



Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society

NEWSLETTER.

JUNE 1981.

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NEXT MEETING:

Friday, 12th June, 1981, at 8.00pm at the Teachers Resource Centre, Glenbrook, opposite the tennis courts in Ross Street. Peggy Clark will be speaking about "Genetic Engineering, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow". Peggy is a Research Officer with the Institute of Clinical Pathology at Westmead. The Society has waited a long time to be able to have Peggy as our guest speaker, and her talk has been eagerly awaited. Bring along your friends to hear about this important subject that can affect the future.

FUTURE MEETING.

July 10th, Friday night, 8.00pm, at the Teachers Resource Centre. Beatrice Palmer will speak on the Social Structure of the Aborigines in the Blue Mountains. This is also another talk not to be missed, and promises to be another enlightening evening. Again, bring along your friends to the meeting in Glenbrook.

EXCURSION.

On May 17th, some of the society's members attended the Rally held at Parramatta Park to protest the proposal to build a Sports Stadium there and to press for a Public Inquiry.

A DAY IN JAMISON CREEK, WENTWORTH FALLS.

The April outing of our society caught up on a little history, together with enjoying glorious sunshine in an area of combined interests. The leisurely walk followed, as nearly as is known, Charles Darwin's visit to Wentworth Falls in 1836. The tree planted in memory of Darwin stands sturdily on the ridge where it can be seen from the railway line. Then the land dips down into what is now a rather murky swamp, before the water of the creek flows through a culvert under the road through some settled suburbia.

Approaching the creek again in the bushland the walkers were delighted to see and hear a flock of some twenty large black cockatoos fly screaming overhead. Another large bird, seen later in the day near Wentworth Falls, was a sea eagle. A stanger in the mountains, this sea eagle must be attracted by the large expanse of water at Warragamba Dam. Only occasionally during the day was a sound of small birds heard. It is reported that feral cats are numerous in this bush, though none are seen in daytime, and would account for the decimation of many species of birds once numerous here. Domestic dogs roamed the valley, with and without owners, and swam the creek. What price Warragamba water?

Despite heavy invasion of foreign trees, shrubs and weeds, the area still contains much of the beauty. Banks of matted coral fern, *Grevillea acanthifolia* showing a few lovely pink flowers, and the general outlook of rocks, caves and sandy creek were restful to the eye. And it was good to see water flowing over Weeping Rock again after the long drought.

It will be a tragic loss of tourist-attractive area if development is allowed on the bushland slope above the rock.

A.C.F. MEETING.

Besse Bramsen attended a gathering at the Lord Nelson Pub in Kent Street, on May 6th, to meet Murray Wilcox QC, and the NSW Councillors of A.C.F. with the opportunity to discuss current programmes of the Foundation. Besse said that the meeting seemed to be more an opportunity for the A.C.F. President to offer thanks to donors towards the fight for Rainforests. He expressed optimism with the growth of ecology - consciousness, and was pleased with the responses and funds to help fight the Rainforest issue. "What can be done in the future to prevent ecological investigations from becoming anti-ecology and pro litigation?" asked Besse in the light of Terania Creek. If we lose, the fight will start again was the essence of the reply.

MITCHELL'S PASS.

The subdivision proposed by the Dept. of Lands in the area to the south of Mitchell's Pass road in Glenbrook has created a lot of interest. The Katoomba and District Wildlife and Conservation Society have offered their support, and propose to start a petition to be in THE HUT at Wentworth Falls, asking that Mitchell's Pass be left in a state so as to allow bushwalkers and bicycle riders access, but no through traffic by motor vehicle.

The Blue Mts. City Council has stated that it has previously requested this area to be zoned Rural as it was in an escarpment situation. This request was disallowed by the Dept. of Lands and the Dept. of Environment and Planning. Negotiations are continuing with the Dept. of Lands for a reduction of the area of land to be subdivided and "considerable Improvements" have been made in achieving a development that will have less effect on Council's escarpment objectives and a minimal effect on the Lennox Bridge precinct.

A letter from the Dept. of Lands, accompanied by a map, states that it is envisaged that a subdivision will be undertaken when the freehold land to the west has been subdivided and access to the Crown land thereby becomes available. The department is concerned to see a minimal impact on the adjoining land to the north, east and south. An area of Proposed Recreation is between the residential land and the Mitchell's Pass Road, and to the east, the land adjacent Lennox Bridge reserve, which is zoned as residential, is not to be subdivided. The Dept of Lands states that it is not intended to subdivide the balance of this residentially zoned land. If this is so, pressure should be put to bear on the Dept. to zone it as Open Space to ensure it is not subdivided in the future.

The Heritage Council and the National Trust have both shown their interest in the Lennox Bridge in relation to this subdivision, and have made representations to the Dept. of Lands.

DARK'S Common.

Blue Mts. City Council has also tried to have the area along Explorers Road, between Glenbrook and Lapstone changed from Residential to Rural or Open Space. However, negotiations with the Lands Dept. have been successful in reducing the area to be subdivided by 50% and the locations that would be visible from the plains will not be subdivided. There will also be a "significant" setback from Explorers Road to try to preserve the natural division between the towns.

