

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



Feedback Welcome

Thank you to those who have contributed articles and features to *Hut News* — Joyce Brister for her recent three-part series on the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment, Ro Morrow for her ongoing series "Saving the Bush From Us" (see page 4), and Bunyip. Last month somebody suggested that Bunyip had been going long enough and should be terminated — cries of horror were heard from Lapstone to Mount Victoria, with echos from Sydney and beyond ... "he's interesting", "I always read the column", "he's a tradition".... Bunyip's column continues on page 3.

The Editor would be pleased to get feedback from members about the articles and features in *Hut News*. (PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782). One criticism we have had is that the bulk of our editorial is too gloomy. Wouldn't it be lovely if all the news about the environment was good? But there are victories! ... see the report below from RAID (Residents Against Improper Development).

Winnicoopa Victory

"And the folk are jubilating as they never were before ..." Some people might recognise these words from the bush poem 'How McDougal Topped the Score', about a cricket match at Piper's Flat near Canberra. This time it wasn't cricket, but as at Piper's Flat, it was an unexpected outright victory.

On 14 November 1997, Judge Pearlman of the Land and Environment Court ruled against the application for a subdivision of the 27ha site which would have doubled the residential capacity of the Winnicoopa Road area in Blaxland. The importance of the physical features on the site were recognised. The list included steep grades, significant rock outcrops and a number of watercourses. It was, however, vegetation which seemed to clinch the argument for protection. Both vegetation communities and individual species were found to be worthy of preservation. In relation to the assessment of vegetation, the professionalism, experience and evidence of Drs Peter and Judy Smith were relied upon by the judge and their work was specifically commended in the report.

RAID appreciates the work done by Blue Mountains City Council in putting time and effort into presenting a strong case and in arranging for expert witnesses of the calibre of Peter Smith to be involved. Many individuals and groups, especially BMCS itself, have also provided encouragement and tangible support for our cause. To you all we offer our heart-

"Only a Frog"

The Red-crowned Toadlet is a frog of the family Myobatrachidae, and the Genus *Pseudophryne*, meaning false toad. It is classed as "vulnerable" Schedule 2 in the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995.

The Red-crowned Toadlet is about thirty millimetres in size, is dark brown with a red triangle on the head, and a red stripe on the lower back. Its habitat is restricted to the Hawkesbury sandstone of the Sydney basin. In the non-breeding season it is most commonly found on or near the ridges, within dry open forests or at the junction of dry and wet sclerophyll forests. The diet is mostly ants and termites. During the breeding season, especially early spring to late autumn, it is limited to semi-permanent streams, that have high amounts of leaf litter.

At the Blue Mountains City Council meeting on Tuesday 16 December, Ecologist Danny Wotherspoon provided evidence that Red-crowned Toadlets live on the Blaxland lot known as Coughlan Road Stage 2.

There were many other good reasons why this subdivision should have been rejected. These included the steepness of the land, over-development of the site, potential bushfire hazards and lack of protection for the rocky outcrop that runs across the site.

However at the meeting on Tuesday 16 December Council approved the development, which is owned by Councillor Ralph Williams, by a vote of 6-5. Those who voted in favour of the development were Councillors Neall, Harris, Kime, Egan, Angel and Derum (Williams could not vote). Those who voted against the development and for the Blue Mountains environment (and for the continuing existence of the little Red-crowned Toadlet) were Councillors Henson, Clarke, Hamilton, Gaul and Berriman.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is obtaining details of Council's reports on the environmental assessment of the application, and obtaining legal advice from the Environmental Defender's Office. We intend to fight to protect the frogs. (More next month.)

Danny Wotherspoon will speak at our February general meeting about the Red-crowned Toadlet and the part it plays in the Blue Mountains environment.

felt *thank-yous* and hope that you in turn are encouraged to continue to stand for wise decision-making in our city. — *Kathy Gott, RAID*

Guest Speakers

Many society members grew up in an era when libraries were only about books.

At our General Meeting on Friday 30 January, Jenny Stubbs, Reference Librarian

March? If you think you can help please phone and talk to one of the committee members (telephone numbers are at the bottom of this page).

