



# Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society

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## **MAY: JUNE NEWSLETTER** 1983

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### COMING EVENTS

NEXT MEETING - Friday, 10th June at 8.00pm

Graeme Worboys, Superintendent of Blue Mountains National Park, will give an illustrated talk on management of Kosciusko National Park. A relevant time to have such a talk as the hordes of skiers begin their seasonal assault.

### FUTURE MEETING

JULY 8th - FORUM ON BUSHFIRE - it's effect on Flora and Fauna.

Don't miss it. We are organising several speakers from research institutions with their latest findings.

### VENUE

All our meetings are held in the Teachers Resource Centre, Glenbrook Infants School, Ross Street, Glenbrook. Notification of the meetings is also placed in the local papers.

NEXT WALK - the Duckhole, Glenbrook Creek. SUNDAY 12th June.

This is a local beauty spot. Meet 11am at the top (western) end of Reading Street, Glenbrook. This is a short easy walk along a track that has some historical significance attached to it. A student engaged in studying erosion problems of this particular track will be present. Bring a picnic lunch.

SOUTH-WEST TASMANIA - SATURDAY 23rd JULY at 8.00pm

There will be a Sight and Sound Presentation of the Tasmanian Wilderness by a chap from Tassie who is touring the state with his show. It has a reputation as a stunning presentation and the venue is the same as our meetings as above. Donations at the door will help to cover his travelling costs and will help the campaign.

### MONEY, MONEY, MONEY.....

We make ours selling odds and ends at the Ivy Market, Springwood. Next market day is Saturday, 11th June. Thank you to all those people who ferretted out all those goodies for the last market. We made \$67.00. Please, keep searching; and call Aleen on 39-4079 if you have any surplus junk. We can sell it!



There's no business....

Yes there is, heaps of it and we get through it all on Mondays after monthly meetings at 7 Kent Street, Glenbrook, 7.30pm. Next Works Meeting is 13th June. All members are welcome. If you have an environmental issue you would like the Society to follow up, come along. Thank you to those new participants for sharing the work load.

#### RAFFLE

Besse Bramsen was almost the last person to buy a ticket and she took out the prize. Congratulations Besse. We raised approx \$50.00.

#### PAST EVENTS      10th April.

Mountain Lagoon and Green Scrub  
walk was a Delight

by Richard Phillipps

Where so close - within an hour's drive - could you walk to a spot that shows you lyrebirds, a python, a Toona australis and other unusual fauna and flora? The Green Scrub, that's where.

The walk was led by Paul Gobert, who likes the area so much he lives at Mountain Lagoon and drives east to his job at Hawkesbury Agricultural College.

Paul met us promptly that Sunday at 11am at the appointed spot, Mountain Lagoon turnoff at Bilpin on Bell's Line of Road.

One sight along the tarred road to Mountain Lagoon is a reserve for a low-growing wattle, Acacia pubescens. We stopped and admired the wrens and robins there.

I hear the Reserve, like most of the area, is now part of the Wollemi National Park and the privately-owned farms are islands in the park, which stretches to the Colo River and beyond, north and north-west. In case you're still not sure where we were exploring, we were between Bilpin and Upper Colo, outside the Blue Mountains Council area, on a line roughly with Springwood but on the northern side of the Blue Mountains. From the high points of our walk you could see the plains north of Richmon and Windsor over distant ridges and through trees.

At Paul's cottage we climbed aboard his new Toyota Hi-Lux bright red four wheel drive truck which seats five in comfort in front. We collected another passenger, Geoffrey who has lived many years at Mountain Lagoon and helped guide us through the Green Scrub.

The Scrub is a patch of rain forest which survived the logging of half a century ago, but the canopy is low and missing in spots. The regrowth is mostly vines and scrub - murder for the only one game enough to wear shorts (yours truly). My legs still bear the scars of the lawyer vines. We were hardly into the scrub before we saw our first Lyrebird, complete with tail - probably a young male. We were delighted to see he was unafraid of us. He was scratching around in the litter like a fowl. There was quite a variety of plant life - sassafras, mountain ash, coachwood. And after quite a hike, a sight of my first Toona australia - the Red Cedar. The first we saw was a giant stump, long dead but identified by Paul cutting into the stump with his penknife. It was surrounded by Turpentine, Cedar Wattles and on the southern side of the hill, rainforest, amongst which were more lyrebirds - or was it the same lyrebird following us? We also saw native figs which produce fruit on the side of the trunk and plenty of ferns, orchids, lichens and fungi of all shapes and colours.



When we stopped to examine some new part of the jungle foliage, the birds would be seen and heard in the canopy and some came close enough to be photographed. There were wrens, robins, whipbirds, honeyeaters and thrushes - also other birds I'd never met before and plenty of King Parrots.

