

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



Badgerys Creek — Time is Running Out!

On April 15 Federal Transport Minister John Anderson pre-empted the outcome of the Environmental Impact Study and signalled that a 24 hour international airport would be constructed at Badgerys Creek.

Anderson told journalists he had been discussing the issue with John Howard and that it was reasonable to assume that he knew the general thrust of the EIS recommendations. A Government source commented later "The Minister's speech was a very strong statement of support that Badgerys Creek is the only realistic solution given that the EIS does not categorically rule out the project as an environmental disaster". Anderson's staff invited journalists to "read between the lines".

In terms of the Commonwealth's EIS process, 'Environmental Disasters' don't exist. Less than 1% of evaluated proposals are rejected on environmental grounds. The premise of an EIS is to identify environmental impacts and produce a strategy to manage them. This, from a government that approved uranium mining at Jabiluka!

Anderson's comments invoked an angry response from western Sydney Liberals, particularly Jackie Kelly who described Anderson as a "captive of his department". Kelly described the Department of Transport as having a 'Badgerys or Bust' mentality. Her public comments earned her a carpeting by John Howard whilst Howard's North Shore colleague and former western Sydney medico Brendan Nelson, welcomed Anderson's comments with apparent immunity. Nelson added "Assuming the EIS confirms that Badgerys can proceed, which I think it will, then the Government should make a decision as quickly as possible".

The Liberal Party is split along geographical lines over this issue, with the safe North Shore group, including the PM, pushing hard for Badgerys. The PM will push this through at his own peril. After the 96 election, he embraced his Western Sydney converts as 'Howard's battlers', but with Labor on the ascendancy and with an airport looming, their loyalty could evaporate.

Ironically also on April 15, Tourism Council of Australia managing director Phil Young said a survey showed 60% of NSW tourism operators would support the development of a second airport outside the Sydney basin.

John Anderson also indicated his enthusiastic support for the Very Fast Train between Mascot and Canberra airports, expected to be operational by 2003. Why sites along this new rail corridor are not being evaluated is beyond me!

Please write NOW to the PM, the Transport Minister and the Environment Minister (Parliament House, Canberra). Time is running out. Don't forget to send a copy to Kerry Bartlett. *Kay Vella, Chairperson, Communities Against an Airport in Western Sydney.*

Award for the Best Heritage Study commissioned by a Government Department.

The three parts of the study were: Historical Context Report; over 300 State Heritage Data Base Forms, one for each track; and Heritage Assessment and Conservation Guidelines. The first two parts were prepared by Jim Smith, the third by Chris Betteridge and David Beaver who said in their Statement of Significance that, taken as a whole, the Blue Mountains walking tracks were of national significance.

It is interesting that the judges in the Heritage Award said in their citation that the Blue Mountains Walking Track Heritage Study was a "very well researched study of an item of international significance".

Membership

Involvement

During the recent Earth Sanctuary debate, the Management Committee became aware that some members would have liked to have been more involved with discussions. So during the coming year, I will focus on membership involvement and am considering organising some workshops on topical issues, projects before the Society and skills acquisition.

If you have a particular interest, please phone me. Meredith 4782.4823 (after 6 pm and weekends)

Nature Conservation Council

Chairperson to Address BMCS

Dr Judy Messer, Chairperson of the Nature Conservation Council, will be the speaker at our May meeting. Judy has been an environmental advocate for nearly 30 years, and has been involved in many of the major environmental campaigns of recent years.

Her current policy interest is on the need to promote the inclusion of the principles of ecologically sustainable development into all policies affecting natural resources, and in ensuring that these policies take an integrated approach.

Judy is well placed to talk about the role of volunteer groups, such as ours. She well knows the difficulties facing volunteer groups, and will be presenting her ideas on the approaches we can adopt to ensure we remain effective. Her address

will be challenging and informative, and will be a must for all conservationists.

The meeting, at the Conservation Hut, Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls, starts at 7.30 pm on Friday 28 May 1999. Why not come — and, bring a friend!

