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RUFOUS WHISTLER

Patron Mr Allen A. Strom, A.M.

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HONOURS FOR CONSERVATION AND LITERATURE

'... the sure vision celebrate' .

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For each the honour recognizes a lifetime of service, professionally and in leisure time, to Australia; each has had a sure vision of this land---its past, present, and its possible future. Their work, each in its kind, has helped their fellow Australians to understand and cherish their country.

At the wish of the General Meeting of 27th January the President has conveyed the Society's congratulations to each of them.

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Mr. Myles J. Dunphy, O.B.E., New Year's Honours List:
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Make any enquiries to:

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"Biological and Evolutionary Considerations"

Professor Burnet's remarks under this heading are extremely interesting. We reprint them in full as follows:

"At a more strictly biological level, I wish to point out how the whole development of the biosphere during the course of organic evolution has been "directed" toward the elimination of life-damaging constituents of the environment. The most conspicuous was the generation of the oxygen of the atmosphere by photosynthesis, mostly by marine algae. Once the oxygen content of the atmosphere became significant, the ozone layer in the stratosphere developed to screen out most of the solar ultraviolet and remove an important damaging agent. Biological processes also gave rise to the laying down of vast amounts of calcium, magnesium, and carbon dioxide, and almost certainly of much iron ore. The associated changes in sea water constitution were in all probability highly significant for development of life.

"Modern molecular biology is deeply concerned with the elaborate mechanisms by which DNA can be repaired after damage by ionizing radiation (from radioactive atoms) or ~~field~~ ultraviolet. The amount of background ionizing radiation has probably diminished six-to eight-fold since the first appearance of life, and the incidence of ultraviolet at the earth's surface must have been many times greater in the days before the development of biological photosynthesis. Life has clearly been concerned from the beginning with counteracting damage from radiation, almost the only type of environmental impact that can modify the informational content of DNA and cause genetic damage. It is interesting possibility that natural chemical mutagens also may once have been present in the environment. If they were, they have since been destroyed by some form of biological action. None are now present at more than a few parts per billion in natural ecosystems uncontaminated with man-made substances.

"One might summarize by saying that lethal ultraviolet and ionizing radiations are appropriate in the atomic furnaces of stellar interiors and the unfiltered regions of space in solar systems. Life can only evolve in environments which such radiation cannot reach in more than minimal amounts. Having regard to all the other physical requirements for an abode of life, the earth's biosphere is, and probably always has been, unique in the solar system. The only human action that could destroy the biosphere and exterminate the human species is by manipulation of nuclear forces. Maybe the biosphere is now so well established that it is indestructible by anything that man could attempt, but the most elementary consideration of the possibility is a justification for struggling to reverse the decisions already made by the major powers to use nuclear energy in unlimited amounts, and to maintain a perpetual stockpile of nuclear arms that could kill or maim genetically a substantial fraction of the people of the earth."

FIRST RANGER REPORT IN OUR LIBRARY

Friends of the Earth have sent us a copy of the First Report of the Ranger Uranium Enquiry, It is in our library for perusal by members. It is not a green light for uranium mining as was initially reported in the press. Friends of the Earth urge people to write to their M.Ps. expressing opposition to the further development of uranium mining in Australia, as the Government must soon commit itself soon on opening up a new uranium mine.

GREATER BLUE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

In our last issue we wrote of the campaign for the Greater Blue Mountains National Park and reported that the case was to be put to the NSW Premier, Mr Wran in November.

Since then the Premier and the Minister for Lands, Mr Crabtree, have announced the creation of the Greater Southern Blue Mountains National, an area of 160,000 hectares which includes much of the southern section of the Greater Blue Mountains National Park.

This is great news indeed and the Government is to be congratulated for its prompt action. Much of the remainder of the proposals for the Southern B. MTS. including Nattai and an area south-west of Mount Werong is to be investigated.

