

Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People

Newsletter

No 94
January 1994

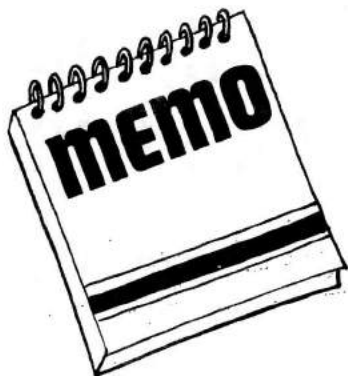
P.O. BOX 29
WENTWORTH FALLS
N.S.W. 2782

President: Mr Thor Schache
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Editor: Mrs Grace Bayley
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Meetings are held in the Conservation Hut at the end of Fletcher St. Wentworth Falls at 7.30pm on the last Friday of every month.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

- January 28: Gregor Manson ... 'National Park Management'
February 25: Merl Thompson ... 'George Caley'
March 25: Annual General Meeting followed by
Muriel Healey's talk on Canada
March 26, SATURDAY PLANT SALE
9 am at THE HUT
Contact David Coleby 84 1395



Welcome

To these new members

Mrs Una White, Mrs Carol Barratt, Peter and Wendy Trankels,
Pamela Garlick, Mrs Diana Jones, Mr Bill Garlick.

Thanks

To all members who returned the 'Area of Interest Questionnaire', Our Membership Development person, Judy Ferfoggia, has noted the replies and you may expect to hear from the Committee in due course. You forgot to return the form? It's not too late to send it as a New Year resolution for the good of the environment - love to hear from you! To those who would like to work in the nursery, there has been a bit of difficulty in arranging a day other than a Tuesday. We think we can resolve this and will advise each person.

CHRISTMAS GET-TOGETHER

A happy gathering met at 'The Hut' on a hot sunny day for our Christmas walk and lunch. Prior to the walk a presentation was made to Robin Corringham for her untiring work for the Society. A detailed account of her work is included in this newsletter. Jill Dark planted a eucalypt in the gardens adjoining 'The Hut' as a thankyou to her for her generous work at the plant sales. On our return from the walk a hearty and happy luncheon and a chance to mingle and chat to friends was appreciated by all.

D. Toseland

SOME MORE GEMS FROM NOEL MAY'S CONTRIBUTION

'WALKING WITH MURPHY'

The sharp stone under your sleeping bag disappears when you climb out to look.
Your food is too hot - but in 30 seconds it is too cold.

Drop-bearers always roost outside tent entrances.

Wild life prefers city food.

If it rains, your parka is in the other pack, but there will be no rain if everyone is prepared.

The river will be too deep to cross in your clothes, and your pack leaks.

REPORT ON THE ROCK WALLABIES OF JENOLAN

The rock wallaby, *genus Petrogale*, occurs in several areas of Australia, but there has been a decline in the numbers all over and in southern NSW the species is 'threatened' due to feral animals, loss of habitat, and "people". There may also be some genetic disabilities as a result of isolation. A lot of research is being done.

The Jenolan rock wallabies, *Petrogale penicillate*, have fallen in numbers from 70-80 animals in the 1960s to only 7 animals now. You may remember that the animals used to be enclosed but were released without guidelines for monitoring. Interested parties observed the decline but were unable to attract funds. The bureaucratic tangle is now straightened out and steps are being taken to research the animal and its needs. Sturt University has set up a Wallaby Committee of macropod scientists who meet periodically. Initial steps taken include feral animal control measures and a return of the surviving wallabies to a large enclosure established at a location preferred by them. \$8,000 has been spent on extending the fence to provide extra space required by dominant breeding animals. Legal anomalies have also been cleared up and the status of the reserve established.

At Jenolan the Karst Resources Group is devising the best way to foster the rehabilitation of the rock wallabies. Your Conservation Society gave \$2,000 raised from the sale of native plants. If you feel strongly about this shocking decline of a native species right on our doorstep and you think that improvement measures are on the right track, and you are not able to work in the plant nursery, you might like to make your own donation to the project, be it in money or other skills. Both sorts of help can be channelled through the Society or direct to the Karst Resources Manager, Jenolan Caves Trust, Oberon St. Oberon 2787.

