

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Permaculture

Permaculture is only about organic gardening? WRONG

Permaculture is only for big land owners? WRONG

Permaculture is only for small landholders? WRONG

Permaculture is only for odd, new age people? WRONG

Permaculture is only about nature? WRONG AGAIN!

At our monthly meeting on Friday 25 November at the Conservation Hut Rosemary Morrow and Margot Turner, both mountain residents, will share a discussion on the extent and effectiveness of permaculture.

Margot is a management and learning materials consultant who also works in Cambodia and she calls her talk, "How we work". Rosemary, well, you know, she is passionate about water and land care and she will discuss how we can monitor our lives and what we need to know to do this.

Their discussion will offer you ideas of how permaculture works in special situations, say of drought, or disaster, or in offices or factories. Some of this is likely to be surprising. There will be time to take questions and lots of examples. Rosemary and Margot welcome difficult questions.

After supper the society's Education Officer, Craig Linn, will be giving a brief presentation on

"Energy, the Environment and Sustainability"

This presentation has a dual purpose. First, Craig will provide a synopsis of the most recent findings and reports on environmental sustainability, then in this context brief members on the Society's upcoming Residential Sustainability Workshops. For a quick rundown on the workshops see the separate article later in this edition of Hut News.

The monthly meeting at the Conservation Hut on Friday 25 November starts at 7.30 pm. Visitors are very welcome.

Letter writers

Inside this issue of Hut News is an insert about the power of writing letters to influence our decision makers. Members will be urged to write a letter each month on a different topic.

The focus of this month is the **DESALINATION PLANT** which the NSW government plans to build at Kurnell.

You will need to write to Hon. Senator Ian Campbell, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600. Senator Campbell has the power, under Federal law, to require an environmental impact study before the NSW Government can begin to build the desalination plant.

Tell him of your main concerns whether they be protecting the nearby wetland environment, polluting the waters of this area with a brine plume, and/or your preference for recycling storm water or the high energy use of such a plant and its associated greenhouse effect.

Ask him to reply to your letter and to keep you informed. See the sample letter on page 2 of the insert and ask your friends to write too.

If you wish to discuss any issue please contact: **Rosemary** 4757 2511, lathouris@bigpond.com or **Robin** 4757 1354 mosman@hermes.net.com

What about RADIATA PLATEAU?

Win some, lose some, or take stock and await developments!

Brian Marshall

Members will recall the protracted campaign, in conjunction with the Save Radiata Plateau Group, several other environmental groups and the Greens, to have the State Government purchase the private holdings on Radiata Plateau (Mt Elphinstone) for incorporation in the National Park, or to ensure some other form of State or Council-controlled protection.

The then Premier (Bob Carr) and the Minister for the Environment (Bob Debus) were unreceptive to the request and numerous petitions failed to move them, despite a long-standing commitment by the ALP (in fact dating back to before Labor attained Government and before Bob Debus was elected State Member for the Blue Mountains). The Society therefore offered the State Government an unencumbered \$50,000 towards the purchase of the property and asked the Minister whether he would use his substantial position to factor a deal involving possible funds from the Federal and State Governments, BMCC, and other concerned organisations and individuals. The Minister felt unable to do this.

Following a meeting between Minister Debus and three members of Management Committee, it became abundantly clear that the campaign would fail, irrespective of the relative merits of arguments for and against the purchase of Radiata Plateau.

The Society therefore accepted Bob Debus' advice to take stock and look at other options. These included such things as voluntary conservation agreements between the current or future owners and National Parks (NPWS), and looking at the powers vested in Council by zoning and the Local Environment Plans.

Effectively, the high-profile campaign will evolve into a series of low-profile discussions aimed at the possible. You can drag a horse to water, but you can't make it drink!

The show must go on ...

All members of the Management Committee and their helpers are volunteers. We do our best to keep to deadlines but sometimes there are other commitments, illness, holidays.

We need back-up people to help during these times. Jobs which spring to my mind are Newsletter Editor and the people who help package and post Hut News. There are many other jobs and nobody will knock back a helping hand.

Please have a look through the list of positions (and contact details) in the box on page 2 and think about where your area of expertise might be and contact the relevant officer. *Christine Davies.*

Hut News matters

Our Publications Officer and producer of Meeting and other Matters Ron Withington is away. His page will return next month.