Thank you Marie, for a job well done!

Working Bee

On Sunday 23 Nov 1997, 12 hardy souls attended a working bee at the water reserve adjacent to Sorenson Continued on Page 2

of Blue Mountains City Council, will speak about "The Reference Collection: Resources and Research". In addition to a description of the more traditional resources, Jenny will outline the availability of information via CD-ROM and the Internet.

Also at the meeting there will be a short presentation by Simone Cottrell of the Wilderness Society to tell us why the Jabiluka Uranium Mine should not proceed.

In the culture of the traditional owners, the Mirrar, Jabiluka is sacred! The mine will be underground, below the flood plain in an area infamous for its wet season, beside Kakadu's famous wetland — a threat to our most famous world heritage national park.

The meeting at the Conservation Hut starts at 7.30 pm. Visitors are welcome.

Publicity Officers

We regret that Marie McInnes has had to retire from the position of publicity officer due to ill health.

Would any member like to take on the job until the Annual General Meeting in

Hut News, the newsletter of Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
P.O.Box 29, Wentworth Falls, 2782. Phone 4757 1872. Fax 4757 1753. Email bmcs@pnc.com.au
President: Marion Hawley, 4784.1933
Vice Presidents: Linda Thomas, Phone 4782-1291; Imre Gahl Phone 4784-3286
Secretary/Treasurer: Les Coyne, Phone 4757-3327 Fax 4757-2820 Email: coyne@pnc.com.au
Bushcare: Norm Harris, Phone 4784-1554. **Education:** Jessica Yuille, Phone 4757-2783
Native Plant Nursery/Entertainment: David Coleby, Phone/Fax 4784.-1395
Land Use: Don Morison, Phone 4759-2471. **Macro Projects/Bushwalks Co-ord.** (Vacant)
Membership: Ross Coster, Phone 4759-1247 Fax 4759-1095 Email: haytech@pnc.com.au
Bushfire Rep: Hugh Paterson, Phone 4751-2303 **Publicity:** (Vacant)
Hawkesbury/Nepean Catchment Rep: Rosemary Lathouris Phone 4757-2511
Newsletter: Christine Davies, Phone 4787-7246 Fax 4787-7777 Email: hutnews@pnc.com.au

LAND USE

Will Labor be green again?

The Carr Labor Government's setback in the Sutherland by-election shows that it will need green support to retain government at the March 1999 State Election. Labor must lift its game on several state-wide land use issues to regain support which, for the time being, it has lost.

The package of changes to the Environment Planning and Assessment Act known as IDA (Integrated Development Assessment) has now passed through State Parliament and could prove to be history's greatest gift to irresponsible developers. Bob Carr must look for ways to moderate that damage.

Dragging the chain on Wollemi Wilderness is costing the Carr Government support, as is its intended over-development of the ADI site at St. Mary's and its almost total inaction in using public money for capital improvement to Greater Sydney's public transport. Major decisions on water flows in the state's rivers to be made in 1998 will also be a crucial test of Bob Carr's green credentials.

Labor in the Blue Mountains

After the upcoming redistribution of State electoral boundaries, there are certain to be several seats in and around the Blue Mountains where green issues will be crucial to the result. Blue Mountains member Bob Debus gave a fine presentation on urban runoff to a BMCS general meeting and was recently promoted in the ministerial pecking order. But now Bob Debus must defend Labor's electricity privatisation policy — local implications for the environment and jobs will be closely watched.

One of Bob Debus' worst problems is that Deputy Mayor Jim Angel is the most prominent Labor Councillor and is apparently on Bob Debus' staff payroll. While another Labor Councillor Duncan Berriman has an excellent record in voting and speaking on Council, this is being overshadowed by the anti-environment votes and speeches of Jim Angel. If Bob Debus wants Labor to hold Blue Mountains seats, he should act now to put much more distance between himself and the 'Slash and Burn' faction on Blue Mountains Council.

Lamentable Priorities

On 17 December, a meeting was held in Katoomba described by Small Business spokesperson John Heath as the most important in fifty years — it had implications for both the built and natural environments. Major Michael Neall had a choice of attending the whole of that meeting in his role as major — or of going to another meeting about planning at Lawson. Personal financial interest in the Lawson meeting meant Michael Neall could not attend as mayor but only on behalf of a small group of people with similar financial interests to his.

