

U.B.M.C.S. NEWSLETTER

"nature Conservation saves
for Tomorrow's People"

Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society, P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, NSW, 2782.
Secretary: Les Coyne 57.3327 Editor: Christine Davies 87.7246

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Name our Publication

To give more time for suggestions we have extended the deadline for the competition until 16 February. *Please put your thinking caps on and let us have your suggestions.* The prize is lunch or dinner for two people at The Hut.

The Annual Meeting

On page 4 is a description of the duties for each position on the Management Committee. Please look carefully through these and consider whether you are able to help the society in 1996/97 by nominating for office. *Don't wait for someone else to volunteer* - let's have a full, dedicated and enthusiastic committee so that we can continue to work to conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains.

Eucalyptus oreades

On page 2, we have a report on the Society's plan to regenerate an area near the Sorensen Bridge at Leura using native plants grown at the Nursery and especially, where possible, Eucalyptus Oreades, our beautiful Blue Mountain Ash.

So often the Mountain Ash is cut down to allow for more development, and it is too big for most domestic gardens. We will plant some for future generations.

This area will be our clean-up area on Clean-Up-Australia Day on 3 March (see Dates for your Diary).

Letter from NPWS

The Society has received a letter from Geoff Luscombe, Blue Mountains District Manager of NPWS, acknowledging the Society's decision to keep Friday meeting night. He states that "I am pleased that so many members of the Society are able to comment on the proposal and the clear preference for continuing Friday meetings is a reminder of the strong traditions of the Society.NPWS strongly supports the activities of the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society and in particular the use of the Conservation Hut for meetings and as a base for other activities."

(100 copies of the new booklet for the Nature Track were enclosed. These are available for members. The booklet recognises Isobel Bowden's pioneering

work and also mentions the Conservation Society.)

"Your contribution to the development of this track is much appreciated. Your contribution of \$1,000 has been expended on track posting (\$400) and printing of the booklets (\$600). We are expecting a good response from visitors, and are pleased to continue the excellent work started by the Society in the Valley of the Waters Area."

Adopt an Animal Proposal

We propose that the Society "Adopt an Animal". We will produce T-shirts and posters with our animal as the logo and with our slogan. We can also sponsor this animal at Taronga Park Zoo.

Habitat preservation is the essence of nature conservation. Every ecosystem relies on all the plants and all the animals that live within that ecosystem. There is a lot of fuss about the poor old Koala and the Whale, but the little creatures are often forgotten. Many species of plants and animals have declined and disappeared without notice or comment, and when there is a change, however small, the whole ecosystem changes and affects the other species that dwell there.

The animal chosen will live in and around development on the ridge all over the Blue Mountains and be appealing to the public - "cute and cuddly". (While the Broad-headed Snake might be an excellent choice it may not be appealing to some people). It will also be vulnerable to our activities such as land clearing and fire controls and to predation by introduced species, both feral and domestic. It should also be small, an animal not noticed or cared about. **We should let people know that this animal (and many others like it) does exist and is important.**

The Feathertail Glider fits all the above criteria. It is extremely "cute and cuddly"; it lives close to development right across the Mountains; it is small and shy and many people do not know it lives here; it nests and feeds lower in the canopy and is killed and eaten by feral cats and foxes (and domestic cats). It is quite a remarkable little animal well adapted to living here, but does not have adaptations to deal with the things we do. A profile of

the Feathertail Glider is being prepared for the next newsletter.

Second choice is the Common Ringtail Possum. This gentle little animal is becoming less common around houses in the Blue Mountains. A study in Kuring-gai Chase National Park found a high level of predation in the study area and predicted the local extinction of ringtail possums within 60 years. Perhaps they will not always be "common".

Guest Speaker for February

Guest speaker at the general meeting on Friday February 23 will be Robert Crawford of Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust. The meeting starts at 7.30 p.m at The Hut. Visitors are welcome. (Please introduce yourself to a committee member if you have not been before.)

