



STEP INC.

Community Based Environmental Conservation

NEWSLETTER

No 46, August, 1990

SPRING BUSHWALK AND MAP LAUNCH - AUGUST 19

Mr Tim Moore, State Minister for the Environment, has kindly consented to launch the STEP map. There will be a brief ceremony, then a bushwalk of about 1½ hours, followed by afternoon tea. We expect the local press to attend. Do turn up to show your support for STEP and your appreciation of the hard work of the STEP committee and STEP members in bringing this dream to its conclusion.

Date: Sunday August 19

Time: 2 pm

Place: End of Kingsford Avenue, Turrumurra

If you could contribute a plate of goodies to share at afternoon tea, this would be appreciated.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This will be held on September 13. Our guest speaker will be Dr Harley Wright, who will speak on the topic "Managing Urban Bushland with the help of Run-off Control" and illustrate with a slide show. Dr Wright is the Manager of Chemical Assessment with the State Pollution Control Commission. Dr Wright has lived in Lindfield and Roseville for most of his life and known and loved the bushland since boyhood. It saddens him to see the growing invasion of weeds. At Macquarie University he studied, among other things, urban run-off and the effect of nutrients on urban bushland. This lead him to take a particular interest in this topic.

The talk by Dr Wright will be preceded by a short business meeting which will include the election of office bearers for the year ahead. As always, there will be vacancies on the STEP committee and we hope that members old & new will consider standing for election. If you could be interested in joining the committee, why not ring the out-going president, Jenny Simons, to chat about it?

Date: September 13

Time: 7.45 pm

Place: Sports Hall, Auluba Road, Turrumurra

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE (Note - this is the one and only notification of the A.G.M.)

CONGRATULATIONS, ELAINE MALICKI

We congratulate STEP member Elaine on her decision to stand as a candidate in the St Ives Ward By-Election. The committee resolved to endorse Mrs Malicki's candidature, as we perceive her to be a fine advocate for what we stand for. We have enjoyed a close working relationship with her for some time now. The committee has offered to assist her in her electoral campaign.

THE STEP MAP Sales are brisk for our beautiful map. If you haven't got your copy yet, ring Judy Meacham, 449 2843, or buy it at the Map Launch and Spring Bushwalk on August 19. Many people buy several copies. The maps make beautiful inexpensive gifts.

STEP CONSTITUTION

The Committee has looked at our constitution recently and recommends a few changes, particularly in the section Objects. The changes are detailed below, and will be proposed, as a special resolution, at the Annual General Meeting on Sept 13. If you would like to discuss any of the proposed changes please ring Jenny Simons; if you would like to examine the existing constitution and the proposed changes, this too can be arranged.

Section 2. Objects

Part (a) Delete "Comenarra Ward", replace by "the Municipality of Ku-ring-gai and its environs".

Part (b) Insert "and "Ku-ring-gai Council's SEPP 19 Plan of Management" at the end of the sentence.

Part (c) Delete "the management of" and "the control of" and "conservation". Insert "bushland" after "Lane Cove River Valley", and insert "management" before "body".

Part (d) Delete entirely.

Part (e) Delete "in this area" and replace by "the Municipality of Ku-ring-gai and its environs".

Part (h) Delete "keep members informed of the Association's activities, and to".

Part (i) Delete "interests" and replace with "objects". Insert "and lobby people in public office" at the end of the sentence.

Part (l) Insert "on committees, other organisations, and" after "Association" and insert "relating to environmental matters" after "enquiries".

Section 3. Membership

Part (a) Delete.

Part (b) Replace "objects and rules" by "Constitution".

Section 7. General Meetings

Part (a) Delete "(except the first Annual General Meeting which shall be held within two months from the end of the first financial year and within 18 months of incorporation)"

Part (b) Delete "special"

Part (c) Delete "to be" and replace by "which may be hand-delivered or"

Part (d), subsection (i) Delete "special"

Part (f) Delete "wish", replace by "which"

Part (i) Insert "prior to or" after "made".

Section 9. Special Resolutions

Part (a), Subsection ii) Replace "rules" by "Constitution"

Part (a), Subsection iii) Delete.

Part (b) Insert "hand-delivered or" after "a notice must be".

Section 10. Public Officer

Part (b) Delete.

Part (f), Subsection iii) Replace "objects or rules" by "Constitution"

Wherever an entire part of a section, or subsection of a part has been deleted, renumber the appropriate parts or subsections.

"HARK!

PEACE!

IT WAS THE OWL THAT SHRIEKED ... "

Dariel Larkins,
225 Kissing Point Rd, Turramurra

My conscience, unlike Lady Macbeth's, was untroubled when the owl called. It was 3.45 am on 23 June last and I was quietly sleeping. Part of my brain registered the two-syllabled calls and prompted me to wake. A conflicting instruction said "It's cold outside. It's a Boobook Owl. Go back to sleep." I slowly sorted this information and decided to get up. There was a Powerful Owl calling from the big blackbutts between my house and Kissing Point Rd.

I was first woken by a Powerful Owl in April 1971, the calls loud, deliberate, very resonant and two-syllabled at the same pitch. The syllables can be verbalised as "WHOO-HOO", and may be repeated at approximately 10 second intervals. Up till mid-June that year the calls carried on several nights from the valley between Kissing Point Rd and West Pymble. There were sometimes two callers, the notes of one being higher pitched than those of the second bird. This indicated a female to male exchange.

