



STEP Matters

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STEP Committee

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Committee Members

Neroli Lock

John Martyn

Tony Morrison

Ann Perry

Kate Read

Diary Dates

23 Nov	Dalrymple Hay Open Day (see next column)
14 Dec	Christmas Barbecue (see page 3)

Dalrymple Hay Open Day

John Martyn

Dalrymple Hay Nature Reserve plus adjoining Browns Forest and Sydney Water Reserve represent the largest intact example of the magnificent tall Blue Gum High Forest which once occupied the higher parts of the Upper North Shore. The forest area is bounded by Mona Vale Road, Rosedale Road and Vista Street. At only 19 hectares it is wretchedly tiny and very vulnerable.

To highlight the value and vulnerability of this plant community there is to be an open day on Sunday 23 November at Dalrymple Hay (use the Rosedale Road entrance) starting at 11 am.

The event is designed for all ages and will feature displays, illustrated talks about flora, fauna, threatened species, bush regeneration, fire management and guided walks.

If you have never been to Dalrymple Hay this is a fantastic opportunity to see and learn what the whole area must once have been like before it was cleared. You will certainly be impressed but also saddened by what has been lost.



B2/B3 Corridor Rezoning

Bruno Krockenberger

STEP has made a submission to Ku-ring-gai Council regarding the rezoning application for parts of the B2/B3 corridor lodged by the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning.

Our submission made detailed comment about the various precincts of the corridor, and the following general comments.

One of the most serious threats to urban bushland is the ongoing reduction by small increments. Urban bushland can only retain its biodiversity values in the long term when it remains in relatively large and unfragmented pieces. Connections between small remnants are vital for movement of species, both animal and plant.

The abandoned B2/B3 corridor provides a relatively continuous piece of bushland, with some cleared and grassed areas. It is our strong belief that all intact bushland remnants should be retained and protected as bushland.

The 6(a) Open Space zoning proposed will not protect bushland in the long term, as it allows development consistent with the open space zoning, such as sports fields. We strongly urge Council to zone these areas as Open Space (Bushland).

The community consultation committee formed by Council contains many knowledgeable and concerned residents. These residents and should have been informed and given the opportunity to assess and comment on the proposal.

STEP Inc

Community-based Environmental Conservation since 1978

PO Box 697, Turramurra, NSW 2074

President's Annual Report

Michelle Leishman

It is with pleasure that I present the President's Report for the year to October 2003.

Committee

This has been a year of major change for STEP with much reorganisation of the tasks of committee members.

We welcomed a new treasurer (Thérèse Carew) and reassigned several tasks following the resignations of Hugh Roberts (treasurer) and Neryle Sheldon (minutes secretary). Many thanks to Helen Wortham and Phil Helmore for smoothing this transition. Thanks must go particularly to Helen Wortham for taking on the duties of membership secretary, publications and web management, as well as compilation of the newsletter.

We also streamlined some accounting procedures to make life a little simpler for our new treasurer who has done a good job in her first year of this challenging role!

I thank all committee members for their contributions throughout the past year. With all the committee now on email, communication works quickly and well.

However the committee members generally have too many tasks and too little time. In order for STEP to function effectively, we need a strong and diverse committee with a regular input of new ideas. I strongly urge any members who have a little spare time to consider joining the committee – it can be a very rewarding experience!

Transport Issues

STEP has continued to work actively on several fronts. We have maintained our work on transport issues arising from the proposed F3 to Sydney Orbital link road.

Our project officer, Kate Read, worked very effectively on this issue until March, when she took up a position elsewhere.

However, fortunately for STEP, Kate then joined the committee and has continued to contribute substantially to our transport campaign throughout the year.

This has included many meetings with local groups and politicians, a submission to Auslink, production and distribution of several flyers and the printing and distribution of 20 000 brochures. With the release of the four road options in July there was a new flurry of activity with meetings, press releases and letters, culminating in a large submission to the study consultants.

STEP continues to oppose any road link, as it would offer no real solution to Sydney's transport problems, and instead urges investment in sustainable transport solutions including mass transit and transport demand management. The STEP web site covers this campaign comprehensively.

B2/B3 Corridor

STEP has also worked on the B2/B3 rezoning issue. With the freeway corridor abandoned, Planning NSW has finally submitted a rezoning application for the Comenarra Parkway to Kissing Point Road section to Council. This has taken several frustrating years. While the application proposes zoning several areas of important bushland as Open Space, it also proposes housing on several key pieces of bushland that function as important bushland links. A copy of our submission is posted on our web site. I expect that this issue will continue well into next year.

Other Bushland Issues

Other issues that STEP has worked on this past year include inappropriate clearing of Adventist Hospital land for fire hazard reduction and funding issues for Lane Cove National Park arising from the additions to the northern part of the park. Both of these issues will also no doubt continue next year.

