

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



At the Crossroads

The natural environment in the Blue Mountains is now entering its period of greatest threat.

The flat land close to town centres is mostly used up, but the pressure for more housing development continues, as more and more people try to escape the rat race in the city and relocate to the Blue Mountains.

The result is that land previously passed over for house building because it was too far from town centres, or too steep, or too swampy, or too close to a watercourse, is now attracting development attention.

The increase in interest in the Blue Mountains has also caused a number of tourist developments to emerge — with the potential to bring noise and traffic to previously quiet areas.

We live in a beautiful part of the world, and it is only to be expected that others will want to share in it — either by living here, or by visiting. However, we need to ensure that this interest in our part of the world does not become a vehicle for destroying it!

What is your society doing about all this?

We review all Development Applications that come before Council, and comment on those that we feel are inappropriate. We are currently involved with about a dozen applications that have negative environmental impacts.

More importantly, we are focusing upon two umbrella matters which we believe have the potential to provide large scale environmental protection — namely, the proposal for declaring the Blue Mountains a World Heritage Area, and the BMCC planning process known as EMP2.

The World Heritage Nomination has been talked about for a long time, and many local people have almost given up on it, believing that nothing is going to happen. Your society is actively lobbying in the Federal arena for an increase in government effort to submit a nomination. We believe that a successful nomination will result in greater overall protection for the environment — that it will cultivate local and national pride in the area, and develop a feeling of national responsibility to protect the area.

Council's EMP2 process also seems to have gone on forever, and many have lost confidence in this, too. EMP2 (Environmental Management Plan, Stage 2) is a planning process that is intended to provide a Plan of Management for certain lands in the BMCC area — particularly many of the environmentally sensitive lands on township perimeters.

Representatives from your society have addressed Council on two recent occasions, and have written to all Councillors on three recent occasions — all with the same theme — to hasten the EMP2 process, and to place a moratorium on development in areas that are covered by the EMP2 process. EMP2 featured extensively in discussions held recently with the BMCC General Manager, Mr. Withers.

What can YOU do to help these society endeavours?

You can write to Senator Hill (Parliament House, Canberra 2600) or Kerry Bartlett (PO Box 376, Springwood 2777) to press for more action with the World Heritage Nomination.

You can write or call BMCC Councillors to press for more action on EMP2 (Blue Mountains City Council will supply a full list of Councillors' addresses, phone and fax numbers).

You can write to the Gazette to call for action on either or both matters. We must act NOW.

Clean Up Australia

The Society's clean-up site on Clean Up Australia Day on Sunday March 2 will be Katoomba Falls Reserve.

Meet near Katoomba Falls Kiosk on Cliff Drive at 9 am. (until about 1 pm). (Look for Ron Wheeler's truck decorated with our banner.) Phone Christine on 87.7246 if you need to arrange a lift from Katoomba Station.

Common Mynah Survey

Please send in your survey forms, complete or incomplete, to Bonnie Doon Fauna Study Group as soon as possible. If you would like to discuss any of your observations ☎ 82.2218.

Membership Renewals

For members who joined the society after February 1996, membership renewal falls due on the anniversary of your joining. For other members, renewal occurs each February. Your *Hut News* envelope shows your renewal month.

For a large number of members, this issue of *Hut News* will contain a renewal notice. Please renew your membership, and encourage your conservation-minded friends to join, too. We now have nearly 500 members, but we need more. Our goal is to have 1000!

Just imagine the influence that a membership of this size could have - especially in our area, where elections are often decided on a handful of votes!

Annual General Meeting

A new management committee will be elected at the AGM on Friday March 21.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a description of duties of each position on the Management Committee. Please look carefully through these and consider whether you are able to help the society in 1997/98 by nominating for office. We need a full, dedicated and enthusiastic committee to continue our work to conserve the natural environment of our beautiful Blue Mountains.

Enquiries to the Secretary Les Coyne on 57.3327.

