



STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978. No. 89 April 1998

COMING EVENTS

STEP 20TH ANNIVERSARY The date has now been fixed. It is Saturday, 30th May, 1998.

The venue is Jenkins Hall at the Lane Cove National Park at Fullers Bridge, access from Lady Game Drive. The time is 6.30 pm to 9.00 pm. Champagne and finger food will be served to set the spirit of celebration soaring, we will have some reflections from one or two "old-timers", and then an illustrated talk by naturalist/author/photographer Densey Clyne. There will be an exhibition of paintings by Yvonne Langshaw for viewing before and after Densey's address, and we will have an original committee member cut the birthday cake.

Come and share the occasion with other members and guests, but do reply to make your reservation via the official invitation enclosed with this newsletter to make sure we cater for the right number of people.

ANTARCTICA A truly fantastic place. The aficionados claim that once you have been there it never releases its grip on you. We can't transport you there for the experience, but we can give you a good secondhand view. **Damien Gore** will take us there in spirit with slides and description on 22/07/98, so set that date aside to join us for his talk. More detail about time and venue in the next Newsletter.

GARIGAL NATIONAL PARK WALK On Sunday 3rd May 1998 we will take an easy to medium walk for about two hours in Garigal National Park. Meet at **Davidson Picnic Area at 1.45 pm for a start at 2.00 pm sharp.** Coming from the Forestville side along Warringah Rd. you turn off to the left just before the Roseville Bridge into Healey Way and proceed under the bridge to the picnic area.

Forest Coachlines (9450 2277) runs a service from Chatswood Railway Station to a bus stop near Malga Ave., Davidson, from where you would have to walk down to the picnic area. Bring your own refreshments.

Aboriginal Use of Plants

On 25th March Dr. Jim Kohen gave a talk about the use of plants by Aboriginal people in the Sydney region.

He set the framework by showing the areas occupied by the various language groups on a map of the Sydney basin.

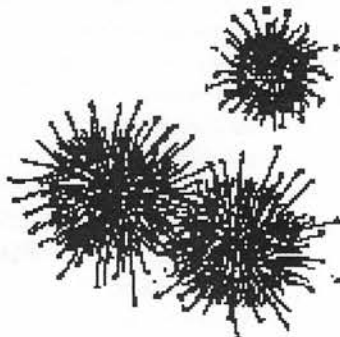
He also used this map to show the main vegetation associations, which explained how the different groups used their respective food resources.

Jim told us about some of the techniques used to make potentially toxic foods edible, such as the fruits of the burrawang (*Macrozamia communis*)

These fruits were soaked and pounded to remove the toxins before being made into a sort of cake.

Many different types of tubers or wild "yams" were consumed, as well as berry fruits of plants such as the

Native Currant (*Leptomeria acida*), Geebung (*Persoonia*) and *Exocarpus cupressiformis*. A number of species of the family Proteaceae were used as sources of nectar, such as the flowers of Banksia and Grevillea species, as well as the Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*).



Interestingly, the word for 'yam' is recorded as darook, darrook, djarug, tarak (and several other variations) for several different language

groups, and there is little doubt that these words are the same as the tribe of Aborigines living on the Cumberland Plain, recorded as Dharug, Darug, Dharuk, Dharoog and Dharruk. This suggests that these people relied heavily on tuberous plants in their diet.

Aboriginal people also used plants for many non-food purposes, including to make string and rope, (*Abutilon*, *Hibiscus* and *Brachychiton* species), material for weaving (*Dianella*, *Lomandra*), bark for wrapping their children (*Melaleuca*), resin (*Xanthorrhoea resinosa*), wood for manufacturing dishes, spears etc. and fish poisons, as well as medicines.

We learnt some of the general names for plants in the Sydney region (eg berry - *wiggi* , tree - *waddy*, sweet drink (Banksia flowers) - *bool*), as well as Dharug terms for some

species (eg *Acacia - wattungulle*, *Blackbutt - terrumbine*, *Fig - tammun*). A few of the common names we use today are direct descendants from the Aboriginal terms, eg *kurrajong*, *bolwarra*, *burrowan* (Burrawang) and *waratah*. Finally Jim gave us an insight into how Aboriginal people managed their plant resources, using fire to increase seed production in some species, or maintain an environment favourable for the growth of tuberous species, and how the distribution of the plant resources directly affected the distribution of the Aboriginal population.

The pre-European settlement era became a fascinating slice of history which most of us had never heard, or learnt to appreciate. It certainly makes the concept of terra nullius, based on the so-called "no till no possession" a complete nonsense. Further details for interested persons can be found in the following publications:

Kohen, J.L.&Downing, A.J. (1992) *Aboriginal Use of Plants on the Western Cumberland Plain, Sydney Basin Naturalist* 1, 1-8.

Kohen, J.L. (1996) *Aboriginal Use of Fire in Southeastern Australia. Proceedings of the Linnean Society of NSW* 116, 19-26.



