



STEP Matters

Number 169 February 2013

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Welcome to 2013

In the STEP Lecture held on 6 November 2012, Professor Ian Lowe provided a sobering summary of the state of the earth's ecosystems and the impact of human activities. However he was not totally pessimistic. It is not too late. There are many proposals for promising solutions to these problems provided there is the will to implement them.

We look forward to a busy year responding to the continuing pressures on our local environment. Currently the major issues will be the developments and legislation affecting our local bushland and national parks as well as the amenity of our local environment. Updates on current issues are provided in this newsletter.

STEP Event - Clean Up Australia Day: Sunday 3 March: Thornleigh Oval area

STEP member Don Davidson will run a community clean up in our usual site covering residential and bushland areas near Thornleigh Oval and the nearby entrances into Lane Cove National Park. The site is open from 8.30 am to 1.00 pm. Volunteers are welcome.

You may register by going to this website <http://www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au/Thornleigh+Oval> or just turn up on the day at the registration table at the end of Handley Ave near the entrance to the Oval. Please bring walking shoes, hat, garden gloves, water and sunscreen. Bags will be provided for the collected rubbish.

For more information contact Don at dond@med.usyd.edu.au

STEP Walk - Sunday 17 March 2013: Sheldon Forest/Rofe Park Turrumurra

A recreational walk of medium grade through four major plant communities. Approx 5 kms or 2 hours. Limit 15. Opportunity for coffee afterwards in Rohini Street, Turrumurra. Venue to be advised on the day.

When: Sunday, 17 March, 9.30 am for 9.45 am start,

Where: Southern end of Warragal Road, Turrumurra

Contact: Frank Freeman, 9983-1586 (after 7.30pm) or frankfreeman@optusnet.com.au. Bookings essential.

STEP Inc

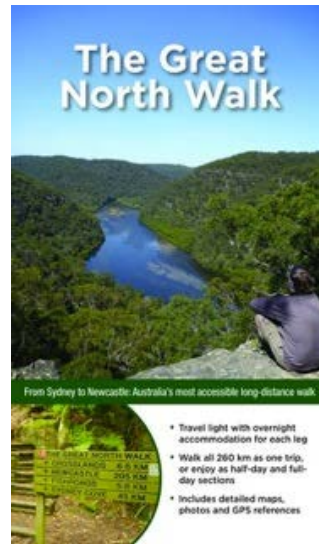
Community-based Environmental Conservation since 1978
PO Box 5136 Turrumurra, NSW 2074 secretary@step.org.au www.step.org.au ABN 55 851 3472 043

STEP Talk – Tuesday 2 April 2013 - The Great North Walk

8pm – St Andrews Church Hall, corner Chisholm and Vernon Streets, Turrumurra

Matt McClelland is the brainchild of www.wildwalks.com.au and author of three walking guide books, 'The Great North Walk', 'Best Bush & Coastal Walks of the Central Coast' and 'Best River & Alpine Walks around Mt Kosciuszko'.

In this talk Matt will give a visual overview and discuss some of the amazing spots along the The Great North Walk - a fantastic walk linking Sydney to Newcastle. Matt will also talk about his next book and some of the new technology he is playing with behind the scenes at Wildwalks.



STEP Walk - Sunday 14 April 2013: Strickland State Forest

Medium grade day walk. A fine example of rare remnant wet sclerophyll and rainforest with high biodiversity on the more fertile soils that were virtually all cleared for farming in the early period of European occupation of the Sydney bioregion. Limit 15.

When: Sunday, 14 April, 10 – 4 pm

Where: Meet at the Banksia car park Strickland State Forest at 9.45 am for 10 am start

Contact: Andrew Little, 9924 7212 (after 7.30pm) or aalittle@optusnet.com.au. Bookings essential

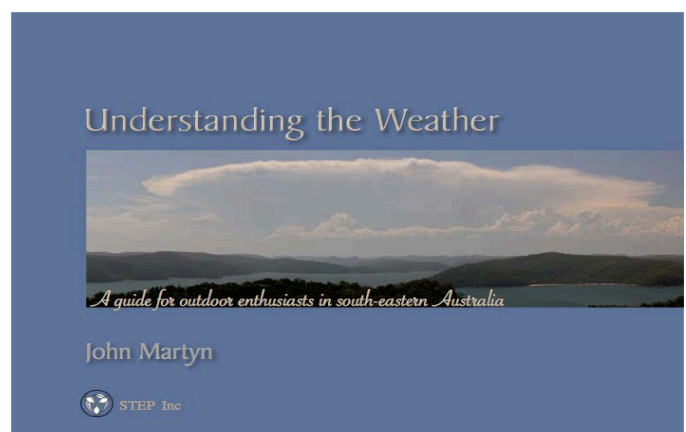
STEP Talk – 30 April 2013: Launch of New STEP Book by Dr John Martyn Understanding the Weather: A guide for outdoor enthusiasts in south-eastern Australia

8pm – St Andrews Church Hall, corner Chisholm and Vernon Streets, Turrumurra

John Martyn has written another fascinating book, this time focussing on the weather as you will experience it from the great outdoors.

