

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



Blue Mountains' Aboriginals

Aboriginal people have been in the Blue Mountains through the millenia. How did they live? What traces remain?

Our guest speaker on Friday 26 February is Wayne Brennan. Wayne is a consultant archaeologist and Discovery Ranger with NPWS, and has worked in close liaison with a number of Aboriginal groups in the mountains and NSW generally. He will talk about the archaeology of the Blue Mountains, the patterns of movement of the Aboriginal people and their art.

The meeting at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, starts at 7.30 p.m.

Clean-Up Australia Day

Sunday, 7 March, 9.30 - 12 noon

Come and help clean up the bushland in North Katoomba. This is part of the area we have been supporting to become a bushland reserve, where members enjoyed a guided walk in November.

Go to corner of Wattle Tree Road and First Avenue, and look out for signs to the meeting place, approximately 500 metres north. Contact Ruth Ley 4782.1635.

100th Anniversary Celebration

Sunday 28 February, from 10 a.m.

Govetts Leap Lookout, Blackheath

'A Century Down the Cliff', celebrates 100 years since the opening of the track to the bottom of Govetts Leap, the first major cliff track in the Blue Mountains.

After the Official commemoration there will be morning tea, short guided historic walks, and at 12.30 a family picnic (BYO) and children's games.

After lunch, join in the planting of 100 trees to mark the occasion.

The opening banquet in 1899 was held halfway down the cliff. Interested people will be guided to the spot. Be part of the fun — wear a period costume.

Help Make a Difference!

At our AGM on Friday 26 March we will elect 18 of our members to form a new Management Committee.

No previous experience is needed — just a commitment to serve the environment, and a determination to "make a difference". There will be more information in the March newsletter. In the meantime, if you would like to find out more contact one of members of this year's committee, or come along as an observer to a

With This Newsletter ...

Changes to the Society's Constitution:

On Friday 26 February at 7.25 pm, immediately before our General Meeting, we will be holding a Special General Meeting to vote on constitution and fee-scale changes, as explained in the enclosed letter.

The major change will be to enable Children's membership for those under 16 years of age.

At present the "Kids' Club" holds an activity every month. We propose to expand these activities and also produce a quarterly newsletter for members of the Kids' Club. These has been no increase in membership fees. The \$5 Kids' Club membership fee will be waived for children of existing members.

Living in the Bush Booklet

Enclosed with this newsletter is a copy of "Living Near the Bush". The booklet will soon be available to all households in the Blue Mountains.

Members wanting additional copies will be able to obtain them from all libraries, Council offices, NPWS Blackheath and Richmond, and the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. The booklet will also be distributed through schools, and can be found on our web site.

committee meeting.

Forest Resurgence!

Vote with your feet! The NSW Forest Alliance, which includes regional and peak environmental groups, is organising a public meeting for forest action at the Sydney Town Hall on Sunday 28 February, 1 pm to 5pm.

Protection of Watercourses

Commissioner Carleton has made twelve major recommendations in his recent report into BMCC's Draft Environmental Plan. Protection of watercourses was the first of his recommendations.

The Commissioner has recommended that a hierarchy of watercourse buffers be introduced in the urban areas of the Blue Mountains. He recommends that buffer widths be a reflection of the significance of the watercourse and associated riparian vegetation, and that maintenance and regeneration of buffer areas be made a condition of development consent.

BMCS and RAID have been pressing for stronger watercourse protection for the last three years. Council made a previous

entertainment (you contribute!), children's activities, (possibly) canoeing, swimming — or for the less energetic, sitting under a tree, watching the birds, and meeting old and new friends.

We plan to arrive at Dunn's Swamp for lunch on Saturday. There will be a BBQ dinner on Saturday evening (BYO meat, and a plate with salad, dessert, or nibbles, etc. to share).

