

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



With this newsletter:

Genowlan and Airly

'Three Hundred Sisters', a landscape that far surpasses that of the Three Sisters at Katoomba, being made up of hundreds of pagodas, isolated tablelands and hidden valleys — a special place, a masterpiece carved in sandstone, a diversity of life, unusual plant communities, endangered, vulnerable and rare plants — and it is vacant Crown land and unprotected.

Airly and Genowlan remain threatened by coal mining, unauthorised road building and four-wheel drive vehicles.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Read the enclosed brochure; Write letters as requested; Tell people about Genowlan and Airly. Give the brochure to a friend.

Guest Speaker in August

While people living in the Blue Mountains occupy only a relatively narrow area within the Blue Mountains National Park, problems caused by humans can extend far beyond the houses. Rubbish which finds its way into creeks and rivers is carried into pristine bushland and can trap, entangle and kill native animals. Feral animals emanating from houses find new territories further away from the towns, and carry diseases into native populations. Weeds carried downstream can affect habitats.

At our general meeting on Friday 28 August, Pam Gardiner of Blue Mountains WIRES will talk about some of the issues affecting our native wildlife both in and beyond the towns, and the role that WIRES plays in the community.

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

Credit Where It's Due

It was refreshing to read Bob Debus' advertisement in the Blue Mountains Gazette on 1 July:

"AT LAST! The nomination of the Blue Mountains for World Heritage listing has finally been presented to UNESCO in Paris. We have been waiting for this since the Colong Foundation first proposed the listing in 1989.

In March 1995, before the last election, Bob Carr, then Leader of the Opposition, announced that a Carr Labor Government would fast track the nomination. He has now, as Premier, fulfilled that promise by providing to John Howard the nomination documents to be forwarded to Paris.

The documents were prepared by Ms Joan Domicelj for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. They are superb and do great justice to the magnificent natural and cultural

Plastic Rings a Danger to Wildlife

Unbroken plastic rings are a real danger to native animals. Lizards and other animals can become entangled. If an animal has a plastic ring caught around its body, as the animal grows the ring eventually cuts into the flesh, causing long suffering and death.

Bower birds are attracted to the blue rings from plastic milk bottles. As a male bird carries and rearranges the "treasures" displayed in front of his bower, a ring can flip over his head and stay there (something like a halter on a horse). The bird cannot feed and eventually starves.

BMCS member John Hill has been collecting first hand accounts from people who have seen the harmful effects on wildlife of blue (or any colour) unsplit plastic rings. He has written to two local newspapers and has received several responses which document and confirm that these rings are a threat to wildlife. It seems from responses that all plastic rings present a threat to some extent, though blue rings are worst.

John reports "The latest is, the producers of Pura milk, National Food and Milk accept that there is a problem. They are moving towards "splitting rings" that snap on opening. They have a problem with the uniformity of manufacture of these rings. (I have observed that sometimes their milk uses them, other times not). I feel that given continued attention, they are likely in time to use only the "splitting rings" on all of their milk products which I believe would be a good thing."

What we can do in the meantime is to cut any unsplit plastic rings we find. If anybody has any information please send a short written account to John Hill, 39 Bland Road, Springwood 2777.

resources of the Blue Mountains. They are well researched, well argued and well presented. In the opinion of one international specialist on World Heritage they are of similar standard to the best documents he has seen in over thirty years.

Many local people have made real contributions to the nomination. I would like to pay special tribute to Keith Muir (Colong Foundation), Les Coyne (Blue Mountains Conservation Society) and the Blue Mountains World Heritage Committee"

Bob Debus has pushed hard for the World Heritage nomination. When a few months ago we were informed that the documents would not be completed in

time, and it seemed that the World Heritage nomination would drag on for another ten years, Bob Debus stepped in and saw that the documents were prepared in time to be sent to the Federal Minister for signature.

Dear Editor ...

The July issue of *Hut News* contained an interesting article by Don Morison lamenting the size of houses being built in the Blue Mountains. Don draws attention to the loss of bushland due to urban sprawl and to the extra impact of large dwellings.

