Issue No. 124, November 1997 Blue Mountains Conservation Society

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"

By now, members will have received a information letter from the Society which sets out the structure of the Society and briefly explains what we do, and asks members to give us some information about themselves.

A fair amount of effort has gone into this project because we think it is very important. The information we will gain from members who complete and return the form could be very useful in the Society's work.

We ask for your co-operation and we thank you in anticipation of a good response.

Jim Smith Talks About Heritage Study

At our general meeting at the Conservation Hut on **Friday November 28** the guest speaker will be Jim Smith.

When NPWS decided to do a heritage study of our walking tracks, who best could they ask to do the job? — Jim Smith who has been doing studying the walking tracks and collecting information for 20 years!

The Blue Mountains walking tracks are part of our cultural heritage and fit the same criteria as old buildings and other man-made things which we value and wish to preserve. The NPWS Heritage Study into Walking Tracks will be on exhibition in November.

The meeting starts at 7.30 pm. Visitors are welcome.

Badgery's Creek Airport — Public Meeting

At 2 pm on Sunday 16 November, at the Springwood Civic Centre.

I believe that the proposed siting of the airport at Badgery's Creek is the greatest human threat to our community and the natural environment in modern times.

Over one million residents from Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains will be adversely impacted, 24 hours a day, by noise and air pollution.

A briefing note from the EPA to the NSW Minister for the Environment on the Summary Draft EIS for the Second Sydney International Airport states:

"On the basis of the information available to the NPWS, all three Badgery's Creek options would result in noise and air pollution impacts on National Parks and Wildlife Service managed lands as a result of planes flying directly over Blue Mountains National Park (including an area generally included in the Blue Mountains World Heritage nomination and areas proposed for designation as wilderness under the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act), Gulguer Nature Reserve and Burragorang State Recreation Area."

Blue Mountains City Council will hold a public meeting at 2 pm, Sunday 16 November, at the Civic Centre in Springwood. This is a significant meeting and, as convener, I urge members to attend. Your support is needed.

Residents opposing the Holsworthy site convinced the Howard Government that they would not accept this airport. We must do likewise. — *Terri Hamilton.*

National Parks Under Attack

The NSW Government has released a draft Access Strategy for National Parks that represents a major shift away from the primary purpose of these protected areas — nature conservation.

The Strategy considers providing increased access for four wheel driving, commercial touring and other high impact recreation to thousands of kilometres of currently restricted management trails and environmentally sensitive core park areas. It also discusses commercial tourist development in national parks.

If it is adopted it will shape the policies that determine individual management plans for National Parks across NSW, including the Blue Mountains, and would not only threaten the nature conservation purpose of parks but would also compromise the quiet enjoyment of most park visitors.

To help counter the direction in which the Government is taking National Parks, Environment groups are holding public meetings and are urging people to write to Pam Allan *(see enclosed flyer for details)*.

The Blue Mountains meeting is at the Katoomba Civic Centre on **Friday November 14, 7 pm.** Speakers are Ian Cohen (Greens MLC), Jeff Angel (Total Environment Centre), Peter Prineas (Nature Conservation Council) and Noel Plumb (National Parks Association).

Christmas Party

The Society's Christmas Party will be held on **Saturday 13 December at the Megalong Valley Recreation Reserve,** starting at 12 noon.

It will be a family Picnic Day, with a barbeque. Food will be provided. Bring your own plates, cutlery, a mug, and a folding chair. We are joining with members of the Blue Mountains Bushcare Network in this picnic and will be entertained in the afternoon by the Network's Bush Band. There will be children's activities for young members.

It will be a great day for all the family, so note the date in your diary now. To assist with catering, please RSVP **before 3 December**, *Norm Harris 4784-1554 or Christine Davies 47 877 246.*

Amendment 25 to LEP 91

Along with other affected landowners, many BMCS members will be receiving a mailed invitation from Council to comment on this proposed change. The amendment clarifies which areas of environmentally sensitive blocks can be developed.

