

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Climate change

The guest speaker at our monthly meeting on Friday 30 July will be Peter Dunda, Climate and Consultancy Manager, NSW Region, Australian Bureau of Meteorology.

Global warming? There is evidence that global surface temperature is warming and most of this recent warming has been attributed to human activities – the Enhanced Greenhouse Effect. Snow cover, sea ice and glaciers have reduced, oceans have warmed and sea levels are on the rise. These are some of the key consensus issues in observed climate change.

What about Australia? Our mean surface temperature has risen, particularly so in recent decades. There have been changes in annual rainfall patterns across the country and El Niño events are hotter than they were in the past.

The future? According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change the global mean temperature will continue to rise at a rate greater than any seen in the last 1000 years. And the global mean sea level will continue to rise too.

The uncertainties? In a scientific sense, many uncertainties still exist. Perhaps most perplexing is the problem of future greenhouse gas emissions – since they depend on future human actions there is no way of determining what these will be. Overall the uncertainties lead to a high uncertainty in regional climate projections but a low uncertainty in the continuing rise in global mean temperature.

In this presentation we will look at some of the evidence of climate change and examine recent trends in Australian rainfall and temperature. Given that there are few, if any, certainties about how our climate will change, we will consider some projections of future climate in the Australian region and discuss possible implications for the Blue Mountains.

The meeting at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, on Friday 30 July starts at 7.30 pm. Visitors are very welcome.

Battle of the Bill

Filming Approval Bill 2004

The article in last month's Hut News described the situation to 30 May 2004 – a few days before the Filming Amendment Bill 2004 was due to come before the Parliament. The Bill was debated in the Upper House on 2 and 3 June, and finalised in the Lower house on 4 June. A total of thirteen amendments were agreed.

The good news is that the amendments provide strong constraints for filming in wilderness areas. Films like "Stealth" are clearly excluded from wilderness areas.

The bill now also contains additional environmental criteria which the Minister must take into account when issuing a filming approval. Protection for recovery plans for threatened species was also added.

The bad news is that third party appeal rights were diminished.

Legal challenges to the validity of a filming approval can only be initiated within 14 days of the issuing of a filming approval. Legal challenges arising from breaches of the conditions of a filming approval can only succeed after the Department of Environment and Conservation has been given 30 days to remedy the complaint.

The 14 day and 30 day conditions did not previously exist. They have come into being despite the Minister's assertion that "third party appeal rights will exist as they were before". The 30 day rule means that, in future, if the conditions of approval are breached and the environment movement wants to remedy the situation, this new 30 day rule requires that 30 days must elapse before the Court can issue an injunction or other direction to stop the damage. The likelihood is that filming will be finished before 30 days have elapsed. In the Stealth case the filming was scheduled to take between one and two weeks.

Our website contains a copy of the draft bill, the approved bill and a schedule which compares the draft and the approved bill.

The Stealth issue has again demonstrated the strong commitment to our natural environment held by Blue Mountains residents. The successful campaign to protect Butterbox Point was a co-operative effort between residents and environmental groups, including Colong Foundation for Wilderness, National Parks Association, Blue Mountains Conservation Society, members of the Wilderness Society, Greens MLC Ian Cohen, Democrats MLC Arthur Chesterfield Evans, Environmental Defender's Office and many other individuals.

Thank you to everyone who was involved in the campaign – attending meetings and rallies, blockading, writing a letter, sending a fax, lobbying politicians, handing out leaflets, talking to people ...

This tremendous effort could only have happened in the Blue Mountains!

Additions to National Parks

At our monthly meeting on 25 June Minister for the Environment and Member for the Blue Mountains Bob Debus announced a series of new additions to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area parks, in all more than 4,500 hectares of new reserves.

The Minister's address is fully reported by our roving reporter **Meursault** in "Meeting Matters". This new page will be a regular feature in Hut News.

In this issue **Meursault** also summarises the presentation at our May meeting by Kalina Koloff of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund.

What is bore water?

Over the next few months there will be a series of articles in Hut News about bore water. We'd like to know your opinions.

Is bore water a never-ending supply? Has human usage of bore water taken water from our hanging swamps and waterfalls? Should people who sink a bore be entitled to take as much water as they wish?

Contact Rosemary Lathouris 4757.2511, lath@pnc.com.au if you'd like to make a comment.