On the east side of the Green Scrub, halfway down a hill where we weren't expecting it, was a young Red Cedar growing where once there must have been thousands, alone among wattles and turpentines. We spent some time photographing it; although I hope it's not the last of the species in the area, it looked to be. Unfortunately because of the loss of canopy it wasn't the tall and stately tree I'd been expecting but one that was bushy, with three main trunks and only about 20 feet high.

The walk back to where we had left Paul's truck was full of interest including a meeting with a small crimson spider with long legs. The country used to be grazed but now it's National Park it has quickly regrown in a few years. The hollows in the ridged are now regrowing what Geoffrey said were young Turpentines but I thought to be a sort of swamp or river gum. We had lunch at the truck and then Paul took us on a test run of his new vehicle, over a fire trail that hadn't been traversed for some years. Finally, attempting a fallen gum tree about 18 inches across, we got stuck. But although the truck was straddling the trunk, a few rocks under one wheel and we were free.

Once on a steep part of the trail we came across a Wonga Pigeon, close enough to study in detail as he stood preening himself. Just after that, we met a Diamond Python who proved he could spring when Paul got too close with his camera.

The area is well worth another visit soon, perhaps when the wattles are in flower. I was fascinated. The Mountain Lagoon itself we drove around and there you could see a number of waterbirds that you won't see elsewhere. It's so quiet there, just the occasional chain saw as the locals clear more of the native vegetation for grazing or exotics. But the local people don't want too much development. They are very much opposed to plans for a licensed inn at the Lagoon.

#### FORUM ON WATER POLLUTION

This was a well-attended success despite the depressing forecast for the future of the Nepean/Hawkesbury River system. You may have seen our press releases in the Gazette but as a result of the meeting, the Society has presented a report to Bob Debus urging the swift formation of a Hawkesbury/Nepean River Authority. The Authority will function in a similar capacity as the Parramatta River Authority and if that can be cleaned up, then there's hope for the Nepean! Other Community groups and Councils have suggested the same and you can help the campaign by writing letters to papers and your local member supporting the proposal. The depressing thing is that even if all Sewerage Treatment Plants (the main pollution offenders) were updated to improve the quality of effluent, we wouldn't see an improvement in the River for quite some time - the population pressures are too strong. If you think it's crowded now, wait for the year 2000, only 17 years away. In fact, while the State Pollution Control Commission has been studying the River, projected population figures for the year 2000 have already been passed at Penrith and Camden! (according to the 1981 census). Two aldermen attended the Forum and Council has requested a Report on discussions and deliberations at the meeting. Needless to say, we have obliged and it is encouraging to see Council taking a keen interest in environmental issues. Let's hope it continues after the next Council elections.

#### SANITATION FOR CONSERVATION

To complement the talk given to us by the Envirocycle people at the Forum, we have included this article about the Clivus Multrum waterless toilet.



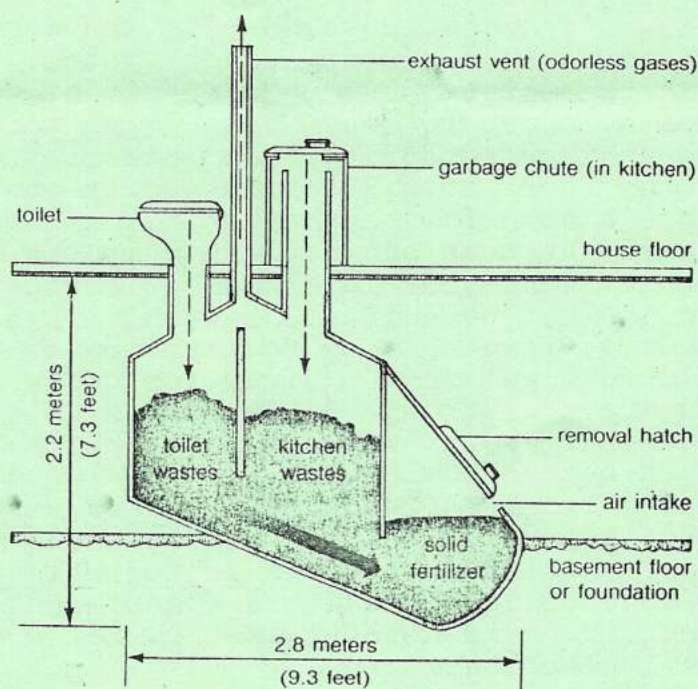
Sewage, when fed into streams and rivers in large amounts, is pollution. What methods are available to deal with sewage other than Thomas Crapper's water closet connected to a local water pollution control plant? The Clivus might be the answer. It seems to be an ecologically sound sanitation system.

The Clivus was invented in 1939 by Rikait Lindstrom, a Swedish engineer. The special value of his system is that no water is required, and it ends the problem of the cost of connecting ratepayers to a central sewage system.