That Michael Neall chose to focus his attention on the Lawson meeting that night shows priorities evident in far too many of our Councillors at the moment.

—Don Morison.



Working Bee (Continued from Page 1)

Bridge at Leura. Included in our number were four people under 13!

The heat was oppressive, and eventually caused us to pack up early (around 1pm), but not before we had produced a substantial weed pile of about 8-10 utility loads, with a load of rubbish removed from the site by Ron Wheeler.

Weeds removed were Broom, Montbretia, Erica, Radiata pine, Holly and Lucerne Trees. Stumps left in the ground were painted with Roundup by our trained Bushcare Officer to ensure that we make permanent progress.

Thank you to all who attended, your efforts are much appreciated.

I intend to run quarterly working bees on the site in January, April, July and October each year **until we run out of work!** The next working bee is scheduled for **Sunday 18 Jan 1998**, from 10am to 2pm. All are welcome. Please bring gloves and lunch, and don't forget your hat, sunscreen and plenty of water. Meet at the reserve, between the highway and the railway on the western side of Sorensen Bridge, at 10 am.—*Ross Coster* (4759.1247)

Kids' Club

There will be no activity during January. We suggest instead a guided walk or activity with the NPWS Discovery program. Call in to NPWS Heritage Centre at Blackheath for a program, or phone them on 4787.8877.

Mums/Dads — Any ideas for February? Phone Jessica on 4757-2783.

A New, Bigger, Committee!!

Next year our committee will expand to have 18 committee members. This must be a sign of how much conservation work needs to be done in the Blue Mountains, and a sign of how large and active our society has become.

Having been a committee member for the past two years, I'd like to say how much I have enjoyed being involved, and to encourage other members to take a turn. You don't need to be an expert of anything. In fact, being on the committee is a great way to learn skills and gain knowledge of the local environmental issues. Whatever your skills, passion or knowledge, if you would like to help the environment, then being active on our committee is a great option.

Descriptions of the 18 positions will be in the next newsletter, in time for the March AGM. These descriptions are flexible so if there is a particular role you would like to take, then please let us know — phone and talk to any committee member (the details are on the front page of *Hut News*).

Let's hope 1998 is a great year for the environment. — Jessica.

Plant of the Month

Kennedia rubicunda (Dusky Coral Pea) is a wonderful climber and groundcover which will quickly cover a bare area, a chain-

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.

wire fence, half a tennis court, or will climb trees (given a little help).

In the spring it will be covered in big crimson pea flowers, and in summer after Christmas the hairy pea pods will blacken, and then explode to release their black seeds. A delightful local native species which should have a place in any garden.

The BMCS nursery, which is open on Tuesday from 9 am to 12 noon, has a number of well advanced plants (at \$4 each) suitable for planting now. Enquiries to David Coleby (4784-1395)

Welcome to New Members

A. Alegria, Hazelbrook
Lois Downing Leura
Pam Pascoe, Glenbrook
Marilyn Kraus & Ted Greenwood, Blackheath
Miss A Pyritz and Partner, Blackheath
Diana Clark, Springwood
Robert Simmonds, Blackheath
Philippa Coleman, Wentworth Falls
Pam Gibson, Mount Victoria
Stan Gray, Wentworth Falls
Natalie Keen, Warimoo
Chris Dewhurst, Katoomba
Jason and Adele Doust, Linden
Myf Young, Katoomba
Carole Gould, Hazelbrook
Lorraine, Hazelbrook

Graham, 'Cheer Up'

Graham Alcorn has been ill, but has now left Katoomba hospital.

Some of the newer members may not know Graham, who is a past-president of the Conservation Society and for many years edited our newsletter. He was head ranger for the nature reserves and walking tracks controlled by Blue Mountains City Council (before NPWS came along).

