

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



"WILDERNESS IS SACROSANCT"

(Mr Justice Lloyd, Land and Environment Court, 29 April 2004)

Blue Mountains Conservation Society's submission to the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) objected to the filming of part of the Hollywood blockbuster movie "Stealth" on Butterbox Point near Mount Hay because this action is illegal in a Wilderness area. The fragility of the area and the presence of endangered species is completely incompatible with blockbuster filming.

Filming operations involved construction of raised decking platforms and walkways, installation and use of a "spidercam" motorised film unit, lighting and filming equipment, generators including power cabling along walking tracks, use of micro explosives and other special effects, dramatic performances and activities associated with acting and filming.

The skeletal soils and fragile rock formations of this exposed area overlooking the Grose Valley support Montane heath which is recovering from bushfire. Part of the process this summer has been mass flowering of the rarely seen Pink Flannel Flower. The delicate swamps are home to the larvae of the rare and endangered Giant Dragonfly which was observed breeding there this summer. It is also within the declared Grose Wilderness.

Colong Foundation for Wilderness, other environmental groups and concerned residents objected to the filming on that location, and other less environmentally sensitive sites were suggested. A blockade was organised and over 150 people attended a protest rally at Govett's Leap on 26 April.

The Society sought advice from the Environmental Defenders Office and our legal action against the Minister, DEC and film company Talons was run on the basis that the Special Licence issued by the Director of DEC to film war movie 'Stealth' in the Wilderness Area of the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains National Park was illegal.

Mr Justice Lloyd found in his strong judgement that the Licence was invalid because the purpose for which it was granted (to film a war movie) was contrary to the objectives of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. It was also contrary to the principles for managing national parks and the management principles set out in the Wilderness Act. He also found that the granting of a licence to occupy and use the land to the exclusion of the public was prohibited by the NPW Act in undisturbed parkland as well as wilderness areas. **The judge made it quite clear in his wording of the judgement that he was of the opinion that this type of activity was wholly incompatible with a wilderness area.**

DEC and Talons lodged an appeal against Justice Lloyd's judgement and the Premier announced that if their appeal failed, he would introduce special legislation to override it. The appeal was withdrawn a day later and the film company moved to an alternative location, completely negating the Premier's claims that Butterbox Point was absolutely essential to the 'integrity' of the film.

This has saved Butterbox Point for the time being. However, the Premier has stated that he is still going to introduce legislation to allow commercial filming in wilderness areas. We understand that there are two opinions in Government on whether the legislation will just apply to filming or allow for other types of commercial use. This will put all Wilderness at risk, including Butterbox Point which because of its relative accessibility will no doubt be particularly attractive.

Premier Bob Carr has created a wonderful system of national parks and wilderness areas which we hope will be his greatest legacy to this state. Are we instead to see them reduced to free film sets for American blockbuster movies that can't be filmed in America because there are more controls there?

Opposition to the Premier's determination to destroy his environmental credentials is continuing, including a demonstration outside Parliament House on May 4.

Wilderness must be allowed to simply 'be', for its plant and animal communities and for the opportunities it offers for human solitude and self-reliant recreation. This is what the Wilderness Act says. There is so little of the natural world left which has not been exploited for commercial gain.

(An extract of a letter from Sue Morrison, dated 27/4/2004)

Letter to the Premier

"...Today 13 people were arrested while trying to protect the sanctity of a World Heritage wilderness area—most of them well-respected older-aged local residents who had never before been involved in such a blockade. In my 14 years with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (from 1984-1998) I could never have envisaged such a shameful day. Thank goodness I can now speak out (unlike many others who have been silenced).

"What makes me so sad is that these people were not protesting against some voracious development on the edge of the wilderness, but against the actions of the very department which is entrusted with the care and protection of our unique World Heritage wilderness. Somebody got it wrong.

