



# STEP INC.

Community Based Environmental Conservation

## NEWSLETTER

No 51, June 1991

### ANTARCTIC EXPEDITIONER SPEAKS

On Tuesday 18th June Antarctic expeditioner Damian Gore will talk about his experiences over two summers. Damian is a geomorphologist who worked from the Australian Mawson Base. He studied the Vestfold and Larsemann Hills area which is the third largest ice free area in Antarctica.

Damian, supported by a brilliant set of slides, will talk about the nature of the ice free areas, the wildlife and experiences with the Australian, Chinese and Russian stations.

7.45 pm at St Andrews Hall, corner Vernon and Chisholm Streets, Turrumurra.

See you there.

### ACCOUNTANT NEEDED

STEP has had devoted treasurers over the years who have done a wonderful job. Now we are incorporated, however, and have significant funds to account for and need a more expert hand.

We need an accountant or experienced bookkeeper to join our committee. We guarantee not to make you sell raffle tickets, lie down in front of bulldozers, man cake stalls or spend your weekends letterboxing. We simply need guidance on procedures, a monthly

P&L and balance sheet, and the accounts presented to the auditor once a year.

Please ring John Burke on 4873680 if you can help.

### MONA VALE ROAD WIN

In recent newsletters we have kept you informed on efforts to preserve the bushland corridor along Mona Vale Rd from St Ives towards Terrey Hills.

The Department of Lands has now completed its Land Assessment and has said that " After a review of the submissions received, significant changes have been made to the (Draft) Assessment." All areas which are now bushland are to be preserved and only the Council nursery, and the Police Driver Training Centre and the quarry on the southern side are designated for development while the showground and its surrounds remain either "intensive recreation" or "semi-natural recreation".

The quarry on the northern side is recommended for intensive recreation while the areas adjacent to it are designated semi-natural recreation. The tree lopping tip is designated to continue in a similar role or be used for intensive recreation.

This is a major achievement and much credit must go to all those individuals and groups who made

submissions when the draft assessment was exhibited. In particular Janet Fairlie-Cuninghame of KUBES and Elaine Malicki of the Ratepayers Association worked tirelessly to put the case for preservation.

### The Next Step

The decision to preserve the crown land bushland is really only the first step in securing the corridor. The next step is to get this bushland made part of the Davidson SRA on the south and of Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park on the north. Then there is the determination of the exact uses to which the areas allocated to development and recreation can be put.

### Tree Lopping Tip Site

There has been considerable debate about Council's proposal to use this site as a recycling centre. Original proposals by consultants were inadequate in providing environmental protection for Davidson SRA and for nearby residents.

A much better assessment report has now been carried out by consultants Mitchell McCotter and a report produced by Council officers which will ensure that, if the proposal proceeds, environmental damage is less. Thus the 440 submissions made by individuals and groups has been effective.

STEP still opposes the recycling centre, however, because a privately operated industrial enterprise belongs on private land in an industrial area - not in the midst of a fragile natural area. We also believe that the argument is a bit like that for roads - without restrictions the production of garbage will grow unchecked. If garbage producers were held accountable for the cost of disposal then there would be less of it. (Emergencies like the January storm occurring every 100 years or so can of course be dealt with by using ovals and mobile chippers etc.)

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### WINTER BIRDS

*Our resident ornithologist Dariel Larkins has prepared the following paper for us as a result of her observations in the Lane Cove Valley, doubtless her observations will be equally applicable to all bushland around Ku-ing-gai.*

With the passing of summer and autumn walkers in the Valley may have noticed some changes in the local birdlife.

In march the noisy Koel Cuckoo, or Coo-ee bird, leaves for New Guinea. It does not announce its departure but calls less as the season advances until it is conspicuous by its absence. The powerful Spine-tailed Swift flies off to Asia in great flocks, to return in Spring when birdwatchers vie to notch up the season's first arrival.

Early risers may hear Silvereye flocks calling as they pass overhead. Silvereyes are quite easy to hear at night during their passage north which begins in March. This movement is very obvious at Dead Horse Gap and Sawpit Creek in Kosciusko National Park in Autumn. Closer to home flocks can be heard and

seen passing passing from the valleys in the vicinity of Mt Banks Lookout, Blue Mountains National Park, together with Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. In the Lane Cove Valley numbers of both species increase in winter, many of which are passing through. Some of these are Tasmanian Silvereyes. Bird banding studies have shown that the species moves as far as Queensland. This is remarkable considering Silvereyes weigh about 11 grams.

In reverse, arrivals from the north include the White-headed Pigeon and the Brown Pigeon. These are fruit pigeons feeding on whole fruit and berries. Following the loss of the North Coast rainforests the birds have adapted by flying to forest regrowth and to thickets of Camphor Laurel. White-headed pigeons will fly across open country to do this. In Autumn and winter small numbers may be seen in the valley and also along the North Shore ridge by the railway line where they enjoy Privet and Camphor Laurel fruit which they fully digest. Look out for them from the train on the east side between Wahroonga and Chatswood, sunning themselves on the electricity wires.

Brown Pigeons are generally found singly and since both species are rather unobtrusive they are sometimes first located by soft calls or fallen feathers.

A rare but conspicuous winter visitor is the Spangled Drongo which arrives in small numbers to winter in Sydney contrary to its normal winter passage north. It is a glossy black aggressive bird with a bright red eye and long fish tail.