Blackheath Centenary Wildflowers Reserve - Early Morning Bird Walk

Members of the Society have been working in the bushcare group for this reserve. **On Saturday March 9 there will be an early morning bird walk and breakfast in the reserve.** The reserve has a wonderful diversity of wildflowers and is a remnant of a ridgetop vegetation community of Blackheath which, with continued development, will become rare. Publicity is needed to help to preserve it. Meet outside the reserve, opposite Cleopatra's Guest House in Cleopatra Street (turn right off Govetts Leap Road) at 7.30 am. Contact Kerry Kirk 87.8592 (weekends only).

Proposed Skyway from Echo Point to Scenic Railway

Some committee members are disturbed about the way this proposal keeps rearing its ugly head. Maybe if it is mentioned often enough and nobody speaks against it then it will become acceptable. Perhaps we should write to Council to say that we are against it right from the start. *What do members think about it?*

Changing Habits Changes Habitats

In bush areas adjoining human habitation, new environments begin to form. These become less suitable for native wildlife and more appealing to feral species. Disturbed bush leads to erosion and weed infestation, creating corridors for cats, foxes and introduced birds.

Birds and mammals that shelter, nest or feed close to the ground are prone to predation by cats, foxes and domestic dogs. Common mynas and common starlings successfully compete with hollow-nesting birds such as parrots. Soon the new environment becomes a habitat which can only sustain feral species and as the weeds spread, this new habitat encroaches deeper into the bush.

Many birds and animals hold and defend defined territories; they can't just simply move on, as every suitable area is already occupied. An example is the juvenile Lyrebird which needs to establish its own territory. If hemmed in by human habitat it may find itself in a well-maintained garden, perhaps to the annoyance of the gardener. It will also be exposed to attack from dogs and foxes.

Our wildlife cannot compromise - we must!

HOW CAN WE CHANGE A FERAL CORRIDOR BACK INTO A NATIVE HABITAT?

Visiting your favourite area - will it be a pleasant place to visit 10 years from now?

We who love the bush naturally want access to it. Too many short cuts and diversions are the beginning of damaged habitat. Properly formed tracks are less erodible.

Dog owners will want to walk their dogs (on a leash of course!) in a pleasant area. These walks often pass through buffer zones bordering undisturbed bush. Have you ever noticed how many other dog owners also find this walk enjoyable? Animal droppings leech nutrients into the soil, making it unsuitable for native plants, but fertilized nicely for weeds. Plastic bags or containers (a well designed pooper scooper is urgently needed), should be picked up with the leash.

Find out if a bushcare group is working in your area. They may be interested to hear about the native (and feral) wildlife you have seen during your walks.

Protecting the bush that adjoins your property.

Feral species follow us and populations

build up around houses. Perhaps you and your neighbours could plan how to make your street a less appealing habitat for them.

In recent times we have become keen composters - but could your compost heap be aiding the population explosion of feral birds, rats and mice? Try covering your compost and check house eaves for potential nesting sites for common mynahs, starlings and sparrows. A few minor repairs and a little wire meshing could drastically reduce next year's feral bird population.

Growing dense, prickly native plants along your property boundary creates a buffer zone, ensuring there are no corridors for introduced species through your yard. Foxes and cats are discouraged by such a barrier. A bonus is that more native birds will be attracted to your garden.

Bush Care Workers

Looking at a damaged area you may come to the conclusion that it is devoid of wildlife - it's not! Birds in particular will utilize the area. They will hawk for insects in the open spots and that muddy puddle may become the local bird bath. Listing wildlife and native plants can provide a record of your success in restoring habitat. Watch the birds at work - bush regenerating - pollinating and dispersing seeds. As your work progresses your native species list will grow and small mammals and reptiles will start moving back into the area.

Even if an area can only be partially restored, you will still have created an important buffer zone to protect adjoining habitats.

We who care about the bush are making a difference; we are educating the people who see us at work.

There will be less thoughtless habitat destruction in the future.

We can live in harmony with our wildlife.

