | 14 | 13 | 9 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| N | Against the development | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 13 | 7 | 3 | 14 | 15 | 8 |
| A | Absent/vote not recorded | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| | TOTAL | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 4 | 17 | 17 | 10 |
| | # Modification of development that had been approved in October 1997 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Fig.2: Analysis supporting the Advertisement of Fig.1.

Note: as shown, BMCS lodged objections to proposals voted on 15/2/05, 2/8/05, 15/5/07 and 30/10/07

COUNCIL WATCH – a follow-up report by Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Last week we drew attention to Councillor voting patterns on multi-unit residential developments and subdivisions.

This week the Society is concerned to discuss developments, large or small, that are likely to have a significant negative impact on the environment. On these, we make submissions either opposing the development outright or suggesting ways it can be modified. The forthcoming Council election is an opportunity to review the environmental credentials of Councillors.

In particular, what is the voting record of Councillors on such developments?

THE APPLICATION FOR 9 TOWN HOUSES AT 9-15 WARATAH ST, LAWSON, IS AN EXAMPLE OF DEVELOPMENTS WE OPPOSE.

The development adjoined a swamp and a creekline. The Local Environment Plan which contains the rules to assess developments enabled Council to reject the development because of the following aspects of the proposal:

- buildings were in the buffer zone to the swamp;
- the buffer zone was to be cleared for fire management;
- a road was to be built through a steep area which could affect the groundwater and stormwater run off into the swamp;
- a fence was to be constructed through the swamp (which would have hindered the movement of native animals).

The vote was taken on 2 August 2005

VOTES FOR Creed (Lib), Myles (Lib), Van der Kley (Lib), Angel (Labor), Frappel (Labor), McLaren (Labor), Searle (Labor)

VOTES AGAINST Brown (Blue Mts First), McInnes (Greens), O'Grady (Greens) ABSENT Hamilton (Indp't)

Rejecting the development could have led to a smaller modified application being presented to Council.

Unfortunately the majority of councillors did not vote to protect the environment although they had good legally-justified reasons to do so.

For details of Councillor voting patterns on multi-unit residential developments and subdivisions see the BMCS website www.bluemountains.org.au



Advertisement authorised by T.Cameron, Faulconbridge

Monitoring changes in Upland Swamps: The roles of fire and rain

A presentation by DAVID KEITH together with the

Blue Mountains City Council's Environmental Trust 'Save our Swamps' Project

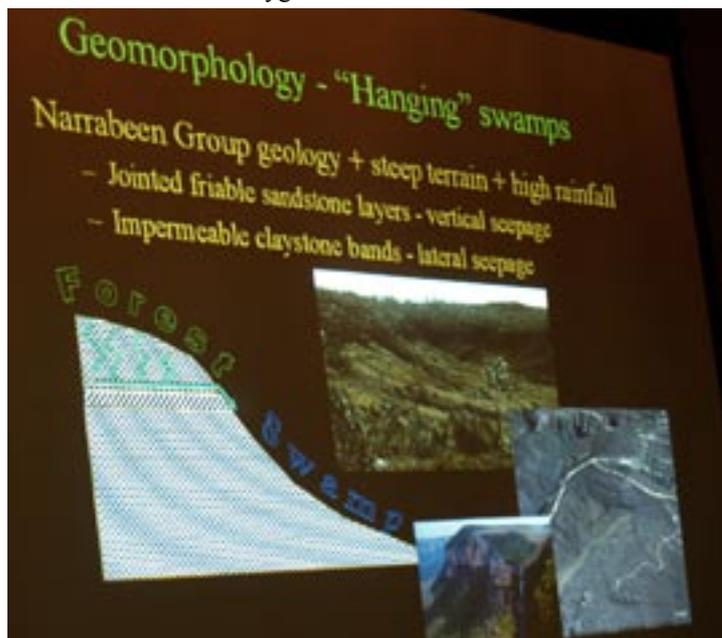
Before he began speaking, very many of us thought that we knew all there was to know about our valley and hanging swamps. But David Keith, in a stunningly clear and detailed presentation, if with a lot of long words, very soon disabused us of that conceit.

David has been studying upland swamp vegetation in the Sydney Basin. His research has revealed a unique perspective on how upland swamps and their component species change over time in response to fires and climatic variation. He nominated some 1400 swamps in the study area, specifically on the sandstone plateau from Lawson to Bell, ranging in size from 0-70ha, and encompassing a total area of about 3200ha.

Both of our upland swamps require a their own unique geomorphology for their formation and both require a rainfall in excess of 1000mm per annum. Our **valley swamps** occur in a flattish terrain with an impermeable substrata. The rainfall must exceed the evaporation and percolation of water. There must be some lateral movement of water and erosion producing waterlogging and black muddy sedimentation. The waterlogging in fact reduces the soil oxygen and thus microbial activity and the soils accumulate organic matter. This organic matter in turn acts as a sponge: it reduces flows and filters suspended sediments and dissolved chemicals.

