

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



"OVER THE HUMP"

September marks the half-way point in the term of the current Blue Mountains City Council. Local Environment Plan 1997 is now with the Minister for Planning and should be on display soon.

Councillors are often relying on complex and lengthy reports from Council Officers in making decisions affecting the natural environment. The would-be developers of major residential subdivisions are also taking up a lot of the time of these BMCC officers with their representations.

In spite of the significance of Officers' Reports and Recommendations, there have been major differences in the way the various Councillors have voted on matters relevant to the natural environment.

Information supplied by Coalition of Residents for the Environment tabulates the number of times that the Councillors have voted in a way supportive of the natural environment on key votes during 1996 and early 1997.

We note with sadness that there are four Councillors whose votes have consistently not been in favour of the environment. They are Clr. Neall, Clr. Harris, Clr. Egan, and Clr. Williams. Three of these Councillors (Neall, Harris and Egan) were elected under the banner of Blue Mountains Alliance, although Clr. Egan has since resigned from the Blue Mountains Alliance and sees his future as a Liberal Party candidate. Clr. Williams, who is involved with a number of development applications in the Blue Mountains, stood as an Independent.

It is particularly disappointing to observe the behaviour of the successful Blue Mountains Alliance candidates on Council. The Alliance campaigned strongly with claims that it would include the environment in its 'balance' of concerns.

As the Councillors enter the second half of their term it is our duty to emphasise the expected significance of the environment in the 1999 Council election and the crucial votes that will occur between now and then.

It is also our goal (as an organisation with a large and rapidly growing membership) to provide Councillors with advice on conservation issues that will be at least as useful and accurate as any other advice they receive.



Valley, and hundreds of hectares infested with Serrated Tussock treated in a cooperative effort with local council officers. A significant rock wallaby habitat in the Wolgan Valley has been assessed for future feral cat and fox control programs. While rangers were in the valley, weeds were controlled along the Wolgan River in the Wollemi National Park.

New pig control techniques for use in remote areas, such as the Kowmung River valley, are being developed with the assistance of bushwalking clubs. Pigs are a recent occurrence in the area. Moss Vale Rural Lands Protection Board ranger, Mr. Andrew Glover, warned in the Penrith Press that "it's illegal to transport a live feral pig". A \$10,000 fine applies".

Pig doggers — hunters that use dogs to chase down pigs for 'sport' — are reported to be active in the Lithgow, Orange and Bathurst Districts.

Pig migration 'by utility' threatens the viability of humane pig control techniques, such as using radio collars to locate pigs and then trapping the whole family.

Anyone seeing pig doggers or dangerous black pigs being transported, especially within a national park, should immediately contact NPWS or the Rural Lands Protection Board.

(Source: *The Colong Bulletin*, July 1997)

Jill Dark in South America

Jill Dark will be the guest speaker at our September general meeting. Jill and Mick Dark have recently visited South America and will talk (and show slides) about their experiences in Patagonia, the southern-most part of South America.

This is wild and beautiful country with national parks, majestic mountains, wind-swept plains, beautiful lakes and glaciers — with a wonderful variety of wildflowers. Patagonia is further south than any part of Australia, and the climate is more extreme. There are plants of Gondwana — the Proteaceae and the Southern Beech which is related to our Antarctic Beech.

The meeting at The Hut on Friday 26 September starts at 7.30 pm. Visitors are welcome.

Roadworks

At present, as part of the Urban Runoff Control Program, several unsealed roads in the Blue Mountains are being sealed.

During this work, contractors should not be dumping construction materials or parking their vehicles onto bushland.

Members are asked to keep an eye out when roadworks happen in their area and let Council know if there are any problems.

Turf or Mulch?

Following road construction activities Council will reinstate turf which has been disturbed, while woodchip mulch is generally used in bush regeneration areas.

Council is prepared to consider requests from residents, to mulch disturbed areas, who have no other grass and do not wish to maintain a lawn.

This is good news for those who have native gardens. For others, why not reduce your mowing? Mulch is better than exotic grasses around natives and gum trees.

Pest Species Management

A draft pest species management plan for the Blue Mountains has been completed by Chris Banffy of the NPWS Oberon Office.

Mr. Banffy is one of several pest species managers, a position created in the last two years to upgrade park management in this important area.