In April 1972, the calls began again, signifying a new breeding season. On 8 June the sounds were very frequent and insistent. On 16 July while exploring, I found deposits of small bones - skulls, lower jaws and legs and splintered pieces, at the edge of a rock shelter in the gully between Canoon Road and Fox Valley. These were later identified as glider possum remains. Was this a Powerful Owl's midden? It seemed so.

On 29 July at 5am I was woken apparently by a magpie breeding song and kookaburra pre-daylight calls. However there was soon a very close "WHOO-HOO", perhaps from the Simons' angophora on the other side of Kissing Point Rd. Heedless of the cold, I hurried out in time to count 30 powerful "WHOO-HOOS" uttered from the top of the mature blackbutt near my back door. At close quarters one notices a very slight rasping inflection between the two syllables. On 16 August there were more calls from the direction of West Pymble. I heard the owl again on 10 April and 10 November, 1973 and 11 May 1975.

In November and December 1977 an adult and an immature bird roosted in the Upper Lane Cove River Valley between Thornleigh and Wahroonga. By year's end the young bird had moulted into adult plumage. One adult was seen a number of times until June 1978, and a second appeared on 20 May. Two birds were together on 4 June with a third about 3 km downstream. There have been few records in the valley since then, but reports of birds from Kuring-gai Chase, Cheltenham, Cumberland State Forest and upper reaches of Middle Harbour may be the same individuals. Powerful Owls occupy a large territory and relocate within it according to resources of prey such as glider and ringtail possums. There are also reports from Royal National Park and the Hawkesbury district.

While the Powerful Owl is the largest Australian owl, some other birds that call at night are the Boobook or Mopoke, our smallest owl which breeds locally in angophora hollows and is sometimes mistaken for a cuckoo. The Barking Owl yaps like a small dog or screams (like a mad woman, it is unkindly said). The tawny frogmouth, a master of camouflage, "OOMS" softly and unfortunately it is often seen as a road kill. In spring and early summer Channel-billed Cuckoos call raucously on their southward migration flights, often moving down the valley about 4am. The Koel is a cuckoo arriving from islands to our north in Spring. It also calls at night when breeding, and some people are irritated by this.

I would be pleased to hear of any encounters with the Powerful Owl or any unusual species. Your records can be included in the NSW Bird Atlas.

LIFE MEMBERS The Committee has approved the issuing of a certificate to confirm Life Membership of STEP. Accordingly, a handsome certificate, dated as at the last STEP committee meeting, is being forwarded with this newsletter to every Life Member. We have at present 25 life members. Perhaps you will consider taking out life membership in 1990. (Do it this year, before the fees rise!)

MEMBERSHIP FEES The annual subscription to STEP is now due, and an invoice is enclosed with this newsletter. We do appreciate prompt payment. It's an awful lot of work, and disagreeable too, to chase up non-paying members. Of course, if you become a life member (see above) we'll never ask you for another penny.

THE KU-RING-GAI WILDFLOWER GARDEN There is a vacancy for a STEP member to join the Wildflower Garden Committee. Would you like to be our representative? Ring Jenny Simons to find out more about it - it's not an onerous task and you certainly don't have to be an "expert". We have some material to assist you.

CHELTENHAM BUSHWALK The Beecroft-Cheltenham Civic Trust is holding a bushwalk on August 26, at 2pm starting from Day Rd, Cheltenham, near Ahimsa, the National Trust property. STEP members are invited. (Take your STEP map for an outing).

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND THE LABOR PARTY

STEP was recently invited by Bob Carr, MP, Leader of the Opposition, NSW, to enter into a dialogue on "the environmental imperatives of the 1990s".

John Burke, Vice-President of STEP, accepted this invitation on our behalf. In a letter to Mr Carr he discussed three points which will be of interest to STEP members: the need for watertight environmental legislation, the need for a population policy for the Sydney region, and the need for governmental management policies for bushland. The paragraphs in Population are reproduced below.

"It is impossible to escape the conclusion that it is only the presence of people which causes environmental degradation. While our behaviour may be able to be modified through education and legislation it is still clear that more people will mean more problems. The continuing expansion of the urban area means enormous losses of bushland in Baulkham Hills and Hornsby shires and elsewhere. We now have 3,500,00 people, shall have a further 1,000,00 by 2011 and, at the same rate of growth shall have almost 7,000,000 by 2050.

The planning document Sydney into its Third Century gives no outlook other than continued growth and sets no end limits on population. Medium density housing will do no more than slow the effect of this growth. STEP is concerned that urban bushland will continue to be cleared for housing, industry and infrastructure and that which may remain will be under great threat from overuse and pollution. With a population of 3,500,00 we have already built an expressway through a national park, are proposing to fill in more of Botany Bay and every day are bulldozing virgin bushland for housing. How well will we resist similar pressures from twice or three times the population?

STEP believes that the State Government should have a population policy for the Sydney region which restricts its population to below 4,000,000."

This newsletter was compiled by Jenny Simons, John Burke and Sue Jones.

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