Stealth back in court

On Wednesday 22 June Heidi Chappelow, Nick Hill and Shanu Antonioconi, the three blockaders who pleaded "Not Guilty" to the Summary Offence that they "without reasonable excuse, wilfully prevented the free passage of a person/vehicle in a public place" successfully requested an adjournment to make representations to the police to have the charges against them dropped. They are being represented by solicitor Tony Simpson, who has an impressive history in social justice issues and have the support of Blue Mountains Conservation Society. They will come before the Court again on 25th August.

Swamp dance

Saturday 4 September, 7pm

September is Biodiversity Month. Celebrate Blue Mountains biodiversity and have some family fun. Dance, stomp or sway to the music of the Gang Gangs at Blue Mountains Conservation Society's Swamp Dance at the Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson.

Mark your diaries now! There will be full details next month.

**"Hut News", the newsletter of
Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.**
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'Parklands' development

Residents have expressed concern at the scope of the proposed development at 'Parklands' in Govetts Leap Road Blackheath. Additional dwellings are proposed for the site, bringing it to a total of 84 units or dwellings. There are a range of community concerns.

In its submission to Council the Society has addressed the environmental issues involved in this subdivision.

Sewage disposal is a major issue. The Blackheath STP does not have the capacity to deal with this additional number of people. For this reason the Blue Mountains LEP requires that this subdivision is able to provide reticulated sewerage to every new unit or house. It does not do that.

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Tasmanian forests update by Jenny Rich

An opinion poll in 2001 found that 70% of Tasmanians support protection of old growth forests. However both the Tasmanian government and opposition support the current forest destruction. **Protection of Tasmania's old growth forests will be a key issue in the coming Federal election. It is vital that we lobby our federal politicians now to get their support. If we do nothing these magnificent national and international treasures will be destroyed, along with the native animals and birds which live there.**

Tourists coming to see these wonderful native forests create more income for Tasmania than wood-chipping the forests for \$10-\$15 per tonne. Nobody wants to see hectare after hectare of monoculture forest plantations bereft of any wildlife.

Is this the kind of Australia we want to leave for our descendants? **Please write to John Howard, Mark Latham, local member Kerry Bartlett and any other federal MPs.** The address is Parliament House, Canberra 2600.

The Blue Tier near St Helens in NE Tasmania is one of the areas being logged in 2004. Clear felling in the foothills of the Blue Tier has been suspended for winter. Ten local residents formed a peaceful blockade to try and stop the logging and were arrested on five separate occasions in April and May. One of those arrested was Lesley Nicklason. She said that the Blue Tier is not as big or as famous as our Blue Mountains but it is a magnificent area which should be permanently protected. Lesley has asked us to lobby politicians before it is too late. More information: Lesley (03) 6373 6195, 167 Forest Lodge Rd., Pyengana Tas. 7216, friendsofthebluetier@bigpond.com or www.bluetier.org

Another special area is the Styx Valley. According to Wilderness Society's Geoff Law, in the last five years over 2000 hectares of tall Eucalypt old-growth forest has been logged in the valley. 400-year-old trees have been turned into piles of woodchip for Japan. Geoff said that the loggers have temporarily pulled out of the Styx to avoid a media fracas before the federal election but they will soon return. More information: Wilderness Society, Hobart (03)6270 1701, Sydney 9282 9553, Tasmania@wilderness.org.au or www.wilderness.org.au

The Tarkine National Coalition (TNC) is fighting to save the Tarkine in northwest Tasmania, an area of about 440,000 hectares named after the Aboriginal Tarkiner people who lived there. The fringes of the Tarkine have been logged for many years but the rainforest heart is still pristine. It is Tasmania's largest unprotected wilderness and includes Australia's largest continuous tract of rainforest. This year a logging road has been pushed into the northwest abutting the Sumac Reserve, one of the largest areas of rainforest in the Tarkine. Logging, with remote areas accessed by helicopters, is expected to begin this summer. TNC's Matty Campbell Ellis has asked us to lobby federal politicians now. More information: see Jul/Sep 2004 *Australian Geographic* or contact TNC, PO Box 218, Burnie Tas. 7320, (03)6431.2177, office@tarkine.org.au, www.tarkine.org.

Other special areas being logged or threatened by logging include Bruny Island (one of the last refuges of the rare and endangered Forty-spotted pardalote), the Tasman Peninsula, the Great Western Tiers, Reedy Marsh and Ben Lomond.

The present four Tasmanian wood chip mills produce more wood chips than the rest of Australia. The Sydney Morning Herald 25/6/04 reported that Gunns will conduct a six month feasibility study into building a \$1billion pulp mill in Tasmania which could make the rate of forest destruction even worse.

