



## "Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"

### **This Month at The Hut**

**Annual General Meeting.** 67 people attended this year's AGM at The Hut—can anybody remember a bigger turnout??—and elected a strong management committee to continue the society's work for the following year.

Over the years the Society, through the hard work of its members, has gained significant achievements in preserving the Blue Mountains environment, and has earned an enviable reputation. With a new burst of life in the Society we hope to continue on these traditions and continue to achieve victories for the Blue Mountains environment.

A list of the elected office bearers is on page 4. Among them there may be some unfamiliar names, so do come along to general meetings and meet the people who belong to these names.

**LBMCS:** At the AGM the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society was officially merged with the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society, and Richard Phillipps, president of LBMCS, presented a cheque for \$700.19, being the remaining funds of LBMCS, to the Society.

**Name Change.** It was then agreed, almost unanimously, that the name of the Society be changed to **Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.** (now pending Consumer Affairs Dept. paperwork.)

**Overdue Memberships.** Some membership renewals are now overdue! If the top line on your envelope shows 1996, please send your renewal now.

**Old Records.** When the society moved out of the old Hut, the records were dispersed to a number of locations. We believe that some may still not have been returned. Also, there have been occasions since then when members and office bearers have borrowed records for a project they were working on.

Do you have any of the society's records, or do you know someone who may have?

Please be in touch with the Secretary if you can help, so that we can reconstitute the complete set of records for the society.

**Guest speaker** at the April General Meeting will be Carol Probert who will talk about Bird Sights and Sounds. The meeting starts at 7.30 pm at The Hut. Visitors are welcome.

**Natural Gas.** Les Coyne represented

the Society at the Launch of the Blue Mountains Natural Gas project. The pipeline will be laid alongside the highway and the railway. A representative of AGL will address the April meeting.

**State of the Environment Report.** Members are urged to purchase a copy of the State of the Environment report which has been prepared by Blue Mountains City Council and is available from BMCC for only \$10 (ask at the enquiry desk). It is a thoroughly professional document and a must for everyone interested in the Blue Mountains environment.

### **From the Mailbag**

There is a display on "**Aboriginal Life**" at NPWS Heritage Centre, Blackheath, until 15 April.

NPWS's Autumn **Discovery** Programme is now available, with details of guided walks and other activities during the school holidays and at weekends up to the end of May. Enquire at Blackheath or Glenbrook National Park offices.

The **Blue Mountains Rare and Endangered Species Group** invites members to the 1996 annual general meeting and information day on Saturday 20 April at 2 pm at the NPWS Heritage Centre, Blackheath.

Speakers will be Sue Morrison (Draft Plan of Management for Blue Mountains National Park), Ben Correy (Grose Valley Rare Plants Post-fire Survey), Jan Allen (Eucalyptus oreades Project), and Marg Turton (Bats and the Blue Mountains).

The Society for Growing Australian Plants will be holding a **Forum on Rare and Endangered Plants in the Blue Mountains** on Friday 3 May at 8 pm in the Blaxland Community Centre. Members are invited to join in the forum. Entry is free.

**Bushcare News.** The Popes Glen Bushcare Group's workday has been changed from the last Friday and will now be the **fourth** Friday of every month.

### **Bonnie Doon Update**

At the Council meeting on 26 March it was unanimously decided to approach the owner of heathland (Lots pt.15 & 16) at the end of Stuarts Road to begin negotiations to acquire the land. This will mean that the proposed road will not be constructed through the heath. Additionally, Council will be contacting the owners of adjoining lots and seeking

funds to acquire that land also.

We have begun negotiations with Bob Debus' office and with enough public support believe that this land can be protected by the State.

**YOU CAN HELP! Write to Bob Debus, Shop 3, The Greenway Centre, 107-109 Macquarie Road, Springwood 2777.** Express your concern and the necessity for the protection of this land.

We were greatly encouraged by the amount of interest and attention paid to this issue by each and every Councillor. We also thank all of you for your encouragement and support.

If you would like to visit the site or would like more information, contact Bonnie Doon Fauna Study 82-2218.

(A donation of \$250 has been sent to the Bonnie Doon Fauna Study Group to help defray their costs.)

### **No Helicopters!!**

The commercial helicopter operator is no longer operating from Medlow airport and may be applying to C.A.L.M. for transfer of the lease to another operator. We should protest against any transfer of helicopter licence—there are just too many problems associated with noise pollution.