Bushcare

The next workday for the Nature Track Bushcare Group will be Monday 17 February, 9-12. Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Everyone welcome! Bring gardening gloves and morning tea. Contact Jessica 57.2783.

Thank you:

To Lindeman Road Bushcare Group for this month's Weed of the Month (Page 2).

To Lloyd Jones for painting the lovely bushland scenery on the Society's banner.



DONATIONS TO BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

"Hut News", the newsletter of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
 P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, 2782.

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Bushwalks:	Chris Woods	82.3419
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Land Use

Yester Grange

Council called for comments just before Christmas on a proposal to establish 18 tourist units on two blocks of land adjoining the Yester Grange property. One block also adjoins Blue Mountains National Park and the other overlooks the Darwin's Walk section of Jamison Creek.

The proposal to use Community Title would have a similar effect to subdividing the land and the application would run counter to the spirit of EMP2.

BMCS responded with a call for no increase in the number of buildings on the blocks. We also alerted National Parks and Wildlife Service of our concerns.

Unfortunately, EMP2 cannot definitely stop such developments until it becomes a draft Local Environment Plan.

Watershed for Development Control

A crucial period is looming in the battle to stop suburbanisation and over development of Blue Mountains towns. Council has established a firm timetable allowing EMP2 to be exhibited as a draft Local Environmental Plan in July this year. State Planning Minister Craig Knowles has written to Council about development controls, expressing concerns the Minister has been known to have for some time.

But Council General Manager Ted Withers has warned a deputation from BMCS not to view the forthcoming Local Environment Plan as a cure-all for environmental threats.

Ordinary citizens will have to make their voices heard by Councillors, Council staff, Minister Knowles and local member Bob Debus to make sure that the new LEP is effective and that undesirable developments are not rushed through in the first half of 1997. Even during the supposed summer break, BMCS members have been busy responding to proposals for subdivisions at Hazelbrook, de facto subdivision at Yester Grange, Wentworth Falls and development of environmentally sensitive land at Blackheath.

Hut News will be offering guidance on the most effective ways for members to express their views during this watershed period.

Highway Widening

RTA environment consultants, Landscape, PO Box 23, Bundeena 2230, have set a February deadline for comments on to proposed highway widening proposals. — *Don Morison.*



Spillway for Warragamba Dam

The proposal for a new side spillway to be built on Warragamba Dam is on public display. This spillway will make the dam 100% secure in the largest probable flood.

Unlike the previous proposal to raise the dam wall by 23 metres, this structure poses no threat to upstream wilderness areas. At the same time floodplain residents are not ignored, with a floodplain management strategy to be funded by the State Government.

The Hawkesbury River, currently not in the best of health, will most likely be spared from further residential development on the floodplain.

If construction of this spillway can proceed during the current parliament (before March 1999) then the aims of the "don't raise the dam" campaign will have been finally achieved in full.

Kowmung Committee and Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs are seeking a bombardment of submissions to Sydney Water supporting the side spillway option.

Every submission will count as there is a vocal pro dam raising group fueled by Hawkesbury Councillors and perhaps a few of their associates in real estate.

Submissions are due by the end of February 1997. Below is a submission guide. (More information John Macris 02.95267363, Keith Muir 02.9241.2702.)

Sample letter to: Reply Paid 166, Safeguarding Warragamba Dam, Sydney Water Corporation, PO Box A248, SYDNEY SOUTH NSW 2000

I/we support the proposed Warragamba Dam Auxiliary Spillway and urge the Government to proceed with this proposal as rapidly as possible. I/we strongly oppose the previous option of raising the dam wall to provide flood mitigation.

In addition to the construction of the Auxiliary Spillway, the implementation of an adequate floodplain management strategy will be essential to ensure the safety of existing floodplain residents. Elements of such a strategy should include a halt to the increasing urbanisation of the floodplain, improved evacuation methods and investigation of flood insurance options for those likely to be affected. (signed)



Weed of the Month

MONTBRETIA

(Presented by Lindeman Road Bushcare Group)

The bright fresh green spear-shaped leaves of Montbretia, *Crocsmia x crocosmiiflora*, are now topped by long spikes of orange tubular flowers. You will see it on roadsides and the disturbed edges of bushland, but it thrives along creeklines and the watercourses where it spreads with great vigour, fed by nutrients in the stormwater, and competes fiercely with all other plants, including other weeds.

