

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



With this Newsletter

- Items enclosed with this newsletter are:
- **Badgery's Creek Environmental Impact Statement Summary, and a covering letter**

We have until 30 March 1998 to make submissions against the proposed second airport at Badgery's Creek. A significant matter of concern in the draft EIS is the omission of the Blue Mountains National Park from the study area.

- **Badgery's Creek Protest Rally**

Say No to Badgery's Creek. Join the "Wake Up Sydney Event" on Sunday 15 February at Warragamba Dam.

- **BMCS Executive Positions**

Eighteen members are needed to fill these positions at the March AGM (see editorial). The Executive committee meets once a month at the Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson.

- **Weed of the Month—Honeysuckle**

Another excellent leaflet prepared by Lindeman Road Bushcare Group.

- **Letter from Bob Debus**

A response to our January Land Use column.

About Blue Mountains Frogs

At our general meeting on Friday 27 February, ecologist Danny Wotherspoon will talk about frogs of the Blue Mountains.

The Blue Mountains is home to 29 frog species. One of these is the Red-crowned Toadlet which is classified as "vulnerable" Schedule 2 under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. The habitat of a population of these tiny frogs at Blaxland is threatened by the Coughlan Road Stage 2 subdivision.

Frogs are in decline around the world. Scientists are puzzled, yet the obvious reason is the impact of humans on the habitat of these sensitive creatures.

So what does it matter? Frogs are an important part of the food chain — the intricate web of life — a fragile balance between consuming and being consumed. The disappearance of frogs, an integral strand in the web of life, is a general indication of the degradation of the environment.

The meeting starts at 7.30 pm at the Conservation Hut. Visitors are welcome.

Kids Club

How do you tell whether a creek is polluted? Well, one way is to see how many different types of water bugs are in it. The more types you find, the healthier the creek.

The Kids/Youth Club (we must find a better name) will be investigating the health of Wentworth Falls Lake and Jamison Creek on Saturday 28 February.

You Can Help to Make a Difference!

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday 27 March. As is usual at our monthly meetings, we'll discuss the society's recent activities and listen to a guest speaker. But this meeting will have one important difference — we will elect eighteen of our members to guide the society for the next twelve months.

Our Society is one of the largest regional environmental movements in the State, if not the largest, and has long enjoyed respect from the community and from the agencies with which it deals. We have over five hundred members, thirty-seven years of unbroken service to the Blue Mountains environment, and, thanks to our older members who raised funds in earlier times and current members who work in our Native Plant Nursery, we have substantial funds at our disposal.

We need eighteen members who are prepared to direct the society's activities for the next twelve months.

Some members of the current Management Committee have advised that they will not be standing this coming year. There are also several new positions which have been created to help share the workload.

Serving on the Management Committee can be immensely rewarding. No prior experience is needed — just a commitment to serve the environment, and a determination to "make a difference". The society has made a difference in the past. We need your help to ensure we make a difference in the future.

The leaflet in this issue of Hut News has the details of all eighteen positions. You can obtain more information from members of this year's committee (phone numbers at bottom of this page).

Or you can come along as an observer to one (or both) of the remaining committee meetings — times and venues are on the back page of *Hut News* — to see just what goes on at Management Committee meetings.

Meet 10 am at the Katoomba end of the Lake's picnic area. Bring a jam jar, paint brush, ice-cube tray, a white enamel dish or light-coloured plastic lunch box or similar, sneakers or boots which can get wet, hat and lunch. Optional extras: gumboots, magnifying glass, tweezers, a net (wire with stocking).

For more information please call Jessica 4757.2783.

Society's Web Page

Blue Mountains Conservation Society now has a web page on the Internet. You can find it on:

www.pnc.com.au/~bmcs

"Only a Frog"

In November 1997 National Parks and Wildlife Service indicated to Council that the fauna and flora assessment submitted for the Coughlan Road Stage 2 development was inadequate and that Red-crowned Toadlets were known to occur on the same lot.

