# Newsletter

Registered by Australia Post-Publication No. NBHO 925

#### UPPER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.

Incorporated in New South Wales. Registered Office: The Conservation Hut, Valley of Waters Reserve, Valley Road, Wentworth Falls 2782. Address for Correspondence: P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Pensioners and Juniors \$4.00 per year; Single Membership \$6.00 per year; Family Membership \$10.00 per year.

MEETINGS: Held on last Friday in the month, January to November inclusive at the Conservation Hut, Valley of Waters Reserve, Valley Road Wentworth Falls at 7.30 p.m.

For speakers at coming meetings, please see Public notices in the Gazette.

COMMITTEE FOR 1988	
President Dulcie Toseland Vice Presidents Eric Blick Mick Dark Secretary Reg Toseland Treasurer Elvine Thomas Membership Officer Betty Collings Newsletter Editor Ewart Collings Walks Convenors Olive & John Noble Librarian June Blick Hut Duty Organiser Beverley Thompson Land Preservation Officer. Deirdre Morton	84.1682 88.1051 58.7061 84.1682 84.2121 57.2131 57.2131 87.8342 88.1051 57.2076 58.8137

NEWSLETTER: Four issues a year - April, July, October, January Advertising space available.

LIBRARY: A wide range of books on wildlife and conservation available to members. Facilities for borrowing and returning books at Monthly Meetings.

THE HUT: The Society maintains a small museum and information centre at the Conservation Hut. It is manned on weekends and holidays by voluntary helpers.

PUBLICATIONS: A range of specialist booklets, posters, maps, postcards etc may be purchased at the Hut.

SALE OF NATIVE PLANTS: Opportunities to purchase native plants grown by Members are organised from time to time during the year. These sales are held at the Hut, proceeds to the Land Preservation Fund.

WALKS: Walks are organised for the first Sunday, third Thursday and third Saturday of the month, conducted by experienced leaders.

LAND PRESERVATION: The Society has a Land Preservation Fund which was set up to give lovers of the bush an opportunity to preserve environmentally important land in the Blue Mountains by purchase and dedication as a reserve.



## **BLUE MOUNTAINS** CONSERVATION

## Newsletter

October, 1988

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COMING TALKS		
September Cape York	-	Jill & Mick Dark
<u>October</u>	-	Plant Weekend
November Blue Mts.Bushwalkers of the Past		Jim Smith

#### WALKS PROGRAMME 1988-89

#### IT IS ESSENTIAL ON ALL WALKS IN THE HOT WEATHER THAT MEMBERS SHOULD CARRY AT LEAST 1 LITRE OF WATER

CARRY ON ALL WALKS:

First Aid Kit

Torch Matches

Warm Shirt or Sweater

No. 73

WEAR SAFE FOOTWEAR

Protective Rainwear

Hat

#### ALL PEOPLE ATTENDING WALKS DO SO AT THEIR OWN RISK

#### October Sunday 2nd - Gladstone Pass, Roberts Pass

Meet at end of Fitzroy Street Leura at 9.00 a.m. Gladstone Pass dates back to 1895 and Roberts Pass to 1903. There is an interesting stone stairway on Gladstone Pass. The walkers will see the first of the Spring wildflowers and some fine escarpment views. 6 hours approximately. Medium to Hard. Contact: David Thomas 84.2121

#### October Saturday 15th - Walls Cave Walk

Meet at Blackheath Station. Commuter Car Park. 10.30 a.m. (over level crossing and turn right). This is a chance to see part of the start of the Grand Canyon. The walkers will see Walls Cave and Lake Medlow. More information can be obtained on the walk. Easy.

Contact: Rachel Makinson 87.1302

## October Thursday 20th - Mt York, Cox's Road, Lockyer's Road

Meet at Mt Victoria Station at 9.30 a.m. The walk will begin at Mt York and go down the old coach road built by Cox in 1814 to Hartley Vale. The optional return is up Lockyers Road (1829) to Mt York Road. Car ferry for drivers will be arranged. 5 hours approximately. Medium. Contact: Bob Jones 58 8361

#### November Sunday 6th - Kanimbla Valley Walk

Meet at Mt Victoria Station 10.30 a.m. to meet train from Sydney. A short car drive will be taken to the start of the walk overlooking the magnificent Kanimbla Valley. Then walk down along the little Zig-Zag track to a property owned by Mr Charles Johnson. Return up the same way. Medium 5 hours. Contact: Rachel Makinson 87.1302

#### November Thursday 17th - Hassan's Walls

Meet at Blackheath Station Commuter Car Park (over level crossing and turn right) at 9.45 a.m. Wild flowers and birds, see side effects of mining. Local geology and history, interesting talk on these subjects from Ron Compagnoni. 3 to 4 hours approximately. Easy. Contact: Ron Compagnoni 87.8894

## November Saturday 19th - Bell Trees Property, Bell

Meet at Mt Victoria Station at 9.30 a.m. Bell Trees property has many interesting features including natural pagodas (rock formations). The semi-closed over clearing called The Cathedral is unforgetable. 5-6 hours approx. Easy - Medium. Contact: June and Eric Blick 88-1051

#### December Sunday 4th - Annual Barbeque

Meet at The Hut which is situated at the Valley of The Waters, Wentworth Falls 10.00 a.m. A barbeque will follow a ramble on one of the tracks around the area. Bring your own tucker. Tea and coffee will be provided. Be in it, have a lazy day.

Contact: Bob Jones. 58 8361 or Olive Noble 87 8342 if unsure where the Hut is situated.

## December Thursday 15th - Wilson's Glen

Meet at Woodford Station. Commuter Car Park (adjacent to the station in Railway Parade) at 10.45 a.m. to meet trains from Sydney and Lithgow. A leisurely walk down Wilson's Glen to Gypsy Pool Long lunch in a large cool over-hang. Wilson's Glen has a romantic story to it. 3 hours approximately. Easy.

Contact: Deirdre Morton 58 8137

## December Saturday 17th - Federal Falls Walk

Meet at corner of Great Western Highway and Honour Parade (opposite Lawson Station) at 9.45 a.m. to meet trains from Sydney and Lithgow. This walk is in the Lawson area and goes through Ordelina Falls, Junction Falls. A side track leads to Federal Falls, then back on the main track to Cataract Falls. Plenty of cool spots. 4-5 hours approximately. Easy. Contact: Ruth Jones 58 8361

#### January Sunday 1st 1989 - Grand Canyon Area

Meet at Blackheath Station Commuter Car Park (over level crossing then turn right) at 9.30 a.m. Walk down Neates Glen to Beauchamp Falls then to Evans Lookout. 5 hours. Medium. Contact: Bob Jones 58 8361

#### January Thursday 17th - Heritage Centre to Horseshoe Falls

Meet in Govett's Leap Road, just past the shops, at 9.30 a.m. Visit the Heritage Centre, then stroll along the Heritage Track to Govett's Leap. The Heritage Track, well maintained by the N.P.W.S., has the native flora identified by small plaques. The walk from Govett's Leap to Horseshoe Falls is optional. The walk is as long or short as you wish to make it. Contact: Bob Jones 58 8361

#### January Saturday 21st - Mystery Walk

Meet Mt Victoria Station 9.30 a.m. You can't complain if you don't get to where you were going to on this walk, because, you won't know if you got to where you were going anyway. Be prepared to get your feet wet. Contact: John Noble 87.8342

#### WALK - BRUCE'S WALK - SUNDAY 7TH AUGUST

Standing in for David, I led an intrepid 14 on what was supposed to be that part of Bruce's Walk from Mt. Hay Road to Medlow Bath aerodrome. On a prospective trip the Katoomba Creek was found to be in full spate and there wasn't much hope that, in the meantime, it would have gone down enough for us to cross. This proved to be a right guess and not having Moses with us we had to make do with a less ambitious destination. We found even the small Govett's Creek needed careful negotiation and much of the path to the ridge was very mushy in places. On reaching the ridge most of the group walked down to look at Katoomba Creek and confirmed that there was still too much water for a safe crossing. We went back to the ridge and then northwards to the rock overlooking the confluence of the abovementioned creeks. We had been walking in very strong wind but the rock proved to be sheltered and one of the most pleasant places for lunch that we have enjoyed and we stayed quite a while, very socially. We returned to Mt. Hay Road by the same route only digressing to visit one of the prettiest of the small waterfalls whose name seems to elude everybody. Elvine Thomas.

