



STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978. No. 87 November, 1997

CHRISTMAS BARBECUE

For the last two years we have had a barbecue just before Christmas, and both occasions have proved to be very enjoyable gatherings. Since two almost makes a tradition we will do the same this year to continue that "tradition".

The venue will be at the back of Leuna Ave., Wahroonga, the time will be late afternoon, say 5.00 pm, and the date will be Sunday, 14th December, 1997.

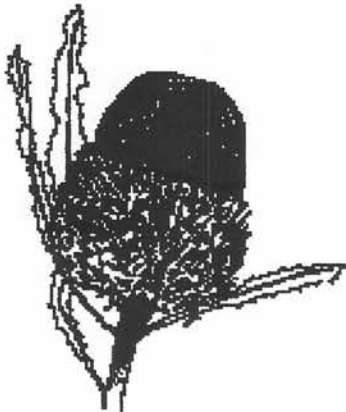
It is a wonderful venue and lends itself to a relaxed exchange of news and views, and it is located close to the bush regeneration areas, where Harry Lock and his team have been enthusiastically working to good effect for a number of years.

Please bring your own food, drinks, tables and chairs, but hot water and a gas BBQ will be provided.

Access is from the corner of The Broadway and Leuna Ave. on to the grassed area at the back of Leuna Ave.

With a bit of luck the weather will be kind to us as it has been in the past. Do come along and meet other Step members and guests and visitors, and enjoy the cheer of the festive season.

MERRY CHRISTMAS MERRY CHRISTMAS MERRY CHRISTMAS



STEP COMMITTEE

The new Committee elected at the 19th Annual General Meeting on 15th October, 1997, is as follows:

President --- Michelle Leishman.

Secretary/Treasurer-- Hugh Roberts

Minute Secretary/Publicity -- Helen Wortham.

Other Committe members are:
John Martyn, Neroli Lock, Jennifer Schwarz, Walter Lennie, Bruno Krockenberger.

Michelle Leishman also doubles as STEP representative on the Ku-ring-gai Bushland Advisory Committee, Hugh Roberts also acts as Public Officere, and is taking on the task of

Membership Secretary. He is going to be busy.

Jennifer Schwarz acts as STEP representative on the Lane Cove Total Catchment Management Committee.

Our new President will no doubt allocate other tasks to the remaining Committee members in 1998.

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year's attendees at the AGM were treated to a wonderful presentation by **Dr. Noel Tait** from the School of Biological Sciences at Macquarie University. Noel talked about the amazing world of invertebrates, or as he put it 'all those marvellous creatures which make up most of the world's biodiversity'. He gave an introduction to the huge range of different invertebrate animals existing, from the slimy to the exotic to the downright bizarre, illustrated by some fantastic slides. He showed examples of strange and interesting creatures from many different habitats -- ocean, desert, forest and even our urban landscape.

Finally he told us about his special research interest -- Peripatus, or the 'velvet worms', which are beautiful, cryptic creatures found in the litter and rotting logs of our forests.. The story of his discovery of the many varied species of Peripatus in Australia, and their bizarre behaviours (particularly their reproductive behaviour!) was fascinating. Members of the audience were delighted to be able to touch and observe a few live specimens of Peripatus. STEP would like to thank Noel for giving us such a wonderful insight into the world of invertebrates with which we share this planet. Noel's enthusiasm for his subject was certainly very infectious!



A WORD FROM THE NEW PRESIDENT

Hello to all members of STEP! As this is my first contribution to the newsletter as President, it seems a good opportunity to introduce myself to you.

I have been a member of STEP for some years now, both as a resident of Lindfield, and now living in Wahroonga. My interests in urban bushland began as a student at Macquarie University, where I studied biology. Several of our undergraduate courses involved fieldwork in the Lane Cove Valley, and I continued on my research career studying plant ecology and bushland management. I now work as a research scientist in plant ecology at Macquarie University. My interest in STEP's activities was encouraged by my sister and brother-in-law Christine and John Burke, who have made an enormous contribution to STEP over the last decade or so.

This coming year we face several exciting challenges.

First, there is the proposal currently being debated on changes to the boundaries of the Lane Cove National Park, which would extend the Park and enable the valley to be managed as a single unit.

This has always been a policy of STEP, and we want to contribute to the process to achieve the best possible result.

Second, we want to ensure that bushland involved in the land release from the B2/B3 road proposal remains protected as bushland.

Thirdly, we hope to begin production of an updated version of the ever popular STEP map of the Lane Cove Valley.

In addition we will strive to maintain or expand our membership to ensure that we remain a strong voice in the community, and to continue to support community projects that increase knowledge and understanding of Ku-ring-gai's natural environment, and improve its management.



