



# STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978. No110 October 2001

## COMING EVENTS

**1. Annual General Meeting --** The STEP Annual General Meeting will be held on **Thursday 18th October**, as previously advised, at **7.45 pm, at the St. Andrews Uniting Church Hall at the corner of Vernon St. and Chisholm St., South Turramurra.**

The formal part of the meeting will comprise the President's and the Treasurer's Reports, the election of officers and any general business which may be raised. Copies of the reports and of the minutes of last year's AGM will be distributed at the meeting to allow members present to peruse them.

This is intended to ensure that the time taken for the formalities will be as brief as possible. The opportunity for discussion of any aspects of the reports will be given after each agenda item as usual.

After completion of the formalities our **guest speaker** will "transport" us to **Lord Howe Island**, a remarkable place, which has captivated anybody who has been lucky enough to visit it, including celebrated naturalist, Sir David Attenborough.

Although we could not secure Sir David's presence, our guest speaker **Rymill Abell** has many fascinating stories to tell about Lord Howe Island.

Rymill is a bush regenerator, resident in Lindfield, who has been involved with bush regeneration on Lord Howe over the last three years.

Lord Howe Island faces environmental threats which differ from those experienced on the mainland and Rymill is well qualified to tell us how these are being managed and combatted.

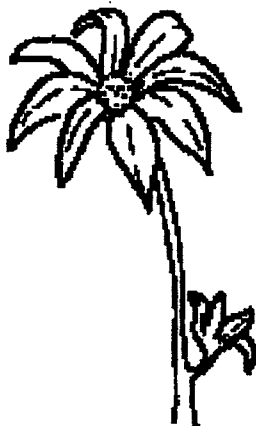
Lord Howe island boasts the world's southernmost coral reef, it supports teeming seabird colonies, rare land birds, diverse forest landscapes and a fascinating coastal terrain: altogether stunningly beautiful and abounding in natural wonders.

Rymill will illustrate his talk with slides to impart an impression of this special paradise. Tea and biscuits after the talk will allow further discussion with the guest speaker.

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### Committee

Over the last few years STEP's activities have become more extensive and the Committee needs to expand its numbers to cope with increasing demands. Our current Committee members are based in Fox Valley, Wahroonga, Kissing Point and West Pymble. STEP membership, however, is far more widespread, it ranges from all suburbs within Kuring-gai to North Ryde, Epping and Hornsby precincts which border on bushland. It would therefore seem desirable to have Committee membership based in



these areas. So please take up the challenge by joining the Committee or offering specific inputs. The Committee would benefit from local knowledge in the Garigal NP and Hornsby Valley areas, as well as from specific

knowledge about aspects other than bush regeneration such as bird habitat. In fact there are numerous ways of contributing, including the routine but essential Secretarial and Treasury work, which is currently being handled by just one person. The Secretarial work involves collecting, recording and distributing mail from our PO box in Turramurra, and handling general correspondence. The Treasury work involves maintaining our financial records and arranging for their annual audit, processing orders for our publications, payment of



our liabilities, liaising with government departments in the role of Public Officer. Closely linked to Treasury is the task of maintaining the membership database, sending out reminders for subscriptions etc. There is plenty of scope for your contribution. If you think you can help, whether by joining the Committee or just being co-opted for particular tasks, please contact Michelle Leishman on 9489 9872, or Hugh Roberts on 9144 1353 or on their respective e-mail.

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### Endangered Ecological Communities

Ku-ring-gai Council is preparing a Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan that will assist in identifying and protecting environmentally sensitive areas in Ku-ring-gai. A set of criteria for Stage 1 has been resolved that includes, but is not limited to, the endangered ecological communities of Blue Gum High Forest, Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest and Duffy's Forest.

STEP's representative, Bill Jones, is one of a group of volunteers who have been collecting data for the survey.

Any STEP members having knowledge of endangered ecological communities, or

concerns about a potential case, should contact Bill Jones (9498 6052) to ensure the information is recorded in the data collection. Unfortunately the time for submission is very limited, it needs to reach Council by Monday 15th October.

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### Blue Gum Walk

About a dozen participants joined Bill Jones on the Blue Gum Walk in the Berowra Valley Regional Park on 23rd September. Although this walk was intended as a Spring wildflower walk, it was anticipated that we would see some birds as well. Our expectations were exceeded by the sighting of four powerful owls on the last leg of the walk. Two adults and two chicks were there and everybody had a chance to see these rare large birds. Other sightings included Crimson Rosellas, Brown Thornbills, Eastern Yellow Robins, Brown Warblers and Superb Blue Fairy Wrens. We crossed Waitara Creek, traversed a degraded weedy area, traces of old houses and plantings, old water pipes and sawyers' tracks before going uphill into the Blue Gum Forest. This is part of Old Man's Valley, formed by the

Hornsby Diatrema, one of the largest volcanic extrusions in the Sydney area. The fertile soil derived from the volcanic breccia supported a substantial Blue Gum (*E. saligna*) forest in the past.

These Blue Gums are today's remnants after extensive logging, farming and quarrying in the area. Climbing up the slope the weeds were gradually replaced by some rainforest species, eg. Blueberry Ash (*Elaeocarpus reticulatus*), Muttonwood (*Rapanea variabilis*) and Scentless Rosewood (*Synoum glandulosum*).

*Indigofera australis* and several climbers (*Hibbertia dentata*, *Comesperma volubile* and *Hardenbergia violacea*) were in evidence. We saw some terrestrial orchids, including *Caladenia catenata*, *Acianthus sp.* and *Corybas sp.*

Towards the top of the slope the fertile soil gives way to sandstone, where Turpentines (*Syncarpia glomulifera*) and eventually Blackbutts (*E. pilularis*) and Sydney Red Gum (*Angophora costata*) become dominant.