Heritage Study

Wins Major Award

The Blue Mountains Walking Track Heritage Study, commissioned by National Parks and Wildlife Service, has won the Integral Energy National Trust

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

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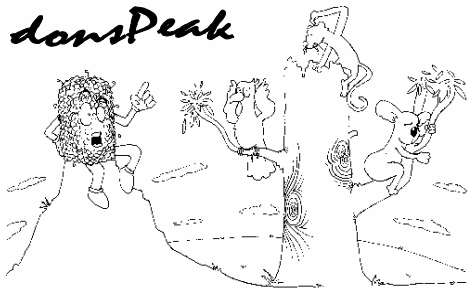
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THE DEADLINE
FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS
WEDNESDAY 19 MAY



Awards As Deserved

Hilary Clinton will present the Goldman Environmental Award to two Australian Aboriginal women who campaigned against Jabiluka mine. But a Deafening Raspberry award is all our Federal Government deserves for its efforts on Jabiluka.

Delta Pawn

Delta Electricity has long been criticised for withholding too much of the environmental flow from the Cox's River and for failing to move coal to its power stations by rail. In April, there was more environmental disruption and a safety alert when a bladder accidentally deflated at Delta's Lake Lyell Dam, causing the dam level to suddenly drop by one metre. What does Delta have to do before the Carr Government ceases to be Delta's apologist and cleans up (greens up?) the Utility's management?

Kedumba Invaders

On April 17, off-road vehicle louts allegedly broke a padlock near Queen Victoria Hospital, Wentworth Falls, and held a drug party in the historic and environmentally sensitive Kedumba Farm area. This underscores the need to report vandalism and illegal activity promptly.

Ralph to the Rescue

I have often been critical of Clr Ralph Williams, particularly his March 23 speech when he claimed that Draft LEP 97 guide-lines might restrict couples to having one and a half children. (It doesn't add up, Ralph!) But now Ralph has offered his services as an engineer on very reasonable terms to a resident whose neighbour is legally pressuring her to remove a favourite tree. So, good on you for that, Ralph—saving one tree is a start!

When It's Time to be a Party Pooper

Macquarie MP Kerry Bartlett is in full anti-Badgery's Airport mode! Will he and Jackie Kelly have to follow the lead of former colleague Paul Zammit and resign from the Liberal party over their anti-resident aviation policies? Don Morison.

Jabiluka Campaign

Are you a North shareholder? Do you know anyone who is? We have been working with North shareholders regarding North's pursuit of the Jabiluka uranium mine in Kakadu National Park. We are now at a crucial stage and are trying to contact North shareholders who are interested in participating in a North Ethical Shareholder group against the Jabiluka mine.

(Sarah Wright, Researcher, Mineral Policy Institute. Phone 02.9387.5540. Email research@mpi.org.au)

The People's Forest Exhibition

The People's Forest exhibition has been acclaimed by media reviewers and the public and described as "absolutely fabulous", "really moving", "a powerful and important exhibition". The exhibition opened at the Katoomba Scenic Railway and Skyway on April 16 for one month. Using oral history, film and photographic material, the exhibition documents the social history of the Australian forests. It tells the untold story about people and the bush, that crucial human element of our forest heritage.

Insufficient space here to say more, except, **Don't miss it!**

.... And The Book

One of the most important books on the environment which has ever been written. It explains our connection to the land and tells the stories of the land.

During the exhibition The People's Forest book will be available for sale at the Skyway at a specially discounted price of \$40.

Welcome to New Members

Carol Proberts, Katoomba
John Tognolini, Katoomba
Bob and Leone Huntsman, Narrabeen
Gabrielle Kirby, Woodford
Joan Thompson, Bullaburra

World Environment Day

The Society will hold a stall at the World Environment Day celebrations (at Mid Mountains Community Centre) on Saturday June 5. Would you like to help? Phone Heather Coster 4759.1247.

Biodiversity: We live in it

Biodiversity — the variety of all living things on Earth — is all around us and looking after us.