There are other rock wallabies in trouble in the Wolllemi in the Widdien Brook area and north of Mount Irvine. Rescue work is underway there too, but needs money. This Society will be giving \$2,000 to Blue Mountains National Park for that purpose.

PLANT NURSERY REPORT

With the departure of our tireless worker Robin Corringham we felt concerned that all might collapse, so you'll be pleased to know that David Colaby is taking over as team leader at the Blackheath Nursery and also as manager of the Society's public plant sales. A sub-committee is being formed to take over responsibility for publicity and logistics for these twice-yearly events. Help is needed for placing posters, transport of plants and so on. Your contact is Thor on 57 3272.

The plant-growing team is solely responsible for the huge financial success which has enabled us to place money at strategic points in the conservation of the natural environment of the Blue Mountains. Thank you, magnificent ones!

TWO RETIREMENTS

Two valued workers have retired. One is Jill Dark who supplied plants to our Spring and Autumn sales. Her husband Mick was president of the society for some time and also secured society representation on the District Fire Committee, and this has been a continuing valuable contribution to sane and scientific appraisal of the problems of fire protection.

The Society marked Jill's retirement by a presentation of Glen Fiddich Whiskey, and she planted a Mountain Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus deanei*) at the Conservation Hut before the Christmas walk, which coincidentally was to inspect the tree planted to honour Isabel Bowden near the entry to Wentworth Falls.

The other retiree is Robin Corringham. Perhaps retiree is the wrong word. She is leaving the district but she'll never retire from her love of nature. The Society presented her with "Adoption Certificates" of trees in the Barrington Tops, at our Christmas walk. This scheme of adopting trees was thought up by the Wilderness Society to raise money to have this significant area declared a "wilderness". Robin was thrilled to her boots and thanks the Society as a whole for the great learning experience of the past few years, and her team mates for their support and friendship. Adieux, Robin, Jill and Mick.

BUSH CARE CALENDAR

BUSH CARE FORUM : 26 February 1994 at Ellison Road Public School, Springwood.
Contact: Thelma Murphy 51 6046
Theme: "World Heritage Depends on Bush Care"

FIELD WORKSHOP: 18 March 1994. To demonstrate erosion control and land care methods. Learn what you should expect from the bureaucrats, including local government and developers, etc.
Contact is Thelma Murphy 51 6046

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY: 4-5 June 1994 at Springwood Civic Centre.
Contacts: Care and Share Committee at Council
Thelma Murphy 51 6046
This Society is mounting a display and info table. Ideas, effort, time and smiles are required from Society members.
Dulcie Toseland is co-ordinating. 84 1682

The Society is still to the forefront of the Bush Care Programme. We continually put our views to land managers and consult with Council. With your help we can get a quicker result. You can be assured that without consistent and persistent representation things will slow down even more. Please enthuse your committee and share your interest.

The Society has asked for a review of the work done in 1993 and a programme for 1994 in the area of Bush Care, from Mr Bill Woodcock, the EMCC Technical Services Manager. We require a greater commitment from Council and the establishment of a permanent Bush Care Committee of staff and community.

THE PROBLEM OF WASTE. We are aware of this enormous problem and we certainly don't want another valley filled with our rubbish. Recycling is only part of the answer as it would be so much better if there was less unwanted material to dispose of. EMCC is tackling the problem. It's a brave move because in the end it is our way of life that will need to be changed. Starting by looking at their own operations the council hopes to evolve strategies that will embrace the whole city, and we'll do our best to support their plans.



FAREWELL TO ROBIN

Robin Corringham has departed from us after four years of valuable work on the Management Committee. She was given formal thanks for her contribution to the Society at its annual Christmas Get-Together at the Hut on December 11. A presentation was made by adopting five trees in her name.

No-one, including Robin, remembers the date on which she joined the Society but few will forget her energetic commitment to achieving the Society's goals over the last four years. Nor can anyone give an adequate account of Robin's work which included writing hundreds of letters, negotiating with Government Officers, attending meetings, and above all, following up on her initial requests. She came to know many workers in the Blue Mountains City Council and in other Government and Semi-Government bodies, earning their respect and gratitude.

