



" Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"

This Month at The Hut

The new Management Committee has had its first Tuesday night meeting and a great year is predicted. Emphasis will be placed on education, to help residents to appreciate the wonderful natural assets that we have in the Blue Mountains. Environmental books will be purchased for Blue Mountains libraries. There will be a concentrated membership drive to attract new people who are concerned about the Blue Mountains natural environment into the society.

Ron Wheeler has agreed to act as our second representative at bushfire meetings where he'll be able to contribute his expertise in a non-voting capacity.

The Society will participate in World Environment Day at Katoomba on June 9. We will provide education and information and sell native plants, posters, and Society T-shirts. **Volunteers are needed to staff our stall for part of the day.**

Feathertail Glider project. Artwork is being prepared, and hopefully our T-shirts will be ready in time for World Environment Day. **We still need a slogan!!—there will be a free T-shirt for the person who comes up with a good slogan.**

All members are urged to participate in Society affairs. Come to the general meeting and have your say; write an article for *"Hut News"*; lead a bushwalk or an excursion; offer to help with a project; write and tell the committee that you like (or dislike) what they are doing.

Natural Gas. Two representatives of AGL gave an overlong presentation at the April general meeting, more a promotion for natural gas than an environmental forum. One of the questions asked was: why was the environmental impact statement not displayed? (*a copy of the EIS is being forwarded to the secretary*). There were also questions about fire, the spread of noxious weeds and revegetation policy.

While natural gas seems the best alternative to wood heaters, there has been a lack of consultation in this major project.

The Hut was packed with members who came to hear **guest speaker** Carol Proberts who gave a talk on **Birds Sights and Sounds**. It was fascinating to hear about the language of birds; alarm calls which are recognised between species; contact calls between flock members and between breeding pairs; juvenile calls

where each individual baby bird is recognised by the parents; distress calls; more elaborate songs to declare territory and to attract a mate; mimicry—we all know about the superb mimicry of the Superb Lyrebird, but **at least 57 Australian birds** use mimicry as part of their song, including the silveryeye and the brown thornbill.

Guest speaker at the May General Meeting will be Paul Curtis of Intelife who will talk about the Wentworth Falls quarry project, environmental display centre.

From the Mailbag

Our Society is an associate member of The Australian Conservation Foundation. The ACF holds regular activities to which our members are invited.

On **Sunday 5 May** at 10.30 am at Pigface Point, Georges River, Sydney—a **Tour of a "Conserver" Lifestyle Education Site**. "This site, home of Dr. Ted Trainer, provides a living model with displays demonstrating a self sufficient lifestyle. Come along and see how Ted is contributing to the building of a *conserver* society, i.e. one that is ecologically sustainable." Children are welcome. Contact Gordon Hocking (02) 528.6091. (Stay on for the ACF State Forum and BYO picnic lunch.)

On **Monday 20 May** at 7pm at Australian Museum, Halstrom Theatre, William Street, Sydney—a **Public Meeting** where the subject is **ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE GROWTH, Myths, Mirage or Mandate?** "Can the environment be protected under a regime of growth, i.e., economic, population and job growth? What conflicts arise and how can they be resolved?"

Speaker is Professor Valerie Brown, University of Western Sydney, who is responsible for developing a National Research Project "The Sustainable Futures Programme". All welcome. Audience participation encouraged. Admission \$4.

Katoomba Falls Creek Valley

The Friends of Katoomba Falls Creek Valley Inc. have been opposing the proposal for a huge tourist and residential development on Katoomba Golf Course since its beginnings in 1989. In 1991 BMCC signed a contract to sell 5.6 ha of public land on the golf course to Noroton Holdings for the purpose of a resort and

residential development.

The proposal would see a swathe of *Eucalyptus sieberi* woodland along the ridgeline of Narrow Neck Road destroyed. The understorey in this woodland contains specimens of *Persoonia acerosa* which is restricted and vulnerable (2VC, Briggs & Leigh, 1988). It is also an important extension of habitat for the large diversity of birds found in Katoomba Falls Creek Valley, which forms a significant migration corridor between the forests of the Jamison and Grose Valleys. The proposal would also involve extension of fairways into the hanging swamp/ woodland community in the north-east of the golf course land.