The announcement of the granting of the Southern Blue Mountains Park came at the same time as the special issue of the National Parks Journal aimed at launching the public campaign for the Greater Blue Mountains Park proposal. Splendid that half of it should be already achieved. However, it is considered that the dedication of the northern section will not be simple as there are considerable commercial, industrial developmental and other opposing forces involved.....(OUR SOCIETY HAS COPIES OF NATIONAL PARKS JOURNAL:FOR SALE \$1, at the Hut) or NPA 263 Broadway...2007

This version of the Newsletter was re-typed from the original by Phoebe Coster in May 2021 to enable search engines to 'see' the text. Minor changes have been made to correct typographical errors and to add clarity.

KATOOMBA AND DISTRICT WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Newsletter No. 27 February 1977. Price 10 cents

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At a more strictly biological level, I wish to point out how the whole development of the biosphere during the course of organic evolution has been "directed" toward the elimination of life-damaging constituents of the environment. The most conspicuous was the generation of the oxygen of the atmosphere by photo-synthesis, mostly by marine algae. Once the oxygen content of the atmosphere became significant, the ozone layer in the stratosphere developed to screen out most of the solar ultraviolet and remove an important damaging agent. Biological processes also gave rise to the laying down of vast amounts of calcium, magnesium, and carbon dioxide, and almost certainly of much iron ore. The associated changes in sea water constitution were in all probability highly significant for development of life.'

"Modern molecular biology is deeply concerned with the elaborate mechanisms by which DNA can be repaired after damage by ionising radiation (from radioactive atoms) or ultraviolet. The amount of background ionizing radiation has probably diminished six-to-eight-fold since the first appearance of life, and the incidence of ultraviolet at the earth's surface must have been many times greater in the days before the development of biological photosynthesis. Life has clearly been concerned from the beginning with counteracting damage from radiation, almost the only type of environmental impact that can modify the informational content of DNA and cause genetic damage. It is interesting possibility that natural chemical mutagens also may once have been present in the environment. If they were, they have since been destroyed by some form of biological action. None are now present at more than a few parts per billion in natural ecosystems uncontaminated with man-made substances.

“One might summarize by saying that lethal ultraviolet and ionizing radiations are appropriate in the atomic furnaces of stellar interiors and the unfiltered regions of space in solar systems. Life can only evolve in environments which such radiation cannot reach in more than minimal amounts. Having regard to all the other physical requirements for an abode of life, the earth’s biosphere is, and probably always has been, unique in the solar system. The only human action that could destroy the biosphere and exterminate the human species is by manipulation of nuclear forces. Maybe the biosphere is now so well established that it is indestructible by anything that man could attempt, but the most elementary consideration of the possibility is a justification for struggling to reverse the decisions already made by the major powers to use nuclear energy in unlimited amounts, and to maintain a perpetual stockpile of nuclear arms that could kill or maim genetically a substantial fraction of the people of the earth.”

FIRST RANGER REPORT IN OUR LIBRARY

Friends of the Earth sent us a copy of the First Report of the Ranger Uranium Enquiry, It is in our library for perusal by members. It is not a green light for uranium mining as was initially reported in the press. Friends of the Earth urge people to write to their MPs expressing opposition to the further development of uranium mining in Australia as the Government must soon commit itself soon on opening up a new uranium mine.

GREATER BLUE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

In our last issue we wrote of the campaign for the Greater Blue Mountains National Park and reported that the case was to be put to the NSW Premier, Mr Wran in November.

Since then the Premier and the Minister for Lands, Mr Crabtree, have announced the creation of the Greater Southern Blue Mountains National Park, an area of 160,000 hectares which includes much of the southern section of the Greater Blue Mountains National Park.

This is great news indeed and the Government is to be congratulated for its prompt action. Much of the remainder of the proposals for the Southern Blue Mountains including Nattai and an area south-west of Mount Werong is to be investigated.

The announcement of the granting of the Southern Blue Mountains Park came at the same time as the special issue of the National Parks Journal aimed at launching the public campaign for the Greater Blue Mountains Park proposal. Splendid that half of it should be already achieved. However, it is considered that the dedication of the northern section will not be simple as there are considerable commercial, industrial developmental and other opposing forces involved...(OUR SOCIETY HAS COPIES OF NATIONAL PARKS JOURNAL: FOR SALE \$1, at the Hut) or National Parks Association Broadway..2007