Graham has a keen interest in nature and a keen ear and eye, identifying with ease those elusive LBB's (little brown birds). It is always a thrill to go on a bushwalk with Graham, to find a hidden nest, to learn about the little creatures of the bush, especially the birds. Often we hear a poem about a bird we have seen, recited with style and with a twinkle in the eye.

A new book of poetry, which will have a section about the Blue Mountains, is presently being printed. In the meantime here is a poem chosen from Graham's first book of poetry, "The Bird Baths of Umbigumbi".

Winter Comforter

In winter the Grey Thrush comes to comfort me. 'Cheer up,' he calls.

It doesn't matter if the bleak winds blow,
It doesn't matter if it rain or snow,
Or if the temperature is two below,
He calls, 'Cheer up.'

I know in springtime he will sing a melody
So sweet and rare.
But now he hops around the garden quietly
With spritely air.
'Cheer up,' cries he.

In the Bush

From his home billabong Bunyip revels in the warm summer weather. Inside a house or a bedroom is not a good spot for birds or flowers but one summer call penetrates our material world to remind us of the natural world and its great goings on. I refer to the koel, our regular summer visitor.

It may be well known by some but the following information may be of interest to others and has been gleaned from several sources.

For reasons unknown to me the koel winters in New Guinea and migrates to Australia's northern and eastern seaboard, its numbers tapering off after Sydney. They belong to the cuckoo family and lay eggs in the nests of other species, including friar birds, orioles and magpie larks, and, to add another of nature's mysteries, lay eggs in host's nests which carry egg markings similar to their own. As the incubation period of 13 to 14 days is shorter than the host's eggs the young emerge and so develop strength to eject the rightful fledglings.

One book claims the persistent "ko-el" call is made by the male to attract the female. The female's call is a shrill wuk-wuk-wuk-wuk. Males also give other hysterical calls, such as a shrieking kee-kee-kee and a falsetto quodel-quodel-quadel. I suppose if I had the amorous male crying his heart

out by my bedroom window at one a.m. any "sounds of summer" thoughts would soon be dispelled.

And so to flowers. The bright fresh flush of spring has passed but there are still colourful displays of the rougher tougher types, the bright yellow of the Isopogons, the magenta of the Kunzea, the clean whites of the emerging flannel flowers and Conospermum just to name a few of the more conspicuous. Temperatures in the 30's and no rain don't trouble them in the least. Take heed, those who bemoan their high water bills.

Their identification can be tantalising without knowledgeable help but there are numerous books. I've fumbled about for years forgetting as fast as remembering but recently I purchased a Royal Botanical Gardens publication (\$80) "Mangrove to Mountain Devil".

Tucked into a back cover envelope is found a booklet titled "Native Plant species in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment". A map of this area has been divided into five and each given a name and number. Katoomba-Wentworth Falls, for instance, are in an area named Upper Blue Mountains.

A few pages over we come to a plant list of five columns. Each column has a list of plants found in each of the five areas. Of course there is some overlap but our search is now narrowed down.

We are not out of the woods yet! Save your pennies up to buy another book. I'll describe it in my next article.—*The Bunyip.*

Fleeting Dreams

Somewhere there is a dream
Of blue, white, wet and closer green
Beyond the Jamison depths
Lies the dream in muddled mounds
And close knit streams,
Beyond the Grose of Govett's Fame,
Lies the dream in sunken cradle rocks
And vaporous shrouded heights, of shame.

Dreaming, I look back from blue Mount Hay
And see the dead Chimney Carrington,
Smokeless and polluting no more;
Calling you temporary persons to see, the dream;
To stand between the Grose and Jamison,
The Cox AND Colo,
To view the blue
Fixed and fleeting in one
Cold moment; one tiny
Window in time.

Beyond the Jamison they see not
Yet, the Blue goes on
past their fleeting gaze
Out through the oily gum tree haze,
past the Wild Dogs, the Cox's,
Gangerangs and Blue Breaks, too;
too big, TOO BLue, Too much for
ONE COLD MOMENT
One tiny window; in time.

The Dream says, they are few
Who, are born true ... to the blue,
Too few to show THE many who throng for
ONE - tiny - window ... a fringe ... a moment
passing
On the Jamison,
A glimpse Over the Grose
or the Wild Dogs;
For we observe from but a fragment of the dream,
A fraction of the blue, a micro hue.