As a Graduate in Environmental Studies from Sturt University, Robin was keen to use her skills for practical purposes in the Conservation Society. Her first involvement in direct action occurred following her appointment to the Land Use Committee in 1989. Council Plans for the environmental management of the Blue Mountains were reviewed in detail by members of this Committee, and recommendations were made for recoding environmentally sensitive areas. Robin emerged from the shadows as a leader in this field. From this position Robin was able to negotiate with the Water Board on several matters including the need for a fauna survey in the Woodford catchment area, and for an over-view of the proposed sewerage tunnel. She was assisted in the fauna survey by a small team of Society members.

A major industry initiated and managed by Robin in recent years has been the Blackheath Nursery which is situated in the general environment of the NPWS Heritage Centre. It has provided thousands of native plants for bush regeneration projects in the Blue Mountains. The income generated by this Nursery has afforded the means for the realisation of the Society's goals for land preservation and reclamation. The work will be continued by members who have been trained by Robin and who have assisted in the Nursery since it was established.

In 1990 Robin was elected President of this Society. During the following three years (1991 through 1993), Robin took the office of first Vice President, a position which gave her greater freedom to take on negotiations with government bodies at all levels. At this time Robin developed her skills in taking and handling the ball right along to the goal in the manner of a key football player. When individual members came up with an idea for consideration, Robin fielded it. After approval she took it all the way. She fielded suggestions from other organisations and initiated others, proposing to the Management Committee the line of action to take.

Projects which were either initiated by Robin, or received her full support during her four years on the Management Committee, include the following events selected from the Society's Minute Book. Some were initiatives undertaken by Robin as member of the Blue Mountain Council's Total Catchment Management Committee (1992-93) or as a participant in Fire Prevention activities in the Blue Mountains. Within these varied contexts Robin advocated and supported:

- the Society's provision of a bridge for the re-opening of the 'Transit of Venus' track, Woodford
 - negotiations with NPWS with respect to the new Conservation Hut and the Nursery
 - a workshop with Bathurst and Lithgow environmental groups for the sharing of information
 - proposals of suitable land for the Society to purchase for the preservation of the natural environment
 - monetary assistance for the Minnie Ha Ha Land Care Workers
 - the development of educational packages for fire hazard reduction and the preparation of a training package for volunteer fire fighters
 - support for World Heritage listing for the Blue Mountains and Wollemi National Parks
 - tree preservation via the 'Register of Significant Trees' in the Blue Mountains
 - investigation of the need for action on endangered species by means of animal surveys, and offers of financial support from the Society (for example, rock wallabies)
 - community education and action on weeds
 - the Environmental Defender's Workshop hosted in 1993
 - provision of funds for the acquisition of a reference library on environment and related issues, to be housed at Katoomba Library.
- Our deepest thanks go to Robin for her tireless interest in, and energy for, all conservation issues. We wish her well in her new habitat.

M. Healey

ROBIN'S BITS AND PIECES.

The editor won't know what to do without Robin's contributions, but I'm sure you'll all rally round to supply interesting information for our next letter. Many puzzling minutes are spent deciphering her writing, so don't worry about your brand of copperplate writing - though type-writing is much appreciated. Here is Robin's report of the projects helped by the sale of native plants during 1993.

- \$1000 - To Environment Award which was won by Minnehaha Land Care group.
- \$ 400 - For the Environmental Law Workshop.
- \$1000 - To National Parks and Wildlife Services for interpretive signs and other work on the Nature Track at Wentworth Falls.
- \$1500 - BMCC Bushfire Control Dept towards employment of a Technical Officer for research.
- \$1000 - District Bushfire Management Committee for educative audio-visuals for Volunteer Bushfire Brigades.
- \$3000 - BMCC Library to establish a section on Conservation.
- \$2000 - To the Karst Resources Group for rehabilitation of Jenolan Caves rock wallabies.
- \$2000 - NPWS for rehabilitation of the northern Blue Mountains National Parks rock wallabies.

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LIBRARY CONSERVATION REFERENCE SECTION: This will include a wide range of subjects from history, philosophy, ethics, economy, practicalities and so on. If you have a point of view or a suggestion for a subject or book you feel is significant, please contact Thor on 87 3272.

RAINFOREST TIMBER: Some time ago the Society asked for Council to state its position regarding the use of rainforest timber - the answer is that Council does not use rainforest timber and recommends this attitude to builders.