"This is not about greenies "sending the wrong message to the film industry". Those of us who live in the Blue Mountains know that this is a special place. We're happy to tell the world why this is a special place. If a film company wants to make a documentary of the kind shown earlier this year on ABC TV about renowned wilderness photographers Peter Dombrovskis and Olegas Truchanas, let them come. If someone wants to produce an in-depth profile on Milo Dunphy and his father Myles, featuring the spectacular scenery of the Grose wilderness and the cradle of conservation, let them come. Let's show the world our unique eucalypt ecosystems and outstanding wilderness areas and why they were listed as World Heritage.

"What we won't do is stand by and let U.S. propaganda war movies be filmed in our wilderness areas, regardless of any potential or actual environmental impacts. Approving this filming activity in the Grose Wilderness goes against the clear intent of the Wilderness Act and the National Parks and Wildlife Act and every word written (over a period of 15 years) for the Blue Mountains National Park plan of management. It makes a mockery of the department's own filming policy. It goes against your own wilderness advocacy and denigrates your outstanding record on wilderness and national park declarations..."

With your help, the cradle of conservation will become Hollywood's playground (what will you do when the department receives a similar application to film the next action thriller in the equally spectacular Kanangra wilderness or Wollemi wilderness?). Myles and Milo would turn in their graves. If you still value your time spent on the Cocks River with Milo, you will send this film crew elsewhere—outside our World Heritage wilderness.

Yours sincerely, Sue Morrison



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Myna Survey

Is this invader threatening the biodiversity of the Blue Mountains? You can help assess the extent of the myna problem in the mountains.

Are Common Mynas present in

your area? When did you first notice them? Where? How many: Five years ago? Two years ago? Present? What affects, if any, have you noticed that they are having on other birds? Any other comments? (Write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782, or email hutnews@bluemountains.org.au)

(Photo by Dr Chris Tidemann, ANU)

Bush Heritage

At our monthly meeting at the Conservation Hut on 28 May Kalina Koloff from the Australian Bush Heritage Fund will give a presentation about the work of the Fund throughout Australia and give an insight into the new Reserve at Ethabuka.

The Australian Bush Heritage Fund is community funded and is a non-profit organisation dedicated to protecting Australian animals, plants and their habitats. Bush Heritage acquires land of outstanding conservation value where populations of threatened species are still living. This land then becomes a Reserve and is managed to protect the communities that live there. Bush Heritage currently owns and manages 16 Reserves around Australia and protects over 345,000 hectares.

Ethabuka, a 214,000 hectare cattle station in Western Queensland, was purchased in February 2004. It is home to an outstanding array of desert flora and fauna and preliminary surveys suggest it may be home to one of the richest assemblages of reptiles in the world. A brochure is enclosed with this newsletter.

The meeting will start at 7.30 pm. Visitors are very welcome.

Environmental Law Workshop

Saturday, 29 May 2004, 10am to 5pm
Mid Mountains Neighbourhood Centre, 9 New Street Lawson

Environmental planning and development assessment laws will be among the topics covered at an Environmental Defender's Office workshop on Saturday, 29 May 2004.

Participants at the workshop will receive practical information that should help them better participate in environmental decision making in their local area and understand how the law can be used to help protect the environment.

Topics covered during the workshop will include the legal system, key environmental laws, the planning and development system, threatened species law, coastal protection law, pollution law, access to information, effective submission writing, rights of appeal, taking a case to court and activists' rights.

Any member of the community interested in learning how to have more influence in decisions regarding the environment is welcome to attend. Cost is \$50 waged, \$20 unwaged/student (ID required). For more info or to register contact Christine Palomo, Education Assistant, Environmental Defender's Office, Freecall 1800 626 239. Email: christine.palomo@edo.org.au

Bushcare/Streamwatch

Open Day: Sun 16 May, 10am to 1pm

South Lawson Bushcare Group's Bushcare/Streamwatch Open day, planned for Sunday 21 March, was cancelled due to rain. It will now be held on Sunday 16 May. All welcome and bring the children.

Learn about our local flora and fauna from Richard Lee, BMCC Bushcare Officer. Laurie Strathdee will be conducting water sampling and insect collection sessions along Lawson Creek during the day. Site tours and revegetation demonstrations will also be held. See how the bush is being reclaimed.