The purpose of the book is to assist, with the help of photos of spectacular, beautiful or portentous skiescapes, in understanding and identifying the weather phenomena that may have the power to enhance, undermine or totally derail your planned walking or camping trip or short outing,

John will describe and illustrate highlights from book.



Local News

Ku-ring-gai Council Ward Summits

STEP is looking forward to participating in a summit that the Mayor, Elaine Malicki, is organising for each of the Wards in the Ku-ring-gai Municipality. The summits are an opportunity to raise matters of interest and concern and help the Councillors to develop priorities for issues that will be included in the Community Strategic Plan 2030.

FOKE AGM and Public Forum – 20 March

The AGM of Friends of the Ku-ring-gai Environment (FOKE) will be followed by a public forum with two excellent guest speakers who are experts on the topical issue of the NSW planning system proposals.

The meeting is on Wednesday 20th March 2013 at 8.00pm at the Killara, Arnold Street, Uniting Church Hall.

The speakers are:

Ms Kirsty Ruddock, Principal Solicitor of the Environmental Defenders Office NSW, the only organisation in NSW established to help people who want to protect the environment through the law; and

Ms Corinne Fisher, co-founder and Convenor of the rapidly growing Better Planning Network an affiliation of community groups concerned about planning in NSW.

As Principal Solicitor of the Environmental Defenders Office NSW, Kirsty Ruddock is responsible for its legal advice and casework program. With her extensive experience in cases relating to administrative law, pollution, cultural heritage, biodiversity, mining and public interest costs, Kirsty will talk about the role of the EDO and successful litigation it has conducted on behalf of the community.

Corinne Fisher lit a community fuse when, in August 2012, she co-founded the Better Planning Network in response to the NSW Government's proposed changes to the NSW Planning Act. The Network now has over 240 affiliated community groups and is attracting more daily as people learn about the proposed changes to the Planning Act.

As the President of FOKE, Anne Carroll points out in her press release, "*given the community concern for the environment and its need to know about the importance of the new Planning Act, and given the current funding threats to the EDO, we are sure that there will be widespread interest in our two speakers and what they have to say*"

Lane Cove National Park Draft Plan of Management

STEP's submission on the draft Plan of Management for the Lane Cove National Park is on our website. We are pleased to confirm that the draft plan prohibits horse riding and mountain bike riding on walking tracks.

The Lane Cove Valley is under pressure because it is surrounded by suburban development. In recent years this pressure is demonstrated by increased weed invasion, stormwater damage and loss of water quality. The situation is not all bad as control measures such as fox baiting have reduced the populations of feral animals leading to an increase in the native animal populations such as bandicoots, brush-turkeys and swamp wallabies..

STEP has suggested that a special protection zone be created in the area of the river valley above Devlins Creek. The valley is wider in this area and includes several tributaries which are currently in relatively pristine condition. Additional protection measures would help ensure that this area remains in this good condition and reduce impacts further downstream.

The ability of the NWPS to implement some areas of management listed in the Plan is curtailed by shortfalls and reductions in funding. If this situation continues further degradation of the quality and attractiveness of the Park is inevitable. In other words it will be impossible for the objectives of the Plan of Management to be met. This is regrettable as it will lead to a loss of appreciation of the Park by the general public and its reputation as one of Sydney's great natural environments.

NSW State Government News

Better Planning Network

STEP has joined the Better Planning Network (BPN). The BPN goes from strength to strength. In the October 2012 edition of STEP Matters we reported that there were 40 community groups in the network. Now over 240 community groups have joined.

The Better Planning Network was formed because of concerns about the NSW Government's Planning Review, and some of the planning reforms proposed in the Government's Green Paper that was released in July 2012. A summary of the more than 1200 submissions on the Green Paper is available at www.planning.nsw.gov.au.

BPN's concerns about the Green Paper include but are not limited to:

- The proposal to limit community engagement at the early strategic planning phase and remove residents and communities' rights of comment and appeal on specific developments in their neighbourhood.
- The proposal to establish 'enterprise zones' across entire Local Government Areas, with few or any planning controls.
- The omission of ecologically sustainable development as the overall driver of the NSW Planning System
- The lack of recognition for the value of residential amenity, such as good building design, open space, parks and urban bushland.
- The removal of environmental protection mechanisms such as State Environmental Planning Policies, and their replacement with non-statutory instruments.
- The omission of any reference to heritage protection.
- The overall emphasis on the need to fast-track development across NSW, at the cost of our communities' wellbeing.

Recent decisions also indicate that the State Government is moving on several fronts to ensure that development proceeds at any cost, for example:

- The continued granting of Coal Seam Gas drilling licences despite enormous and ongoing community opposition.
- The refusal to guarantee long-term, secure

funding for the NSW Environmental Defender's Office; and

- An increasing number of large-scale urban renewal projects that have not involved any community engagement and do not reflect local community wishes.

