

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



Federal

Integrated Development Assessment Proposal: THE CARR GOVERNMENT MUST DROP IT!

Worthwhile public participation in Development Consent can only happen if the public is **notified** about significant developments in their area, and appropriate people who are directly accountable to the public make the decisions — in most cases, this means our elected Councillors!

The Carr Government has caused a severe threat to public participation to materialise in the form of the 'Integrated Development Assessment' White Paper and proposed legislation which could become law as early as September 1997.

If that happened, the requirement to notify the public would be reduced — even with some very important developments like subdivisions. Additionally, many Development Consent functions currently carried out by local councils could be privatised and removed further from public scrutiny.

A vague new category 'State Significant Development' would be created — allowing the pro-development Department of Urban Affairs and Planning to make many important decisions through a virtually secret process.

Peak environment groups — the Nature Conservation Council, Total Environment Centre, and several others — have made a joint submission, calling on the Carr Government to drop the Integrated Development Assessment White Paper, and conduct a holistic review of reforms to the Environmental Planning and Assessment process.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society urges its members to write to Mr. Bob Carr, Premier, Parliament House, Sydney, and Mr. Bob Debus, Member for the Blue Mountains, supporting the above demand of the peak environment groups.

Government's environment powers.

There has been a series of appalling decisions — culminating in Government approval of world-recognised wetlands at Point Lillas as the site for Victoria's chemical storage facility.

If we can't protect World Heritage sites such as the Great Barrier Reef and Shark Bay or internationally renowned wetlands such as those at Point Lillas, what can we protect? Will short-term economic gain always win out over conservation?

The inquiry will investigate the legal implications of treaties and conventions and the balance of powers and responsibilities between the three tiers of government.

This is not only a chance to have a say about current environment decisions, but an opportunity to give positive views on how we can put the words "protection" and "conservation" back into the environment picture.

Groups and individuals concerned about government powers or lack of powers as they relate to ecologically sustainable development, endangered species or natural and cultural heritage are asked to make a submission **before 20 June**.

For the Inquiry's terms of reference or more information, contact Australian Democrats' Fran Murray (06)277.3169. Phone Les Coyne on 57.3327 if you would like a copy of the information booklet.

Birdscaping our Gardens

At our next General Meeting on Friday 27 June, the guest speaker will be Tony Saunders who will tell us how to attract wildlife to our gardens.

A new member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Tony has a Phd in Honeyeater ecology, has been a member of the Society for Growing Native Plants (SGAP) since 1978, and a member of Cumberland Bird Observers Club for 15 years.

The meeting starts at 7.30 pm at The Conservation Hut. If you haven't been to a general meeting for a while, please come along and find out what's happening. You might find that the meetings have become very lively and interesting! (Any other improvements we can make please let us know — we want our Society meetings to be marked on everyone's calendar as **events not to be missed!!**) Visitors are welcome.

Maintenance Needed on Our Walking Tracks

At our April general meeting, guest speaker Keith Painter spoke about the deterioration in the condition of the Blue Mountains walking tracks.

Keith drew examples from Prince Henry Cliff Walk, Centennial Glen, Fern Bower, Terrace Falls and Horseshoe Falls. Problems exist with drainage, bridges, signage, fallen trees, and overgrown tracks. Keith especially highlighted the difficulty in establishing which organisations were responsible for each track (or sections of

each track). The cause of deterioration in track quality was the lack of manpower allocated to track maintenance.

Keith spoke positively about the bushcare work being done by voluntary groups, and concluded by proposing that volunteer groups be formed, each adopting sections of track in their locality.

Weed of the Month

This month's Weed of the Month is the dreaded Holly. This weed is the upper Blue Mountains bush regenerator's nightmare. It suckers under the ground and forms clumps of tough spiky bushes with horrible prickly leaves which are very difficult to remove. Birds eat the red berries and spread the seeds into the bush.

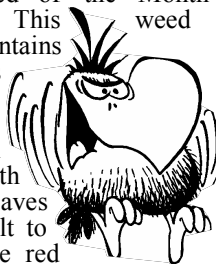
The attraction of the red berries in the garden would soon wear off if the gardener were to spend a day with our bush regenerators removing holly from the bush.

Who needs to grow a weed!!!

(Apologies to Lindeman Road Bushcare Group for referring to "Council's" leaflet in last month's Hut News. The Weed of the Month leaflets are wholly produced by Lindeman Road Bushcare Group and printed by Council.)

