



STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978. No.70 March 1995

COMING EVENTS

HERITAGE WEEK -- April 2 to 9, 1995, is heritage week this year. The National Trust is again organising this event, and encouraging everybody to become involved. Although STEP has not arranged any special activities for this purpose this year (we plead preoccupation with the launch of the Field Guide), we are participating in the display organised by Ku-ring-gai Council at the Local History Centre with our display board, with a view to raising the public awareness and appreciation of our natural bushland, and especially with the promotion of the Field Guide for that purpose. We urge members to visit the Local History Centre, where the heritage display will be open throughout the month of April, and to keep their eyes open for other events during Heritage Week.

AUTUMN BUSHWALK -- The STEP autumn bushwalk will take in the Blackbutt Reserve in Gordon on Sunday, April 23, at 2.00 pm. That is the weekend after Easter, so put it in your diary now. We will give you more detail in the April Newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP-- Please note that if you have not yet paid your membership subscription for 1995, it is now due, and your status will be displayed on the address label to remind you. Your prompt action will make it easier to meet our obligations and to keep our records straight.

NSW STATE ELECTION (25/3/95)-- Election time is the time when you can exert your influence to make Government more responsive to your concerns. The problems on the environmental front created by Government action or inaction are enormous. And every one of us has some concern, which falls into that category, be it deforestation, transport, waste management, dual occupancy, or whatever. Now is the time to tell your MP or candidate about your concerns. The environment needs every bit of support it can get.

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA Sunday 5th March was unfortunately a wet and miserable day, but in spite of this some 20 hardy folks turned up. The group worked at the end of Kissing Point Rd., and Canoon Rd. The workers were bemused by the youngsters sitting on the fences after their games watching the clean up work. Maybe next year we will be able to enthuse them to help. Thanks to Jennifer Schwarz and John Martyn, who supervised.

BOOK LAUNCH

Thursday 2nd February, 1995, saw the official launch of our latest publication, "*A Field Guide to the Bushland of the Upper Lane Cove Valley*", by John Martyn.

The meeting was under the control of Master of Ceremonies Glenn Johnson, who provided a resume of the history, activities and objectives of STEP, and then introduced Robyn Williams, ABC Science Presenter, to perform the launch. In his speech, Robyn referred to the user-friendly structure of the guide, the overview followed by detailed walks and concluding with details of flora and fauna.

He also referred to the excellent scientific information contained in the guide, and the marvellous illustrations, all computer generated,

which would make it possible to identify and appreciate the flora and fauna, which nature presents in our bushland.

Robyn also deplored the public vandalism, which allows projects like the M2 motorway to destroy sections of this very bushland in the face of overwhelming evidence that urban motorways are self-defeating and unable to provide solutions to a city's transport requirements. He quoted the British experience with it's motorways, of which he had some recent experience. Some 150 STEP members and guests were present to mark the launch, and engaged in conversation before and after the official proceedings, and enjoyed refreshments in a convivial atmosphere. The invited guests represented a very

wide cross-section of the community. The local Member of Parliament for Gordon, the Mayors of Hornsby, Ku-ring-gai, Willoughby and Lane Cove were present, Councillors, members of community groups, scout leaders, and members of staff of the Councils, National Parks and Wildlife Service, as well as other special guests honoured STEP with their attendance.

The author took great care to ensure that all those who had contributed, collaborated or influenced the book were duly acknowledged in his speech, which wound up the formal part of the launch.

Prior to that he had presented a special bottle of vintage red from his own cellar to Robyn Williams in appreciation of his imprimatur on the launch, and in turn received a

small gift for assisting the promotion of one of STEP's objectives, to raise the awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of our natural bushland, by his dedicated work on the Field Guide.

RECYCLING

Sue Jones has provided the following information about recycling household wastes:



Corks -- The Girl Guide

Association collects corks for recycling. These can be left at the Glengarry State Training Centre, Miowera Rd., North Turramurra. The recycled corks are re-used and processed in Australia to produce gaskets, cricket balls, safety floor mats and other industrial products. Funds raised in this way are used to support environmental programs, and the use of recycled cork products helps reduce the volume of cork which would otherwise have to be harvested and imported into Australia.

Waxed cardboard -- Clean milk and juice containers can be left in the marked container at the BP Service Station, Pacific Highway, Pymble.

Plastic bags -- Clean shopping bags (from any retailer) can be left in the marked bin at Woolworths supermarkets.

Steel cans -- Can be left at the Ryde Transfer Station. The station also takes vehicle batteries and scrap metals (eg white goods).

Plastic containers -- Any bottles or containers carrying the recycling symbol and the numbers

1, 2 or 3 can be left at the Ryde Transfer Station.

