

Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society NEWSLETTER

NO. 58 - NOVEMBER, 1984 - Price 20¢ - P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls

Editor: G. Kerr, 5 Barratt Street, BLACKHEATH.

PATRON: Allen Strom, A.M.

PRESIDENT: Michael Dark (58-7061). VICE PRESIDENTS: Barry Barnes (88.1053); Keith Sherlock (57.1927); SECRETARY: Graham Kerr (87.7139)
TREASURER: Judy Kerr (87.7139)

COMING MEETINGS: AT THE CONSERVATION HUT, VALLEY OF WATERS RESERVE,
VALLEY ROAD, WENTWORTH FALLS AT 7.30 P.M.

For speakers at coming meetings held on the last Friday of the month, please see Public Notices in the 'Gazette'. No meeting in December except for walk and barbecue on 2nd.



COMING WALKS:

January, Sunday 6th:- Green Scrub - Mtn. Lagoon.
Meet at Bilpin 10 a.m. (on the way to Mt. Wilson) where Mt. Lagoon Road turns off to your left. Rain forest country - palms and a brush turkey mound. Leader Kevin Fiedler (045.67739) early evening.

January, Thursday 17th:- Hazelbrook - James Park to Bedford Creek.
Swimming opportunities - touch of rain forest - easy stroll. Leader Jill Dark 58.7061. Meet at Parking area south side of line near Hazelbrook Station 10 a.m.

February, Sunday 3rd:- Martins Lookout - down to Glenbrook Creek -
Ideal summer walk - through rain forest to pools for a swim.
Leader Jill Dark 58.7061. Meet at corner of Burns Road and Macquarie Road 10 a.m. (Macquarie Road runs parallel to railway line on southern side between Faulconbridge and Springwood).

February, Thursday 21st:- Horseshoe Falls, Faulconbridge - An easy stroll. Meet at shopping centre parking area on the north side of the line at 10 a.m. Leaders: Dulcie and Reg Toseland 84.1682.

COMING WALKS (Cont.)

March, Sunday 3rd:- Mt. Victoria Falls - along the newly constructed N.P. trail made since the last fires, to the Cascades, Victoria Falls and down to Burra Korain Flat and the Grose River. Leaders Judy and Graham Kerr 87.7139, Meet opposite Community Centre, Great Western Highway, Blackheath. 9.30 a.m.

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Leaders or participants with any problems please ring Walks Conveners Keith Sherlock 57.1927 or Lloyd Jones 57.2270.

SIX FOOT TRACK - NELLIES GLEN TO OLD FORD RESERVE

A good deal of recent history was revealed to us on the Nellies Glen Section of the Six Foot Track during the Society's September walk. Apart from the track itself, which in places is almost in its original condition, we passed by the site of the Megalong Village which once housed forty families. The villagers were dependent on the shale mines in the vicinity of the Ruined Castle; and from the village the miners gained access to the working area through a tunnel in the base of Narrowneck.



Some remarkably good bird sightings were made by a fortunate few of us: in the rainforest, a pair of Crescent honeyeaters (male and female) and towards the Old Ford Reserve, a Fan-tailed Cuckoo which was thoroughly confused by our mimicry of his call. Botanically there was much to be seen in the rainforest and the Scribbly Gum area, and many Acacias and ground orchids were seen along the way. We were fortunate to be able to call upon the expertise of Jill in identifying birds and plants.

The twenty of us who lunched on the banks of Megalong Creek at the Old Ford Reserve will long remember the day, the glen and the evidence of a disastrous attempt to build a road through it.

Thanks are due to our secretary Graham who kindly conveyed drivers back to the starting point near the Explorer's Tree to collect cars and thus enable walkers at the reserve to make their homeward journey after another enjoyable day's walk.

Keith Sherlock.

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RESEARCH PROJECT

Society member Barry Barnes is carrying out a research project to establish the change in boundaries and species content of Rainforest and Wet Sclerophyll communities in the Blue Mountains since European development.

It is likely that our older bushwalking members have observed such change in their experience and Barry would be pleased to hear from them.