Our arguably more famous **hanging swamps** occur in steep terrain generally associated with the Narrabeen Group geology. (See Figure) Jointed friable sandstone upper layers permit vertical seepage until the water strikes an impermeable clay band when lateral seepage takes over and the waterlogging and sedimentation regime outlined above comes into play.

Within this soil regime, plant life becomes a mosaic of thicket, heath and sedgeland with moderate levels of plant diversity in respect to both species and communities. The endemic plants obviously must tolerate high levels of soil moisture, but also survive low levels of oxygen.



David's PowerPoint page prepared in a computer, projected onto a screen, digitally photographed, fed back into a computer, placed in pagemaking software and printed as the hard copy you see. Technology rampant!

Thus for increasing soil moisture content within the swamps, David identifies this vegetation mosaic:

Eucalypt woodland

Banksia thicket

Restioid heath

Sedgeland,

Cyperoid heath

Ti-tree thicket

and the functional groups of seeding shrubs, resprouting shrubs, fire ephemeral herbs, non rhizomatous resprouting herbs and rhizomatous sedges and herbs. *Acacia ptychoclada*, *Almaleea incurvata*, *Grevillea acanthifolia* and *Olearia quercifolia* are common.

Most of us have favourite swamp sites. For example I am incurably attached to the swamp that overhangs the pool at Ingar Picnic Area and have spent many hours contemplating its unchanging beauty, while looking for Leura Water Skink and the Giant Dragonfly in support of Michael Henson's BMCC *Save our Swamps* program. But David Keith who has made a study of the changes in floristic composition in some 54 coastal swamps over the period 1983 to 2004, pointed out that swamps do in fact change over time, and my favourite could well be experiencing shifts in species composition and changes in species abundance. The factors involved appear to be variation in rainfall and in evaporation rates affecting water flow, disturbance caused by flood regimes creating strong erosion, and certainly by fire.

The fire factor is of particular interest, because quite surprisingly, a swamp will burn freely: and I recall the total conflagration of the flora in a hanging swamp recently set on fire along Jamison Creek, despite the fact that the swamp exhibited a very strong seepage into the creek both before and after the fire.

David asserted that it is within the nature of the swamps to experience species turnover. He has observed that a drying swamp will veer towards larger shrubs and woody species and a dampening swamp will veer towards the sedges.

So, if we are to manage our swamps for sustainability we must strive to give equal encouragement to all the representative species, that is, support the diversity. The way to do this he said is to maintain water flows on the landscape (no bores!), maintain the spatial heterogeneity of the landscape (no 'dozer tracks, no nearby building excavation, no drainage lines and no longwall mining!), and pray for the fire frequency to be quite random, thus preventing any one species from becoming dominant. Oh, and one other thing – the really tough one – devise clever adaptation strategies for climate change!

Ron Withington



David is a Senior Principal Research Scientist with the Department of the Environment and Climate Change and the award-winning author of 'Ocean Shores to Desert Dunes'. His research over 20 years has addressed a wide range of ecological issues relevant to the conservation of biodiversity, studies of patterns and processes that influence rainforests, eucalypt forests and woodlands, heathlands, wetlands and deserts.

Freezing cold, ice on the puddles left over from the last rain, and windy! There we were, eight of us, five men (one with bare knees), and three women, setting off to Sublime Point and beyond. It was sunny and clear and the views were magnificent.

At the end of Sublime, the fun really started, down, down. Great, I liked it. I thought and felt like a mountain goat. Through the corkscrew, pack first, and out. I think that bit was called Copeland Pass.

OK, then we connected to Lindeman Pass (any relation to the winemaker?) We did a detour northwest to Gordon Falls, where the track seemed to stop at a landslip. Somewhere along the way we had morning tea and, refreshed, on we went.

Staying upright was not too hard on the eastern side of the Pass. However, sometimes it just disappeared, covered by rocks and fallen trees. It was still cold and gloomy under the tree canopy as the sun was on the other side of the gully and no flying fox in between. Rosellas, bellbirds and king parrots kept us company,

the wattles and several flowering bush plants were a joy to see.

By then I was getting a little hungry (I am always hungry!) We kept moving, had lunch, slipped, got up, kept going, lost the track, found it again and then finally made it to the bottom of Gladstone Pass, with the elusive *Fairmont* at the top. Thinking a cup of espresso was so nice, but first we had to get up there. I am sure no rabbit has ever hopped along this Pass. Up, up, water, moss, mud, and I wished my legs had been a little longer to negotiate some of the slippery, slimy rocks. At one stage, I really got stuck and if it was not for a gentleman hoisting me on his shoulder, I probably would still be trying to get up (to the *Fairmont* and hot coffee).

