

# STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978 No. 60 Feb. 1993

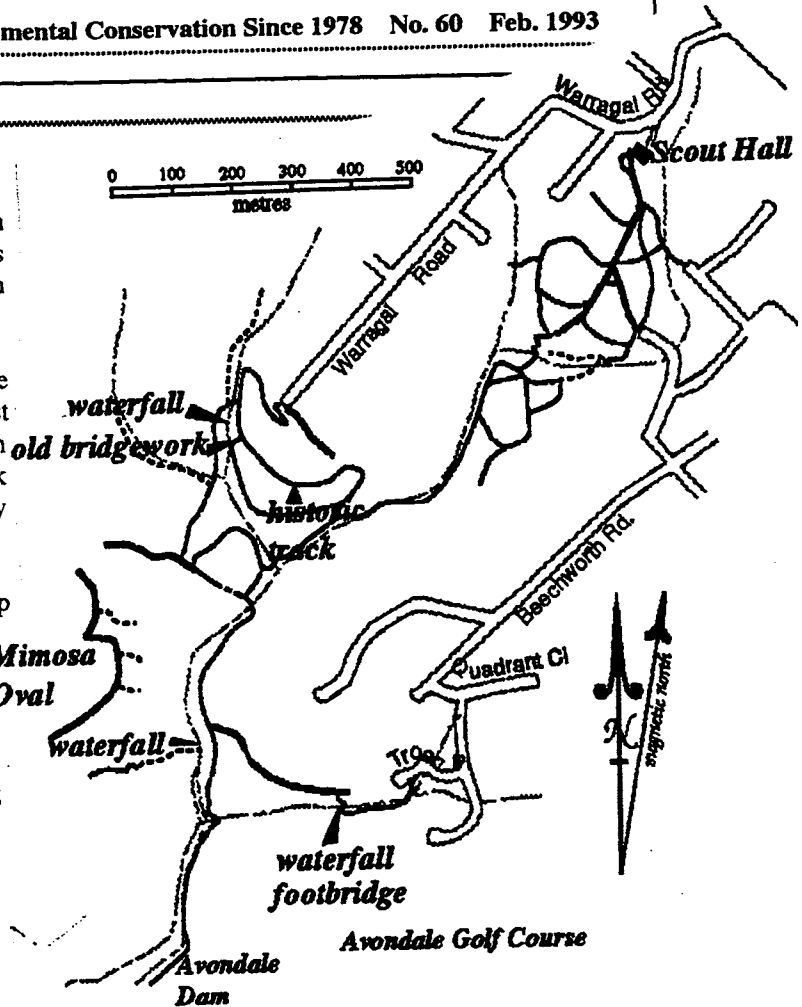
## THREE WATERFALLS BUSHWALK

The THREE WATERFALLS WALK - from Sheldon Forest through Rofe park to Avondale Dam and return is the first STEP bushwalk for the year and will be held on Sunday April 18 at 1.30 pm.

This walk features three of the highest waterfalls in the Lane Cove valley, with interesting fern species, the best example of shale-based ground-flora on public land in the Catchment, a historic track and bridgework constructed during the great Depression, and hopefully some beautiful and bizarre fungi.

The walk is about 3 hours and features some steep scrambling sections and several creek crossings.

Meet at the scout hall in Warragal Rd at Oval  
1.30 pm on Sunday 18th April.



## CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY - SUNDAY MARCH 7th

STEP has organised the cleanup at one site and is assisting at another. Please turn up at one if you can. Both offer beautiful scenery. Come at 9am, bring gloves, sensible shoes and tools such as rakes.

**EITHER**

**Buckham (Blaxland) Falls** in the Lane Cove Valley catchment. This beautiful area is right next to Macquarie shopping centre but few know it exist. Meet at the end of Alma Rd Macquarie Park. John Martyn has organised this one.

**OR**

**Terreys Green** next to (or in) **Garrigal National Park**. Meet on the corner of Mona Vale Rd and Forest Way. There will be signs directing you to the entrance on the S-E corner. Park near the fruit market and walk across the road. Organised by National Parks.

## POPULATION IMPACT AWARENESS DAY

Sydney's population has doubled three times this century and growth is set to continue. Development of infrastructure for the North-West Sector around Rouse Hill is well under way so that another 250,000 or so people can be packed in there. It is State Government policy to encourage us to invest in dual occupancies by filling up our backyards with more houses and people. We are unable to solve our river and air pollution and road congestion problems now and yet are rushing into more of the same.