You can contact Barry on (047) 88.1053 or write to him at "Yarrabee", Rutland Road, Medlow Bath, 2780.

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SIX FOOT TRACK - BLACK RANGE TO COX'S RIVER

On Sunday, October 7, a group of 15 members took the ramble along the Six Foot Track from the car park on Black Range Road to the Cox's River and on to the Old Ford Reserve. Nineteen members were in the party that met at Mt. Victoria Station but 4 members kindly only did part of the walk, so that they could convey members to the start of the walk and pick them up at the finish.

The total distance walked was about 20km.

The weather was perfect, not being too warm, and the track easy to walk, although steep in places especially round the Murdering Creek area. It was not hard to imagine horses trotting along the track 100 years ago and although much of the area has been cleared for farming the area around the Cox's River must still be almost the same. Bellbirds were predominant before the Little River crossing but blackberries marred the area. A pair of Wedge-tail eagles were noticed high above the Cox's River while we were having lunch, it was such a perfect setting, all members were reluctant to leave and begin the homeward journey.

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Our thanks go to Rachel Makinson for being at the finish of the walk to help convey members to their cars at Mt. Victoria Station.

Olive, John & David Noble.

P.S. The walks conveners would like to commend the conscientious way the Nobles researched the area and so enabled a walk, which could have been difficult and confusing, appear quite easy.

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NATIVE PLANTS OF THE UPPER BLUE MOUNTAINS

This is the title of a new book written by members Margaret Baker, Robin Corringham and Jill Dark and is due to come off the press and will be available shortly. Containing 118 colour photos with plant description, location map, fully indexed, this book designed as a field guide will be a must for all those who love native plants.

Jill hopes to have a quantity of these books in time for the next General Meeting. Members will be able to purchase their copy at a reduced price.

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END OF YEAR RAMBLE - BARBEQUE.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2 - Meet at Conservation Hut, Valley of Waters, Valley Road, Wentworth Falls at 10.00 a.m. for ramble through the Reserve. This will be followed by a barbeque (fire ban permitting) and social get-together. Bring your own food and refreshments. Tea and coffee provided.

ALL WELCOME

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A WEEK WITH THE BIRDOS

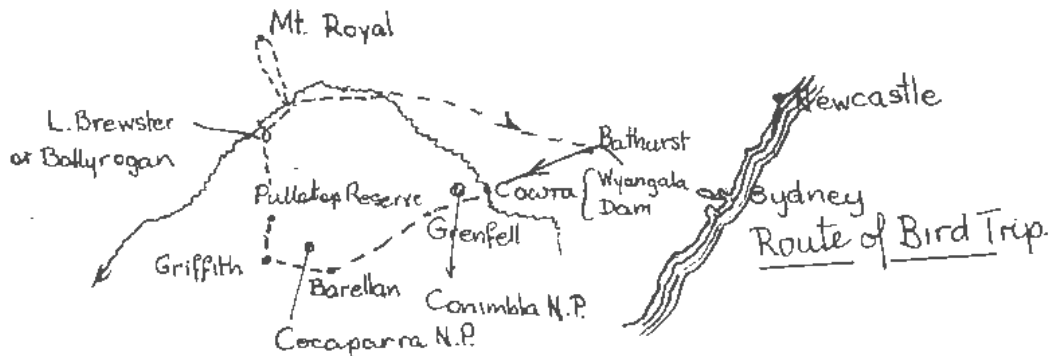
by Lloyd Jones.

Bird watchers are a breed quite distinct from all other mortals. Orderly rational behaviour is cast aside and bodily comforts ignored whenever a tweet or flutter is registered by their highly specialised receptor mechanisms.

Such was my thought as wedded to my sketch block I watched my companions troop out from the comforts of a well appointed comfortable shore side bungalow at Wyangala Dam despite the violent squalls of rain obscuring the distant shore and the towering cumulo nimbus bearing towards us.

I was about to write 'trooped off to a man' but that would not have done justice to the grandmas fresh from suburban comforts and routine who rallied to leader John Dengate's clarion call of "we might see something".