BPN representatives have held several meetings with local MPs, the Minister for Planning and the Department of Planning and Industry to explain community concerns.

The White Paper that will spell out the details of the working of the final legislation and the draft legislation are due to be released in March 2013.

The BPN is currently circulating a petition asking for at least a six month period for consultation before the legislation is finalised. Local Councils and MPs are being asked to organise workshops that will provide local residents with explanations of the proposals and provide an opportunity for feedback.

The BPN website is:

<http://betterplanningnetwork.good.do/>

The website and Facebook page provide details on how to contact your local MP to express your views or sign a petition.

Recreational Hunting in National Parks

The National Parks Association of NSW continues to hold rallies around the State explaining the reasons for opposition to recreational hunting in the 78 parks that have been nominated by the Government. These rallies have been well attended.

During the past couple of months Information has been revealed that demonstrates the foolhardiness of the hunting proposals. The previous State Government was warned by a bureaucrat in 2008 that hunting in national parks would 'annihilate' wildlife management, that there was no precedent for opening parks to hunters and it would cripple initiatives aimed at increasing visitation.

Just before Christmas the NSW Government's Office of Environment and Heritage's own risk assessment produced as part of the preparation for implementation of the legislation was leaked to the media. It clearly outlines that recreational hunting in national parks is a major risk for park users.

The assessment identified the following major risks associated with the so-called Supplementary Pest Control In Parks Program with various levels of likelihood and seriousness of consequences:

1. The risk with major consequences is of a projectile (bullet or arrow) causing death or a serious injury to OEH workers, visitors and hunters
2. A possible risk of confrontation incidents between hunters and a likely risk between public-authorized officers and the public due to public protest.
3. Environmental Impacts from carcasses of shot animals left in the bush that will potentially pollute water sources and provide a previously unavailable food source for predators (probably other feral animals).
4. Impacts on Visitation - the risk rating is medium for adverse impacts on visitor experience and high for visitor perceptions and commercial impacts.
5. Credibility - impacts on the national parks brand.

6. Animal welfare - wounding of animals due to low hunter accuracy.

The introduction of recreational hunting has been postponed from December to March in order to avoid the peak holiday period. The details of the regulations covering the operation of hunting are due to be released shortly. It is hoped they will be strict enough to control the risks. However the cat is out of the bag and the general public are already very concerned about the safety of national parks.

The State Government has stated that they will be using the experience of hunting programs in South Australia and Victoria. However the situation in these States is different to the NSW proposals. In South Australia hunting occurs for short periods under a planned control program and the whole park is closed during hunting. In Victoria hunting of deer or ducks only occurs in a small number of alpine parks over a fixed period and more general pest animal hunting is only permitted in one remote park in the Mallee region.

The National Parks Association is asking for supporters of the opposition to the legislation to send a letter to your local MP. This can be done through this website <http://nohunting.wildwalks.com/> This website also has lots of information about the issue.

Update on the Powerful Owl Survey

The August edition of STEP Matters included details on the Powerful Owl Survey being undertaken by Birdlife Australia. The Survey aimed to locate all breeding pairs of Powerful Owls in urban areas of Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle.

The Survey showed that there are about 43 territories in the Sydney region with 19 of these areas observed having successful breeding events. The observed diet of choice was Ringtail Possums. Brushtailed Possums, Grey headed Flying-foxes, Rainbow Lorikeats and Sulphur Crested Cockatoos also featured.

A number of cockatoo interactions were noted around the owl nest hollows, the most notable of which was a cockatoo which flew into an occupied hollow, followed by an owl. The resulting racket ended in a quite bald cockatoo being chased from the hollow – lucky escape and an amazing observation.

Monitoring of the breeding season will occur this year from late March to October.



Owl in Flying-fox Reserve, Gordon

Details of the project can be found here: <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/surveys/Powerful-Owl-Project>

Teaching and Learning about Sustainability in Schools and Communities

During the 1990's STEP member Syd Smith worked for the NSW Department of Education leading the team that developed the NSW Environmental Education Policy. He has written the following article about the history and development of this important aspect of education

In the August issue of STEP Matters Janine Kitson wrote about proposed cuts in NSW Government support for sustainability education. It appears that the Save Sustainability Education Campaign has had some success. We are pleased to advise that the State Government's final organisational structure has retained the position of Sustainability Advisor.

One of the most interesting developments in schools today that would be of interest to STEP members is the teaching and learning of environmental issues and how students are being encouraged to not only take on sustainability issues themselves but to consider the sort of world we may have in the future. This is very much governed by what we do to our environment today. In this article I try to explain how the events of the last 102 years have led to the teaching of sustainability education in our schools today and why it has become so important to all of us.