We rely on biodiversity in every part of our lives. Our food and medicines come from biodiversity; Native birds, bats and insects pollinate our gardens; We breathe the oxygen produced by trees; Trees take up the carbon dioxide produced by our factories; Plants keep the air fresh in our offices; Tiny bugs break down our garbage into fertile soil; Our crops are protected from pests by foraging birds and insects; Marine organisms clean up the sewage we put into the oceans. (Source: *Biodiversity, A guide to using and protecting Australia's Biodiversity, Environment Australia.*)

September 1999 is Earth Alive! National Biodiversity Month. It also embraces National Threatened Species Day on Sept 7, the day the last Tasmanian Tiger died. Any ideas for a Society project? Phone Christine 4787.7246.

Macleans Flying fox Colony

Membership Enquiries
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The refusal of a grant for legal aid brought to an end the legal battle to protect a colony of flying-foxes at Maclean, on the north coast of NSW.

In January, the Land and Environment Court granted an urgent injunction restraining the Department of Education from disturbing the colony, located in a rainforest reserve next to the Maclean High School, which included a threatened species, the Black Flying-fox.

Experts engaged by the North Coast Environment Council contend that the flying-fox colony has been on the site since the late 1800s. The school was built in the 1960s. Extensions in 1996/97 brought school buildings into contact with trees in the Reserve used by roosting flying foxes.



The disturbance/dispersal process began at 5.30 pm on 6 April and continued until 7 am on 9 April. During that time a "Bat Wailer" was used to emit loud noises directed at the bats. By 5:pm on 8 April over forty people were involved in the active disturbance of the colony, using all sorts of noises, including children firing starting pistols (illegal) and people letting off fireworks (also illegal).

Since 1989 these animals have been "protected" under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974, and are "conserved" under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995.

Yet because of irresponsible and bad planning by a Government Department (Education), the animals have been harassed, tormented and displaced.

This shameful episode has illustrated how a human community can push a species to the brink of extinction, then blame the animal for its own destruction, without considering the impact this will have on the wider human, animal and plant communities.

Is this what we want to teach our children?

Flying-fox Information and Conservation Network (FICN) has requested that as many people as possible write letters to the Premier Bob Carr, Environment Minister Bob Debus and Education Minister John Aquilina.

.... In Contrast

FICN was recently contacted by a school in Northern Queensland to inform them that the Little Red Flying-fox had returned to a rainforest remnant adjacent to their school, which they had been regenerating for five years.

The children were delighted with their achievement. The school had enlisted over this five year period, the services of flying-fox educators, local bush regenerators and TAFE students to not only improve the rainforest but to gain a greater understanding of how our flora and fauna work together.

Looking Back ...

(From Newsletter No 5, June 1971)

Birds amongst the Banksias.

At present on the slopes above the great cliffs of the Jamison Valley, the hill-Banksia, *Banksia collina*, is flowering profusely. The flowers of this wonderful plant — large, dull-orange brushes with purply black “hairpins” protruding — provide food for many species of birds. Most of them belong to the most common Australian bird family, the Honeyeaters. Reta Vellenga mentions in her book sixteen species of honeyeaters, which she observed within the Council’s boundaries.

Anyone taking a stroll along Prince Henry Cliff walk would have a good chance of seeing in the months of June, July and August six of these species feeding on Banksia nectar or “hawking” for insects in the air. Pick a spot where you hear a lot of birds calling. If you stand or sit still, most of the species will come and inspect you.

Commonest are the Eastern Spine-bill and the New Holland Honeyeater. The first is small, sprightly, with long curved bill, coloured dark above, dull orange below, white chest, smoky bib. It has many brisk, cheerful calls and it will come right up to you. The other is larger, black and white with yellow on wings, white eye, striped breast.

Next is the Yellow Faced Honeyeater — grey green above, grey beneath, yellow face stripe. Tens of thousands of these birds migrate north in Autumn. However there seems to

be a large winter population here, living on nectar and insects. These birds are almost certainly migrants which have come up from the south of Victoria perhaps...?