Well an hour later a wet bedraggled party sloshed in from the liquid darkness. "Something" had been seen, i.e. the usual run of shore line birds and waders that one would expect to find on any surface water.



And such was the pattern of progress for the remaining week. We headed SW through the bird deserts of the shaved agricultural districts to Cowra and on to Conimbla State Forest which flanks the southern end of the Conimbla National Park. Despite exploitation the pine forests made one feel that at last we had reached the bush. The tuneful wheezy metallic call of the bush lark as it winged its way skyward from the pockets of grassland and the scolding of the babblers were aural proof that we were over the mountains.

A stay the next night at a camping ground on the outskirts of Griffith was something of an anticlimax but the balance was righted by a quick get away to the M.I.A. absorption lakes a little to the north of the town, a haven for the water fowl and obviously a haven for humans in the hot summer months. The shores of Lake Wyangan were covered with a wide variety of planted native trees and shrubs which attracted an equally varied bird life.

On we went to Pulletop Reserve where the mallee scrubs suddenly appear north of Griffith. Here under the guidance of a ranger from the National Park Service we threaded our way through the bush and were lucky enough to sight a mallee fowl leaving its mound. Here also I was introduced to the dainty beauty of the Splendid Wren as the male of a group flitted about his harem.

A WEEK WITH THE BIRDO'S (Cont.)

Next day it was out to the northern end of Coccaparra Range National Park, to a campsite among the inland gum types growing on Homestead Flat. There is something special to be felt wandering in an unfenced area unexploited by man - a rare glimpse of "what was" though I must confess much modified by roadside exotics and species competition as the native plants fought for the repossession of the previously grazed areas.

Lake Ballyrogan or Brewster was our next goal. A weir across the Lachlan diverts water over a depression which can be re-diverted downstream when the river falls. Sturdy specimens of Red Gum grew along the water margins and hosts of water fowl enticed the party to study them despite a very cold southerly drifting over the plains.



Gums on the Lachlan.



Typical Mallee-Pulletop Reserve near Griffith

And so on to Mt. Hope Mallee Reserve via Lake Cargellico. From a high knoll we could see a full 360° of mallee wilderness blanketing the plains. To the east however we could see neat rectangles of freshly sprung wheat penetrating westward. In this marginal country one wonders if the farmers' democratic right to make an economic gamble is fair to the nation in their effect on the land's stability when seasons fail.

As we slithered our way eastward to tarred roads back to the Lachlan at Euabalong then through Lake

Cargellico we entered the heart of the wheat belt where life's values are measured in bags per acre.

The paddocks are clear of any competing trees or the lucky survivors are on their last legs through sheer age. Stock see to it that there are no descendants. The next generation of Australians will quite likely see and accept an absence of trees on all agricultural land. It's an area for all good birdos to hurry through though it was hard to resist the temptation to divert to the distant blue haze of some national parks and little patches of crown land just in case "we might see something",



Lake Ballyrogan near the Lachlan.

WESTERN DIVISION CRISIS

Your Society has received the following letter from the Nature Conservation Council of N.S.W.

"On Tuesday, 11th September, the Minister for Natural Resources, Mrs. Crosio, announced, in effect, the lifting of the embargo on cropping and clearing in the Western Division. Her announcement was made in Parliament in response to a 'Dorothy Dix' type question put to her by the member for Broken Hill, Mr. Beckroge. Mrs. Crosio stated that she had made 'modifications' to the embargo, as follows:-

First, cultivation of the Darling flood plains will be allowed following the receding of flood waters, where no clearing is involved. I emphasize that no clearing must be involved. Second, clearing of lands will be permitted where lease conditions specifically require it. Third, clearing and cultivation of scrub infested lands will be allowed. This covers land that support inedible woody weeds, such as cassia, of any size in dense stands or clumps, or as individual plants, or spaced closer than 30 metres apart, with or without tree overstorey. The overstorey itself may only be cleared if a special licence has been issued. Uncleared mallee is not included in the definition. Fourth, the control, including burning, of scrub infested land will be permitted in pastoral situations. Fifth, the cultivation of lands already cleared under licence, or which have been previously cultivated, will also be allowed.