#### WALK - DENFENELLA - THURSDAY 18TH AUGUST 1988

After overnight rain the skies cleared and apart from a few drops at the start of the walk the day turned out perfect for walking. For the entire morning we were enchanted by the ever changing rainbow in the Jamison Valley. Pimelea was out in abundant profusion everywhere we walked. After visiting Denfenella we went along Undercliff Pass and had lunch in the sunshine at Rocket Point before returning to the cars early in the afternoon. During the day we heard plenty of birdlife but most of them remained hidden. However we did see some crimson Rosellas, Thornbills and a Flycatcher. We had fifteen people on the walk.

Beverley Thompson

## WALK - ARETHUSA FALLS TO HENSON'S GLEN - THURSDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER

A damp misty morning - 21 people turned up for the usual pleasant gossipy amble. Early spring flowers were a delight, including Glossodia minor, Euphrasia - Bright Eyes, and many others. Birds were in attendance with nests of Scarlet Robin and Pardalote. However, after lunch the dampness turned to wetness, but the spirit of the company as always never flagged. One of the pleasures of this Arethusa Walk is that no one seems to know where exactly the falls are. We should ask birdman Graham "What do birds do in wet weather; do they build humpies on branches or make leaves into brollies or rush into holes in trees or caves or K-Mart, or just stick it out?"

#### WALK - FIRST LEG OF SIX FOOT TRACK - SATURDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER

Very unsettled weather at Katoomba, but we were lucky down in the Megalong Valley because we only had one patch of rain. There were five walkers on the track — Lloyd Jones, David Thomas, Bert Davies, my wife Ruth and myself. The walk was timed to start after we met the train from Sydney to Katoomba Station, but I had not allowed for the S.R.A. time and motion experts. They had another of their periodic brain storms (West.Dist. sudden cerebral disturbance) and changed the time table yet again. As I had not walked this part of the Six Foot Track for many years, Ruth and I went over it a few days before the official walk. I remember Nellies Glen as a steep, but delightful walk. It was sad and depressing to see what had happened to it. Just a track through a man-made landslide. The walk at the bottom, towards the ford, has suffered in several areas from bulldozing. The N.P.W.S. has provided stiles where needed.

Along the valley track a few waratahs were just beginning to bloom. David investigated some bush wasps which he said had a sting like an electric shock, but this did not stop him from getting amongst them for a closer look at their nests. Further on we found one of the N.P.W.S. red track markers which had been dislodged off a tree; when David picked up the marker the nails were still in it. "Anybody got a hammer?", he asked. I was just about to tell him that after a quick mental check of my pack contents, I'd found that my faithful old cherished hammer was missing, when to my amazement I heard a voice behind me say "Well, as a matter of fact..". I turned round and saw Bert rummaging round in that multipocket pack of his, and guess what he produced!! Useful bloke to have as a track mate — wonder what else Bert has in that pack. We went as far as the site of the Old Village which catered for the needs of the shale mine workers. This is where we had lunch after meeting up with Lloyd who had gone on ahead with his sketch book.

On the return journey we had a small hailstorm but very heavy rain for about half an hour. Lloyd Jones who had left his rain gear at home disappeared at the start of the rain. He turned up after the shower bone dry. Another one of those bush mysteries I forgot to ask him about. We arrived back at the cars at about 3.30p.m. P.S. Actually the hammer was a small axe which Bert uses to cut down obnoxious weeds on the walking tracks. I should be used to David's jokes by now.

Bob Jones.

#### RECYCLE ICE CREAM CONTAINERS.

2 & 4 litre plastic ice cream containers (no lids please!) may be left at the Hut for recycling. The Society will make a little money from this.

#### FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF CONSERVATION IN THE U.K.

The title, I hope, will make allowances in case I am not exact, for I have not done enough research into conservation here as yet. From what I have seen I would think there are more folk proportionally interested in Wildlife here than in Australia. The Royal Society for the protection of Birds has over 500,000 members and though many of these just enjoy birds in their garden, at least they do! The population of winter birds would be greatly reduced if it weren't for the bird tables in so many gardens. And it is not only resident birds that are thus kept alive but many extras that come from northern Europe to winter here. There is a great move to create gardens that attract wild life. Many books and articles are written on it and competitions for the best wild life garden are quite common. And these cater for all sizes even the window box. There is a desire to bring back the wild flowers that changes in agriculture have diminished, to plant for butterflies, to make refuges for all creatures, in fact to create little self supporting ecosystems. Recently there was a Shropshire Wildlife Festival for nine days and I was interested to see 15 groups were taking part. International ones such as Friends of the Earth, national ones and local ones such as a Bat Group, Badger, Owl and Hedgehog Groups all doing something to interest people and make some money for their particular cause. It was well advertised and as far as I could see well patronised.

The National Conservancy Council is the official Big Brother for conservation generally. Though an independent body, it is a part of the Department of Environment and is the main adviser to the Government on conservation issues. It helps, advises and gives grants to other conservation groups and has a nationwide network.

We have joined several societies. There are so many, something for everybody. The Royal Society for Nature Conservation is a national body but under its umbrella each county has a Trust for Nature Conservation that concerns itself with local needs and issues, anything from the Festival already mentioned to acquiring interesting and/or threatened habitats and turning them into nature reserves.

We have joined the National Trust, founded in 1895. One in every 50 Brits belong, which is amazing when the migrant and juvenile numbers are considered. The Trust owns a vast number and variety of properties all over the U.K. These include a large portion of the Lake District, islands such as Brownsea and Lundy, farms, 40 traditional villages, 200 odd historic houses, 100 gardens, historic industrial sites, 57 nature reserves and perhaps most important of all, 480 miles of coast. All are under the care and protection of the Trust and all are open for the public to enjoy. Though professionals are in charge and employed, much of the labour is done voluntarily by members of the Trust.

We belong to the Woodland Trust which I think shows amazing growth. It began in 1972 and now has 60,000 members and owns 10,000 acres of native and broadleaved woodland ranging in size from less than an acre to 350. One of 320 acres is on the Kent/London border. What a marvellous breathing space such a woodland must be for folk in that vast metropolis and what a refuge for wild things. It's up to members who hear of woods threatened by clear felling to inform the Trust which, if it sees fit will buy it, often encouraging support from people who live near

the threatened wood. These woods are open for the public to enjoy but are managed by foresters again with the help of volunteers. They have conservation in mind yet the woods produce about 10% of the Trust's money, often getting the produce by way of coppicing thus helping to maintain the natural state.

Then too we've joined the famous RSPB that I mentioned before. It also owns reserves all over the country and has done so much to popularise birds and bird-watching aiming especially to capture the young. It has a Young Ornithologists Club with 85,000 members with its own magazine and activities. Its 115 reserves cover over 140,000 acres mostly with wardens and open to visitors. On top of this education and conservation programme they are increasing their international activity to help wild birds everywhere. They certainly need such help when 'sport' in many European countries includes shooting everything that flies. Shooting hides on the migration routes are common and a bag full of songbirds a usual occurrence.

In spite of what I think is a great interest in conservation among the people, there are still a multitude of problems; almost daily we read of threatened areas. There is still trouble with industrial waste running directly into river esturies. They have not solved that looming problem of nuclear waste. Right now there are complaints and resignations because the Department of Environment does not spend enough to ensure that there is no pollution from hazardous waste dumps. There I notice soap powders are not nearly enough inspectors and salaries are too low. etc don't have to be bio-degradable and we still haven't found a place to deposit aluminium cans for re-cycling. Only in the May budget some encouragement was given for the use of lead free petrol by not increasing its price; since then sales have gone up significantly even though its still very hard to find. In the same budget a tax lurk was stopped that had been there to encourage the wealthy to plant evergreen forests. Many were in the very special Flow Country of Scotland, destroying the rare finely balanced habitat with exotic trees that won't thrive there anyway. So perhaps if they had a rain forest here the U.K. Government would allow it to be cut down, but the people generally would, as they do in some other countries, make a big protest and maybe because of their greater number have a bigger impact. Jean Armstrong

#### WIRRIMBIRRA SANCTUARY OUTING - SEPTEMBER 6TH.

Eight Society Members visited Wirrimbirra at Bargo. Situated on the old Hume Highway just past Tahmoor - it's an easy drive (under two hours from Leura).

The rare white waratah bush was in bud — by the end of September it would have been out. We weren't disappointed as many wonderful flowers were blooming — Glossodia major and minor; Diuris sp.(donkey orchid); Pterostylis curta; Caladenia caerulea; Eriostemon australasius; Pomaderris spp. — and a Pardalote's nest in the heap of potting mix!