Pop in any time or come for the whole session. A light picnic lunch and refreshments will be available. Enter near corner of Honour Ave and Waratah St Lawson, and walk forty metres down the earthen road track. Enquiries: Erst 4759 2058; Peter 4759 2578.

Nursery Manager

Blue Mountains Conservation Society will soon need a new Nursery Manager. Is there anyone out there who would like to volunteer to tackle this challenging and rewarding job?

The present Nursery Manager is getting a bit long in the tooth, and probably past his use-by date. He has been in the job for eleven years, ever since Robin Corringham left the Blue Mountains to live on the south coast.

The BMCS nurseries make a positive contribution to practical conservation wherever BMCS native plants are used for revegetation. The major benefits are the underpinning of BMCS finances, and the contribution to the protection of the environment through revegetation in certain areas. An additional benefit is the focus that the nurseries provide for members to participate in an important BMCS activity: this focus enables exchange of ideas and information about all aspects of raising native plants for sale and provides a regular social contact for people interested in the environment.

One might also include the idea that the nurseries, in providing native plants to the public, are engaged in a public education program about the value of native plants vis-a-vis exotics and the necessity to prevent exotics becoming weeds and thereby endangering the World Heritage National Park.

Contact me soon! David Coleby, BMCS Nursery Manager, Phone or Fax: 4784-1395; email: dcoleyby@pnc.com.au

Land Use Sub-committee

A crucial part of the Society's work is done by our Land Use subcommittee. We need more members to help in this subcommittee to lighten the load.

The subcommittee usually meets on the first Monday of the month at 7pm.

We're seeking people who would like to be involved in assessing Development Applications and in taking a pro-active role in preparing various submissions to Blue Mountains City Council and the NSW State Government on issues related to land-use planning. Other activities involve co-ordinating Mountains Watch which alerts the Committee to DAs in the City area (Glenbrook to Mt Victoria).

For more information contact Alan Harris, 4757 4545, email pamal8@bigpond.com

Water Recycling by Ross Coster

Sydney Water's operating license requires it to re-use waste water in order to reduce discharges to waterways and to reduce demands on the dams. In 1995 a target was set for the year 2000 of 58 megalitres per day. In 2000/1 Sydney Water re-used less than 28.4 megalitres per day—less than half of the target figure. So what went wrong? One big problem of course was the water quality incident in 1998. The previous enthusiasm for trialing re-use dissipated and the primary focus moved to water quality. Most effluent re-use today is in Sewage Treatment Plants (STP's) and in irrigation.

Re-Use Schemes

Sydney Water has a few different schemes under way to re-use effluent.

All water used for non-potable purposes (e.g. washing equipment) in STP's is derived from recycled effluent.

The Rouse Hill STP distributes highly-treated effluent through a separate recycled water main to homes in the area. Incidentally, these people don't currently face water restrictions as there is plenty of recycled water available for their gardens.

Another scheme under way involves selling recycled water from the Camden STP to dairy farmers in the upper Nepean for irrigating their pastures.

The new Wollongong sewage system

will soon supply about 20 megalitres per day of recycled water to Port Kembla Steel Works for use in coke quenching and other industrial activity.

The upgraded Glenfield STP is to be piped to Malabar (so that effluent can be released into the ocean rather than the George's River) via a recycled water pipeline, hopefully picking up recycled water customers along the way.

All of these are good schemes, but is it enough?

How Much Water?

The dams that supply Sydney are capable of supplying about 600 gegalitres per annum average, the 'Sustainable Yield'. Currently Sydney uses about 630 gegalitres per annum average. Once an environmental flow regime is agreed to for the Hawkesbury Nepean I expect the Sustainable Yield to drop to about 500 gegalitres per annum. This means we need to save 130 gegalitres per annum now plus a little more each year to cater for population growth.

This amounts to about 360 megalitres per day.

If Sydney Water were to recycle 360 megalitres per day then our water supply problems are solved!