Additional flora and fauna reports by the applicant (Councillor Ralph Williams) concluded that no Red-crowned Toadlets had been found on the part of the site to be developed and that the development would be unlikely to have any detrimental affect on habitats/potential habitats of the "toad" population.

After these reports had been lodged with Council a population of Red-crowned Toadlets were identified on the site. Council officers and

Councillors were notified of this prior to the Council meeting on 16 December, and Danny Wotherspoon detailed how the habitat and population would be adversely affected by the proposed development. Despite this advice, and the fact that clearly no Species Impact Statement had been prepared, a majority of Councillors (Neall, Harris, Kime, Egan, Angel and Derum) voted to approve the development. One Councillor went so far as to state that they are "only frogs" and implied that their presence should not be used as a reason to stop or modify a subdivision.

Hut News, the newsletter of Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
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LAND USE

Development Dilemmas

Sometimes those of us who become involved in day to day issues referred to BMCS are brought sharply back to the reality of the 'big picture'. This was the effect for me of the excellent contribution by member Meredith Brownhill in January *Hut News*.

This letter pointed out that BMCS aims are not about any kind of development as such. Nevertheless our committee is constantly being challenged to assess the balance of positive and negative impacts in determining our position on various types of development — which can be no easy task.

Our primary orientation is Natural Heritage. A recent submission by committee member Norm Harris called on us also to consider Cultural Heritage in educating the public about Blue Mountains Heritage.

Further, we have a tradition of considering energy and resource consumption issues such as the impact on public transport use of particular decisions.

The issue of Medium Density Housing (some of which is referred to as Multi-Unit) illustrates the complexity that can be involved in determining a position.

Virtually all of the Multi-Unit Housing areas proposed in Council's LEP97 have been opposed by some residents as a threat to residential amenity — which by itself has never been put forward as a BMCS cause.

When the BMCS submission on LEP97 was finalised, we made specific criticism of only two proposed zones of Multi-Unit housing, one at Springwood and one at Hazelbrook. In both cases we referred purely to their impacts on natural values. We did not at that stage join in criticism of certain other Multi-Unit zones, which has been based mainly on damage to Cultural Heritage values.

As a general principle, construction of Multi-Unit accommodation close to Blue Mountains Railway Stations can increase the public transport share of the overall people-moving task. In a recent 2BL 5.30 forum (unfortunately broadcast on Christmas Eve 1997), the NRMA's Mark McKenzie and Action for Public Transport's Jim Donovan agreed that Land Use Planning to increase public transport patronage was vital.

Increased rail use in the Blue Mountains could make a contribution to reducing Sydney's worsening air pollution because so many of our car trips take us into the Sydney basin. Air pollution is already creeping into the lower mountains and could come further west. The linear nature of the Mountains, with nearly every town near a station, compounds the benefits which might be achieved by planning for greater public transport patronage.

No doubt these topics will cause more discussion within BMCS. Members' contributions are very welcome.

—Don Morison.



Why have a Threatened Species Conservation Act if the threatened species are not to be protected?

Clean Up Australia Day

Sunday, 1st March, 1998

Members and friends of the Society are invited to help in the clean-up at Fairy Dell, Springwood, 9 am to 12 noon.

It will also be a chance to see the wonderful work that has been done by the Fairy Dell Bushcare Group in recent years.

Bring gardening gloves, morning tea and drinking water. Enquiries to Christine Davies 4787.7246. (Wanted: Somebody to co-ordinate at Fairy Dell on the day — phone Christine ASAP.)

Special Working Bee

The Nature Trail Bushcare Group will hold a special working bee on Sunday 8 March, 9 am to 12 noon.

Last year we cut down some large Genista. The area was then burnt for hazard reduction. Now we have a fine crop of seedling Genista, about half a metre tall.