There will be a rally on Sunday July 11 at First Fleet Park, Circular Quay.

Dr Tim Flannery, Senior Research Scientist at the Australian Museum has written - "The issue of world overpopulation has surfaced as one of the great threats to the environment. Yet, many Australians assume that overpopulation is somebody else's problem. Because of our uniquely impoverished soils, erratic climate, the need to grow non food crops and conserve some natural forest on better soils, some scientists estimate that an optimum population for Australia is between 6 and 12 million."

We shall remind you about this rally in the next newsletter.

## URBAN CONSOLIDATION - STEP POLICY STATEMENT

*In past newsletters we have introduced the subject of urban consolidation as an environmental issue. This arose because in so many areas we kept coming up against population growth as being the real enemy of conservation and the main long term threat to the environment. The issue has been fully discussed within the STEP Committee and the views of members called for. If you have queries about this policy we would be delighted to hear from you*

STEP opposes urban consolidation as provided for by the current laws of NSW because it will lead to the degradation of both the natural and built environment of Ku-ring-gai.

**1 STEP approves of urban consolidation which has as its aim:**

- i The renewal of rundown or depopulated areas of Sydney which have been densely developed in the past.
- ii Housing, such as retirement villages, which is necessary to balance the housing stock in a particular area.

**2 STEP opposes urban consolidation which has as its aim;**

- i Housing an ever increasing population.
- ii Allowing more people to enjoy the lifestyle prevalent in a particular area if their presence modifies that lifestyle.
- iii Satisfying a State Government arbitrary planning decision which is clearly against the wishes of the local community.

**3 STEP calls for full community participation in the development of a plan to take the Sydney area through its next century.**

### BACKGROUND

Urban consolidation impacts upon the natural, social and built environment. Of particular concern is its capacity to alter our environment piece by piece with the end result being totally unenvisaged by the proponents and the community. The matters which have been considered in formulating the STEP policy include;

1 If the population of Sydney is to keep increasing without limit then urban consolidation is a palliative rather than a cure for urban sprawl. The current sprawl will be slowed but will inevitably continue as existing opportunities for consolidation are exhausted and as people demand relief from medium and high density living.

2 People in Sydney now have clear choices between medium and high density living in the various suburbs. Some elect the sort of density we have in Ku-ring-gai rather than properties of equal value in, say, the eastern suburbs. If the character of Ku-ring-gai is to be changed then the whole community must be consulted. It is most doubtful whether the community would approve a plan which would change the character of Ku-ring-gai.

3 Any planning decision with the potential to have such a severe impact on the natural, built and social environment really should be the subject of an EIS process rather than the product of ad-hoc decision making.

4 Proponents of urban consolidation are attempting to hijack the community's social conscience by pretending that it is the socially responsible course of action. They refer, for instance, to the opportunity to save urban bushland now being taken for housing. It is only if that urban bushland can be put into permanent reserves, however, that it will be "saved" - otherwise its destruction is only delayed while the basic problems fuelling the need for more housing are ignored.

5 The dual occupancy provisions are especially insidious because they provide a financial mechanism to drive urban consolidation along. There is a clear financial opportunity in being able to put one or more houses, strata titled, in your backyard. Of course as soon as this process starts in a street or precinct a domino effect can also occur as everyone cashes in then moves out to a less crowded area.

## RAINFOREST PLANTS IN THE LANE COVE VALLEY

by Dr John Martyn (continued)

*In the last newsletter we printed the first part of this article. John there described the general position with rainforest in the valley and described the Browns Field and Lorna Pass areas.*

### Devlins Creek

The vegetation thickens along Devlins Creek upstream from Whale Rock, and the dark green thicket of small trees includes Coachwood, Privet, Grey Myrtle, the wattle *Acacia schinoides*, and White Cherry. On the opposite bank there is a small, dark closed forest of Coachwood (with one large White Cherry) poor in species but a good example of a closed canopy. The floor is open and covered with gristle fern. At the west end the rosey stems of Five Leaf Water Vine (*Cissus hypoglauca*) climb some 20 metres into the canopy. The place is unfortunately weed-prone with numerous Privet seedlings and Wandering Jew, but the darkness of the canopy will hopefully suppress a major invasion.

### Upper Lane Cove River

Rainforest species occur sporadically along the full length of the river, never quite forming a dense community anywhere but providing an interesting hunting ground for the enthusiast.