❖ *Bonnie Doon Fauna Study Group*

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**BLACKHEATH AREA
NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE
GARDNER'S CRESCENT
PHONE 87.7770 FAX 87.7777**

**Serves the communities of Blackheath,
Megalong Valley and Mount Victoria
New Courses starting in February
Enquire now!**

**Volunteers are needed at the
UBMCS Native Plant Nursery
Tuesday and Thursday mornings
Enquiries to David Coleby (Phone 84.1395)**

Planting Eucalyptus oreades near the Sorensen Bridge at Leura

We propose that the Society use local native plants to regenerate selected areas of land between the old and the new Highways on the Leura side of the Sorensen Bridge. A major part of this regeneration might be to plant stands of Eucalyptus oreades, the Blue Mountains Ash.

The Sorensen Bridge replaced the old "Hole in the Wall" railway bridge over the Great Western Highway in 1990. At an earlier time the Highway ran along the northern side the railway line towards Leura: a part of it still exists. The new Highway, further north, links up with the old Highway nearly opposite Myall Avenue.

The present condition of the eastern end is mixed. One part, almost opposite Kitchener Road is a shallow dish of sour compacted soil in which the RTA have introduced about 100 native plants for rehabilitation. None would appear to be of local provenance, and they are all struggling to survive: even the weeds are having a difficult time. It may be appropriate to supplement this planting with wet-loving natives of local provenance.

Nearer the bridge there is a roughly rectangular grassy slope, with some Coreopsis. This area would appear to be suitable for regeneration, perhaps including Eucalyptus oreades.

Nearest the bridge, the Old Highway curves down to the site of the old "Hole-in-the-wall", ending up in a bare gravel patch. Behind that there is an area (nearly the size of a football field), once a stockpile site and now almost completely devoid of vegetation except for a very old oak. This area would also appear to be suitable for regeneration, again perhaps including Eucalyptus oreades.

In the west, almost opposite Myall Avenue, there is an area of about two hectares formerly used as a stockpile site for materials used in building the new Highway. There is still a sign indicating "DMR Stockpile, 47 km west of Penrith". When the area was vacated by the RTA no rehabilitation was conducted. What little vegetation exists there is mainly weeds.

Regeneration of this western plot needs a lot of planning, but in the meantime we hope to begin planting soon near the bridge.

Help is needed!

Phone David Coleby, Nursery Manager (84-1395).

**Tired and Dirty and Happy
-A Great Walk at Deep Pass**

On Saturday 20 January after Friday's violent thunderstorm, a group of 14.5 ("point five" being young Keith, Chris' six-year-old grandson) met at Mt. Victoria Station for Dave Lovegrove's excursion to the River Cave.

At the junction of the fire road, the big decision was made not to go to the river canyon due to the heavy rain of the previous day and the threat of more. We agreed to go instead to Deep Pass which did not involve walking through the water, a wise decision.

What a great place, made more enjoyable by Dave's interesting information on the area's history, and the flora. There were sheer rock walls, aboriginal handprints, creeks lined with tree ferns, caves, waterfalls and the luxury of fine water droplets falling from the cliff-faces to cool us down when we felt hot.

The highlight of the walk was when we climbed into a cleft in the rock barely wide enough to pass through, with vertical cliff walls above us about 100m

high which were quite spectacular. Some of us were amazed that we all got through (with much pushing and pulling and sans packs) and when we finally reached sunlight formed a chain to pass the packs along.

Lunch was enjoyed under a small waterfall. Later we saw the spot where the creek went underground through a plughole in the rocks, then we wandered up another canyon where we climbed up to a large cave system on the cliff face.

For the icing on the cake, a short detour on the way back to visit Bald Hill Trig where we had a panoramic view of the area, and arrived back at Mt. Victoria tired and dirty but happy after a great day.

(PS. Dave will be organising another walk to the River Cave in less inclement weather in the near future. Watch out for the date in Dates for your Diary.)

Please send walk reports to the editor for publication in the newsletter. The leader could nominate someone to write the report. - Ed.