DISAPPOINTMENT: There is disappointing news that our plans to offer the Land Preservation Funds to National Parks and Wildlife Services towards buying a private property for inclusion in the Kanangra-Boyd National Park, has fallen through. The owner simply decided not to sell. So now we start again to find a deserving home for that hard-won money - \$40,000 odd. Please advise a committee member if you have a suggestion. Holiday home for tired conservationist will not be acceptable - sorry!

FORGOTTEN LOOKOUT



The walk on October 14 1993, led by Bob Jones, was very interesting. Den Fenella was the destination, but on the way Bob showed us some forgotten and neglected tracks and lookouts below the Undercliffe walk at Wentworth Falls. One lookout especially fired the imagination. It looked like a kiln with a little staircase winding around it to a seat on the top of the 'chimney'. Bob thinks the lookout was named after a fabulous Conservationist, Isobel Bowden. If this is so we should try to get NPWS to repair and restore it for posterity.
G.B.

WALLS LEDGE WALK

Thursday November 18th, 1993

Grace and Fred Bayley thought they'd be late arriving at the arranged meeting place at Blackheath station. So many phone calls to enquire if the walk would be off because the rain was coming down so heavily, and it appeared to be set in for the day in spite of what the weather forecast said.

It continued to rain while waiting at the car park, but as everyone who was prepared to walk was prepared to walk in the rain we drove to the end of Centennial Glen Road. Here eight brave people donned their wet-weather gear and set off along the top to go to Walls Ledge. Though we got wet from the vegetation we walked through we were thankful the rain stopped.

What a sight to see the columns of mist rising from the Kanimbla Valley, almost like smoke from a chimney. The valley looked absolutely beautiful, green undulating hills with houses dotted here and there, dams filled, and the area bounded by distant mountains. The rain had certainly enhanced the scenery, and as the sun came out everything sparkled, the raindrops on the trees and falling from the towering cliff above us as we walked on the ledge; the wet walls glistened.

We had morning tea sitting under a large overhang. What a delight to look down on a brilliant rainbow just below us. We were most fortunate to have Vivian explain about native plants - their names and how they got them. There were so many flowering, and of special delight were the orchids.

It so happened that Jim Smith was showing a visitor from Western Australia the fabulous scenery and beautiful flowers and on three occasions we met. The second time was as we were admiring the waterfall dropping into a man-made pool. He suggested the rock and concrete wall could have been built over a 100 years ago when the centennial track was made in 1888.

We went down the carved sandstone steps till we came to a track leading off to the right. This led to a grotto almost enclosed by rock above. By getting close to the wall and gingerly following it we came to the big hole above where the waterfall pounded into a hole below then with great force rushed through the narrow passage hemmed in by rock. We retraced our steps and followed the watercourse going down many steps, here the water raged down the steep rock slope, even over the steps. Its sure worth seeing waterfalls after heavy rain.

Going back up the steps we turned left and came to an enormous overhang where we had lunch, looking over to a waterfall opposite. It turned out quite hot so we were shedding wet-weather gear and jackets.

We returned by a different track. We were amused by the rock that looks like a man's head wearing a top hat. Someone had drawn in an eye at the appropriate place.

What a delightful surprise it was to come upon a great area of stypandra in flower, a deep blue with brilliant yellow centres.

It was a wonderful walk, the rain having added an extra dimension to its enjoyment by enhancing the view and adding volumes to the waterfalls.

A Happy Wanderer

This began in fine weather and finished with the walkers being thoroughly soaked a couple of times. It was Robin's last excursion as leader of a walk devoted to our mountain wildflowers. We lingered long over the flowers on the cliff track between Govett's Leap and Evans Lookout and paid for it before we could reach shelter. But by the time we had had lunch in the very crowded shelter shed our clothes were dry so we pressed on down the track following the power lines to Braeside walk. It was worth it to see the many waratahs and abundant flowers on the once bare area. It shows how forgiving nature is. The scramble along an overgrown Braeside track is best forgotten as we all were soaked again. But everyone was happy.