Pest management programs have recently been implemented in Abercrombie River National Park, Wolgan Valley and Gardens of Stone National Park. About 800 goats have been destroyed in the Abercrombie

"Hut News", the newsletter of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
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Deadline for next issue is Sept.18

Land Use

Those who want to plant Exotics

Concern about planting of exotics on private property near bushland has surfaced among members of the Bushcare Network and BMCS.

Malcolm Ryan, an officer of Blue Mountains City Council will soon give a public address explaining how planning instruments (such as Environment Protection zoning) relate to vegetated areas on private property.

This issue will also be taken up in BMCS' forthcoming 'Voluntary Code of Practice for Living Near the Bush'.

Malcolm Ryan's address will be at:

**Mid Mountains Community Centre
New Street, Lawson**

7 pm, Wednesday 17 September 1997

Exotic Seeds on Subdivision Sites

Another worry about exotics relates to infestations on the sites of proposed subdivisions. It is feared that sites where exotics have been growing could be a source of exotic seeds entering bushland for many years, once they are disturbed.

A particular concern has been raised about gorse plants on the site of a recently approved subdivision at Blackheath. The problem does relate to many areas of the Blue Mountains.

BMCS would welcome suggestions on how to tackle it.

From Theft to Mindless Vandalism

Gates, ballards and other protective installations for natural areas have long been the targets for malicious damage. Once access is created, it is easy for an assortment of offenders to trap native birds, steal bushrock and firewood, or simply commit acts of mindless vandalism.

Many years ago, glow-worms in the southern tunnel at Newnes Plateau were wiped out by vandals lighting fires.

Recently, at Lawson camping area, vandals destroyed ballards, damaged trees, ploughed up the soil with off-road vehicles and left masses of broken glass.

Surely, such idiots would not be worse off if they spent their entire lives in the concrete jungle of the city. We need to do more to discourage them from ever visiting the country areas of New South Wales.

— Don Morison.

New Members

Terry Vaughan, Katoomba
Gillian Stephenson, Leura
Jim Wallace, Leura
Chris and Kathy Proberts, Blaxland



Uranium and Real Estate

An environmentally friendly uranium mine — What's next, selling parks!

There can be no greater folly than uranium mining in a world heritage national park — except for Energy Resources Australia's CEO, Phillip Shervington claim, that Ranger uranium mine has 'no detrimental effect on the environment'.

ERA is relying on Ranger's environmental performance to obtain approval for the Jabiluka Uranium mine.

The Ranger Uranium mine, a huge rock crushing and uranium extraction factory, is set inside Kakadu National Park. The Arnhem Highway and the medium sized town of Jabiru were built to serve it. These activities have a huge impact on the natural and cultural environment of the park. A giant hole and a one kilometre square heap of finely ground rock dust full of chemicals and radionuclides has been created, along with numerous huge ponds and rock heaps that are somewhat less radioactive.

In addition to mine-based problems, the Jabiru mining town exports thousands of tonnes of plant nutrients via its primitive sewage treatment plant to the park environs. World Heritage wetlands have been altered, for example, the plant nutrients from the sewage have promoted the spread of aquatic weeds.

The Jabiru township is set to double if the Jabiluka uranium mine is approved.

An interesting sideline for ERA mining operations is the proposed sale of home blocks in the Jabiru township, a part of Kakadu National Park. ERA wants to recover the money invested in the town's establishment. 'Buy our uranium and at no extra cost receive your place in tropical paradise at our Kakadu condo' — could be a good sale line with northern hemisphere power corporations, especially in winter.

The sale of national park land would be immoral. National Parks are for nature conservation, not windfall profits.

(Source: *The Colong Bulletin*)

Pollution: We ALL Live

Down Stream

When pollution leaves a factory and is put into the environment, it affects air and water which belong to everyone. At the moment the EPA and the polluter together decide the pollution limits. The public has no say in this process.

NSW pollution laws are under review. The Environmental Defender's Office, in conjunction with a coalition of conservation and community groups, is calling for public participation in the licensing process. We need your help.

Pollution is a crime unless the polluter has a licence. To get a licence a polluter applies to the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), giving details of their pollution history. The EPA assesses the application and grants a licence. You might live next door and breathe the pollution. You might live down stream and drink or swim in the pollution. But you have no right to know about or dispute

the pollution levels. You are not told what the impact may be on you and on the environment.

The EPA and the Government are resisting public participation in the licencing process. They're happy to keep the process closed, one on one with the polluter.