This issue of Hut News has been increased to six pages to allow space for the first part of the management committee's response to the Membership Survey (Article 1 on page 3), as promised in last month's Hut News. On page 4 is a report of a recent decision handed down by the Land Environment Court in relation to use of groundwater at Mangrove Mountain. This issue is very integral to one of the Society's main Objectives—Groundwater—and contains lessons for others who are worried about the overuse of our groundwater for commercial purposes.

Also in this newsletter is an insert page on how WRITING LETTERS can influence our decision makers. This is something we can all be involved in.

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Start your new year with a Sustainability Workshop

In January/February 2006 (that's just a few months away) the Society will be running full-day workshops on Residential Sustainability. These workshops will be a great opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of sustainability, learn what you can do to dramatically reduce your home's environmental footprint, and probably most importantly of all meet like minded souls in your own community.

Each workshop will have several presenters (a variety of views!) and will cover such topics as energy, water, retrofitting existing buildings and sustainable garden planning.

Obviously, you cannot learn everything in a day, but you can leave enthused and with a wealth of pointers to more information. And what's more, the society intends to keep the cost of the

Blue Mountains Local Environment Plan 2005

was finally gazetted on 7 October 2005 BUT the NSW Government has recently announced the introduction of a "standard template" for all Local Environment Plans (LEPs) across NSW. This means that all local Councils will have to start drawing up new LEPs next year using a standard format (template) developed by the State Government. Over 10 years of community effort will be wasted unless the Blue Mountains can be exempted.

Blue Mountains Local Environment Plan 2005, gazetted on 7 October 2005, has significantly increased the environmental protection for creeks, escarpment areas, steeply sloping land, heaths, swamps and other sensitive vegetation communities. It also introduces protection for bushland across the mountains under a Bushland Protection Order.

LEP 2005 was more than 10 years in the making. It involved years of tireless effort from dedicated planners, environmental scientists and other specialists and councillors and a non-remitting effort by the Society and other environment groups and individuals to have the environmental protections put in place.

It reflects a true community effort.

It all started in 1983 when the first LEP 4 was found to be inadequate to deal with the pressures of urban expansion and did not offer environmental protection. Council resolved to prepare an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for the whole of the Blue Mountains. This was a huge task so in 1988 Council decided to first develop a plan for just our fringe and rural areas as these were under the most pressures for development. This became LEP 91.

workshops as low as possible!

More details (exact dates, venues, costs, etc) will appear in the December edition of Hut News, but if you can't wait and would like to find out more and/or register your interest in attending a workshop then please contact (preferably by email) Craig Linn, Rosemary Lathouris or John Haydon. Contact details are in the box on this page.

Welcome to new members

Jan & Peter Field, Blackheath
 Juli Boddy, Lawson
 Robert & Marion Pratt, Valley Hts
 Gwen Wilson, Katoomba
 Andrew Solomon, Wentworth Falls
 Ann Penhalurick, Wentworth Falls

Bushcare

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets at 9 am on the 2nd Saturday of every month. Tools are provided. Bring morning tea, gloves and drinking water. Contact Karen 4757 1929 for meeting place and more information.

Meanwhile Council continued to prepare studies and ask for community responses to studies such as the Population Study, the Community Plan and Heritage Study.

The review of the remainder of the Local Government Area, not covered by LEP 91, started in March 1994. The community was invited to suggest what issues should be addressed in a revised LEP through a series of public meetings and submissions.

Draft LEP 97, exhibited in late 1997, attracted over 1000 submissions from the community. Our main concerns were its failure to protect creek-lines, steep slopes and significant vegetation. It was not a prescriptive plan with clear rules, leaving much open to matters of opinion, i.e. 'merit' assessments.

In response Council asked for a Commission of Inquiry to assess the wide range of concerns raised. This inquiry was conducted in June/July 1998 and attracted a record number of 311 submissions. Of these, 126 also made oral submissions and some took the Commissioner on site visits (in the snow!) Local environment groups presented convincing cases to the Commissioner, helped by many local experts who volunteered their time and expertise.

In March 1999 a major review of the DLEP commenced with Council investing huge resources into mapping, data collection and analysis to implement the Inquiry findings (released Jan 1999).

DLEP 2002 evolved after another 3½ years of dedicated work by council planners and further community involvement – 1404 community submissions were received covering 6,500 different matters (Oct/Dec 2002). The Society's submission contained 65 pages of detailed information, resulting from

(continued on page 5)

Volunteers needed for vegetation survey

Do you have a spare day or two to help out with floristic surveys as part of research into the effect of fire regimes in the Greater Blue Mountains?

