



# Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society

P.O. Box 119, Springwood. 2777

## MARCH NEWSLETTER 1983

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## EDITORIAL

Hands up those who are exhausted - but extremely happy. We did it, influenced an election!!! Life may not have been meant to be easy and neither is politics, especially for those politicians who don't keep abreast of changing attitudes in the community.

The Australian people showed unequivocally that "NO DAMS" was a real election issue. How many voted "No Dams" is hard to establish though some indication can be gained from the following:-

- Milo Dunphy, the only independent anti-dam candidate for the Lower House, received an average vote of 12.7%. His largest support in Bennelong was recorded in the strong Liberal-voting areas.
- In the Phillip and Diamond Valley electorates, a different how-to-vote card was distributed which effectively labelled the votes. This showed that 17% of Labor voters in Diamond Valley and 14% in Phillip were anti-dam voters.

With this sort of electoral support, conservationists have proved that they are a force to be reckoned with.

Dr. Jim Cairns summed up Labor's policies as "the politics of people and politics of nature". The Labor Party was more aware of the electorates feelings this time and we must keep it that way,

The Society's contribution was impressive and convincing. The Concert was an overwhelming success. Over \$1000 was taken with \$600 going to the T.W.S. (\$400 to the Blockade). Many helped but our heartfelt thanks must go to Gerald Williams. His ability to relate music to wilderness made the night a truly emotional experience. Besse Bramsen must also be given a special thank you for the multitude of scones we all enjoyed for supper. This Lady is an inspiration to us all.



We also demonstrated our dedication to the Franklin by campaigning heavily in the Calare electorate. A number of people distributed leaflets one Saturday and manned (womanned!) a number of booths on Election Day. This must have been profitable as the seat was won by Labor for the first time ever.

All of these activities have left us short of funds, so we now have a desperate need for money - any fund raising ideas, please let us know.

This campaign has shown, without doubt, what we can do, let's keep up the pressure, as nothing succeeds like success.

Conservation is no longer just an interest or hobby, but a necessary function within the community demanding time, money and dedication.

Well done LBMCS.



One Down.....

To the LBMCS,

Could you please pass on our thanks to all your members and friends for the assistance that they gave the Lithgow Branch TWS on the 5th March at the Polling Booths. Their presence was very much appreciated, and we hope that they felt some satisfaction in the long hours that they contributed in the campaign, with the electoral outcome being a successful change to Labor.

A few of our members attended a Calare group celebration at Federal Falls on Mt. Canobolas on Sunday. There were approx. 60 people in attendance and we then had a surprise visit by David Simmons, the new member, to thank us for our assistance. He acknowledged that we must have contributed at least 30% to the success of his election to office.

We also heard that Mr. Mackenzie<sup>(NP)</sup> found it most disconcerting to find members of our organisation at every polling booth that he visited. Our presence was noticed.

Thanking you again,

Yours sincerely,  
Lithgow TWS.



PAST MEETINGSFEBRUARY

We had a full house for the Godfrey's slides of part of the Franklin Blockade and other areas in Tasmania. There is no doubt that the S.W. Tas. campaign has generated widespread support and also acted as a catalyst to unite all conservationists.

MARCH

Pure business, but well-attended and thank you to all those members who are easing the workload for the Executive. It's really encouraging to see the work being distributed throughout the group.

NEXT MEETING

This will be held at the usual place, 8pm on 8th April. Paul Gobert will be showing us some slides of Kakadu National Park.

WORK MEETINGS

These have been very well-attended. The next one is on 28th March at 7 Kent Street, Glenbrook (7.30 start).

URBAN CONSOLIDATION

Thanks to Judy Smith for compiling our submission on Medium Density Housing. At the February meeting, most members agreed that whilst this Policy is probably more desirable from an environmental viewpoint (ie it could stop urban sprawl), it cannot be applied in blanket fashion to all municipalities. For instance, the Blue Mountains is as distinct from Penrith as chalk is from cheese. In addition, basic services are stretched to their limit here and in some cases, overloaded (eg sewerage treatment works) and until these are improved the Society is opposed to any alterations to current zonings that may promote a further influx of people. Our submission urged that the Policy should include an exemption clause. This would allow Councils such as ours and other environmentally sensitive areas to apply for exemption.

BLUE MOUNTAINS HERITAGE STUDY

Croft and Associates (Newcastle Consultants) are carrying out the study, which is being jointly funded by the Aust. Heritage Commission, D.E.P. and B.M.C.C. We have been given the opportunity to make some input into the study and representatives of our Society will meet with Crofts at some time during the week 14th-18th March.