The Friends' opposition to development is primarily based on the Environmental Study of Katoomba Falls Creek Valley (1993) carried out by Professor Fred Bell. Professor Bell identified the retention and protection of all remaining native vegetation on public land, especially the hanging swamps, as vital for the health of this small catchment, which is the source of flows to Katoomba Falls.

In 1994 the then Minister of Planning approved the rezoning of the golf course to allow the development to proceed, despite the clear findings of BMCC staff and a Public Hearing that this would not be in the public interest. Since then Council has also approved the development application. In 1995 Friends legally challenged the rezoning in the Land & Environment Court, and won the case. The rezoning and the DA were declared invalid. The Minister and BMCC have chosen not to appeal the court's judgement. The developer however is appealing. The Friends will be defending the appeal in the Supreme Court on 11 June.

Even if the Friends are ultimately victorious in court, the whole issue is likely to come back to Blue Mountains Council.

Whatever the outcome, the Land and

**"Hut News", the newsletter of the
Upper Blue Mountains
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P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, 2782.

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Deadline for the June issue is May 28

Environment Court judgement has made an important ruling regarding Council's dealings with developers. It makes it clear that decision-makers, such as Councils and Ministers, must only consider the public interest and planning issues (such as the environmental impacts), and **must not** be influenced by commercial contracts, when exercising their powers regarding such land use decisions as rezoning.

New Pet Laws

In the Blue Mountains unrestricted domestic animals cause many environmental problems. Cats and dogs hunt and kill native animals. Dog and cat faeces carry diseases which are harmful to wildlife and nutrients which encourage weeds.

Cats especially, being nocturnal and able to climb trees, are a threat to our small native marsupials. A single puncture wound received during a cat attack will lead to infection and death, so that animals that escape a cat attack will often die.

Since 1966 there has been legislation to control dogs. Until now cats have not been included in any legislation.

The Department of Local Government has convened a working party to address a range of issues to be included in the new Companion Animals Act which is designed to replace the Dog Act (1966) so that cats can be included in the policy document.

16 organisations are represented on the working party: NSW Animal Welfare League, Australian Institute of Environmental Health, Local Government and Shires Associations, Dog Industry Advisory Council, Australian Veterinarians' Association, ANZ Federation of Animal Societies, Cat Protection Society, Royal NSW Canine Council, Department of Agriculture, Animal Welfare Advisory Council, RAS Cat Control, Royal Guide Dogs' Association, Dept of Local Government and Co-operatives, Domestic Animal Birth Control Co-operative Society, RSPCA and WIRES. From the list it is obvious that environmental groups are in the minority, WIRES probably being the only represented group which is able to advise on the impact of domestic animals on native wildlife and on the natural environment.

Issues which have been canvassed include items such as: that companion animals are an integral part of human existence and society; the need to focus on responsible pet ownership; legislation or regulation needs to be enforceable; the importance of education programmes to run hand in hand with the implementation of legislation; environmental concerns need to be addressed; financial incentives may be needed to encourage councils and others to do their job; the need to review what has already been attempted in other states in

terms of companion animals legislation.

The Green Paper (discussion paper) will be available soon so that community groups and individuals can make submissions and comments on the issues raised. The final draft of the legislation will be introduced into Parliament in the Spring 1996 session (October).

WIRES feel that there are a number of concerns for wildlife rehabilitation (and environmental) groups. Of particular concern are:

1. The issues of registration and identification of cats, (micro chipping, tattoo, collar and tag, or all three.) Example: Unregistered or unidentified cats found in national parks and bushland reserves could be euthanased. Registered and identified cats found in bushland and national parks could be returned to the owners who could be fined. Suggestions and comments regarding this issue should be discussed giving the wildlife perspective.