Montbretia is a perennial hybrid herb from South Africa. It has annual leaves and flowers, dying down in autumn after producing its seeds, and reappearing in spring. Under the ground are long strings of flattened corms which break away when the parent plant is disturbed and begin to shoot. There may be up to 14 or more of these corms on each plant, crowding out all other vegetation.

The weight of this mass of corms in the ground can cause the collapse of stream banks, erosion and sedimentation. Walk up Yosemite Creek from the picnic area, or notice the effect on Jamison Creek from Darwin's Walk to see this happening. Already Montbretia is growing along and beside waterfalls — Katoomba Falls for example.

The threat to the environment posed by Montbretia has been recognised by its declaration as a noxious weed under category W4c. This means that it may not be sold, propagated or knowingly distributed, and that any occupier must prevent its spread to any adjoining property.

Getting rid of Montbretia, or even preventing its spread, is not easy. Where possible, dig deeply to remove all the corms. The weed responds poorly to herbicide spray, which does not translocate well to the corms, but where digging is impossible the foliage can be wiped with full strength Roundup after flowering. Be sure to use impervious gloves and wash well afterwards. Whichever method is chosen, years of follow-up work will be needed.

The best place for the flowers is in a vase where they won't produce seed. Good luck with the removal! One thing is certain — if you wait until next year there will be much, much more to get rid of.

Lindeman Road Bushcare Group meets in Lindeman Road, North Leura, at 9am on the first Saturday of each month, and welcomes new members. For more information ring 82.4305.

Membership Enquiries: The Society is keen to have new members who are concerned about the welfare of the Blue Mountains natural environment. Contact membership secretary, Ross Coster: Work (047)59.1247, Home 59.1837 FAX 59.1095, or write to P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.

A Day in the Life of a Magpie

This morning we'd laugh
at her
cavorting with
the hose
enjoying the spray
in my bush garden
It was later
I found her body
on the road

I buried her
in the garden
under a banksia bush
but near the house
so her spirit can dance
with the spray
on a warm summer day
—Rosemary Lewis

Bird Observers

The Society has recently joined the Blue Mountains Bird Observers and has received their interesting newsletter and bird list. It is hoped that we will be able to contribute a list of birds sighted by our bushwalkers.

What an amazing assortment of birds!! A total of 120 species of birds were seen in the Blue Mountains during November 1996. As well as all our resident birds and summer migrants, the list included some unusual visitors — a White-bellied Sea-Eagle seen over Lapstone, and the White-necked Heron who took up residence at the duck pond in Blackheath Memorial Park.

Bushwalker's Report

On an overcast Saturday morning we left Hazelbrook Station, walking down Terrace Falls Road pulling out stray

Welcome to New Members

Apologies to members who joined in December whose names were not included in the January newsletter. They are: Mrs. MI Ryan, Leura
N Krause, Wentworth Falls
D Lucey, Katoomba
Wilson Alcorn, Millers Point
Eugene and Helen Molineux, Fairfield West
Barbara Harley, Leura
John and Hilary James, Hartley Vale.

New members this month are:
Warrimoo Citizens Association
Leilani Musgrave, Hazelbrook
Isobel Evans, Blackheath
Sue Nicol, Blackheath
Louise Thibou, Dover Heights
Peter Derwent, Lindfield

Broom,
down the big hill towards the entrance to Victor Falls, stopping for morning tea at Terrace Falls then on past Salata Pool, through picnic point to Willowong Pool for lunch. The water in the pool was quite low.
We then made our way to Bedford Lake, again water level low, and on a side track to Lester Lake retraced our steps and began the long walk back to our cars.
In Railway Pde we met a lady who was planting native trees along the railway side of the road. Hope everyone treats them with respect after her hard work!