The Australian Museum reports that an unusual number of Scaly Thrushes and Noisy Pittas are turning up in the Sydney district. The colourful Noisy Pitta is a vagrant south of the Hunter River.

Pittas are ground feeders normally associated with rainforest.

The Scaly Thrush is a quiet litter feeder, brown with buff mottling and an attractive overall scaly pattern. Its beautiful dawn song has a crystal quality.

While there is a winter movement of both the Noisy Pitta and the Scaly Thrush, this is not well understood. Birds now turning up in Sydney and Central Coast gardens may be responding to unusually dry conditions in the bush. Your resident bird population will probably alert you to any feathered "foreigners" arriving in your garden. Should this happen, please lock up the cat and report your good luck either to myself (44-5478) or the Bird Department at the Australian Museum.

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### THE BUSH SCHOOL HALL

We told you last time about the proposals to put an oversized hall on the Burns Rd frontage hard up against a bush regeneration area. Substantial opposition has now emerged, not least from the Burns Rd residents who, surprisingly, were not consulted during the planning process.

We hope that an appropriate hall will be approved where it doesn't threaten the natural environment of the school and the built environment of the street.

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### WAHROONGA RAMPS

The ruckus continues over the proposal to build ramps onto the F-3 which will feed into Junction Road and thence through Killeaton St and the Arterial Rd to Chatswood (Secondary Road 2043). As reported last time the freeway has changed and increased the traffic flow through the

Wahroonga area. A group, Wahroonga Warrawee Turramurra Action Group Inc., has been formed to fight to have ramps built.

It seems they have a lot to learn about the dynamics of traffic generation. Just as the F-3 has almost overnight caused enormous increases in traffic volume, the completion of Road 2043 as a four lane highway will only attract even more traffic until it too is overloaded.

Their brochure says that within four years "the exit ramps off the F-3 Freeway to the Pacific Highway at Wahroonga will become completely saturated." This perfectly illustrates the quandary we face - the traffic will expand to fill the roads made available to it.

So the ramp proponents will make a highway through Ku-ring-gai and reduce the quality of life for thousands and will still be faced with that road becoming overloaded and spilling cars throughout the Municipality.

The answer is of course for the State Government to learn from overseas experience, to look at the abundant evidence under their nose and to plan the demography and a transport system for Sydney which limits the extent to which our urban environment is destroyed by the car. In the meantime it surely proper for the protagonists to join forces to keep the suburbs free of this unwanted traffic.

STEP will be making a submission to the Action Group to support their complaint but to question their solution.

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#### ACCESS ROAD FOR UTS (Ku-ring-gai College)

We are continuing to work on this

issue as described in the last newsletter. The Lane Cove SRA Trust has not yet given its permission for the access road from Lady Game Drive and we shall continue to lobby for rejection of the current proposal. Anyone wanting a copy of STEP's submission please ring John Burke.

In conjunction with two other community groups STEP met with senior management of the UTS in May. This was a productive meeting at which it seemed clear that the University has decided to re-examine the issue with a view to arriving at a more sensitive proposal.

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#### ECONOMIC GROWTH

When most environmental problems are analysed it becomes obvious that they are a product of the growth ethic. This often puts conservationists in the position of appearing to be against growth, against wealth creation and against progress and logically leads to the accusation that if we had our way everyone would still be living in mud huts!

This does give some scope for introspection. Would we have been against Warragamba Dam or the Sydney Harbour Bridge or against mining Broken Hill?

The answer of course is that it doesn't matter. Our responsibility is to the future. Just as we have better medicine, industrial safety and standards of living than fifty years ago then so do we have a better attitude to the environment.

The problem then is to reconcile opposition to environmentally harmful activities with the community's aspirations for a better standard of living and increased wealth.

The first part of this reconciliation is to appreciate that the main threat to a better standard of living comes from a continuation the processes of the past 200 years so that every rainforest is removed, every river is dammed and so that air and other pollution spreads unchecked. The second is to appreciate that economic growth and increased wealth are derived from technology as well as from population growth. There is no reason that economic growth cannot continue with a stable population.

A stable population will of course relieve pressures for the destruction of urban bushland and would give us a chance to get our transport and sewage under control. We could then concentrate our industrial energy in improving the wealth of the population rather than always devoting huge resources into infrastructure projects.

We believe, therefore, that it is quite possible to reconcile strict environmental protection with ever increasing standards of living.

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#### WARRAWEE PRIMARY

For over ten years a group of parents (mostly STEP members) have been working to reclaim a fragment of the Blue Gum High Forest behind Warrawee Primary on Blyesthwood Ave and a smaller gully site in the infants section. The highly disturbed sites were a mess but contained sufficient tall timber and understorey to make regeneration feasible.

The P&C has installed walking tracks and teaching materials are being written around the sites. The implementation of the new Environmental Education Curriculum will be made easier at Warrawee because of this work and the children will be more

easily able to appreciate the role of the shale forests in the lives of the aborigines and the early white settlers.

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#### MEMBERSHIP

STEP's influence in the community depends on the quality and quantity of its involvement in issues. It also depends very much on the size of its membership.

If you have friends who may be interested please tell them about STEP. We would be pleased to mail membership information and copies of recent newsletters to anyone nominated. Just ring and let us know.

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