



STEP INC.

Community Based Environmental Conservation

NEWSLETTER

No 44, April 1990

GO BATTY WITH STEP

This is to remind you of our forthcoming members' evening on May 2. The Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony Committee will present slides, talk about bats, and introduce two tame grey-headed fruit bats for our enjoyment and interest. Do come and meet the "Bat People" and their charming, intelligent, furry friends. Note that we are starting early so that children can come too. Everyone is welcome - you don't need to be a member of STEP.

Place : Sports Hall, Auluba Rd, South Turramurra

Date : Wednesday 2 May, 1990

Time : 7.00 pm

We suggest you bring a donation (say \$2 each) for the KBCC.

LANE COVE VALLEY FREEWAY

The pamphlet we enclosed with the February newsletter has been widely distributed and received with interest. One of our members has sent a generous donation to assist with the cost of production, which we gratefully received. STEP records its appreciation of the substantial contribution made by John Burke, working on the Coalition team.

Extra copies of the pamphlet are now available. Phone the Assistant Secretary, Judy Meacham, 449 2843, with your requests.

FISHY MATTERS

One of our members, John Martyn, has been making some interesting observations on the native fish population in Twin Creeks Reserve. He has agreed to let STEP publish his findings in our newsletter.

Decline of Native Fish Populations in Twin Creeks Reserve,

John Martyn, Monteith St

19 December 1989

I have noticed a recent marked decline in the numbers of native gudgeon (*Gobiomorphus*) in the creeks of this reserve.

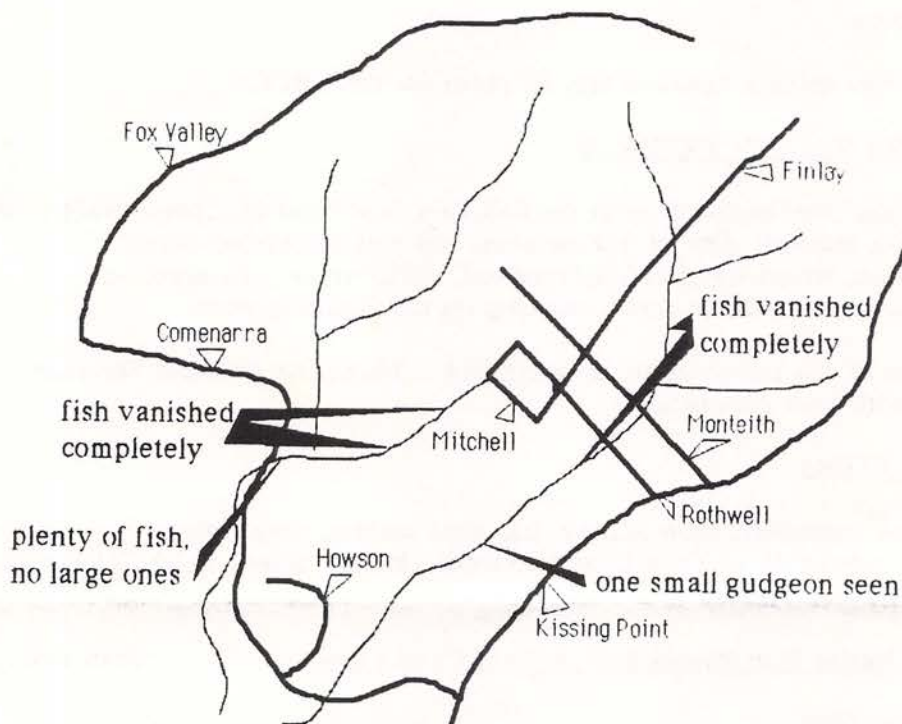
Until last year, gudgeon were common throughout the creek system, even in the upper reaches of the smaller tributaries. All sizes were present, from juveniles up to specimens more than 15 cms long. Recently I have checked various pools and likely hideouts and cannot find any fish longer than about 8cms. In the southern creek (see sketch) gudgeon seem to have vanished completely from the upper reaches. I only found one, about 2 cms long in a large pool midway between Rothwell Rd and Comenarra Parkway. They also seem to have disappeared from the small tributary at the bottom of Mitchell Crescent. This ceased to flow for long periods in the

drought years of the early 80s yet always carried a population of large gudgeon. They are still abundant in the Browns Field Creek just upstream of the Comenarra, but again there are no large fish.

I would be interested to know whether anybody else has noticed this decline, either in these watercourses, or others in the Lane Cove system. It seems to have occurred quite suddenly or rapidly over the past 12 months, and does not seem to have been due to an event in only one watercourse.

I enquired at the Australian Museum and they were not sure of what might be the reason for the decline, though apparently they have been recorded as disappearing from parts of the Nepean River system after exceptionally heavy rain, only to recolonise later. Of course we have had plenty of rain over the last few years, but why an effect only in the last 12 months? It will be interesting to see if they return in the future, though they will need to grow legs to scale the ledges and waterfalls of some of the smaller tributaries.

