

MINUTES OF JANUARY GENERAL MEETING held 12th January, 1973

It was decided to write again to the Water Board over the proposed horse-riding trails in the Wild Dog Mountains seeking more information. It was also resolved to write to Penrith City Council to obtain fullest possible information regarding the siting of the Lakes Scheme, the proposed public meeting, and to make the Society's position clear on environment impact studies into the scheme.

The Society is to send a statement to the Lake Pedder Action Committee supporting their call for a grant of \$10m. from the Commonwealth Government to save the Lake. We have also decided to support the N.S.W. Teachers' Federation in its stand against the building of an expressway through Wyong High School.

The Society will be participating in the Wildlife Show to be held this year by the Conservation and Wildlife Study Group in Sydney. Delegates elected for an organisational meeting were Denis Pain and Mick Dark.

Michael Smithson gave a report on his negotiations with Parks Service to obtain permission to collect dead native animal specimens. Permission was granted on condition that the specimens be given to the Australian Museum.

Dave Cook gave an interesting report on his haematology work with our live-trapped animals.

It was resolved that we should write to the Metropolitan Waste Disposal Authority, Minister for Environmental Control, and the Premier, supporting the call for an open enquiry into waste dumping in Castlereagh State Forest.

We will be writing to Parks Service and the Australian Museum to say that we are willing to help document Aboriginal sites in the Blue Mountains area.

The Society has also decided to make a submission to the gas pipeline enquiry to be held in March.

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WHAT'S ON?

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| <u>NEXT MEETING</u> | - | FRIDAY, 9th Feb., Springwood Civic Centre, 8 p.m. |
| <u>TRAPPING RUN</u> | - | Phone Michael Smithson, Penrith 213567 for details. |
| <u>FIELD TRIP</u> | - | Castlereagh area. Saturday 17th February.
Meet - Upper Castlereagh School at 2 p.m.
We will visit an aboriginal site and then proceed to Castlereagh State Forest. A spot-lighting run will be conducted in the evening. |

THE CONSERVATION SCENE

Bungonia Saved!

A N.S.W. Mining Warden has recommended that an application by Metropolitan Portland Cement Ltd. (a subsidiary of A.P.C.M.) to mine limestone in Bungonia Gorge near Marulan, be not granted.

The Mining Warden, Mr. K. S. Anderson, found that "the public interest in preservation of scenic aspects and recreational uses outweighs the public interest in the mining of the area, having regard to the everlasting impairment of the environment as compared with the short-term benefits of mining".

Precipitous Bluff (Tas.)

At Devenport (Tas.) on Dec. 6 1972, a Mining Warden found in favour of the conservation viewpoint when he rejected an application for a special prospector's licence by Mineral Holdings (Aust.) Pty. Ltd. The Company wished to prospect a limestone deposit occurring on the lower slopes of Precipitous Bluff.

In his determination, the Mining Warden said "the advantage of retaining the area in its primeval and pristine condition far outweighs the nebulous benefits from the mining activities proposed".

Myall Lakes

- * Mining is at present taking place on the coastal strip from the northern boundary of the Scientific Area north to Seal Rocks.
- * Anyone who has been a regular visitor to Myall Lakes will note the massive destruction which has been caused by the construction of the "mining road" from Mungo Brush to Seal Rocks. This is no longer an unobtrusive dirt track but a high-speed, built-up gravel road, resembling more an expressway. No attempt was made to follow the old route. This unnecessarily wide road has spared nothing.
- * The N.S.W. Parliamentary Labor Party has issued a policy statement which formally supports the Myall Lakes Committee's proposed national park boundaries. The party has indicated it would prevent mining within these boundaries if the A.L.P. came to power.

Myall Lakes (Cont.)

- * Some hope is seen for the area as a whole in the fact that the State Planning Authority has refused mining development by Mineral Deposits Ltd. in the forested high dunes running between Kataway Bay and Smiths Lake. M.D. has appealed against the decision and an Arbitrator, Mr. Walter Bunning, has been appointed to hear the appeal. The Myall Lakes Committee hopes to be granted leave to appear at the hearing.
- * Tamboi Pty. Ltd. recently proposed a major tourist complex on the shores of the Broadwater, near Mungo Brush. It involves four large hotels, 350 residential building blocks, a yacht club and marina, a golf course, bowling club, village shopping centre and beach club. S.P.A. is considering the proposal.

Penrith Lakes

A scheme has been proposed to reclaim old gravel quarries north of Penrith by flooding them to provide general water recreation. The proposal is for a series of lakes, some 8 square miles in extent in the area between Cranebrook Road, the Nepean River and Castlereagh Road. Penrith City Council favours the project and is co-operating with the S.P.A. and the Quarry Masters Association. The Council has commissioned the firm of Gutteridge, Haskins and Davey to carry out a design study of the project. Preliminary plans are expected by the middle of the year. The Society is enquiring into the proposal, particularly in relation to its consideration of environmental factors and how it would affect the Nepean River.

Lake Pedder

Despite propaganda to the contrary, Lake Pedder has not been destroyed. If a favourable decision came within the next few months, the Lake would be virtually unscathed. The Lake Pedder Action Committee is demanding that the Commonwealth Government make a public offer to Tasmania of \$10m. to meet the cost of modifying the power scheme so that Lake Pedder will be saved.

KANGAROO ISLAND PART II

The coastal cliffs of Kangaroo Island are in most places rugged, with sheer falls of 100-150 feet to the water below. They stand as a solid buttress against the heavy seas that come in from the south and at the same time provide homes for various birds and animals.