It was good to see the warm welcome Shirley Rooke gave Grete. Shirley runs Wirrimbirra and Grete has been closely associated with the reserve for many years. The field studies section was buzzing with activity — the cabins have inspired us to think about a Society weekend down there and we all brought some plants home withus from the very well-stocked nursery — prostrate forms of Banksias serrata and integrifolia were popular.

#### THE WHITE WARATAH

I received the following from Susan Heins, an Honorary Member of our group who at one time was entirely responsible for the Region Seed Bank.

"The Australian Plants of March 1988 listed a few Waratah cultivars. There was no mention of the White Waratah, but it exists. I was again for a few days with my friend Thistle Stead (Harris) in Wirrimbirra, when one morning Red Marshal from the Water Board came excitedly in and told us "Come with me I show you something very special." He drove us on a small road in the Water Board Reserve at Picton Lakes to a tree he had marked and from there led us in the bush. And there was a small bush only about 3 feet high of a pure white Waratah. The day before a driver of the Water Board, sitting high up on some of their machinery, was driving along some bush track saw something white and stopped to investigate. He saw a bush with 5-6 big white flowers but did not have a clue what it was. He broke one flower off and took it with him when he went after work to the Picton pub. That night, by good luck, Marshall from the Water Board was there and he realised immediately what the flower was. He got the driver to show him where he found it and the next morning came to Wirrimbirra to fetch us. The plant was badly burnt and not much new growth on it. There was not much cutting material, but we got a few pieces.

Wirrimbirra now has two flowering plants, both very slow growing. Thistle gave some cuttings to experienced growers with the request that no plants are to be sold. John Wrigley got some and the Canberra Botanical Gardens have now two beautiful plants, about 6 feet tall and with many flowers. They also have a few hundred plants in pits. John Dillon who was manager of Swains Nursery has a good plant on his Blue Mountains property. But that is not the only White Waratah I have seen. On one of my trips with Thistle going north we drove through Colovale. There in front of an old cottage was a magnificent Waratah bush 6 feet tall covered with pure white flowers. We asked the old woman living there to let us take some cuttings but she said "Nobody will touch my white waratah". Two years later we passed there and got again the same answer. 2-3 years later Thistle drove through Colovale. There was no more any white waratah. It had died and nobody was ever allowed to take any cuttings of it.

"Wirrimbirra White" has been registered with the Australian Cultivar Registration Authority as a cultivar by the Stead Foundation. It is not listed as an endangered species for the reason that at the present time only one known wild plant of this cultivar exists . The White Waratah was known by the early Aborigines. In the Dreamtime it was the only colour form known. Among the stories and legends handed down is the following "Searching for her lost mate a Wonga Pigeon flew high above the tree tops forgetting about her enemy, the dreaded hawk. She was attacked and his talons inflicted severe wounds. But the little pigeon freed herself and with blood dripping from her wounds she flew down among the white waratahs. Her blood dripped on them turning the white flowers red. At last reaching her mate the little pigeon shed the last of her blood and since that time the legend says all waratahs have been red". But the legend concludes "Sometimes, although it is rare, it is still possible to find a white waratah as they were in the Dreamtime.' Thank you Susan for sending us that exciting news.

Grete Vanry

In some ways it is heartening to find how much of this chapter is common know-ledge to us. Since Birch wrote his comments in 1976 on population problems the media and public discussion have spread some information and awareness to all. If this degree of knowlege could filter down with the same impact from other environmental problems, changes for the better could be introduced at a much faster rate. I suspect however the slightly sexual undertones which are associated with population make that environmental problem more discussed than any other.

Here are some of Birch's quotes on population.

"The explosive growth of the human population is the most significant terrestial event of the past million millenia" (Paul and Anne Ehrlich).

"The world population is increasing at 2% per annum. This means a doubling of numbers in 35 years, a multiplication of one thousand times in 350 years. If this rate continued, in less than 1200 years, the population would outweigh the earth" ...... "Over the next few decades roughly everything must be doubled just to stay where we are - housing, schools, transport, food and other resources that people need".....

"Our pre-agricultural forebears used energy at a rate equivalent to the burning of a single 100 watt bulb. The modern Australian uses energy equivalent to the burning of about six 1000 watt radiators. When you think of modern man in the developed world, you have to think of him as wrapped up in tonnes of steel, copper aluminium, lead, tin, zinc and plastics, each day gobbling up thirty kilograms of raw steel and many kilograms of other minerals. Far from getting all these things in his homeland he ranges around much more as a hunter and more often than not in the poorer countries of the world, be it for oil or high quality protein to feed on."

Birch then poses us with some very topical questions -

"Is there any merit at all in having more people in Australia?
"What should Australia's population policy be in an overcrowded world running short of resources? Should not Australians curb their own environmental impact on the earth?" He calls for a clear cut population policy, whether it advocates more or less people.

He presents statistics which show Australia is in a strong position to move towards zero population growth and that it could probably stabilise the population below 20 million people. That is dependent upon maintaining the present trend of reduced birth rates and <u>not encouraging immigration</u>.

Birch states ... "Australia cannot serve as a sponge for population explosions elsewhere. It would solve no one's problems, for example , if the annual increase in population of over thirteen million people in India were moved to Australia. It would not solve India's problems and an annual doubling of the population in Australia would create havoc and misery for all."

He states that Australia could probably double its food production but it would only be achieved through cost to the environment. The location of the resulting population increase would in the main be confined to the better rainfall coastal areas. Our dearth of large rivers and our light rainfall make inland growth centres impossible.

He points out that Australian cities already suffer from overcrowding. "The signs of this are traffic congestion, pollution, distance in travelling to work, crowded schools, crime and delinquincy both in the casy centres and in the

outskirts. Australia has not solved these problems with 13 million people. How does it expect to do a better job with double or treble that number?"

In the current immigration debate none of these present shortcomings have been raised - nor has the national calamaties awaiting us as the deserts creep eastward, the soil erodes and salinity spreads, the forests shrink and the rabbits multiply.

How easy it would have been for politicians to defend cuts in immigration by pointing out these problems, rather than expose themselves to racist accusations.

P.S. Gov

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The issue of the Weekend Australian in August gave front page coverage to the heading "Desert creep a disaster for the outback" by rural writer Julian Cribb. While this was a heartening sign of public interest and growing awareness, the facts revealed make the pros and cons of immigration as mouthed by the politicians sound quite puerile and childish.

Here are some of the facts quoted:

"4.3 million hectares of Australia's pastoral inland are at the brink of becoming perpetual desert. Forty times this area of land suffers from a lesser degree of degradation of its soils, water and vegetation."

The former deputy chief of the CSIRO's Soils Division, Dr John Loveday, told the National Soils Conference in Camberra in May: "When almost half of the land in use for grazing or cropping in non arid areas requires treatment to combat the effects of erosion and/or salinity, the seriousness of the situation can hardly be doubted. Of the arid zone in pastoral use, much of the 432,000 sq km showing substantial or severe erosion will eventually become desertified if land use and management are not changed..... "in some instances the degradation is likely to prove essentially irreversible."

"The last complete national estimate of land damaged by soil degradation" writes Julian Cribb, "was made as long ago as 1970. It said that 2.7 million square kilometres of land in use, equal to more than a third of Australia's total land surface area, was in need of some form of treatment for degradation. The cost of repairing and restoring much of this vast area has been estimated at \$2 billion or even more - many times more than the \$100 million spent annually by State and Federal Governments."

Professor Ralph Slatyer, the Director of the Research School of Biological Science at the Australian Mational University comments: "The only thing that is really new about soil degradation is that there is more of it." He points out that Australia's soils in general are pretty poor at the best of times and we have hammered them too hard by sheep and cattle grazing, clearing, logging, thoughtless road construction, mining and by the introduction of feral animals, particularly the rabbit.

"This (the rabbit) is a Mational problem not a rural one", Drs Alan Newsome and Steve Robbins of the CSIRO Division of Wildlife have warned. "Rabbits are undoubtedly the greatest threat to our semi-arid environments. They are causing tremendous damage to the cause of conservation."

Myxomatosis has lost much of its effectiveness and the rabbit is calculated to be increasing at 12,000 an hour.

And our immigration quota for the year is set at 140,000. The only stir this has caused is the fuss about the racial mix of this 140,00.