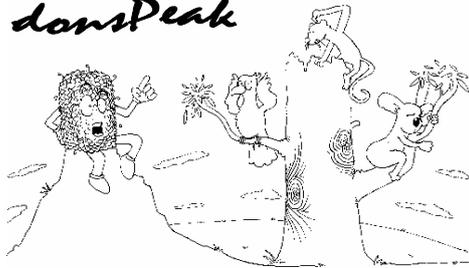
We need to know numbers in advance. If you are coming .. would like to find out more .. need a lift .. can give a lift .. want to borrow a tent .. could loan a tent .. would prefer accommodation nearby phone Mary 4757.4133 or Christine 4787.7246 before Monday 8 March.

attempt to include watercourse buffers when they were preparing Amendment 25 to LEP1991, but withdrew it after receiving advice from council staff.

We call on Blue Mountains City Council to revisit this matter, both in DLEP 1997 and LEP 1991.

THE DEADLINE
FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS
WEDNESDAY 17 FEBRUARY

"Hut News", the newsletter of Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
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Few Tears for Catalina Racetrack

The Management Plan recently adopted by Blue Mountains City Council would phase out car racing activities at Katoomba's Catalina circuit, ending the 'Catalina' era of Upper Katoomba Falls Valley.

This era began in 1946 when Horne Gates gouged an artificial pond. Later, war relics were exhibited in a commercially exploitative manner.

In 1957, an Aboriginal community — the last cohesive Aboriginal settlement in the Blue Mountains — was shifted without compensation or re-location assistance, to make way for the race track. While some accounts of this conflict were exaggerated, Jim Smith writes 'this is itself inhumane enough' (Stockton (ed.) 'Blue Mountains Dreaming', 1993).

The heyday of car racing coincided with damage to swamps and weed invasion. The remnants of the car racing installations and the war relics exhibition area are now dilapidated and contributing to further environmental damage.

Car events are not a logical part of the dawning era for the valley. The new era is one of respect for the ecology and Aboriginal heritage, noting especially that this is the head-waters of Katoomba Falls, one of the most prominent Blue Mountains natural attractions.

Throughout the 1990s, volunteers from the Friends of Katoomba Falls Creek Valley, in the later stages assisted by BMCS, have contributed thousands of hours to improving various Plans of Management for the area around and downstream of the derelict race track. Meanwhile, bush regenerators have begun clearing radiata pines and other environmental weeds.

Unlike environmentalists, the car enthusiast fraternity did not significantly contribute to the recent consultative process about Upper Katoomba Falls Valley (Frank Walford Park). Nevertheless, they recently staged a 'Save Our Catalina' event.

Blue Mountains City Council should stand by its decision to adopt the Management Plan, and all parties should recognise that the Catalina era is now over. *Don Morison.*

Jabiluka News

Mine postponed indefinitely! How exciting to pick up a paper and find at the back [Business Page of the Canberra Times], a small item saying the Jabiluka mine has been postponed indefinitely. ERA, the miners, claim this is due to the need for more time to negotiate with the traditional owners. Whatever the reason, it's good news. I believe that all our protests, including letters, petitions, attendance at rallies, general meetings of banks and mining companies, and of course, the protests at the mine, have helped put the mine on hold.

I have always believed that we can make a difference, each one of us. Over 400 were arrested for trespassing on what they believed was Aboriginal land. One Blue Mountains arrestee, Mark Bergamo, said in court, amongst other things: 'As a citizen of this earth, I owe it to my progeny and the progeny of every organism on earth not to perpetuate the earth's destruction through the activities of greed, ignorance and arrogance. The profit motive will not save the earth of radioactivity after the fact...'

The Dangers of radioactivity will be the theme of a two day workshop in Canberra at old Parliament House on 19-20 March. Leading specialists from USA and UK will speak as well as local writers and others. The venue will hold 400 people and the cost will be \$50 for the two days. It will be an opportunity to highlight the ongoing dangers of uranium mining and use in general, and the more specific and immediate dangers of nuclear reactors due to the millennium and possible computer malfunctioning. Hope you can come. — *Sabine.*

Action for the Forests

The NSW State Government's decision to protect less than one third of the forests scientifically identified as needed for new national parks means that some 300,000 ha of old growth forests, and up to 100,000 ha of wilderness in North East and South East NSW remain outside the reserve system. The result is that endangered species such as Yellow-bellied Gliders, Sooty Owls and Spotted-tailed Quolls, as well as many smaller species of animals and plants are at risk of regional or total extinction.