STEP will continue to be represented this year on the Lane Cove Total Catchment Management Committee (Jennifer Schwarz), Ku-ring-gai Council's Parks and Reserves Committee (assuming Council's agreement) and Bushland Conservation Advisory Committee (Michelle Leishman).

We will also be continuing our popular walks and talks program, expanding our number of guided bushwalks, and inviting some fascinating speakers on a range of topics.

We will keep you posted.

The Committee this year has some wonderful, energetic members.

I would particularly like to thank our just-retired president Bruno Krockenberger for his efforts over the last few years. We will miss Bruno as president but are very glad that he is remaining on the Committee.

Also our Treasurer and Secretary Hugh Roberts has added Membership Secretary to his tasks, and continues to do a wonderful job. Please contact me or any of the other Committee members if you would like to talk about or contribute to any of our activities. Remember that our society is as strong as the members make it! I look forward to seeing you at the Christmas Barbecue.

Michelle Leishman



PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE 19th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

(by the outgoing President)

It is a privilege to present this Annual Report to you once again. I summarise the efforts which we undertook during the last twelve months and the activities in which we participated with you, and present a brief view of 1997/98.

ACTIVITIES

Two bushwalks were organised this year, the Autumn Bushwalk on 4th May, 1997, took us through the Beecroft Park area, where the stately high forest in the Devlin's Creek valley has been severely disturbed by the M2 motorway.

It was extremely informative.

and the Spring Bushwalk on 14th September, 1997, to the Muogamarra Nature Reserve. This walk was pure enjoyment.

We organised four talks during the current year,

the first one was a presentation of photographs by Barbara Bryan, a discussion of techniques and some constructive critique of our members' efforts. This followed after the 1996 AGM.

Subsequently we had Dr. Walter Boles to talk about the Evolution of Australian Bird Fauna,

John Martyn about Mauritania, following his visit there

and Dr. Steve Riley to talk about the Urban Run-off in the Lane Cove Valley.

We supported the Clean-up-Australia Day again, which this year proved to be very effective, with teams sent to various locations, as in 1996.

We set up our information display and sales stand at the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Festival, at the Ku-ring-gai Community Fair to spread our message about conservation, and to promote the Field Guide.

FIELD GUIDE

The Field Guide second print run continues to sell steadily.

STEP MAP

This highly successful initiative, taken by STEP many years ago, has now come to its conclusion. We have just a few copies left, and the Land Information Centre in Bridge St. will be the last remaining source of further copies, while their stocks last. Because of the effects of the 1994 bushfires and the passage of time, the Committee decided that a revision would be necessary, rather than a repeat print run. This is a task to be undertaken in the 97/98 year, and will call for contributions of time and expertise from other members, as well as from the Committee.



NEWSLETTERS

Seven Newsletters, starting with No. 80 in August, 1996, and finishing with No. 86 in September, 1997, were published this year. We have tried to include a variety of articles in the Newsletters to help achieve our objectives of awareness and information about conservation issues, as well as to provide enjoyment to our readers.

COMMITTEE

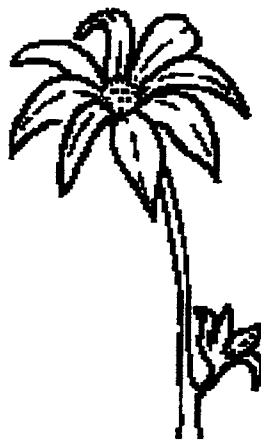
The Committee has met regularly every month to deal with the business at hand. Geoff Suggate and Sue Jones have indicated their wish to retire from the Committee. Geoff joined the Committee in 1983 and served as Treasurer from 1983 to 1991. He has also been our representative to the Copuncil's Parks and Reserves Advisory

Committee. He is currently the longest serving member of the Committee. It is understandable that he wants to free himself now, and we thank him for his contributions over the years.

Sue joined the Committee as Secretary in 1986 and continued in that role until 1993. By that time she had made herself almost indispensable and was continually being called upon to advise on procedural matters, or to resurrect something out of the Committee's "too hard basket". She supported four Presidents, and is currently still our Membership Secretary. We are very grateful to Sue for her hard work and effective contributions. We will miss her.

During the year Hugh Roberts extended his position of Treasurer to include the tasks of General Secretary and Public Officer. He is about to add Membership Secretary to that list, since his computer system and expertise make that possible. Hugh deserves special thanks for his efforts.

I would also like to thank all other Committee members for their contributions during the year. There are opportunities in the Committee for people who are keen to contribute to the activities of STEP in various capacities. The Committee works in a collaborative fashion, giving plenty of scope for members to contribute in ways which suit their time and talents.