THE MINISTER'S ACTION HAS SERIOUSLY WEAKENED THE THRUST OF THE WESTERN DIVISION SELECT COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRE-EMPTS ANY GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR RE-STRUCTURING THE DIVISION.

Mrs. Crosio has, it appears, ignored a letter from the Nature Conservation Council opposing any further relaxation of the embargo. Her 'modifications' allow destruction of mallee by burning and legalise cultivation for which approval had not been granted as required in Regulations of the Western Lands Act. Government departments with a clear interest in the division have not been consulted on the lifting of the embargo.

Mrs. Crosio is playing into the hands of those Western Division lessees who are intent on destroying the fragile soil resource of the Division for short term gain. It appears that she realised the embargo was ineffective due to lack of policing and is now attempting to legitimise the actions of lessees who ignored the embargo.

Member societies are strongly urged to:

- (a) Write immediately to the Premier, Mr. Wran, calling on him to over-rule the Minister's decision and to reinstate the embargo until such time as the Government has made an overall decision on management of the Western Division.
- (b) Encourage individual members to write in a similar fashion.
- (c) Write in support of the Western Division Select Committee's recommendations to Mr. Wran, Mr. Hallam and Mr. Sheahan."

Your Society has already written to the Premier, Mr. Wran and we would urge individual members to also write as suggested.

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S T O P P R E S S

A small group from A.T.C.V. will be working at the Marked Tree site Katoomba from Friday, 30th November to Monday, 3rd December.

Any assistance you can give in replacing plants which have failed, spreading wood chips and removing broom would be greatly valued.

MOUNT BANKS MYSTERY SOLVED

The following letter has been received which clears up the mystery of missing names in our article in the August 1984 issue of our Newsletter, entitled 'Beer Almost Discovered at Mount Banks.' This was in reference to message in a bottle found in the cairn at the top of Mount Banks in 1941.

"Members may be interested to hear of subsequent discoveries. A great deal of interest was shown and the local papers even picked it up.

Miss Ebona Isles, Historian of Mt. Victoria, rang us. She did some research and found that the H.G. Reinits of the message was a resident of Mt. Victoria from 1880 - and was a school master. He started a boarding school in 1885 which continued to 1913. This is the Mr. Reinits who was very active in Mountain affairs and his name appears on a map showing the location of various rocks and minerals. This map was printed in 1899 and bears the name of Curran, Reinits and Ball.

So the C. Ba....? on the old note was C.J. Ball.

The other name, A. Keinz, was really Albert KUNZ who also had a school for girls in Mt. Victoria.

I gave the old message to the Mt. Victoria Museum so that is where anyone interested will have to go.

By the way, the bottle in which we discovered the message was not a beer bottle, but an old Cognac bottle. What a pity we, in our ignorance, did not keep it as well as the note!"

Grace and Fred Bayley.

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A BIRD OBSERVER'S NOTES

How can there be a white blackbird? Well, I've got one, an albino English, pure white with a bright orange bill. I saw it on two consecutive days in the dark pines at the bottom of my garden, like the legendary white hart of medieval mythology.

Years ago a Blackheath lady rang about a white Wattle Bird in her garden. I'm sorry that I didn't follow it up. About the same time the lady told me of an albino Red-browed finch in a flock at Shipley.

Albino birds are rare but there is one Australian species, the Grey Goshawk, which has a white form and it is quite common for half a clutch of young to be white and the other half grey. One of these beautiful birds visited my garden years ago but was immediately chased off by magpies. Brother Wilson saw one sitting in a tree at Lyre Bird Dell, and once we both watched one from Kings Tableland soar across the Wentworth Falls and right along the face of the escarpment to disappear up the Valley of Waters. Strangely, I've only seen the grey form once, circling above the trees below Evans Lookout.

On the bus trip, at each stop for junk food, I would wander into the bush looking, without much success, for birds. Not as easy as it sounds, for although these roadhouses stand on their own in the wilderness, each is surrounded by acres of rubbish - rusty tins, old car bodies, etc. - and it is quite a walk to reach the unspoiled bush. By that time you're

A BIRD OBSERVER'S NOTES (Cont.)

disheartened, out of sight of the bus, start worrying you're going to miss it, and can't concentrate much on birds!