Ku-ring-gai Council collects glass (not broken), aluminium cans, PET plastic and paper products in the weekly kerbside recycling pick-up.

Waxed paper cannot be accepted by this service.

Useful contact numbers are: EPA (NSW Environment Protection Authority) 325 5555.

Ku-ring-gai Council 498 0888.

If you have any other ideas or information, please contact Sue on 449 4718, so it can be disseminated to others.

CHASE ALIVE BUSHWALKS

The Chase Alive program conducts guided walks and other activities within the Northern Sydney District of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Samples of coming activities are:

Sunday 12 March: An easy early morning stroll in the delightful Upper Lane Cove Valley. 7.30 am at the end of Day Rd., Cheltenham, when the bush is alive with birdsong.

Tuesday 14 March: A medium difficulty (5 hrs., 8 km) from Berowra Station carpark to Appletree Bay via Cowan Creek. Meet 9.30 am and bring lunch and water. Car shuffle arranged.

Wednesday 15 March: A pleasant 4 hr. stroll from the Kalkari Visitor Centre down the Birrawanna Track to the new Boardwalk at Bobbin Head, have lunch and return up the other side of the Birrawanna Track to Kalakari. Meet 10.00 am

Sunday 19 March: A full day walk from the Lady Game entrance of the Lane Cove National Park along the northern side of the river via Fiddens Wharf to de Burgh's Bridge returning along the southern side. See the regrowth after the fire and hear history of Aborigines and park. Meet at 9.30 am at Lady Game entrance.

Sunday 26 March: An early-bird exploration of the Field of Mars

Wildlife Refuge, Pittwater Rd., East Ryde. Bring your binoculars to enjoy this urban refuge, which is rich with native birdlife and redolent with history. A leisurely 2 1/2 hrs.

Meet 8.30 am

Tuesday 28 March: Meet at 10 am at the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden Pavilion and take a medium difficulty walk along its trails. This walk entails a \$5 carparking charge and a \$1-50 entry pp.

There are many others. Bookings are essential for all activities.

Phone the Kalkari Visitors Centre between 9 am and 5pm 7days on 457 9853.

In addition to the above, the Society for Growing Australian Plants runs a talks and walks program at the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden on Tuesdays. The next three deal with ferns, banksias and the plant kingdom generally, after which the May/June Tuesdays will be devoted to identifying trees, birds, hakeas and grevilles, plant reproduction and similar topics.

Enquiries to Pat 477 3023, Margaret 489 2960 or Val 484 2106

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION

The NPA runs a lecture series, which in 1995 will be based on the book "*Taken for Granted*".

The topics will be :

Aboriginal Impact on Sydney Bushland.

Monday 10 April.

North of Sydney Harbour: Vegetation Past and Present. Monday 8 May.

South of Sydney Harbour: .. Monday 19 June.

Bushland of Western Sydney: Parramatta to the Hawkesbury-Nepean River. Monday 10 July.

Fire: The Ecology and Conservation of Bushland. Monday 14 August.

Bush Regeneration for Sydney's Bushland.

Monday 11 September.

Conservation and the Future of Sydney's Bushland.

Monday 9 Oct.

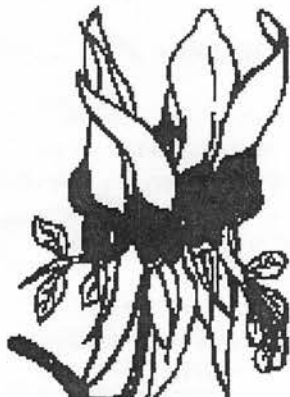
The lectures are held at the Hallstrom Theatre, Australian Museum (William St. Entrance) from 6.00 pm to 7.00 pm. Cost is \$7, \$5 concession, or \$30 and \$24 for the series. Enquiries to Claire Carlton 560 4553.

WATER MANAGEMENT

Water management is critical in Australia. This has always been thus, according to Hans Bandler, local civil and environmental engineer, but Aboriginal society had grasped this concept, as demonstrated on the Barwon River at Brewarrina, NSW, or at Lake Condah, Victoria, or the Puritjarra rock in Central Australia, where evidence of water management regimes dates back thousands of years.

Mr. Bandler, who is now an honorary research associate at Macquarie University's History Department, recently presented a paper at the World Congress organised by the International Water Resources Association in Cairo entitled *Expertise in Satisfying Water Demands in Australian Prehistory*.

Mr. Bandler has been a long time Turrumurra resident, active in local community affairs, and believes that in water management as in many other aspects of living within the environment we may derive valuable lessons from the ways of Aboriginal society prior to the arrival of Europeans.