BELL SAND MINE

We are still working on this controversial proposal.



## WINMALEE WATER POLLUTION CONTROL PLANT

Society representatives met with engineers from the M.W.S. & D.B. and Consultants for the Board on the site of the new Plant. Construction is proceeding on the interim works.

Outfall will be released into an unnamed creek east of Hawkesbury Road, 5 kilometres from the Nepean River, south of Yarramundi crossing.

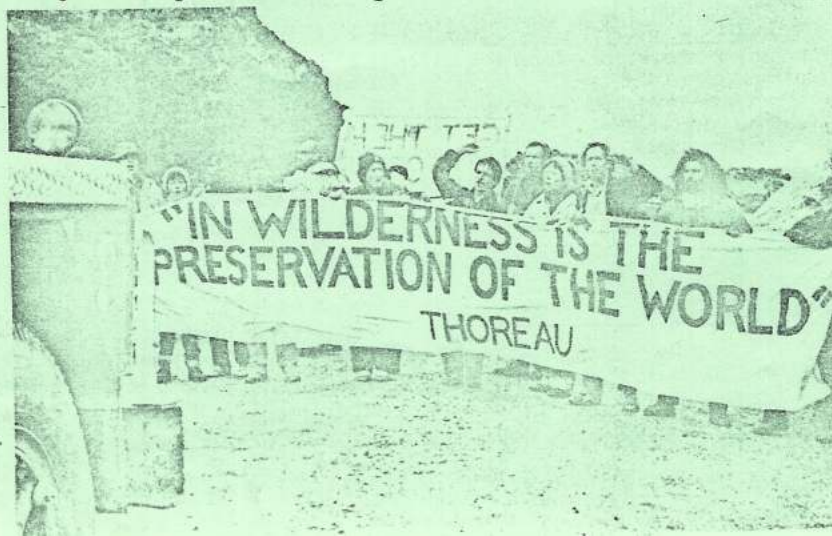
Levels of eutrophication are a major cause for concern and our Society believes that this problem must not be exacerbated. The Plant comprises primary and secondary processes and a series of Oxidation Ponds with a retention period of 10 days. These ponds only achieve a small reduction in the concentrations of inorganic constituents such as phosphate, nitrate and ammonia (the major causes of eutroph.). The State Pollution Control Commission advises that the length of the retention period allows these ponds to qualify as a tertiary process. This implies a very high standard of effluent in the outfall. Whilst 99.5% of residual bacteria can be eliminated as well as virtually all pathogens and viruses, the growth of microscopic algae can be encouraged by the natural decay processes involved in reducing microorganisms. This can result in coloured and turbid outfall which exerts a high apparent BOD.

All Water Pollution Control Plants must be designed to cope well into the future as a significant cause of high pollution levels in the Nepean catchment can be attributed to overloaded Plants in the Blue Mountains.

### S.W. TASMANIA

The TWS has worked out alternative employment packages that they hope to put to Mr. Hawke. It will be interesting to see how Robin Gray weathers this storm. Maybe he's gone too far this time, egged on by that all-time political interferer, the H.E.C. DONATIONS to TWS are needed to cover the cost of the election campaign which has amounted to approx \$27,000 so far. Our group is frantically fund raising, but VOLUNTEERS and contributions to cake stalls etc. are urgently needed. Lobbying (letters etc) is still needed. We can't let any more politicians procrastinate over the Franklin.

Protesters blockade  
the Kelly Basin  
Road.





COMING EVENTS

MONTHLY WALK - to the Green Scrub behind Mountain Lagoon (see Walks Programme) 10th April

SUNDAY 27th MARCH TO THE DOMAIN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT FESTIVAL

Assemble at 1pm Hyde Park South.

There will be a Peace Train for Blue Mountains participants.

Enquiries to 39.1748

APRIL 8th - Our monthly meeting

APRIL 10th - Green Scrub walk.

APRIL 10th - Sydney Harbour Cruise.

An invitation to enjoy your harbour at the beginning of Heritage Week. Organised jointly by the A.C.F. and Sydney Harbour and Foreshores Committee, this is a cruise up the Parramatta River and to Bantry Bay. Landing for lunch (bring your own) at Garden Island. Ferry leaves Circular Quay at 9.15am and returns at 4.30pm. \$10.00

Enquiries 02.27.4714 or 02.922.3102

APRIL 10th to 17th - Heritage Week and Fair. The Fair will be located near the National Trust Centre in Observatory Hill Park on Sunday 17th

APRIL 16th - Native Plant Day Wirrimbirra Sanctuary 10am to 4pm. \$10.00

APRIL 15th to 17th - Fire Ecology Workshop at Barren Grounds Bird Observatory, Jamberoo. Enquiries 042.36.0195.