Newnes Junction sand mine

Last year there was vigorous opposition from concerned residents and environmental groups to Sydney Construction Material's proposal for a 27 million tonne sand and clay mine at Newnes Junction, adjoining the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

If approved, the sand and clay mining proposal will damage biodiversity values by polluting the Wollangambe River, the best wild river in the Wollemi Wilderness, the largest formally protected wilderness in Australia. The mine will destroy 25 hectares of publicly owned intact bushland, including two Newnes Plateau Shrub Swamps of high conservation value.

We understand that the developer has now provided additional and/or amended information which will allow the determination process to commence.

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Sydney's Water

Sydney's drinking water catchments : Is our drinking water good enough?

by Ross Coster

In 1998 Sydney experienced what has become known as a 'water quality incident', when crypto-sporidium and giardia spores were discovered in raw water at the Prospect Water Treatment Plant. An enquiry into 'the incident' (the McClellan Inquiry) found that Sydney's Drinking Water catchment is polluted with multiple contaminants from multiple sources and that management of the catchments was sub-standard. McClellan made dozens of recommendations amongst which were the establishment of the Sydney Catchment Authority (SCA) to manage the Catchments and the establishment of a Regional Plan for the Drinking Water Catchments.

Work on the Regional Plan started in 1999 with the formation of a Regional Advisory Committee which includes myself as a representative of the Total Environment Centre. We have met about 15 times, viewed multiple drafts of the Regional Plan, and now the document '*Sustaining the Catchments - The Regional Plan for the Drinking Water Catchments of Sydney and Adjacent Regional Centres*' (catchy title!) is on public exhibition.

What is in the Regional Plan? The Regional Plan consists of several sections: Overview and Action Plan, Regional Environment Plan (REP - the legal instrument) and Guidelines

The REP is a legally-binding planning instrument that attempts to

ensure future development in the Catchments does not cause further degradation of the drinking water catchments. The key tool to ensure this is the Neutral or Beneficial Effect Test, which basically says that a consent authority cannot approve a development unless it will have no detrimental effect on water quality. This is more difficult to do than first thought as almost all development has an effect on water quality, and assessing these effects is complex.

Neutral or Beneficial (NorB) Effect is achieved by using Current Recommended Practices during construction, operation and de-commissioning of a development. Proving that a development will have NorB Effect involves identifying water quality issues, calculating pollutant flows and concentrations, and describing how these pollutants will be dealt with, including connecting to reticulated sewerage and stormwater and constructing on-site water treatment measures.

So what happens if a development cannot achieve NorB Effect? This is where it all gets controversial! What is proposed is a Pollution Offset Scheme where you buy credits in someone else's pollution reduction project to offset pollution from your development. Offset ratios are used to ensure that calculation errors don't result in net increases in pollution. Pollution Offset Schemes will be run by the SCA and will rectify pollution, then sell pollution credits to developers.

There are plenty of people who don't like or trust Pollution Offsets but I am a big fan of the idea as I see successful schemes for offsetting Sulphur Dioxide in North America and for Salinity in the Hunter Valley and I believe we can

achieve similar successes in the Drinking Water Catchments.

Will NorB and the Pollution Offset Scheme achieve positive benefits for water quality in the drinking water catchments? Maybe, depending on how thoroughly NorB is assessed and how much auditing and enforcement is done of developments and of Pollution Offsets.

What about existing pollution?

The Regional Advisory Committee made it plain years ago that just fixing future developments was not going to achieve acceptable catchment management as water quality is already poor. The Regional Plan answers this through a process called Rectification Action Planning. This process involves the SCA finding all existing developments that currently pollute waters and fixing them!

The SCA has started with urban sewerage and stormwater infrastructure in places like Lithgow, Goulburn, Mittagong, Moss Vale and Bowral and is spending millions (jointly with Councils) on upgrading these aging and often inadequate systems. In the long term, Rectification Actions will involve fencing stock away from streams and installing water troughs, re-vegetating tracts of degraded land, re-constructing river banks and upgrading industrial processes to reduce pollution.

Making a submission. The Water Cycle Sub-committee is working on a Conservation Society submission on the Draft Regional Plan as we have found a few holes in the document that need fixing. If you want to help, or want to make your own individual submission, contact me on 4739.2987 (ah) or Lyndal Sullivan on 4782.1635 (ah) for a chat.