Finally, we were out! However, it was too late for coffee, too early for cocktails, and the look of our group would have raised a few eyebrows. So, home started to look appealing. Park car, strike match, fill bath with bubbles, clothes in a heap on the floor – in! Ah yes, and a glass of Lindeman's chardonnay. Any regrets? No, no. It was great!

Annemarie Hekman

WALKING IN THE MIST

On some days I have trouble convincing the Thursday walkers about the desirability of the Blackheath weather. On such a day twelve of us met in the cold and mist of a Blackheath winter morning. It was to be an easy walk because Sylvia Beamer was soon to go into Westmead for heart surgery.

The heathland on Shipley Plateau around the Amphitheatre, by the old Blackheath race track on the way to Mount Blackheath, is a good place to see honeyeaters in the winter. There is a new gate at the turnoff to stop vehicles and a pleasant walk along a sandy road. At the beginning of the walk lots of Red Wattle Birds frolicked and called among the twisted scribbly gums. Colours and patterns of tree trunks and orange lichens were accentuated by the moisture. We saw wallaby prints in the sand and Don spotted a dark-coloured wallaby which hid behind some shrubbery.

Soon the scribbly gums disappeared and vegetation was low-growing heath dominated by Banksias in flower. The view over the Kanimbla Valley was hidden in the mist and lichen-patterned rocks beside the cliff glistened with moisture.

Six species of honeyeaters were spotted flitting among the banksias: Eastern Spinebill, New Holland Honeyeater, White-cheeked Honeyeater; Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, and the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater. There were also a number of Silveryeyes.



The breeze from the valley freshened and it soon became very cold. Our next stop was beside the fire in the Megalong Tea Rooms for a leisurely morning tea with scones and blackberry jam and cream. Then a stroll along the Megalong road. Back behind the tea room we saw the flock of White-winged Choughs which is often there.

Our lunch at the Ivanhoe included a delicious cake baked by Jenny to celebrate Ron Hyslop's 70th birthday. We toasted Ron, gave Sylvia our best wishes and love, and all agreed it had been a very enjoyable morning.

Christine Davies, 24 July 08

NOT EXACTLY "BUSH TUCKER"

This is a reference to the Woody Pear (*Xylomelum pyriforme*: Greek, xylon= wood, melon=fruit and Latin, pyriforme=pear-shaped) which is the newest plant we are cultivating in our nursery. This is a common shrub or small tree to about 5m with rough, flaky bark and glossy lanceolate leaves with prominent venation. Juvenile leaves are coarsely toothed. Creamy white flowers on tan spikes 5-8cm long appear in Spring, but the most striking feature of the plants is the large (usually 7-10cm long) woody (weighing 50-60g) pear-shaped fruit. This is covered with rusty, velvety hairs giving it a suede-like feel and, on ageing, it turns a lovely dove-grey colour.

After fire or the death of the plant, the fruit splits to give two large winged seeds and we are currently germinating about 40 of these.

The Woody Pear is widespread north from the Sydney area and nearby ranges into Queensland. There are many specimens all over the Mountains and we have even found a tree in the parking lot near Bullaburra station. We hope to have some for sale early next year and, although fruit formation may take some years, it will be worth the wait.

Meantime, we have lots of other lovely, local plants for your garden at our nurseries (Blackheath, Tuesday mornings; Lawson, Wednesday mornings and the Lawson Magpie Markets every third Sunday of the month). We look forward to seeing you.

Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager, 4787 6436 khbell@eftel.net.au

NURSERY NOTES



BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING ACTIVITIES

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. The *BMCS Bushwalkers' Guide*, which explains the numbered Grades, can be found on the Society's website www.bluemountains.org.au, or will be posted on request.

For further information please contact the Walks Convenor, Liz van Reyswood, on 4757 2694, email bushwalks@bluemountains.org.au, or by mail at PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.

Before attending a walk, please discuss the walk with the contact person or group co-ordinator (see below)

SATURDAY WALKS

Usually a full-day, longer walk at a faster pace. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. Before attending ring the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Jim Percy, 4758 6009 or email jp34@tpg.com.au

- Sept-20 **Rites of Spring Picnic (2)** Annemarie 4759 2172 **Map:** Mt Wilson **Meet:** Blackheath Stn CP **9.35am**
6km. A Picnic at Hanging Rock! Bring picnic lunch. Short scramble down.
- Sept-27 **Mt Hay & Boorong Crags (3)** Jim 4758 6009 **Map:** Mt Wilson **Meet:** Mt Vic Station CP **8.30am**
11km. Steep descent and some rock scrambling
- Oct-04 **Donkey Mountain (3)** Meredith 4782 4823 **Map:** Ben Bullen **Meet:** Blackheath Stn CP **8.15am**
6km. GoS NP, 300m climb. New walk for Saturday, with a surprisingly beautiful set of flora, pagodas and caves on top.
- Oct-11 **Gooches Crater (2)** Bill 4758 8545 **Map:** Lithgow etc **Meet:** Mt Vic Station CP **8.15am**
12km. A special area requiring protection.