Submissions Sought for Senate Inquiry

Australian Democrats have initiated a broad Senate Inquiry to investigate the



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Land Use

The Misuse of Power

Treasurer Mike Egan's plan to privatise many electricity supply functions in New South Wales should ring warning bells for the environment. Wide areas of the Western Blue Mountains have already been devastated by the dumping of power station and mine waste and by the collapse of cliffs above underground coal mines that were created to supply the power stations.

The New South Wales privatisation plans have been drawn up in response to competition from Victoria. How do we know that we are not heading for a price war that will simply encourage both industrial and household users to consume vastly more electricity than necessary? Local supplier Integral Energy has done some good work, in co-operation with environmentalists, to encourage responsible electricity use. It would be a pity if that progress were to be reversed.

Airports Threat to Environment

The latest postponed date for the release of Badgery's and Holsworthy Airport Site Environment Assessments is drawing near. Alliance for an Airport Location Outside Sydney (AFALOS) and Springwood-Winnalee Action Group have recently organised discussions about possible airport sites.

Many Blue Mountains residents will have particularly noticed the recently released flight path information showing flights from Badgery's Creek would potentially have a serious effect on Mountains towns and on the Blue Mountains National Park.

The fact is that both Badgery's and Holsworth airport sites would have severe environmental consequences. The proposal for an airport in the Goulbourn area, which has drawn the interest of AFALOS, may have great potential for limiting the environmental damage from increased air travel. — *Don Morison.*



Rock Climbers

Following a comment about rock climbers in the April *Hut News* we have had correspondence from a group called Blue Mountains Cliffcare.

Blue Mountains Cliffcare Inc is an environmental and access climbers association formed by members of the local climbing community in response to the increasing impact climbers are having on the fragile cliff environments in the Blue Mountains.

Previously most climbers came from a strong outdoor/bushwalking/environmental background. This however is now not the case with many new climbers. Cliffcare is endeavouring to educate this new group of climbers in low impact, environmentally friendly and considerate climbing practices.

Climbing and abseiling activities can cause significant environmental degradation as a result of repeated and regular usage of confined sites. The sandstone environments of the Blue Mountains with their skeletal soils are particularly susceptible to this type of deterioration and are slow to recover.

Climbing and abseiling have increased greatly in popularity in the past few years and growth is continuing.

At some locations, new sites have been developed by commercial operators and others for climbing and abseiling, involving the installation of permanent rock fixtures, clearing of tracks and other unauthorised works. These activities have led to significant environmental damage at several sites, some of which were previously pristine or unused.

National Parks and Wildlife Service have prepared an interim strategy for the management of commercial climbing and abseiling which requires commercial operators to be licenced and restricts activities in sensitive areas.

In the upper Blue Mountains many popular sites are outside national parks. At present there are no licencing requirements for commercial operators outside of national parks.

Blue Mountains Cliffcare have recently been doing some great work in restoring areas which have been damaged by rock climbers/abseilers in Centennial Glen, Blackheath.

For more information about Blue Mountains Cliffcare, write to PO Box 298 Blackheath or phone 87.1325.

Savage Cuts to A.C.F. Funds

The Federal Government has cut funding to the Australian Conservation Foundation by over 40%.

ACF has been receiving an annual administration grant from the Federal Government since its formation. Although the grant is much less than the contributions received from donors and supporters, its loss will affect ACF's campaigning ability. Is this what the Government is counting on?

With threats to forests, wetlands and world heritage areas looming larger than ever, ACF needs all the campaigning

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.

strength they can muster.

Send tax deductible donations to the Australian Conservation Foundation, 340 Gore Street, Fitzroy 3065.

The Foxes

(More about foxes....)

Recent studies have proved that Foxes are a serious threat to Australia's native fauna.

Fox control in Western Australia resulted not only in substantial increases in the populations of some marsupials, but also in wider habitat use.

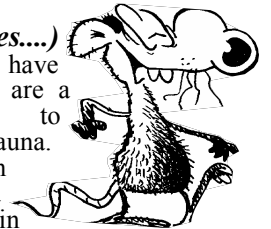
In a co-operative baiting programme done between landowners and authorities in the South West corner of Western Australia, Operation Western Shield covered an area of 5 million hectares. Since Operation Western Shield there has been an incredible recovery of native species in the area, including 12 endangered species. Rock wallabies were once common through SW Western Australia. By 1979 only six isolated colonies existed and these were in decline. In a predator removal experiment, foxes were controlled using 1080 baits in two colonies. After eight years, the populations subject to fox control increased four to fivefold. Those not subject to fox control remained the same, or fluctuated and then declined. A third population in an area having no fox control was reduced to a single, barren female.