Unfortunately population increase has an effect far wider than the area occupied by homes. The average Australian requires less than 0.5 hectares of total built up land but utilises about five hectares for water catchment, waste disposal and production of food and fibre. The major

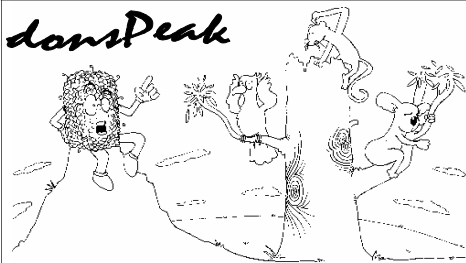
impact of humans on their environment comes from this "ecological footprint" and in the case of wealthy humans such as Australians the footprint of each of us is large.

While it can be distressing to see bushland destroyed for the construction of large dwellings the extra few square metres involved are only a tiny fraction of the land area each of us requires to maintain our daily standard of living. Our part in degrading soil and polluting air and water spreads way beyond our dwellings.

— Gordon Hocking, President, NSW Branch, *Australians for an Ecologically Sustainable Population.*

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

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Transports of Delight from Politicians?

Environmentalists like to hear about plans for more fuel efficient and less polluting transport systems. But when you hear the talk, you may have to listen very hard for the sound of actual dollars being committed to the plans.

Melbourne-Darwin Railway? Talk but no money from John Howard, and this while already operating rail freight routes like Sydney-Melbourne and Sydney-Bathurst are screaming out for funds to keep them viable.

Great Western Highway? A fine political slanging match but more money to accelerate its upgrade outside National Parks might silence the surplus chatter.

Parramatta-Chatswood Passenger Rail. Full marks to the Carr Government for this one: they have advertised for staff to make it happen!

Sydney-Canberra High Speed Train? — all talk at the time of writing, but maybe something is about to happen.

Kandos-Mudgee and Blayney-Cowra Rail Re-opening? — \$300,000 from the Carr Government for a study. (How about including rail loops at the Central West's power stations to get coal off the roads?)

Penrith-Orange Task Force? — Rail freight has been going backwards, even as they deliberate.

Bathurst Rail Freight Terminal? ... I could offer you more talk, but perhaps you've already gone to clean your walking shoes and lubricate your push-bike.

Brickbats for Rural Politicking

Many farmers have had a long and effective partnership with conservations, having acted as senior officers of the NSW Nature Conservation Council and made other important contributions.

The NSW Farmers' Conference in late July was not a happy chapter. They withdrew an invitation to Labor Premier Bob Carr, castigated the Native Vegetation Clearing Laws, and heaped abuse on conservationists, the ABC and others. Only a minority present supported a motion criticising National Party Primary Industries Minister, John Anderson.

I am sure that farmers still working with conservationists to protect native vegetation will not be distracted by this Festival of tantrum throwing staged by what claims to be their peak organisation.

— 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 (02)4759.1247, Home 4759.1837, Fax 4759.1095, Email haytech@pnc.com.au, or write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.

No to Badgerys Creek Airport

(from Jon Rickard, Australian Democrats Candidate for Macquarie/Member of BMCS)

Due to consistent action over several years, Blue Mountains Democrats and branches in Western Sydney have influenced official party policy on Sydney's Second Airport. The policy is now: "The Australian Democrats do not support the development of a new airport within the Sydney basin, and believe that the development of any new airport must be fundamentally based on integration with fast rail and rail freight transport development and other planned infrastructure development."

This position is in stark contrast with that of the Government ("Badgerys Creek is the preferred option") and that of the Labor Opposition which has backed slightly away from Badgerys Creek but maintains that a site in the Sydney basin should be suitable; however optional sites have not been signalled.

Local Democrats have advocated investigation of sites between Southern Highlands and Goulburn with VFT rail connections for the past three years. Only recently has John Fahey (Federal Minister for Finance) realised this seems a viable solution to the problem.

The EIS process has been discredited for its shortcomings. Several important environmental impacts were seemingly overlooked including the impact of the land transport of passengers, freight and fuel to and from the BCA site!

In opposing the Badgerys Creek site I have been most concerned with noise pollution.