It is desirable that the airport be given to NPWS for their use and for use in emergencies.

**Please write to Bob Debus, address as above.**

### **Feathertail Glider Update**

The society is now the proud sponsor of a Feathertail Glider (*Acrobates pygmaeus*) at Taronga Park Zoo. The Zoo advises that at last count they had 15 Feathertails, but they are prolific breeders and the number has been increasing.

They are housed in a special nocturnal enclosure which has to be just as they would like it in the wild—with vegetation offering dense cover, many vertical and horizontal climbing surfaces, many feeding points, a surplus of nest cavities (hollows in trees), and a diet of nectar substitute and live insects, and a large social group.

**"Hut News", the newsletter of the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.**  
**P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, 2782.**  
**President: Colin Williams 84-1899**  
**Secretary: Les Coyne 57-3327**  
**Editor: Christine Davies 87-7246**  
**Deadline for the May issue is April 23**

The Feathertail Glider is normally active at night. In the nocturnal house lighting is used to turn day into night and night into day so that we can see them when they are active. Vivien Hunter reports that she recently visited the zoo to see the Feathertails and was amazed at their acrobatic skills and their ability to walk on the glass wall of their house.

The zoo has sent us 20 tickets (valid until Feb. 1997). If you would like two tickets to go to the zoo to see the little acrobats, write to P.O. Box 29, **before 22 April**, and we will draw for the tickets at the April meeting.

We are also looking for a slogan for our T-shirts. Any ideas?

### **Clean-up Australia Day**

An energetic morning's cleanup at the Society's revegetation site, the area between the old and new highways west of the Sorensen Bridge, resulted in a load of rubbish which filled 25½ bags, one ute, and half a skip. There were 21 bags of assorted rubbish—plastic, paper, food wrappers, cigarette cartons, a dog collar, old clothes, etc., 3 bags of glass bottles, 1 bag of PET bottles, and only a handful of aluminium cans (is there a message here about having refunds on drink containers as they do in South Australia?). Ron's ute was loaded with an old ironing board, a train seat, a mattress, car panels, a car tyre, a 44-gallon drum, and assorted other rubbish including bent star poles, twisted wire, and sundry pieces of wood and iron.

It was a good chance to have a look around the revegetation site which is quite extensive. The old road follows the railway line, and is to be used as part of the Blue Mountains cycleway. At the Leura end the site is badly degraded with subsoil and rubbish and mostly weeds. However up above there is good bushland which is very pretty, and along the old road beside the railway line tiny Eucalypts and other natives are trying to reclaim the area. (Photo: Alex Wylie, member of UBMCS clean-up team)

### **Kosciusko in Summer**

Joan and Imre Gahl and David Coleby

spent a week in the Kosciusko National Park in the mid-February—part of a group of 17 who stayed at the Warrugang Ski Lodge in Perisher, arriving in rain and snow.

When the weather cleared Mt Perisher's upper slopes were thick with snow, but as warmer weather ensued it all but disappeared up to the top. Not so on the main range, where in spite of brilliant sunshine, Mt Kosciusko and Mt Carruthers remained white all week.

We went on bushwalks each day; an easy 8 km up to Perisher Gap, across a huge magnificent bog to the Porcupine, and back down to the village. There were masses of alpine herbfields dominated by the extraordinarily beautiful *Eucalyptus pauciflora* ssp *niphophila*, the alpine snow gum. Knee-high shrubs included *Prostanthera cuneata* (alpine mint bush), *Phebalium ovatifolium* and *Kunzea muellerii*, all interspersed with exquisite flowering herbs like the *Craspedias* (billy buttons), the *Euphrasias* (eyebrights), the *Wahlenbergias* (bluebells), the *Celmisias* (snow daisies) and the *Gentianellas* (alpine crocus).

Above the treeline from Charlotte's Pass some of us went on a 20 km all-day walk via the Blue Lake, Mt Carruthers, Lake Albina and Mt Kosciusko. One of us (nameless) fell in the Snowy River at the outset! However, the climb was well worth it, for the views were staggering and the high alpine herbfield, called feldmark, was a wonder to behold.

Another all-day walk, almost as strenuous, was the 12 km walk from Guthega dam to Mt Tate. Here the alpine grasslands provided shelter for daisies, crocus, eyebrights and billy buttons in their thousands. Our big adventure that day was coming down the 45 degree thick bushy slope from the Tate East Ridge to Guthega Dam. There may have been a track, but we couldn't find it!