At the Nullarbor Road House I saw a smallish brown bird on the ground, a female Brown Song Lark. The male arrived with its strange call like a creaky cart wheel - 'wichety weedle.' Dark, handsome, much bigger than the female, with a sooty black breast, it commenced a vigorous mating dance, hopping around, wings drooped, tail cocked jauntily like a wren. The female flew off, apparently unimpressed!

On the coastal plain, small flocks of budgerigars - 20 or 30 in each - skimmed with astonishing speed 2 or 3 feet above the bushes, wheeling and turning, a vivid green flash. One flock disappeared over the 100 metre coastal cliff but soon swooped back again.

Passing Cocklebidly, I remembered my excitement motoring over in the early 1960's - seeing my first Australian Bustard there, and my second memory of 1000 miles of dirt road and only seeing one other car. No Bustards this time, but I did see a couple of emus.

I am looking forward to the trip back in the "Wilsonmobile", when we can stop where the fancy takes us.

GRAHAM ALCORN,

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CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE DAINTREE RAINFOREST.

Many members will be aware that our Society has strongly supported the campaign both by writing to the appropriate Ministers and making donations to the Australian Conservation Foundation fighting fund.

The Society has received a letter from Senator Don Chipp, Leader of the Australian Democrats and encloses a Press Release which gives details of a motion to be put to the Senate on October 2 and which in part says:-

"That the Senate:

- (i) Notes the Australian Heritage Commission Report released on 12 September, 1984 which recommends that the Wet Tropic Region of North-East Queensland (including the Daintree Rainforest) be nominated for inclusion in the World Heritage List because it fulfils all the criteria set out in the World Heritage Convention.
- (ii) Notes that the Queensland Wet Tropic Rainforests include:
 - * the most diverse rainforests in Australia
 - * a rare association of fringing coral reefs and rainforested coastline in the Cape Tribulation area
 - * 13 families of primitive flowering plants which give the area the highest concentration of such families on earth
 - * the highest diversity of animal life of any area in Australia and the only habitat for numerous species that are regarded as threatened
 - * elements of plant life that relate to the four major stages in the earth's evolutionary history, dating back more than 35 million years



CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE DAINTREE RAINFOREST (Cont.)

- * important clues to the problem of origin, evolution and migration of the flowering plants
- * a record of the extreme effect of the Pleistocene glacial periods on tropical rainforest vegetation
- * the only remaining recognised Australian Aboriginal rainforest culture and therefore a significant component of the cultural record of Aboriginal society, and
- * many features of outstanding natural beauty.

(iii) Notes that the Queensland Government has made it clear that Queensland will not nominate any areas of Queensland for the World Heritage List."

Senator Chipp states in his letter that pressure must be kept on the Government and asks that all those interested write to their Federal politicians now and let them know the Daintree must be saved.

We urge Members to write to their Federal politician in the strongest possible terms. With a Federal election due in December, politicians are in a very receptive mood.

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NATIVE PLANT SALE AND MINI FETE A GREAT SUCCESS

This sale held at the "Hut" on the weekend of 27th and 28th October proved to be a huge success and the Land Fund committee would like to thank all those who contributed to this success in the sale of native plants and also a fine array of goods at the opportunity table. Despite bad weather, close on \$500.00 has been added to the Fund.

On Saturday, 26th October, Jill Dark raised the enthusiasm of 50 people for growing native plants at a demonstration and discussion of her propagating methods.

Our Society is very lucky to have a member with such outstanding talent.

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EXPLORERS TREE REJUVENATED

The Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers are to be congratulated on the fine job they have carried out in the Explorers Tree area at Katoomba during September and October.

With the help of members of our Society and other organisations, rock gardens were created, pathways established and hundreds of native shrubs planted and covered with mulch generously delivered to the site by The Prospect County Council.

This was a fine community effort and the Blue Mountains City Council deserves a "pat on the back" for their assistance without which the project probably could not have got off the ground.