Publications

The reprinted *Field Guide to the Bushland of the Lane Cove Valley* and the map, *Walking Tracks of the Lane Cove Valley*, continue to sell steadily. Both will get a sales boost next year with the release of the new maps of the walking tracks of Middle Harbour.

This project consists of the production of two maps, covering an area from Garigal National Park in the north to the bushland reserves of the northern side of Sydney Harbour. It will also join into the existing Lane Cove map.

Work on the Middle Harbour maps is continuing but nearing completion, and we expect to launch early in 2004.

Many thanks to John Martyn for initiating and leading this exciting project and to Bruno Krockenberger for managing map production.

Environmental Education

STEP has also continued to support environmental education through the Pam Morse Bequest Fund. This year we awarded grants to Warrawee Public School and Ku-ring-gai Creative Arts High School to support their environmental initiatives.

We also awarded the STEP Environmental Prize at the Intel Young Scientist Awards, which this year went to Andrew Stewart of Karabar Distance Education Centre for his project *Artificial Wetlands: Can Carex appressa Prevent Eutrophication in Australian Waterways?*

Activities

This year's activities program has been very successful. We have hosted well-attended talks by Anne-Marie Poirrier on environmentally-friendly pest management in the home, Stephen Doggett (medical entomology, Westmead Hospital) on everything you wanted to know about ticks, Michael Batley on native bees and tonight by Ian Hutton on the weed eradication program on world-heritage listed Lord Howe Island.

We also ran three bushwalks (Murrumbidgee Track led by Bill Jones in April, Bantry Bay led by Gerald Holder in August and Middle Harbour foreshore led by John Balint in October) that were very popular.

Newsletters

We published five newsletters (numbers 116 to 120) thanks to Bruno Krockenberger and Helen Wortham.

Representation

STEP has been represented on Ku-ring-gai Council's Natural Areas Advisory Committee and the Union of Lane Cove Valley Conservationists.

The Coming Year

Next year will be busy with the launch of the Middle Harbour maps and celebration of 25 years of STEP scheduled. STEP will continue to participate in the B2/B3 rezoning and F3 to Sydney Orbital link road processes as well as in the rezoning of the UTS campus at Lindfield.

I am sure that the new committee will continue to be an effective advocate for Ku-ring-gai's environment on these and other issues as well as a strong supporter of environmental education and awareness.

Report on Walk to Middle Harbour Creek

John Martyn

STEP ran a second spring walk this year, because spring walks are very popular – twenty-two people came along – and of course there are masses of wildflowers everywhere. Also the weather is much more reliable than in the fickle autumn.

Middle Harbour map volunteer and local bushcare organiser, John Balint, led us through what must be some of the most beautiful bushland in Sydney, with the bonus of an amazing diversity of bushcare sites. The sites mostly lie in a section of Ku-ring-gai Council land flanked to the north and south by Garigal

National Park, to the east by tidal Middle Harbour Creek and to the west by suburban East Killara.

October 19 was a hot dry day and it was already warm at 9 am as we gathered for the walk. We started from the end of Barrie Street, East Killara, and walked by road to the first site on the north side of Saiala Oval. This has been a bushcare site for many years, and features several specimens of *Eucalyptus camfieldii*, a small tree with distinctive, dark green, almost native fig-like leaves, which occurs nowhere else in the catchment.

Re-entering the main bushland area through the Aboriginal land claim area at the end of Kanowar Avenue, we passed sites in the headwaters of Northern Creek that illustrate typical weed invasion resulting from nutrient-enriched stormwater runoff.

The route then followed the alignment of an old road that used to provide access to Lockley Point where jobless people survived in the Great Depression. The road's original stonework is still visible in places. Lockley Point itself is another bushcare site and is also a beautiful waterside spot complete with small beach.

The walk from here southwards is through exceptionally beautiful bushland bordered by serene tidal waters and featuring a waterfall, coachwood glades, tidal saltmarsh and mangroves. The bushcare site at the mouth of Southern Creek is subject to tidal inundation and consists of saltmarsh and casuarinas traversed by a clear stream with shoals of native smelt. *Tradescantia* has been controlled here by the novel technique of applying salt, which doesn't harm the indigenous vegetation.

The return route featured a detour to the mouth of Gordon Creek, a swampy delta of mangrove and saltmarsh with panoramic views of the river. The track led west from here to the abandoned 1927 sewer bridge across Gordon Creek.

This is a site of local heritage significance and was traversible not many years ago, providing a link to the shoreline walking tracks. Now its timbers are rotting progressively and it is unsafe and urgently in need of renovation.

The route of this walk will be featured in the forthcoming Middle Harbour walking track map series. For more information on the bushcare program please contact John Balint (9498 7527, sbalint@ozemail.com.au).

Young Scientist

Helen Wortham

To encourage and reward research and education on environmental issues, STEP has aligned with Intel Young Scientist and each year we donate a prize of \$200 for the best environmental project.