2. Cat curfew. This has been a particularly contentious issue for many people who are against implementing any form of curfew on cats. The main reason given is that it is unenforceable. Lateral thinkers might like to come up with suggestions for overcoming this problem (authorised volunteer 'cat rangers'?? impoundment of cats found outside their owner's property?? owners fined and receiving information on the benefits to cats and wildlife if the cat are kept in at night??) *Perhaps legislation might aid education.*

3. Desexing stray/unowned cats and putting them back in the community? This obviously does not help the wildlife or the cats who are left to fend for themselves, and does not discourage irresponsible cat ownership.

4. Desexing. Should all companion animals be desexed unless they are to be used for breeding? The issue here is an attempt to address the stray and feral animal population.

5. The sale and transfer of ownership of kittens, cats, puppies and dogs. Should animals be given away "free to good homes" or sold through pet shops or the local paper, without regard to the lack of knowledge some people may have regarding the on-going responsibilities and costs of pet ownership. *(Domestic pets sold only through registered breeders?)*

Copies of the green paper may be obtained by contacting the Dept of Local Government, phone 02.251.8498 or fax 02.251.1442. The Society has requested a copy and will be making a submission.

It is only with an united effort that the necessary outcomes will be achieved with this legislation to prevent and reduce the impact that cats and dogs are having on wildlife in the Blue Mountains and right across the state.

Send your comments on the green paper

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to: Department of Local Government, Level 2, 151 Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000. There is only a limited time in which to make comments and submissions.

Make your voice heard before the Companion Animals Act becomes Law.

Send a copy to Bob Debus, Shop 3, The Greenway Centre, 107-109 Macquarie Road, Springwood 2777.

(The above information on the proposed legislation has been provided by Denise Ford who is the WIRES rep for the Companion Animals Act Working Party).

Valley of the Waters Walk

A pleasant sunny day, with no wind, and lots of birds, and a Golden Whistler to wish us well as we started off from The Hut; it was a truly beautiful walk down the Valley of the Waters, along National Pass, with morning tea before going down Slack Stairs to the Lower Wentworth Falls, along Federal Pass, and then up the Valley again and back to The Hut.

It being the time for the northern migration there was a great number of yellow-faced honeyeaters, silvereyes, pardalotes, red wattle birds, lewin honeyeaters, **and**, but not on migration, a **Powerful Owl**, which was passed by most of the party and only sighted by the last two members.

There was some concern at seeing people with ropes absailing down Wentworth Falls among the *Microstrobis fitzgeraldii* which is already struggling for survival beneath polluted water. One foot in the wrong place could mean an end to a very rare plant. There was also absailing being done at Empress Falls but this did not seem to cause any damage.

Shortly after lunch we heard eleven rifle shots higher up in the Valley of the Waters. NPWS were notified when we returned to the Hut.

We all felt that greater care should be taken of this beautiful area lest the "Moss's Gentle Fingers" be damaged.

—David Thomas.

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In the Bush

My arrival back to Australia from China on a date perilously close to Hut News deadline, prompts me to draw on trip observations. I will concentrate on environmental matters.

The map shows the areas actually seen. The links to each were by air. Since my visit to China sixteen years ago material improvements are immense. Main highways, bridges, air terminals, hotels, railway stations are equal to any we have. The internal airlines we used had up to date planes, clean efficient terminals and smartly dressed staff. The many wealthy Chinese customers were most elegantly dressed and they carried a sophisticated affluent air. One feels however that this great leap forward has caused great environmental problems. A

haze of smog envelops each city where tall chimneys poured out columns of black smoke from coal burning furnaces. I thought it ominous that I saw no sea gulls or pigeons around the shorelines of Hong Kong and Shanghai. Have they been eaten out long ago? In all our travelling we saw few birds except in National Parks and Gardens.

In the streets additional loads of smog were belched out by fleets of buses and cars. I wonder what the life span of the constabulary is who stand for hours on duty at traffic control points. One feels the extra burden on a smoker's lungs is of no consequence in this soup of fog. Nevertheless the Government have warnings on the evils of smoking, well distributed around city streets and public places.

Coal is the chief energy source I am told. The heart of a train buff would be stirred by the sight of very modern and powerful locomotives belching their way across the countryside. Oil however has transformed the NW of China. Within the last ten years, mean villages along the silk road have been replaced by the most modern cities.