#### A STORY WITH A HAPPY ENDING?

The points brought up by Jill Curnow in her article about walking tracks and drainage published in the winter edition of the Newsletter highlight the tremendous importance of interference with water flow in the Blue Mountains. There is a story to tell about the headwaters of Woodford Creek which gathers the strands of gully waters to supply Woodford Dam, an integral part of the city water The area is in and about the Edith Falls Reserve (somereticulation system. times known as Waterhouse Park). The water runs through grasses and paperbarks before it enters a swamp with sedge, bottlebrush and wattle. It assumes creek formation under Edith Falls.

G.J. Waterhouse built the first "Weroona" house above the valley in 1905. I quote from "Historic Woodford and Linden", "Here are to be found a great variety of wild flowers, Christmas bush in plenty, waratah, banksias, forest trees, etc., and at Fern Dell, tree ferns, and a wealth of other ferns and shrubbery are met Pathways have been cleared through the bush to such picturesque spots as Besides the natural beauty of the flora, Pulpit and Gipsy Rocks and The Falls. the sight of so many native birds adds additional interest to this mountain home"

(from Lawson Guide of 1905).

The walks have been used ever since. When electric power lines were laced over the valley in the 1950's some of the tracks became roads. The roads were used inappropriately by, firstly, 4WD vehicles and later by trail bikes. trail bike use of the erstwhile walking track had dug a gutter which aggravated to a full blown erosion gully with depths of up to 2.5m and widths of 4.7m. A letter to the Water Board about this problem of erosion was not answered. In 1985 a study This was returned without was done and submitted to the relevant 530A Committee. By 1987-88 the gullies had become continuous craters 4m deep by 17m wide for 600m length. The falling and caving sand had caused the collapse of 20m trees and thick undergrowth of the valley floor. More important, the new gully was now flowing at a lower level than the old swamp bed which it had replaced as the main In this relatively short space of time the farther margins of the swamp dried out and were being invaded and colonised by their neighbours from the dry bank.

While any Water Board ranger or other interested person who appeared was harangued it was not until the end of 1987 that Ranger, Mr. Terry Farmer, was able to press the business of restoration of the erosion through the Board's bureaucratic halls. To restrict access locked gates were installed and walking only permitted. winter, the slow, tedious and expensive job of amelioration was commenced. debris of vegetation was cut and piled on the erosion floor, the sandy sides were planed and covered with hession, small mesh wire was stoutly pegged across strategic places and the water flow directed by sandbags. The aims are to get the water flow back to the swamp and to prevent further soil and water flow in the Appropriate seeding and planting will help revegetate the denuded erosion gully.

Now it is a matter of time.

The whole saga is a demonstration of many facets of a common problem, unsealed roads, off-road vehicles in excess, ignorance of potential ill-effects and lack of concern by authorities and the importance of conscientious individuals employed in bureaucracies who are tenacious enough to break through the inertia of passive resistance. Robin Corringham

#### LITTLEST MEMBER

Peter Horton-James, recently arrived son of David and Lois, was enrolled early in September. Lois is already teaching him the rudiments of conservation and mud-brick making. Congratulations David and Lois.

#### THE PLATYPUS

## Society News

At the July General Meeting, we were given a very interesting talk with slides by Tom Grant, one of the most informed authorities on the platypus in Australia. He first became interested in the platypus when writing a thesis on the subject as a student. He was astounded to find how little was written about the animal since it's discovery in 1790. The first specimen sent to England was regarded as a scientific hoax, concocted from bits and pieces of a bird and an animal.

The Platypus and the Echidna are monotremes and differ from other mammals in laying eggs and in lacking nipples.

The Platypus is distributed in Eastern Australia from the high altitudes and winter snows of Tasmania to the tropical rainforests of Northern Queensland. It seems not to extend westward of the Great Dividing Range. It has been introduced into Kangaroo Island in South Australia but was unsuccessful in Western Australia. There is only one case of a platypus being bred in captivity.

When not in the water, a platypus spends most of its time in a short simple residential burrow just above water level in the bank of a river or stream. The nesting burrow is constructed by the female prior to laying its eggs. It is a more elaborate structure up to 20 metres long, terminating in the nesting chamber, usually two eggs are laid which the female incubates by holding them against her belly as she lies curled up in the nesting chamber. Eggs hatch in 1-2 weeks after being laid and the young feed on milk secreted from numerous ducts on the mother's abdomen.

When submerged the platypus closes it's eyes, nostrils and ear apertures and most of the information it receives about it's surroundings, comes from touch receptors in the skin of its bill. The fur is waterproof, keeping a layer of air trapped next to the skin. This insulation enables the animal to forage in extremely cold water. The pressure of the water often squeezes air from the fur which gave rise to the myth that platypuses breathe through their backs.

Tom Grant's book "The Platypus" is now available in our library.

#### NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX OF AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE

Our members may not be aware that the Australian Museum Photographic Index is made up of collections of Australian mammal, bird, reptile and frog transparencies which are used by publishers, artists and the scientific fraternity, as well as the Museum's own publications. At present it is publishing ten books on Australian Birds, five of which have been completed and the next three in the process. It is interested in gaining sponsors for these books.

Members who may be interested in either submitting photographs or sponsoring pages in these books should write to - Joy Coghlam, 11 Willoughby Road Leura Phone 84 1395 (Saturdays or Sundays)

#### SPRING PLANT SALE - SATURDAY 29TH OCTOBER FROM 10 a.m.

A good selection of locally grown <u>local native plants</u> will be for sale. Gardening advice dispensed free! <u>Jill Dark's latest publication - a booklet - "A Hundred Hardy Natives for Blue Mountains Gardens" should be ready for sale and at \$2 per copy its a must for local gardeners. Jill has generously directed all profits from these booklets to the Land Preservation Fund. Graham Alcorn will give a talk at 11 a.m. Bring lunch and come for a walk with Graham about 1 p.m.</u>

As usual, plants will be for sale at 7 p.m. Friday, 28th October, before the 7.30 p.m. monthly meeting. All proceeds to the Land Preservation Fund.

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

At the August General Meeting a very instructive talk was given by Michael Eades, the environmental officer of the Blue Mountains City Council. He said that the Blue Mountains Plateau is dominated by a Sandstone Geology. As a result of weathering, the topographical features comprise tall cliffs and wide steep gorges, undulating plateaux and ridges.

Due to low fertility of the soils and the visual importance of the natural bushland, it is appropriate to develop planning strategies and statutory controls that preserve the bushland character of the non-urban lands. The existing rural zonings that apply to these non-urban areas are particularly inappropriate in that it permits agriculture with its resultant tree clearing and grazing of animals. He outlined the proposed new zones and illustrated his lecture with interesting maps and slides.



#### DICTIONARY OF A DEVELOPER

Ark Interesting experiment by Noah, now being revived in

the Blue Mountains

Crocodile Cuddly, cute, Koala-like creature native to the

Blue Mountains but ecocentric to Bullaburra.

Koala Extinct animal. Two remain at the Bullaburra Crocodarium.

Councillor Welsher

Developer Person completely indifferent to profit, pelf

self aggrandisement, or money of any kind

Conservationist Greedy, self interested person whose ego is completely

out of control.

Animal

Liberationist A sadistic person who wants to cause pain to developers

Crocadarium Fauna and Flora Park

Flora Rubbish

Fauna Crocodiles and taipans

Bush Empty, vegetated desert

Veterinary

Scientist Reincarnation of St Francis of Assisi

Motor Accident

Victim Suicide
Red Cross Suckers

Lies Truth

Idealism A desire to tell the Truth

Ethics Hysteria

Denis Kevans.

#### LAND PRESERVATION FUND

Name

The Society has a Land Preservation Fund which was set up to give lovers of the bush an opportunity to help to preserve some environmentally important land in the Blue Mountains by its purchase and dedication as a reserve.

#### Tax Deductible Donations (Minimum \$10.00)

The forms below show you how to make a tax deductible donation to the Australian Conservation Foundation, advising ACF of your preference that the funds be used for the Land Preservation Fund of the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

The Director Australian Conservation Foundation, 672B Glenferrie Rd., VIC HAWTHORN Dear Sir, I attach a donation to the Australian Conservation Foundation. I prefer that this donation be spent for the purposes of the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society Land Preservation Fund. I understand that this donation is tax deductible and therefore look forward to your receipt. Name (block letters) Address Amount ...... Signed ...... Date ..... The Treasurer, Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society, P.O. Box 29, WENTWORTH FALLS 2782 Dear Sir. I have forwarded today to the Australian Conservation Foundation a donation expressing a preference that it be spent for the purpose of the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society Land Preservation Fund.

Address.....

Amount ...... Signed ...... Date......