BMCS urges its members to send messages of support to Council. It would also be helpful to ask Council to include buffers around Sensitive Vegetation Units and water features in the Amendment.

Heli Scenic Heli Impact

Larapinta property in the Kanimbla Valley at the junction of the Cox and Little Rivers is approximately two kilometers downstream from the six foot track.

Mr John Webster the owner of Sydney Heli Scenic has indicated that he wishes to bring 32 Japanese tourists per day to his Larapinta property. **This translates into 11680 tourists per year and 2000 plus helicopter movements per annum up the Coxs River Gorge or over the Blue Mountains National Park.** The invasive impact on the environment and those using and living in the area will be devastating.

Cox's River Concerned Residents Group is appealing for help (more info: John Wilson 82 3703). Objections can be lodged by writing to the General Manager, Oberon Shire Council, PO Box 84, Oberon 2787.

***"Hut News"*, the newsletter of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.**
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Deadline for next issue is Nov.20

LAND USE

Elephant Man

Mr Bruce Baird, at the time he was Nick Greiner's Minister for Roads, rammed the M2 Motorway through his electorate, killing 110,000 native trees. This was despite a judge conducting an independent enquiry having recommended no motorway. Only days ago, it was announced the supposedly private motorway would cost NSW taxpayers yet another $7 million, due to wrong estimates of traffic volumes.

Today, Bruce Baird is chief spokesman for corporate tourism and, in that role, he is giving his full backing to Badgery's Creek Airport. How many giant white elephants can you fit into one career?

Sign of Contempt

I noticed the advertising sign decorated with a large crown that promotes the new Queens Road subdivision at Lawson. This subdivision virtually doubled in size after Blue Mountains City Council caved in over a court appeal.

The crown makes me think of the land's owner, Doctor Keith King, who is a former councillor and close associate of certain present councillors. The sign also said the blocks were 'environmentally sensitive'. Is this to attract buyers who delight in clearing environmentally sensitive land? Who do you know who thinks like that?

The Politics of Wilderness and Mining

The Wollemi Wilderness process has been delayed for two months. This followed a call from Bathurst Labor MP Mick Clough, to give a coal mine operator more time to prepare a submission criticising the Wilderness proposal — Mr. Clough was previously known for opposing protection of Mount Airley.

The coal mine employees of the Lithgow district are in desperate straits from mine lay-offs that have nothing to do with wilderness. If companies had any commitment to retaining jobs, they could have enough coal and we would still have a large viable wilderness area. The cheap political grandstanding involved in the wilderness process is something we could all do without.

Sydney Water Down the Creek

From October 10 to October 13, a burst water main in North Lawson was allowed to flow unchecked, spilling a huge quantity of water in two directions into bushland in the Danters Glen and Fairy Falls sections of the Wentworth Creek catchment. Erosion and transporting of exotic seeds resulted.

A Sydney Water manager blamed an industrial dispute with the Australian Services Union for the disaster.

—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.

Donation of Books to Library

The presentation of the books dedicated to the memory of the late Grete Vanry will take place at Katoomba Library at 9.15 am on Wednesday 19 November 1997. Everyone is welcome.

Broom Busting Day

The area between the highway and railway on the Leura side of Sorensen Bridge is to be the Society's regeneration project. (A name for the reserve will be announced soon!) We will have a "Broom Busting" day there on Sunday, 23 November, 10 am to 1 pm. All welcome! Tools will be provided. Bring gloves and morning tea.

Nature Trail Bushcare Group

Our bush regeneration team has worked its way north from the Conservation Hut along the Nature Trail parallel to Valley Road, to our present work site on the northernmost point of the Trail.

This site is approximately half a hectare in size and badly degraded by woody weeds such as Cherry Laurel, Cotoneaster, Privet, Hawthorn, Scotch Broom, Portuguese Heath, English Holly and numerous self-sown domestic fruit trees, plus English Ivy and the ever-present Japanese Honeysuckle.

All of these weeds have become established through an array of nutrients delivered to the site from a stormwater drain coming off the Great Western Highway, behind the Ampol Service Station.