What Can We Do with Recycled Water?

NSW Health has categorically ruled out re-use of effluent as drinking water as there are contaminants in effluent that cannot be removed to safe levels by current treatment technology. This means we can't just tip treated effluent back into the reservoirs.

Yes, I know direct potable recycling

is being done overseas, but here NSW Health just won't allow it.

Recycled water can be safely used for garden watering, toilet flush, irrigation, watering public gardens, sports fields and golf courses.

Recycled water can also be used in some industrial processes. The golden rule is that recycled water can only be used where you don't drink it or bathe in it. The most promising idea (in my opinion) is to sell recycled water to irrigation users in the Windsor/Richmond area, both supplying them with nutrient-rich water and reducing their demands on the river.

The Penrith Lakes scheme is to be filled with water extracted from the Nepean river, resulting in losses of about 30 megalitres per day in evaporation. This is obviously not acceptable and the NSW Government should be negotiating a deal to fill the lakes with recycled effluent from the Penrith and Winnmalee STP's (about 40 megalitres per day flow from these two plants).

In the long term, we need to explore every avenue for effluent re-use, including retro-fitting the entire Sydney Metropolitan area with recycled water mains to every property, at a cost of billions. It's either that or build a new dam, which I personally oppose, and I imagine a lot of you will join me in front of the bulldozers if it comes to a new dam!

Next month I will discuss options for harvesting and using stormwater, another way of supplying Sydney with more water, with its own set of advantages and problems. Ross Coster.

Mt Wilson "Fungi Walk"

Gypsy-laced falls of water
Glitter greenly-gold over
moss and stone
Delicately placed coachwood stars
pose in the moist glaze
of autumn ...
as softly lit walkers move
in stillness.
A Yellow Robin's crisp call
captures my languid mind,
and suddenly bird-call debate
drowns our silence.
We move on through rain-forest,
spread with surprise finds
of fungi – preposterous 'plates'
and pert posies, amidst
the rich aroma of damp earth
and fallen wood.
Boldly rounding corners and
stepping surely over
shade-varnished leaf litter,
the dappled elegance of autumn
air finally gives me ...
Peaceful Pause.

Bernadette, 1 April 2004.

An early morning rendezvous on a tidal inlet in New Zealand

Ron Hyslop, March 2004

It's called the Sugarboat bar and restaurant, but it's really an old sailing vessel named the Tui. In dry dock, it sits alongside the bridge leading to the treaty house at Waitangi.

Each morning at low tide, I have kept a rendezvous with a white-faced heron, a kingfisher and a reef heron. They are always there and have been for the last week, oblivious to a bloke with binoculars.

His breast muddied from repeatedly diving for small crabs, the kingfisher returns to his lookout on the boat. Reflected beautifully in the stillness of the shallow water, the white-faced heron remains motionless, waiting to strike. The slate-grey, stockily built reef heron with its strong bill, moves steadily along the water's edge.

Nearby, prodding and poking with the long and most beautiful orange coloured bills are the variable or Sooty oystercatchers. A family of cormorants are spreading and drying their wings, whilst in the distance flocks of dotterel

scurry across the mud flats.

Gulls circle overhead as I return to the car. Tomorrow is another day, but I bet the white-faced and reef herons, along with the kingfisher, will again ignore me tomorrow.

Welcome to New Members

Helen Proudfoot, Blackheath
Helen Burlinson, Glenbrook
Matthew Oakley, Hazelbrook
Ondine Evans, Hazelbrook
Geoffrey Lane, Leura

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monthly Meeting: Friday 28 May
7.30 pm, Conservation Hut (page 2)

Management Meeting: Saturday
22 May, 9 am. Mid Mountains
Community Centre, Lawson. Members
are welcome to attend as observers.

Bushcare/Streamwatch Open Day:
Sunday 16 May, 10-1 (page 2).

Environmental Law Workshop:
Saturday 29 May, 10-5 (page 2).