Granny Springs Reserve

The bushcare group at the Granny Springs Reserve has been doing a great job and deserve plaudits. The effect of their work is plainly visible to anyone who shops at the Turrumurra Plaza and parks at the rear. It was suggested to STEP that a sign should be erected at the site

to explain the bushcare activity and to spread the word.

Since STEP members are participating in the activity and since it was the patch of bushland where Pam Morse used to exert herself to try to stem the weed infestation the STEP committee decided to financially support the erection of a sign recognising the current efforts and Pam's earlier contributions and her bequest to STEP.

Some time this year the sign will be set up at the corner of the regeneration area, where it will be visible to passers-by.

STEP History

In view of our 20th anniversary it is appropriate to look back as well as forward. Looking back implies that the current generation of STEP members understands the origins, the circumstances which prevailed two decades ago and which spurred a small band of people to get together and speak out about the insensitive and high handed way in which decisions were being made affecting their built and natural environment.

An updated history of STEP seems highly desirable, and we wonder whether some of the older members have photographic, documentary or oral information which would help to create a complete picture of STEP's history.

If you have any of the above, please let one of the committee members know, or bring it along to the 20th anniversary celebration.

Currently our documentary information is limited to the minute books, which tend to provide a very dry and businesslike version, and the document "Out of S.T.E.P.", which we believe was compiled by Elizabeth Dokulil for the tenth anniversary.

Surely somebody took photographs of the people blockading Canoon Rd and the police escort for the bulldozers and some of the subsequent actions like the pioneering of the STEP track.

Research Grants Available for Studies of Urban Bushland in the Sydney Region

STEP Inc. is pleased to announce that funding up to the value of \$400 will be available through the Pam Morse Bequest Fund to students engaged in the study of any aspect of urban bushland, including flora and fauna studies, biodiversity, and management issues such as chemical pollution, weed invasion, erosion control and control burning.

It is expected that such studies will allow better understanding and management of Ku-ring-gai's urban bushland, although the study area will not be limited to Ku-ring-gai. Eligible students will be engaged in research at honours or postgraduate level. Applicants will be required to submit a grant application, consisting of no more than two A4 pages, outlining their research project (objectives, project design) and how the money would be used to aid their research.

A short curriculum vitae should also be submitted.

Applications close on May 30th, 1998, and funds will be available from July 1st, 1998.

Successful applicants will be required to provide a short summary of their research results on completion of the project (within one year of receipt of the award), which will be published in the STEP Newsletter.

The Pam Morse Fund must be acknowledged in any publications. Applications must be submitted to:

The Pam Morse Fund,
STEP Inc., PO Box 697,
Turrumurra, NSW, 2074.

For further information contact Dr. Michelle Leishman, ph 9850 8194 or 9489 8972, email mleishma@rna.bio.mq.edu.au.

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This advertisement has been distributed to metropolitan Universities.

The STEP Environmental Protection Fund

This is just a reminder that this fund has been set up to allow donations to be made to the work and objectives of STEP, which are tax deductible for the donor.

Tax time is coming up again soon and maybe it is convenient to think of a donation.

We would also encourage people making, or not making, donations to tell the committee their views about what should be promoted with such funding, although the committee would make the final decision and be accountable for it. Give it a thought.



Extending the Lane Cove National Park

It has long been STEP's position that the bushland in the Lane Cove River Valley should be viewed as one single ecological entity, and therefore managed on a total catchment basis.

Currently the bushland is fragmented and managed by a number of different authorities. Generally the boundary to core ratio is large, external impacts more difficult to control, and fauna and flora communities more vulnerable due to fragmentation and artificial management boundaries.

A valuable contribution to the discussion has recently been made by Douglas's assessment in the report commissioned by the North Metropolitan District of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Douglas's recommendations are that the areas studied are worthy of inclusion into National Park on

several grounds, including maintenance of water quality, biodiversity and protection of rare and endangered flora and fauna. STEP supports this assessment, but believes that there are other areas, which are critical components of the Lane Cove Valley bushland. Additional areas are:

1. **Blackbutt Reserve**, which is only separated from the National Park by Lady Game Dr. and contains an outstanding example of Tall Forest with Blackbutt (*E.pilularis*), Sydney Red Gum (*Angophora costata*), Turpentine (*Syncarpia glomulifera*) and some other species which are rare in the valley, eg *Pultenaea daphnoides*, *Cymbidium suave*, *Hovea longifolia*.

2. **Sheldon Forest, Rofe Park and Avondale Dam**, separated from National Park only by the Comenarra Parkway, containing Blue Gum High Forest (now listed as Threatened Ecological Community), a fine example of Ashfield Shale flora poorly represented elsewhere in the valley, and plant species, eg *Desmodium* spp, which is rarely found elsewhere in the catchment.

It also contains scenic waterfalls and historical construction works from the Great Depression era.

The privately owned portion should be considered for a voluntary Conservation Agreement.

3. **Remnants of the B1 Corridor**, with ridgetop heathland and hanging swamp between Lyon, Canoon and Barwon St. and shale vegetation in bushland adjacent to Auluba Reserve.

