



STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978 No 59 October 1992

FROGS AND REPTILES TALK & WALK



WEDNESDAY & SUNDAY



On Wednesday 28th October at 7.45 pm Dr Hal Cogger, Deputy Director of the Australian Museum and a STEP committee member will talk at St Andrews Hall corner of Vernon & Chisholm Sts, Turramurra

On Sunday 1st November Hal will lead our bushwalk. Meet on the corner of Dawson Ave and Ferguson Ave, Thornleigh at 2 pm. This will be an opportunity to see the Spring wildflowers and also, weather permitting, to meet up with some of the frogs or reptiles that Hal is so expert in. Darrel Larkins will be on hand to help with bird watching and identification. Afternoon tea will be served after the walk.

that we know about is the Australian Bush Heritage Fund which was set up by Bob Brown and which is expanding from Tasmania to other states. The problem of dealing with private bushland which should be saved is a most difficult one. Few owners will hand over their land gratis and the current options revolve about some sort of legal process to protect or acquire it. Governments buy land for national parks but the backlog there is so long and funds so hard to come by that a private initiative would provide an alternative.

For information on ABHF write to 102 Bathurst St, Hobart, 7000.



CONTAINER DEPOSIT LEGISLATION

The crisis in the garbage disposal industry is helping to turn our attention to the need for container deposit legislation (CDL). This has been introduced into South Australia and into American States such as Michigan, Oregon and Maine with great success. Because of this very good information is available on the impact of CDL.

The effects include;

- Reduced total solid waste about 5%
- Reduced container industry energy consumption 40%
- Reduced beverage container litter by 70 to 90%
- Reduced cost of drinks by up to 40%
- Reduced imports of raw materials
- Creation of over 3,000 jobs in NSW
- Reduced unsustainable level of resource consumption

Why the Delay?

With all these benefits the obvious question is why hasn't it already been done? It seems that the answer is that there is a very powerful container manufacturer lobby which doesn't want its output

reduced by 80%. The shift to disposable containers has reduced the number of NSW soft drink manufacturers from 135 to 27 since 1974 and reduced employment in that industry by 54% to 1,600. The capital intensive plants would be very much at risk from CDL.

This is an issue which is easily understood by every consumer and it is an area where we can all have an impact. Why not insist on buying milk in bottles and save 6 cents a litre while helping to save the milk bottle from its imminent extinction. Draft CDL legislation is, or soon will be, before parliament - why not write to your local member or the Premier and ask them to support it.

This article draws on Container Deposit Legislation for NSW, Bringing Back Returnables, by Peter Hopper, FOE, Aug 1992

BUYING BACK THE BUSH

In the USA there is an organisation called the Nature Conservancy which buys endangered land. It began to have a real effect in 1953 and by 1987 it had amassed 2,610,000 acres. It operates quietly in a non-confrontationist way and obviously has some rich benefactors. (Time, February 9, 1987)

The only equivalent in Australia

FIELD GUIDE PROGRESS

The Field Guide to the Lane Cove Valley is well advanced, with detailed descriptions of 5 bushwalks now completed. Now is the best flowering season and easier recognition of plants has led to three additions to the flora list as published in the STEP Plan Of Management. These are the Red Beard Orchid (*Calochilus paludosus*), The mat rush *Lomandra cylindrica*, and the pea-flowered *Phyllota grandiflora*. The planned deadline for publishing is March-April 1993, but there is a lot of work ahead to meet this.

The final result will be about 50 pages long, copiously illustrated with maps, and plant and fauna drawings, all computer-generated, will contain sections on history, geology, fauna, flora including fungi, and 8 or 9 separate bushwalks through most of the upper valley down to West Killara. It will contain updated flora and fauna lists (unfortunately including a greatly expanded weed section).

DOES ANYONE HAVE AN APPLE MAC?

John Martyn would appreciate help in compiling and updating the flora and fauna lists and needs a volunteer with a Mac and a spreadsheet program. If you can help please contact John on 488 8339.

RAINFOREST PLANTS IN THE LANE COVE VALLEY

by Dr John Martyn

Locally we do not have a classic rainforest with giant buttressed trees, but we do have a significant number of plants and plant communities of rainforest, or more correctly, closed forest affinity. These occupy the deeper, moister, lush parts of the Lane Cove Valley system. Because of the weed prone nature of these sites the communities are threatened by most of the worst weeds that infest the Sydney area.

This article is a brief introduction to the rainforest plants in the valley and is intended to provide an additional focus of interest for bushwalkers and visitors, and to increase awareness of these fragile communities. Native *Hydrangea* (*Abrophyllum ornans*) for example has only recently been reported from the area, and it is certain that more discoveries are to be made.