At Sawpit Creek there are several walk options, all easy. We chose the 6 km Waterfall track, which we can highly recommend. It is very sheltered, and supports a large community of plants and other wildlife. The creek has many trout, birds are abundant, and the *Leucopogons* covered in red berries are superb.

February is a magic time of year to make a visit, so if you get the chance, don't miss it. —David Coleby.

### **The Roberts Pass Walk**

Thirteen of us met at the Hut, where Les showed us on the map the route we would be taking, and produced a roll of stick-on labels so that we all were named, such a help as each walk seems to attract new people. The cautious and hesitant mixing made after the first introductions soon gave way to a friendly accepting social atmosphere which prevailed

throughout the journey—a sure sign of a successful walk.

As we admired the fabulous view over the Jamison Valley from Empress Falls Lookout, a sudden gust of wind lifted Les' hat, plunging it far down into the valley. A reward was offered, but.....

We stopped and admired each of the six named and also unnamed falls as we descended into the valley and followed the Vera Falls track past the turnoffs to National Pass and Wentworth Pass and joined Roberts Pass. A landslide in the past had destroyed the track up Robert's Pass, so that nowadays a detour has to be made down and up again in the vicinity of the old coal mine.

It was rainforest country, thick with ferns, and not always easy going, but those who at times found sections difficult had plenty of willing help from other members of the group. Flowers seen were few, an occasional *Styloidium* still gleaming through the green and some *Isopogon*, confused by the seasons. Some *Tasmania insipida* (pepper bush) had black berries and others were a lavender/purple colour on the way to ripeness.—Nella and Heather.

(Morning tea on the track)

...The Saga leaps forward in time and

location. The authors of the above were gently gathered from the grandeur of Fairmont foyer reeling from the effects of caffeine, escorted to a waiting car and whisked back to The Hut and their own cars. There were no ghastly headlines in the tabloids so I can reasonably state their companions finished the programmed walk under the careful guidance of Les Coyne.—Lloyd.

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## A Bird Walkers' Breakfast at Blackheath

It was a gorgeous morning, the bush dusted with soft droplets of rain, the weather cool and gently grey...an almost windless stillness adding to the magic of the morning. Everything in place for an early birdwatchers' breakfast...except the subjects of the breakfast weren't so ecstatic about the conditions! However, the five of us were unperturbed—after all the reserve was looking exceptionally pretty for a picnic. (A writer in heaven in the mist and rain!)

Early on our wander we heard a tree-creeper, springing Christine and Joan into fascinating details about their feet, the way they sleep, species food, etc. I was a touch disappointed we didn't get a closer view of the 'tree toots' under discussion but it's all part of the mysterious beauty of birds! There's always those other precious moments when all of a sudden you're drawn into some totally unexpected and moving encounter!!

Back to Saturday! We stopped for breakfast in such a pretty spot with Kerry and Joan's superbly organised packs being well used!! (Many thanks!) After we'd

been sitting a while, the weather began to creep into a more seeping cold, the mist waving in through the trees in its magic silverness, drifting silently through deserted streets, except for a small party of birdhopeful breakfasters hidden away in the quiet beauty of the bush in Blackheath. The winged songsters may have been missed but our early morning picnic was an absolutely glorious change from the treeless, compartmentalised squash of a city commuter's weekly morning schedule. To sit in the bush is to FEEL what a GIFT we have been given...it sings to my soul!

—Helen Raphael.

*(P.S. Helen will be leading a walk on 11 May, a "Scribblers and Pottering Poets' Walk" at beautiful Mount Wilson. Bring along a pen and paper to write down some of your thoughts and experiences of the walk. It is amazing how easy it is, and it is fun!)*

**(This 18th Century English rhyme was sent in by Reg Baumgarten.....Still relevant today?)**

**They hang the man and flog the woman**

**That steals the goose from off the common,**

**But let the greater felon loose**

**That steals the common from the goose.**

## In The Bush

Before summer and the snake season slither away as they are rapidly doing, I must comment on my brief experience with the "deadly serpent" this year.

Rounding a shrub on a warm summer morning, **there it was!** Shock, horror, pounding heart, breathlessness, trembling of the knees—why do these basic instincts dominate? In my youthful days society expected man to do his duty by suppressing his cowardice and so move in and slay.