We have asked the Urban Stormwater Run-Off Task Force to install a gross pollutant trap at the delivery point to the National Park and this is under consideration. Also the Wentworth Falls Rural Fire Service will assist us in burning the weed trash we have already cut out and assembled along Bate Road below the Service Station.

Members of the Society are welcome to join us on the third Monday of each month. Tools are provided. Bring work gloves, a hat, and something for morning tea.

Our next work day is **Monday 17 November.** We will meet outside the Conservation Hut at 9 am with Greg Welham, Asst Dist Manager NPWS to sign up new regenerators as NPWS volunteers.

The work is enjoyable and rewarding. Come and join us! — *Norm Harris.*

Bushwalks Co-ordinator

The management committee welcomes Peter Crawshay-Williams who has volunteered to be our new bushwalks co-ordinator. Under Peter's direction, we hope to offer a full and interesting walks programme. If you have ideas for bushwalks and excursions, and/or would like to lead a walk, talk to Peter on 4757 4363.

Blue Mountains Environmental Film Festival

At The Edge cinema, Katoomba, Tuesday November 25 to Saturday November 29, 6.30 pm onwards.

The program will include films and videos made by local community groups. BMCS will have an information stall at the festival. More info: Wild Spaces 87 9192.

Kids/Youth Club

Our paper-making activity in October was a great success, and lots of fun.

On **Sunday 16 November** there will be another activity for young members — **"Bilbies and Bushrangers"**, an exploration of North Lawson Park. We will discover special things along the way, using our maps, our eyes, and even our voices.

On **Saturday 13 December**, there will be children's environmental games at the Christmas Picnic in Megalong Valley. (More details on page 1.)

To make further enquiries or suggestions as to future activities, or to book for the Bilbies and Bushrangers activity, phone Jessica on 57.2783.

Native Plant Nursery

Blue Mountains Conservation Society's native plant nursery is open for sales on Tuesday mornings from 9 am to 12 noon. At present there is a huge selection of natives plants ready for bush regeneration projects and gardens.

Volunteers are welcome to come along to help. Phone David Coleby 4784.1395.

Nature Conservation Council

Conference: December 5-6, 1997
Forests in the Future: Peace or Protest?
For more information, or registration of interest, contact: the NCC Conference Line (02) 9241 2052.

Biodiversity Conference

9-12 December, 1997
"The Other 99%: Conservation and Biodiversity of Invertebrates".
For more information contact the Australian Museum on (02) 9230 6243.

Dragon in the Well

WIRES rescuers get all sorts of calls about all sorts of native animals in all sorts of trouble.

Mark Gardiner, Blue Mountains WIRES reptile co-ordinator, responded to a plea for help from a caller who had found a large lizard trapped down a well at Knapsack Gully. Mark found that the lizard, a 1-metre long eastern water dragon, had fallen down a counterbalance hole which had been dug to build the Knapsack Gully bridge.

Mark, with the help of his father Alec, abseiled down the 40-metre deep hole, got the dragon into a bag and brought it to the surface. Found to be uninjured, the very ungrateful but lucky lizard was released in Knapsack Gully.

The WIRES rescue number is 4754.2946.

Welcome to New Members

Daniel Wotherspoon, Faulconbridge
Debbie Cook, Blackheath
Roger Grealy, Blaxland
Jan Craney, Mount Victoria
Kevin and Carolyn Skelton,Wentworth Falls
Jodi McNeilly, Blaxland
Kerry and Monika Jones, Blaxland
Demis Mehmet and Raema Decent, Faulconbridge
Ben Scheuler, Glenbrook
John Wilson, Katoomba

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment

How did Sydney's river systems come to be so strange in their behaviour? (Part 2 of a 3-part series)

During the Devonian Period, sometimes known as the Age of Fishes, some 400 million years ago, fish had dominated animal life in the seas and lakes. Excellent fossils of these early fish can be seen today in rocks at the Museum of Fishes at Canowindra not far from Orange.