I'm no political or economic expert but it's pretty obvious that since the fervour of the early days of communism and the introduction of foreign capital and investment, a middle class has emerged

anxious for a share in the good things of life. The roads are already choked with buses, taxis, and a goodly sprinkling of modern Chinese-made cars and of course bicycles. The department shops offer all the western appliances we take for granted.

The peasant however seems to live the same hard life and they are the vast majority of the population (74% approx.). Every inch of soil is used. Apart from a few state plantings surmounting the highest slopes there is not a shrub or sapling in view. Admittedly those observations were only made on a two

hundred mile journey through the rural area surrounding Hangzhou, but there is no reason it should be otherwise in other parts of China. Food production is number one priority. I have seen a few Australian deserts but none to

equal the dreariness of the Gobi where it straddles the road in NW China. In some places not a sign of life could be seen and the hills were as interesting as a slag heap.

The whole trip was a stimulating jolt to one's sense of values. Much of what we take for granted would be seen as a gift from Heaven by the Chinese.

It was my pleasure to join the first available society walk on my return, fill the lungs with good clean air, look around and just be "in the bush".

The Bunyip.

Mountain of Gold

Out Capertee way there is a mountain of gold; it has been standing there through the ages, since life began—long, long before there were humans.

Golden cliffs reflect the golden rays of the afternoon sun, until even as darkness falls the dying light reflects its last on the mountain of gold.

Above the golden cliffs are giant pagodas, huge monuments of stone sculptured by wind and water and time. From the tops of the giant pagodas you can see the whole world.

Higher still on the mountain, above the giant pagodas, an ancient volcano has left behind basalt rock, rich dark soil and precious stones—diamonds and rubies—but none as precious as the golden mountain itself. And on top of the basalt are river pebbles, washed and smoothed by an ancient river.

Beneath the golden mountain is black coal, made of decayed vegetation crushed beneath the mountain of golden sand. A hundred years ago men mined coal from beneath the golden mountain, causing some of it to crumble. They cut down all the trees. They built their houses beneath the boulders which had been cast down by the mountain over the ages.

These men are gone. The trees have regrown. The ruins of some of the houses can still be found, sheltered beneath the boulders tossed down by the golden mountain.

Now other men with large machines want to mine for more coal from beneath the mountain of gold. Is coal more precious than gold?

When the mountain of gold has crumbled and is just a pile of rubble, the children of the children of the children might hear a legend that once there was a golden mountain, more beautiful and more precious than all the precious stones in the world, that shone golden in the afternoon sun and reflected the last golden glow of each golden sunset.

They will ask, what happened? Coal was mined from beneath the mountain of gold. What happened to the coal? It was sold for money and shipped over the oceans and was burnt. What happened to the money? It was spent. What happened to the people? They are dead.

—Christine Davies

New Members

Sonia Bennet, Seven Hills
Christina Jones, Leura
Mark Dando, Wentworth Falls

Membership

The Society is keen to have new members who are concerned about the welfare of the Blue Mountains natural environment. Contact the Membership Secretary, Ross Coster—telephone (047) 59.1247 FAX 59.1095, or write to P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, 2782.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- MAY
- 03 (Fri) **Forum on Rare and Endangered Plants in the Blue Mountains.** Blaxland Community Centre at 8 pm.
 - 05 (Sun) **Bushwalk and picnic at Kanangra site.** Meet 9.30 at Mount Victoria Station. Contact Muriel Healey 58.6574. Grade 4
 - 06 (Mon) **Leisure Walk—Bonnie Doon.** Meet at Explorer’s Tree at 9.30. Contact John Gibbs 82.6509. Grade 4.
 - 11 (Sat) **(Please note that the Literary Bushwalk has been changed to 25 May)**
 - 13 (Mon) **Leisure Walk—Transit of Venus.** Meet 9.30 at locked gate at end of Clearview Parade, Hazelbrook. 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) **Leisure Walk—Minna Ha Ha Falls.** Meet Minna Ha Ha Reserve, North Katoomba, at 9.30. Contact Christine Davies 87.7246. Grade 4.
 - 25 (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 8.30 am. Contact Helen Raphael 58.8934. Grade 4.
 - 27 (Mon) **Leisure Walk—Walls Cave.** Meet 9.30, Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. Contact Tessa Knight 87.6543.
 - 28 (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.