Claire Lanigan, Lawson
Tony Saunders, Lawson
Bronwyn Gahan, Bullaburra
James and Elizabeth Warburton, Lawson
Chris Whiteman, Hazelbrook
CH Putting, Bullaburra
Gwen Campbell, Hazelbrook
Corrie Brook, Epping
Stephen McLaren, Lawson
L Appleford, Lawson
Laurel Osbourne, Blaxland
Marlene Milos, Hazelbrook
Chris Kempster, Hazelbrook.

The society now has nearly 500 members. We are aiming for 1000!

A mailout has been sent to 3,500 residential addresses in Woodford, Hazelbrook, Lawson and Bullaburra. **Please contact your friends in these towns and urge them to join the society.**

Threatened Species Act

A conference on "The relevance of the Threatened Species Conservation Act for the management of urban bushland and remnant vegetation in conserving biodiversity" to be held in Sydney on 1-2 May, 1997

If you would liked to be placed on the mailing list for this conference, send details of your name, organisation, address, phone and fax numbers to Nature Conservation Council, 39 George Street, Sydney 2000. More info. Erica Higginson 02.9247 4206.

In the Bush

The calliopsis still dominates this month's floral display. It is also known as coreopsis and is a Compositae and native to the USA. I marvel at the amazing mechanism which regulates the flower to follow the path of the sun. With the massed effect which this gives them they gain a great strength of colour. I have yet to see them penetrate virgin bush. Any in my opinion seen in the bush are only there because of dumped or disturbed soil. (Editor's note: Perhaps bush regenerators who have been working to remove this weed from along the creeks and waterways in our bushland and national park are less fond on this weed!!)

The, to my knowledge, unsubstantiated story of their spread is linked with a tale of some lady sprinkling seed from her rail carriage window as she journeyed up the mountains. It would be

interesting to know the full facts. Memory is a great deceiver but I cannot recall their profuse display in the early 40's when I first became acquainted with the Western Line.

Just now the first flush of blooms has changed because of the development of seed heads. In the yard I have seen the crimson rosellas walk up the stems until the seed head falls to ground level at which point they can consume them with greater ease.

Until recently I had been puzzled by the way these birds frequented the road margins in large numbers at certain times of the year. A flash of insight makes me now believe the seed has fallen on the smooth swept road margin thus making them more visible to the rosellas.

Now, out in the **real** bush on the dry rocky sandy ridges, may be seen equally striking displays of the flannel flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*) — *Gr. actinotus*, furnished with rays, *helianthi* *Gr* for sunflower.

They belong to the family Umbelliferae and so are not daisies. Actually carrots and parsnips are in the same family. So

pure and vital are the messages they give, one treads warily in such patches for fear of destroying even one specimen. They seem particularly prevalent in burnt-over areas but maybe that is because other species are lacking and don't distract our attention.

I can't for the life of me believe a bush fire could ever help a flannel flower. Their seeds, like so many bush flowers, are very minute and vulnerable. If a fire can melt a glass bottle anything organic wouldn't stand a chance except deep bedded lignotubers.

But the air we breathe is laden with small specks of life, and maybe these falling on the new ash beds are the reason for the sudden appearance of some species after a fire.

Bunyip did enjoy a break from his home billabong in December, at a place aptly named Perisher. That experience will be described in the next issue of *Hut News*.