The Crescent Honeyeater is smaller than the last two; dark grey above, with bright yellow on wings and tail, light grey below, white chest with a black crescent-shaped mark each side. It has a shrill, strident voice — its chief call sounds like: “Egypt Egypt”. It is a most exasperating bird in that it will perch in a bush near you and shriek derisively, but see it, you cannot! However if you stay still it will sometimes come and look at you. When you do see it, you will be surprised, that such a small bird could have such a loud voice. The female is much duller than the male, olive-brown in colour and even more elusive.

The Lewin Honeyeater is a handsome olive-green bird with a yellow ear-patch. Larger and stouter than the others. It lives in the wet, overgrown gullies, but comes up to feed on the Banksias. It calls freely, a single musical note repeated in a rapid staccato fashion.

The largest is the Red Wattle Bird. It travels round in flocks and has a raucous voice of which it makes full use, calling constantly “Kwok, Kwok”, “Have another, we’ll have another”, and other calls.

Recently, without moving from one place, six species were observed hawking for insects in the late afternoon sunlight. Even the elusive female Crescent Honeyeater ventured forth long enough to focus the binoculars! What a pleasant and exhilarating experience. (Graham Alcorn)

KIARAMBA by Noel May

The alter in the Chapel
to the westward looks away,
Where the colour of the sunset
brings to night, another day,
Here the lantern in the rafters
sheds a warm and friendly glow
On the folks who gather ‘round us
in these joyful times we know,
Where we come to share our gladness
as in older times and ways
At the alter of the faithful
and to raise our voice in praise.

There’s a long and haunting story
of this valley in the hills,
Where the cedar cutters dragged their load
to hidden bushland mills,
And the dimly glowing candles
of the miners down below
Led them in their search for silver,
where the shadows dance and grow.

They are gone, these ancient shadows
of a past I never knew,
But I still can stand and dream about
the labours of the few,
Who stood against the dangers
with a saddle-horse and pack
As they lived alone with beauty
in a tumble-down bush shack.

Ah, but when now I sadly wonder
as the waters, deep and wide
Have claimed this ancient valley
‘neath their cold and silent tide
If those ghosts of Kiaramba
with its ever changing sky
Would smile and say you’re welcome
And we’re glad that you came by.

(*Kiaramba, on Scotts main range, acquired by five priests from the Archdiocese of Sydney in 1940, where The Shack was erected. The story of Kiaramba and The Shack can be found in “Shack Country and the Old Burragorang” by Jim Barrett.*)

In the Bush

I’ve been wandering away from the local billabong and have returned with even greater appreciation of our sandstone environment and the national parks it contains. Its very uselessness as a food production source has spared it from all the strategies which have been applied to make our more arable lands keep on giving. Thus, we can wander over it where we will and except for bush fire damage see a landscape which in the main remains quite undisturbed.

Once past Hartley commercial exploitation of the land is the norm. Actually the rolling grasslands with their flocks and herds convey a sense of prosperity and rural bliss. Our soil and agricultural experts however see a landscape beset with many problems which make the dream of sustainable farming mean just that — a dream.

Mary White in her recent book “Listen, our land is bleeding” has amassed facts and figures which show land productivity is steadily

declining. Salination, water and wind erosion, soil acidification, soil compaction, cadmium poisoning are just a few of the afflictions which beset out land.

Despite this, White states “...we persist in producing for export: grains ... in quantities to feed 200 million people; sugar for 35 million and meat for 30 million, ... enough wool for 500 million and cotton for 100 million.” That practical global concern over the environment will replace economic aspirations within our lifetime is laughable to contemplate.