In the final vote the ALP teamed up with the Nationals and Liberals to secure passage of the Forestry and National Parks Estate Bill 1998, despite opposition from the Greens and Democrats.

It is time for people concerned about forests and species survival to spur themselves into action. How can we be active on the forest issue?

Ethical Consumerism - Our spending patterns directly support the industries undertaking the ecosystem vandalism we oppose. Use recycled paper (available from Blue Mountains Environment Centre); avoid companies that extract timber from high conservation value areas, e.g. Norths

Ltd., Bunnings, Boral; find out if you are unknowingly investing in unethical companies through your superannuation, bank accounts, daily purchases, etc. (phone 1800.021.2270).

Buying Back the Forests - A plan to buy back old growth forests and threatened wilderness, establish wildlife corridors and alternative employment in regional NSW is being put into action.

Write to Bob Debus (3/107 Macquarie Road, Springwood 2777). **Come to the public meeting at the Sydney Town Hall on 28 February** (details are on page 1). To find out more phone Daniel 4759.2417. *Daniel Beaver.*

Vertical Rehabilitation

Blue Mountains Cliffcare Inc. arose out of the concerns of local climbers about the increasing impacts on our cliff environment.

Soon after its formation, Cliffcare performed an "audit" of the state of cliffline resources in order to establish priorities for protection and rehabilitation work, and also commenced a program to educate climbers about minimising impacts. It was evident that a number of climbing areas needed urgent attention to deal with problems large and small. The choice for the first Work Day (winter '97) was "Shipley Upper". This small cliff stands above Walls Ledge, a popular walking track near Centennial Glen at Blackheath. Measures were undertaken to reduce erosion of the earth bank between the path and the cliff base, and lowering points installed to remove the need for climbers to trample through the cliff-top's sensitive heath vegetation.

The Mount York area is popular with both recreational climbers and commercial guided groups due to the ease of access and generally 'friendly' nature of the cliffs. Some of the more heavily used parts were showing serious signs of the impact and seemed in danger of "being loved to death". Two access routes (known to climbers as Gilroy's Gully and Echo Gully) were most in need of attention. The former was closed-off and much of the surface covered with brush matting. Alternative access was made available via Galactic Gully, which was first 'hardened' in preparation for the expected increased traffic. (Feb '98)

Echo Gully was an even larger task, and presented a number of physical and logistical challenges. First there was the problem of getting materials (cement, water, rocks, timber, etc) to the various positions in the steep gully and avoiding the danger of objects falling onto workers underneath. Secondly, there was a section in the upper regions of the gully where exposed tree roots needed to be protected from further damage. An aerial ropeway, installed for the Work Day (Nov '98), significantly reduced the first problem, and two flights of pre-fabricated wooden steps now facilitate access while protecting the roots and their parent tree.

With a number of completed projects demonstrating that climbers can make a difference, Cliffcare is enjoying slow but steady membership growth, and is planning further rehabilitation projects for 1999. *Kevin Westren, B.M.Cliffcare.*

Membership Enquiries
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Wise People in Our Lives

Dave Lovegrove's article inspired me to think about the three wise people who influenced my life. They were Florence Binskin, Isobel Bowden and Ben Esgate. I met all three when they were in their 70's. They had spent their lives learning about a relatively small area: Florence, Baga Island in the Solomons; Isobel, the Central Blue Mountains; and Ben, the middle Cox's River. Perhaps it takes 50 or 60 years to gain the depth of understanding they had. I shall always remember Florence looking out to sea, talking to the dolphins and waiting for the moon to rise, Isobel speaking of the subtle interconnections of nature and Ben explaining how the Gundungurra saw the landscape.