NSW's brush-tailed rock wallabies are in much the same predicament. Once abundant and widespread throughout the mountainous country of eastern Australia, the brush-tailed rock wallaby is now found only on a few isolated cliffs through its former range. Fox baiting programmes are being carried out to try and increase their numbers.

During studies of the distribution and abundance of fauna in two forested regions in eastern New South Wales, in the north, and in the south, foxes were found to be abundant in all 13 study areas in the southern region. At the same time small wallabies were not found, quolls were present in only one area, and bandicoots in six areas, both at very low abundance. In contrast, of the ten northern study sites, foxes were only found in four, at approximately half the abundance found in the south. Small wallabies and quolls were present in nine areas, bandicoots in seven areas, and all were mostly in high abundance.

What about the Blue Mountains? It is

Continued on Page 3.



Welcome to New Members

Anthony Lowe and Helen Ford, Leura
Yvonne Bowles, Lawson
Mark Williams, Leura
PD Bonney, Faulconbridge
Frank Turner, Colyton
David Waters and Jenny Spranger, Lawson
Sheena Andrews, Wentworth Falls
Davina Engelman, Wentworth Falls
Kevin Bell and Philippa Fincher, Blackheath
Warren Harmer, Katoomba
Judy Leaver, Blackheath
Bronwyn Petrie, Mount Victoria
Kath Turner, Mount Wilson
Lindy Edwards, Katoomba
Laurence and Dorothy Robinson, Blaxland
Judith Buckley, Leura
Susan Hutchinson, Blaxland
Rod Julian, Glenbrook

...After Rain

The rain-cloud slowly parted;
The sky was brilliant blue.
The shadowed days were gone
And the Sun came shining
through.
It shone upon the tree-tops,
Beyond the window-pane.
The bush is so beautiful after rain.

The heath and grasses glistened
In the slanting yellow rays,
Reminding me of other times
And other glorious days.
The spider's webs, with diamonds
hung,
They sparkle yet again.
The bush is so beautiful after rain.

With all the sorrows of our lives
May clouds all part once more.
Remember only happy times
And hopes we have in store
Let's walk among the happy times.
Remembering life's gains.
The bush is so beautiful after rain.

— Noel May.

*A poem inspired by a walk
description in a recent Hut News.
"I was reminded of some beautiful
rainy walks."*

The Fezals

(Continued from Page 2)



not known what effect the fox has on Blue Mountains native fauna. However, in our unique environment with its wonderful biodiversity, an introduced predator has to be assumed to be having an adverse impact.

Very little can be done to control the Blue Mountains fox population, especially around the towns, as baiting is not a possibility in urban areas.

The best long-term solution rests with CSIRO who are working on immunoviral sterilization using a virus which will attack the reproductive cycle of foxes. This may be ready for release around 2002.

In the meantime we can help by NOT FEEDING THE FOXES, and limiting food sources around our homes. By providing food and helping the fox through lean times we are encouraging the proliferation of the species and enabling it to extent its territory.

Foxes eat root crops and vegetables — fence the garden. They may find food in the compost heap — cover it. If you know where the fox's den is, notify National Parks and Wildlife Service (87.8877).

(.....and Rabbits)

On a bushwalk the other day a rabbit sighting brought cries of "oh, look at the cute little bunny rabbit". Funny how we humans think fur is cute and warts are not. Imagine someone saying "look at the cute little cane toad!!" The rabbit is this country's most serious pest. (More next month.)

In the Bush

The Bunyip is off again on his travels. His regular column will return next month.

Bringing Back the Bush

When we bought our three acres of bush in beautiful Blackheath five years ago, we did not realise that one-third of it had been taken over by the dreaded Gorse. Attractive in its native setting, Gorse has become a rapacious coloniser in the Australian bush.

Our land is on the vertical, sloping steeply down to swamp that becomes a creek flowing into the Grose River. Covered in Coral Fern and Tea-trees, Hakeas and Banksias as understorey to towering Oreades, Scribbly Gum and other Eucalypts endemic to the area, a haven for wildlife, it was rapidly being taken over by the Gorse.

Some bushes were over two metres high and in dense thickets. In spring, a good acre was a sea of yellow blossom that certainly was not Acacia!