Early Days of the Gould League

Many of you will be aware that children have been learning about the environment in our schools for over a century. It really began with the formation of the **NSW Gould League of Bird Lovers** when a principal and his teacher at Wellington Public School decided in 1910 to do something about preventing children from collecting birds' eggs, a practice which ultimately endangered the existence of bird species themselves. In those days it was seen as so important that the then head of the education department (or Department of Public Instruction as it was then known) was installed as the first president of the League. Many of you will remember the pledge you took to protect birds and other fauna and the badge you proudly wore to confirm your membership of the Gould League. Later in the 1960s the Gould League amalgamated with the Junior Tree Wardens and so conservation extended to flora as well as fauna. For almost the entire twentieth century the Gould League led the way in providing resources and teaching ideas for teachers and students in our schools. It was only when events outside our education systems took effect that environmental education became a much broader perspective, so broad that it is now known as **education for sustainability** or **education for sustainable development**.

The Development of Education for Sustainability

Education both reflects and influences our society. In the case of the environment it has links with global events as well as national and local. Perhaps the first global awakening occurred with the **Treaty of Rome** in 1969



where for the first time world leaders began to discuss the implications of the world's population growth. In 1970 Australia responded with a conference organised by the Academy of Science in Canberra where it was agreed that environmental education had to be an important component of the school curriculum. But it was not until 1975 (the **Belgrade Charter**) and the **Tbilisi Declaration** (1977) that any definition of sustainability education was available in any way. By 1987 the **Brundtland Commission of the United Nations** defined sustainable development as *"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."* This perception of sustainability still hold fast today but unfortunately escapes the understanding of many who seem to think that only the present is important. Ironically a young child in Queensland said it all so much better when he declared *"sustainability is enough for all forever".* It was about this time that a new national education body was formed, the **Australian Association for Environmental Education**, whose members still comprise teachers, government department employees, council officers, private consultants and other conservationists.

It was not until 1992 at the **Rio UNESCO Earth Conference** that an international approach to environmental education was enshrined in the now famous **Agenda 21** document which finally declared that all nations had a responsibility to include it in their school curricula and through

local government. Many of you will recall that a follow-up conference in Rio was held in 2012 on its twentieth anniversary. Unfortunately the 2012 conference was not the same success as the original Earth Conference.

In the meantime however Australia and its states and territories were developing changes on the ground. From the 1960s to the 1990s zoo education centres and environmental education centres (formerly field studies centres) were opening up across the country. Taronga Zoo and its satellite at Western Plains have dynamic teams of teachers doing important work with visiting schools while in both NSW and Queensland each has 23 environmental education centres respectively.

Latest Developments in Education for Sustainability

Presently the Federal Government is leading the way in developing an Australian curriculum. For the first time it is anticipated that all states and territories will be able to adopt a common curriculum which will be transferable across borders and enable mobile families to adapt to a change in a new school. The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is the independent authority responsible for the development of this national curriculum, a national assessment program and a national data collection and reporting program *“that supports 21st century learning for all Australian school students”*. While it includes the traditional curriculum areas like English, Maths, Science and the other learning areas it has also mandated the teaching of three cross curriculum priorities that deserve particular attention. These are: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia and **Sustainability**. ACARA believes that by including sustainability in the curriculum it will *“allow all young Australians to develop an appreciation of the need for more sustainable patterns of living and to build the capacities for thinking and acting that are necessary to create a more sustainable future”*.

So what has changed from the early days of environmental education to what is happening in our schools today and what is likely to occur into the near future? First we still try to teach our students certain facts and understandings. For example, we want them to appreciate that sustainability addresses the ongoing capacity of the Earth to maintain all life, that everything we have and use comes from the Earth, that sustainable patterns of living will meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs and that actions to improve sustainability are both individual and collective endeavours shared across local and global communities. But the facts and understandings are only part of the story. We also try to ask our students to

adopt a renewed and balanced approach to the way they interact with each other and the environment. We want our students to not only understand, but through their actions, appreciate that the biosphere is a dynamic system providing conditions that sustain life on Earth. Then they can gain an appreciation that all life is connected through ecosystems and humans depend on ecosystems for their wellbeing. How many people for example realise that without insects we would starve? This understanding is based on the view that humans are **part** of and not separate from the ecosystems that make up the biosphere. They can then see that human activity impacts on ecosystems. When this happens they see that humans have an impact on biosphere processes and therefore the biosphere’s sustainability. Finally we want them to really understand that sustainable patterns of living rely on the interdependence of healthy social, economic and ecological systems.

The New Curriculum in Sustainability

What has really changed is we are trying to get our students to take a much broader, longer term, integrative approach to knowledge and problem solving. We are not presenting a gloomy future to them; we are giving them skills to think outside the box, to develop partnerships with others, to learn to negotiate, to live in the real world, to discuss relevant issues, to look for connections.