The EPA says simply to **leave it to them; trust them; they do a good job.** Does that sound like Jo Bjelke-Peterson in Queensland twenty years ago? For better decisions, the process has to be public.

The EPA acknowledges that there are over 400 sites in NSW where pollution is having a significant effect on the environment and there has never been an EIS.

Legislation is being redrafted now. The public should have a say in pollution in licencing. **Write to:** Hon Pam Allen MP, Minister for the Environment, Parliament House, Macquarie Street, SYDNEY 2000.

Demand that the public have the right to participate in the pollution licence process. Pollution affects you — you deserve the right to know the chemicals and their impact and to have your say. If possible please also send a copy of your letter to:

Environmental Defender's Office, Level 9, 89 York Street, Sydney 2000.

If you would like more information, please call the EDO. (02.9262.6989)

EDOs Told to Stay Out of Court

New guidelines issued by the Commonwealth Government on funding for the National Network of Environmental Defender's Offices (EDOs) have restricted their ability to bring legal action against Governments and developments that breach environmental laws.

The guidelines follow complaints to the Attorney General about EDOs helping community and environment groups to pursue breaches of the law. Queensland developer Keith Williams complained to the Government that the NSW EDO had taken his Hinchinbrook development to court.

Mr. Keith Williams welcomed the decision, saying "no government is going to be stupid enough to fund challenges to decisions that they have properly made".

The guidelines will greatly restrict the community's ability to enforce environmental laws.

As Roland Brown, Chair of the Tasmanian EDO, said "it is pointless to have laws which protect the environment unless they can be enforced... the EDOs' strength is that they have the potential to litigate and act as a watchdog. If a developer or a State government knows there's someone there who can keep them honest, that has a thousand-fold effect on the quality of decision making".

What you can do.

Write a letter to the Attorney General Daryl Williams and Prime Minister John Howard at Parliament House, Canberra 2600, supporting funding of the litigation work of the EDOs. Visit your local Federal MP and let him know how much the work of the EDO Network is valued.

(Source: *Environment NSW, Winter 1997*)

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.

Eighty Years of Conservation —

An exhibition of photographs

(presented in the NSW Parliament House Fountain Court area by the Colong Foundation. The exhibition will be launched by the Premier, the Hon. Bob Carr, at 4.00 pm, 24 September)

VIEWING TIMES: Weekdays 9 am to 5 pm, 22 September to 3 October, and the evenings of 23, 24 and 25 September, 1997

Eighty Years of Conservation

The exhibition "Eighty Years of Conservation" demonstrates that the concept of preservation of the natural environment is not a recent phenomenon but stretches back to the early 1920s and beyond, when only a handful of people perceived that "progress" should not be achieved regardless of environmental cost.

These photographs are the work of Alan Rigby and Henry Gold whose careers span the period from about 1920 to 1997. They are representative of the host of bushwalker photographers, throughout this period, whose work has informed public opinion and helped to facilitate the conservation of scenic wilderness.

Mount Airley Outing

On a superb winter's day 32 travellers (including three children and two dogs), despite a few car troubles en route, arrived in convoy at Airley.

Undaunted we set off to explore this unique area whose natural charms seem to have nearly obliterated its recent shale mining past. Nevertheless as we ambled along and slightly off the track we discovered several miners huts built from local stone, sometimes propped up against a larger boulder, sometimes supported by iron drilled into the rock. These were not the most spacious of abodes but the 100 or so miners who lived on Airley at the height of the mine's operation must have called them home.

Interestingly, the higher we climbed the grander these dwellings became and in the prime position with superb views of Capertee River valley was an in-built cave featuring two roomed accommodation, a food pantry and a brick oven at the door just crying out to bake pizzas. Unlike some of the other homes this one was large enough to stretch out in.

More poetry written during a school excursion to Wall's Cave, Blackheath

Magical things!

I can hear the splashing of a waterfall,
the sound of people walking through the damp mud.
I can feel the wind soar like a bird round me,
I can see the light peeping through a gap,
a mount of rocks looking like a fairy palace.
I can feel the dust hit my skin
and see ripples in the water when the rocks fall in.
I can feel the vines brush against my skin,
the warmth of other people.
I can see the calm, cool water brush against the rocky banks,
and bright green vines forming a shelter.
All these things are magic flowing through a RAINFOREST.