#### UPPER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Objects of the Society as set out in the Constitution are:

- (a) To disseminate and foster an understanding of the ideals of Conservation among members of the Society and the public generally, particularly in relation to the unique resources of the Blue Mountains.
- (b) To conduct meetings, excursions and research, and such other activities as may be determined by the Society in relation to Wildlife Conservation, and especially through the Conservation Hut at the Valley of the Waters, Wentworth Falls, to provide information on Conservation matters.
- (c) To maintain friendly relations with other Conservation Societies especially local bodies.

#### UPPER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls.

MEMBERSHIP / RENEWAL FORM\*

The Membership Secretary:

I enclose a cheque or postal note for ...... for membership or renewal of my membership.

> Name Single \$6.00 Family \$10.00 Address \_\_\_\_ Concession \$4.00

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Monday to Friday - 9.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Saturday - 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. (047) 82 3467 This version of the Newsletter was re-typed from the original by Phoebe Coster in December 2023 to enable search engines to 'see' the text. Minor changes have been made to correct typographical errors and to add clarity.

October 1988

No. 73

UPPER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER.

Registered by Australia Post – Publication No. NBHO 925

#### **UPPER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY**

Incorporated in New South Wales. Registered Office: The Conservation Hut, Valley of Waters Reserve, Valley Road Wentworth Falls 2782.

Address for Correspondence: P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.

<u>SUBSCRIPTIONS:</u> Pensioners & Juniors \$4.00 per year; Single Membership \$6.00 per year; Family Membership \$10.00 per year.

<u>MEETINGS:</u> Held on last Friday in the month, January to November inclusive at the Conservation Hut, Valley of Waters Reserve, Valley Road Wentworth Falls at 7.30 p.m.

For speakers at coming meetings, please see Public Notices in the Gazette.

#### COMMITTEE FOR 1988

President	Dulcie Toseland	84.1682
Vice-Presidents	Eric Blick	88.1051
	Mick Dark	58.7061
Secretary	Reg Toseland	84.1682
Treasurer	Elvine Thomas	84.2121
Membership Officer	Betty Collings	57.2131
Newsletter Editor	Ewart Collings	57.2131
Walks Conveners	Olive and John Noble	87.8342
Librarian	June Blick	88.1051
Hut Duty Organiser	Beverly Thompson	57.2076
Land Preservation Officer	Deidre Morton	58.8137

<u>NEWSLETTER</u>: Four issues a year – April, July, October, January. Advertising space available.

<u>LIBRARY</u>: A wide range of books on wildlife and conservation available to Members. Facilities for borrowing and returning books at Monthly Meetings.

<u>THE HUT</u>: The Society maintains a small museum and information centre at the Conservation Hut. It is manned on weekends and holidays by voluntary helpers.

<u>PUBLICATIONS</u>: A range of specialist booklets, posters, maps, postcards etc may be purchased at the Hut.

<u>SALE OF NATIVE PLANTS</u>: Opportunities to purchase native plants grown by Members are organised from time to time during the year. These sales are held at the Hut, proceeds to the Land Preservation Fund.

<u>WALKS</u>: Walks are organised on the first Sunday, third Thursday and third Saturday of the month, conducted by experienced leaders.

<u>LAND PRESERVATION</u>: The Society has a Land Preservation Fund which was set up to give lovers of the bush an opportunity to preserve environmentally important land in the Blue Mountains by purchase and dedication as a reserve.

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#### **COMING TALKS**

September - Cape York - Jill & Mick Dark

October - Plant Weekend

November - Blue Mts Bushwalkers of the Past - Jim Smith

#### IT IS ESSENTIAL ON ALL WALKS ON THE HOT WEATHER THAT MEMBERS

SHOULD CARRY AT LEAST 1 LITRE OF WATER

CARRY ON ALL WALKS: First Aid Kit

Torch Matches

Warm Shirt or Sweater Protective Rainwear

Hat

WEAR SAFE FOOTWEAR

#### ALL PEOPLE ATTENDING WALKS DO SO AT THEIR OWN RISK

#### October Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> – Gladstone Pass, Roberts Pass

Meet at end of Fitzroy Street Leura at 9 am. Gladstone Pass dates back to 1895 and Roberts Pass to 1903. There is an interesting stone stairway on Gladstone Pass. The walkers will see the first of the Spring wildflowers and some fine escarpment views. 6 hours approximately. Medium to Hard. Contact: David Thomas 84.2121

#### October Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> – Walls Cave Walk

Meet at Blackheath Station. Commuter Car Park. 10.30 am (over level crossing and turn right). This is a chance to see part of the start of the Grand Canyon. The walkers will see Walls Cave and Lake Medlow. More information can be obtained on the walk. Easy.

Contact: Rachel Makinson 87.1302

#### October Thursday 20th – Mt York, Cox's Road, Lockyer's Road

Meet at Mt Victoria Station at 9.30 am. The walk will begin at Mt York and go down the old coach road built by Cox in 1814 to Hartley Vale. The optional return is up Lockyers Road (1829) to Mt York Road. Car ferry for drivers will be arranged. 5 hours approx. Medium.

Contact: Bob Jones 58 8361

#### November Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> – Kanimbla Valley Walk

Meet at Mt Victoria Station 10.30 am. to meet train from Sydney. A short car drive will be taken to the start of the walk overlooking the magnificent Kanimbla Valley. Then walk down along the little Zig-Zag track to a property owned by Mr Charles Johnson. Return up the same way. Medium 5 hours.

Contact: Rachel Makinson 87 1302

#### November Thursday 17th - Hassan's Walls

Meet at Blackheath Station Commuter Car Park (over level crossing and turn right) at 9.45 am. Wild flowers and birds, see side effects of mining. Local geology and history, interesting talk on these subjects from Ron Compagnoni. 3 to 4 hours approx. Easy

Contact: Ron Compagnoni 87 8894

#### November Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> – Bell Tree Property, Bell

Meet at Mt Victoria Station at 9.30 am. Bell Trees property has many interesting features including natural pagodas (rock formations). The semi-closed over clearing called The Cathedral is unforgettable. 5-6 hours approx. Easy — Medium.

Contact: June and Eric Blick 88 1051

#### <u>December Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> – Annual Barbeque</u>

Meet at The Hut which is situated at the Valley of The Waters, Wentworth Falls 10 am. A barbeque will follow a ramble on one of the tracks around the area. Bring your own tucker. Tea and coffee will be provided. Be in it, have a lazy day.

Contact: Bob Jones 58 8361 or Olive Noble 87 8342 if unsure where the Hut is situated.

#### <u>December Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> – Wilson's Glen</u>

Meet at Woodford Station, Commuter Car Park (adjacent to the station in Railway Parade) at 10.45 am. to meet trains from Sydney and Lithgow. A leisurely walk down Wilson's Glen to Gypsy Pool. Long lunch in a large cool over-hang. Wilson's Glen has a romantic story to it. 3 hours approx. Easy. Contact: Deirdre Morton 58 8137

#### December Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> – Federal Falls Walk

Meet at corner of Great Western Highway and Honour Parade (opposite Lawson Station) at 9.45 to meet trains from Sydney and Lithgow. This walk is in the Lawson area and goes through Ordelina Falls, Junction Falls. A side track leads to Federal Falls, then back on the main track to Cataract Falls. Plenty of cool spots. 4-5 hours approx. Easy.

Contact: Ruth Jones 58 8361

#### January Sunday 1st 1989 – Grand Canyon Area

Meet at Blackheath Station Car Park (over level crossing then turn right) at 9.30 am. Walk down Neates Glen to Beauchamp Falls then to Evans Lookout. 5 hours. Medium.

Contact: Bob Jones 58 8361

#### January Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> – Heritage Centre to Horseshoe Falls

Meet in Govett's Leap Road, just past the shops at 9.30 am. Visit the Heritage Centre, then stroll along the Heritage Track to Govett's Leap. The Heritage Track, well maintained by the NPWS, has the native flora identified by small plaques. The walk from Govett's Leap to Horseshoe Falls is optional. The walk is as long or short as you wish to make it.

Contact: Bob Jones 58 8361

#### January Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> – Mystery Walk

Meet Mt Victoria Station 9.30 am. You can't complain if you don't get to where you were going to on this walk, because, you won't know if you got to where you were going anyway. Be prepared to get your feet wet.