PHOSPHORUS IS FOREVER

A technical report on behalf of the Middle Harbour Catchment Management Committee by HJL Wright, RT Buckney and SM Mitrovic has highlighted some interesting facts about urban rainfall runoff.

The report describes an investigation of the site of a plant, *Haloragodendron lucasii*, once thought to be extinct but rediscovered at a locality (undisclosed) in the St. Ives area.

The site is near a road from which rainwater washes in nutrients, particularly phosphorus.

Phosphorus is carried in solution, but also bound in solid particles and the study set out to determine the total phosphorus load carried in by the urban run-off, in contrast to most other studies which have concentrated on water samples only. Solid phosphorus is carried in organic matter such as leaf mould and animal faeces and also in mineral form from basaltic bluemetal used to surface roads.

The alkaline basalts which dominate the local supply are usually much higher in phosphorus than ordinary basalts and may contain several thousand parts per million (ppm) of phosphorus, much higher than Hawkesbury sandstone soils which carry less than 100 ppm.

Such phosphorus is in stable mineral form. This, however, may become available due to organic acids being produced in the soil and other complex interactions, over a period of time, especially since it is generally in the form of very fine dust particles.

Phosphorus in soluble form may be taken up by plants or it may also become fixed as a result of the complex interactions. If taken up by plants, it will be continually recycled, rather than being flushed out of the system.

Therefore, whether in mineral form or in organic form, phosphorus tends to stick around once it has been introduced.

The study also showed that rainfall of as little as 0.8 mm will cause surface water flow from a road surface, whereas precipitation 30 times greater (25 mm plus) would not generate discrete runoff in bushland.

As a result, the presence of a paved road surface near bushland will cause a continual addition of phosphorus to the adjacent bushland plant community, building up by retention within the system. In the case of the *Haloragodendron lucasii* the study seems to be inconclusive about the direct effect of phosphorus, but did conclude that the potential competition from weeds thriving on the added nutrient was a real threat.

This, of course, applies to the bushland plant communities in general, and is evidenced by the thriving weed infestations on the fringes of bushland near any paved road surface.

STOP PRESS FIELD GUIDE

The new Field Guide has been so well received, that we have sold 640 copies to date, out of a print run of 1040.

This is quite remarkable, and demonstrates not only the interest of the community in appreciating and preserving our natural heritage, but also speaks volumes about the quality of the work which has been put into the guide by John Martyn.

STEP and the community is giving John an accolade.

At the same time it would be nice if our politicians and bureaucrats could come to understand the community's feeling for our urban bushland, and its aversion to the willful destruction, which is being pursued by our Government instrumentalities in the name of some dubious transport "needs", or other so-called "progress".

BOOK REVIEW

THE RETURN OF SCARCITY by H.C.Coombs

Subtitled "Strategies for an Economic Future" was published in 1990, but encompasses a series of papers and speeches delivered as early as 1972. This parallels the Club of Rome era, but somehow Coombs did not succumb to the temptation to make definite statements about the future, which characterised the Club of Rome, and which, of course, was the basis of reaction against the limits of growth concept, and consequently allowed business-as-usual attitudes to prevail. Coombs' wide canvas of ideas which have become respectable since then is quite remarkable. Unfortunately it also illustrates how long it takes for the body politic to accept such ideas and adopt policies which are necessary and obviously so. Pertinent currently are Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, entitled "Matching Ecological and Economic Realities" and "Economic and Ecological Issues in Resource Management", and written in 1971 and 1974 respectively. They deal in some depth with the fact that ecological effects of production are not correctly reflected in the cost of products and therefore do not allow consumers to make ecologically sound choices.

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WA WILDFLOWERS

Our Western Australian correspondent reports that the "Western Wet" heralds a great wildflower season. He writes:

If you have contemplated a holiday to see Western Australia's famous wildflowers, and you missed out in the spectacular 1992 season, this year will be a great one to catch up on that.

Most of you will have read about, or seen on TV, the floods, which have cut the Eyre Highway and the Trans-Australia Railway Line in the southeast of Western Australia.

These were brought about by Tropical Cyclone Bobby, which delivered torrential rain, up to 15 inches, from the Pilbara southeast across Australia's best wildflower country. Considerable rain had already fallen this summer by the time Bobby arrived, and high humidity and seasonal factors should ensure follow-up rains between now and wildflower time.

The Pilbara, Gascoyne, Murchison, Eastern Goldfields and Nullarbor will produce memorable displays, but the Pilbara, especially the Hamersley Ranges, will be the one to beat this year.

Starting as early as June, and peaking in July-August, the sea of purple Mulla Mullas with the backdrop of red, blue and purple ranges should be a stunning sight, enhancing the already spectacular tourist attractions of the area. The only problem you will have will be finding accommodation.