To switch to a carefree holiday mode demands a certain ostrich mentality but I managed it. The rolling acres of grass and crop, the copses of surviving eucalypts, the vast sky parade of cloud stirred the heart and eye and brought back old memories. Nevertheless I would not like to live in any country town if it had no national park close by. There is nowhere to walk freely. Even national parks and Crown land present problems if one wants to press on past the tourist zones. In the higher rainfall southern areas blackberry bushes present formidable barriers along creek ways. I attempted to traverse sections of the Hume and Hovell trail only to be foiled by them. In the north the problem is lantana.

So how nice it is to be

back in a zone free of fences, too sterile for foreign invaders, and sally forth to explore new reaches.

Incidentally I was pleased to purchase from the “highest shop in NSW” (Cabramurra) a Field guide to Native Pea flowers of Victoria and SE Australia by Dorothy Woolcock. Illustrations by Collin Woolcock — plenty of colour plates and line drawings and a must for those striving to identify that confusing Fabaceae family which are so well represented in our local surrounds. **The Bunyip.**

(*This is the last “In the Bush” article from Bunyip. We have enjoyed the descriptions and illustrations of Bunyip’s many journeys and rambles, and wish him well in his future adventures.*)

Birds are Animals Too

Society Member Joan Williams has written to point out a mistake in the April issue of Hut News where we incorrectly described "birds" as a separate group to "animals". The term "animal" describes a large taxonomical group to which all birds, mammals, insects, etc., belong. Joan states that our Society should know better. My apologies! Ed.

Why Bushwalk?

We owe so much to the early bushwalkers. Their vision to conserve the bush has given us what we have today.

Now, as then, our bush still entices and inspires. The many tracks that beckon us onward are endless arrays of charm and beauty. Be it the exquisite delicacy of the near to the grand vistas of the far, nature at her best fills us with awe. We are spiritually uplifted.

That is why a good bushwalk changes our perceptions, perhaps even of life itself. When others join us, we all share the benefits. We renew our sense of adventure, get to know others better, learn new things, breathe fresh air, and get healthy exercise in a fun way — all for free! We are so lucky to have so much just at our doorsteps.

The Society organises a bushwalk almost every weekend. **During the cooler autumn and winter months we hope to have more walks in the Lower Mountains, but we need more walk leaders who are familiar with these bushwalks.**

If you want to know more, or would like to lead a walk, or an excursion, phone Jim Wallace on 4784.3305

Visit to Budthingeroo

On Sunday May 23 we are organising an excursion to **Budthingeroo** and Kanangra Walls. All are welcome.

Budthingeroo is marked on the Kanangra 1:25000 map as Portion 5, on the way to Kanangra Walls from Oberon.

This land was purchased a few years ago by National Parks and Wildlife Service, with help from Blue Mountains Conservation Society, who paid half the purchase price.

During the excursion we will have a picnic lunch at **Budthingeroo**, collect seed for propagation at the Society's nursery, visit Kanangra Walls lookout, and perhaps a short walk at Kanangra Walls. See "Dates for Your Diary" →

The Urban Fox

Enclosed with this newsletter is a pamphlet prepared by the Urban Feral Animal Action Group.

Foxes are now present in all urban bushland reserves of Sydney, their numbers approximately double those in rural areas.

In the Blue Mountains foxes occur in much greater numbers around the Blue Mountains townships than in the surrounding National Park. We can help reduce their numbers..

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | SATURDAY | SUNDAY |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------|-------------------|--------------------|--|
| MAY | | | | | | 2 Bushcare 2 Bushwalk |
| 3 LeisWalk | | | | | 8 Bushwalk | 9 KidsClub |
| 10 LeisWalk | | | | | | 16 Bushwalk |
| 17 LeisWalk | 18 Bushcare | | | | 22 MCMMeet | 23 Excursion |
| 24 LeisWalk | | | | 28 GenMeet | | 30 Bushwalk |
| 31 LeisWalk | | | | | | |
| JUNE | | | | | | 6 Bushcare 6 Bushwalk |
| 7 LeisWalk | | | | | | 13 KidsClub 13 Bushwalk |
| | | | | | 19 MCMMeet | 20 Bushwalk |
| 21 LeisWalk | 22 Bushcare | | | 25 GenMeet | 26 Bushwalk | |
| 28 LeisWalk | | | | | | |