We made enquiries on how best to destroy it: burning off - too dangerous and destructive; spraying - expensive and unsightly. We decided the best way was to cut it down to almost ground level, poisoning the raw cut immediately. This method would give some room and light to the weak, struggling natives.

The initial cutting down was the worst part, bent double among dense prickly branches. We used Zero as the poison at first, then Hortico Blackberry and Tree Killer which we had used with success on a blackberry patch. Both poisons weakened the Gorse which has long underground root systems, but the latter we found the most effective.

Some stumps still sprouted weak shoots the following year but any burgeoning blossom was nipped out as soon as it was seen. Then began the long hard job of mattocking out the roots.

As we cleared the worst patches, almost bare earth by the time we had finished, it became very evident that the natives were liberated. Geebung, Tea-trees, clumps of native grasses and reeds, even sapling Eucalypts and Banksias, were coming into their own. An abundance of different birds, Ringtail Possum dreys and sometimes the thump of a passing Swamp Wallaby were great rewards.

The work is far from finished. Gorse seeds, we were told, stay in the ground for up to twelve years so we will be pulling up seedlings and working on new growth, usually in the most inaccessible places, for some years yet.— Gillian Janus.

Where Are All the Volunteers Coming From?

We would like to offer a few comments about Keith Painter's talk on walking tracks given at the April general meeting.

Mr. Painter bemoaned the lack of routine track maintenance — we agree. Unfortunately the politicians will continue to think that there is more mileage in opening new tracks than maintaining existing tracks, unless we as voters write to

tell them otherwise.

We agree with Mr. Painter that it would be nice to preserve our historic tracks. However, not all these tracks were located in the best position to avoid damaging the environment. Sometimes they cut across swamps and disrupted the drainage patterns essential to the survival of fragile hanging swamps.

Sometimes these tracks were graded or drained in such a way that they caused soil erosion or created fast flowing channels which subsequently undercut the track. The only way to prevent a track becoming a watercourse is to make it level. Obviously this is not possible if you want to go down a hill, so you make a number of small level platforms. That is why there are so many steps in modern trackbuilding.

As for the suggestion of having volunteers constructing tracks — who were you volunteering? There is already an enormous amount of important work being carried out by volunteers in organisations such as our own through the nursery, our bushcare group, and the committee; there is also Cliffcare, 26 other Blue Mountains Bushcare Groups, Wildplant Rescue, Meals-on-Wheels, etc. Should this job too join the list? Isn't it important enough to be a paid job, or don't you believe most of us need to earn our living? (We also spend many weekends doing other unpaid work.)

Track construction is very hard work which requires considerable skill, stamina and an ability to work under difficult circumstances. As a Society, we should be pushing for track workers to be skilled and trained in **both** track construction and bush regeneration. Not all recent work has been good, considerable effort is being put into improving methods. TAFE currently runs two courses which include some instruction in track construction.

The rationale for building tracks is to direct human traffic safely and to protect the environment from this traffic. The bush is under pressure from an ever increasing population of residents and visitors. — Lyndal Sullivan and Ruth Ley.

Sydney's Sustainable House

A house in Chippendale is proving that sustainable living and solutions to our own pollution are not beyond the reach of the individual citizen. The owner, environmental lawyer Michael Mobbs, planned the project to meet three goals: to become an exporter of solar energy; to be self-sufficient for water; and to ensure no waste left the site. Within two months of completion the goals had been met.

Using simple and available technology, provided by Australian companies, this house has cut itself off from Sydney's water and sewerage system and exports excess power back to the electricity grid for use by other consumers.

Each year the house keeps more than 60,000 litres of sewage out of the ocean, saves 102,000 litres of water from being taken out of the Shoalhaven River and Warragamba Dam, keeps more than 80,000 litres of stormwater out of Sydney Harbour

(Continued on Page 4)

JUNE

- 11 (Wed) **Bushwalk — “There is Life Below Woodford”, Walk 1.** Emu carvings and old saw mill site. Meet Bulls Camp, Woodford at 9.30 am. Contact Allan Macaulay 39.2767. Grade 5. Duration 4-5 hours.
- 16 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 57.2783.
- 16 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Exploring Shipley.** Meet Blackheath commuter carpark (w.side) at 9.30. Contact Norah Gaynor 87.6071
- 19 (Thu) **Committee Meeting.** 7 pm at Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson.
- 21 (Sat) **Bushwalk — The Lost World.** Meet at the carpark beside Springwood Library at 9.30 am. Contact Ron Wheeler 57.1526.
- 23 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Valhalla Head.** Meet Mount Victoria Station at 9.30. Contact Gillian Janus 87.6181.
- 27 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut, 7.30 p.m.** Guest speaker Tony Saunders — “Birdscaping our Gardens”.
- 30 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Berghofer’s Pass.** Meet 9.30 Mount Victoria Station. Contact Norah Gaynor 87.6071.