At the last meeting of the society, Mrs. Thistle Stead was the guest speaker. Mrs Stead is the manager of the "Wirrimbirra" Field Study Centre at Bargo. Whilst staying in the Mountains, she advised members of the society how to further progress towards the establishment of a Field Study Centre at Dark's Common attached to the Lapstone Primary School. She was confident that this would be a workable proposition with the assistance of the Education Dept. George Thelfro is working hard on this proposal at the moment.

Mrs. Stead talked about the way Wirrimbirra was set up, and the way it operates now. Students are able to come to the Centre, and with the guidance of their teachers and a teacher at the centre, carry out a variety of projects in Nature Study, whilst staying at the Sanctuary. The field study centre itself is where the students and teachers come together to organize for planned and careful study of the local environment within a Sanctuary, such as Dark's Common could be, or in the surrounding district. Accommodation is already available at the Glenbrook Primary School.

Students from the western area of Sydney, by using the Field Study Centre, will gain an appreciation of the importance of the resources of nature which we extract from our environment in order to live with enjoyment and quality. Students can look at the way nature works, providing a guideline for man's management of resources. Our future generations will become aware of the way man is using and abusing the resources of nature and therefore threatening the quality of life, 50, 100 or more years ahead.

The aims of Wirrimbirra itself are to;

- provide an experience in the natural environment
- provide an opportunity for social interaction and to encourage social awareness
- provide a situation in which to develop observation skills.

SAVING A WHALE.

Each year, thousands of whales run aground and die along the beaches of the world. However, when one of the endangered species of sperm whale beached itself in New York harbour, marine biologists flocked to the site in an effort to save the distressed whale. Found in only 3 feet of water, near Long Island's Jones Beach, efforts were made to haul it into deeper water. The 24 ft. long male, 25,000 lbs of power, batted the would-be rescuers off their feet.

Its breathing was laboured, mucus leaked from its blowhole and it would surely have died had a Coast Guard cutter not managed to tow the whale to a nearby boat basin. Tests revealed four different types of pneumonia bacteria, and prospects did not seem too hopeful. Yet, scientists dosed the whale with penicillin, and began serving it squid, its favourite food. He started to recover, sitting higher in the water and emitting clicking sounds used for communication.

Word spread of the whale's predicament, and get well cards began to pour in, thousands came to see him, and some brought flowers. Suddenly the whale's condition worsened. In desperation to save "Physty" (*Physeter catodon*), rescuers switched to a more powerful antibiotic, lacing the squid with the medicine, & forcing the food down his throat. Next day, the patient made a remarkable comeback, practising quick shallow dives.

Within ten days it was time to let him go. At first the whale was reluctant to leave the boat shelter once the net blocking the opening was removed. Thousands of spectators were there to cheer him on, urging "Go, Physty, go. You can do it!" At last the whale was herded to the open sea, escorted by two Coast Guard vessels some 4½ miles offshore. Physty made three dives, 3 minutes apiece, then he was seen no more. It was the first time that a stranded sperm whale had ever been saved.

Reported in "Time" May, 1981.

NATIONAL PARKS AND MINING FOR COAL.

Wendy Godfrey prepared and submitted the Society's protest about the proposal to allow coal mining in National Parks. The following is a summary of Wendy's excellent submission to the Dept. of Environment and Planning.

"This society will not tolerate any interference in any present or proposed national Park or reserve administered by the NPWS, other than essential management practices. The concept that nature conservation and the underground extraction of coal resources could co-exist in any one area is inconceivable by anyone's standards. These two forms of landuse will remain irreconcilable."

The society objects for these specific reasons:

- (a) The land uses do not co-exist. One area of a National Park cannot be singled out as less important than another in order to locate a mine, mine head etc.
- (b) The remaining 97% of land that is not National Park, should be exhausted of coal first.
- (c) Staffing of the NPWS would be inadequate to control the mining operations etc.
- (d) Rivers will not be protected in Special Protection Areas - as pollution can occur great distances from its source.
- (e) Coal washeries are not closed systems and accidents do happen. Plants are sensitive to slight changes in Ph factor in water given the failure of a coal washery.
- (f) Subsidence around mines -already evidenced.
- (g) Difficulties with legal powers of one authority over another will severely restrict environmental safeguards.
- (h) There is no tried or tested revegetation programme of native bushland for coal mining operations.
- (i) Structures associated with mining are considerable. The NPWS would have trouble refusing an application on that basis when a multinational company had been given overall permission to mine.
- (j) Accidents occur which will spill pollutants into the ecosystem.
- (k) Air pollution associated with mines.
- (l) Allowing Coal mining into National Parks will set a precedent for other non-compatible uses to be allowed.
- (m) Impact on local communities that border National Parks in question.

The Society recommends that the Mining Legislation be reformed and that the National Parks Act be amended to prevent mining exploration and extraction in National Parks and Nature Reserves. The society urges that these proposal to mine in National Parks be withdrawn immediately and the Ministerial Agreement be revoked.