Bushcare: Saturday, 8 May. Valley of
the Waters Bushcare Group meets at
9am on the 2nd Saturday of every
month. Tools are provided. Bring
morning tea, gloves and drinking water.
Contact Karen 4757.1929.

Membership Enquiries
Contact Elizabeth van Reyswoud
Phone 4757.2694
Email: mcreysw@bigpond.net.au
Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

The Willow Killers of Goulburn River

The NPWS staff at Mudgee are very proud of their Goulburn River national park, having turned it from marginal grazing land into fitting habitat for an impressive amount of wildlife – which includes 28 vulnerable/threatened species. Before the Park was gazetted in 1983 willows had been planted as emergency stock feed. Riverbanks are prime real estate for a swag of birds, reptiles and small animals but willows destroy the understorey they need for habitat as well as choking the river with roots. So the willows had to go.

In 2001 local contractors began mapping the 90km stretch of river that winds its way between grassy banks and sandstone cliffs in the 70,000 ha park. The willow control program began in Feb 2002 using NPWS staff and contractors. In April of 2002 the first 'Willow Bash' was held, involving volunteers and National Parks staff, and so far over 3,500 willows have been killed.

At Easter I went again to Goulburn River with David and Nelda King (organisers of Horseshoe Falls Bushcare Group) to attack the willows. On Saturday morning we walked to where NPWS had erected the 'Willow Bash' sign to meet Lisa and Greg from NPWS and another volunteer, a pretty blonde girl called Suava, then drove 3.5 km upstream to search for Weeping Willow which had not been killed by the contractors. David's young daughters Kelsie and Bethany rode with Lisa in the 'Argo', a little eight-wheel-drive amphibious vehicle that gave them an exciting if bumpy ride along the river bed.

We adults sloshed along through (mostly) knee deep water, wandering from bank to bank, chiselling and poisoning any errant bits of willow which had resisted the earlier attempts. Sometimes this was quite energetic and included climbing up onto branches overhanging the river to attack living wood because the trunk was deeply buried in piles of flood debris. We soon realized why Lisa and Greg preferred to walk in the water. The edges of the river bank were thick with Bathurst Burr and Cobblers Pegs. The unwary volunteers ended the day looking prickly as cactuses. Never mind, it gave us something to do in the evening while we discussed the day's events.

By 3.30 pm we had covered the 3.5 km of river and were back at our campsite beside the Cypress Pines. Having put on dry clothes and hung the wet ones on convenient bushes, we relaxed and went down to enjoy the National Park's barbecue. Seated on the river bank we enjoyed sausages, spiced tofu, tomatoes and onions on our buns - all cooked to perfection by Chef Lisa. A perfect end to a most satisfying day and well worth the effort and a rather long drive! *Morag Ryder, Hazelbrook.*

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING GROUP

Our Bushwalking Group provides a range of activities. Membership of the bushwalking group is available to members of the Society. For further information contact the Activity Leader/Coordinator (listed) or Bushwalks Convener Bob van Reyswoud 4757 2694 (phone/fax), email mcreysw@bigpond.net.au Membership details are on page 4. **Cost of insurance and affiliation fees for bushwalkers is \$12.50 per member.**

Pre-School Walks, for parent/grandparent/carer with children under 6 years.

Short, easy walks, approx 1 hour, 1st Wednesday of every month, starting at 10.30am. Bring a snack and a drink. Contact Liz Riley 4787.6637 for more information or if the weather is doubtful.

Jun 02 Lennox Bridge, Glenbrook. Meet at the Bridge parking area on Mitchell's Pass Rd.

Jul 07 Adeline Park, Faulconbridge. Meet at end of Shirlow Avenue.

Monday Leisure Walks: *Usually 'Short Day' walks of 3-5 hours suitable for walkers of average fitness. Graded Medium, i.e. can include some short rock scrambles or some short sections off-track. Bring morning tea and lunch, plus carry at least 1 litre of WATER, 2 litres on warmer days.*

May 10 Castle Head. Walk along Narrow Neck. Fabulous views over the Cedar Valley and Mt Solitary. Meet 9am Gearins Hotel, Katoomba. ☎ Norah 4757.4058.