The new curriculum has selected 3 major organising Ideas that are spread across three areas

- Systems
- World view and
- Futures

Each one of these has its own role to play. Systems, for example, covers the biosphere and how everything, including us, is connected and interrelated. World View recognises the dependence of living things on a healthy ecosystem, and provides examples of how diversity and social justice are essential for achieving sustainability. Poverty for example is the result of many forces: the unequal distribution of resources, politics, economics and the social values and culture that prevail in a society. This can occur at all levels from local to international and for this reason it needs to be attacked through individual and group action. Finally Futures involves students looking at the sustainability of ecological, social and economic systems by involving them in informed individual and community action that values local and global equity and fairness across generations into the future. The future is something we can control to some extent. We can take steps now to give us a better chance of having the future we prefer.

In summary we try to show our students that a sustainable future results from actions that are designed now to preserve and/or restore the quality and uniqueness of environments.

A Final Word

We are fast coming to the end of the UN Decade of Sustainable Development (2005-2014) which began with the following theme: *There can be few more pressing and critical goals for the future of humankind than to ensure steady improvement in the quality of life for this and future generations, in a way that respects our common heritage—the planet we live on.. Education for sustainable development is a lifewide and lifelong endeavour which challenges individuals, institutions and societies to view tomorrow as a day that belongs to all of us, or it will not belong to anyone.*

To ensure the goals of the UN Decade are achieved by, and even beyond 2014 there will be many challenges facing those who are committed (like STEP members) to a sustainable future. Many politicians still have a problem in accepting the need to make some compromises now to ensure a better future for

our descendants. The National Party in Queensland, for example at a meeting in August recently lobbied the government to ban the teaching of Climate Change in schools. Why are they so anxious to ban the rational discussion of an issue that concerns us all? The current cutbacks in the curriculum support area of the NSW Department of Education and Communities is another case in point. The support provided by the environmental education senior curriculum officer is to be disbanded and in some remote way teachers are supposed to become aware of current research, available resources and any new teaching strategies relating to sustainability just at a time when it is to become a part of the Australian Curriculum and hopefully managed effectively by schools.

Sustainability is a complex but important part of the curriculum. It is more than keeping a compost heap or hugging a tree, (as relevant as those things may be); it is preparing the next generation for the future to encourage them to make a much better contribution to their environment.

'Wilderness': re-establishing its meaning and value

This article is written by Dr Haydn Washington. Haydn is the Hon. Sec. of the Colo Committee and on the Board of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness. He is also a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Environmental Studies at UNSW and did his PhD in wilderness in 2006 at UWS. His book 'Human Dependence on Nature' was published by Earthscan in 2013.



I started campaigning in 1974 for what is now the Wollemi (then called Colo) wilderness. I went on to campaign for the Franklin, then for the Washpool wilderness rainforest, and finally the Daintree wilderness rainforest. We won all these wilderness campaigns. Wilderness is thus a term that I know well, and about which I am passionate. We had the big public debates in the 1970s and 1980s about wilderness – and we won! A survey of 1059 adults in 1996, found

that 98% agreed that 'We have a duty to future generations to conserve wilderness areas', and 86% agreed with the statement 'Wilderness areas should be conserved for their own sake, not because people want to use them' (Morgan, 1996). However, some years ago, I noticed increasingly negative reference to 'wilderness' and I started to see that fewer people used the term. Even the Wilderness Society spoke mainly about 'wild country' rather than wilderness. What was going on?

This puzzled me so much that I did a PhD on this at UWS called 'The Wilderness Knot' (Washington, 2006, 2008). It examined the confusion and tangled meanings around the term 'wilderness'. It also looked at how we might reduce the confusion and so continue to protect large natural areas.

What do conservationists mean by wilderness?

So what did we mean when we spoke about the Colo wilderness in the 1970s? At that time 'Wilderness in Australia: Eastern NSW and Southwest Queensland' (Helman et al, 1976) defined wilderness as:

A wilderness is a large area of land perceived to be natural, where genetic diversity and natural cycles remain essentially unaltered

We in the Colo Committee used this definition. Clearly, wilderness was a *large natural area*. That doesn't mean there were not many definitions of wilderness out there. Some defined it in terms of area (e.g. 25,000 ha), while others defined it in terms of being how long it took to walk across.

The IUCN (2008) Guidelines for applying Protected Area Management Categories defines wilderness (Category 1b) as:

usually large unmodified or slightly modified areas, retaining their natural character and influence, without permanent or significant human habitation, which are protected and managed so as to preserve their natural condition.

So 'wilderness' as a large natural area seemed pretty obvious – *except it turned out that it wasn't.*

What do other people mean by 'wilderness'

It turned out that there were other older meanings of wilderness, and other ideas that were confused with wilderness. One persistent confusion dates back to the US Wilderness Act (1964). It states:

A wilderness ... is hereby recognised as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.

