

LOWER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

JULY

1973

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EDITORIAL

The next meeting of the society will be held this coming Friday(August 11th.). While it may not be so interesting as the last general meeting when John Barker gave a lecture on Frogs(a synopsis is expected to be available for a future publication)however, there is much of interest in the business of the society itself, the following is an incomplete outline.

Michael Smithson will be presenting a proposal for the Regional Co-operation of various groups in the area.

The Society has a great deal of work in the preparation of its contribution to the Environmental Exhibition for which Denis Pain has shouldered the burden of organisation. The theme of our exhibit is likely to be our work on the Escarpment Preservation, anyone interested in assisting with this show particularly in manning the exhibit (to be held Lower Town Hall Sydney 10th.-15th. September-9am. to 9pm.) even for part of the day or evening would be spending their time well in the interests of conservation.

As you may know the Blue Mountains Conservation Societies in conjunction with the Total Environment Centre have as expressed in the text of a letter by our president to various bodies on behalf of the above mentioned groups. "...responded to the complex problems confronting regional conservation planning in the Blue Mountains...(have) decided to arrange a conference to enable an exchange of ideas opinions and policies between interested and concerned groups and individuals, which would serve as a guideline for decision-makers, both administrative and voluntary, in the environmental planning of the Blue Mountains." The Conference is set for September the 16th. and should cost about \$4 (to include lunch and papers)

Members may not be aware that the reason for "Kalori" not being used in this issue is due to the discovery that the Australian Museums Society have been the registered holders of that name since the early thirties. Perhaps you can suggest a suitable replacement. While on the subject of the society's newsletter I am happy to inform members that this issue has been printed on the society's own Duplicating Machine, acquired last July and operated from the Editor's address. Anyone interested in contributing to the newsletter be it a letter to the editor, an article or some comment of interest can contact the editor (Mr. N. McGrath 4 Ross Cres., Blaxland 391035)

Members are entreated to attend our next meeting and participate in the many activities of the society which is so vitally concerned with events that shape our lifestyles today and the community of man in the future.

ESCARPMENT EFFORT:-

Johti Sommerville, a Sydney University Architecture student, who was helped by the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society to prepare a planning assesment of the Blue Mountains Eastern Escarpment, sent us her effort recently.

It is quite an achievement in our opinion. It is available through the Librarian - reference only at this stage.

AND NOW SOME QUOTABLE QUOTES:-

"It is better to pollute the sea than to pollute Penrith".

- Penrith Mayor. Brian King.

"I've never heard of it -".

- Staff members of Dept. of Enviromental Control in answer to a question concerning Castlereagh State Forest and the Environmental impact study done on the waste dump proposal.

"Roads have precedence over wilderness and pipelines".

- Out of the pages of Mr. Coffeys report of the Gas pipeline inquiry comes the scent of further winds of change.

** What price wilerness and peace!....

THE LAKE PEDDER ANNUAL REPORT.

The full report will be on display at the next general meeting (Friday Aug. 10th.)

The Lake Pedder Action Committee lists the following things as a must for you to do to save Lake Pedder.

- 1). Write to the Prime Minister and members of his Cabinet.
- 2). Even better, send telegrams to them. (The same message can be sent to a number of persons for only the extra cost of each member's name providing they are at the same address. See more details in the text.)
- 3). Write, phone or call upon your State and Federal members, request their urgent action.
- 4). Obtain your copy of the Pedder Report from the Lake Pedder Enquiry, P.O. Box 1937, Canberra 2601. Read it. Act on it. It is most revealing! Take a copy to your local section of the media and point out the advantages to all Australians of a saved Lake Pedder.
- * Copy available from Society. Librarian, Jill Dark, phone 391764.
- 5). Write to your newspaper.
- 6). Send a donation to your nearest LPAC Branch. Funds are needed urgently.

Take any other action you think worthwhile.

Politicians will not know your concern until you tell them.

The report includes a summary and recommendations derived from the enquiry report.

"The final judgement concerning the facts of Lake Pedder must be made at the political level, that is, by those whom Australians have elected to decide on national and State priorities and needs. Our role is to assist this judgement by providing an assesment of the facts and opions on the ma'ter, so far as we can ascertain them.

It is also our role, having considered the submissions presented to us, to express the opinions and views we have formed. In general, these have been given in the body of this report.