PAM MORSE FUND

This fund will be used to provide a grant to the value of \$250 annually to a student engaged in the study of any aspect of urban bushland, including flora and fauna studies, biodiversity, and management issues such as chemical pollution, weed invasion erosion control and control burning. Applications for this grant will be called in March of each year, and the work will be required to be completed within 12 months. The Committee has outlined a set of conditions, which will apply. The scheme will commence in March, 1998. Other suggestions for its application are also being considered.

STEP ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION FUND

During this year this fund has been set up to take advantage of the taxation provisions under subsection 78(4) of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936.

This will allow donations to be made to this fund by individuals, who are then entitled to deduct these from their taxable income. It will place STEP on the same footing as other environmental organisations. It increases the effectiveness of donations.

REPRESENTATION

STEP was again represented on the following permanent bodies:

Ku-ring-gai Council's Bushland Management Advisory Committee, the Lane Cove Valley Total Catchment Management Committee,

The Union of Lane Cove Valley Conservationists,

Council's Parks and Reserves Advisory Committee,

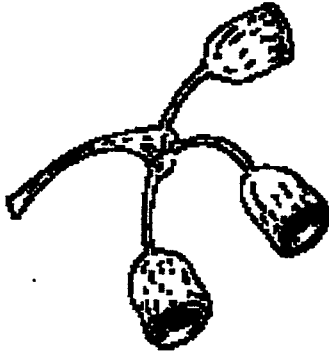
We have also participated in:

Council's Residents' Environmental Advisory Committee.

STEP is a member of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, which is a peak conservation organisation.

STEP has continued to make formal submissions to

Local and State Governments regarding significant issues affecting urban bushland directly and indirectly.



FINANCES

STEP's financial position continues to be sound. Details are contained in the Treasurer's Report.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The big issue, which is likely to affect our bushland, our suburbs and our region in the coming years will be the effects of population growth. It is likely to be the primary cause for a range of secondary effects, such as pressures for residential development, for roads and other infrastructure and the consequent incremental degradation or destruction of tree canopy and remnant bushland.

The lack of a population policy at Federal and State level imposes an opened growth pressure on the metropolitan area, which is now being expressed in the State Government's drive to increase residential density in all suburbs. The end effect of such a limitless expansion on North Shore suburbs generally, but Ku-ring-gai, Hornsby and Warringah in particular is to destroy their character, ie. their tree cover and their remnant bushland surrounds and enclaves. It is also a very divisive issue, since it pits neighbourhood against neighbourhood, and we need to be aware as a community that the desire to preserve our environmental heritage, be it natural or built, should unite us against the

insensitive imposition of inappropriate density standards. Unfortunately population growth to the north of our municipalities also exerts secondary effects on our environment, due to commuter transport demands, which would turn our neighbourhoods into traffic sewers, if the transport planners at the RTA were given half a chance. This pressure is evident in the constant moves to try to increase the traffic capacity of Route 2043 through Wahroonga and St. Ives. It could surface again on the south side of the Pacific Highway, given that there is a latent impatience with any traffic problems, which is easily exploited by the road lobby. Although population policy appears to be far beyond our local sphere of interest, we cannot ignore it because of its potential to impact so destructively on the local environment, which we are striving to protect.

Development pressures are never far from the surface, such as the sand, soil, gravel and bus depot at St. Ives, or the residential proposal for the Cook Trig site at Grosvenor St., Wahroonga, imposed by State Government decisions, or more recently the residential proposal straddling Byles Creek at Malton Rd., Epping. They all affect our bushland detrimentally. Such pressures will continue to surface. The incorporation of Council controlled bushland, and B2/B3 road corridor land into National Park or Regional Park status under NPWS authority will require a concentrated effort on the part of STEP members and Committee to ensure that the best result is achieved, which gives those areas the best chance of effective conservation.

The STEP Committees task ahead is to meet these challenges and to mobilise the membership and community opinion in support of our objectives. This task does not seem to get any easier from year to year.

This will be my last report to you as President. I have decided not to

offer myself for reelection. It's time for change.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank all the Committee members for their efforts over the past year, and to thank you, the members of STEP for your support. It has been a great privilege to serve as President.

Bruno Krockenberger



DONATIONS

As mentioned in the past president's report to the AGM, STEP has established the *STEP ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION FUND* which has been approved by the Authorities to receive donations which are tax deductible in the hands of the donors.

This puts us on a par with other environmental organisations and creates the potential for STEP to carry out or sponsor environmental projects which may require some capital input in addition to the usual volunteer labour.

We would therefore encourage members to enhance STEP's financial capacity for funding local conservation objectives by their donations. Donations above \$2 are tax deductible.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

Just a reminder that the *Field Guide to the Bushland of the Upper Lane Cove Valley* is still an excellent Christmas present for your friends, good value at \$25, and still available from your Treasurer or Committee member.