Many hands will make light work of pulling these seedlings out. This is also a great opportunity for people who can't make our usual Mondays to come along.

Please bring gardening gloves, morning tea, water and a hat. Meet at Backhouse Street (turning west off Valley Road). Contact Jessica 4757.2783.

LEP97 Submission

The Society's LEP97 submission has been completed and lodged with Council. A tremendous amount of effort was needed to do a thorough job. Many thanks to all the people who contributed — members of the Society and members of other groups (SWAG, RAID, CORE). A special thanks to Lyndal Sullivan, Linda Thomas, Don Morison, Jessica Yuille, Hugh Paterson, Mike Purtell, Joyce Brister, Joan Storey, Barbara Harley, Shane Grundy, Pam Swift, Megan Birmingham, Laurel Osbourne, Kathy Gott, David Coleby, Imre Gaul, Erst Carmichael, Peter Dodd, Kerry Johns and Shirley Lewis.

Digger Cooper Reserve

Until now we've been referring to "the Reserve on the Leura side of the Sorensen Bridge, between the highway and the railway". Well, the reserve (almost) has a name — Digger Cooper Reserve. More next month!!!

The Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group met on Sunday 18 January. You've got to be keen to work in such appalling heat, and only four people attended (Ross Coster, Heather Coster, Belinda Coster and Ron Wheeler). Despite the heat we picked up rubbish, pulled weeds and cut down non-native tree saplings. This month's haul included Coreopsis, Radiata, Blackberry, Privet, Broom, Poplar, Apple. Ron Wheeler took half a utility load of rubbish to the tip.

The next workday will be in April, when the weather should be more agreeable. — Ross Coster.

Welcome to New Members:

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.

Lorraine & David Lintern, Hazelbrook
Robyn Hughes, Wentworth Falls
Dr Anne Cripps, Redfern

South Coast Forests

**Australian Conservation Foundation
Forest Campaign Group**

Field trip to
the South Coast Forests of NSW
26-28 February, 27-29 March, 24-26 April
RSVP asap (02)9247.4285

The aim of the field trips is to provide participants with a general idea of the area so that walk leaders can plan walks for their own club members.

Please Don't Mine Jabiluka"

At our January general meeting members of the Wilderness Society spoke about why Jabiluka should not go ahead.

Jabiluka is part of Kakadu National Park that has been excised for mining leases (along with Ranger). But it is in every way a part of the same ecosystem as the park which completely surrounds it.

The Federal Government has given the Jabiluka project the go-ahead. We can still put pressure for the decision to be revoked. If you want to make a difference: Write to John Howard, Prime Minister, Parliament House, Canberra 2600, or Fax him on (026) 273 4100 (Canberra) or (02) 9251 5454 (Sydney).

Just say "Please don't mine Jabiluka".

Management Meetings

At present the monthly Management Committee meetings are held on a Thursday evening (eight days before the General Meeting which is held on the last Friday of the month) at the Mid Mountains Community Centre, starting at 7 pm.

If this venue and starting time is not be suitable for the majority of members of the new committee it can be reviewed by the newly elected Management Committee at the first meeting after the Annual General Meeting.

WANTED

A Society member with basic engineering knowledge.

The draft Development Control Plans (currently on exhibition at Blue Mountains City Council) contain proposals for drainage and road works in subdivisions, amongst other things.

The Land Use sub-committee would like to discuss these with someone who knows about coefficients of runoff and flow velocities and the meanings of some other technical terms.

Even if you don't have any technical knowledge but are interested in other aspects such as protection of vegetation around creeks, we'd like to hear from you too.

Please contact Lyndal 82.1635 ASAP if you can help.

In the Bush

Continuing last month's article ...

The book I recommend for those with more than a passing interest in wild flowers is "Native Plants of the Sydney District" by Fairley and Moore. I bought my copy at the Mount Tomah Botanical Gardens shop for \$60. A prodigious amount of work obviously goes into such a book. It is hard covered and well bound. It contains colour photographs and descriptions of about 1500 species.