As we followed the ridge we joined the Great North Walk, where wildflowers proliferated.

*Cassinia denticulata*, *Xanthosia pilosa*, *Brachyloma daphnoides* and *Ricinocarpus pinifolius* were the most common, and the parasitic plant *Olix stricta* was also seen.

One of the highlights of this section was the mass flowering of *Eriostemon hispidus* along the ridge. The intense scent of *Boronia floribunda* frequently alerted us to its presence long



before we could catch sight of it.

On the way down to the creek again the Rock Lily (*Dendrobium speciosum*) and Tongue Orchid (*Dockrillia linguiformis*) were flowering well, with some of the delicate *Bulbophyllum exiguum* and Epacrid (*Dracophyllum secundum*) as well.

Along Berowra Creek Coachwoods, Watergum and River Lomatias occur and our spring weather was affirmed by the presence of an Eastern Water Dragon. A break at Fishponds Waterhole gave us the strength to take the track back to Rosemead Ave. and to our cars.

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### The Population Debate

The poll-driven Government response to the asylum seeker problem, unfortunately exacerbated by election hype, has not only cast into question what sort of nation Australia wants to be and wants to be seen as in the international community, but it has also completely obscured the real debate about the size of population which is sustainable.

We continue to be bombarded by calls from business

leaders and economists to increase the population in order to achieve economy of scale in our domestic markets. Not only do they ignore the limitations which this continent places on total population, but they also ignore the changes caused by globalisation, which in this case are positive in so far that the market for our products and services is increasingly external.



One of the spectres often raised by economists is the ageing of the population and linked in knee-jerk fashion with a call to increase population by immigration. The argument is that the number of workers to support an ageing population needs to be increased.

Jill Curnow, of Sustainable Population Australia Inc. has taken a closer look at this argument in an occasional paper released last year.

She analyses the statistics used to support the argument from a different view point and throws sufficient doubt on their interpretation to justify a rethink of the argument. She points out that although there is an increase in proportion of people over 65 there is also a decrease in those aged under 25, which are the part of the population which actually require the major support from the working population.



There are also other factors, eg. the fact that older people require above average health care only in the last two years of their lives and that people between 65 and 75 still make a positive contribution in unpaid work and financial support, rather than requiring support on average.

The paper provides food for thought.

(Note: The editor was not born in Australia, supports the compliance with international obligations to accept refugees and asylum seekers)

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### Map Sales

It is very pleasing to report that over 1200 copies of our map of the Lane Cove Valley have been sold to date and that the cost of production has been recouped.

The cost of production does not include the tremendous amount of time and expertise, which John Martyn has provided and without which the publication would not have been possible. He has donated these efforts to STEP free of charge in order to promote and support the objectives of STEP, the conservation of our bushland, the enhancement of the public's appreciation of our bushland and to enhance the enjoyment of the bushland in its natural state

### Christmas Presents

Christmas is coming up fast and we would remind you that the map is still an excellent present for a friend who may need an introduction to the pleasures of a quiet walk through our bushland.

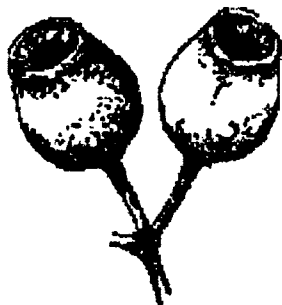
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### Membership Renewal

Those of our members who have not yet renewed their membership for 01/02 will find renewal invitations with this newsletter.

Your membership is valued and appreciated, and your participation is necessary to allow STEP to keep the local environmental conservation issues before the public eye and those who would govern us.

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### Map of the Walking Tracks of Middle Harbour.

You will be pleased to hear that the preparation of a new map for the Garigal/Middle Harbour area is progressing. John Martyn reports that the team of volunteers is well into the marking up of the tracks on the database provided by LIC as they explore them on the ground. We cannot yet promise a date of publication, but watch this space.



### Parramatta Rail Link

The NSW Government has now published the Summary of the Final Proposal for this project.

It has some negatives and some positives for almost everyone.

It proposes a cut and cover tunnel across the Lane Cove River to which STEP had objected as being destructive of the river bed and its ecology.

It retains a station at UTS, which has some benefits but arouses the fear of future commercial development near the UTS campus.

It connects to Chatswood station which is seen as a positive for a future link to the Northern Beaches but raises the fears of disturbance to the residents whose houses are located over the tunnel.

There are no stations at Lane Cove or for the Artarmon industrial area, which STEP had advocated as part of an alternative routing.

It does not adopt the concept of a Y-junction to Chatswood and to St. Leonards, which STEP always regarded as unworkable in operational terms.

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### Morona Ave.

Progress continues on this site in the Lane Cove Valley. Last month a group of 19 people met for the first of the monthly bushcare working days to do additional planting and weed the three sites where the recently completed retention basins were installed.

A ranger from LCNP also assisted and supplied the water tolerant plants which were used to extend the previous plantings.

A combination of Juncus and grasses were planted to provide a habitat conducive for frogs. Tadpoles have already been observed in one of the basins.

Many Privets growing along the top of the creek line were cut and poisoned. It is planned to continue working down the creek line to remove this weed.

Wandering Jew was also removed in a small area at the base of one retention basin and many little ferns were found struggling to survive. With increased light and much less competition, these ferns should be able to spread.

Along the street edge is a good example of what happens when garden refuse is dumped. Spider Plant and Onion Weed are making incursions down the slope into the bush. Work has now begun to halt the march of these nasties.

A professional bushcare team will be engaged in the near future to tackle the vine and blackberry problem which is harder to manage.

The transformation of this site has engendered fresh enthusiasm and interest among members of the local community who are keen to improve their bushland environment.