WILDLIFE NEWS

The world's oldest wild cattle - the kouprey - has been rediscovered in southeast Asia. This primitive animal, which has not been seen since the early days of the Indochina war, was recently sighted near the Cambodian border.

Because of ready kouprey funds, raised in hopeful anticipation of this event, the World Wildlife Fund has offered to help the Royal Thai Forest Department with a rescue operation. Capture of the animals has been difficult as they are grazing in areas studded with land mines. One member of the search party was injured after stepping on a mine. (WWF Newsletter)

Status of the Western Australian Underground Orchid

Since a WWF study started 18 months ago, more than 118 healthy flowering plants have been discovered in four widely spaced localities. The underground orchid is now secure for the first time on three vested flora reserves created solely for its protection. From experiments still being conducted, it appears that the close association between the "parasitic" orchid and host shrub of broom honey-myrtle (*Melaleuca uncinata*) is maintained by an intricate nutritional "bridge" of fungus. Final experiments will trace compounds from within the shrub as they are transferred to the orchid. Unless similar "bridges" are constructed with nearby broom honey-myrtles, it is unlikely long-range seed dispersal will succeed in natural habitat. However, laboratory trials using specially designed



see-through incubation chambers have shown that orchid seeds can germinate with the right conditions of soil, moisture content and density of broom honey-myrtle feeder roots. Due to this recent finding, work is progressing to discover whether it is possible to grow plantlets to maturity. (WWF Newsletter)

#### Lord Howe Island Woodhen

We've just bought a bird for \$203,515. In May 1980 there were a mere 22 Woodhens left on this earth. As of last month, the population had reached 90. That's not exactly a population explosion but it's a good start and thank you to all those people who gave their time and money towards this project. This sort of cost can be avoided if we employ wise land management practices in the first place!

#### A FORGOTTEN CASUALTY - the ORANGE-BELLIED PARROT

The cold south-westerlies have eased and the southern winter is over. It is October.

Across the stormy stretch of Bass Strait a solitary bird - a splash of brilliant green and yellow - makes its way over the whitecaps and petrels bound for the secluded valleys and plains of South-West Tasmania.

The migratory bird, en route to its summer breeding ground, is the first of a depleted stock - a forgotten casualty of a careless world.

For the Orange-bellied Parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*), the days may be numbered. The wandering flocks of timid birds which once numbered thousands along the coastline of Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, have all but gone.

The little parrot is now on the danger list of over 30 species of birds (in Australia alone) that next year could vanish, a statistic of our neglect. In the last 300 years over 300 species of birds have disappeared from the Earth - most of them this century.

*Neophema chrysogaster* is perhaps the rarest bird on the Australian continent with a total population of fewer than 100 birds. This is a decline from 1981, when the three-state census recorded 150 birds. Of the remnant population, probably fewer than 60 birds are breeding pairs.

The alarming reduction of the parrots' numbers is due largely to the disappearance of saltmarsh - the bird's major habitat. Saltmarshes have long been considered useless wasteland and vast areas have been eliminated - particularly in Victoria - for agricultural and industrial purposes. Added to this, the quality of the saltmarsh which remains has declined due to foraging livestock and off-road vehicles (ORVs) rendering large areas unsuitable for the parrot. The clearing and degradation are continuing unchecked.

Most countries have never really made a genuine effort to prevent the disappearance of species and Australia is no exception.



Tasmania's poor record is legendary. While the three states did not see the urgency over the endangered bird, the World Wildlife Fund did.

In 1979 a research program, instigated and initially funded by the WWF, was commenced by the Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Service, with the co-operation of the South Australian NPWS and the Victorian Fisheries and Wildlife Service. Two reports were produced. The most important recommendations for Tasmania are as follows:

1. A fire management plan to be drawn up for the bird's breeding ground. (For thousands of years Orange-bellied Parrots and Aborigines had a close association. Aborigines systematically - though not indiscriminately - burnt the button grass plains. The specialised parrots prefer areas that have been burnt 3-10 years previously. After the Aborigines were removed from the South-West the fire frequency altered. Today, as a result of haphazard mineral exploration, the incidence of fire has dramatically increased, resulting in the degradation of suitable breeding sites. Added to this is the direct risk of a fire eliminating the entire population of the birds while they are brooding)
2. Limited access to the area, with a wildlife ranger stationed at Birchs Inlet in the breeding season.
3. Investigations to be carried out in the Olga and Hardwood Valleys - proposed to be inundated by the Gordon-below-Franklin scheme - to ascertain possible further elimination of habitat.
4. Restriction of stock activity and the immediate fencing of valuable food sources on the West Coast migration route.
5. The employment of a permanent ranger on King Island as a matter of urgency, for the protection of the island's saltmarsh. All the migrating birds pass through this marsh, making it probably the most critical habitat of all.