Now the problem here was what 'untrammelled by man' means? The Act goes on to explain that it: '*generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with man's imprint substantially unnoticeable*'. This makes clear that it means that the land has *primarily* been affected by nature, not that humans have never lived there or had influence on the land. However, some indigenous peoples and academics have seen the above definition as ignoring indigenous history. So, even though Australian conservationists never used the US Wilderness Act definition, the term wilderness has been claimed to be 'anti-Aboriginal'.

This was taken even further Langton (1996) who argued that wilderness is '*the same as Terra Nullius*' and is a '*mystification of genocide*'. This is confused, for Terra Nullius was the objectionable colonialist doctrine that Aborigines did not have a real civilisation (and hence ownership of the land). The essence of the concept of wilderness however is about *large natural areas*, hence the two have nothing to do with each other. Similarly, wilderness has

nothing as such to do with genocide. Nevertheless, such attacks have damaged the meaning of wilderness to the extent that many academics and government bureaucrats will not use the word. This has an impact in the real world.

There are also other tangled meanings around 'wilderness'. These have been listed in my website www.wildernesstruths.com. One of these is that wilderness is a 'concept', not a place (Cronon, 1996). Well, wilderness, national parks and even local parks are all 'concepts', but they are *also places*. Another is that wilderness is in fact a 'human artefact' or cultural creation. However, wilderness was here *before* humans were, it is not an artefact made by humans. The landscapes were not 'made' by humans, nor did we evolve the native species.

The traditional criticisms of wilderness came from a modernist source, mainly developers who espouse 'progress' through profiting from destroying wilderness. However, sadly a new crop of criticisms has come out of postmodernist academia. The sources of postmodernist criticisms of wilderness seem to lie in skepticism about the *real*, and the claim that we live not inside reality but inside our representations of it (Baudrillard, 1993); an intense suspicion of Romanticism, and the influence of these on the conservation movement (e.g. Cronon, 1996); the view that wilderness itself was a 'grand narrative' (or dogma) that needed to be opposed (Cronon, 1996). This is tied in with the idea that 'reason' as defined by Western society is itself suspect (Derrida, 1966), so that attacks on wilderness are often *not rationally argued*. Such postmodernist criticisms (like modernist ones) come from a strongly anthropocentric viewpoint.

Do such criticisms of wilderness *matter*? Yes, as postmodernism is a dominant ideology within much of academia, which trains scientists and bureaucrats. If they accept these myths, then they are unlikely to support wilderness protection. In fact they are unlikely even to *use* the word – as seen currently in Commonwealth bureaucrats. 'Nature skepticism' has also become fashionable, where one questions the *reality* of the natural world (Washington, 2013). Some argue that nature is just part of culture. If wilderness is *just in our minds*, then one doesn't need to act to protect it and it has no right to exist. Bryant (1995) summarises the problem:

If we turn our regard for nature more and more into clever philosophical word games, if we begin to think that we are intellectually creating nature rather than physically participating in it, we are in danger of losing

sight of the real wolves being shot by real bullets from real aeroplanes, of real trees being clearcut, of real streams being polluted by real factories.

Should we come up with another word for wilderness?

Would it help ease the confusion if we changed the word to 'wildland'? No, for a 'wildland' could fall prey to the same myths. A change in name is **not** going to solve the wilderness 'knot'. Some people simply don't want to keep large natural areas, often because they want to exploit them. If we want to keep them, then we need to *move past* the myths that attack 'wilderness'. We have a perfectly good word for large, natural areas right now, and that is **wilderness**. It is time for us to reverse the 'code of silence' that exists in academia and bureaucracy. Ignore wilderness and it will go away – not just the concept *but the wild place as well*. Those of us who believe wilderness has a right to continued existence need to stand up and use of the term, and then continue to protect the wild reality.

Is wilderness still under threat?

Yes, but most people don't seem to realise this. Yes we have made some great gains, but in NSW only around **60%** of the wilderness areas identified by surveys such as the Wilderness Working Group (1986) have been declared under the Wilderness Act. In other parts of Australia the situation is even worse. Even those areas that have been declared as wilderness in NSW are now under threat from demands for increased tourist use. In 2012, the Office of Environment and Heritage brought out a strategy that allows horse riding in five declared wilderness areas. Thus, government bodies that should be championing wilderness now seem to assist in its degradation. By contrast, Europe is currently championing the 're-wilding' of areas to re-create wilderness. The need for an ongoing public campaign to declare and protect wilderness thus remains urgent.

Conclusion

Wilderness is defined by the IUCN as essentially a large natural area. In Australia in the 1970s and 1980s conservationists won the debate that such remaining areas should be protected. Since then the term 'wilderness' has come under sustained attack from both modernists and postmodernists. Some in academia have contributed to this, to the extent that the term is now used less frequently. However, all large natural areas have not been protected, and they are still under increasing threat. If we want to keep large natural areas into the future then it is time to move past the myths about what 'wilderness' is. It is time to again stand up and champion the importance of *wilderness* and debunk the myths around it.