Unfortunately many of the illustrations are small. The main problem confronting the beginner is the abundance of detail — over 400 pages of it.

So with a specimen in hand and 400 pages to scan the prospect of matching it with a picture is pretty remote. Alas, all I can recommend to a beginner is to avoid the less conspicuous plants for a while and fall back on the trusty "Native Plants of the Blue Mountains". It has only 100 or so pages to flick through and with constant scanning one hopefully develops some visual memory of the contents.

Having found a suspect, go the booklet enclosed in "Mangrove to Mountain Devil" and see if that plant is listed for the area where you collected it. If so go to Fairley and Moore for further description. If all else fails take the specimen to the Sydney Botanical Gardens' public enquiries counter facing the road which runs past the Art Gallery. The staff will identify material on the spot. Specimens may also be posted. As plastic wrapping causes rapid decay use paper padded envelopes. Any enquiries 0292318125.

Only yesterday I had to resort to some of the steps suggested above. On returning by the cliff edge walk from Mount Hay one of the walking party noticed the heads of orchids growing in a mossy depression.

Nobody could place a name on them.

On returning home I looked up the Fairley and Moore index to Orchidaceae. Fortunately there were ten pages of good photographs so it only needed a quick flick to track down the suspects. There were two so I referred to "Mangrove to Mountain Devil" booklet and found the one listed for

the upper mountains, *Cryptostylis subulata*.

I was then captivated by the preamble in Fairley and Moore on the *Cryptostylis* genus. I'll quote: "The Australian species of *Cryptostylis* are pollinated by ichneumon wasps in a remarkable process known as pseudocopulation. This occurs through the attraction of males by a pheromonal scent and subsequent arousal to sexual activity by the resemblance of the labellum to the female insect. In the act of mating, pollinia are transferred from flower to insect."

Just as mind boggling is a quote further on stating that the flowering of the orchid is timed to coincide with the emergence of the wasp.

Such revelations cast me into a philosophical mode. Technology no doubt reveals the processes but will it ever be able to explain what is behind the web of life which seems to link us all.— **The Bunyip.**

Another Song

— Charlee Marshall —

I had fashioned a song of the bushland —
A mirage of rythm and rhyme:
Every word held the sob of the southwind
Blown sad o'er the abyss of time.
I had caught the soft purl of the waters
Caressing the curve of the creek,
And I wrote of the morn's pearly dewdrops,
Clinging still to the night's swarthy cheek.
Sure I thought as I read through the lyrics
No finer song ever was planned,
Then a butcher bird sang in the gully,
And I crumpled the page in my hand

Fact Sheets from EDO

The Environmental Defender's Office (EDO) new fact sheets on environmental law in NSW have been written in plain English for citizens, local councils, conservation groups, regulatory authorities, lawyers and students.

The Environmental Law Fact Sheets have been written by the specialist environmental law team at the EDO. They have been financially supported by the Law Foundation and sponsored by Sydney Water.

A range of 35 topics is covered, including national parks, environmental impact assessment, air and water pollution, mining and coastal protection. Others are getting legal advice, the Land and Environment Court, freedom of information and international law.

Each fact sheet is four pages long and they are contained in six booklets. The whole set costs \$35 including postage. To order, phone 02.9262.6989.

World Heritage Update

Developments since our report in December 1997 *Hut News*: NPWS have been negotiating with prospective consultants to prepare the Nomination document in time for a June 1998 submission. Informal discussions with State and Commonwealth representatives confirm that there are genuine grounds for optimism that things are still on track.

A Suburban Garden

Spring comes early in this area of suburban Western Sydney. Winter is mild and passes quickly. In our suburban garden we have planted lots of native trees and shrubs. A large lemon scented tea tree is a favourite with the white necked honeyeaters ("flying priests"). There are quite a few Grevilleas in this garden, which attract the birds, and lots of other natives, including two endemic to the western suburbs, *Ozothamnus* (white dogwood) and *Dodonaea cuneata* which is quite rare.