In brief, for the mainland, the report essentially recommends that no further habitat degradation occurs: that ORVs be barred from sensitive areas, that no commercial development take place in proximity to feeding areas, that damaged habitat be restored, and that food resources which have disappeared due to human interference be reintroduced.

In short, the survival of this species depends upon ample habitat in all states being safeguarded against human intrusion. To date all recommendations have been ignored.

With our obsession to dominate and alter every niche of the Earth we have left a battered landscape for the generations to come. Our preoccupation with all-important human needs has left little room for concern for the Earth beneath our feet or for the wild creatures with whom we share it.

Yet from the destruction we have wrought has sprung a generation with a concern that goes, for once, beyond human needs.



Inherent in this concern is the knowledge that every wild creature's disappearance diminishes us as a species. The Web becomes weaker and the Earth a little more frail.

Like a candle in the wind, the solitary bird making its way over the whitecaps of Bass Strait is wavering in its fight for life. We have one chance to enact our concern and there will be no other. Extinction is forever!

Postscript: On 1 November 1982 the Victorian Government announced that a wildlife reserve would be proclaimed at Point Wilson, near Werribee, in an attempt to save the parrot from extinction. This area is one of the most important sites on the mainland. The 161 hectare reserve is the first serious step to be taken by a state government for the bird's preservation. So far the Tasmanian Government has taken no action on the recommendations.

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THANK YOU - for selling tickets to the Concert,

Glenbrook Camping Store  
Pickles and Ginger, Springwood  
Oxley's Pharmacy, Springwood  
Fantail Bookrooms, Katoomba

#### MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Society is being called upon increasingly to assess conservation issues on a highly technical basis. If you feel you have skills or expertise that you can offer, please fill out the enclosed form and forward by return mail. We are also interested in hearing from members and friends who could entertain and/or inform us at monthly meetings.

#### MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

The Society is embarking on a membership drive and one of our first plans of action is to place signs at the railway stations indicating our presence and whereabouts. Thanks go to Morris Cronin and Bob Chapman who are working on these signs.

#### NEWSLETTER CHANGES

Aside from making this a 20-page bi-monthly edition due to the amount of information we need to get to you, the newsletter will be going to print every month from now on (except December).





# Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society

## 1983 WALKS AND MEETING PROGRAMME

PROVISIONAL !!!!

### MONTHLY MEETINGS

- APRIL 8th Paul Gobert will take us through Kakadu National Park via his slides.
- MAY 13th A Forum on Water Pollution. We hope to get speakers from Hawkesbury Residents Action Group, State Pollution Control Commission, Total Environment Centre, and a firm called Envirocycle from the Northern Suburbs.
- JUNE 10th A look at Kosciuszko National Park. We have invited a speaker from NPWS.
- JULY 8th A Forum on Bushfires. We will be inviting people from the Australian Museum, Forestry Commission, C.S.I.R.O. and Total Environment Centre.
- AUGUST 12th Margaret Baker will be talking about some work she did with Wombats.
- SEPTEMBER 9th We have invited Graham Alcorn to speak to us about Birds in your garden.
- OCTOBER 14th Annual General Meeting and traditional members slide night.
- NOVEMBER 11th A Forum on Public Participation in the Planning of your local area. Speaker from the Department of Environment and Planning and others.

### WALKS

- APRIL 10th The Green Scrub assisted by Paul Gobert. Meet 11.00am at Mountain Lagoon turnoff on Bells Line of Road.
- MAY 14th/15th Weekend walk to the Colo River in Wollemi National Park via Canoe Creek.
- JULY 10th Burghoffer's Pass from Mt. York Road.
- AUGUST 14th The Duckhole Track to Glenbrook Creek.
- SEPTEMBER 10th BBQ AND SPOTLIGHTING, hopefully with a zoologist.
- OCTOBER 16th Barren Grounds Nature Reserve near Jamberoo.
- NOVEMBER 13th Sydney Botanic Gardens, Herbarium.

N.B. Further details will be available as these arrangements are finalised.