Kingsford Smith Airport in 1996 catered for 20.3 million passengers. It is anticipated (Draft Environmental Impact Statement Summary) that by 2016, 49.0m. passengers will use Sydney's airports. At least 19.0m will use the proposed Badgerys Creek Airport (the worst case scenario would have 29.3m passengers using BCA; the remaining 19.7m using KSA). In 18 years the air traffic density and noise around BCA would be at least similar to that at KSA presently — people of Western Sydney and Blue Mountains are hardly prepared to accept such a dislocation to their lifestyle and sleeping patterns. We have learnt from the 'sharing of aircraft noise' problems of the inner city.

The proposed Badgerys Creek Airport would have no curfew. Boeing 747-400's would generate at least 70dBA as far west as Wentworth Falls (Option B). Are you prepared for such intrusive noise any time of the day or night?

A Personal View

Living at Linden, the 'city' is easily seen, except of course when air pollution obscures the view. This happens regularly due to industrial and vehicle emissions. The 'city' is presently home to 4.0m people. Recent figures suggest that over the next 50 years Sydney's population will increase to 6.2m. Due to topography and climate, without curbs on population and development, or significant advances in pollution controls, Sydney will become further environmentally degraded. With air and

water pollution, traffic congestion for much of the day; Sydney's 'planners' seem to have only 'economic growth' vision. They do not realise that a degraded environment costs, and then costs more to alleviate the problems.

By siting Sydney's Second Airport in the Southern Highlands (to Goulburn) region, economic growth could be encouraged away from the Sydney basin alleviating, to some degree, pollution concerns. Given the population drift to the city, the collapse of industries in country regions and the downsizing of banks, railways, Telstra, etc. in country regions, major infrastructure such as Sydney's Second Airport along the VFT route would initiate a new round of decentralisation.

For social, environmental and economic reasons Sydney's Second Airport must not be built at Badgerys Creek airport. Suitable sites between Mittagong and Goulburn should be identified, and with community consultation and a reputable EIS process, the suitable site selected. — Jon Rickard.

A Big "Thank You"

A big "thank-you" for all the help received in preparing "Weed Control" booklets for Railway Station Waiting Rooms. To Barbara Harley and Lindeman Road Bushcare Group for the original "Weed of the Month" leaflets; Ross and Heather Coster for vast amounts of printing and the folders; Chris Dewhurst, BMCC, for more printing, and to CONSOC members who have undertaken the task of circulating the booklets.

Any feedback would be appreciated. Laurel Osbourne 4739 1696.

Cats and Wildlife

On July 20, Ray Martin's 'A Current Affair' programme gave a rather unsympathetic presentation of a Victorian woman who has decided to do something practical about cats killing native wildlife. The woman, a former shearer, is keeping a cat trap on her property. She says she destroys feral cats she traps but releases any domestic cats. Two of her neighbours say that their domestic cats (which were presumably not curfewed) have disappeared.

Victoria, in general, is more advanced than NSW in dealing with the domestic animal threat to native wildlife.

The NSW Companion Animal Act became law on 14 July. While not going far enough, especially in regard to cats, it is a step in the right direction. Some of the more selfish cat owners might soon have to modify their behaviour.

Welcome to New Members

Margaret Jones, Blackheath
Lachland Garland, Winmalee
Ross Young & Kim
McClymont, Katoomba
Annette Scarlett, Faulconbridge
Michael J Kelso, Katoomba
Chris Emery, Capertee
Patricia Johnson, Spit Junction
Robin and Helen Mitchell, Blackheath
Lyn Wilkie, Leura
Paul Roper, Linden

THE TAPESTRY

At dawn of time the weaver cast
A delicate thread the tapestry made
Upon a loom so lavish and vast
The pattern of life, forever laid.

How lovely the weave, with wisdom imbued
How rich the variety, how grand the design!
A precious infinity of life so ensured
Each one unique, according to kind.

So many worlds through time did unfold
Each one a heritage for those to come later;
Until the dirty animal upset the mould
And walked on Earth, to become a hater.

Those worlds, now hidden, are used up for greed
To foul up the air and sully the sea.
No more is the tapestry just used for need
Nothing is sacred, neither you nor me.