Kate Hammill, an ecologist from the Dept of Environment and Conservation (NPWS), will be surveying sites from Blackheath to Bulga over the next few months and needs volunteers to help out.

Field sites will be mostly located near fire trails. Some knowledge of native plant species is preferred. The results of the research will help establish benchmarks for biodiversity in the Blue Mountains, provide information on fire regimes favourable to biodiversity for management and feed into community education programs planned by the WWF and NSW NCC. The field work is to start ASAP.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Kate by phone (9585 6890) or email (Kate.Hammill@environment.nsw.gov.au).

In last Hut News, you were told that we were examining the replies to the survey and planned to have a report in the current issue of Hut News. To achieve this, Brian, Heather, Liz and David prepared a report comprising data summaries and suggested responses for consideration at the October Management Committee meeting. Because the raw data and report are too long and indigestible for a single Hut News article, it was decided to use it as a basis for several sequential articles that will attempt to convey the nature of replies to the various questions, and the actions being considered by Management Committee.

Completed surveys were received from nearly 20% of the membership. This was encouraging, because a 'normal' response for this type of survey is about 10%. Of the non-responding 80%, it seems likely that they are passive (the majority), too busy, 'away' at the time of the survey, have a strong resistance to surveys, or some combination of these. As it is difficult to respond to unexpressed views, we necessarily assume (but it could be debated) that the 80% are broadly satisfied (or not overly dissatisfied) with their membership.

The current article will look at questions A to D, whilst successive articles will deal with E to G, H to K and N, and finally L and M. Over the period spanned by the articles, it is hoped that many of the envisaged changes will become obvious to members.

Questions A and B: why did you join the Society and what do you hope to gain from your membership?

These questions are dealt with conjointly because there is a considerable amount of overlap.

The most common reasons for joining, in decreasing order of preference, are *environmental concerns* (100%), *bushwalking* (59%) and *bushcare* (49%). A small but significant group were newcomers and wished to *meet like-minded people* (13%). Where the total percentages exceed 100%, it is because respondents were able to select more than one option. As the Society is an environmental organisation, the dominance of *environmental concerns* is to be expected.

In terms of hoped for gain, the main themes in order of decreasing frequency (percentages not meaningful) are: *the provision of information, knowledge and learning; meeting and sharing friendships with like-minded people; and enjoying bushwalking*. The somewhat greater emphasis on knowledge and social relationships, as opposed to more

serious bushwalking, led to the perception that serious bushwalkers were perhaps under represented in the 20% of the membership that replied to the survey. It also suggested that many respondents preferred to express views in an environment of 'sympathetic reception'; that is, being with like-minded people.

A possible explanation for seeking 'sympathetic ears' is that the environmental movement is less respected than it was 10-15 years ago. Environmentalists and 'greenies' are sometimes treated disparagingly within a society largely committed to selfish materialism, economic rationalism and the hip-pocket nerve. Even the threats of climate-change and destruction of heritage are less newsworthy than the nightly doses of terrorism, interest-rate hikes, share-price and currency movements, and sporting successes.

For many there is the joy of sharing a love of nature with like-minded people.

Responses being entertained by Management Committee include:

- a. increasing the proportions of educational and informational articles in Hut News;**
- b. continuing with the monthly-meeting format of educational and informative speakers, followed by a speakers' panel, but in recognition of several comments, add a Management Committee 'Aunt Sally' (questions without notice from members present!);**
- c. reexamining the merits of workshops and/or field-based instruction;**
- d. introduction of 'bush-based' events for disabled members (subject to insurance considerations); and,**
- e. attempting to make bushwalks more educational by finding better-informed leaders, although it is recognised that some walkers are solely concerned with 'getting there'!**

Questions C and D: do you prefer to subscribe but be passive, and do you write supporting letters about an issue?

In answer to C, 58% said 'yes' and 48% said 'no'; for D the responses were 80% 'yes', 15% 'often', 64% 'occasionally' and 18% 'never'.

These somewhat complementary questions raised interesting and contradictory responses. Many indicated 'yes' to being passive, yet went on to say they wrote supporting letters;

similarly, some who said 'no' appeared to do nothing and indicated no wish for further involvement. It is almost as though the 'no' and 'yes' responses applied to 'subscribe' rather than 'passive'. Obviously the questions could have been more clearly framed.