THE FELLING OF THE GUMS

(Glenbrook, October 27, 1995)

We did not know he was a student of Art, Even if he had studied one book many times, One book of Art, which showed out at Glenbrook, When he ordered that the gums should be felled. First, I heard the screaming of the saws in the trees, Then, I heard the ratchet taking the weight of a limb, Then I saw the fall, and heard the loud thump. This was his revenge against those who said "No" Now, he had the power, again, to order the felling - So, I looked up and saw the mutilated trunks, And bleeding limbs of the old, magnificent gums, Which commuters saw every morning at Glenbrook, Then, I knew that, indeed, he was a student of Art, Even if he had only studied the one book. When the limb fell, the birds sang louder and louder, Trying to take the dark bruise out of the air, To calm the lake of morning, where red-tipped ripples Raced and barneyed for a place. And when I saw Quarterized limbs, bleeding stumps, beheaded giants, I knew, then that he had read one, at least one Book of Art. You can guess which one it was - It was Goya's book of the French War in Spain, When the French hacked off the limbs of the Spanish "Guerrillas", and staked them on the limbs of trees, That was all that was missing at Glenbrook, On that bright, Spring morning, when the white gums Screamed, and the birds sang louder than ever before. Denis Kevans.

The call of the Koel has been quite subdued in the Wentworth Falls district so far. This traveller from the sunny balmy north sounds like a lost soul as the male calls for a lady love on our drizzly mountain days. Why

In the Bush

Naming the flower of the month is, I find, quite impossible. Each part of our local area favours different species. Along shady cliff faces, the dainty little flowers of Sprengelia monticola (Swamp Heath) become conspicuous because of their profusion.

Around the next corner of the path the bright pink of Stylidium lineare (Trigger Plants) catches the eye and as one moves into drier areas there are massed crowns of white on the Leptospermums to catch the eye.

Lower down the mountains the red bracts of the Christmas bush beckon our attention. So which can we claim to be the most conspicuous? As most peoples'

observations are limited to what is seen from a car while on the way to shopping, the flowering Leptospermums could be a contender.

I learn there are several species of Leptospermum flowering together but I'll be bold enough to state the rough-barked L. attenuatum and the smooth-barked L. flavescens are the main contributors of the floral display.

In our yard the Melaleuca hypericifolia, with their salmony pink brushes, have provided a much more consistent meal for the Wattlebirds and New Holland Honeyeaters than the showier Callistemons.

The bird of the month label provides the same problem as does the flower. The birds greater mobility give us sightings and songs as they fly from one food source to another.

on earth should they leave such pleasant areas to shiver down here? They parasitize on Wattle and Friar birds, Orioles and Magpie Larks. Maybe the victims are more prevalent during our summer months of flowering than they are up north.

Of course January would not be the same without our regulars - the Crimson Rosellas, King Parrots and White Cockatoos. Their constancy when the migrants forsake us.

The Bunyip

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

FEBRUARY

- 02 (Fri) **Introduction Morning.** Come along and meet old and new members - morning tea followed by a short guided bushwalk. 10 am at The Hut.
- 04 (Sun) **Bushwalk. The Jungle.** A beautiful walk in the Grose Valley. Easy except for a few (hundred?) steps, the ascent of which will be negotiated at a slow pace in the shade of the afternoon. Meet at Blackheath Station commuter carpark at 8.30. Contact Olive Noble (047)87.8342. Grade 6-7.
- 17 (Sat) **Bushwalk. Burro Korain Head** from an access point on the road to Baltzer Lookout. Magnificent views; about 7 hours duration; participants should be reasonably fit. Contact Lloyd Jones (047)57.2270. Grade 8.
- 16 (Fri) **DEADLINE FOR FEBRUARY ISSUE.**
- 19 (Mon) **Committee meeting** at The Hut at 2 pm.
- 21 (Wed) **Bushwalk. Old Point Pilcher.** Meet at Northern side of Medlow Bath Station at 9.30. Contact Christine Davies (047)87.7246. Grade 4.
- 23 (Fri) **General Meeting** at The Hut at 7.30 pm. Guest speaker Robert Crawford, Chairman, Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust.