On Friday 24 October, Neroli Lock presented Andrew Stewart from the Karabar Distance Education Centre with STEP's prize for Best Environmental Project at a ceremony at the Powerhouse Museum.

Andrew conducted a series of tests on the uptake of nitrates by the wetland plant *Carex appressa* and concluded that artificial wetlands may provide a safe, cheap and effective means of successfully treating nutrient runoff.

Christmas Barbecue

We will celebrate the end of a successful year with a barbecue on the grass behind Leuna Avenue, Wahroonga. Access is from the end of The Broadway.

Neroli and Harry Lock will provide a gas barbecue and hot water from 4.30 pm on Sunday 14 December. Bring your own food and drinks.

To those members who cannot be there, the committee would like to thank you for your continuing membership and wishes you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

UTS Campus Rezoning

Bruno Krockenberger

The University of Technology Sydney has advised that it is preparing a rezoning application to for its Ku-ring-gai campus with a view to submitting it by Christmas 2003.

This forms part of its process of considering all options for the future of the site, and will be made without prejudice to any decision on the future use of the campus or the university's intention to maintain the academic disciplines presently conducted on the campus.

The rezoning envisages a range of housing on the site, including the bushland, which had previously been the subject of a proposed conservation agreement. Unfortunately this agreement was never consummated.

John Burke, who had previously worked so hard setting up the proposed agreement, is representing STEP in the public participation process and has reiterated STEP's position regarding the significance of the bushland on this site.

The position paper opposes housing except within the existing cleared sports ground. It refers to the continuing stream of small decisions fragmenting bushland and hence destroying its capacity to maintain healthy diversity. It highlights the effect of uncontrolled stormwater and it invites the university to take a longer-term view rather than allowing short-term financial criteria to determine its decisions. The full text of the position paper is on our web site.

The university's move is of great concern to the local residents, since it would have considerable impact on the local area, and to environmental groups, since it would destroy the valuable bushland on the site.

Lord Howe Island – World Heritage, Woodhens and Weeds

Jenny Schwarz

On Tuesday 28 October, more than thirty people came to hear Ian Hutton talk about the weed eradication program on Lord Howe Island. Ian is a renowned naturalist, famous for saving the Lord Howe woodhen from extinction, for sharing his extensive local knowledge on guided tours and more recently for bush regeneration.

Lord Howe Island has long been known for its unique flora and fauna. In 1880 it was declared a Forest Reserve and is now heritage listed and surrounded by marine parks. It is home to a unique variety of seabirds and marine life. The flora is related to species found in Australia, New Zealand and Caledonia and 50% of its plants are endemic to the island. There are ten species of orchids and Kentia palms are grown there for export all over the world. Unfortunately, there are also weeds.

The 1997 review of world heritage values identified seventeen noxious weeds as being one of the main threats to the conservation of the island's endemic flora and fauna. Ground asparagus (*Proasparagus aethiopicus*) is a major concern along with cherry guava (*Psidium cattleianum*).

The Lord Howe Island Board Environmental Section undertakes weed control projects on the island but the population is too small to be effective on its own. So a novel program has evolved.

'Weed tours' began on a small scale in the 1980s. In 1998 Rymill Abell and Ian Hutton organised a group of twenty-seven volunteer bush regenerators from Sydney and set a precedent for this type of larger scale weeding activity. The idea spread and this year there were six trips bringing 150 weeders for a working holiday. Not that it is all work. Weeding takes place in the morning under the direction of local rangers.

Afternoon activities include tours, gourmet barbecues, wildlife, swimming, rock climbing and climbing Mount Gower (not for the faint hearted).

The volunteer program is part of an overall weed eradication strategy that includes some reafforestation. As well as local rangers, the Royal Botanic Gardens gives professional support and controls the import of all plants to the island. In 1999 the WWF contributed funds. Friends of Lord Howe Island sponsor young people to come over and tackle some of the more physically demanding work. Volunteers are also helping with research into birds and local residents appreciate help with clearing weeds from their properties.

After primary, secondary and tertiary weeding, asparagus fern is under control behind Pinetrees where the volunteers stay. But it will be many years before Lord Howe is free of weeds.

Meanwhile if anyone is interested in taking a holiday to a very special place and helping the environment at the same time they can find out more from Lord Howe Island Nature Tours (lhitours@bigpond.com).

At the start of the evening, STEP members and visitors were delighted to see Ian Hutton recognised for his invaluable work in nature conservation on Lord Howe Island. He was awarded a NSW Government Community Services Award by Barry O'Farrell.

Successful Grant Application

STEP recently applied to Ku-ring-gai Council for funding under their 2003 *Financial Assistance Program* and we were delighted to be successful. Helen Wortham was presented with a cheque for \$1000 from the Mayor, Councillor Ian Cross on Tuesday 4 November.

We would like to thank Ku-ring-gai Council for their financial support. The money will go towards maintaining our web site and producing our map of walking tracks in Middle Harbour.