It can be suggested that members replying to the survey (~20%) are demonstrably not passive in that they have done something beyond paying the membership fee and reading Hut News. However, perhaps a more instructive figure is that only 15% indicated 'often' to writing letters; and this low level of involvement came through in a later question where it became clear that very few wished to be more involved with the work of the Society.

Answers to the supplementary questions on the way the 'letter' was communicated (*snail-mail 65%; fax 8%; email 35%; phone 20%*), and to whom (*State Politicians 70%; State Govt Departments 38%; Councillors 33%; BMCC staff 33%; Blue Mountains Gazette 2%*), were instructive. Snail-mail, the preferred method of communicating, is recommended because there is a real signature on the letter, and because these bodies tend to be swamped by emails. State Politicians are the principal recipients, but very few trouble to write to the newspaper, perhaps because have tried and not been published, and/or because the newspaper doesn't reply to letters.

Actions being considered by Management Committee involve:

- a. continuing to encourage letters (= snail-mail) that necessitate a reply;**
- b. encouraging correspondents to copy letters to newspapers so as to generate awareness in the media; and,**
- c. offering draft letters on the website and having pertinent drafts available at monthly meetings.**

Members' reactions

If, when you read this article you feel that there is a significant omission, please send your comments to bmcs@bluemountains.org.au and mark them M'shipSurvHNArticle1.

MANGROVE MOUNTAIN GROUNDWATER DECISION

Suck it and see is alive and well! By Brian Marshall

A recent decision handed down by the Land and Environment Court upheld an appeal by a consultant to Peats Ridge Springs Pty Limited (a subsidiary of Coca Cola Amatil Pty Limited) against the refusal by Gosford City Council to allow a number of changes to the operation of a mineral water bottling facility located at Euloo Road, Peats Ridge.

'Lesser' issues included increased operating hours (three shift twenty-four hour per day, six days per week) and increased heavy vehicle movement. However, the principal matter involved increasing the level of groundwater exploitation from ~25 to 66ML per annum and the potential impact of this on the Kulnura/Mangrove Mountain aquifer. There is concern that depleting the aquifer and lowering the watertable might impact on residents' household bores near the production facility, and influence surface flows contributing to local dams and Gosford water supply.

Opposing counsel argued that the application be rejected, that failing this the allowed volume be reduced, and that failing this a trial period and conditions be imposed. The Commissioner allowed the application (thereby over-ruling Gosford CC) and saw no reason to reduce the extracted volume. The only concessions to opposing counsel were that a trial period was imposed until 31 December 2007, that no more than 11ML were to be extracted in any 28-day period, and that applications to further expand the extracted volume could not be made before 31 March 2007.

The Commissioner reached his judgement by placing emphasis on the DIPNR-generated *Water Sharing Plan*, which deals with the allocation of groundwater from the Kulnura/Mangrove Mountain aquifer. In essence, based on an average annual recharge of 9007ML per annum, allocations were made for the environmental health of the aquifer, for domestic and stock purposes, and for general access licences. The remainder, which comprised a discounted amount of 995ML, is available 'other needs'. The Commissioner concluded that because the additional 41ML sought by Coca Cola was only ~4% of the available remainder, there was no reason to reject the application.

The Commissioner said he was convinced by the evidence of Dr Beck (a hydrogeologist appearing on Coca Cola's behalf) who indicated that the closest hanging swamp and nearest perennial stream would not be impacted, and that although bores on the Azzopardi property would experience impact, it would be insufficient to render them useless. In light of 'uncontradicted expert evidence (Dr Beck and another) that the increased extraction would have no impact on water flows in the streamway, anecdotal evidence of decreased flows already observed as a consequence of the existing level of extraction was dismissed.

COMMENT: Without having seen all the reports and been present at the proceedings, it is inappropriate to assess the Court's decision. However, certain matters are clear:

- . The emphasis on the *Water Sharing Plan* whereby total recharge, less dedicated allocations, leaves a remainder for exploitation is horrifying in its simplicity. It disregards assumptions made about recharge, groundwater flow-rates within the 'aquifer', the veracity of 'allocations', the overriding impact of climate change, and the need for a thorough evaluation of more local issues.
- . Anecdotal statements, no matter how sincere, must have some form of documentary support, such as diaries, 'old' newspaper articles and other historical records. It is otherwise impossible to weigh them against expert evidence.
- . The expert witnesses of the appellant need to be 'balanced' by experts appearing for the opposing party, and by the court appointing an independent expert to arbitrate if necessary. Funding is clearly an issue here!
- . On what I have seen of an evaluation by Parsons Brinkerhoff (7 September 2004) of modelling undertaken for Peats Ridge Springs Pty Ltd, and of Dr Beck's evidence before the August hearing, many unjustified assumptions and interpretations were made and open to challenge on theoretical grounds.
- . The trial period of increased extraction and monitoring is very much in the suck it and see category.