In summary they are:

- 1). The decision-making process which led to the flooding of Lake Pedder had weaknesses.
- 2). THE EVIDENCE CONCERNING THE RECOVERY OF THE LAKE INDICATES THAT IT IS HIGHLY LIKELY THAT THE LAKE WOULD RECOVER ACCEPTABLY IF RESTORED TO ITS NORMAL LEVEL DURING 1973.
- 3). The Lake Pedder National Park was proclaimed a scenic reserve in 1955 in the normal way; the boundaries were developed to take account of the views of the Hydro-Electricity Commission concerning likely developments; there was public expectation that the dedication of the reserve was permanent.
- 4). THE WILDERNESS AREA OF SOUTH WEST TASMANIA, OF WHICH LAKE PEDDER WAS THE FOCAL POINT, IS OUTSTANDING, AND IS A NATIONAL ASSET.
- 5). LAKE PEDDER WAS OF SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AND IMPORTANCE.
- 6). LAKE PEDDER WAS A PLACE OF OUTSTANDING BEAUTY.
- 7). There has been a significant change in public and political attitudes to environmental issues since the decision to flood Lake Pedder was made by the Parliament of Tasmania in 1967.
- 8). THERE ARE PRACTICABLE MODIFICATIONS TO THE PRESENT SCHEME WHICH DO NOT INVOLVE FLOODING LAKE PEDDER.
- 9). The case for retaining the present scheme unchanged rests basically on the cost of such modification.
- 10). The estimated costs of the modification which appears most acceptable would be of the order of \$12 million in capital expenditure and a loss of \$11 million representing the capitalized value of energy foregone from the Huon waters. If after a moratorium such modification were decided upon, these costs would be incurred from 1976 onwards.
- 11). The adoption of a five year moratorium during which Lake Pedder would be at least temporarily restored by partly draining the Serpentin/Huon impoundment would be unlikely to prejudice the ability of the HEC to meet expected power demands. Even three years would probably be an adequate length for a moratorium. Adoption of a moratorium may involve additional running of the Bell Bay themal stations. We estimate the total cost of this extra running at a maximum of \$8 million over the period from 1977 to about 1982.

This could offset to some degree by the value of additional timber salvaged from the Gordon Valley.

- 12). There are precedents for Government expenditures such as these to yield benefits which are largely intangible.

13). There are national interests involved which would justify the Australian Government in meeting the costs involved in the moratorium or alternative changes.

There are various uncertainties - the extent to which the Lake would recover, and details of alternative schemes, in particular - which we believe prelude recommendation of a specific alternative at this stage. The moratorium proposal appears to provide a reasonably cheap way of resolving the various uncertainties.

In summary, bearing in mind the substance of our second Term of Reference, this Committee expresses the opinion that:

- * The loss of Lake Pedder was an adverse consequence of the Gordon River Power Development Stage 1.
- * The moratorium proposal would alleviate that adverse consequence.
- * THE MORATORIUM PROPOSAL SHOULD BE ADOPTED WITH A VIEW TO ASSESSING THE FEASIBILITY OF RESTORING LAKE PEDDER.
- * The costs should be borne by the Australian Government".

John Burton,
D.G. Hill
Edward St. John
W.D. Williams

Recently some members were invited by Dave and Carol Cook to an area around Yaralla Bay on the Parramatta River (Sat. 28.7.73) - unfortunately the circumstances did not allow time for the outing to be generally publicised. Here is a report by Dave -

The afternoon was spent observing water fowl of Yaralla Bay (at Concord). Groups of birds were photographed wading among the many groves or on the waters of the Bay.

The following birds were observed:-

- 21 Ibis
- 18 White-faced Herons
- 2 Royal Spoonbills
- 1 Eagle

approx. 100 Ducks (very wary - hence specific identifications unavailable).

Whilst on the subject of water birds here is an article "Head Tilting of the Great Blue Heron" outlined from Nature (VOL.242, Apr. 1973) by Dave Cook.

The results of study of a particular mannerism of the Great Blue Heron when feeding in water. The authors J.R.Krebs and B.Partridge have commented:-

"One of the problems confronting a bird that hunts for food over water is glare produced by the sun. Several ways of reducing the interference of glare have been discussed, including both anatomical features such as dark patches around the eyes, coloured oil droplets in the retina and polaroid filters and behavioural mechanisms such as looking through the shadow of an outstretched wing. During the course of a study of the feeding behaviour of Great Blue Herons (*Ardea Herodias*) we noticed that often when a heron that was hunting was seen head on, its head and neck were tilted quite markedly to one side. This posture was often maintained for several minutes while the Heron walked slowly through the water, occasionally orienting (suddenly turning the head) to or striking at a prey.

We subsequently noted that head tilting was much commoner on sunny days and only occurred when the Heron was facing at an angle to the sun (that is not directly towards or away from the sun)!"

The authors then gave the results of the research they had conducted and concluded with the following summary:-

"In summary, we suggest that head tilting by the Great Blue Herons (and related birds) serves to move the glare patch from the sun to one side of the body, and from the area in which the bird is looking for fish. This presumably enhances the hunting efficiency of birds in sunny weather."

SUCCESS AT NORTH ENTRANCE PENINSULA

Wyong Council sought to save this magnificent stand of Redgum forest near Tuggerah Lakes by imposing a Tree Preservation Order and recently secured from the N.S.W. Equity Court an injunction which prevented Associated Minerals from mining the Peninsula without Council approval. After consultation with the State Planning Authority the company will be allowed to mine a much restricted area. By taking such a firm stand the Council obtained the maximum result which could have been hoped for.

WIANGARIE STATE FOREST

It is reported that Forestry Commission contractors are logging in completely virgin rain forest in Wiangarie State Forest on the Tweed Range. Sounds like something Keith King could get his teeth into.