Heart beat, blood pressure and saliva eventually returned to normal and logic and reason started to seep through the fear. Did I really want to mash up such a beautifully structured piece of Nature's creation?

No—and this is where Alan Lobb comes in. He runs a nursery at Hazelbrook and is a voluntary helper with WIRES. Secateurs, rake and watering can were dropped at a moment's notice and he was around to do battle.....**A look, a stoop, and exit one Copperhead snake into a bag. I did feel like a wimp!!**

However his subsequent discussion about snakes I found most interesting and I share herein that which is remembered.

Alan said the Copperhead was a truly

Alpine snake and very common from Wentworth Falls up. They are the first to appear on a warm day and the last to hibernate when the weather cools. Size and colour are misleading but an infallible identification mark is the barred white lip on the lower mouth.

It is not an aggressive snake, but like most snakes will lash out if cornered and it is dangerously venomous.

Our conversation wandered on to snake ratings for venom. To my surprise on a world list of venomous snakes the first twelve places are held by Australian species. Of course while the toxicity can be accurately measured too many variables have to be considered to pass judgement on a snake's lethal capacities, e.g. the length of its fangs, its mobility, its habits, its frequency and distribution, etc.

Returning to the local scene, Alan said the Red-Bellied Black, the Tiger and the Diamond Python were common throughout the Blue Mountains, but the Copperhead is only found from Wentworth Falls upward.

Below Wentworth Falls, Browns, Blacks and Death Adders prevail. A small snake which is commonly encountered in the Blue Mountains is Drysdalia rhodogaster (no common name),

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## New Members

Linda Thomas, Katoomba  
Jessica Yuille, Wentworth Falls  
Jan Cadogan, Wentworth Falls  
Joy McDonald, Wentworth Falls  
Carol Summers, Wentworth Falls  
Norah Gaynor, Blackheath  
Rosemary Brister, Katoomba  
Les Peto, Katoomba  
Virginia Bear, Blackheath  
Clare Hodgkiss, Katoomba  
Helen Lomax, Hazelbrook  
Chris Woods, Katoomba  
Andrew Rush, Wentworth Falls  
Jenny Barry, Wentworth Falls  
Doug Barber, Wentworth Falls  
Tessa Knight, Blackheath  
Fay Arnold, Leura  
Chris Cole, Katoomba  
Jan Mason, Katoomba

which is regarded as harmless to man but is sometimes mistaken for one of the more venomous snakes.

There is no special month for snakes. So much depends on temperature and food supply. Last September when we enjoyed a run of warm weather snakes were more plentiful than now. They seek shelter on very hot days.

Snakes have no sense of hearing but are most sensitive to vibrations. Their forked tongue is an amazingly sensitive organ which can register temperature changes. Behind the tongue is an even more sensitive instrument known as a Jacobson's Organ which helps them assess their environment with great accuracy.

Alan calculates that Blue Mountains WIRES snake handlers responded to at least two hundred snake calls this summer.

He would have talked snakes for hours but the needs of his Prostantheras (he specialises) had a slightly higher priority so he has off and away. After a health check my snake would be released in a quiet place 'in the bush'.

—The Bunyip.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### APRIL

- 01 (Mon) **Monday Morning Leisure Walk—Hat Hill, Anvil Rock and Wind-Eroded Cave.** Meet 9.30 am Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. Contact Tessa Knight 87.6543. Grade 3.
- 07 (Sun) **Bushwalk—Vera Falls.** Meet at Wentworth Falls Station at 9 am. Contact Ron Wheeler 57.1526. Grade 7.
- 15 (Mon) **Monday Morning Leisure Walk—Berghofer's Pass.** Meet at Mount Victoria Station at 9.30. Contact Norah Gaynor 87.6071. Grade 3.
- 17 (Wed) **Bushwalk—Elphinstone Plateau.** Meet at Gearins Hotel at 9.45. Contact Shirley Brown (047)84.3348. Grade 4.
- 20 (Sat) **Bushwalk—The Hut, Valley of the Waters, National Pass, Slack Stairs, The Hut.** Meet at The Hut at 9.30 am. Contact David Thomas 84.2121. Grade 6-7.
- 22 (Mon) **Monday Morning Leisure Walk—Mount Wilson Rainforest.** Meet Mount Victoria Station at 9.30 am. Contact Christine Davies 87.7246. Grade 4.
- 23 (Tues) **Deadline for May issue of "Hut News".**  
**Committee Meeting** at The Hut at 7 pm.
- 26 (Fri) **General Meeting** at The Hut at 7.30 pm. Guest speaker Carol Probert - Bird Sights and Sounds.
- 29 (Mon) **Monday Morning Leisure Walk—Cliff Top Walk, Gordon Falls to Leura Cascades.** Meet 9.30 am at Gordon Falls Reserve. Contact Lee Tredinnick 57.4030.

