Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 1980.

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NEXT MEETING. -Annual General-

FRIDAY OCTOBER 10th at 8 pm at the Teachers Resource Centre at Glenbrook Infants School, Ross Street, Glenbrook, opposite the tennis courts. Milo Dunphy will be addressing the group on the subject of rainforests prior to the Annual General Meeting, and the election of officers. This promises to be a very interesting and important night, and a good attendance is requested for the guest speaker who will be travelling from Sydney especially.

NEXT BAR-B-Q/ PICNIC.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28th at 10.30 am at Besse Bramsen's "Belar" 52 Boomerang Road, Springwood. This is a chance for the family to meet friends in the society as well as giving time to discuss more involved topics than can not be accomodated in the short time available at the monthly meetings.

Plant Variety Rights Legislation and the formation of a 530A Committee to look after the Deanii Forest in Springwood, will be on the agenda on Sunday. Bring along your food and thoughts.

EXCURSIONS.

SUNDAY, October 12th, to the Kangaroo Park at Dural and the Forestry Nursery at Pennant Hills. Ring Wendy for details.

SATURDAY October 18th. A walk along the Jack Evans trail to Erskines Creek, and beyond. Meet at the Rangers Hut at Glenbrook National Park Entrance at 9 am.

November, on a date to be fixed, a walk along Florabella Pass from Warrimoo to Blaxland. This walk was thoroughly enjoyed on two occasions in the past, with swimming holes for the children to cool off en route.

IVY MARKET

SATURDAY 11th October. If shopping in Springwood, drop in to the Civic Centre Hall, and lend some encouragement to Jill and Aleen who work so hard to raise funds for the society to donate to Conservation projects throughout Australia.

FILMS.

The anti-uranium films proposed to be shown in Glenbrook Community Theatre have had to be postponed until early next year.

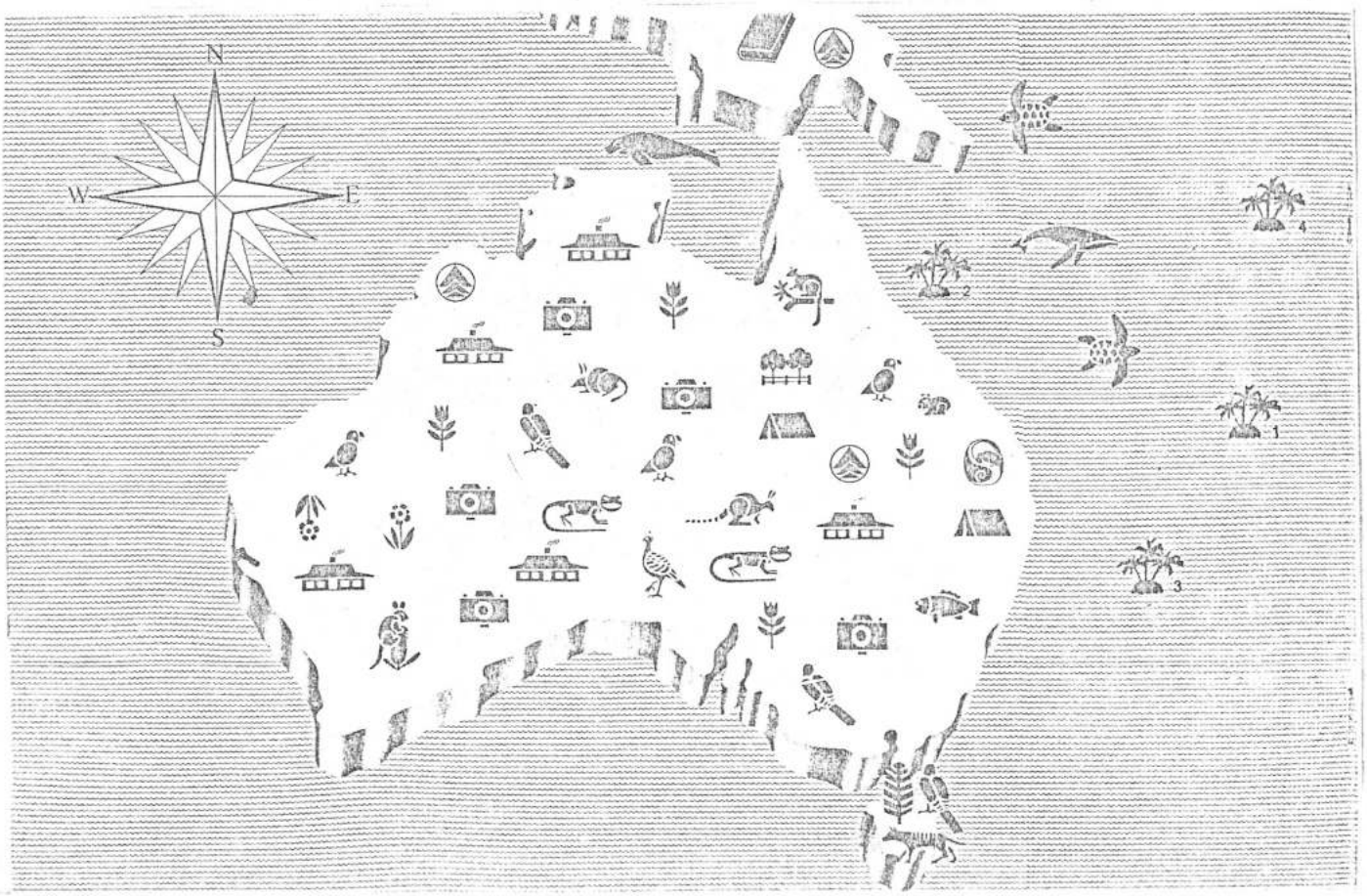
The South West Tasmania Committee are showing a film, "A South West Journey" at the Law School Theatre, Cnr King and Elizabeth Streets Sydney at 7.30 on Friday, 17th OCTOBER and Saturday, 18th October. Standing room only is the usual, on Friday night, so be there early. The debate is not over in the South West, with the Government's decision to dam the Gordon instead of the Franklin. The Splits, a set of 500' chasms along the Gordon would be flooded by such a dam. The Society has sent a letter to the Tasmanian Wilderness Society, congratulating them on the work they have done in fighting to save the Franklin.