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS

'Short Day' walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of average fitness. Bring morning tea and lunch and adequate water. The Group Co-ordinator is Maurice Kerkham, 4758 6310, or email mauricekerkham@hotmail.com

- Sept-15 **Terrace Falls, Hazelbrook (2)** Judith 4758 6310 **Meet:** Hazelbrook Station **9.00am**
Road walk, waterfalls, large ponds.
- Sept-22 **Hat Hill & Bald Head (2)** Phil 4787 5560 **Meet:** Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre **9.00am**
Blackheath area. Magnificent Grose Valley Views. Car pool.
- Sept-29 **Empire Pass, Echo Bluff (2)** Phil 4787 5560 **Meet:** Lawson Bowling Club Car Park **9.00am**
Lawson area.
- Oct-06 **Newington Armoury (1/2)** Norm 4784 1554 **Meet:** See below. This is an optional guided tour. **9.30am**
Meet at 9.30am at the top of escalator at Central, to catch 10.00am ferry at Circular Quay to Olympic Park.
- Oct-13 **Tessellated Rocks, Mt Irvine (2)** Marie 4787 1257 **Meet:** Mt Vic Station Car Park (car pool) **9.00am**
Open forest walk finishing at an unusual rock formation.

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS

The walks are of 2-3 hours length conducted at a leisurely pace to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, adequate water and lunch if noted. The Group Co-ordinator is Simone Bowskill, 4757 3416, email simbow@tpg.com.au

- Oct-02 **Rigby Hill (2)** Heather 4739 1493 **Meet:** Mt Vic Station Car Park **9.50am**
Short track off Pierces Pass. Walk to lookout. Views and wildflowers.
- Oct-09 **Solitary Restaurant to Silver Mist (1)** Joan 4782 5966 (clo) **Meet:** Gearains Hotel, Katoomba **9.30am**
Cliff-top walk via lookouts.
- Oct-16 **Walls Cave (2)** Maurice 4787 5560 **Meet:** On GWH at Medlow Bath **9.35am**
Off Evans Lookout Road in Blackheath. Some scrambling involved.
- Oct-23 **Govetts Leap to Evans Lookout (2)** Simone 4757 3416 **Meet:** Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre **9.45am**
Cliff-top walk, there and back. Joint walk with Historical Society with John Low.
- Oct-30 **Govetts Leap to Pulpit Rock (2)** David 4757 3416 **Meet:** Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre **9.45am**
Cliff-top walk with spectacular views.

NOTE: Advance notice of a bus trip to Jenolan Caves on 6 November, 2008. Cost \$12. Bookings, Simone 4757 3416

Bushcare wherever you live!

Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets on the second Saturday of each month, 9am till noon. Tools and gloves are provided, and instruction on weed identification and treatment is given. You bring a hearty snack, a beverage and a wish for weed walloping!

Ring Karen Hising: 4757 1929

But if you can't make it to our site please consider finding a Group nearer to your home. Check the website:

www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/bushcare_groups.asp or phone

Lyndal Sullivan at: BMCC 4780 5528

A CHALLENGE TO OUR WALKERS from Liz van Reyswood

Are you available to assist Blue Mountains City Council and local bushcare groups at the following special bushcare days? It would be great if some of our bushwalkers were able to participate in this NPWS-sponsored effort.

SATURDAY 11 OCTOBER – BRAESIDE BLITZ – 9:30am-3.00pm

Braeside Bushcare Group, Consoc, Swampcare and NPWS plan to stop the Gorse creeping over the cliff line into the recently-burnt Grose Valley. This is the only catchment left in the Blue Mountains NP that still has Gorse growing. Join the effort and work along the creek line, pulling, cutting and painting this invasive weed.

SATURDAY 18 OCTOBER – MT VICTORIA – POST-FIRE WEEDING – 8:30am-4.00pm

Upper Blue Mountains Bushwalking Club, Consoc and the NPWS plan a thirty-minute walk into the headwaters of the Grose River to work removing urban weeds that are regenerating after the fires. Targets include Holly, Broom and Irish Strawberry Tree. **NPWS Coordinator for both is – Vera O'Donovan 4787 3112**

NOTE: The Consoc Bushwalkers Picnic, mooted for Sunday 9 November, will be held at Sun Valley. It has morphed into a picnic for all BMCS members. See page 1.