This Time Period was ended by the folding up of a great mountain range, as high as the Andes of today, which formed the eastern edge of the Australian continent. It extended for hundreds of miles and its roots are exposed today from Ulladulla to Bungonia and through Bathurst and Gulgong. Another mountain chain, now New England, existed in the north east, and rivers rushed from all of these mountains carrying sediments on to the basin-like continental shelf.

For the next 200 million years the great mountains were worn away by water, wind and glaciers and the resulting sediments were laid down more or less horizontally in the basin.

During this time plant life gradually developed from primitive club mosses to giant tree ferns which proliferated in the swampy conditions around the shore lines. During the Carboniferous Period, about three hundred million years ago, enormous deposits of peat were laid down throughout the world as the plants used the plentiful carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to grow prolifically. At the same time the atmospheric oxygen increased enabling the development of animal life on the land.

When the plant material became buried deeply it was gradually converted into coal by heat and pressure. The Coal Deposits surround and underlie the Sydney Basin, being visible from Newcastle to Lithgow and Joadja on the west and showing along the coast at Newcastle, Coal Cliff and Wollongong. They lie underneath the sediments which were deposited as the mountains were worn away during the following hundred million years, a period known as the Mesozoic. These sediments were mainly gravel, sand and silts which gradually filled the Basin and across which rivers meandered to reach the sea.

During the Mesozoic Period the Sydney Basin gradually took on the appearance of a tidal estuary. The mountains to the west had become low-lying and were covered with cycads, conifers and ferns among which reptiles and dinosaurs roamed. It was during this period that the ancestor of the Wollemi Pine first flourished.

Rivers flowed into the estuary from south, west and north-west. Time passed. When the land began to rise slowly above sea-level some rivers were able to keep pace with the rising land by cutting their way deeper and deeper into the sedimentary rocks.

Gradually a long western ridge bent upwards to form the Blue Mountains and a smaller upwards tilt formed to the east leaving the younger shales lying in the centre of the basin-like structure.

The old Cox's River joined with the Wollondilly to cut through the rising sandstone at Warragamba Gorge while the Grose and Colo entrenched steep valleys into the rising plateau. They all joined to form a river which flowed northwards parallel to the ridge towards a depression south of Richmond.

Finally they joined with another stream which had cut its way back from the sea through the high land. When, about 10,000 years ago, at the end of the last ice age, the sea rose 200 ft, this eastern valley was flooded to form Broken Bay. The flooding also affected the small stream which is now Sydney Harbour and also formed Botany Bay and extended up into the Georges River. — ***M.J.B.***

Book Review

"Back from the Brink — Blue Gum Forest and the Grose Wilderness", by Andy Macqueen.

This substantial work covers the geology, Aboriginal occupation, and the complete European history of the entire Grose River system:- every major exped-ition into the area; attempts to modify the Grose River system for farming, railways, dams, timber mills, oil shale and coal mining; and attempts to conserve the river, with emphasis on the Blue Gum Forest campaign in the 1930's and its role as the 'Cradle of Conservation'.

The book is extremely well researched, and includes historical and recent maps and photographs, a complete 'Glossary of Place Names', and a comprehensive index.

The style of the book is friendly and story-telling in its manner, and I had trouble putting it down.

In short, this is a great book to read, and I recommend it to all with an interest in Blues Mountains conservation.

— Ross Coster.

In the Bush (Part 2)

Writing on about the dunes of the Canning Stock Route.

Some quite substantial stands of eucalypts are seen as well as the shady desert oaks — far beyond what a 250 mm rainfall could sustain. Their secret of success seems to be their luck to germinate in a good season which is followed by enough rain to enable the roots to reach the vast aquafers which underlie most of the stock route.

We were fortunate to be there after good falls of rain and colourful annuals were in abundance. I was content to admire the variety of colours but for those with botanical leanings most were confined to WA with ancestral forms of Eastern state varieties such as Swainsonia, Senecio, Sturts Desert Pea, Clianthus, Parakeelia, Erimophila (many species), Cassia and many many others.