Newnes Junction sand mine

(continued from page 2)

We have written to Craig Knowles, Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, referring to our original submission and requesting that any revised application be re-exhibited before approval is given so that we and other interested parties have the opportunity to consider and respond to any changes that have been made to the original proposal.

We have also repeated our request that the necessary steps be taken to add this area to the Blue Mountains National Park so that it is protected from inappropriate development forever.

You can support our submission by writing to The Hon Craig Knowles MP, Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, Level 33, Governor Macquarie Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney 2000 and The Hon Bob Debus MP, Minister for the Environment, 107 Macquarie Street, Springwood 2777.

Outback and Back

by Ann Fox

Orange to the new Paroo-Darling National Park, White Cliffs, Broken Hill, Mutawintji National Park, Kinchega

National Park, Pooncarie and home via Wentworth, Lake Cargelligo, and Orange again - a wonderfully interesting two week camping trip. Mutawintji, which was the major aim of the trip, was magical. The stories, the rock art, and the waterholes were all explored, and I walked myself to a standstill.

The trip degenerated at Kinchega NP where we intended to camp by the Menindee Lakes, but there were no lakes at Menindee, just patches of grassy green. We camped on the banks of the Darling - now nearly all mud. The other side of the river is not National Park and, at regular intervals, down went the pipes to continue dragging the remaining water out of the Darling. And what is it for? Not for cattle, or sheep, or even wheat. No, it's for those two traditional outback crops, cotton and grapes.

The camping was pleasant and we saw plenty of birds, including black kites and whistling kites, little eagles, mallee ringnecks, peaceful doves, pacific white-faced heron, pelicans, egret and the usual ubiquitous crows. The rest of the trip was down the Darling to Wentworth where it joins the Murray, then back up to the Lachlan. Everywhere it was the same. There were weirs holding water full of blue-green algae, pumps draining

water for irrigation and trees on the banks of the rivers dying, falling, the banks turning to sand. Everywhere there were grapes or cotton - crops with very heavy water usage.

Before the grapes, the crop of choice was oranges. At Orangeworld, not far from Mildura, orchards of ripe oranges are falling and rotting. Why? A glut of oranges makes it no longer worth the costs of picking and marketing them. Thousands of acres of new vines are being planted from Menindee to the Murray and east. Is this what will happen with the grapes?

We cannot ignore this overuse of water, loss of trees, fish, birds, insects, etc, and the increase in salinity? How can this be managed sustainably?

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monthly meeting: Friday 30 July, 7.30pm, Conservation Hut (page 1)

Management meeting: Saturday 24 July, 9am, Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson. Members are welcome to attend as observers.

Bushcare: Saturday, 10 July. 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.

Travelling south

by Christine Davies

In May 2004 Peter and I visited Eden and Mallacoota. Features of the journey were the magnificent trees of the South Coast state forests and national parks.

At Eden we stayed in a cabin at Eagle Heights, overlooking the northern fold of Twofold Bay and the Pacific Ocean. The rain during our three day stay would have been welcome elsewhere. From Eden we made the short journey across the Victorian border to Mallacoota, a quiet little coastal village surrounded by Croajingolong National Park. Abalone are processed in the local co-op.

Mallacoota Inlet appears to be a maze of channels and islands, probably fairly shallow right across because of the presence of swans feeding. Its outlet into the sea is blocked by a sand bar. A group of 40 or so little "ducks" stayed close to the shore, too young to fly but already accomplished divers – a crèche of baby Black-faced Shags (Australia's only exclusively marine cormorant).

At Captain Stevenson's Point there is a memorial to E.J. Brady, Australian author and poet, who brought his family to Mallacoota in 1909 and described it thus: "...Mallacoota – where benign Australian Nature has found her fairest expression, where ocean, lake, stream, forest and mountain are blended in panoramas of ever changing beauty ..." E.J. Brady started a writers' camp at 'Captain's Point'. "The fishing was good, the shooting was good and a temporary solving of the economic problem had left one free to write when and what one liked – in blessed literary emancipation and far enough from all that vulgar, strident condition that is miscalled 'modern civilization'."

After three days we returned to Eden. Our cabin at Eagle Heights was perched on the cliff overlooking the bay. The sea was calm and sea birds patrolled the bay, diving at high speed when food was spotted. Sunrises were spectacular. Cargo ships slowly crossed the horizon and the Tasmanian ferry crossed at speed and ablaze with lights.