Some rainforest plants such as Coachwood (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*) and Sweet Pittosporum (*P. undulatum*) are widespread and common, forming dense thickets of small trees and saplings along shady creeks and gullies such as lower Boy Scouts Creek, the stream above Avondale Dam, and at intervals along the Lane Cove River and Devlins Creek. These are often unaccompanied by other rainforest species. White Cherry (*Schizomeria ovata*) which resembles Coachwood, Sandpaper Fig (*Ficus coronata*), and Grey Myrtle (*Backhousia myrtifolia*) are also scattered through the valley but are much less common.

There are, however, a few more localised pockets where a broader spectrum of plants occurs, and these are the focus of the article.



Backhousia myrtifolia
Grey Myrtle

There are four significant rainforest localities in the upper part of the valley:

Browns Field at Wahroonga and the creek downstream.

The west slope of the Lane Cove Valley at Lorna Pass, Thornleigh.

A small patch of closed forest on Devlins Creek just upstream from Whale Rock.

Along the Great North walk near the Lane Cove River adjoining the STEP Track, South Turramurra.

Browns Field

This is the best known and documented, having been the subject of a special section in STEP's own bushland Plan Of Management volume which includes a list of the plants occurring here. It occupies the uncleared part of the site of an ancient volcanic centre and surrounds an oval. The weathered volcanic rocks have generated unusually fertile soils. Many plants here and for a kilometre or more downstream do not occur or are extremely rare elsewhere in the valley. Principal of these is Sassafras (*Doryphora sassafras*) a tree familiar to walkers in the ravines of the Blue Mountains. It has attractive, aromatic, toothed leaves, and masses of white flowers in spring. Also believed to be restricted to this part of the valley is the tree Native Laurel (*Cryptocarya glaucescens*), the shrub *Wilkiea huegeliana* with its tough prickly leaves, the climbers Lawyer Vine (*Smilax australis*) and Water Vine (*Cissus antarctica*), and cabbage tree palms (*Livistona australis*). The familiar Lillypilly (*Acmena smithii*) is particularly common at Browns Field but rare elsewhere in the valley. The graceful fern-leaved wattle *Acacia schinoides*, Coachwood, and Grey Myrtle grow prolifically along the stream banks but these are also common elsewhere.

The Browns Field vegetation was particularly badly damaged by the January 1991 storm, but recovery

is being greatly assisted by an active local bushcare group which includes STEP members, and also by the Council's bushcare work.

Lorna Pass

The Lorna Pass walking track follows the junction between tall forest, and rainforest vegetation which forms a narrow strip along the lower valley slope. The flora is dominated by Coachwood with some quite tall specimens. Grey Myrtle is also common, as is the small tree or shrub Muttonwood (*Rapanea variabilis*) which has variable leaves sometimes resembling English Holly. Lillypilly occurs close to the river where Rock Felt Fern (*Pyrrosia rupestris*) grows over mossy boulders.

The elegant foliage of the shrub Tree Heath (*Trochocarpa laurina*) with its wine red to lime-coloured new growth is a conspicuous sight along the walking track. Another shrub with attractive leaves, Native *Hydrangea*, may also be found. A wide range of shade-loving climbers and ground covers also grows here.

Lorna Pass is easily reached from Thornleigh Oval, from the Great North Walk, or from the sandstone cutting on the Comenarra Parkway. Try a walk along the actual river bed upstream from the Great North Walk crossing.



Ceratopetalum apetalum
Coachwood

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR THE 14th AGM, 16th September 1992

STEP has had a busy year which has been characterised by steady progress. Our urban natural and unbuilt environment continues to be threatened from a number of directions.

NEWSLETTERS

Five newsletters have been issued in the year. These go to members and also to a free list of Aldermen, local politicians and other groups.

We have increased the number of articles relating to flora and fauna.

ACTIVITIES

In November John Martyn presented a fascinating talk on the wildflowers of W.A.

In April Yvonne & Fred Langshaw led a bushwalk in the Lorna Pass - Conscript Pass area of the Lane Cove Valley. Both this & John's talk were very well attended.

At this AGM Dr Chris Dickman and Dr Ashok Rathore are to speak on the problems with feral animals.

COMMITTEE

Your Committee met monthly.

FINANCES

STEP continues to be in a sound financial position. Accounts for 91-92 are available at the AGM. Bruno Krockenberger has done a marvellous job as treasurer.