Contact: John Noble 87 8342

#### WALK – BRUCE'S WALK – SUNDAY 7<sup>th</sup> AUGUST

Standing in for David, I led an intrepid 14 in what was supposed to be that part of Bruce's Walk from Mt Hay Road to Medlow Bath aerodrome. On a prospective trip the Katoomba Creek was found to be in full spate and there wasn't much hope that, in the meantime, it would have gone down enough for us to cross. This proved to be a right guess and not having Moses with us we had to make do with a less ambitious destination. We found even the small Govett's Creek needed careful negotiation and much of the path to the ridge was very mushy in places. On reaching the ridge most of the group walked down to look at Katoomba Creek and confirmed that there was still too much water for a safe crossing. We went back to the ridge and then northwards to the rock overlooking the confluence of the abovementioned creeks. We had been walking in very strong wind but the rock proved to be sheltered and one of the most pleasant places for lunch that we have enjoyed and we stayed quite a while, very socially. We returned to Mt Hay Road by the same route only digressing to visit one of the prettiest of the small waterfalls whose name seems to elude everybody.

**Elvine Thomas** 

#### WALK - DENFENELLA - THURSDAY 18<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 1988

After overnight rain the skies cleared and apart from a few drops at the start of the walk the day turned out perfect for walking. For the entire morning we were enchanted by the ever changing rainbow in the Jamison Valley. Pimelea was out in abundant profusion everywhere we walked. After visiting Denfenella we went along Undercliff Pass and had lunch in the sunshine at Rocket Point before returning to the cars early in the afternoon. During the day we heard plenty of birdlife but most of them remained hidden. However we did see some crimson Rosellas, Thornbills and a Flycatcher. We had fifteen people on the walk.

**Beverley Thompson** 

#### WALK - ARETHUSA FALLS TO HENSON'S GLEN - THURSDAY 15<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER

A damp misty morning – 21 people turned up for the usual pleasant gossipy amble. Early spring flowers were a delight, including Glossodia minor, Euphrasia – Bright Eyes, and many others. Birds were in attendance with nests of Scarlet Robin and Pardalote. However, after lunch the dampness turned to wetness, but the spirit of the company as always never flagged. One of the pleasures of this Arethusa Walk is that no one seems to know where exactly the falls are. We should ask birdman Graham "What do birds do in wet weather; do they build humpies on branches or make leaves into brollies or rush into holes in trees or caves or K-Mart, or just stick it out?"

**David Thomas** 

#### WALK – FIRST LEG OF SIX FOOT TRACK – SATURDAY 17<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER

Very unsettled weather at Katoomba, but we were lucky down in the Megalong Valley because we only had one patch of rain. There were five walkers on the track – Lloyd Jones, David Thomas, Bert Davies, my wife Ruth and myself. The walk was timed to start after we met the train from Sydney to Katoomba Station, but I had not allowed for the State Rail Authority time and motion experts. They had another of their periodic brain storms (West. Dist. Sudden cerebral disturbance) and changed the time table yet again. As I had not walked this part of the Six Foot Track for many years, Ruth and I went over it a few days before the official walk. I remember Nellies Glen as a steep, but delightful walk. It was sad and depressing to see what had happened to it. Just a track through a man-made landslide. The walk at the bottom, towards the ford, has suffered in several areas from bulldozing. The NPWS has provided stiles where needed.

Along the valley track a few waratahs were just beginning to bloom. David investigated some bush wasps which he said had a sting like an electric shock, but this did not stop him from getting amongst them for a closer look at their nests. Further on we found one of the NPWS red track markers which had been dislodged off a tree; David picked up the marker the nails were still in it. "Anybody got a hammer?", he asked. I was just about to tell him that after a quick mental check of my pack contents, I'd found that my faithful old cherished hammer was missing, when to my amazement I heard a voice behind me say "Well, as a matter of fact..". I turned round and saw Bert rummaging round in that multi-pocket pack of his, and guess what he produced!! Useful bloke to have as a track mate – wonder what else Bert has in that pack. We went as far as the site of the Old Village which catered for the needs of the shale mine workers. This is where we had lunch after meeting up with Lloyd who had gone on ahead with is sketch book.

On the return journey we had a small hailstorm but very heavy rain for about half an hour. Lloyd Jones who had left his rain gear at home disappeared at the start of the rain. He turned up after the shower bone dry. Another one of those bush mysteries I forgot to ask him about. We arrived back at the cars at about 3.30 pm. P.S. Actually the hammer was a small axe which Bert uses to cut down obnoxious weeds on the walking tracks. I should be used to David's jokes by now.

Bob Jones.

#### RECYCLE ICE CREAM CONTAINERS

2 and 4 litre ice cream containers (no lids please!) may be left at the Hut for recycling. The Society will make a little money from this.

#### FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF CONSERVATION IN THE U.K.

The title, I hope, will make allowances in case I am not exact, for I have not done enough research into conservation here as yet. From what I have seen I would think there are some more folk proportionally interested in Wildlife here in Australia. The Royal Society for the protection of Birds has over 500,000 members and though many of these just enjoy birds in their garden, at least they do! The population of winter birds would be greatly reduced if it weren't for the bird tables in so many gardens. And it is not only resident birds that are thus kept alive but many extras that come from Northern Europe to winter here. There is a great move to create gardens that attract wild life. Many books and articles are written on it and competitions for the best wild life garden are quite common. And these cater for all sizes even the window box. There is a desire to bring back the wild flowers that changes in agriculture have diminished, to plant for butterflies, to make refuges for all creatures, in fact to create little self-supporting ecosystems. Recently there was a Shropshire Wildlife Festival for nine days and I was interested to see 15 groups were taking part. International ones such as Friends of the Earth, national ones and local ones such as a Bat Group, Badger, Owl and Hedgehog Groups all doing something to interest people and make some money for their particular cause. It was well advertised and as far as I could see well patronised.

The National Conservancy Council is the official Big Brother for conservation generally. Though an independent body, it is a part of the Department of Environment and is the main adviser to the Government on conservation issues. It helps, advises and gives grants to other conservation groups and has a nationwide network.

We have joined several societies. There are so many, something for everybody. The Royal Society for Nature Conservation is a national body but under its umbrella each county has a Trust for Nature Conservation that concerns itself with local needs and issues, anything from the Festival already mentioned to acquiring interesting and/or threatened habitats and turning them into nature reserves.

We have joined the National Trust, founded in 1895. One in every 50 Brits belong, which is amazing when the migrant and juvenile numbers are considered. The Trust owns a vast number and variety of properties all over the U.K. These include a large portion of the Lake District, islands such as Brownsea and Lundy, farms, 40 traditional villages, 200 odd historic houses, 100 gardens, historic industrial sites, 57 nature reserves and perhaps most important of all, 480 miles of coast. All are under the care and protection of the Trust and all are open for the public to enjoy. Though professionals are in charge and employed, much of the labour is done voluntarily by members of the Trust.

We belong to the Woodland Trust which I think shows amazing growth. It began in 1972 and now has 60,000 members and owns 10,000 acres of native and broadleaved woodland ranging in size from less than an acre to 350. One of 320 acres is on the Kent/London border. What a marvellous breathing space such a woodland must be for folk in that vast metropolis and what a refuge for wild things. It's up to members who hear of woods threatened by clear felling to inform the Trust which, if it sees fit will buy it, often encouraging support from people who live near the threatened wood. These woods are open for the public to enjoy but are managed by foresters again with the help of volunteers. They have conservation in mind yet the woods produce about 10% of the Trust's money, often getting the produce by way of coppicing thus helping to maintain the natural state.

Then too we've joined the famous RSPB that I mentioned before. It also owns reserves all over the country and has done so much to popularise birds and bird watching aiming especially to capture the young. It has a Young Ornithologists Club with 85,000 members with its own magazine and activities. Its 115 reserves cover 140,000 acres mostly with wardens and open to visitors. On top of this education and conservation programme they are increasing their international activity to help wild birds everywhere. They certainly need such help when 'sport' in many European countries includes shooting everything that flies. Shooting hides on the migration routes are common and a bag full of songbirds a usual occurrence.

In spite of what I think is a great interest in conservation among the people, there are still a multitude of problems; almost daily we read of threatened areas. There is still trouble with industrial waste running into river estuaries. They have not solved that looming problem of nuclear waste. Right now there are complaints and resignations because the Department of Environment does not spend enough to ensure that there is no pollution from hazardous waste dumps. There are not nearly enough inspectors and salaries are too low. I notice soap powders etc don't have to be bio-degradable and we still haven't found a place to deposit aluminium cans for re-cycling. Only in the May budget some encouragement was given for the use of lead free petrol by not increasing its price; since then sales have gone up significantly even though it's still very hard to find. In the same budget a tax lurk was stopped that had been there to encourage the wealthy to plant evergreen forests. Many were in the very special Flow Country of Scotland, destroying the rare finely balanced habitat with exotic trees that won't thrive there anyway. So perhaps if they had a rain forest here the UK Government would allow it to be cut down, but the people generally would, as they do in some other countries, make a big protest and maybe because of their greater number have a bigger impact.