Such myths are endangering the task of keeping our wonderful large natural areas safe into the future.

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The Vibrant Turramurra Community Garden

A barren piece of land next to the railway line and Pacific Highway in Turramurra has been transformed to a productive community space thanks to the initiative of a group of local residents. Here's hoping many more community gardens can be created in Sydney. This article was originally published in Good Organic Gardening magazine (for subscriptions contact 1300 303 414). It was written by Tina Howard, a founding member of the Garden. Website is tlcgarden.org.au.



Social morning tea under the cherry tree

Saturday morning is a buzz of gardening activity at Turramurra Lookout Community Garden (TLC). Traditionally this is the working bee day of the garden and members start arriving from 8.30am, ready for a host of gardening activities. Friendships flourish easily as well as plants.

Turramurra is a hilly suburb on the Upper North Shore of Sydney. TLC garden fronts onto the Pacific Highway which is a major arterial road traveling north. Cars and trucks wizz by in ever-increasing numbers. A railway line and a nursing home are neighbours to the site. The community garden is tucked in behind a large, raised berm to ensure privacy and a more peaceful escape from the traffic noise. This physical barrier also serves a greater purpose as it is the show entry to the garden and has been developed as a true community area.

After a public meeting in 2009, Ku ring gai Council agreed to allocate a park for the purpose of a community garden, the first in the shire... a true test of gardening commitment for the region. Interested members were offered a course in Permaculture through the TAFE system and this was paid for by council. This enthusiastic core of residents commenced the planning for the future garden and developed a robust 'togetherness' with each other that gave strong ownership to the project.

Money does not grow on trees as we all know - but immediately opposite the site - Bendigo Bank had opened its doors and when approached, were delighted to become

foundation sponsors for the garden. We were on our way!

Thorough planning and design work took one whole year as the site has a particularly steep slope. Earth moving equipment completed paths, allotment areas and swales within three days. Swales were needed to manage the water flow on the site after heavy rain as Turramurra has the heaviest rainfall in Sydney! We held our combined breaths after the first downpour of rain and were delighted at the distribution of the water on the site as it slowly trickled downward from the top to the lower swale. The management of water on the site continues to be enhanced as extras such as pathways, ponds and compost areas are improved.

A management committee was established, team leaders for different sections of the garden were allocated and both group and individual allotments were ready for planting. Rosters and job sheets were prepared and gradually a happy 'flow' developed within the garden.



Summer crop

On entry into the garden, its downhill vista allows an instant view. Plantings are now in their second year. The food forest in the lower swale has fruits of every type imaginable nestled amongst the native bee hive, the berry patch and the banana plot. Individual plots form a major hub of the garden. Gardeners have a variety of reasons for wanting their own plots. Some live in flats or units, some have gardens without sufficient sunshine due to over-hanging canopies of trees in this green shire and some just like to garden with friends and get their

hands dirty. Others just like to grow varieties of organic vegetables for personal satisfaction in sustainable ways and for sharing with their families.

The mounded berm is an area set aside where passers-by can pick fresh organic herbs, flowers, artichokes and citrus fruits. And pick them they do! Next door to the site is a nursing home and people often walk through the community garden with a bunch of freshly picked parsley or lavender on their way to visit elderly relatives. We occasionally receive requests on small notes from residents asking for more curly parsley or mint when supplies are low. We are always happy to oblige and it's a great way to get to know the neighbours.

A community demonstration garden has been established recently. It is continually being refined and improved and will soon have raised beds for those who are unable to work at ground level. It is an area for showcasing the growing of seasonal, organic produce through crop rotation. Trials are being established so that plants at TLC receive the very best of growing conditions for this area. This is a community area where you can almost hear the plants growing and certainly hear the chat that comes from the excitement that it creates. We are happy to share and laugh about both our successes and failures.

As one walks through the garden there are little pockets where school children have grown their seeds on their visits and tours of the garden. It is not unusual to see a group of pre-schoolers sitting on mats having morning tea on the grass before their treasure hunt to find strawberries and radishes that they have planted on previous visits. Young scouts, guides and Year 10 students are often seen completing work experience opportunities. Gardening clubs love to visit and tour the garden offering advice and enthusiastic praise as they casually taste the snowpeas overhanging the fences.



A section of member plots

We now enjoy the most wonderful shed that has been completed in the last year. It holds all our tools, individual lockers (polystyrene boxes really), whiteboard timetables and morning tea facilities. We have a shed sheriff who insists on tidiness, cleanliness and super organisation at all times. It will soon have solar panels installed on it and water tanks installed next to it. Kind sponsors, successful grant applications and tireless volunteer hours have pooled together to enable this project to near completion.



Spring produce

We are often asked if there are any 'pests' in our garden. All gardens have them and we are no exception. Most pests we try to control organically and there are many weird and wonderful concoctions trialed especially in summer. Flocks of white cockatoos do an enormous amount of damage especially as vegetables near harvesting time. Resident rabbits often nibble low growing plants and low fences have had to be erected to protect them both in community and individual plots. We have luckily had very little graffiti or property damage in the garden. There are no fences or gates surrounding the whole perimeter of the garden. It is a truly open area to wander within.