All these things will pass like landslides
slipping to the valley floor
In the dream,
Carrington Chimneys come and go
Ribbons of roads will crack to nought
Glimsy room cocoons of few and many
Will rot below the skyline ...
After the dirty streams ... unhealthy airs
There will still be the blue, big blue.

The dream says ... the dream goes on.
(not like the tourist buck)
The dream asks is this your dream?
It lies at our feet, in our hands ..
tattered, torn, ...
Battered by uncaring forces
temporarily wills propping up, the dream.

But the dream goes on
Through the Wild Dogs, Cox's,
Gangerangs and Blue Breaks,
Colo and Wollemi,
Past Kanangra,
It is too BIG, too blue, too much
for one cold moment
One tiny window, in time.

Wyn Jones, 1988 (revised 05.09.97)

Good News for Native Plants and Pasture in the Arid Zone

"The best news for conservation in the arid zone for nearly 50 years!" Data collected from the Flinders Ranges, South Australia, provides quantitative evidence that rabbits have had a major role in suppressing recruitment of perennial plants and that rabbit calicivirus has been able to lift this suppressing effect.

Perennial plants are a vital component of arid zone flora. They help protect soils and reduce the long-term degradation caused during dry periods. They support other native vegetation and provide habitat for native birds and animals.

Rabbit numbers have not been so low in the arid zone since the early days of myxomatosis.

Possum in Your Roof?

Brush-tailed Possums usually live in tree hollows, but if there are not enough hollow trees around, a hollow roof on a suburban house may have to do.

Brushtails are highly territorial and do not relocate well when removed from their surroundings. A licence is required if a possum living in a householder's roof is to be captured.

After it is captured the animal can be held until dusk the following day to allow cavities and access points in the roof to be blocked up. The possum must then be released onto the same property at dusk.

Like them or love them, we need to realise that these possums are a part of

our natural habitat and we can learn to live with them.

One way is to provide a possum shelter in the garden or in surrounding bushland. A resident possum will discourage other possums from moving into the area (and into your roof).

Further advice from Blue Mountains WIRES on 4754.2946.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

JANUARY 1998

- 12 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Water Nymph's Dell.** Meet 8.30 am, Wentworth Falls Station, Stockyard Carpark (nearest Highway). Contact Kees Putting 47 59 1958.
- 17 (Sat) **Mystery Walk.** Meet Mount Victoria Station at 9.30 am. Bring spare shoes. Contact Olive Noble 47 87.8342
- 18 (Sun) **Working Bee.** Meet at the reserve at 10 am. Contact Ross Coster 4759.1247. (Story on Pages 1 and 2)
- 19 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 4757.2783.
- 19 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Overcliff/Undercliff.** Meet 8.30 am Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. Contact Jan Cutler.
- 22 (Thu) **Committee Meeting.** Mid Mountains Community Centre, 7 pm.
- 30 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut.** 7.30 pm. (See Page 1)

FEBRUARY

- 01 (Sun) **Bushwalk — The Turpentine Walk.** Meet at Woodford Station carpark (south side) at 9 am. Medium grade. Contact Ron Amos 02 9727 8931.
- 02 (Mon) **Bus Trip to Kanangra Walls.** (Fully booked out.) Contact Mervyn Bird 4787 7959.
- 09 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Mount Boyce.** Meet 8.30 Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. Contact John Gaynor 4787 6071.
- 16 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 4757.2783.
- 16 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Wall's Ledge.** Meet 8.30, Blackheath Station commuter carpark. Contact Norah Gaynor 4787 6071.
- 19 (Thu) **Committee Meeting.** Mid Mountains Community Centre, 7 pm.
- 23 (Mon) **Lila's Falls, Katoomba.** Meet 8.30 am, Fork & View Restaurant, Cliff Drive. Contact Christina Jones 4784 1101
- 27 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut.** 7.30 pm.

Saving the Bush From Us

Part 2: Health in Bushland - Animals

Last month I talked about healthy ecosystems and how to look at the bush and see indicators of morbidity. In this issue we will continue to look at indicators of good health, and this time look at the animal life.