It consists of a fibreglass compost container which goes under the house. Space is needed to remove about 60kgs a year of high potash fertiliser for a family of three. The lavatory pedestal looks normal except that it is wider at the bottom (its not yours) than at the top. there can be an opening in the kitchen for kitchen waste. Between the two there is a ventilation shaft. This produces a powerful draught that sucks in air for rapid bacterial breakdown and prevents the escape of any odours.

Ten centimetres of peat is layed on the bottom, followed by 50mm of garden soil to provide a starting stock of bacteria. Lawn mowings, dead leaves or garden rubbish is placed on top. Then normal usage of the lavatory and dumping of kitchen waste can continue indefinitely, with the removal of finished fertiliser the only attention required.

One problem of course is that the Clivus does not cope with bath and washing water. Also, Council approval to install one is most difficult if not impossible to obtain in most areas. There are other brands such as Ecolet and Bioloo.





A JOYOUS SOUND

by Besse Bramsen

During this year, a colony of Bellbirds has settled in Lawsons Grant - now the Deanii Forest. Manorina melanophrys (Bellbird or Bell Mynah) is said to have inspired more poetry than any other singing bird in Australia. They are honeyeaters and feed on flowering trees; but their main food consists of insects. They breed for approximately 10 months of the year, with usually two eggs to a nest.

They are found on Eastern Slopes and in coastal gullies from South Queensland to North Melbourne, very rarely on the higher mountains, and never west of the Great Dividing Range.

It is not known why colonies migrate to and from certain areas. But, certainly, in recent times, destruction of their habitat has forced migrations.

The birds seem mainly to inhabit the crowns of tall trees; though in some of their activities, particularly when distracting intruders away from their nests, they do come to ground.

Members of the Society are delighted to know of this addition to local wildlife; and folk living in the vicinity must be enjoying the sound of tinkling bells.

In the hope that they have come to stay, we would like to offer two suggestions to maintain their survival. Because of eating habits the birds could suffer from the use of garden sprays. And because of the fact that they do come down from trees, they can fall prey to domestic or feral animals.

THREATENED SPECIES - CONSERVATION ALERT

by Wendy Godfrey

Captive breeding colonies are being established for the Numbat (in Perth) and the Green Parrot (Norfolk Island species). I'm glad it's costing us heaps; it might change our short-sighted approach to land use management practices.

T-SHIRT FUND

There has been a good response from members but more loans or pre-paid orders are needed.

SOUTH-WEST TASMANIA- WORLD HERITAGE BILL

The Society lobbied Federal Parliament for amendments to the Bill. Three out of four amendments suggested by the Tas. Wild. Society have been accepted by the ALP and legislation passed accordingly. These amendments gave legal standing to any person or organisation to challenge any breach of the Act in the Courts. It is such a shame that the campaign has had to end up in the High Court. Surely the administration of policy in line with the signing of international treaties (on whatever issue) must be left to the Commonwealth Government. And contrary to Mr. Ellicott's claims (Q.C. for Tassie) in the High Court this week, there is no suggestion in the Act of the resumption of state property of W.H. status. If the administration of policy relevant to international treaties was left to Governments of the calibre of Queensland and Tasmania, we'll end up back in the dark ages.

The Blue Mtns. Branch of the Tas. Wild. Society meets next at Springwood Pre-School, Macquarie Road, Springwood on Thursday 9th June at 7.30pm. All visitors are welcome.

THERE IS STILL HEAPS TO BE DONE!!!!!!



## WILDERNESS WANDERING / WONDERING

On Tuesday 17th May, 1983, a gaggle of Godfreys waddled off into the depths of the Kowmung Wilderness - heads held high but backs weighed down with the necessities of a civilised escape.

With the first obstacle conquered (the S.R.A.'s Glenbrook to Katoomba trip) we traversed the heights of Narrowneck through to Clear Hill. From this vantage point a truly magnificent panorama is visible of the Blue Mountains Heartland. This is the easy part of the trip; from here it's all downhill to the Coxs River. Taro's Ladder needs to be grappled with, no easy task when 80cm legs fail to span 100cm gaps, but perseverance mixed with sheer fear triumphed over good sense and we all made it down to the helipad. The first night was spent peacefully here only interrupted by the gentle fall of a light mountain shower. The second morning saw us down to the River - hardly an inspiring sight. The Water Board road runs down to a gauging station, complete with weir, flying fox, huts and service tracks. With these last vestiges of technological man behind us we thought we had made good our "escape".