We understand that further projects are planned for the Mountains and it is pleasing that one of our Vice-Presidents, Barry Barnes, has been appointed area representative by the A.T.C.V.

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WORK AT THE "HUT"

For the information of Members your Management Committee has set up a special Committee under the chairmanship of Hut Convenor, Barry Barnes, to look at the possibilities of replacing the Hut to one that can better serve the educational and display needs of the public.

However, even if this can be achieved, it is a long way off and, in the meantime, Barry is working on brightening the place up and modernising the displays.

Already the inside of the Hut has been painted and it is planned to repaint the outside on Sunday, November 11. Many thanks to all those (willing?) volunteers who wielded paint brushes and to Barry for his planning.

The Hut looks a little bare at the moment but it is hoped to have new displays up by the end of the year.

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This version of the Newsletter was re-typed from the original by Phoebe Coster in January 2023 to enable search engines to 'see' the text. Minor changes have been made to correct typographical errors and to add clarity.

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Next day it was out to the northern end of Coccaparra Range National Park, to a campsite among the inland gum types growing in Homestead Flat. There is something special to be felt wandering in an unfenced area unexploited by man – a rare glimpse of “what was” though I must confess much modified by roadside exotics and species competition as the native plants fought for the repossession of the previously grazed areas.

Lake Ballyrogan or Brewster was our next goal. A weir across the Lachlan diverts water over a depression which can be re-diverted downstream when the river falls. Sturdy specimens of Red Gum grew along the water margins and hosts of water fowl enticed the party to study them despite a very cold southerly drifting over the plains.

And so on to Mt. Hope Mallee Reserve via Lake Cargellico. From a high knoll we could see a full 360° of mallee wilderness blanketing the plains. To the east however we could see neat rectangles of freshly sprung wheat penetrating westward. In this marginal country one wonders if the farmer's democratic right to make an economic gamble is fair to the nation in their effect on the land's stability when seasons fail.

As we slithered our way eastward to tarred roads back to the Lachlan at Euabalong then through Lake Cargellico we entered the heart of the wheat belt where life's values are measured in bags per acre.

The paddocks are clear of any competing trees or the lucky survivors are on their last legs through sheer age. Stock see to it that there are no descendants. The next generation of Australians will quite likely see and accept an absence of trees on all agricultural land. It's an area for all good birdos to hurry through though it was hard to resist the temptation to divert to the distant blue haze of some national parks and little patches of crown land just in case “we might see something”.

WESTERN DIVISION CRISIS

Your Society has received the following letter from the Nature Conservation Council of NSW.

“On Tuesday, 11th September, the Minister for Natural Resources, Mrs Crosio, announced, in effect, the lifting of the embargo on cropping and clearing in the Western Division. Her announcement was made in Parliament in response to a ‘Dorothy Dix’ type question put to her by the member for Broken Hill, Mr Beckroge, Mrs Crosio stated that she had made ‘modifications’ to the embargo, as follows:-

First, cultivation of the Darling flood plains will be allowed following the receding of flood waters, where no clearing is involved. I emphasize that no clearing must be involved.

Second, clearing of lands will be permitted where lease conditions specifically require it.

Third, clearing and cultivation of scrub infested lands will be allowed. This covers land that support inedible woody weeds, such as cassia, of any size in dense stands or clumps, or as individual plants, or closer than 30 metres apart, with or without tree overstorey. The overstorey itself may only be cleared if a special licence has been issued. Uncleared mallee is not included in the definition.

Fourth, the control, including burning, of scrub infested land will be permitted in pastoral situations.

Fifth, the cultivation of lands already cleared under licence, or which have been previously cultivated, will also be allowed.

THE MINISTER'S ACTION HAS SERIOUSLY WEAKENED THE TRUST OF THE WESTERN DIVISION SELECT COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRE-EMPTS ANY GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR RE-STRUCTURING THE DIVISION.

Mrs Crosio has, it appears, ignored a letter from the Nature Conservation Council opposing any further relaxation of the embargo. Her 'modifications' allow destruction of mallee by burning and legalise cultivation for which approval had not been granted as required in Regulations of the Western Lands Act. Government departments with a clear interest in the division have not been consulted on the lifting of the embargo.