JULY

- 06 (Sun) **Bushwalk — Mount Banks.** Meet at Mount Victoria Station at 9.30 am. Contact Basil Tickner 87.7264. Duration 5-6 hours
- 07 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Glow Worm Tunnel.** (Day bus trip — booked out). Contact Mervyn Bird 87.7959.
- 14 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Pulpit Rock, Wind-eroded Cave, Anvil Rock.** Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre at 9.30 am. Contact Christina Jones 84.1101.
- 16 (Wed) **Bushwalk — “There is Life Below Woodford”, Walk 2.** Glenbrook Creek between Blue Pool and the Duckhole. Meet at the Glenbrook entrance to National Park at 10 am. Contact Allan Maaulay 39.2767. Grade 6, as some scrambling is necessary. Duration 4-5 hours.
- 17 (Thu) **Committee Meeting.** 7 pm at Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson.
- 19 (Sat) **Bushwalk.**
- 21 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 57.2783.
- 21 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — The Transit of Venus.** Meet 9.30 am, end of Clearview Parade, Hazelbrook. Contact Helen Lomax 58.6993
- 25 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut, 7.30 p.m.**
- 28 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — The Nature Trail.** Meet 9.30 at The Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. Contact Jan Cutler 84.3079. (A picnic lunch afterwards and tree planting at The Hut.)
- 28 (Mon) **ARBOR DAY.** Join the Leisure Walkers at The Hut Picnic Ground at 12.30 for a picnic lunch and plant a tree or shrub or groundcover in the John Buki Garden to celebrate Arbor Day. (David Coleby and his dedicated group of nursery workers are busy getting native plants of local provenance ready for the occasion.)

Check your Firewood

Each autumn and winter Blue Mountains WIRES receives dozens of calls to pick up and relocate animals inadvertently delivered in firewood. Last year there were lizards, snakes, insectivorous bats, pygmy possums, feathertail gliders and geckos which had to be relocated by WIRES to areas as far away as Mudgee and Narrabri.

Most of these animals would not survive for long outside their natural habitat. Any that did survive could pose a risk for our own endemic species. Our local wildlife may be forced to compete with them for habitat and food or may even be on the menu themselves.

Always check your firewood, both when you stack it and when you are about to burn it, to see if there are any native animals included in the load. Some species, like pygmy possums or the insectivorous bats could be in torpor (a deep sleep) and be unaware that they are about to be barbecued. If you do find any native animal in the firewood, don't

release it, phone WIRES so that it can be checked out and returned home.

If you find any native animal in distress you can call WIRES 24 hours a day on 047.54.2946.

Bushwalk to Fairy Bower

On a cool Saturday morning nine Conservation Society members met at Mount Victoria Station and drove to the start of Fairy Bower. We soon warmed up while enjoying the lush surroundings which lead us to an ideal spot for morning tea and a great view. Then on to Cox's Cave, so up the ladder we went for a close inspection. On the track up to Mount Piddington we had the company of a couple of honeyeaters and a currawong came at lunch time to see what was on the menu.

Off again to Hornes Point. What a great view!. The weather was perfect — too soon to go home so we explored Witch's Glen before returning to the cars via One Tree Hill.

All looking forward to our next walk.

— Ron Amos.

Sustainable House (continued from Page 3)

and produces more than 100,000 litres of its own water. It also saves 4.3 tonnes of coal from burning and reduces carbon dioxide pollution from power stations by 8.3 tonnes. Council waste is reduced by recycling newspaper and kitchen waste.

The renovations were completed using plantation timbers and energy efficient appliances and light fittings. Outside, the house looks like a typical terrace. Inside are all the normal fittings, including an ordinary flushing toilet, and you don't have to be a handyperson to run it.

If you are looking for an inspirational experience in this time of environmental doom and gloom, take a Monday morning tour of 58 Myrtle Street and spread the word, particularly to builders, architects, engineers and government regulators.

For further information or tour bookings call (02) 9566 4340. An information kit on the project is available for purchase by people who tour the house.

(From *Environment NSW*, the quarterly newsletter of the Nature Conservation Council)