THE RETURN OF THE NIGHT PARROT.

Exciting news in the search for Australia's rarest birds is the re-discovery of the Night Parrot, after being lost without trace for 60 years. Shane Parker of the South Australian Museum led an expedition into Central Australia, journeying along Cooper's Creek by camel. Four positive sightings were made. This is a project funded by the Bank of New South Wales through the World Wildlife Fund of Australia, of which this society is a member. Accompanying is a map of WWF projects in Australia.

Wildlife Conservation Project Guide

PROJECT 1	$46,000	"A survey of Orange-bellied parrot and Ground parrot in Tasmania, Victoria and South Australia"
PROJECT 2	$67,000	"Study of the Australian Grayling"
PROJECT 3	$55,157	"The Thylacine Quest"
PROJECT 4	$29,000	"Status of the Western Australian Subterranean Orchid"
PROJECT 5	$4,000	"A further attempt to locate populations of the Dibbler"
PROJECT 6	$74,950	"Conservation of the Dalgyte"
PROJECT 7	$23,800	"Yellow-Footed Rock Wallaby - A population survey in South Australia"
PROJECT 8	$20,000	"The D.B. Mack Mallee Fowl Reserve"
PROJECT 9	$15,725	"The establishment of parks and reserves - Fiji"
PROJECT 10	$37,213	"A network of Conservation Reserves for Western Queensland"
PROJECT 11	$13,800	"Mapping of specific habitats of vulnerable forest species in Eastern Australia"
PROJECT 12	$10,000	"Endangered Australian Plant Species"
PROJECT 13	$2,820	"Taxonomy, Ecology & Conservation of the genus Daviesia"
PROJECT 14	$15,140	"The Conservation of the Huon Pine"
PROJECT 15	$33,825	"To determine ranges and status of Australia's rarest birds"
PROJECT 16	$42,000	"Potentially endangered populations of reptiles and amphibians in the arid zone"
PROJECT 17	$17,500	"An ecological study of the Tree Kangaroos in North Queensland"
PROJECT 18	$31,820	"Marine Turtles in Papua New Guinea - a programme for their management and conservation"
PROJECT 19	$18,180	"Dugong Conservation, Management and Public Education Programme in PNG
PROJECT 20	$13,650	"Wildlife Conservation Project. Humpback Whale - Tonga"
PROJECT 21	$46,300	"Raine Island (Great Barrier Reef) Project"
PROJECT 22	$13,636	"Turtle Status Survey - Solomon Islands'
PROJECT 23	$118,150	"Conservation of Lord Howe Island's terrestrial and marine environments"
PROJECT 24	$11,000	"Wildlife Conservation on Australian Farms"
PROJECT 25	$18,525	"Preparation of conservation education materials - Papua New Guinea"
PROJECT 26	$14,739	"National Parks and Reserves Development and Conservation Education in Western Samoa"
PROJECT 27	$30,000	"National Photographic Index of Australian Wildlife"
PROJECT 28	$10,000	"Survey of Brisbane's Wildlife"
PROJECT 29	$19,050	"Conservation measures for the Hairy-nosed Wombat"
PROJECT 30	$8,000	"World Conservation Strategy"



PENRITH LAKES SCHEME.