The nearby Rotary Park commemorates the sailors and fishermen who have died at sea with part of the 107th Psalm and a memorial wall and plaques in the gardens which bear the names of those who have drowned at sea in that area since the 1880's. A pathway leads to the Rotary Lookout where the view of the southern fold of Twofold Bay is spoiled by the woodchip mill. Giant chutes spit out enormous piles of woodchips waiting for the ships to come and take them away.

On 16 May the moonless sky was ablaze with stars and there was lightning far out to sea. From our cabin we saw unexplained lights flashing in the water along the edge of the bay, all within 15 metres or so of the rocky shore.

Henry Lawson, who visited Brady's Mallacoota camp in March and May

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 Conveyor 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. PLEASE PAY WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL.**

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.

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

Aug 04 Circular walk at Faulconbridge. Meet in the park on the corner of Wigram Road and Sir Henry's Drive.

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.*

Jul 12 Sun Valley, Valley Heights. Old volcano crater, tall forests. Meet 9.15 Valley Heights Rly commuter car park. ☎ Ron 4757 1526

Jul 19 Christmas in July. Walk from Leura Railway Station to Everglades Gardens. Conducted tour of gardens, catered xmas lunch (\$20) or BYO. **Bookings essential.** ☎ Birgitta 4784 3191 BYO Drinks.

Jul 26 Bus Trip, Wiseman's Ferry. Walk the Great North Road! Meet 8.30 am Nth Katoomba Council Depot. Fare \$10 due by 12/7. ☎ Ron 4757 1526. For pickups along highway to Hawkesbury Rd ☎ Laurel/Norm 4784 1554. BBQ.

Aug 02 Darwin's Walk, Rocket Point, Wentworth Falls. Historic walk along creek. Meet 9am Wentworth Falls Rly Stn commuter car park. ☎ Bill 4759 1692

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.*

Jul 08 Dante's Glen, Lawson. Bush paths with some steps through rainforest gullies. Meet north side of Lawson Station. ☎ Simone 4757 3416.

Jul 15 Minnehaha Falls, Katoomba. Level walk to top of falls, steep descent to base of falls for those who wish to go further. Opportunity to view progress of regeneration after 2003 fires. Meet Gearins Hotel Katoomba. ☎ Joan 4782 2218

Jul 22 Fairfax Heritage Track, Blackheath. Easy round trip through bush on graded tracks. Option of extending walk for those who wish. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. ☎ Phil 4787 5560

Jul 29 Lawson's Long Alley, Mt Victoria. Walk down old road alignment to Hartley Vale. Car shuffle to return. Meet Mt Vic Station. ☎ Marie 4787 1257

Aug 05 Oaklands Road, Burgess Falls, Hazelbrook. Descent on bush tracks to walk along creek and to waterfalls. Meet Hazelbrook Shops carpark. ☎ Simone 4757 3416

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 Conveyor Bob van Reyswoud 4757.2694, email mcreysw@bigpond.net.au*

Jul 10 (Sat) Boorong Crags. Medium/hard. Meet 8.30 am, Cnr Mt Hay Road and GWH, Leura. ☎ Jim 4758.6009.

Jul 17 (Sat) Mt Piddington, Horne Point, etc. Medium. Meet Mt Victoria Station 9am. ☎ Mary 4787 6918.

Jul 24 (Sat) Sassafras Gully. Medium. Meet Faulconbridge Station 9am. ☎ Ron 4757 1526.

Jul 31 (Sat) Roberts Pass, return via Valley of the Waters. Hard, steep climbing. Meet Wentworth Falls Station 9am. ☎ Bill 4758 8545.

Aug 07 (Sat) Numantia Falls. Medium/hard. Meet Faulconbridge Station 9am. ☎ Liz 4754 4966.

Bushwalking members are reminded that the bushwalking levy should be paid with your membership renewal. If you have forgotten to include it with your recent renewal please rectify this with membership secretary Liz van Reyswoud.

1910, may have also seen these lights and wrote in his poem 'Mallacoota Bar':

*"All night long, white-faced and staring, she who was the sailor's star
Watched the hellish phosphorescence
leap on Mallacoota Bar."*

Is this an annual natural event in the shallow waters along that part of the south coast? Does anybody know what the "phosphorescence" could have been?

Welcome to new members

Ann and Tony Fisher, W. Falls
Sam Malouf, Nth Balgowlah
Robin de Croos, Hazelbrook
Peter Shenstone, Blackheath
Jan Thornley, Blackheath
Gerhard Hassler, Blackheath
Glenis & Malcolm Gelgard, Springwood
Lee O'Neill, Blackheath
Merryn Hawkins, Lawson