Mrs Crosio is playing into the hands of those Western Division lessees who are intent on destroying the fragile soil resource of the Division for short term gain. It appears that she realised the embargo was ineffective due to lack of policing and is now attempting to legitimise the actions of lessees who ignored the embargo.

Member societies are strongly urged to:

(a) Write immediately to the Premier, Mr Wran, calling on him to over-rule the Minister's decision and to reinstate the embargo until such time as the Government has made an overall decision on management of the Western Division.

(b) Encourage individual members to write in a similar fashion.

(c) Write in support of the Western Division Select Committee's recommendations to Mr Wran, Mr Hallam and Mr Sheahan.

Your Society has already written to the Premier, Mr Wran and we would urge individual members to also write as suggested.

STOP PRESS

A small group from A.T.C.V. will be working at the Marked Tree site Katoomba from Friday, 30th November to Monday, 3rd December.

Any assistance you can give in replacing plants which have failed, spreading wood chips and removing broom would be greatly valued.

MOUNT BANKS MYSTERY SOLVED

The following letter has been received which clears up the mystery of missing names in our article in the August 1984 issue of our Newsletter, entitled 'Beer Almost Discovered at Mount Banks.' This was in reference to message in a bottle found in the cairn at the top of Mount Banks in 1941.

"Members may be interested to hear of subsequent discoveries. A great deal of interest was shown and the local papers even picked it up.

Miss Ebena Isles, Historian of Mt Victoria, rang us. She did some research and found that the H.G. Reinitz of the message was a resident of Mt Victoria from 1880 – and was a school master.

He started a boarding school in 1885 which continued to 1913. This is the Mr Reinits who was very active in Mountains affairs and his name appears on a map showing the location of various rocks and minerals. This map was printed on 1899 and bears the name of Curran, Reinits and Ball.

So the C. Ba....? On the old notes was C.J. Ball.

The other name, A Keinz, was really Albert KUNZ who also had a school for girls in Mt Victoria. I give the old message to the Mt Victoria Museum so that is where anyone interested will have to go.

By the way, the bottle in which we discovered the message was not a beer bottle, but an old Cognac bottle. What a pity we, in our ignorance, did not keep it as well as the note!"

Grace and Fred Bayley.

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A BIRD OBSERVER'S NOTES

How can there be a white blackbird? Well, I've got one, an albino English, pure white with a bright orange bill. I saw it on two consecutive days in the dark pines at the bottom of my garden, like the legendary white hart of medieval mythology.

Years ago a Blackheath lady rang about a white Wattle Bird in her garden. I'm sorry that I didn't follow it up. About the same time the lady told me of an albino Red-browed finch in a flock at Shipley.

Albino birds are rare but there is one Australian species, the Grey Goshawk, which has a white form and it is quite common for half a clutch of young to be white and the other half grey. One of these beautiful birds visited my garden years ago but was immediately chased off by magpies. Brother Wilson saw one sitting in a tree at Lyre Bird Dell, and once we both watched one from Kings Tableland soar across the Wentworth Falls and right along the face of the escarpment to disappear up the Valley of Waters. Strangely, I've only seen the grey form once, circling above the trees below Evans Lookout.

On the bus trip, at each stop for junk food, I would wander into the bush looking, without much success, for birds. Not as easy as it sounds, for although these roadhouses stand on their own in the wilderness, each is surrounded by acres of rubbish – rusty tins, old car bodies, etc. - and it is quite a walk to reach the unspoiled bush. By the time you're disheartened, out of sight of the bus, start worrying you're going to miss it, and can't concentrate much on birds!

At the Nullarbor Road House I saw a smallish brown bird on the ground, a female Brown Song Lark. The male arrived with its strange call like a creaky cart wheel – 'wichety weedle.' Dark, handsome, much bigger than the female, with a sooty black breast, it commenced a vigorous mating dance, hopping around, wings drooped, tail cocked jauntily like a wren. The female flew off, apparently unimpressed!