A very detailed submission has been prepared by Margaret Baker and Rosalind Stafford arising from the fifth annual conference in Environmental Education held at Hawkesbury Agricultural College in May this year. At the plenary session of the conference the following motion was unanamiously adopted;

1. That aletter be sent to Penrith City Council
Windsor Municipal Council
Colo Shire Council
Local conservation and Community Groups
setting out a summary of possible problems recognised from investigations of the Lakes Scheme Proposal.

2. That the Penrith Lakes Scheme needs to have wider representation on the Working Committee including the NPWS, the National Trust, the SPCC, and the SPEC.

3. That alternative schemes to that proposed by the mining Consortium must be given equal deliberation and planning.

4. That the community should be better informed of all possible alternatives.

A number of questions have been raised and directed towards Penrith City Council and the Penrith Lakes Development Corporation. The report goes on to detail a number of problems envisaged by the lakes, under the following headings;

Water sources vs Water Losses
Flushing of the Lakes System
Flooding
Water Quality
Wildlife Lake
Geological Instability of the region
Erosion by the Nepean River
Wave Action
Effect on Atmosphere

As can be appreciated, the submission is too complex to summarize here, but those interested in reading the paper may obtain it from Wendy Godfrey. It is hoped that this very worthwhile document will be forwarded to the National Trust, SPEC, SPCC and the National Parks Association for their serious consideration. Here are the recommendations of the submission;

Recommendations

1. That the Corporation undertake much more extensive studies to assess feasibility and impact of the lakes scheme proposal, and that in drawing up the brief for the Environmental Impact Statement answers might be sought to the range of problems raised in this submission.

2. That alternative schemes to that proposed by the Mining consortium be given equal deliberation and planning and that the public should be fully informed of all possible alternatives.

3. That the Environmental Impact Statement when submitted should be made readily available to the public and that opportunities for public discussion be provided.

4. That the composition of the Working Committee set up by the Corporation be modified. It currently has a disturbingly commercial bias. It is recommended that the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the National Trust, the State Pollution Control Commission, the State Planning and Environmental Commission, the Water Resources Commission, the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society, the Hawkesbury District Conservation Society and the local community be represented on the Committee. The representative or representatives of the local community should have no vested interest in the scheme.

5. That as part of the overall scheme, the National Parks and Wildlife Service be funded to review and if necessary research conditions required for waterfowl to breed, present a plan for construction and management of a suitable wetland lake for waterfowl and supervise its implementation.

6. That if the area is developed as a large aquatic recreational area, pollution should be minimized by avoiding zoning of any of the catchment area as industrial and/or residential land.

At the moment, Penrith City Council is considering another application to allow extraction of sand and gravel along Castlereagh Road, opposite Wilchard Road. This proposal involves the construction of a crushing plant within 50 metres of Castlereagh Rd. As can be imagined, this operation involving 60 truck loads per day, between 6am and 10pm, will substantially disrupt the people living in the area. The Castlereagh Resident's Action Group has been formed to fight this proposal, and this Society has sent a letter objecting to the application, as the area involved is subject to an Environmental Impact Statement under preparation. Penrith City Council has already stated in the past that "piecemeal approvals would produce an unplanned no-man's land of water holes".

(As an aside, it is noted that the Penrith Lakes Development Corporation's office in High Street, is housed with the Penrith Typing Pool.)

PLANT BREEDERS RIGHTS or PLANT VARIETY RIGHTS LEGISLATION.

At the first Bar-b-q held at Besse Bramsen's home, a member from S.G.A.P. gave a detailed address on the proposed Plant Variety Rights legislation, which is thought to come before parliament in February, 1981. As a result of that meeting, a number of questions about this legislation have been formulated, and will be submitted en masse in letter form to Mr. Wran. The letter requests a moratorium to allow time for thorough discussion and public debate on the consequences of this bill. Further discussions on the format of these questions will take place at the picnic on Sunday, accompanied by a display and explanation prepared by Mark and Margaret Baker.