Philippa Munton (3R)

We also were led to adits, ventilation shafts, brick chimneys, cables from the aerial incline, a skip and the boiler for a stationary steam engine that pulled the skips along, and we were able to see the brickwork that formed the track where the tramway came up the mountain.

We had lunch at the ruins of the old pay office and then walked further along then up the hill to the point where the aerial incline went down into Torbane for refining the shale into oil and then loading onto rail.

One of the group with a passion for industrial archaeology provided a photo of the site in operation which we compared with the present outlook. Again the traces of the past were being overshadowed as the bush reclaimed its own.

Airley is an isolated area. We heard birds constantly, found wombat holes and lots of scats, and some of us were lucky to see an echidna sheltering by a rock, and five kangaroos grazing.

The colours highlighted by the setting sun on the rock cliffs of Airley and its neighbour Mount Genowlan were striking and the pagodas glimpsed on surrounding peaks are always awesome. This was an area many of us felt drawn back to explore further either as mining history buffs or as people drawn to bush areas of natural tranquillity.

It was disturbing to learn that a mining lease has currently been granted on this site and the thought of what any further mining might do to unbalance this fragile area is daunting. —Barby Wylie

Peacefulness.

I hear the whistling wind,
the trickling of water,
a fast fish,
peacefulness,
mossy rocks, birds singing
a shady place, a soft
waterfall,
green ferns, a yabby,
calm water,
furry feathers, echoes

Katrina Ward (3R)



A Wonderful Month! (August, 1997)

Such a lovely month, August 1997, with a succession of frosty nights followed by balmy days with clear blue skies.

Near the beginning of the month I led a walk to Walls Cave, a delightful walk with bright golden Sunshine Wattle scattered through the woodland, Banksias dripping nectar, and birds — hundreds of them!

On a sandy beach near Walls Cave, Denis Kevans recited his poem "Ah, white man, have you any sacred sights?" and as he spoke his voice echoed in the cave, coming back to us like murmers of agreement from the Ancients.

A few days later I went to Minnahaha Falls. Here again Banksias and birds were delightful, with fleet New Holland honeyeaters darting in and out of the heath, and tiny acrobatic white-naped honeyeaters in the tree tops. The bushcare group has done a wonderful job on the weeds. It is hard to spot the weeds at present. And I met some friends who were doing trackwork there as part of a TAFE track-making course.

It was sad to see that the "bottomless" pool at the base of the falls has completely disappeared under a fresh load of sand and that the fallen tree trunk which a year ago was above the pool is all but buried.

And then a trip to Mount Airlie, a place unique and so beautiful as to inspire the poet and wrench the heartstrings of the less poetic. A century has passed since men of my great-grandfather's generation struggled to mine kerosene shale from beneath Airlie and Genowlan. If you search you can find the ruins of their homes and traces of the railways which carried the shale.

My 7-year-old grandson Keith's pockets were bulging with pieces of kerosene shale and a few days later he proudly brought home a merit card from Blackheath school awarded for his knowledge of geology.

It is so sad that this this beautiful and fragile place could be lost to future generations if it is mined under the present coal mining lease.

A week away in the beautiful rainforest beneath Barrington Tops, then home again for another lovely Banksia and bird walk, this time the Transit of Venus Track at Woodford. After the walk we visited Woodford Academy for a fascinating journey through Blue Mountains history back to our convict past, under the expert guidance of Gwen Silvey. The Woodford Academy is open for inspection on the third Saturday of every month from 10 to 4, and is well worth a visit.

With Spring in the air, the honeyeaters further north began their southern migration. I first noticed them flying over my garden on the 22nd August — such a thrill! That night, just three minutes after midnight, Keith's brother Brodie was born at Katoomba hospital — a perfect little human, born in this most beautiful of places, the Blue Mountains, in the loveliest of months, August 1997.