One valuable idea is that an entire ecosystem is a live organism which has two main components. The first are the fixed species which are the trees, shrubs, herbs, grasses, and fungi. They are vitally important in carrying out a number of functions. They cycle nutrients, provide shade and mulch, and keep the soil nutrients and water in balance. Some plants provide for others such as those that fix nitrogen, or phosphorus. Others are pioneers and provide shade, humidity and protection for the young growing up underneath them.

Animal Life: The second component of an ecosystem are the mobile species which are the virus, bacteria, fungi, earthworms, insects, burrowers, carnivores, grazers, and birds. They are as important as the fixed species and carry out a complementary and different set of functions. For example, borers prune trees, leaf-eating insects create fertiliser rain, wombats and others cultivate the soil, insects, birds, possums pollinate trees, parrots and other animals disperse seed and control pests.

Healthy bushland has a wide diversity of animal life. Many are active by night, and some by seasons. All have a place and contribute to the health of the ecosystem. The role of some is known, others are unknown or inconspicuous. The thousands of honeyeaters who migrate to the Mountains each winter have an important role in pollinating the plants. When the seed sets it feeds other animals who have other functions.

Look for an abundance of animals around flowering and seeding times. There needs to be a healthy predominance

of insects especially in spring. Look at the flowers, and at the air through a shaft of light and you will see hundreds and sometimes thousands of insects. They are working for the bushland.

There are some animals who are "indicator animals" The echidna is one. It is said that where there are echidnas then the litter layer is in good health. This is because it needs to eat so many insects that only a diverse litter layer can provide for its nutritional needs. Perhaps a healthy litter layer is the ultimate sign of good health in ecosystems. Other indicator animals are owls and raptors because these are sensitive to insecticides.

Among the bird life, a predominance of vermin such as sparrows and Indian mynah reflect loss of the bushland and locally indigenous bird habitat. And the presence of many large predator birds such as currawongs means the middle storey layer is weak or absent. Healthy bush needs its middle storey for both insects and small birds which pollinate, and predate on and control pests (in Tasmania there is a very strong Understorey Society).

The plants and animals are in constant interaction, and are interdependent. Poor health in, or loss of fixed species can diminish the mobile species and vice versa. So look closely at the animals. Do an inventory of the species and find out where they live. Decide whether your bushland or that near you is in good health through the plant and animal balance. — *Ro Morrow.*

Next Issues: Soils, Water and Edges

Proud to be a Conservationist

The December 1997 *Hut News* has a comment that needs examining.

In the Land Use column, there is a statement, "BMCS will prove we are FOR responsible and environmentally sustainable developments and only AGAINST developments that are irredeemably dangerous..."

I wonder, is it appropriate for BMCS to prove it is FOR or AGAINST develop-

ment? Is it necessary for BMCS to prove itself? Surely the objective is to protect the natural environment.

If the carrying out of our conservation tasks makes us for or against development, then this is beside the point. We need to be clear and confident in our objectives.

The term "environmentally sustainable" is tricky nowadays, as its meaning depends on who uses it. For example, the Williams mangrove swamp and dugong habitat destruction in Hinchinbrook channel is most likely a sustainable development to the Federal Minister of Environment who approved it.

If the statement in question was a response to critics, then I believe it is important not to succumb to the attacks of our critics. To be a caretaker of the earth, to be a protector of life — a conservationist, is something to be proud of.

Chins up and chests out!

—*Meredith Brownhill.*

Monday Leisure Walks

The entertainment at the Leisure Walkers Megalong Christmas party was great! — this is one of the songs.

We are the Monday leisure walkers
You will see us everywhere
With packs and sticks and talkers
We haven't got a care

From Hazelbrook up to Mount Vic
We've trekked through vale and glen
To places you could never pick
And some we've done again.

In every kind of weather
In the heat or winter's rain
You will see us all together
And you might hear this refrain ...

We are the Monday leisure walkers
You will see us everywhere
With packs and sticks and talkers
We haven't got a care.

(Members of the Monday Leisure Walkers Singing Group will make a special appearance at our January General Meeting.)