—The Bunyip.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY NATIVE PLANT NURSERY OPEN TUESDAY MORNINGS 9 am to 12 noon PLANT SALES VOLUNTEERS ARE WELCOME TO HELP CONTACT DAVID COLEBY 84.1395

FEBRUARY

- 10 (Mon) **Earlybird Leisure Walk** — **Olympian Rock/Tarpean Rock/Leura Cascades.** Meet Leura Station carpark at 8.30 am. Contact Christina Jones 84.1101.
- 15 (Sat) **Bushwalk — Porter's Pass.** Meet at Blackheath Commuter Carpark at 9.30. Contact Christine Davies 87.7246. Duration 5 hours. Grade 4.
- 17 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 57.2783.
- 17 (Mon) **Earlybird Leisure Walk — Fairy Bower.** Meet Mount Victoria Station at 8.30. Contact Daphne Rawling 87.8567.
- 19 (Wed) **Bushwalk — The Lost Mine.** Meet at Mount Victoria Station at 9 30 am. Contact Dave Lovegrove 063.55.2133. Duration 5 hours. Easy grade, but some scrambling.
- 24 (Mon) **Earlybird Leisure Walk — Little Zigzag.** Meet at Mount Victoria Station at 8.30 am. Contact Mervyn Bird 87.7959.
- 25 (Tues) **Committee Meeting** at The Hut at 7 pm.
- 28 (Fri) **General Meeting** at The Hut at 7.30 pm. Guest speaker Chris Hannocks, "Conservation in South Africa".
- DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP IF IT IS DUE**

MARCH *(By popular vote, Leisure Walks will be 8.30 start until Easter.)*

- 02 (Sun) **Clean Up Australia Day — Katoomba Falls Reserve.** (9 am to about 1 pm) Meet near Katoomba Falls Reserve Kiosk at 9 am. *Look for Ron Wheeler's truck decorated with our banner.* ☎ Christine 87.7246 if you need to arrange a lift from Katoomba Station.
- 03 (Mon) **Earlybird Leisure Walk — Fort Rock.** Meet at Blackheath Station commuter carpark (west side) at 8.30. Contact Norah Gaynor 87.6071.
- 10 (Mon) **Earlybird Leisure Walk — Horne's Point.** Meet at Mount Victoria Station at 8.30. Contact Gillian Janus 87.6181.
- 15 (Sat) **Bushwalk — Hanging Rock.** Meet at Blackheath Station commuter carpark at 10 am. Contact Valerie Collins 59.2472. Grade 5.
- 17 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 57.2783.
- 17 (Mon) **Earlybird Leisure Walk — Minna Ha Ha Falls.** Meet at Katoomba Station (Gearin's Hotel side) at 8.30. Contact Fay Arnold 84.3225.
- 18 (Tues) **Committee Meeting.**
- 19 (Wed) **Bushwalk — The Jungle.** Meet at Blackheath commuter carpark at 9 am. Contact Carol Butcher 57.3830. Grade 7. Duration 6-7 hours.
- 21 (Fri) **Annual General Meeting. Guest Speaker, Graham Alcorn.**
- 24 (Mon) **Earlybird Leisure Walk — Katoomba Cascades to Echo Point.** Meet at Katoomba Station (Gearin's Hotel side) at 8.30. Contact Mervyn Bird 87.7959.

A beautiful bird sighted by Society's bushwalkers.

Seen at the junction of Victoria Falls Creek and the Grose River on Sunday 2 February, a male Satin Flycatcher, his plumage brilliant blue in the sunlight as he flew over the river, his breast a dashing white; nearby, at the Burra-Korain Flat camping area, his mate, with rufous breast.

kids' corner

Hut News would like to hear from children with poems, stories or essays about the Blue Mountains.



FIREFLIES

I was camping in the Wolgan Valley and looking for possums. When someone saw some lights and they were fireflies, I thought the fireflies were amazing! The fireflies were so bright and there were lots of them. They looked like tiny torches flying.

Cameron Brown, Age 10.

Bushwalks

Bushwalks have been graded:- 1-3 easy, 4-7 medium, 8-10 harder. Most walks in the mountains contain some uphill sections. If walkers are in any doubt about their ability to participate in a particular walk they should contact the leader. Bush walks are usually "day" walks and walkers bring their lunch.

Leisure walks are generally easy to medium grade and conducted at a slow pace. They are usually "morning" walks, lasting about 3 to 3½ hours. Bring morning tea.

ALL walkers are required to carry drinking water, especially in the summer months — 1 litre minimum.