And so the great Earth, choked up in its grief
Struggles on to repair the torn thread, at a cost.
So much we, in return, all share one belief:
That love for the tapestry will undo what is lost.
— Jim Wallace.

... Call Australia Home

If you call Australia home, consider yourself lucky. It is easy to take for granted what nature provides, and also the relatively comfortable lifestyle we enjoy. Recently I received a postcard from a friend holidaying in Ireland. When here in Australia, he works for State Forest. He was surprised that virtually all Irish forests seem to be plantations with trees like spruce, oak, ash and beech. Certainly this is not what we hope for Australia. To take note and put our energy into the protection of native forests will ensure us the gratitude of future generations.

With the proposed World Heritage listing for the Blue Mountains the subject has gained new momentum. It also brings to mind the human impact and the

changed conditions to which native plants and animals have to adapt in and around our townships. Some introduced species have taken advantage of Australian conditions to an extent that they have become pests. The Indian Mynah is an example of such an introduced bird. Large populations have invaded our villages and taken over habitat by displacing native birds from their nesting sites.

Widespread native vegetation clearing and urbanisation seems to suit also some native birds, for example currawongs. If they occur in large numbers they are not very welcome and should not be encouraged. The threat they pose to nestlings of smaller native birds is only part of the problem.

Another native bird (who is also a nest robber, but not a problem) is usually quite liked and frequently seen around. The kookaburra is one of Australia's best-known birds. Its famous boisterous territorial 'laugh', developing into a chorus, is usually heard at dawn or dusk. Kookaburras have an interesting social life with a well developed rigid social order in their family groups, where incubation of the eggs and feeding of the young is often shared with offsprings from previous seasons. They are very territorial, and the family group moves around within the territory and defends it against other kookaburras. Because kookaburras mostly live in family units and are relatively large and strong birds, they do not easily fall prey during the day and may live in excess of 20 years.

— Helga.

In the Bush

Wentworth Cave has long been an enticing goal to visit. So near but yet so far. Wentworth Creek starts behind Leura Public School and winds its tortuous way NE to meet the Grose at the cave site. To reach it in a day's walk is difficult from any quarter. I was happy to join a group who planned to approach it from the north side of the Grose. The descent to the site took about three and a half hours and was as expected, steep rough and slippery and a bit of a race against time in these now short days.

Imagine then our disappointment in finding no trace of the cave marked on the 1:25000 Kurrjong Sheet. Dusk had fallen by the time the party had returned to the parked cars.

A second look was made at home of Andy Macqueen's "Back from the Brink" and lo and behold, his map at the rear of the book shows the cave located directly over the river from where we were. As six inches

of rain had fallen at Wentworth Falls over the three days preceding our walk the Grose was bubbling along at an unfordable rate so our walk would have been just as futile even if armed with the correct

information. Strange to say simple tourist maps show its correct position. Still it was an invigorating walk and we will be back in the summer.

Andy Macqueen in his book states the survey team seeking out a rail route over the mountains (1850-60) went in error for at least several metres up Wentworth Creek. He conjectures the cave would have been used by the survey team as a shelter and base.

Rough as this area is to approach it is not a patch on some of the country on the Wollongambe River side. The river winds in another tortuous meander between the steep sandstone cliffs to the

History of Our Walking Tracks

Part 6. (Extracts from Jim Smith's Draft Historical Report for the Walking Track Heritage Study.)

The Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Connection

A curious by-way of walking track history can be found by examining the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital connection to some Jamison Valley tracks. A month after Prince Alfred had gone down Prince Alfred's track to view the Jamison Valley, there was an attempt on his life. Henry Parkes' personal physician, Sir Alfred Roberts, removed the bullet. "When he recovered it was decided as an indication of gratitude for such recovery to build a hospital as a memorial". Sir Henry Parkes wrote to Florence Nightingale asking her to recommend a woman to be the matron. Elizabeth Lilla Murray was recommended. During her voyage to Australia she met the Captain, James Somerville Murray, whom she later married.

When Prince Alfred Hospital opened in 1882, Elizabeth Murray was the matron and Roberts the Honorary Secretary. When Captain and Mrs Murray were married they honeymooned at Wentworth Falls where Roberts and Captain Murray had holiday homes. Their daughter Margaret Caroline Britannia Murray was born in 1893.