Jean Armstrong

#### WIRRIMBIRRA SANCTUARY OUTING – SEPTEMBER 6<sup>th</sup>.

Eight Society Members visited Wirrimbirra at Bargo. Situated on the old Hume Highway just past Tahmoor – it's an easy drive (under two hours from Leura).

The rare white waratah bush was in bud – by the end of September it would have been out. We weren't disappointed as many wonderful flowers were blooming – Glossodia major and minor; Diuris sp. (donkey orchid); Pteroystylis curta; Caladenia caerulea; Eriostemon australasius; Pomaderris spp. - and a Pardalote's nest in the heap of potting mix!

It was good to see the warm welcome Shirley Rooke gave Grete. Shirley runs Wirrimbirra and Grete has been closely associated with the reserve for many years. The field studies section was buzzing with activity – the cabins have inspired us to think about a Society weekend down there and we all brought some plants home with us from the very well-stocked nursery – prostrate forms of Banksias serrata and integrifolia were popular.

#### THE WHITE WARATAH

I received the following from Susan Heins, an Honorary Member of our group who at one time was entirely responsible for the Region Seed Bank.

"The Australian Plants of March 1988 listed a few Waratah cultivars. There was no mention of the White Waratah, but it exists. I was again for a few days with my friend Thistle Stead (Harris) in Wirrimbirra, when one morning Red Marshal from the Water Board came excitedly in and told us "Come with me I show you something very special." He drove us on a small road in the Water Board Reserve at Picton Lakes to a tree he had marked and from there led us in the bush. And there was a small bush only about 3 feet high of a pure white Waratah. The day before a driver of the Water Board, sitting high up on some of their machinery, was driving along some bush track saw something white and stopped to investigate. He saw a bush with 5-6 big white flowers but did not have a clue what it was. He broke one flower off and took it with him when he went after work to the Picton Pub. That night, by good luck, Marshall from the Water Board was there and he realised immediately what the flower was. He got the driver to show him where he found it and the next morning came to Wirrimbirra to fetch us. The plant was badly burnt and not much new growth on it. There was not much cutting material, but we got a few pieces.

Wirrimbirra now has two flowering plants, both very slow growing. Thistle gave some cuttings to experienced growers with the request that no plants are to be sold. John Wrigley got some and the Canberra Botanical Gardens have now two beautiful plants, about 6 feet tall and with many flowers. They also have a few hundred plants in pits. John Dillon who was manager of Swains Nursery has a good plant on his Blue Mountains property. But that is not the only White Waratah I have seen. On one of my trips with Thistle going north we drove through Colovale. There in front of an old cottage was a magnificent Waratah bush 6 feet tall covered with pure white flowers. We asked the old women living there to let us take some cuttings but she said "Nobody will touch my white waratah". Two years later we passed there and got again the same answer. 2-3 years later Thistle drove through Colovale. There was no more white waratah. It had died and nobody was ever allowed to take any cuttings of it.

"Wirrimbirra White" has been registered with the Australian Cultivar Registration Authority as a cultivar by the Stead Foundation. It is not listed as an endangered species for the reason that at the present time only one known wild plant of this cultivar exists. The White Waratah was known by the early Aborigines. In the Dreamtime it was the only colour form known. Among the stories and legends handed down is the following "Searching for her lost mate a Wonga Pigeon flew high above the tree tops forgetting about her enemy, the dreaded hawk. She was attacked and his talons inflicted severe wounds. But the little pigeon freed herself and with blood dripping from her wounds she flew down among the white waratahs. Her blood dripped o them turning the white flower red. At last reaching her mate the little pigeon shed the last of her blood and since that time the legend says all waratahs have been red". But the legend concludes "Sometimes, although it is rare, it is still possible to find a white waratah as they were in the Dreamtime."

Thank you Susan for sending us that exciting news.

Greta Vanry

In some way it is heartening to find how much of this chapter is common knowledge to us. Since Birch wrote his comments in 1976 on population problems the media and public discussion have spread some information and awareness to all. If this degree of knowledge could filter down with the same impact from other environmental problems, changes for the better could be introduced at a much faster rate. I suspect however the slightly sexual undertones which are associated with population make that environmental problem more discussed than any other.

Here are some of Birch's quotes on population.

"The explosive growth of the human population is the most significant terrestial event of the past million millenia" (Paul and Anne Ehrlich).

"The world population is increasing at 2% per annum. This means a doubling of numbers in 35 years, a multiplication of one thousand times in 350 years. If this rate continued, in less than 1200 years, the population would outweigh the earth" ...."Over the next few decades roughly everything must be doubled just to stay where we are – housing, schools, transport, food and other resources that people need"...

"Our per-agricultural forebears used at a rate equivalent to the burning of a single 100 watt bulb. The modern Australian uses energy equivalent to the burning of about six 1000 watt radiators. When you think of modern man in the developed world, you have to think of him as wrapped up in tonnes of steel, copper aluminium, lead, tin, zinc and plastics, each day gobbling up thirty kilograms of raw steel and many kilograms of other minerals. Far from getting all these things in his homeland he ranges around much more as a hunter and more often than not in the poorer countries of the world, be it for oil or high quality protein to feed on."

Birch then poses us with some very topical questions -

"Is there any merit at all in having more people in Australia?

"What should Australia's population policy be in an overcrowded world running short of resources? Should not Australians curb their own environmental impact on the earth?" He calls for a clear cut population policy, whether it advocates more or less people.

He presents statistics which show Australia is on a strong position to move towards zero population growth and that it could probably stabilise the population below 20 million people. That is dependent upon maintaining the present trend of reducing birth rates and <u>not encouraging immigration</u>.

Birch states ..."Australia cannot serve as a sponge for population explosions elsewhere. It would solve no one's problems, for example, if the annual increase in population of over thirteen million people in India were moved to Australia. It would not solve India's problems and an annual doubling of the population in Australia would create havoc and misery for all."

He states that Australia could probably double its food production but it would only be achieved through cost to the environment. The location of the resulting population increase would in the main be confirmed to the better rainfall coastal areas. Our dearth of large rivers and our light rainfall make inland growth centres impossible.

He points out that Australian cities already suffer from overcrowding. "The sign of this are traffic congestion, pollution, distance in travelling to work, crowded schools, crime and delinquency in the city centres and in the outskirts. Australia has not solved these problems with 13 million people. How does it expect to do a better job with double or treble that number?"

In the current immigration debate none of these present shortcomings have been raised – nor has the national calamities awaiting us as the deserts creep eastward, the soil erodes and salinity spreads, the forests shrink and the rabbits multiply.

How easy it would have been for politicians to defend cuts to immigration by pointing out these problems, rather than expose themselves to racist accusations.

#### P.S.

The issue of the Weekend Australian in August gave front coverage to the heading "Desert creep a disaster for the outback" by rural writer Julian Cribb. While this was a heartening sign of public interest and growing awareness, the facts revealed make the pros and cons of immigration as mouthed by the politicians sound quite puerile and childish.

Here are some of the facts quoted:

"4.3 million hectares of Australia's pastoral inland are at the brink of becoming perpetual desert. Forty times this area of land suffers from a lesser degree of degradation of its soils, water and vegetation."

The former deputy chief of the CSIRO's Soils Division, Dr John Loveday, told the National Soils Conference in Canberra in May: "When almost half of the land in use for grazing or cropping in non-arid areas requires treatment to combat the effects of erosion and/or salinity, the seriousness of the situation can hardly be doubted. Of the arid zone in pastoral use, much of the 432,000 sq km showing substantial or severe erosion will eventually become desertified if land use and management are not changed... "in some instances the degradation is likely to prove essentially irreversible."

"The last complete national estimate of land damaged by soil degradation" writes Julian Cribb," was made as long ago as 1970. It said that 2.7 million square kilometres of land in use, equal to more than a third of Australia's total land surface area, was in need of some form of treatment for degradation. The cost of repairing and restoring much of this vast area has been estimated at \$2 billion or even more – many times more than the \$100 million spent annually by State and Federal Governments."