- JUNE
- 02 (Sun) **Bushwalk—Porter’s Pass.** A wonderful walk through heath and rainforest. Meet at Blackheath Station commuter carpark at 10 am. Duration about 4-5 hours. Grade 5. Contact John Gibbs 82.6509.
 - 03 (Mon) **Leisure Walk—Den Fenella.** Meet at The Hut at 9.30. Contact Lee Tredinnick 57.4030.
 - 15 (Sat) **Bushwalk—Lockley’s Pylon.** Magnificent views. Meet at Leura Station carpark 9 am. Duration about 5 hours including drive to track head. Grade 4. Contact Chris Woods 82.3419.
 - 17 (Mon) **Leisure Walk—Clifftop: Leura Cascades to Echo Point.** Meet Leura Cascades picnic area at 9.30. Contact Norah Gaynor 87.6071. Grade 4.
 - 19 (Wed) **Bushwalk—Valhalla Head.** An easy walk on the plateau. Meet Mt. Victoria Station 9 am. Duration about 5 hours. Grade 4. Contact Imre Gahl 84.3286.
 - 24 (Mon) **Leisure Walk—Old Point Pilcher.** Meet northern side of Medlow Bath Station at 9.30. Contact Christine Davies 87.7246. Grade 4.
 - 25 (Tues) **Committee Meeting** at The Hut at 7 pm.
 - 28 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut** at 7.30 pm.

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.**

WALKS

Walking? It’s much more than that: wanders, strolls, hikes, tramps, treks, rambles, meanders, explorations, journeys, outings.

Currently, there are usually three regular walks each month. These occur on the first Sundays, the third Wednesdays and third Saturdays. There are leisure walks on Monday mornings, and this month we have a Literary Bushwalk on the Saturday 25th.

If there is a demand out there among you for more walks, I will schedule more, but it will require some input from you as to where to go and what to do, etc. In any event, I welcome all suggestions and ideas.

Would you like to lead a walk? Do you have a special place you would like to share with others? Do you have a special interest such as plants, rocks, history or leeches? Well, don’t be shy about it! I know several of you have particular skills and interests and I’m sure you would like to share your knowledge.

This is your Society. Help it to grow and you will expand your own boundaries along with it. Please talk to me on

047.82.3419 or write to me at PO Box 227, Katoomba 2780. *Chris Woods.*

Minnamurra River Mouth

It is so different for old Blue Mountaineers to acclimatise to the coastal walks. One day in November we set off to explore the sandy peninsula which separates the Minnamurra River from the sea, just north of Kiama. We drove along the Killalea State Nature Reserve road which branches from the road leading into Shellharbour, enjoying views of river on the right and turquoise sea on the left. At the end we parked and could see below us the long deserted beach, the wooded spit dividing river and sea, Stack Island, and Minnamurra Headland behind the river’s mouth.

We set off down steep rocky steps below the twisted sand-dune scrub to the beach. Long ropes of dune grass straggled across the white sand; purple pigs’ face, tiny geraniums, sparse tufts of course grass waving in the wind, enormous white lilies; then the dry sand and the hard bubbly rocks sloping to the waves. Walking

along the spongy sand at the water’s edge, cooling our feet in the waves, we were glad of the sea-breeze. We walked for about 1½ km to the very end of the spit and looked back up the Minnamurra River at the sandbanks and mangroves. The water was clear and tiny fish darted away from us. But there was nowhere to sit so we came back to the beach and sat on a low sandbank in the wind to keep cool, as there was no shade. Opposite us was Stack Island, deserted, and shaped, according to Captain Cook who named it, like a haystack.

On the way back we found a path leading into the thick scrub so we cut across the spit along a shady level path to the river. There were plenty of Banksias, but we missed our other mountain flowers and wondered what the bush was like before someone introduced the cursed lantana.—Grace and Fred Bayley