We inherited a beautiful aged crab apple tree that spreads its width just high enough for us to enjoy morning teas beneath its branches. It is a very special place...quite near a newly constructed, tranquil pond. If only the tree could talk... it would tell you about the welcoming attitude of its members, the lively discussions that take place there and about the friendships that are forged. We wanted to build a strong sense of community in Turramurra and to re-enliven the Turramurra village atmosphere. Members, young toddlers to older residents and every age in between, sit here together enjoying a chat or listening to an organised lecture on the topic of the month. There are many excellent gardeners (and also brilliant cooks) willing to share their experiences and their knowledge on a huge spread of ideas about food and gardening and just life itself!

Other Events

Bush Regeneration Days at Muogamarra National Park

Located in the northern end of Muogamarra Nature Reserve, Peats Crater and Peats Bight were cleared and grazed from the 1840's to the mid 1900's. The fertile volcanic soils have since been home to several exotic plant species competing with the naturally regenerating landscape.

Held on 23 February, 7 April, 1 June, 25 August, 19 October, and 9 December.

Join National Parks rangers for a fun and productive day tackling these weedy pockets in the otherwise healthy and diverse Muogamarra.

- Time:** 8:30am to approx 2pm
Place: Deerubbin Reserve boat ramp, Mooney Mooney. Transport by NPWS boat to Peats Bight.
Bring: Plenty of water, sun protection, long sleeves and pants, sturdy shoes and a packed lunch
Provided: Tools, training, morning tea, transport to site

Booking essential: Contact Tegan Burton on 9472 9322 or 0419 753 798

Email: tegan.burton@environment.nsw.gov.au

Opening of the National Arboretum, Canberra

We have missed the official opening but the National Arboretum is a new feature of the Canberra landscape that is well worth a visit. The Arboretum's Opening Festival on Saturday 2 February was one of the first events to kick off the Centenary of Canberra's year of celebration and community involvement.

An arboretum is a park planted with trees to become an exceptionally beautiful place for enjoyment, recreation, education and research. The National Arboretum Canberra is located on a 250 hectare site just 6km from the centre of Canberra near Lake Burley Griffin. In 1915, Walter Burley Griffin suggested establishing an international arboretum.

In 2004 the ACT Government's hosted a design competition for the arboretum. The winning design was called 100 Forests and 100 Gardens. The forests feature trees which are threatened, rare and/or symbolic, and which can survive on this site.

More details will be provided in a later edition of STEP Matters.

How to Contact Your Local Council – Use an iPhone App

Snap Send Solve is an iPhone app that is most useful and available from the App Store. The App is free and will only work in Australia. It is designed to help you quickly and easily report issues and provide feedback to your local council

Snap Send Solve uses GPS to determine your locality and work out which council you are in. Once determined the server sends back all relevant council details including contact information, location and email contact.

You can use Snap Send Solve to easily capture and report on common issues such as litter, hard waste, parking, street cleaning, fallen trees, noise, graffiti, damaged road or pavement or nuisance animals. It will also provide a general request or general feedback. Your reports can be via email or you can call the council directly.

CAN YOU HELP?

We are looking for a volunteer who can look after our Facebook page. Our Committee feels we are missing out on opportunities to keep our members informed on recent events and developments and provide feedback on local issues. Unfortunately our Committee members do not have the skills to keep the Facebook page up-to-date. We can of course provide help on content or editing when required.

Please let us know if you are interested by emailing secretary@step.org.au

STEP Information

STEP Matters: The editor of STEP Matters for this edition is Jill Green, who is responsible for all information and articles unless otherwise specifically credited. The STEP Committee may not necessarily agree with all opinions carried in this newsletter, but we do welcome feedback and comments from our readers, be they STEP members or not.

Feedback: Send complaints, praise, comments or letters to secretary@step.org.au. Please feel free to share you copy of the newsletter with friends, neighbours and business colleagues.

Note: All editions of STEP Matters can be viewed on line, usually with full colour illustrations.

New members: New members are always welcome to join STEP and to make themselves available for the Committee should they wish to do so. The effectiveness of STEP is a factor of the numbers of members we have, so please encourage your like-minded friends and neighbours to join.

The STEP Committee for 2013

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NOTE: THESE ARE MEMBER PRICES – SEE WEBSITE FOR NON-MEMBER PRICES.	Cost	Number	Cost
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Middle Harbour Valley (North): Bungaroo and Roseville Bridge	\$15		
Middle Harbour Valley (South): Northbridge and North Harbour	\$15		
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Understanding the Weather: A Guide for Outdoor Enthusiasts in South-eastern Australia	\$20	Due out in April 2013	
Postage per order for books	\$10		
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