Professor Ralph Slatyer, the Director of the Research School of Biological Science at the Australian National University comments: "The only thing that is really new about soil degradation is that there is more of it." He points out that Australian's soil in general are pretty poor at the best of times and we have hammered them too hard by sheep and cattle grazing, clearing, logging, thoughtless road construction, mining and by the introduction of feral animals, particularly the rabbit.

"This (the rabbit) is a National problem not a rural one". Drs Alan Newsome and Steve Robbins of the CSIRO Division of Wildlife have warned. "Rabbits are undoubtedly the greatest threat to our semi-arid environments. They are causing tremendous damage to the cause of conservation."

Myxomatosis has lost much of its effectiveness and the rabbit is calculated to be increasing at 12,000 an hour.

And our immigration quota for the year is set at 140,000. The only stir this has caused is the fuss about the racial mix of this 140,000.

#### A STORY WITH A HAPPY ENDING?

The points brought up by Jill Curnow in her article about walking tracks and drainage published in the winter edition of the Newsletter highlight the tremendous importance of interference with water flow in the Blue Mountains. There is a story to tell about the headwaters of Woodford Creek which gathers the strands of gully waters to supply Woodford Dam, an integral part of the city water reticulation system. The area is about the Edith Falls Reserve (some times known as Waterhouse Park). The water runs through grasses and paperbarks before it enters a swamp with sedge, bottlebrush and wattle. It assumes creek formation under Edith Falls.

G.J. Waterhouse built the first "Weroona" house above the valley in 1905. I quote from "Historic Woodford and Linden", "Here are to be found a great variety of wild flowers, Christmas bush in plenty, waratah, banksias, forest trees etc., and at Fern Dell, tree ferns, and a wealth of other ferns and shrubbery are met with. Pathways have been cleared through the bush to such picturesque spots as Pulpit and Gipsy Rocks and The Falls. Besides the natural beauty of the flora, the sight of so many native birds adds additional interest to this mountain home". (from Lawson Guide of 1905).

The walks have been used ever since. When electric power lines were laced over the valley in the 1950's some of the tracks became roads. The roads were used inappropriately by, firstly, 4WD vehicles and later trail bikes. By 1984 trail bike use of the erstwhile walking track had dug a gutter which aggravated to a full blown erosion gully with depths of up to 2.5m and widths of 4.7m. A letter to the Water Board about this problem of erosion was not answered. In 1985 a study was done and submitted to the relevant 530A Committee. This was returned without comment. By 1987-88 the gullies had become continuous craters 4m deep by 17m wide for 600m length. The falling and caving sand had caused the collapse of 20m trees and thick undergrowth of the valley floor. More important, the gully was now flowing at a lower level than the old swamp bed which it had replaced as the main watercourse. In this relatively short space of time the farther margins of the swamp dried out and were being invaded and colonised by their neighbours from the dry bank.

While any Water Board ranger or other interested person who appeared was harangued it was not until the end of 1987 that Ranger, Mr Terry Farmer, was able to press the business of restoration of the erosion through the board's bureaucratic halls. To restrict access locked gates were installed and walking only permitted. In winter, the slow, tedious and expensive job of amelioration was commenced. The debris of vegetation was cut and piled on the erosion floor, the sandy sides were planed and covered with hession, small mesh wire was stoutly pegged across strategic places and the water flow directed by sandbags. The aims are to get the water flow back to the swamp and to prevent further soil and water flow in the erosion gully. Appropriate seeding and planting will help revegetate the denuded surface. Now it is a matter of time.

The whole saga is a demonstration of many facets of a common problem, unsealed roads, off-road vehicles in excess, ignorance of potential ill-effects and lack of concern by authorities and the importance of conscientious individuals employed in bureaucracies who are tenacious enough to break through the inertia of passive resistance.

#### **Robin Corringham**

#### LITTLEST MEMBER

Peter Horton-James, recently arrived son of David and Lois, was enrolled early in September. Lois is already teaching him the rudiments of conservation and mud-brick making. Congratulations David and Lois.

## **Society News**

#### THE PLATYPUS

At the July General Meeting, we were given a very interesting talk with slides by Tom Grant, one of the most informed authorities on the platypus in Australia. He first became interested in the platypus when writing a thesis on the subject as a student. He was astounded to find how little was written about the animal since it's discovery in 1790. The first specimen sent to England was regarded as a scientific hoax, concocted from bits and pieces of a bird and an animal.

The Platypus and the Echidna are monotremes and differ from other mammals in laying eggs and in lacking nipples.

The Platypus is distributed in Eastern Australia from the high altitudes and winter snows of Tasmania to the tropical rainforests of Northern Queensland. It seems not to extend westward of the Great Dividing Range. It has been introduced into Kangaroo Island in South Australia but was unsuccessful in Western Australia. There is only one case of a platypus being bred in captivity.

When not in the water, a platypus spends most of its time in a short simple residential burrow just above water level in the bank of a river or stream. The nesting burrow is constructed by the female prior to laying its eggs. It is a more elaborate structure up to 20 metres long, terminating in the nesting chamber, usually two eggs are laid which the female incubates by holding them against her belly as she lies curled up in the nesting chamber. Eggs hatch in 1-2 weeks after being laid and the young feed on milk secreted from numerous ducts on the mother's abdomen.

When submerged the platypus closes it's eyes, nostrils and ear apertures and most of the information it receives about it's surroundings, comes from touch receptors in the skin of its bill. The fur is waterproof, keeping a layer of air trapped next to the skin. This insulation enables the animal to forage in extremely cold water. The pressure of the water often squeezes air from the fur which gave rise to the myth that platypuses breath through their backs.

Tom Grant's book "The Platypus" is now available in our library.

#### NATIONAL PHOTOGRAHIC INDEX OF AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE

Our members may not be aware that the Australian Museum Photographic Index is made up of collections of Australian mammal, bird, reptile and frog transparencies which are used by publishers, artists and the scientific fraternity, as well as the Museum's own publications. At present it is publishing ten books on Australian Birds, five of which have been completed and the next three in the process. It is interested in gaining sponsors for these books.

Members who may be interested in wither submitting photographs or sponsoring pages in these books should write to – Joy Coghlam, 11 Willoughby Road Leura. Phone 84 1395 (Saturday or Sunday)

#### SPRING PLANT SALE – SATURDAY 29<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER FROM 10 AM.

A good selection of locally grown <u>local native plants</u> will be for sale. Gardening advice dispensed free! Jill Dark's latest publication – a booklet – "A Hundred Hardy Natives for Blue Mountains Gardens" should be ready for sale and at \$2 per copy it's a must for local gardeners. Jill has generously directed all profits from these booklets to the Land Preservation Fund. Graham Alcorn will give a talk at 11 am. Bring lunch and come for a walk with Graham about 1 pm.

As usual, plants will be for sale at 7 pm. Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> October, before the 7.30 pm monthly meeting. All proceeds to the Land Preservation Fund.

#### **THE ENVIRONMENT**

At the August General Meeting a very instructive talk was given by Michael Eades, the environmental officer of the Blue Mountains City Council. He said that the Blue Mountains Plateau is dominated by a Sandstone Geology. As a result of weathering, the topographical features comprise tall cliffs and wide steep gorges, undulating plateaux and ridges.

Due to low fertility of the soils and the visual importance of the natural bushland, it is appropriate to develop planning strategies and statutory controls that preserve the bushland character of the non-urban lands. The existing rural zonings that apply to these non-urban areas are particularly inappropriate in that it permits agriculture with its resultant tree clearing and grazing of animals. He outlined the proposed new zones and illustrated his lecture with interesting maps and slides.

#### **DICTIONARY OF A DEVELOPER**

Ark Interesting experiment by Noah, now being revived in the Blue Mountains

Crocodile Cuddly, cute, Koala-like creature native to the Blue Mountains but ecocentric

to Bullaburra.

Koala Extinct animal. Two remain at the Bullaburra Crocodarium.

Councillor Welsher

Developer Person completely indifferent to profit, self self aggrandisement, or money

of any kind.

Conservationist Greedy, self interested person whose ego is completely out of control.

Animal Liberationist A sadistic person who wants to cause pain to developers

Crocadarium Fauna and Flora Park

Flora Rubbish

Fauna Crocodiles and taipans

Bush Empty, vegetated desert

Veterinary Scientist Reincarnation of St Francis of Assisi

**Motor Accident** 

Victim Suicide

Red Cross Suckers

Lies Truth

Idealism A desire to tell the Truth

Ethics Hysteria

Denise Kevans.