Dave mentions two men; Bernard O'Reilly and Norb Carlon whose values were formed in the Cox's River communities and environments. I like to think that these men who lived close to the river shared something with the Therabulat.*

I used to get frustrated that none of these people would write something of their philosophy of life, despite my regular urgings. I realised later that the essence of their wisdom could not be written down. The nearest you could get to understanding it was to spend time with them in the environments they loved.

There often seemed something lonely or isolated about them, perhaps because their non-materialistic values were out of step with those of the world of their later years. You could feel the underlying "weight" (or "gravitas" as the ancients called it) of all the experiences they held in their hearts.

In the Bush

There was a wonderful display of wild flowers this spring to be seen along the ridges running down to the Grose River from Bells Line of Road. How does this area, so often burned out, bounce back? I can believe plants like many of the Proteaceae with their tough ligno-tubers could withstand a hot fire but what of the fragile seeds of the others — the flannel flowers, the Tetratheca, Microsacme, Dampiera, Epacris, etc, etc. A fire which can melt glass, crack rocks and run up a gum tree must surely destroy the fine dust-like seeds shed by many native plants.

I suggest that it is that dust-like quality which ensures its survival. A burnt out area could be sprinkled with every

May we never lose the feeling, as Dave put it, that there are "so many experiences still to be had". Perhaps then there would be at least a few people who will remember us as one of the "wise" people in their lives. *Jim Smith* (*The Therabulat were a band of the Gundungurra-speaking people who lived in the middle Cox's River area. —Ed.)

A Tribute to Thor Schache

Thor Schache, a recent past-President of the Society, died late in 1998 following an illness. He loved the Mountains, and moved from Melbourne to Wentworth Falls with his artist wife, who died several years ago.

Thor was involved in many local organisations and environmental issues. Throughout his long and diverse life in various occupations, he was always a staunch conservationist, and did his best to ensure that everything possible was done to protect and restore any sensitive areas. He will be missed by our Society.

Book Review

Thistle Harris - an autobiography by Joan Webb, published by Surrey Beatty 1998.

This book was partly financed by the National Trust in recognition of the great contribution made by Mrs Thistle Stead.

Thistle Harris was one of the early conservationists. With her knowledge and enthusiasm for growing Australian native plants, she was the person to whom people would go for advice. She wrote books on the native plants of NSW, and helped start the Society for Growing Australian Native Plants in NSW, later in Tasmania. She established Wirrimbirra at Bargo, which was set up as a memorial for David Stead. and handed over to the

conceivable local plant species from adjoining areas. The successful would be those which found the right conditions for their survival. Ferns soon reappear in fire-ravaged spots. Could it be that wind blown spores were the first to arrive on

account of their lightness and abundance.

A recent walk along Yilleen ridge gave rise to these musings. It's an easy walk. A safety rail now blocks vehicular access. There are traces of a former two wheeled track which degenerates to a faint footpath. At about this point I stumbled over an old burnt out chassis of a possible mobile saw unit.

This gives the lie to those who claim these ridges were never logged and opens up the way for fresh contemplations. Who, when and why were men out there? What needs did they meet? Was it for pit poops, building construction, fire wood — maybe all three? Shale and coal mining which were active in that area would call for timber. Once workers moved near these industries wood for cooking and warmth would be a

National Trust.

The life and personality of Thistle have been thoroughly researched by the author who has endeavoured to show the great influence that Thistle and David have had on modern Conservation movements.

As a person who was acquainted with Thistle for more than fifty years, I recommend this book to anyone interested in Conservation or in the life of an unusual and influential woman. *Joyce Brister.*

Welcome to New Members

Tony and Jenny Smith, Wentworth Falls
Sylvia Dawson, Blackheath
RM Dorman, Springwood
Andy MacQueen, Springwood
J Anderson, Glenbrook
Gregor Bannatyne, Wentworth Falls
Ian Raffan, Springwood
Professor Terry Bossomaier, Bathurst
Janet Ramsay, Blackheath
John and Gail Siccardi, Greenacre
John McManus, Leura
Laura Hays, Katoomba
Peta Hudson, Katoomba
Britta and Alex Stordal, Wentworth Falls

On a Banner at Jabiluka blockade ...