But modern man's influence is most difficult to elude; it pervades everywhere. The banks of the Coxs River are infested with exotic weeds and grazed by feral cattle and horses. Still, we thought that the Kowmung would be better - it wasn't, the same factors persisted right into the heart of the wilderness. Nevertheless, we struggled on, camping the second night in the Kowmung Gorge. Due to the grazing animals, good camping is available on flat grassy banks. Unlike most other rivers, the Kowmung water not only looks good but is excellent to drink - no "swimming pool" tablets or copious boiling is necessary, what a delight. The general environment makes a very pleasant walk, some parts easy, others difficult with wet feet assured by frequent river crossings. The third night was spent near another gauging station with the same "refinements" as on the Coxs River. I wonder if these are needed in the middle of a "Wilderness". The fourth day was a very pleasant but rushed one. Wide and shallow river sections are interspersed by narrow deep pools complete with resident trout, just "begging" to be lifted out. We only managed to extract one of these feral animals - a great addition to the "road base" and "dehydrated grits" we had grown unaccustomed to. The fifth day greeted us with a "slap" of rain which continued throughout our 2700ft climb up Roots and Gingra Ridges to Kanangra Walls.

4.30 Saturday afternoon saw us emerge through the mist and rain, soaked to the skin. Once we stopped the cold sank its freezing fangs deep but fortunately our arranged rescuers saved us with an "injection" of chocolate biscuits and potato chips - followed by a booster of steak and real, not plastic, vegetables.

Was it worth it? Yes, but more time was needed to fully relish the Kowmung's better qualities. What needs to be done with those agents of environmental degradation that are present, I don't know. I am sure that little, if no money, is allocated to find out what could be done. The Kowmung is a long way from State Parliament and 189-193 Kent Street, Sydney.

N.B. The Society is anxiously awaiting the release of the Draft Plan of Management for Blue Mountains National Park.

### PINUS RADIATA - A MILLION HECTARE MISCALCULATION? (PART ONE)

by Harry F. Recher.

By the year 2000, Australia will bristle with over one million hectares of pine plantations mostly containing Monterey Pine, *Pinus radiata*. Already there are over 500,000 hectares of land under pine and with an annual growth of 30,000 hectares, extensive areas of native forest are threatened with extinction.



Over half of Australia's original forest has been cleared for agriculture and urban development making the remaining areas of our native forest a precious resource. They not only provide us with recreation, water and wood, but it is imperative that we manage our public lands in ways which ensure that all parts of the forest survive.

Clearing a native forest and planting pines means that the vast majority of plants and animals living in that forest are lost. Despite this the pressure for more pine plantations at the expense of native forest is increasing from both Governments and timber companies.

Monterey Pine does grow extremely well in the southern hemisphere. Established in plantations and free of the insects and diseases which plague it in California, *Pinus radiata* is an ideal farm crop. In general, Monterey Pine grows best on fertile, well-drained soils with a minimum annual rainfall of 750mm. In eastern Australia, these limits restrict *Radiata* plantations to elevations of between 600 and 1200 metres, depending on latitude. For example, in N.S.W. major plantations are located at Tumut, Bombala and Bathurst. In Tasmania, and South Australia, the tree grows well at lower elevations down to sea level.

Compared with other countries, Australia has little forest. 22% of New Zealand, 32% of the U.S., 44% of Canada, but only 5% of Australia is forested.

Not all *Radiata* plantations are established on forested lands. For example, in S.A. most plantations have gone on cleared, agricultural land and in W.A. pines are being planted in place of forest severely affected by disease. The most significant environmental problems with the establishment of *Radiata* Pine plantations occur in N.S.W., Vic., and the A.C.T. In these states, governments have preferred to use existing State Forests for pine plantations. In this way they avoid the cost of purchasing land. When it has been necessary to purchase land it is often forest or land on which a native forest has regenerated. Such land is not only the least expensive, but it avoids the political problems associated with the removal of productive farm land from the tax rolls.

#### Important Forest Threatened

In districts where there are extensive pine plantations whole forest communities are reduced to the point of extinction.

A typical example of a threatened community are the peppermint forests, *Eucalyptus radiata* and *E. dives* near Bombala on the southern tablelands of N.S.W. The peppermint forest community has been seriously depleted. The impact may only be regional, but these peppermint associations are exceptionally rich in wildlife.

We should look closely at what we gain and what we lose from the replacement of native forest with pines. Many costs, such as the loss of wildlife, are not properly accounted for.

Many animals can be seen in a pine plantation, but only those which are able to find the resources they need for successful reproduction can be considered residents. There is wildlife in a pine plantation, but much less than in a native forest.

Growing Monterey Pine is farming. Just as we do not expect to find an abundance of native animals in a cabbage patch, we should not expect many in a pine plantation.

Plantations are simple plant communities - only one species is planted and all the trees over quite large areas are the same size. As a result, there is only a single layer of vegetation. Ecologists have shown that plant communities with very few kinds of plants or little structural diversity support kinds of birds than communities which are rich in plants or have many layers of vegetation. Therefore, a grassland has fewer birds than a woodland, and a woodland has fewer birds than a forest.

To be continued....

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