In the light of the financial outlay incurred by Gosford Council and the Azzopardi family, and the anguish experienced by local residents, it is interesting that Coca Cola's annual licence fee for the water will be less than \$200, while the same water will retail at ~\$18 million!

(LEP2005 ... continued from page 2)

over 500 hours of direct effort by members. The Society also invested funds and time to ensure residents understood key issues.

In November 2003 major proposed amendments to the previously exhibited Draft 2002 Plan were exhibited for public comment. This resulted from the review of community submissions. In addition there was the Bushland Protection Order which was part of DLEP 2002. Community members attended public meetings and made 115 submissions before an amended BPO was adopted.

In December 2003 council adopted an amended DLEP 2002 which was sent to the State Government to review and gazette. Almost two years later, with much positive intervention from Bob Debus, it emerged as LEP 2005.

LEP 2005 is a tribute to the council and the community working together and dedicated to get it right to protect this unique place.

BUT the NSW Government's recently announced introduction of a "standard template" for all Local Environment Plans (LEPs) across NSW means that all this community effort could be wasted and most of the hard-won environmental protections lost.

The template sets out a common format, definitions and zones for LEPs across the State. Local councils will be able to add to the list of permissible land uses in each zone but not restrict the types of developments permitted in each zone. *They are permitted to promote development but not restrict it!*

This can only be a backward step for the Blue Mountains. It will not be possible to include all the good controls that are now built into LEP 2005 in this new standard template.

The format being proposed reflects the sort of planning approaches that were used 30 years ago. Since then planners have recognised the importance of detailed and precise plans. When plans lack precision the planning decisions are transferred to the courts. Only a 'place based' approach can give the level of precision required to ensure each locality has a relevant plan which has been developed by planners with community contribution, rather than Courts in reaction to individual development applications.

The proposed format lacks legal precision - effectively handing over planning responsibility to the Courts. It is heavily biased towards development rather than protection of the environment or of local communities. There are no environmental development standards which have any legal certainty (apart from prohibiting sandmining in coastal zones). There are no appropriate zones to allow protection of many Environmental features such as Escarpment, Significant Vegetation Communities or Riparian buffers. There is no recognition of the need for 'buffers' to protect sensitive areas. Dwellings and small 'exempt' developments are permitted in sensitive areas without any environmental assessment. Environmental Protection Zones do not prohibit development.

The Blue Mountains LEP 2005 is considered one of the most advanced. It follows a "place based" approach. A standard LEP template based on a "place based planning" model which has certainty and introduces some minimal environmental stands could be used to bring all Councils up to a good level. We understand that such a model offered by BMCC has been rejected.

The model on which this 'draft standard LEP' is based cannot be considered an improved approach to

planning and good planning outcomes are not the reason for this change. The purpose, as stated last year by the then Minister Craig Knowles, is to "minimize complexity, duplication, red tape and lengthy assessment times".

Plea for the Blue Mountains:

The draft Standard LEP template should not be forced upon the people of the Blue Mountains.

Our council and community have worked together for 10 years and have invested a huge amount of public funds and countless voluntary hours of community time in developing LEP 2005.

Blue Mountains City Council should be exempted. A five-year assessment time of the LEP 2005 will show how 'place based' planning works. We should also be allowed to pursue the plan to incorporate the existing LEP 91 into LEP 2005 to make one plan for the whole of the Blue Mountains as was for envisioned by our planners in 1988.

If the NSW government perseveres in forcing BMCC to rewrite LEP 2005, this will represent a total disregard of the community effort and OUR public funds.

ACT NOW. Submissions to Dept of Planning closed on Friday 4 November 2005 (having given the community only one month to learn of it!) However we **MUST** ask our local state member Bob Debus to speak up for us — by the middle of November. It is best to write or fax if you can: Bob Debus, Member for Blue Mountains, 107 Macquarie Rd, Springwood 2777.

bob.debus@parliament.nsw.gov.au

More information: Lyndal Sullivan 47821635 (ah) lsullivan@efel.net.au
The draft document can be found at www.planning.nsw.gov.au/planning_reforms/index.html

Walk against warming International day of climate protest 11am Saturday December 3, 2005 Starting at the Sydney Town Hall

This protest is timed to coincide with the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Montreal (28 November to 9 December, 2005).