The large pencil pine is a haven for all the birds who build their nests in it. A small species of native bluebell has always grown under this tree, but the last few years have been so dry that there is very little this year.

The garden is starting to look like a small forest from the other side of the road, but the birds like it. The honeyeaters are

most interesting; they fly past you when you are in the garden, whistling as they pass, protecting their territory. Some of them have built their nests in the orange blossom tree at the back, strata unit style. They do it every year.

Sometimes we get Currawongs and one year I heard this most amazing bird voice. It was so sweet and beautiful, I'd never heard a bird like that before. So I hid behind one of the bushes and watched. There was a Currawong sitting on the fence with his head bent low down, calling out to the baby honeyeaters on the lemon-scented tea tree, "Come little ones, fly down to me, come little ones, I won't hurt you". They thought it a game and kept flying around him/her listening to their mother's instructions and fooling the old Currawong.

The sound of summer has always been the call of the Koel. Most people in Western Sydney do not complain because they have other things to do, like working long hours or out finding a job, or too many

problems on their minds to think about the natural world. They do plant native plants because Blacktown Council gives each household a couple of them every year.

Our dear friend Keith Hodgson who sells us free range eggs from the chooks in his garden always keeps his garage open especially for the Welcome Swallows to come in and build their nests. They have been doing that for 20 years.

Other common birds are Lorikeets, who fly high looking for nectar in the tops of the grey gums. Galahs have become common in these parts the last few years; Kookaburras I haven't seen for a while. Willy wagtails, pee wees and Magpies are always around. Down by the creek grass parrots can be seen in the Casuarinas.

Summer is here and the temperature is in the 30s for the next few days. I think we will go to the beach today. The garden can look after itself for a couple of hours.

— Sonia Bennett.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

FEBRUARY

- 01 (Sun) **Bushwalk — The Turpentine Walk.** Meet at Woodford Station carpark (south side) at 9 am. Medium grade. Contact Ron Amos 02 9727 8931.
- 02 (Mon) **Bus Trip to Kanangra Walls.** (Fully booked) Contact Mervyn Bird 4787 7959.
- 09 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Mount Boyce.** Meet 8.30 Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. Contact John Gaynor 4787 6071.
- 15 (Sun) **Badgery's Creek Protest Rally.** Join the "Wake Up Sydney Event", at Warragamba Dam.
- 16 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 4757.2783.
- 16 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Wall's Ledge.** Meet 8.30, Blackheath Station commuter carpark. Contact Norah Gaynor 4787 6071.
- 19 (Thu) **Committee Meeting.** Mid Mountains Community Centre, 7 pm. Members are welcome to come as observers.
- 23 (Mon) **Lila's Falls, Katoomba.** Meet 8.30 am, Fork & View Restaurant, Cliff Drive. Contact Christina Jones 4784 1101
- 27 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut.** Guest speaker Danny Wotherspoon (See page 1). 7.30 pm.
- 28 (Sat) **Kids Club. Catch water creatures to find out "How Healthy is Wentworth Falls Lake and Jamison Creek?"**. See the story on Page 1 for a list of items to bring. Contact Jessica 4757.2783.

