

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



EMP2 Developments

Last month we spoke about the two big issues for the Society:

- BMCC's progress with EMP2, and
- The Nomination of the Blue Mountains for World Heritage Listing.

Well, not much is happening with the World Heritage Nomination. Our contacts in the Federal and State spheres both consider that the reasons for the delays rest with the other. How to break the nexus? Funding seems to be an important part of the situation, and as the money mostly comes from Canberra, we've decided to write to Kerry Bartlett (MHR for Macquarie) for a meeting so we can personally press our claims for priority from the Federal Government. **Letters to Mr. Bartlett (PO Box 376, Springwood 2777), stressing the importance of the World Heritage Nomination, would assist.**

What about the other key issue — EMP2? Blue Mountains Councillors are now involved in a round of workshops to review the local planning issues, in preparation for EMP2 public exhibition later this year. The society became involved on Monday 17 February when a fax was received about tea time. The fax was the business paper for the next night's workshop. Councillors were being given about twenty-six hours to review a complex paper - **one which has far reaching environmental consequences** - for discussion at the workshop the next night.

The Society became involved, with another environmental group, in sending faxes to all twelve councillors, based on the business paper we received. We stressed the importance of two points associated with the development of land currently zoned "Residential Bushland Conservation 8/HA", namely:

- Development to be forbidden on land with a slope greater than one in five, and
- Development also to be forbidden on land within fifty metres of lakes, lagoons, watercourses and significant natural features, such as rock outcrops, cliffs and rock ledges.

We don't know what councillors made of these suggestions, because at the workshop, it was made clear that the workshop papers were confidential documents, and were not to be discussed with anyone. Our faxes had clearly demonstrated that we had got a copy of the papers for that night's meeting. The official view was that our activity was all against the rules for the conduct of council workshops.

- We have three questions?
- Is it fair to expect councillors to discuss complex issues when they only receive twenty-six hours notice?
 - Why can't councillors consult their constituency before discussing issues that are of vital concern to residents?
 - Why can't residents know and comment about matters of widespread public interest when they are being discussed at Council Workshops?

It is important that the EMP2 plans go on exhibition at the earliest possible opportunity, but not if this requires a reduction in the level of environmental protection. **Why not ring your local councillor and discuss the events of 17/18 February?**

We need to find a way to improve the current processes for the conduct of council workshops — so that we can comment and, hopefully, influence councillors to take an environmentally friendly view when they are meeting in workshops to consider environment related matters.

Volunteers Needed for Easter Walking Track Surveys

NPWS is currently undertaking visitor surveys on walking tracks and footpads in a number of areas throughout the Blue Mountains. They hope to survey track users in as many locations as possible over the Easter long weekend with the assistance of volunteers.

If you would be willing to count track users and/or conduct a small number of face-to-face interviews (using a standard survey questionnaire) in one of the following areas, please phone Sue Morrison (87.8877) **no later than Monday 17 March.**

Blackheath (Govetts Leap/Evans LO/Perys Lookdown); Katoomba/Leura/Wentworth Falls; Glenbrook; Wild Dog Mountains (Blue Mountains NP); Wollemi NP (SW section/Newnes canyons) .Kanangra-Boyd NP; Wollangambe area.

From a New Member ...

Dear Members, The Conservation Society needs the help of every member in the fight to preserve the natural environment of our beautiful Blue Mountains. It doesn't matter if you are a long-standing or brand new member, or how busy you are, you **can** help.

If you would like to participate, in a way that is pleasant and not too time consuming, please ring me on 82.7110 so that we can arrange an informal gathering to talk about how we can actively contribute to the society in any way, no matter how small.

— Marie McInnes

Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held on 7.30 pm on Friday 21 March 1997 at Wentworth Falls Public School in Falls Road. We are looking for a big attendance to vote in a strong committee for the coming year.

There will be several vacancies on the management committee. A description of positions was sent out with last month's *Hut News*. Can you help?

The Society is looking for dedicated people who can serve on the Management Committee or could assist on one or our sub-committees. Further information from the Secretary Les Coyne (57.3327).