So, in the Valley of the Waters, we have Lillian's Glen, Lillian's Bridge, Mrs Murray's staircase, Britannia Falls and the Caroline Pool. None of these features would have had these names unless Henry James O'Farrell had taken a potshot at Prince Alfred. Roberts' Pass, completed about 1898, is the final name with a Royal Prince Alfred Hospital connection.

(Next Month: Walking tracks constructed for environmental education.)

Colo and access to its waters is limited. Wollongambe Crater is shown on the 1:25000 sheet of the area and entices out many adventurers. In my opinion, the site is something of a let down after the strenuous walking needed to reach there. A vivid imagination may detect a greatly dissected circular cliff formation and there is an uncharacteristic patch of swamp land but the average observer would not give a second thought to these features — but the walk in gives good exercise and a feeling of great remoteness. At the moment it is also a dirty walk as the January fire in Lithgow reached this area. The waratahs, as usual enjoy the lack of competition and are coming through in great shape and promise a great late spring showing.

— The Bunyip.

Saving the Bush from Us

Part 9: Health in Bushland

— The Great Weed Battle

Background: What is a weed lies very much in the eyes of the beholder. So, broom, gorse and pines can bring a sigh and nostalgic tear to the eye of some. However the problem with weeds is that they are the invaders, pioneers and colonisers of natural places — a bit like the colonial Empires.

Weeds usually move towards a monoculture and they have two big problems — one is reduction of biological diversity and the other is the difficulty of removal. The third is the change in soil/water relation so that it is usually harder to re-establish the indigenous plants afterwards. So it is starting to sound like your hard work and time. These rules are all my own.

Principle 1 of Weed Control: Don't Litter. I know you don't, but lots of people toss lawn cuttings and piles of weeds over the fence. Other just put them down the back. And litter is also seeds. Knock the tops off weeds before they seed. Set the mower on high and gradually reduce the numbers of annual and perennials. Once they have flowered, some weeds like onion weed will continue to form seed once cut from the plant — so you chop it off at the initiation of flowering. Turn weeds into compost by using one of the heat methods.

Principle 2: Don't Enrich. For every 100 kg of nitrogen fertiliser applied to crop or garden only 60% is able at the maximum to be absorbed by the plants — the rest goes into air and waterways and soil. So any high nitrogen fertiliser like dynamic lifter, urea or chook manure will seep surplus nitrogen into the subsoil water and the soil. The environment is changed and the weeds will thrive.

Surplus water in places where it was formerly dry will result in weed invasion and smothering of the original vegetation. So, use barrier plants and macrophytes to filter surplus water. Similarly, clearing and paving causes water to run off very quickly and not soak into the ground and so wet-loving plants can give up and die and be succeeded by dry type weeds.

Where I live the road builders turned a creek to run in another direction. My 12 year old neighbour, Will, tells me he remembers a permanent creek between our homes. Other neighbours tell me that the tree ferns and gums were dying when they bought their home.

Compost, good old compost in the form of humic acid, holds water and nutrient and is the best slow release fertiliser of the lot. It will also encourage a soil bacterium, *Penicillium* spp, which breaks down insoluble phosphates which are largely responsible for soil acidity problems. (Message to farmers: put all crop residues back into the soil where they can compost.)

Principle 3: Don't overclear weeds. Some people like to feel virtuous and effective by hauling out huge quantities of honeysuckle, or blackberry. It is far

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

AUGUST

- 18 (Tue) **Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group.** Meet at the Conservation Hut at 9 am. Bring morning tea and gloves. Contact Jessica 4757.2783.
20 (Thu) **Committee Meeting.** Mid Mountains Community Centre, 7 pm.
23 (Sun) **Kids' Club — "Bush Treasures".** A hunt for hidden treasures of the bush, using photos and a map for clues. Meet 10 am, outside Heritage Centre, Govetts Leap Road, Blackheath. Contact Jessica 4757.2783.
28 (Fri) **General Meeting** at The Hut, 7.30 pm. Guest Speaker Pam Gardiner, Blue Mountains WIRES.

