



STEP INC.

Community Based Environmental Conservation

NEWSLETTER

No 47, October 1990

STEP's COMMITTEE

A new committee was elected at the Annual General Meeting in September and contains some new faces. Elected were John Burke (President), Sue Jones (Secretary), Geoff Suggate (Treasurer and Public Officer), Judy Meacham, Bruno Krockenberger, Harold Cogger, Yvonne Langshaw, Glenn Johnson, John Martyn and Helen Wortham.

JENNY SIMONS

Jenny Simons was unable to serve a third term as President because she is moving away from Sydney. We are very fortunate to have had Jenny in charge for the past two years. Her remarkable energy and ability with people has kept STEP's effectiveness and reputation at the highest level. We wish Jenny and John every happiness in their new home at Bowral, hope that they will continue to take an interest in STEP and look forward to seeing them at future STEP meetings and events.

STEP's MEMBERSHIP

While STEP had its beginnings in South Turrumurra our interests have spread to the whole of Ku-ring-gai and the surrounding areas. Bushland areas such as the Lane Cove Valley must be managed as a whole and hence it is pointless to restrict ourselves to a small section. Bushland throughout Ku-ring-gai and adjacent areas must all be well managed because it is interdependent. Thus we are seeking members from the whole of Ku-ring-gai and surrounding areas. The larger our membership base the more effective our opinions and representations will be. Our existing membership of about 350 is very good but we hope for a further increase over the next year. Please help by signing up any friends who may be interested.

THE MONA VALE ROAD CORRIDOR

The whole of the bushland corridor from St Ives to Terry Hills is destined to become a grubby strip development if current proposals are approved. Council wishes to lease the tree lopping tip to a private company for use as a recycling centre. Lined up to follow this are a crematorium and a bus depot. Once these are built there will be plenty of others to follow.

The Mona Vale ridge top bushland should be incorporated into the adjoining Davidson SRA on the east and into the National Park on the west. This ridge and part of that along the Wakehurst Parkway are the only remaining bush ridges draining into Sydney Harbour.

If you would like Mona Vale Rd to continue as a bushland parkway, if you believe that industrial enterprises should be restricted to industrial areas and that there should be a plan of management for all Crown Land in the area rather than ad-hoc development then please write to Nick Greiner, Parliament House, Sydney, 2000 or to Ku-ring-gai Council, P.O. Box 15, Gordon 2072.

STEP OPPOSES RECYCLING ??

If you have been reading carefully you saw in the above paragraph that we oppose the proposed recycling centre on Mona Vale Road. We have done this after a consideration of the Statement of Environmental Effects prepared for the Development Application and of other relevant matters. We aren't opposed to recycling of course but this particular proposal has many problems associated with it. If you would like a copy of our submission please ring John Burke on 487-3680 or write.

F-2 - CASTLEREAGH TOLLWAY - THE WOODWARD REPORT

This matter is important to STEP because of the general threat to bushland from roads and because of the particular threat to the Lane Cove Valley posed by the F2.

The proposed F-2 tollway from Pennant Hills Rd to Pittwater Rd at Ryde has been the subject of a Commission of Enquiry. In a comprehensive report Commissioner Woodward recommended against the construction of the F-2 and proposed that the need for the corridor be reviewed in 10 years. He proposed, inter-alia, an upgrading of existing roads, that the RTA do an adequate traffic analysis, that a review of growth and transport demands be carried out and that a public transport study be done. His report is a damning inditement of the Government's approach to the whole problem of transport.

The State Government does not seem too keen to accept its Commissioner's findings, however, and Hornsby, Baulkham Hills, Parramatta and Ryde Councils are stridently calling for the F-2 to be built. An emotional atmosphere prevails.

STEP has tried to distance itself from the emotion. We want answers to issues such as these.

- * We want to know why a tollway will reduce congestion on surrounding streets when it seems obvious that only when the discomfort from congestion in those streets exceeds the discomfort from paying the toll will the tollway be used at all.
- * We want to know how this proposal will be immune from the "Los Angeles Effect" whereby that city, with the world's greatest urban freeway system, also has the greatest traffic jams.
- * We believe that building this road will simply lead people to live further from work and to drive instead of using public transport. It will also provide the Government with an excuse to continue to ignore our total transport needs and the necessity for a plan for Sydney which provides for a maximum population level. The Commissioner reckons that, if the F-2 is built, the current congestion will return in 10 years, we think much sooner, but the principle is the same.

The F-2 will cause the removal of urban bushland along over half its route, an important issue in itself, but if the road won't do anything to improve traffic congestion and in fact will make congestion worse then it will fail on that criteria, independent of the environmental issues.

HARLEY WRIGHT GIVES AMAZING TALK

At the A.G.M. on 13th Sept. Dr Harley Wright talked about the effect of nutrients on bushland. The 50 or so people present were fascinated to have the intricacies of a large part of bushland management science explained so clearly. Harley is a chemist and pioneer of study into the way our urban society poisons the bush and the ways in which this may be countered. Thanks Harley.

If you want a copy of Harley's paper ring John Burke on 487-3680 or write.