The section of the river adjoining the STEP Track is perhaps the most diverse. Coachwood, Sandpaper Fig, Muttonwood, and White Cherry occur here, and in October the scented creamy-white flowers of the rather lanky, weed-like shrub *Commersonia fraseri* are much in evidence. It is the climbers that are most conspicuous however. Native Passion Flower (*Passiflora herbertiana*) is more abundant here than anywhere else in the valley. It flowers reluctantly, but produces striking,

ornate, creamy-yellow to green flowers about 8 cms across. Snake Vine (*Stephania japonica*) and Pearl Vine (*Sarcopetalum harveyanum*) are at least as common here as at Browns Field, and the small, slender climber *Tylophora barbata* can also be found. Five Leaf Water Vine grows with weed-like vigour sprawling and climbing into the trees, which include some beautiful Sydney Blue Gums, Blackbutts, Turpentine and Angophoras. On the major left hand bend in the river, a small track leads to the opposite bank, where downstream you may find Native Peach (*Trema aspera*), Kangaroo Apple (*Solanum aviculare*), Lillypilly (*Acmena smithii*), and Scrub Beefwood (*Stenocarpus salignus*).

The weed threat to this plant community is more strikingly demonstrated here than anywhere else. The Water Board are actively spending your environmental levy money in weed removal and bush regeneration along this section of the river, but the task is enormous.

### STEP Track

The STEP Track has recently been upgraded by the Council, with steps constructed on steep sections. Take the southern section that heads due north up the spur from the Great North Walk. This leads to a beautiful Coachwood glade on a small clear stream. Ferns proliferate here, and just downstream from where the track meets the glade there is a mass of King Fern (*Todea barbara*), uncommon elsewhere in the valley.

Enjoy your walks and if you come across something of interest, a new plant species for the valley perhaps, please contact John Martyn (488 8339) who is updating the flora list as an appendix to the field guide.

## UTS ACCESS ROAD

We last mentioned the proposed road in newsletter 56 in April 92. There has been some progress since.

The problem involved three sets of interests, the local residents, the University, and the bushland.

For many years the residents at Lindfield near the UTS have been plagued by traffic and noise as the only access to the university is through local streets. They want an alternative access with the existing Eton Road access used only for emergency vehicles. The university wants to expand but can only do this if it solves the traffic problems. It proposed a new access road through bushland to Lady Game Drive. This threatened one of the best areas of bushland within Ku-ring-gai and was opposed by National Parks, by STEP, Kubes and other groups.

National Parks had the power to refuse permission for the road and did so (it passes through a strip of their land). This produced an impasse with no-one particularly happy. The apparent victory for the environment was a very temporary and unsatisfactory one in our view. So long as the land remains without being locked up permanently there is risk that it will be lost to development.

A breakthrough came when the engineering assumptions behind the location of the road were questioned. It was found that a previously discarded route along one edge of the bushland was feasible and a redesign has been carried out. The university has agreed to sign a conservation agreement for most of the best bushland which will effectively lock it up forever.

If the agreement proceeds it will be the best example of cooperation between protagonists that we have seen. Andrew Skidmore representing the residents, Ken Doyle from the UTS and Robert Pallin representing the State Recreation Trust as well as the NPWLS staff have all been particularly constructive.

## MOUNTAIN BIKES IN BUSHLAND

Ku-ring-gai Council recently commissioned a study on the feasibility of allowing mountain bikes on fire trails within the Municipality. Evidently National Parks has allowed a commercial operator to conduct rides within Ku-ring-gai Chase.

STEP will be commenting on this

proposal and is, at this stage, opposed to it. Our reasons are that we are not convinced that there is a real grass roots demand for it and that there seems to be conflict between the high energy, high speed sport of mountain bike riding and the passive recreation needs of bushwalking and otherwise enjoying the bush.

If you have an opinion please let us know.

## BUSHROCK

STEP members are probably aware that the harvesting of bushrock for landscaping is destroying habitat for reptiles and other fauna. It is illegal to take bushrock without a permit.

Please don't buy bushrock under any circumstances and show your disapproval to any garden centre which stocks it.

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## DIARY REMINDER

**Sunday 7th March** Clean Up Australia Day 9 am Bring gloves, shoes and tools

**EITHER**

**Alma Rd Macquarie Park**

**OR**

**Mona Vale Rd and Forest Way**

**Sunday 18 th April** Three Waterfalls bushwalk, meet at Warragal Rd Scout Hall at 1.30 pm

**Sunday 11th July** Population Impact Awareness Day, First Fleet Park, Circular Quay