REPRESENTATION

STEP is represented on these permanent bodies;

Ku-ring-gai Council's Bushland Management Working Party; St Ives Wildflower Garden Committee; The Lane Cove Valley Total Catchment Management Committee; The Union of Lane Cove Valley Conservationists.

In addition we are involved in;

A committee of the UTS, local residents and other parties concerned with the proposed access road from Lady Game Drive

A committee set up by Council to

look at strategies for dealing with urban consolidation

A committee which is attempting to save from development and regenerate a ridgetop in Fox Valley
Various other meetings and ad-hoc committees dealing with a range of environmental matters.

ISSUES

The newsletters cover the issues in detail but some of the key ones are;

Urban Consolidation

This is a sensitive issue. The proponents have often been environmentalists or people who have extolled the environmental benefits of urban consolidation. We have, however, identified many environmental problems associated with it and have drafted a policy which opposes consolidation in the form being implemented by the State Government.

Feral and Pet Animals

This is another sensitive issue which we first canvassed in a newsletter almost two years ago. The times have moved with us however and the effect of introduced animals on our native fauna is now being publicly debated. We hope to eventually see koalas, wallabies and other locally extinct animals back in our bushland.

Freeways

STEP made substantial submissions to the new F2 Freeway EIS and to the RTA Future Directions initiative. There is no doubt that the conventional wisdom on the benefit of urban freeways has shifted considerably for the better over the last few years. STEP member Caron Morrison has been one of the most effective people in the State in this area.

One good result during the year was the release of the corridor from St Ives to Dee Why through the Garrigal National Park.

Private Bushland

Another initiative during the year has been to look at areas of bushland held in private hands. There is always the possibility of arranging for preservation of some areas once the owners realise their value or by

arranging commercial tradeoffs.

Mona Vale Rd

The fight for the Mona Vale corridor continues with the threat of a bus depot opposite the Showground still being very real.

WALKING TRACKS

Committee member John Martyn has made a good start on a book of local bushwalks. The book will contain a commentary on the walk and botanical & other details. John is expert with computer graphics and we shall be publishing a high quality product for general sale.

KU-RING-GAI COUNCIL

We have been mildly critical of the dissension within Council between Aldermen. It's not our role to become involved in politics, however, except the politics of conservation.

Those who we supported at the election, Peter Derwent, Janet Fairlie-Cuninghame, Elaine Malicki and Robert Pallin have given us no reason to doubt their basic, active commitment to conservation & environmental issues.

We have had discussions on various issues over time with Malcolm Patterson, Tony Hall, Richard Geddes and David Barnett and find them approachable and in agreement with us more often than not. We don't yet know Geoff Swinson and Ted Roach too well but see neither of them as a threat to the environment of Ku-ring-gai.

THE NEXT YEAR

In the next year the new Planning Scheme being drafted by Council will require input from us. One of our problems is attending to all the issues in sufficient detail and there is enough work on just the issues listed in this report to see us through the whole year.

I wish to thank the STEP Committee who have worked so hard all year and our hundreds of members who continue to support us. Without you our efforts would lack credibility. We look forward to a productive year and to meeting many of you at our functions.

KOALAS IN FOCUS

The Zoo needs eucalypt leaves to feed the koalas at Taronga and will come to collect any which you can spare. They do not have access to a sustainable plantation supply and therefore must collect from the wild or from private sources.

The species are;

E. punctata Grey Gum
E. tereticornis Forest Red Gum
E. camaldulensis River Red Gum

E. viminalis Manna Gum
E. nichollii Sydney peppermint
E. microcorys Tallow-wood
E. robusta Swamp Mahogany
E. scoparia Wallangara
White Gum

Other plants which the Zoo can use are Mulberry, Hibiscus, Grevillea, Callistemon, Bamboo, Banana, Acacias and Ficus spp.

To help ring Michael Dixon, Richard Blacklock or Warren Townsden on 969 2777 ext. 290

MORRISON FOR NRMA

STEP member Caron Morrison is standing for election as a NRMA Councillor.

Few people have worked as hard on or know as much about our road system, congestion and its causes & the transport needs of the future.

Caron will effectively represent the environment and road users. Please vote for her by 29th Oct.

President

John Burke
116 Browns Rd

Secretary

Sue Jones
40 Howson Ave

Treasurer

Bruno Krockenburger
47 Bowen Ave

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REPTILES talk and walk

Dr. HAL COGGER,

Deputy Director of The Australian Museum will give a TALK on the reptiles and amphibians of our area on WEDNESDAY 28th OCTOBER, followed by a GUIDED BUSHWALK in the Lane Cove Valley on SUNDAY 1st NOVEMBER.

See inside for details.