It was obvious to the early morning walkers that the vegetation supported a great variety of mobile life. On the sand there were paw marks, slither marks, hopping steps, caterpillar tractor types, etc., all telling of feverish activity during the night.

A few kangaroos and numerous emus were seen on the way to Wiluna but except for camels no other sign of wild life was seen. The birds deserve a mention. Over the whole length of the 4000k journey we were aware of the Masked Wood Swallows. The characteristic 'cheep, cheep' was heard descending from the heavens though we rarely caught a glimpse of them. Every water hole had its clientele of painted and zebra finches and the odd budgerigar and diamond dove. Our leader, following reports that Princess Parrots though rare were not uncommon on some sections of the Canning, searched diligently but fruitlessly. Naturally he was greatly disappointed but such is the lot of the "birdo".

As the old song goes "The stars at night are big and bright", but not more so than in the mountains. The big thing is you see them from ankle height to zenith and in a sweep of 360°. The sunsets and sunrises are colourful with or without cloud and the low focussed sun's rays playing over scrub and earth bring out the richest colours of the day.

Durba Springs and Breaden Hills are the only really spectacular scenic spots and their access is limited to Canning travellers.

It is a journey for the mind to dwell on rather than the eye. The mind flits from the way Aborigines of the past survived, to the difficulties of the early surveyors and well sinkers, to the early drovers who handled mobs of at times 1000 cattle and were on the road for 15 weeks or so. There are several graves along the way of stockmen speared by Aborigines — the cause of the clashes a rich source for discussion.

Never be tempted to do the journey alone unless you are a first class mechanic or have unlimited capital. A big name tour operator recently had to call in a helicopter from Perth with two mechanics to weld two torsion bars back to the chassis (and they snapped off again a few days later). We met a chap on the Gunbarrel Highway who had been patiently waiting for three days for a clutch part to arrive from Alice Springs.

—The Bunyip.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

NOVEMBER (*NOTE THAT DURING SUMMER MONDAY LEISURE WALKS WILL START AT 8.30 A.M.)*

02 (Sun) **Sunday Morning Bushwalk — Wall's Cave.** Meet 9 am, Blackheath Station commuter carpark. Contact Christine Davies 47 877 246.

03 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Terrace Falls, Hazelbrook.** Meet 8.30 am, Lawson War Memorial, Honour Avenue. BBQ after (BYO). Contact Kees Putting 47 59 1958.

08 (Sat) **Glenbrook Fair — Help wanted.** ☺ Members to help on the stall, to give out information about the Society and ask people to write letters about Badgery's Creek. **(Contact Jessica on 47 57 2783)**

10 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Clifftop Walk Echo Point to Leura Cascades.** Meet 8.30 am Leura Cascades. Contact Marie McInnes 47 82 7110.

14 (Fri) **Public Meeting**, **NSW National Parks Under Attack —** (Story on Page 1.) — Katoomba Civic Centre, 7 pm.

15 (Sat) **Bushwalk — Mount Piddington, Hornes Point, Wilsons Glen, Little Zigzag.** Meet at Mount Victoria Station at 9.30 am. Contact Mary Flynn 47 87 6918.

16 (Sun) **Public Meeting**, **Say NO to Badgery's Creek. —** 2 pm at Springwood Civic Centre.

16 (Sun) **Kids/Youth Club — "Bilbies and Bushrangers"**, an exploration of North Lawson Park. 10.30 am to 1 pm. Educational and fun!! Contact Jessica 47 57 2783. (Adult helpers are welcome.)

17 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 4757.2783.

17 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Walls Lookout.** Meet 8.30 am Mount Victoria Station. Contact Jan Cutler 47 84 3079.

19 (Wed) **Presentation of Books dedicated to the memory of the late Grete Vanry.** Katoomba Library, 9.15 am.

20 (Thu) **Committee Meeting.** 7 pm at Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson.

23 (Sun) **"Broom Busting Day", 10 am to 1 pm.** All welcome! Meet at the Reserve, Leura side of Sorensen Bridge, Tools will be provided. Bring gloves and morning tea. **Come along and inspect the reserve.**

24 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Dantes Glen.** Meet 8.30 am Lawson Swimming Pool. Contact Caroline O'Neill 47 57 3141.