THE PYGMY POSSUM



One of our most common mammals here on the Blue Mountains is the Pygmy Possum - *Cercartetus nanus*. Being very small, secretive and nocturnal, it is very rarely seen and when sighted it is often mistaken for a mouse. It lives in diverse habitats, from rainforest, woodland forest, to heathlands. Its feeding habits are of equal diversity - nectar, seeds such as acacia and grevillia, and manna, which is a white secretion found on the edge of eucalyptus leaves. But it is primarily insectivorous, feeding on a wide range of insects, and will even sample small lizards. It eats holding its food with its front paws, while sitting up, and with its lightly-furred prehensile tail firmly wrapped around a leaf-stalk or small thin branch. Rarely is it found higher than 3 or 4 metres above the ground, but sometimes it is seen on the ground amongst leaf-litter, still using its prehensile tail.

It builds a small round nest of leaves, grass, ferns or whatever material is readily available, under bark, in hollows of trees or logs, in rock crevices. - sometimes recycling ringtails' nests or the abandoned nests of small birds, the most favoured being the nest of a thornbill.

Because they are so small the Pygmy Possums have difficulty in maintaining a high body temperature when the weather becomes inclement and they have the capability to become torpid for a period when their body temperature falls almost to that of the surrounding area, and their breathing becomes very shallow. This condition may last from overnight to up to ten days or more. Gentle warmth will bring it back to normal within an hour or so, but this condition is not to be confused with hibernation, so bear in mind that what may appear to be a dead mouse may well be a healthy but very cold Pygmy Possum. Although they are not uncommon in the Blue Mountains this does not mean that they are not endangered. On the contrary, they are in need of protection as their balance can so easily slip the other way, as in all native fauna. People who have gardens in the proximity of the local bushland should be encouraged to plant banksias, acacias and grevilleas. Remember this at our next plant sale.

Writer, David Thomas

Illustrated by Ewart Collings

EXCURSION PROGRAMME



FEBRUARY 1994

- Sunday 6 Wonderland Track, Megalong Valley and the Colleseum.
Meet 9 am at corner of Station St and Great Western Highway,
Medlow Bath. Contact June Baxter 87 7312. (Area code 047
for all these
numbers)
- Thurs. 17 Bird walk with Graham Alcorn.
Meet 10am at Blackheath Station carpark.
Contact Christine Davies 87 7246
- Sat. 19 North Lawson exploratory walk. DRY walk.
Meet at Lawson Station carpark at 9am.
Contact Muriel Healey 58 6575

MARCH

- Sunday 6 Cox's River. Meet at Blackheath Station carpark at 8.30am
to drive to Megalong Creek.
Contact Olive Noble 87 8342
- Thurs. 17 Echo Point to Katoomba Falls along Prince Henry Cliff Walk.
Meet at Echo Point carpark at 10am. Those needing to be
picked up from train contact Grace Bayley 59 1955.
- Sat. 19 Vera Falls. Meet Wentworth Falls Station at 9am
Contact Ron Wheeler 57 1526

APRIL

- Sunday 3 Wollangambe River. Meet at Mt Victoria Station at 9am.
Contact David Thomas 84 2121
- Sat. 16 Gardner's Gap. Meet at Mt Victoria Station at 8.30 am
Contact John Noble 87 8342
- Thursday 21 Darwins Walk. Meet at Wilson Park, corner Falls Rd and Great
Western Highway at 10am. Contact Dulcie Toseland 84 1682.

It is essential on all excursions in the hot weather that members carry at least 1 litre of water.
Please carry on all walks: First Aid Kit, Torch, Matches, Warm shirt or Sweater, Protective
Rainwear, Hat. Wear safe footwear

All people attending excursions do so at their own risk

Members arriving by train should advise contact prior to the excursion. Train timetable on
week-days might be altered. Walks starting times and meeting places will remain as stated.

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January 1994

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MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE ON MARCH 1st 1994

UPPER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY. P.O.Box 29, Wentworth Falls. 2782

Membership / Renewal Form (1st March 1994 - 28th Feb 1995)

| | | | |
|--------------|------------------|------|----------|
| Name..... | Family | \$15 | per year |
| Address..... | Single | \$10 | " " |
| | Pensioner Family | \$10 | " " |
| | Single Pensioner | \$6 | " " |

Half fee applies for new membership from 1st September. If a receipt is required please forward stamped self-addressed envelope.