Carol and I went to Cape de Couedic to see the old lighthouse, Admirals Arch and a group of islands just off the Cape. Admirals Arch is an arch of limestone (complete with stalactites) formed over a basalt floor by preferential weathering and wave action. It was here that we found a group of Fur Seals basking on the rocks and we sat and watched them for some time. The fur seal is the smaller of the two types of seal that are on the island, the White-capped Hair Seal being much larger and rather intimidating.

Some days later we were to see a Fur Seal playing in the water at another area and we again sat fascinated as the seal treated a very heavy surf with disdain.

A fifty mile round trip brought us to Seal Bay where visitors are able to approach basking White-capped Hair Seals and pups. The area of beach one can visit is bordered at both ends by seal sanctums where the feet of tourists are banned. The nature of these areas and the reasons for the ban were not displayed, so one can only guess that they are breeding areas. To approach the beach from the small parking area, one threads a way along paths worn by the seals as they carry out their daily wanderings. The paths are bordered by grass-topped humps which appeal to lazy people as being an easier place to walk. I fell into the trap and ended up getting a rude shock. Jumping from hump to hump, I travelled merrily along until, jumping from one hump to another, I passed over the top of a not-so-sleepy seal. The roar put up by that 6 feet of blubber upset me, to say the least.

The beach is a place of wonder, fascination and nose-plugs. It is far better to view the seals through a pair of binoculars up-wind than close at hand, down-wind. The smell was atrocious and I now know why the hair of some of the seals was going white, I went a little grey myself.

Carol and I had to go right to the other end of the island to make our acquaintance with the other aquatic inhabitants. The night was dark, windy and cold when sounds like a pack of dogs out at sea announced the arrival of our friends. We sat behind a rock and spent some time watching the passing of our dinner-jacketed friends. The Little Penguin (*Eudyptula minor*) is common in many spots on the island and breeds quite successfully there. In many cases, the penguins walk (or waddle) some distance from the water (even crossing nearby roads) to reach their burrows. I consider this a fair feat because, after a hard day's work, I find it hard to walk the stairs to my flat let alone trying it with flippers on my feet and my knees bound together.

Anyway, we must leave the island there and simply recommend to you that you visit it some day. It's superb.

- David and Carol Cook

Blue Mountains

Total Environment Centre, Ecology Action, and the Wilderness Protection Committee have recently been taking a major interest in the Blue Mountains and at a public meeting they organised at Springwood on 8th December, 1972, the following resolutions were passed:-

1. That the State Government should, as a matter of urgency, direct the S.P.A. to devise a comprehensive plan for the development of the Blue Mountains region and that the skills of landscape architects, ecologists, botanists, zoologists, and sociologists be employed in addition to those of architects and engineers in the devising of such a plan.
2. That a plan for the development of the Blue Mountains must provide for substantial additions to the areas of National Parks.
3. That the organisers of this meeting call upon the representatives from all concerned local societies to meet within the second week of the New Year to consider a joint campaign against the proposed routes of the powerline and the gas pipeline.

In accordance with the last resolution, representatives of many concerned societies held a meeting at the Hydro Majestic Hotel on Saturday, 13th January 1973. This provided an interesting forum for discussion and several important decisions were made on action to be taken. These included:-

- a) That a delegation be sent to the meeting of Ministers and Councils called by Ald. Coates on 18th January.
- b) That Crown Lands on the eastern escarpment of the Blue Mountains should be made into a national park administered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- c) That the S.P.A. should instigate an urgent regional planning scheme for the Blue Mountains and that all major development should be deferred while this goes on.
- d) The meeting came out against the proposed route of the natural gas pipeline as it affects existing and proposed national parks.
- e) The meeting decided to set up a committee to look into the relation of private lands to a National Park for the escarpment and to report back to a subsequent meeting. Having tabled our policy for the escarpment, this Society was elected as the committee with power to co-opt.

A NEPEAN ABORIGINAL SITE

My first introduction to this aboriginal site on the Nepean River was through the Australian Museum Publication "The Natural History of Sydney" where an article on aboriginal relics by the curator of Anthropology, Mr. F. D. McCarthy, told of "Thousands of grooves abraded in soft sandstone rocks for half a mile along the river".

From the not too specific directions given in this article, I was able to pinpoint the site almost immediately.

Astonishment was my first reaction. Used only to the odd grinding groove in Blue Mountains' creeks and more numerous grooves on ridges, I was amazed at the sheer expanse of grooves. I commenced to count them but halted after counting 127 on one 21 yard shelf of sandstone.

Moving downstream, I noted grooves submerged as deep as two feet in the river - possibly drought sites. The grooves seemed unending as I walked downstream along the river bank.

Some of these grooves were one foot long and three inches deep while others were only inches long. Some sections of sandstone took on a corrugated look owing to the large amounts of grooves found on them.

Although secluded and rarely visited, the site has suffered vandalism - though not major proportions. Surveyors' marks have also been found on the rocks.

Later, I visited the site with Society members on two occasions. The last time saw the discovery of grooves ground in the natural clefts of the sandstone for reasons unknown as there is little possibility of their being used as axe-grinds. A number of slides were taken of the site as well.

Whether the site will remain unchanged is a matter for the fates, or so it seems. No concrete protection is available. No information as to the site's location has been given here but a field trip to the area is planned for 17th February (see "WHAT'S ON" column in this issue for details.)

- Michael Smithson.