If the earth were only a few feet in diameter, floating a few feet above a field somewhere, people would come from everywhere to marvel at it. People would walk around it, marvelling at its big pools of water, its little pools of water and the water flowing between the pools. People would marvel at the bumps on it, and the holes in it, and they would marvel at the very thin layer of gas surrounding it and the water suspended in the gas. The people would marvel at all the creatures walking around the surface of the ball and at the creatures in the water. The people would declare it as sacred because it was the only one, and they would protect it so that it would not be hurt. The ball would be the greatest wonder known, and people would come to pray to it, to be healed, to gain knowledge, to know beauty and to wonder how it could be. People would love it, and defend it with their lives because they would somehow know that their lives, their own roundness, could be nothing without it. If the earth were only a few feet in diameter. (Author unknown)

necessity. I've heard that some wealthy owners of mountain holiday homes consigned firewood to their city addresses. This activity could also be conducted by other opportunists.

All this is very speculative but it may be the explanation for the old cart tracks to be seen on most ridges. *The Bunyip.*

More About Currawongs

Currawongs have been in the news lately on account of their nasty habit of using other birds as food.

I wonder if anyone has found that they also take small animals.

One day I saw a currawong attacking what I thought was a rat. Fortunately I looked more closely and saw that it was pecking at a ringtail possum only about 12 cm long. This happened at Turramurra where there was grass and some paper barks, quite near a bus terminal.

No sign of mother possum, so I brought the little one home and placed it in a woollen cap as the weather was cool. It slept for 20 minutes then gave one short sharp squeak.

I rang Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Service. Soon a lady came and took possum, first to a vet. It had a cut above one eye caused by the currawong and had been trying to defend itself with its tiny paws. Possum was taken to be reared with another of similar age. I heard it was doing very well. When ready they would be released together. Two would have a better chance of survival than one alone.

Elizabeth Oakley.

A Special Place

The south coast around Bateman's Bay is one of our special places. Each place we "discover" in this area is more beautiful than the last. In the Murramarang National Park at South Durras is the "Headland Walk".

This short walk passes through an old-growth forest of magnificent Spotted Gums, not straight and slim like their young brothers in the nearby state forests, but branched and bent, with bumps and hollows, beneath them an understorey of ancient Burrawangs, some with above-ground trunks 2-3 feet high.

The Spotted Gums were flowering profusely, spent flowers littering the forest floor, and from the treetops came the call of whistlers (Golden?), with brief glimpses of the whistlers and small honeyeaters as they moved around the canopies.

At the edge of the tall forest the Burrawangs abruptly stop and are replaced by Lomandra and heath, and the Spotted Gums shorten and twist and turn and mingle with and then give way to small rough-barked Eucalypts, all bending away from the prevailing wind. These in turn give way to taller Casuarinas and Coast Banksias, with an understorey of Lomandra longifolia.

At the end of the headland walk we were high above the ocean, with views to the north stretching to Jervis Bay, to the south to Mount Dromedary. A sea eagle soared over the land behind us, and there were dolphins near the rocks below.

Sheltered in the cove to the north of the headland is Dark Beach, so called because of the black "sand" of small pebbles and tiny particles broken down from the surrounding black rocks. This beach is covered at high tide. The tide

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
FEBRUARY						
1 LeisWalk					6 Bushwalk	7 Bushcare
8 Leis Walk					13 Bushwalk	
15 LeisWalk					20 MCMMeet	21 Bushwalk
15 Bushcare						
22 LeisWalk		24 Bushwalk		26 GenMeet	27 KidsClub	28 100 Ann. 28 Forest M
MARCH						
						7 CleanUpA. 7 Bushcare
8 Leis Walk					13 CAMP	14 CAMP
15 LeisWalk					20 MCMMeet	21 Bushwalk
15 Bushcare						
22 LeisWalk				26 GenMeet	27 Bushwalk	

FEBRUARY

20 (Sat) **Management Committee Meeting**, 9 am, Lawson Community Centre.