A.C.F. Campaigns

The Society has sent \$100 donation to the ACF Save Hinchinbrook Campaign (see article on page 2).

The Australian Conservation Foundation is currently working to ensure the protection of the habitat of our endangered species. Native vegetation is being cleared at an alarming rate, threatening the existence of many endangered species.

ACF have also launched a major campaign to oppose mining in areas of high conservation value. The areas under threat are our national parks, state parks, World Heritage Areas and wilderness areas.

"Hut News", the newsletter of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.		
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Land Use

Open Government Not Yet on the Menu

The McDonalds hamburger debate in Council on February 25 was probably a sign of things to come. This debate saw a sharp split between those Councillors willing to block or modify developments only on technical grounds and those influenced by community attitudes to development — resulting in no McDonalds for now.

The same kind of split is likely to occur at the series of secret workshops for councillors that have now begun dealing with Environment Management Plan 2.

Most informed observers believe that these secret workshops are where the real decisions about the future size and shape of Blue Mountains towns will be made.

Despite the importance of EMP2 to every resident, there is a group of councillors who are determined to keep these discussions behind closed doors. They would rather try to intimidate councillors of opposing views than agree to bring the most important phase of the EMP2 process into the open.

Kerry Bartlett's Airport Concerns

Macquarie parliamentarian Kerry Bartlett told a recent forum in Springwood that he had unsuccessfully lobbied his Canberra colleagues to consider major airport sites outside Sydney. Our Federal Member said that he and Lindsay MP Jackie Kelly had received relatively few letters of protest about Badgery's Creek and other airport sites in the Sydney basin.

Nevertheless, the stand taken by Kerry and Jackie has been backed by the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils which is now overwhelmingly opposed to Badgery's Creek Airport. Liverpool Council is now isolated in its strange pro-Badgery's position.

You are urged to contact Kerry Bartlett and/or Jackie Kelly opposing a new airport in Western or South-Western Sydney (Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600).

St. Basil's Wentworth Falls

BMCS is objecting to a development application for 42 residential units on the St. Basil's site at Wentworth Falls.

Concerns include increase of sealed surfaces, changes to drainage patterns, and the overall effects on the surrounding catchments. — *Don Morison*

Membership Enquiries: The Society is keen to have new members who are concerned about the welfare of the Blue Mountains natural environment. Contact membership secretary, Ross Coster: Work (047)59.1247, Home 59.1837 FAX 59.1095, or write to P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.



Hinchinbrook — World Heritage Vandalism

Where two world heritage areas meet in far north Queensland — the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics — lie Hinchinbrook Island and Channel; a sublime work of nature which is being vandalised in the name of economic development.

A massive tourist development on Hinchinbrook Channel by Keith Williams is proceeding with the approval of John Howard's Federal Government and the fervent support of the Queensland State Government.

No environmental impact study has been done for the 1500-guest resort, 250-boat marina with supporting channel and breakwater. The pristine mangrove forest has been bulldozed, massive earthworks undertaken and worse is to come unless conservation-minded people can stop this madness.

There is deep alarm that the development will be the final, fatal blow to the dugong population of the Great Barrier Reef. The dugong or "sea cow" population has crashed by over 50% in only eight years. Yet this irresponsible development will expose this precious marine mammal to high risk from boat strikes and disruption and pollution of its seagrass feeding grounds. All the tourist dollars in the world cannot compensate for the loss of the dugongs from the Great Barrier Reef.

You can still help. A High Court challenge to the development is being prepared. A Legal Fighting Fund has been set up and your donation is vital. Send tax-deductible donations to the Hinchinbrook

Fighting Fund, Australian Conservation Foundation, 340 Gore Street, Fitzroy VIC 3065. — *Noel Plumb (National Parks Assn)* (This article was published in the National Parks Journal, February 1997 issue)

Weed of the Month Project

Unashamedly borrowing BMCS's excellent Weed of the Month idea, Lindeman Road Bushcare Group has expanded the concept. With the assistance of Council's Bushland Management section and Bonnie Doon Fauna Study Group, a display will be mounted each month in the foyer of the Council Chambers, at libraries, and at various other appropriate locations. This display will comprise original artwork, photos, potted weeds, and an informative illustrated leaflet to take away. Future directions include living weed displays "WANTED" posters, and bookmarks.