MORE FISHY MATTERS -- another report from John Martyn

"The decline of the permanent native fish population in the creeks of the Twin Creeks Reserve area may now have reached its conclusion. Recently I could see no fish in the stretch of water between Brown's Field and the Comenarra Parkway which is the only place I could find them a few months ago. I say "recently" because that was when the water was clear enough to see into. Now it is not possible to see the bottom in the pools and there is an unmistakable whiff of sewage in the air. I will keep looking, because sometimes the bottom dwelling gudgeon are hard to see, but I fear the worst. It seems that some authority, possibly the Water Board, is aware of a sewage leak because about three months ago the water was lurid green for a while from a tracer dye. As we hear through the media, illegal direction of storm runoff into the sewage system is a problem for the Water Board, but the reverse process is happening, continuously, not just in heavy rain.

On a recent all-day bushwalk (using the STEP map of course) we crossed many Lane Cove tributaries, none of which looked clean, but one is absolutely foul. This is Devlin's creek which drains from North Epping and includes the surprisingly large and otherwise attractive pools of Duckys Waterholes. My son once saw a very groggy eel in there which was undoubtedly regretting it had left the ocean. I can't imagine anything else surviving.

It seems that ocean and beach pollution is not the only outcome of Sydney's antiquated sewage system. The local ocean environment has the potential to recover if cared for, but it is unlikely that any mechanism exists to return the Lane Cove River waterways to their original state even if any authority had the motivation to attempt it."

John's report is of course a sad reminder of the way we are still treating the natural world around us. STEP will be writing to the State Government about it. If you would like to help please write to Tim Moore, Parliament House, Sydney 2000. He is the Minister responsible for the Water Board and the Environment.

MAGPIES, BUTCHERBIRDS AND KAMIKAZE ATTACKS

Another insight into the world of birds by Dariel Larkins.

"During July I was reminded that the Black-backed Magpie breeding season was underway when a male of the species, splendid in his fresh black and white plumage, (the female has an ashy-grey nape), perched on my Hills Hoist and tried to unravel the clothes line. Sometimes I've seen nesting magpies flying off with wire coat hangers, so I watched and soon found the nest site about 30m up in an old Blackbutt.

Some literature on nests tells us that magpies use wire if suitable sticks aren't available, but this habit seems to be common and reflects the species' ability to exploit its environment. Local birds obviously prefer wire to sticks, at least for the outer nest, tidying up the neighbourhood for us as a bonus.

Breeding magpies are unpopular because of their savage Kamikaze attacks. As they are a cryptic species, keeping to the trees and bushland and wearing camouflage plumage, it is less well known that Grey butcherbirds also behave this way. Magpie fledglings are clumsy fliers and may flop into low bushes or onto the ground. The parents' anxiety is then directed into flying attacks and squawking at innocent and not-so-innocent passers-by, including cats. During a three year study of Grey butcherbirds in the Aluba Reserve (Turrumurra) I found they made no attacks while incubating eggs or early nestlings. However, when the young were ready to leave the nest the parents were extremely worried. Their attacks on intruders were restricted to within a radius

of 45m from the nest.

Kamikaze attacks therefore occur for a very limited period considering the rather lengthy breeding season. It is annoying to be attacked in the street by the same birds that ignore you in the garden, but such behaviour suggests the birds do not recognise individuals. They may accept habitual activity near a nest, but don't know you in the street. The best defence is a hat and a stick. If you are brave, perhaps reckless, turn and give the attacker a direct stare, the "fish-eye". This diverts and allays the attack.

Both the male Black-backed magpie and Grey butcherbird carol beautifully in the breeding season. These songs are uttered at first light from the "singing-tree", and are a very early signal that breeding is underway. This tree and the nesting tree may vary from season to season. Breeding song is very soft and brief at first, but increases in duration and volume a little each morning to a climax, after which it subsides day by day until the season closes when the carols cease.

If you are an early riser you may enjoy the glorious carols of your local singer in winter and spring. It is interesting that only dominant magpies hold territory. Subordinate bachelors and spinsters collect in a gaggle elsewhere. Young unattached butcherbirds wander, perhaps looking for an unoccupied territory and a mate. Both butcherbirds and magpies are excellent mimics of other birds, including magpies and butcherbirds.

An immature Grey Butcherbird banded near the Pennant Hills Park archery range by S.G. (Bill) Lane on 12 June 1972, has been a visitor to residences in Hicks Ave. and Canoon Rd., Turrumurra over a period of 18 years after banding. It recently bred in the park on the corner of Hicks and Parkinson Avenues. This is the oldest breeding and longevity record for the species."

In future newsletters we hope to print more of Dariel's writings on birds.

BUSH REGENERATION AT TWIN CREEKS RESERVE

Bush regeneration is continuing at Twin Creeks Reserve. Dates for the rest of the year are Sunday 28th Oct, 25th Nov and 23rd Dec. Meet at the corner of Montrose St and Rothwell Rd Turrumurra at 2pm. All welcome.

STEP MAP LAUNCH

The STEP map of walking tracks in the Lane Cove Valley was launched by Tim Moore on 19th August with supporting speeches from Ku-ring-gai's Mayor Richard Lennon and Elaine Malicki in front of a large crowd. The map has received wide support and hundreds of copies have so far been sold.

This newsletter was compiled by John Burke.

President
John Burke
116 Browns Rd
Wahroonga 2076
487-3680

Secretary
Sue Jones
40 Howson Ave
Turrumurra
449 4718

Treasurer
Geoff Suggate
43 Bowen Ave
Turrumurra
449 4029