The conference is an historic event. Not only will the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) be meeting for the 11th time, but 2005 also marks the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol. At Montreal, the first ever meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (MOP) will be held parallel to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP).

The United Nations Climate Change Conference is set to be the largest intergovernmental climate conference since the Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997. Some 8,000–10,000 participants are expected.

The demonstrations will

demand that the USA and Australia ratify the Kyoto Protocol immediately and that the entire world community move as rapidly as possible to a stronger emissions reductions treaty that will be both equitable and effective in stabilising greenhouse gases and preventing dangerous climate change.

Bring family, friends, kids, bikes, placards, sunflowers.

Butterfly season again ...

I usually get excited about butterflies at this time of the year. A few weeks ago on a bushwalk we admired an Imperial White butterfly resting on a flower and displaying all the lovely colours of its underwings.

Since 23 October Caper White Butterflies have been travelling through the upper mountains in a generally north-east direction.

This migration is very different to the one observed in the Blue Mountains and



© CSIRO

Sydney at the end of November last year. There is none of the frantic haste nor the enormous numbers of last year. Travelling through in ones and twos at a leisurely pace they pause often to pass backward and forward between the flowers and sip the sweet nectar.

A favourite with all the insect pollinators has been the *Hakea dactyloides*. Densely covered with sweet-smelling creamy white flowers, this plant attracted white and orange butterflies, feral and tiny striped native bees and all sorts of pollinating flies.

Spring wildflowers in the upper mountains this year have been lovely, but none so extraordinary as those we saw today on Rigby Hill, near Pearce's Pass, where the ragged cliffs and deep gorge of the Grose River forms a mighty backdrop to a most extravagant and truly wonderful display of wildflowers. This is a favourite wildflower walk but I have never before seen them flowering so profusely.

On Rigby Hill we saw beautiful Swordgrass Butterflies.

Christine Davies, 3/11/05.

Clean versus Coal

Rosemary Lathouris

At the last Management Committee meeting it was agreed to endorse the campaign run by Greenpeace to pressure power holders, industry and governments to establish a program for a just transition between coal and renewable energy. Greenpeace is asking that for every tonne of coal that is exported, ten cents be contributed to a Just Transition Fund to help find the solutions that will allow Australia to move to renewable energy whilst being supportive and fair to our coal communities, like the Hunter Valley. Just as Newcastle has made a successful transition from steel, we want to help coal communities create a sustainable working future.

The Howard Government refuses to ratify Kyoto, spending billions locking developing countries into using polluting coal for energy. From 1993 to 2003 the government spent less than 1% of its coal spending on renewable energy. The State government is also hypocritical, acknowledging global warming while approving new coal mines and coal fired power stations.

On behalf of the membership, the Management Committee is writing to Federal and State Governments supporting the Just Transition Fund and asking them to commit to a **20% by 2020 target for renewable energy.**

Exploring the south coast

By Jenny Rich

Ten members of BMCS and the NPA have just returned from a camping trip exploring NSW south coast national parks. There were many highlights:

At Booderee NP a large pod of dolphins raced with the cruise boat, we found eight migrating whales off Steamer Head, a powerful owl sat above my tent eating a ringtail possum, I watched two pardalotes busily constructing their nest and I shared the Botanic Gardens with many birds including black faced monarchs.

At Murrararang NP we saw tidal rock pools and rainforest on the coastal walk to Snake Bay and walked through a magnificent spotted gum forest behind Depot Beach. Lyrebirds, wonga pigeons and kangaroos wandered around our campsite at Pebbly Beach. Ros and I canoed on Durras Lake, nearly colliding with a surprised fisherman.

At Mimosa Rocks NP swamp wallabies and bandicoots scuttled around our campsite at night while the sea thundered. We saw sea eagles grabbing fish from the sea, also pied oyster catchers and endangered hooded plovers nesting on special fenced off sections of beach.