MARCH

- 01 (Fri) **Morning tea at The Hut.** Morning tea followed by a short guided bushwalk. 10 am.
- 03 (Sun) **Clean Up Australia Day** - UBMCS bush regeneration site. Drive-in parking area (old DMR stockpile site 950 metres west of Sorensen Bridge on left hand side of Great Western Highway (*You must enter while travelling west*). 9 a.m. start, until about 12.30 p.m. Bring a plate for picnic lunch at Wentworth Falls Lake afterwards. Contact Christine Davies (047)87.7246.
- 16 (Sat) **Bushwalk. The Hut, Roberts Pass, Lillian's Bridge, Nature Trail, The Hut.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Les Coyne (047)57.3327. Grade 7.
- 20 (Wed) **Bushwalk. Braeside Walk and Evans Lookout.** Meet at Blackheath station commuter carpark at 9.30 am. Contact Imrie Gahl (047)84.3286. Grade 4.
- 25 (Mon) **Committee meeting** at The Hut at 2 pm.
- 29 (Fri) **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** at The Hut at 7.30 pm.

APRIL

- 07 (Sun) **Bushwalk - Vera Falls.**
- 17 (Wed) **Bushwalk - Elphinstone Plateau.**
- 20 (Sat) **Bushwalk - The Hut, Valley of the Waters, National Pass, Slack Stairs, The Hut.**
- 23 (Tues) **Committee Meeting** at The Hut at 7 pm.
- 27 (Fri) **General Meeting** at The Hut at 7.30 pm.

Walks have been graded:
1-3 easy, 4-7 medium, 8-10 harder
If in doubt contact the leader.
Walkers must carry 1 litre of water

EXECUTIVE POSITIONS

The following 14 office bearers form the UBMCS executive. Executive members attend monthly management committee meetings, and other meetings, as needed. Additional personal time is needed to effectively handle the responsibilities. **A guide to the total number of hours per month (hpm) is shown in brackets after each position.**

PRESIDENT (15hpm)

Provides Leadership & Direction for UBMCS. Chairperson for UBMCS meetings. Spokesperson for UBMCS.

SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT (10hpm)

Deputises for the President, as required. Responsible for UBMCS Insurances.

SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT (10hpm)

Deputises for the President, as required. Responsible for UBMCS participation in NCC and ACF. Promotes NCC and ACF activities to UBMCS members.

SECRETARY (20hpm)

Prepares agendas and minutes for meetings. Handles correspondence. Maintains Central Filing System. Prepares members' name tags Responsible for the office.

TREASURER (10hpm)

Responsible for UBMCS finances. Pays accounts and deposits receipts. Provides monthly financial report. Arranges audit for the AGM.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY (15hpm)

Keeps attendance book. Keeps membership records. Sends "Welcome Aboard" letter to new members. Follows-up members who become non-financial. Removes non-financial members from membership. Provides monthly membership report. Arranges for address labels to be produced for each member mailout.

LAND USE OFFICER (15hpm)

Reviews proposed changes in land use. Investigates inappropriate changes.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR (30hpm)

Publishes and posts twelve newsletters per year. Liases with newsletter contributors and advertisers.

WALKS CONVENOR (10hpm)

Organises and publishes a walks program. Actively markets the walks program to non-members

PLANT NURSERY MANAGER (30 hpm)

Responsible for the Blackheath Nursery. Liases with NPWS staff at Blackheath. Purchases materials required by the Nursery. Arranges seed collection and manages the seed bank. Develops the marketing arrangements for Nursery products. Provides six monthly report on Nursery activities.

PUBLICITY OFFICER (20hpm)

Promotes the UBMCS in the local press. Initiates programmes for community information. Initiates programs to attract

new members for the Society. Distributes publications via BMTA and the Hut.

ENTERTAINMENT OFFICER (6hpm)

Arranges a speaker for each monthly meeting. Advertises each General Meeting. Arranges hospitality for speakers - welcome, introductions, gift and supper.

BUSHCARE OFFICER (15hpm)

Develop and manage the society's bushcare activities. Liase with NPWS, BMCC and other bushcare groups. Represent the society at Bushcare meetings convened by BMCC.

EDUCATION OFFICER (15hpm)

Responsible for education programs for UBMCS and the public. Prepare publications to inform the public about conservation issues. Develop education programs for school and public use.

NON-EXECUTIVE POSITIONS

The following non-executive positions are filled at the AGM.

PUBLIC OFFICER (1hpm)

(Contact point between UBMCS and BACA). Ensures that annual returns are filed with BACA.

BUSHFIRE COMMITTEE

REPRESENTATIVE (5hpm)

Represent UBMCS on local Bushfire Committee.