This project should result in permanent, locally-based high-quality display materials being available for Weeds Awareness Week and other events such as World Environment Day. It is hoped that special displays can be mounted for Water Week, Asthma Week, etc. If successful (and adequately funded), this project will be ongoing, and will target noxious and environmental weeds in upper and lower Blue Mountains.

You are invited to participate in this project and contribute your wealth of knowledge and experience about weeds, the bush, and the Mountains. Of special importance is what you may know about the effect of weeds on habitat and fauna, and where and when to get good photos.

Please ring Barbara Harley on 82.4305 if you can contribute in any way. Every bit of help will be greatly appreciated.



Weed of the Month

Cherry Laurel (*Prunus lauroceracus*)

Another garden escape, Cherry Laurel is a multi-stemmed, vigorous, spreading evergreen shrub, occasionally a small tree. It is easy to spot in the bush, where its large shiny bright green leaves are very different in colour and texture from our native bushland plants.

It bears large leathery oblong leaves with bright green shiny upper surfaces. The veins are distinctly yellow, and the backs of the leaves are pale and dull. The upright spikes of tiny strongly-scented ivory flowers seen in early spring become clusters of cherry-sized berries, ripening to purplish-black, through summer and autumn.

Cherry Laurel is a familiar sight in older Upper Mountains parks and gardens, where it has been used extensively as a screen, hedge or windbreak. In the bush it poses a serious threat to our bushland, replacing and crowding out native plants and trees. Under its dense canopy the soil remains cold and dark, conditions which do not favour the germination or growth of native plants.

Cherry Laurel spreads by seed. The berries are attractive to some birds, who eat the fruit and deposit the seed somewhere within their home range. Cherry Laurel in your garden will encourage Common Mynahs who will drive away native species.

For directions on how to remove this weed, see the leaflet Control of Woody Weeds available from Council and libraries.

If the plant has been used as a screen or windbreak you could replace it with a non-invasive Photinia, a Rhododendron (get advice from your local nursery), or better still one of the fast-growing, bird-attracting Melaleucas and Banksias (advice from SGAP).

ANYTHING IS BETTER ... who needs to grow a weed!!!

(Thanks to Lindeman Road Bushcare Group — Enquiries 82.4305)

Welcome to New Members:

Margery Sherman, Lawson
Deb Lisyak, Lawson
K Rummans, Hazelbrook
Marilyn Foley, Hazelbrook
Frances Lundberg, Lawson
Elizabeth Isaacs, Bullaburra
Michael and Ruth Wortley, Blaxland
Helen Morgan, Wentworth Falls
Fred Patchell, Lawson
Valerie Anne Yates, Hazelbrook
Ann M Gale, Wentworth Falls
Mark and Sharon Burridge, East Blaxland
Les Mounser, Lawson
Helena Combe, Blackheath
Norah and Sean Holman, Katoomba
C Van Den Bout, Hazelbrook

Pollution Perspectives

The Environmental Defender's Office is hosting a one day conference to discuss and critique the proposed new pollution legislation. Opening address, the Hon. Pam Allen, Minister for the Environment. Come and have a say.

9 am to 4.30 pm, Thursday 20 March 1997 at YWCA (opposite Hyde Park), Wentworth Avenue, Darlinghurst, Sydney. Cost: Corporate/government \$145, local government \$90, community groups, non profit, concession \$40. Phone Les Coyne (57.3327) for a copy of the registration form. More information 02.9262.6989.

Greta Vanry

Greta Vanry is a life member and was a founder member of the Society.

Many members will know of Greta's tireless work for the society and for the environment. Nature conservation has been a way of life for Greta. She always carried a plastic bag to collect any rubbish found along the track, always stopped to pull out weeds in the bush. While others rested for lunch, Greta weeded! She grew native plants for the Society's annual plant sales, collected aluminium cans for sale.

Now 88 years of age and very ill, Greta still remembers her past work for the society. Until quite recently she has regularly walked up and down Sublime Point Road near her home, picking up any rubbish.