We had three nights at Eden Tourist Park while we washed our clothes, had hot showers, enjoyed fish and chips, saw migrating whales from the 'Cat Balou' (in a 3 metre swell!), spent a day exploring the South East Forests National Park, visited the Whale Museum, did the Lake Curralo boardwalk and the maritime history walk

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING GROUP

(Walks in this newsletter will now be listed mid-month to mid-month)

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 Coordinator (listed) or Bushwalks Conveyor Bob van Reyswoud.. **Cost of insurance and affiliation fees is \$15 per member.**

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 section off track. Bring morning tea and lunch, plus carry at least 1 litre of WATER, 2 litres on warmer days.

Nov 14 Mt Wilson environs. October Creek with Norah (4757 4058), Zircon Creek with Marie (4787 1257).

Nov 21 Dark's Cave. Meet 9.15 Leura rail commuter carpark near GWH. Birgitta 4784 3191.

Nov 28 Blue Gum Swamp, Winnmalee. Meet 9.15 Springwood town car park, behind shops. Heather 4739 1493.

Dec 5 Ingar Picnic Area. Christmas party BBQ—bring meat and food to share. Meet 9.15 Stockyard car park, Wentworth Falls Station. Mary 4758 7882.

Dec 12 Lithgow Water Works. Shaded walk. Lunch at Lithgow Workmens Club. Meet 9.15 Mt Victoria Railway Station. Car pool. Jock 4757 6346.

Dec 19 River Lett, Hartley. Relaxing day. BBQ and stroll by river. Bring chairs. Meet 9.15 Mt Victoria Station. Marie 4787 1257.

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.

Nov 17 Solitary Restaurant to Echo Point. Prince Henry Cliff Walk via lookouts to Echo Point. Car shuffle. 10am Gearins Hotel Katoomba Joan 4782 2218

Nov 24 Dargan Dams, Clarence. Easy walk through bush tracks to dams and old pump house. Swimming if weather suitable. Meet 9.30 am Mt Victoria Station. David 4757 3416.

Dec 1 Kings Tableland. Walk to heath and rock carvings with great views. Meet 9.30 Wentworth Falls car park (near the clock). Marie 4787 1257.

Dec 8 Coachwood Glen, Megalong Valley. Cool walk in rainforest. Visit Mermaid's Cave. Picnic lunch at Megalong Creek. Meet 9.30 Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. John 4757 1558.

Dec 15 Christmas Party at Rhododendron Gardens, Blackheath. Bring plate of food and drinks to share. Meet 10.30 Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. Contact Simone 4757 3416 to advise what you will bring.

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

Nov 19 (Sat) Darwin's Walk, National Pass, Undercliff/Overcliff. Medium. Meet Wentworth Falls stockyard car park 9am. Ros 4733 3880.

Nov 26 (Sat) Camel's Hump. Meet Mt Victoria Station 9.30am. Car pool. Medium. June 4787 7312.

Dec 3 (Sat) Wigin's Track, Sassafras Creek, return via Magdala Creek. Medium. Meet Springwood Station carpark 9.30 am. Bob 4757 2694.

Dec 10 (Sat) Christmas Party, Mt Wilson. Short walk, October Creek. Easy. Lunch at Sefton Cottage \$25 each. Bookings with \$5 deposit essential. Meet Mt Victoria Station 11 am. Car pool. Bob 4757 2694.

at Aslings Beach. The Tourist Park had native plants, natural areas beside the lake and many birds including a large family of wood ducks, a plover family and buff banded rail. Little wattlebirds started the dawn chorus at 3.30 am.

At Ben Boyd NP we visited Boyd's Tower and the site of the Davidson's whaling station near the mouth of the Towamba River – now a beautiful peaceful place. We shared our Bittangabee campsite with a wombat, swamp wallabies and many birds and had wonderful walks to Green Cape Light house and Hegarty's Bay, a wild but very beautiful place. Sitting in a café at Eden on the last day I saw whales breaching out in the bay. Another highlight of the return trip was Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens which display the flora of the south

coast and adjacent ranges.

It was wonderful to escape from the horrors of the nightly news for a few weeks. I'm planning a similar north coast trip next August. If you are interested contact me on 4787 6243 or jennywombatrigh@aim.com

BMCS Multi-day Activity MERRY BEACH

Nights 27 Mar – 30 Mar incl. (2006)
Upper bunks still available. Send \$40 deposit to Don Morison, P.O. Box 170 Katoomba 2780 (Aust Post Money Order preferred). Enquiries to Don 8230 2116.

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Elizabeth van Reyswoud

Phone 4757.2694

Email: mcreysw@bigpond.net.au

Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782