26 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut — Wayne Brennan.** (see page 1)

MARCH

07 (Sun) **Clean Up Australia Day.** North Katoomba (see page 1)

13-14 (Sat/Sun) **Weekend Camp at Dunn's Swamp.** (Details on page 1.)

KIDS' CLUB (Parents are welcome to come along.)

FEBRUARY

27 (Sat) **Exploring Nature** through sounds, shapes, textures, and environmental games — lots of fun! Meet at the shelter shed at the beginning of the Six Foot Track (near Explorers Tree) at 10 a.m. Bring morning tea and a drink. Parents, please come along. Contact Jessica 4757.2783.

13-14 (Sat/Sun) **Kids' Club activities at the Weekend Camp (Dunn's Swamp).**

BUSHCARE (Tools provided — bring morning tea and gloves. Contact Blue Mountains City Council to find out about other bushcare groups in your area.)

FEBRUARY

07 (Sun) **Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group.** Meet 9 am at the Reserve. Contact Ross Coster 4759.1247.

15 (Mon) **Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group.** Meet 9 am Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. Contact Jessica 4757.2783. (following Monday if

wet)

MARCH

07 (Sun) **Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group.** (Details as above)

BUSHWALKS (Usually day walks — bring lunch and **minimum 1 litre water.**) Walks have been graded: 1-3 easy; 4-7 medium; 8-10 hard. If coming by train or in need of transport, contact the leader. If you would like to lead a walk or organise an excursion, contact the Bushwalks Co-ordinator, Jim Wallace 4784.3305.

FEBRUARY

06 (Sat) **Walls Cave.** Meet Blackheath Commuter Carpark, 9.30. Contact Ron Amos 02.9727.8931. Grade M5.

13 (Sat) **Den Fenella.** Meet Stockyard Carpark, Wentworth Falls, 9.30. Contact Carol Butcher 4757.3830. Grade M5.

21 (Sun) **Mount Wilson Mystery Walk.** Meet Mount Victoria Station, 9.30. Contact Jim Wallace 4784.3305. Grade M6.

24 (Wed) **Beauchamp Falls.** Meet Blackheath Commuter Carpark, 9.30. Contact Mervyn Bird 4787.7959. Grade M6.

28 (Sun) **100th Anniversary Celebration, "A Century Down the Cliff"** (See Page 1)

MARCH

21 (Sun) **The Devil's Hole.**

27 (Sat) **Lawson's Long Alley.**

LEISURE WALKS (Usually morning walks — bring a drink and morning tea.)

FEBRUARY

01 (Mon) **Birdwood Gully, Springwood.** Meet Springwood Station 8.30. Contact Pat Warner 4751.4413.

08 (Mon) **Bonnie Doon.** Meet at Gearins Hotel 8.30. Corrie Brook 4757.4574.

15 (Mon) **Cliff walk, Leura Cascades to Katoomba.** Meet Leura Cascades Picnic Area 8.30. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.

22 (Mon) **Grand Canyon.** (A harder walk, with a steep climb out). Contact Mervyn Bird 4787.7959. **Bring lunch.**

MARCH

08 (Mon) **Red Gum Park.** Meet Bullaburra Station, 8.30. BYO BBQ afterwards. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.

15 (Mon) **Rocket Point.**

22 (Mon) **Horseshoe Falls.**

29 (Mon) **Pulpit Rock.**

was at its very lowest and we were able to explore the lovely rock gardens exposed above the tide. Then, as the sea gently but determinedly began to creep in to reclaim the rock gardens, a pair of Sooty Oyster Catchers landed on a nearby rock.

Most of the houses at South Durras

have no fences, their lawns kept short by the kangaroos who are frequently seen on the beach.

I was reminded of all this (securely stored in my diary) by the well produced leaflet for a "Greater" Murramarang National Park which is enclosed with this newsletter. *Christine Davies*