### MAY

- 05 (Sun) **Bushwalk and picnic at Kanangra site.** Meet 9.30 at Mount Victoria Station. Contact Muriel Healey 58.6574. Grade 4.
- 06 (Mon) **Monday Morning Leisure Walk—Bonnie Doon.** Meet at Explorer's Tree at 9.30. Contact John Gibbs 82.6509. Grade 4.
- 11 (Sat) **Literary Bushwalk. A "Scribblers and Pottering Poets' walk" at Mount Wilson.** Bring a notebook and pencil. Bring a poem or a story to read at lunchtime (either your own work or a favourite). Meet at Mount Victoria Station at 9.30 am. Contact Helen Raphael 58.8934. Grade 3.
- 13 (Mon) **Monday Morning Leisure Walk—Transit of Venus.** Contact Ruth Milton 57.3584. Grade 3, **Slow pace.**
- 15 (Wed) **Bird Walk with Jill Dark.** Meet at Blackheath Commuter Carpark at 9.30. Contact Jill Dark 58.7061.
- 18 (Sat) **Bushwalk—Blue Gum Forest.** Meet at Blackheath station commuter carpark at 8.30 am. Contact Olive Noble 87.8342. Grade 8.
- 20 (Mon) **Monday Morning Leisure Walk—Minna Ha Ha Falls.** Meet Minna Ha Ha Reserve, North Katoomba, at 9.30. Contact Christine Davies 87.7246. Grade 4.
- 21 (Tues) **Committee Meeting** at The Hut at 7 pm.
- 31 (Fri) **General Meeting** at The Hut at 7.30 pm—Guest speaker Paul Curtis of Intelife; Wentworth Falls quarry project, environmental display centre.  
**(Walks have been graded: 1-3 easy, 4-7 medium, 8-10 harder. If in doubt contact the leader.**

*Walkers must carry 1 litre of water.)*

### Executive Committee 1996/97

<b>Senior Vice-President</b>	Marion Hawley
<b>Second Vice-President</b>	Chris Hannocks
<b>Secretary</b>	Les Coyne
<b>Treasurer</b>	Barby Wylie
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Ross Coster
<b>Land Use Officer</b>	Don Morison
<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	Christine Davies
<b>Walks Convenor</b>	Chris Woods
<b>Plant Nursery Manager</b>	David Coleby
<b>Publicity Officer</b>	Linda Thomas
<b>Entertainment Officer</b>	Vivien Hunter
<b>Bushcare Officer</b>	Jessica Yuille
<b>Education Officer</b>	Joan Williams
<b>Macro Projects Officer</b>	Sharyn Sinclair-Hannocks
<b>Non-Executive Positions</b>	
<b>Public Officer</b>	Reg Toseland
<b>Bushfire Committee Representative</b>	Hugh Paterson

### President

Colin Williams

### DOGS AND NATIONAL PARKS

National parks and reserves are special places for wildlife and for people who want to experience a peaceful and natural environment.

Dogs and other domestic pets may not be taken into national parks, historic sites or nature reserves managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Owners may be issued an on-the-spot fine, and unaccompanied dogs may be impounded and their owners fined.

#### **There are good reasons why dogs are not allowed in national parks:.**

- your dog may be well behaved and under your control but its very presence is detrimental to wildlife; dogs are viewed as predators by native animals—small animals and birds can be easily scared away from their homes and nesting sites, often leaving their young unprotected;
  - dog faeces carry diseases which can be harmful to wildlife; they also add nutrients to the soil, which increases the spread of weeds.
  - dogs chase and/or kill wildlife and occasionally bite people; and
  - their barking can detract from the use and enjoyment of an area.
- (In special cases approval may be granted, such as guide dogs accompanying sight-impaired or hearing-impaired visitors.)

You can help by leaving your dog at home when you visit a national park and by explaining to your friends why dogs are not allowed in national parks.

**MEMBERSHIP:** The Society is keen to have new members who are interested in the welfare of the Blue Mountains environment. Write to P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, or phone the Secretary on 57.3327.