On the coastal plain, small flocks of budgerigars – 20 or 30 in each – skimmed with astonishing speed 2 or 3 feet above the bushes, wheeling and turning, a vivid green flash. One flock disappeared over the 100 metre coastal cliff but soon swooped back again.

Passing Cocklebidly, I remembered my excitement motoring over in the early 1960's – seeing my first Australian Bustard there, and my second memory of 1000 miles of dirt road and only seeing one other car. No Bustards this time, but I did see a couple of emus.

I am looking forward to the trip back in the "Wilsonmobile", when we can stop where the fancy takes us.

GRAHAM ALCORN.

CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE DAINTREE RAINFOREST.

Many members will be aware that our Society has strongly supported the campaign both by writing to the appropriate Ministers and making donations to the Australian Conservation Foundation fighting fund.

The Society has received a letter from Senator Don Chip, Leader of the Australian Democrats and encloses a Press Release which gives details of a motion to be put to the Senate on October 2 and which in part says:-

"That the Senate:

(i) Notes the Australian Heritage Commission Report released 12 September, 1984 which recommends that the Wet Tropic Region of North-East Queensland (including the Daintree Rainforest) be nominated for inclusion in the World Heritage List because it fulfils all the criteria set out in the World Heritage Convention.

(ii) Notes that the Queensland Wet Tropic Rainforests include:

- the most diverse rainforests in Australian
- a rare association of fringing coral reefs and rainforested coastline in the Cape Tribulation area
- 13 families of primitive flowering plants which give the area the highest concentration of such families on earth
- the highest diversity of animal life of any area in Australia and the only habitat for numerous species that are regarded as threatened
- elements of plant life that relate to the four major stages in the earth's evolutionary history, dating back more than 35 million years
- important clues to the problem of origin, evolution and migration of the flowering plants
- a record of the extreme effect of the Pleistocene glacial periods on tropical rainforest vegetation
- the only remaining recognised Australian Aboriginal rainforest culture and therefore a significant component of the cultural record of Aboriginal society, and
- many features of outstanding natural beauty.

(iii) Notes that the Queensland Government has made it clear that Queensland will not nominate any areas of Queensland for the World Heritage List.”

Senator Chipp states in his letter that pressure must be kept on the Government and asks that all those interested write to their Federal politicians now and let them know the Daintree must be saved.

We urge Members to write to their Federal politician in the strongest possible terms. With a Federal election due in December, politicians are in a very receptive mood.

NATIVE PLANT SALE AND MINI FETE A GREAT SUCCESS

This sale held at the “Hut” on the weekend of 27th ad 28th October proved to be a huge success and the Land Fund committee would like to thank all those who contributed to this success in the sale of native plants and also a fine array of goods at the opportunity table. Despite bad weather, close on \$500.00 has been added to the Fund.

On Saturday, 26th October, Jill Dark raised the enthusiasm of 50 people for growing native plants at a demonstration and discussion of her propagating methods.

Our Society is very lucky to have a member with such outstanding talent.

EXPLORERS TREE REJUVENATED

The Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers are to be congratulated on the fine job they have carries out in the Explorers Tree area at Katoomba during September and October.

With the help of members of our Society and other organisations, rock gardens were created, pathways established and hundreds of native shrubs planted and covered with mulch generously delivered to the site by The Prospect County Council.

This was a fine community effort and the Blue Mountains City council deserves a “pat on the back” for their assistance without which the project could not have got off the ground.

We understand that further projects are planned for the Mountains and it is pleasing that one of our Vice-Presidents, Barry Barnes, has been appointed area representative by the A.T.C.V.

WORK AT THE “HUT”

For the information of Members your Management Committee has set up a special Committee under the chairmanship of Hut Convenor, Barry Barnes, to look at the possibilities of replacing the Hut to one that can better serve the educational and display needs of the public.

However, even if this can be achieved, it is a long way off and, in the meantime, Barry is working on brightening the place up and modernising the displays.

Already the insides of the Hut has been painted and it is planned to repaint the outside on Sunday, November 11. Many thanks to all those (willing?) volunteers who wielded paint brushes and to Barry for his planning.

The Hut looks a little bare at the moment but it is hoped to have new displays up by the end of the year.