4. **UTS Bushland**, which is to be covered by a Conservation Agreement, separated only by Lady Game Dr.

5. **Bushland between Lucinda Ave. and Campbell Dr.**, containing mesic rainforest-like vegetation. This could be managed under a voluntary Conservation Agreement.

6. **Headwaters of Coup's Creek**, a large area of little disturbed bushland which is an

important component of the Lane Cove River catchment, connecting to Reserve 22 (Douglas 1997) and hence to the National Park and Thornleigh Park.

It should be considered for a Conservation Agreement.

7. **Terry's Creek Reserve**, although it is weed affected, its proper management is crucial to the long term sustainability of the downstream bushland in the Lane Cove valley.

8. **Beecroft Park**, running along Devlin's Creek, one of the large tributaries of the Lane Cove River, now separated by the M2, which contains Blackbutt Forest and Blue Gum High Forest and remnant Ashfield Shale vegetation.



There are a number of options available for the management of the extended Lane Cove Valley Bushland as a single ecological unit, based on total catchment management principles. Some elements which need to be included in a final solution are:

- * There must be ongoing community consultations regarding the options and the final decision.
- * Current levels of funding by Councils must be continued.
- * Staff and expertise developed by Councils in bushland management must be maintained.
- * Good relationship between residents adjoining bushland and the administering authority must be maintained or developed.
- * Some activities such as walking the dog must be permitted in areas currently used in this manner.

STEP's Position is:

All bushland assessed by Douglas (1997) and the additional bushland areas mentioned above should be added to the lands managed as an ecological entity with the existing Lane Cove National Park.

The entire area of reserved land should be designated The Lane Cove Regional Park.

The Lane Cove Regional Park should be managed on a total catchment basis, administered by the NPWS.



The Board of Management must include at least one representative from each of the local Councils. Local Councils should continue to manage those areas which fall within their municipal boundaries, under a joint management agreement between Councils and the NPWS, within the guidelines provided by the Lane Cove Regional Park Board of Management.

Current levels of funding for bushland management provided by local Councils must be maintained. Councils should continue to co-ordinate and supervise voluntary bushcare workers, within the guidelines set for the Lane Cove Regional Park.

The Berowra Regional Park structure may be a suitable management model for the extended area of the Lane Cove Valley Bushland.

STEP believes that this option is the best possible to ensure long term sustainability of the Lane Cove River Valley bushland.

Bush Regeneration at TAFE

Have you ever thought of coming to Ryde campus of TAFE and completing your Bush Regeneration Certificate?

Why not learn to enjoy the bush even more by extending your knowledge of native plants, weeds, animals and different areas of bushland.

The Bush Regeneration Certificate II course leads you through the world of botany, soils, local animals, bushland issues, all the practical skills that are so important, changes in bushland over time, impact of fire and much, much more.

The course is one year for one day a week (and a little weekend time) or one night a week and a lot of weekend work, but we do make sure you still get some weekends to yourself.

Transport problems? The college is not far from West Ryde Station, near the Top Ryde bus stop, or why not pool a car with some friends.

Enrolment is on Thursday 2nd July from 1.00 to 7.00 pm, and classes start the week commencing Monday 20th July.

The cost is \$90 for the first semester (half year) and a similar amount for the second semester. Ring Course Information on 9808 8278, or Robin Buchanan on 9808 8217 for more information.



New Map

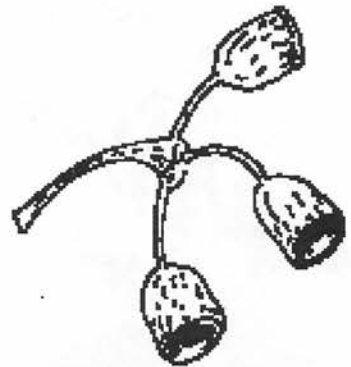
The committee is proceeding with plans for a new map of the walking tracks of the Lane Cove Valley.

At this stage it would be good to have some feedback from members or other interested users regarding the features of the map, ie should there be more commentary on the map?, should there be a distinction made between classes of track?, Should the coverage be extended to cover the current Lane Cove National Park?, etc.

Do you have a favourite track which is not adequately identified?

A note in the mail or a phone call to a committee member would be appreciated.

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Committee Members

The current committee members are:

Michelle Leishman (President)
9489 8972

Hugh Robert (Secretary/Treasurer)
9144 1353

Helen Wortham (Minute Secretary)

John Martyn (Map/General)

Neroli Lock (Parks&Reserves)
9489 5794

Jennifer Schwarz (TCMC)

Walter Lennie (Displays)

Bruno Krockenberger (NL Editor)
9449 1985.

The postal address for all mail is:

P.O.Box 697,

Turrumurra, NSW, 2074.

TAILENDER

Recent events tend to remind us of the well-worn pearl of wisdom:

*"Life is a tragedy for those who feel,
and a comedy for those who think".*

Sometimes the tears penetrate through the laughter.