MAY

- 22 (Sat) **Management Committee Meeting**, 9am, Mid Mountains Cmunity Centre.
28 (Fri) **General Meeting at the Conservation Hut, 7.30 pm.** Guest Speaker: **Dr Judy Messer**, "Emergent Issues for Nature Conservation and Environment Protection - Is there a Role for Local Conservation Organisations?" (More information on page 1)

JUNE

- 19 (Sat) **Management Committee Meeting**
25 (Fri) **General Meeting.** Guest speaker, well-known Blue Mountains ornithologist, **Carol Proberts.**

KIDS' CLUB (Parents are welcome to come along.)

MAY

- 09 (Sun) **Making a safe bird bath and frog pond, using recycled materials.** Meet 10 am, 55 Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls. Bring morning tea. Contact Jessica 4757.2783.

JUNE

- 13 (Sun) **Bushwalk with Nature Games — Look/Listen/Find.**

BUSHCARE (Tools provided — bring morning tea and gloves.)

MAY

- 02 (Sun) **Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group.** Meet 9 am at the Reserve. Contact Ross Coster 4759.1247.
18 (Tues) **Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group.** Meet 9 am Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. Contact Jessica 4757.2783. (following Tuesday if wet).

JUNE

- 06 (Sun) **Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group.** (Details as above.)

BUSHWALKS (Usually day walks — bring lunch and **minimum 1 litre water.**) Walks have been graded: E-easy; M-medium; H-hard If coming by train or in need of transport, contact the leader. If you would like to lead a walk or organise an excursion, contact Jim Wallace 4784.3305.

MAY

- 02 (Sun) **Leura Forest, revisit this historic picnic area.** Meet Leura Railway carpark 9.30. George Georgiou 4784.1721. Grade M. (up the railway).
08 (Sat) **Bruce's Walk, an ideal walk for late Autumn,** Meet at Gearins Hotel, Katoomba 9.30. Rebekah Somerville 4782.4294. Grade M/H. (car shuttle needed).
16 (Sun) **Euroka Clearing (an Aboriginal site, beautiful Nepean River, kangaroos ... and more).** Meet Glenbrook Station, 9.30. Contact Jim Wallace 4784.3305. Grade M/H.
23 (Sun) **Excursion/Bushwalk/Picnic — "Budthingeroo", Kanangra.** (More information on left side of this page.) Meet at Mount Victoria Station at 9am to pool cars. Contact Christine Davies 4787.7246.
30 (Sun) **Crayfish Pool, Glenbrook. A lovely spot in NP at Glenbrook.** Meet Glenbrook Station, 9.30 Contact Elizabeth Stark 4754.4966. Grade M.

JUNE

- 06 (Sun) **Ikara Head, superb views of the Upper Grose Valley.** Meet Mount Victoria Station at 9 am. Contact 4787.8342. Grade M.
13 (Sun) **Six-Foot-Track, Megalong Valley Road to Cox's River.**
20 (Sun) **Blue Gum Swamp Area.**
26 (Sat) **The Lost World.**

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

MAY

- 03 (Mon) **Fort Rock.** Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9.30. Contact Norah Gaynor 4757.4058.
10 (Mon) **Terrace Falls.** Meet Hazelbrook Station carpark, southern side of station, 9.30. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.
17 (Mon) **Gordon Falls, Pool of Salome.** Meet Gordon Falls Reserve 9.30. Contact Jan Cutler 84.3079. **BBQ afterwards.**
24 (Mon) **Three Brothers.** Meet outside Hydro Majestic, eastern end. Contact Mervyn Bird 4787.7959.
31 (Mon) **Radiata Plateau.** Meet Gearins Hotel, Katoomba, 9.30. Corrie Brook 4757.4574.

JUNE

- 07 (Mon) **Darwin's Walk.** Meet Stockyard Carpark, Wentworth Falls, 9.30. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.