May 17 Pulpit Rock Clifftop Walk. Views over Grose Valley. BBQ. Meet 9.15 Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. ☎ Laurel 4784.1554.

May 24 Spit to Manly Foreshore Walk. Lovely harbour views. 6.39 am train from Lithgow. Meet 9.30 top of escalators, Central Station. ☎ Jock 4758.6356.

May 31 Bus Trip to Jenolan Caves. Walk last part of Six-foot Track for lunch at Caves House. Meet 8.15 Springwood. Other pick-ups by arrangement. ☎ Laurel 4784.1554 to book.

Jun 07 Red Hands Cave. Aboriginal hand paintings. Meet 9am Glenbrook Railway Station commuter carpark. ☎ Allan 4739.2767.

Thursday Pleasure Walks: *These easy to medium grade walks are conducted to suit the walkers on the day. Times given are approximate. Slower walkers are catered for and on longer walks there is an option of a slower group to complete a section of the walk. Phone the contact for any enquiries about the program, starting times and transport issues. NOTE: Walks to commence at 10 am unless stated otherwise.*

May 13 Blue Gum Swamp, Winmalee. Round walk on firetrail with some steep sections. Meet commuter carpark at Springwood Station. ☎ Marie 4787 1257.

May 20 Prince Henry Cliff Walk, Solitary Restaurant Leura to Echo Point. Car shuffle to return. Meet Gearins Hotel, Katoomba. ☎ Joan 4782.2218.

May 27 Hartley Shale Mines. Walk along old railway track off Darling Causeway. Drive to Hartley Vale via other mine sites. Meet Mt Victoria Station. ☎ Marie 4787.1287.

Jun 03 Mermaid's Cave, Coachwood Glen, Megalong Valley. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. ☎ Bill 4759.1692.

June 10 Bus Trip to Taronga Zoo. Bookings and payment required by May 10. Pickup times and locations to be advised. Costs \$7 for the bus plus zoo entry \$20 adults, \$17.50 concession, \$10.75 children. ☎ Simone 4757.3416 or Joan 4782.2218.

Weekend Bushwalks: *Always discuss with the contact if the walk you would like to do is medium/hard or hard, before attending. If this is your first walk, or you are in any doubt, discuss with the contact or Bushwalks Convener Bob van Reyswoud 4757.2694, email mcreysw@bigpond.net.au*

May 08 (Sat) Mt Banks. Meet Mt Victoria Station 9.30 am. Medium. ☎ June 4787-7312.

May 15 (Sat) Narrow Neck to Tarrow's Ladders. Meet Gearin Hotel, Katoomba 9am. Medium, long walk. ☎ Ron 4757.1526.

May 22 (Sat) Blue Gum Forest via Pierce's Pass. Meet Mt Victoria Station 8.30 am. Medium/Hard, long all day walk. ☎ June 4787.7312 or Liz 4754.4966.

May 29 (Sat) Gardens of Stone via Ben Bullen Forest. Medium 5 hour walk, poor track. Bookings required for places in 4WD. Meet Mt Victoria Station 8.30 am. ☎ Meredith 4782.4823 after 5pm.

Jun 05 (Sat) Fortress Ridge. Meet Cnr Mt Hay Road and GWH 9.30am. Medium. ☎ June 4787.7312.

"When I look around, the time is rapidly approaching when natural environment, natural unspoiled vistas, are sadly beginning to look like leftovers from a vanishing world. Is there any reason why the ideal of beauty could not become an accepted goal of national policy? Is there any reason why Tasmania should not be more beautiful on the day we leave it than on the day we came? We don't know what the requirements of those who come after us will be. If we can revise our attitudes towards the land under our feet, if we can accept the role of steward and depart from the role of conqueror, if we can accept the view that man and nature are inseparable parts of the unified whole, then Tasmania can be a shining beacon in a dull, uniform and largely artificial world." (Olegas Truchanas)