MARCH

- 01 (Sun) **Clean Up Australia Day—** Fairy Dell, Springwood. 9 am to 12 noon. See story on page 2. Contact Christine Davies 4787.7246.
- 02 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Waterfall Circuit, Lawson.** Meet 8.30 am, War Memorial, Honour Avenue, Lawson. Contact Jim Warburton 4759.1312
- 08 (Sun) **Nature Trail Bushcare Group, Special Working Bee,** 9 am to 12 noon. Bring gardening gloves, morning tea, water and a hat. Meet at Backhouse Street (turning west off Valley Road). Contact Jessica 4757.2783.
- 09 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Laura Forest.** (Up via Scenic Railway). Meet 8.30 am, Laura Station. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.
- 16 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 4757.2783.
- 16 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Minni Ha Ha Falls.** Meet 8.30 am, Katoomba Station north side. Contact Carolyn O'Neill 4757.3141.
- 19 (Thu) **Committee Meeting.** Mid Mountains Community Centre, 7 pm.
- 21 (Sat) **Bushwalk — (LEADER NEEDED —** Contact Christine Davies 4787.7246.)
- 23 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Den Fenella.** Meet 8.30 am, Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. Contact Millie Rogers 4782.6631.
- 27 (Fri) **Annual General Meeting** at The Hut, 7.30 p.m.
- 30 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Old Hartley Shale Railway.** Meet 8.30 am, Mount Victoria Station. Contact Mervyn Bird 4787.7959.

Saving the Bush From Us **Part 3: Health in Bushland - Soils**

You can see from past issues that I am gradually putting together, like a jigsaw, all the parts that make up bushland ecosystems and which keep the whole working in good health, sustainably.

Soil in Healthy Bushland. It is sometimes said that the last unknown landscape is that beneath our feet. It is not the purpose of the plants and animals to build deep rich loamy soils in bushland. Aeons of erosion and degradation have given rise to soils which are commonly called 'poor' by European settlers who imposed a value system on our soils. They called those soils poor which did not support imported agri-cultural crops. Soils which grow a narrow range of plants are rich loams, and those which support a wide range of plants and animals are thin, residual and usually low in the three magic elements; nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. This lack of major elements means that many plants have diversified to match special small niches.

As a result, there is a very wide range of fixed species and their accompanying mobile partners. These have a variety of root systems at different depths in the soil, and many have adapted symbiotically to micro-organisms such as fungi to assist in nutrient intake. Some scientists say all

plants have a symbiotic root micro-organism. These are remarkably efficient at doing a lot with little, extracting the nutrients the plant needs.

The nutrients are then 'banked' in the leaves, fruit and flowers of the plants, and in animals. Some plants with a rosette (flat leaf) habit and deep tap root remove nutrient from deep in the soil, store chemicals in their flat leaves and when the leaves resting on the soil break down the nutrients are deposited in the soil top layer which helps seeds germinate, and ephemeral plants with adventitious roots to have access to the nutrients.

Plants also return about 25% of themselves to the soil for recycling as organic matter every year. Large trees and shrubs are much more generous than young ones and smaller ones whose nutrient uptake is greater. These are hungrier.

The myriad of soil animals burrow, eat, decay, defecate, and humidify the soil to keep it in good health for the plants and for themselves. For example, ants store organic matter underground as compost which is very valuable in dry climates. Earthworms reduce food to carbon dioxide and soluble nutrients which plants can take up in solution through their root hairs.

One image of soil is as a vast bank of seeds and nutrients which is cared for by the animals and the plants. Deposits and withdrawals are made constantly and a soil

cannot be measured accurately since it changes in humidity, nutrients, and gases from morning to night. Soils are self regulating only while the plant and animal life is maintained in balance and diversity.

— *Ro Morrow.*

(Next Issues: Healthy Bushland and Water, Edges.)

Phosphorus Reduction **Campaign Reduces Costs**

Families who switched to detergents with little or no phosphorus have saved the Albury City Council \$500,000 over 3.5 years.

The City's phosphorus reduction campaign has changed the way half the city did its washing. The City has saved \$450,000 in chemical costs for treating sewage with less phosphorus.

Other savings attributed to a 26% reduction in phosphorus has come through reduced power costs and the cost of handling sludge.

The Albury campaign was launched in late 1993 in a pilot joint venture with the NSW Government. The Albury model has now extended to 82 municipalities through NSW, operating under 12 campaigns, from the NSW North Coast to the Snowy Monaro.