The questions are presented here for your consideration.

1) Is it correct that to gain the full benefits of the Plant Variety Rights (PVR) legislation, Australia must join the International Union for the Protection of Plant Varieties (UPOV) system?

2) Is it correct that under the UPOV system Australia will be obliged to include all its commercial crops under PVR control?

3) Will Australia develop a National list of approved varieties making the growing of non-approved varieties illegal?

4) As the U.K. and other European countries have found it necessary to establish National Lists or their equivalent to enable PVR to be effectively monitored and controlled, how could Australia avoid the establishment of similar lists?

5) What will be the standing of Australia's native flora under PVR?

6) Such is the threat to loss of germ plasm that the West German government placed advertisements in national newspapers urging companies and back yard gardeners to send in seeds. How is this situation to be avoided in Australia?

7) The supporters of PVR maintain that germ plasm to provide genetic material to combat uncontrolled disease and insect pests will be available from storage banks currently existing. Where do these facilities exist in Australia, what stocks do they maintain, how do they function, and what will be considered to be adequate funding for them?

8) In the event of an insect or disease threat to a genetically uniform crop, how long would it take germ plasm banks to grow the stocks they possess, determine the suitable characteristics to be developed and then provide sufficient seed to replace the unsuitable commercial variety? What contingency plans will be made to deal with problems caused by any time-lag that may arise?

9) Is it correct that major international companies are already taking an interest in such Australian companies as Yates Seeds and to what extent are international companies involved in the Australian seed industry?

10) Is it correct that the Executive Secretary of the Industry Committee for Plant Breeders Rights is also a director of the Yates Seeds Company? And that the Chairman of the same committee is the Patients and Trade Mark attorney? What are the respective interests of these persons in promoting PVR in Australia?

11) Will the requirements for yearly repurchasing of seed or payment of royalties by farmers increase the cost of foodstuffs in Australia?

Recently, objectors to the Plant Variety Rights legislation have been attacked by the media for confusing the issue. A long two page article appeared in the Weekly Times, (Aug 13, 1980, p5/28,) detailing some "misconceptions"; but reinforcing some of the objector's fears.

The Larger companies figure prominently in the article. "The legislation is not aimed at the amateur, but at the larger companies who have the resources to carry out extensive breeding programs and who seek protection from others less reputable".

"While it is true that some of the smaller seed firms in Australia may be bought out by larger companies, as they have been in other countries of the world, it need not be bad. Large companies have far greater resources to put into plant breeding and the importation of improved protected varieties from overseas."

"The move into seed production....(by chemical firms).... is another means of capitalising on their positions in the market place, and is not necessarily a boost for their chemical sales."

"There is no intention in Australia to develop a National List," states the article, "and therefore there will be no restrictions on the range of varieties which may be offered for sale in this country."

"Much of the present controversy has arisen from the misconception that a national list will be formed, and that chemical firms will withdraw present hardy types and replace them with susceptible varieties which will not yield without chemical inputs.

Evidence from other countries which have had PBR for many years would indicate that agricultural and horticultural industries have blossomed since its introduction. Enormous sums of money have been invested in the betterment of crops, and much revenue has been gained by sales of seeds overseas."

(Note the question of "susceptible varities which will not yield without chemical inputs" was not answered, directly.)

PVR appears to invest more power and money into fewer large diversified multinational companies. Should a public property (seeds) be handed over to a few large corporations for private gain, while increasing the costs of seeds and providing few benefits that are not already available???

Groups lobbying for the introduction of PVR representing the major Australian and foreign seed corporations have received financial backing from industry for a 10 year fight!!!!!

AFTER THE D.M.R. .....

With the character of the Mountains changing with the widening of the Great Western Highway, perhaps now is an appropriate time to reflect on the prayer for the American Road Builders' Association;

" O Almighty God, who has given us this earth and has appointed men to have dominion over it, who has commanded us to make straight the highways, to lift up the valleys and to make the mountains low, we ask thy blessing upon these men who do just that. Fill them with a sense of accomplishment, not just for the roads built, but the ways opened for the lengthening of visions, the broader hopes and the greater joys which makes these highways a possibility for mankind.

Bless these, our Nation's road builders, and their friends. For the benefits we reap from their labors, we praise thee; may thy glory be revealed in us. Amen."

from "After the Planners"
by Robert Goodman Penguin 1972.