Bird Observers

Members are encouraged to join Blue Mountains Bird Observers.

Membership costs \$10 per year. There is a quarterly meeting with a guest speaker, mid-week bushwalks and other excursions, and a monthly newsletter.

It is great fun watching the birds and listing those you see. The list is sent to the Bird Observers at the end of each month. The information is compiled into a monthly list of Blue Mountains birds (in January there were 104 species listed). Contact Chris Todd 51.3482.

On a beautiful autumn day last year, during a walk at Mount Irvine, we lingered on the tessolated hill overlooking the vast wilderness or Bowen's Creek and the Wollangambe River. Helen Raphael read this poem, Rumer Godden's translation from the French of "The Prayer of the Goat" from "Prayers from the Ark". The goat here is undoubtedly a 'wild' conservationist at heart! The double exclamation marks are Helen's — "one isn't quite enough for such sentiments!!"

Lord,

let me live as I will!
I need a little wild freedom,
a little giddiness of heart,
the strange taste of unknown flowers.
For whom else are your mountains?
Your snow wind? These springs?
The sheep do not understand.
They graze and graze,
all of them, and always in the same direction,
and then eternally
chew the cud of their insipid routine.
But I—I love to bound to the heart of all
Your marvels,
leap your chasms,
and, my mouth stuffed with intoxicating
grasses,
quiver with an adventurer's delight
on the summit of the world!!

AMEN!

In the Bush

I wish to enlarge on the brief mention I made last issue of my sojourn at Perisher. Its billabongs do nothing to encourage immersion, fed as they are from surrounding snow fields.

Thirty years have passed since my last visit. Hearing and reading about the development of the ski-slopes is one thing, but seeing them is another. Superlatively designed lodges are stamped on the slopes, no expenses spared. Adjoining them are the ski-slopes festooned with lines of poles, cables, snow making machines and vast tarred parking areas.

During our stay it was all deserted which gave one an eerie feeling. Later in the year an absolutely different atmosphere will pervade the slopes. Hundreds of humans in expensive array will be paying big money for transportation up the slopes for the privilege of rushing down again.

The installation, maintenance and supply of power needed for that activity,

plus the warm air-conditioning of the lodges must make huge demands on environmental resources. The funny part is I bet the participants will return home and feel they are doing their bit by recycling the milk cartons and separating the glass from the garbage.

Nevertheless Bunyip had sufficient control of his conscience to fill up with petrol, burn up some rubber and pollute some atmosphere and be off to the Snowys.

The Blue Mountains and the Snowys have little in common. They have different geological histories. We live on a dissected plateau of very poor soils. The Snowys are roughly 2000' higher and many of the valleys are U-shaped through the passage of ancient glaciers. The profiles of its hills are much more rounded. There is a broad cut-off point of about 6000' for tree cover. Snow gums dominate the scene, for no other tree can follow them to this height. After that it is upland meadow country which supports the wonderful display of wild flowers.

Now these plants really only have three months to reproduce themselves so we see every biological trick used to assist their

survival. Some hug the ground in heavy mats, leaves are often small or crowded, woolly haired stems and leaves, but they all have the capacity for quick response once the weather warms.

December to February are the only months with warmth. By March cooling off commences and plant growth slows or stops. As we were there in early December we saw no mass flowerings of Alpine varieties, but the makings were present.

Below the 6000' level quite large areas were covered with a wide variety of flowers. From an artist's point of view the names are unimportant. It is the mosaic of textures which please the eye and make the area so distinctive.

A tight clump of snow gums, an open patch of colourful meadow flowers, toss in a few massive granite boulders, a big blue sky, and absolute stillness, and you have the High Country picture. — **The Bunyip.**

DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP IF IT IS DUE

MARCH (By popular vote, Leisure Walks will be 8.30 start until Easter.)