—Christine Davies.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SEPTEMBER

- 01 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Red Gum Park.** Meet end of Noble Street, Bullaburra, at 9.30 am. Contact Carolyn O'Neill 4757.3141. **WATTLE DAY.**
- 08 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Witch's Leap.** Meet Katoomba Falls Kiosk, Katoomba Falls Road (opposite Caravan Park) at 9.30 am. Contact Marie McInnes 4782.7110.
- 15 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 4757.2783.
- 15 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Wall's Cave.** Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre at 9.30 am. Contact Norah Gaynor 4787.6071.
- 17 (Wed) **Bushwalk — Cancelled.**
- 18 (Thu) **Committee Meeting .** 7 pm at Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson.
- 20 (Sat) **Bushwalk — Exploring Mount Hay.** Some rough sections, steep in parts, but slow walking. Strong footwear essential. Meet corner of Great Western Hwy/Mount Hay Road, opposite Leura Primary School, at 9.30 am. Contact Imrie Gahl 4784.3286.
- 22 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Mount Wilson Rainforest.** Meet Mount Victoria Station at 9.30 am. (Consider staying on afterwards to look at Spring gardens). Contact Jan Cutler 4784.3079.
- 26 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut, 7.30 pm.** Guest speaker Jill Dark. — Patagonia, furthestmost tip of South America (see page 1)
- 29 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Newnes.** (Day bus trip — fully booked.) Contact Mervyn Bird 4787.7959.

OCTOBER

- 05 (Sun) **Bushwalk: Fortress Ridge — "Where the Wedgetail Eagle Lives".** A beautiful wildflower walk with superb views Meet corner of Great Western Hwy/Mount Hay Road, opposite Leura Primary School, at 9.30 am. Contact June Baxter 47 877 312 Grade Medium.
- 12 (Sun) **Excursion — Mount Annan Botanic Gardens.** Guided walk through the Terrace Garden and a talk about the Wollemi Pine. Contact Christine Davies 47 877 246 (before 5 October) so that I can make a booking for the Wollemi Pine lecture (\$3 per person), guided walk (free), and arrange for car pool.
- 13 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Braeside Track.** Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre at 9.30 am. Contact Lee Tredinnick 4757.4030.
- 13 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 4757.2783.
- 20 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — October Creek.** Meet Mount Victoria Station at 9.30 am. Contact Norah Gaynor 87.6071.
- 23 (Thu) **Committee Meeting .** 7 pm at Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson.
- 27 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Rachel's Track, Clifftop Walk, Evans Lookout.** Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre at 9.30 am. Contact John Gaynor 4787.6071.
- 31 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut, 7.30 pm.**

Nature Track Bushcare Group

An enormous Cherry Laurel was cut down during the August work day, leaving an impressive stack of weed material to be collected by Council (about 3 truckloads!)

The bushcare group works on the third Monday of every month. Next working day is Monday 15 September. Meet at The Hut at 9 am. ☎ Jessica Yuille 4757-2783

Have you seen this weed?

Chrysanthemoides monilifera ssp monilifera ("Boneseed" or "Bitou Bush")

A member has informed us that this coastal weed is spreading in the Blue Mountains. It was introduced for stabilising coastal sand dunes after rutile mining, and is now a very thick pest on our coastline. An erect shrub to 3 metres high, it is flowering NOW with bright yellow flowers



in terminal clusters. Flowers are 2.5cm in diameter and resemble Crysanthemums. Green berries turn black as they ripen.

If you see this weed growing in bushland in the Blue Mountains would you please let *Hut News* know about its location (PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls).

Wilderness Expanded

A parcel of private land along the Jenolan River has been purchased through the Dunphy Wilderness Fund and will be managed by NPWS. The 320ha of land is surrounded by the Kanangra-Boyd Wilderness zone. It is a most appropriate first purchase for the Fund — Milo Dunphy's middle name was Kanangra.

The deep valleys and remnant old growth forest will now be declared wilderness, giving it the most stringent level of protection under NSW law. (Source: *National Parks Journal*, August 1997)

Visitor from Maleny

Hut News has had a request from Sylvia Dawson of Maleny who wants to visit the Blue Mountains between Oct. and

Feb. and is looking for somewhere to stay. Sylvia does volunteer work in Maleny and when she was in the Blue Mountains last year helped out at some of the bushcare working days. Some members may know her. She is "mature age, reliable... and can supply references". If anyone can help, write to Sylvia at PO Box 486, Melany, Qld., 4552.

**POSITION VACANT:
BUSHWALKS CO-ORDINATOR**

Duties: Organises and publishes a walks program. Actively markets the walks program to non members.

Qualifications: Knowledge of Blue Mountains bushwalks (i.e. able to advise walk leaders on length and suitability of proposed bushwalks).

Benefits: Able to help the Society to promote and protect the Blue Mountains environment. Being part of a great management committee. Contact Christine Davies 87.7246.