28 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut, 7.30 pm.** Jim Smith talks about NPWS Heritage Study into our Walking Tracks. (Story on page 1). Visitors are welcome.

DECEMBER

01 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Darwin's Walk to Rocket Point.** Meet 8.30 am, Park on corner GW Highway and Falls Road, Contact Kees Putting 47 59 1958.

07 (Sun) **Bushwalk — The Jungle.** A lovely walk among cool rainforest and creeks of the Grose Valley, with a **slow** ascent in the afternoon shade. (Steps down and up, otherwise medium grade). Meet at Blackheath Station Commuter Carpark at 10 am. Contact June Baxter 47 877 312.

08 (Mon) **Leisure Walkers' BBQ Christmas Party at Quota Picnic Area, Megalong Valley.**

13 (Sat) **Family Picnic Day at the Megalong Valley Recreation Area (with Blue Mountains Bushcare Network).** Starts at 12 noon. RSVP before 3 December to Norm Harris 4784-1554 or Christine Davies 47 877 246.

15 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 4757.2783.

15 (Mon) **Leisure Walk —Clifftop Walk, Gordon Falls to Leura Cascades.** Meet 8.30 am, Gordon Falls Reserve. Contact Kees Putting 47 59 1958.

18 (Thu) **Committee Meeting at The Hut, 7 pm.**

Historie Newnes

Despite some misgivings because of the recent unsettled weather, Monday September 29 dawned bright and clear, and what a glorious day it turned out to be.

Some eager members (19 in all), of the Monday Leisure Walkers Group, set forth in the local Access Bus to enjoy a leisurely walk through the old shale mining works at Newnes. The road into the Wolgan Valley is a narrow, winding one, with sheer cliffs on one side, and a formidable drop on the other. Surprisingly, when we commenced our descent into the valley, the bus became quiet, but the passengers must have regained confidence in the driver, because the chatter returned to normal.

Everyone was amazed at the sheer splendour of the valley, the high cliffs and the green, rolling hills of the valley floor combining to make a scenic wonder of nature. When we reached the Wollemi National Park, we drove past the old Newnes Hotel through to a large camping area, and settled down to morning tea. Such was the serenity of this area, many of the group lay down on the grass in the warm sun, and seemed content to spend the rest of the day right there. However, we had come to see the ruins, so we boarded the bus, and drove back to the crossing and waded across the shallow river.

During our leisurely walk through the ruins, it was hard to imagine the hive of activity it must have been some ninety years ago. The immensity of some of the brick retaining walls built in order to allow a flat area at the base to be levelled out for construction of some of the buildings in the complex, is incredible. We had a leisurely lunch at the ruins of the paraffin shed, then continued through the ruins, some consisting of brick foundations, piles of bricks (remains of a 70 metre high chimney), and, in some cases, substantial foundations and walls.

With the walk completed, we returned to our bus (once again, wading across the river), and regretfully, commenced our return journey . However, the day was not yet complete, as on our way back, we were fortunate to see wallabies, and a wombat, much to the delight of one of our group who had not seen one before.

On arrival at the Council Depot, a tired, but happy group alighted from the bus, wanting to know when our next bus outing was going to be held, and wanting to reserve their seat! — Mervyn Bird.

A poem by David

Christine is our leader
We shall not get lost
She leadeth us to the wild places,
She interpreth all that we see,
the birds and the bees
the shrubs and the trees
so we have no mysteries

She leadeth us down the right path
Beside the still waters,
Through tall timber, heath & rainforest,
and yea even though she leadeth us up the creek
and through the valleys
where the shadows are deep and dark
we fear no evil
for Christine is with us

and at the end of the day
she leadeth us to the pub
where a table has been prepared for us
and our beer glasses runneth over

What more could we want

Thank you Christine

may we all follow you
on many more Thursday
interpretive walks.

This issue of ***Hut News*** has been printed on 100% Recycled Paper