- 10 (Mon) **Earlybird Leisure Walk — Horne's Point.** Meet at Mount Victoria Station at 8.30. Contact Gillian Janus 87.6181.
- 15 (Sat) **Bushwalk — Hanging Rock.** Meet at Blackheath Station commuter carpark at 10 am. Contact Valerie Collins 59.2472. Grade 5.
- 17 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 57.2783.
- 17 (Mon) **Earlybird Leisure Walk — Minna Ha Ha Falls.** Meet at Katoomba Station (Gearin's Hotel side) at 8.30. Contact Fay Arnold 84.3225.
- 18 (Tues) **Committee Meeting,** at The Hut at 7 pm.
- 19 (Wed) **Bushwalk — The Jungle.** Meet at Blackheath commuter carpark at 9 am. Contact Carol Butcher 57.3830. Grade 7. Duration 6-7 hours.
- 21 (Fri) **Annual General Meeting — 7.30 pm** at Wentworth Falls Public School in Falls Road.. Guest Speaker, Graham Alcorn.
- 24 (Mon) **Earlybird Leisure Walk — Katoomba Cascades to Echo Point.** Meet at Katoomba Station (Gearin's Hotel side) at 8.30. Contact Mervyn Bird 87.7959.

APRIL (Leisure Walks return to 9.30 start)

- 06 (Sun) **Bushwalk— Blue Mountains Historic Roads.** Meet at Mount Victoria Station at 9.30. Contact Christine Davies 87.7246. Grade 5. Duration 6 hours.
- 07 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Wentworth Falls Lake.** Meet 9.30 carpark at the Lake (Sinclair Crescent). Contact Ruth Milton 57.3584.
- 14 (Mon) **Leisure Walk —Gipsy Pool.** Meet 9.30 Woodford Station carpark. Contact Sue Morrison 59.1932.
- 16 (Wed) **Bushwalk — Pope's Glen.** Meet at the War Memorial (opposite Blackheath Station) at 9.30. Contact Imre Gahl 84.3286. 4 hours. Grade 4.
- 17 (Thurs) **Committee Meeting.**
- 19 (Sat) **Bushwalk.**
- 21 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.**
- 21 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Darwin's Walk.** Meet 9.30 at park in Falls Road (Cnr. Great Western Highway). Contact Lee Tredinnick 57.4030.
- 25 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut.**
- 28 (Mon) **Leisure Walk —Blair Athol Mine.** BRING A TORCH. Meet 9.30 Mount Victoria Station. Contact Christine Davies 87.7246.

Hut News
 would like to hear
 from children with
 poems, stories or
 essays about the Blue
 Mountains.

<p>Leisure Walks</p> <p>The Earlybird Leisure Walkers on 10 February had much to be thankful for: a mild day after a hot weekend, majestic scenery, and an enthusiastic leader, Christina Jones, who did a lot of research to make our walk really interesting. On our way along the Prince Henry Cliff Walk between Gordon Falls Reserve and Leura Cascades we learnt the origin of the names of three of the lookouts — Elysian and Olympian evoking happy images of ancient Greece, and Tarpeian Rock being associated with gruesome executions in ancient Rome.</p> <p>At morning tea, overlooking Bridal Veil Falls, we had some reminiscences from brothers Graham and Wilson Alcorn about working on the tracks, going up and down the awesome steel ladders and filling in the old Leura Baths. As a bonus, Graham</p>	<p>recited one of his poems for us. — <i>Norah.</i></p> <p>(If anyone would like to join us on our walks and needs transport, please ring Norah Gaynor (87.6071). Train times at the moment are not very convenient.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Monday Walking</p> <p>We gathered for our walk in the bush today Our dear friend Christina leading the way The weather was kind And the track was good Our cares and our worries all left behind A couple of hours free to enjoy Laughter, friendship, being at peace And in awe of the beauty surrounding us Learning of Elysian, Olympia and Tarpeian Rock Morning tea, Graham's poetry always inspiring Watching the black cockatoos chasing, swooping, gliding Soaring free in the valley below us Thank you for Mondays</p> <p style="text-align: right;">— <i>Jan Cutler</i></p>
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Letter Writing

A discussion/letter writing group meets at Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre Thursdays 1-3 pm. The group looks at topics like uranium mining, genetic engineering, proposed second airport.

It would be good if someone came along with some expertise on local issues.

Phone Helena (87.8554) for more information, or just come along.

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