Incidentally, I have observed one specimen of each of two other native fish in the Twin Creeks Reserve, common galaxias (*G. maculatus*) and one of the two eel species. Both of these are migratory so seeing them is a matter of luck. There are as yet no mosquito fish there, though these are common around Browns Waterhole downstream.



28 February 1990

I have some further observations and thoughts on the decline of native fish in Twin Creeks Reserve:

One afternoon last week I noticed that the water in the southern creek (Monteith-Rothwell) had turned milky despite three days without significant rain (I have observed a similar phenomenon several times over the past two years). I reported this to Ku-ring-gai Council, but it was too late in the afternoon for them to send anyone to investigate that day. The

following day a Mr Brendan Bennett called me back to say that he and a colleague had visited the creek in the morning, but found that the water by that stage had cleared. I asked him what might have caused the discolouration and he told me that it was normally a consequence of illegal backwashing of swimming pools directly into creeks or stormwater drains, and that it was very hard to catch the culprits. He did not say, but I assume that the milkiness is from diatomaceous earth, which on the older type of filter is entirely expelled, and must be recharged following each backwash.

Of course with all the rain of the last three years there has been a great deal of water lost from pools, and much extra backwashing and wasting, perhaps even the odd catastrophe. Any pool (including our own) spills some water and chemicals onto the land and into the watercourses during heavy rain, though one would think the chemicals would be too diluted in those conditions to cause problems. However if a number of people are illegally flushing into the creeks in the days following rain when flow has returned to normal, it would certainly account for the widespread death or disappearance of fish, and explain why they have vanished most conspicuously in recent times.

On a more positive note I have observed a shoal of 7 or 8 galaxias in the pool just below the small causeway at the confluence of the creeks that flow from Mitchell Crescent and Browns Field. This pool also holds larger numbers of small gudgeon than anywhere else I have seen, and hopefully will be a source for recolonising the creek system.

ACCOUNTANT WANTED

STEP Inc needs some advice from an accountant. We are hoping that one of our accountant members could spare a little time to assist our Treasurer in the next few weeks. Please ring Geoff Suggate, 449 4029 if you can help.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

A march and rally in the Domain is being planned for SUNDAY 3 JUNE. A committee has been formed of representatives from many NSW environmental groups, and STEP endorses the concept. Further information from Janet Parker, 690 1977.

LANDCARE AND WATER BOARD GRANTS

STEP has made two proposals to the National Soil Conservation Program and one to the Water Board for substantial grants of money to allow us to supervise/undertake bush regeneration and run-off control works in the Ku-ring-gai municipality in 1991. Two of the proposals are made jointly with other local community groups, Ku-ring-gai Ratepayers Association, the Union of Lane Cove Valley Conservationists and Ku-ring-gai Bushland and Environmental Society. The initial Quarry Creek proposal has been refined and redefined, with substantial help from Tein McDonald of Ku-ring-gai Council. The STEP committee is excited about these developments and would like to record its thanks for the substantial work of Ralph Pridmore in preparing these applications. We could have one or more important demonstration projects on our hands.

THE STEP MAP

Production is going ahead at a steady pace. We're looking forward to announcing a launching date before too long.

DEGRADATION OF BUSHLAND PROJECT

The STEP Committee will be meeting with Robin Grimwade of Ku-ring-gai Council to discuss progress and problems.

BUSH REGENERATION

A gratifying number of people turned up for our first session in 1990. Remember, everyone is welcome, and you can come on a regular basis or an occasional basis - it all helps. We would like to remind you that when you work as a volunteer bush regenerator on a STEP project - which will have approved by Council - you are covered by Council's Voluntary Personal Accident Policy. However, children are not covered by this policy, so if you bring them along, please understand the legal situation.

Here are the dates for the next few months:

Dates : Mondays April 9, May 14, June 11
 Sundays April 22, May 27, June 24

Time : Monday 10.30-12.30, Sunday 2-4

Place : The culvert at the corner of Montrose & Rothwell Streets, Turramurra

MEMBERSHIP

A number of new members have joined this year. With this issue of our Newsletter non-financial members will receive a red sticker. This will be a final reminder. However, if you receive a red sticker and you believe that you are a financial member, please inform our Treasurer at once. Mistakes do happen occasionally, despite our best efforts.

TOTAL ENVIRONMENT CENTRE TOURS

This organisation runs interesting tours and trips. For example, Sunday May 6 - Reef Walk at Narrabeen, Sunday June 3 - Cruise on the Hawkesbury at Windsor. For details and booking form phone the TEC 241 1523.

"ENVIRONMENT 90"

This will be a specialised exhibition dealing with the protection and conservation of the environment to be held at Darling Harbour May 2-5. Some new products will be exhibited including SCRIMBER, a hardwood manufactured from pine prunings, air powered aerosols and bricks made from garbage.

This newsletter was compiled by Jenny Simons and Sue Jones.

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