SEPTEMBER

- 15 (Tue) **Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group.**
17 (Thu) **Committee Meeting.**
25 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut.**

BUSHWALKS (Usually day walks — bring lunch and minimum 1 litre water)

Bushwalks have been graded: 1-3 easy; 4-7 medium; 8-10 hard. People coming by train or in need of transport should contact the leader.

AUGUST

- 02 (Sun) **Glastonbell** — a lovely walk at Glastonbell, Bell. Meet at Mount Victoria Station at 9.30. Contact Christine Davies 47 877 246.
15 (Sat) **Crayfish Pool.** Meet 9.30 at the National Park gates, Glenbrook. Grade 5. Contact Ron Amos 02 9727 8931.
29 (Sat) **Mount Boyce.** Meet at Blackheath commuter carpark (western side of station) at 9.30. Grade 4-5. Contact Barbie Wylie 4784.1954.

SEPTEMBER

- 06 (Sun) **Undercliff/Overcliff Walk.** Meet at Wentworth Falls Station at 9.30. Grade 5. Contact Terry Flynn 4787.6918.
26 (Sat) **Mounts Airly and Genowlan.** (Visit the 300 sisters!). Meet at Mount Victoria Station at 9 am (cars to Capertee). Contact Marion Hawley 4787.1933. Fairly easy, but be prepared for a long day.

LEISURE WALKS (Usually morning walks — bring a drink and morning tea.)

AUGUST

- 03 (Mon) **Terrace Falls.** Meet 9.30 War Memorial, Honour Avenue, Lawson. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958. (Some rough patches)
10 (Mon) **Mystery Walk.** Meet 9.30 Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. Contact Rose Hodgson 4787.7121.
03 (Mon) **Terrace Falls.** Meet 9.30 War Memorial, Honour Avenue, Lawson. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958. (Some rough patches)
10 (Mon) **Mystery Walk.** Meet 9.30 Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. Contact Rose Hodgson 4787.7121.
17 (Mon) **Clifftop Walk, Gordon Falls to Leura Cascades.** Meet 9.30, Gordon Falls Reserve. Contact Judith Buckley 4784.1062.
24 (Mon) **McMahons Point.** Meet 9.30 Stockyard car park, Wentworth Falls. Contact Anne Gale 4787.2092.

SEPTEMBER

- 07 (Mon) **Mount Victoria Mystery Walk.** Meet Mount Victoria Station at 9.30. Contact Rosemary Butler 02.6355.2292
14 (Mon) **Explorers Tree to Old Ford Reserve (Part of Six Foot Track).** Meet 8.45 am, Explorers Tree. Contact Mervyn Bird 4787.7959 (Long steep descent, cars being organised to ride up)
21 (Mon) **Lockley's Pylon.** Meet 9.30 outside Leura School (cnr. GWH and Mount Hay Road). Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958. BRING LUNCH.
28 (Mon) **Grand Canyon.** Meet 9.30 Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. Contact Lee Tredennick 4757.4030. HARDER WALK: steep descent and ascent.

better to go slower and to control the regrowth. Then you can replant with dense understorey plants to smother weed regrowth.

My Life: I'd just like you to know that my weed problem was a row of twenty one, 100 foot high pines on the NNW boundary of my land. This week the last are being felled. The canopy has been largely mulched, the small timber stacked for burning after two years of drying, and the larger trunks milled on the land for later building of a replacement shed. It has been a huge and scary job, yet enormously satisfying. I have sun and space and I am replanting as each group of trees is felled. One problem is the heavy frosts this year because I am sure that for squillions of years these soils were never frosted. They are now, and it

must be changing them in some way.

Next time will be the last in this series. I hope you have enjoyed them.

— Ro Morrow.

More Bushwalks Planned

What better way to see the Blue Mountains than to go on a bushwalk? By doing this you can see new places and make new friends. We go beyond the lookouts and learn more about our unique environment.

We are increasing our bushwalking programme and soon hope to have a walk each week. Can you suggest any places to go? Or perhaps you would even like to lead a walk? If needed we can get someone to help you. The more leaders we have the less work each one will have to do. Please contact Jim on 4784.3305.