



# STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978. No.105 November 2000

## COMING EVENTS

**MAP LAUNCH** --at the risk of becoming tedious, this is the final reminder to members about the map launch, which will take place at 7.30 pm on Thursday, 9th November, 2000, at Jenkins Hall in Lane Cove National Park.

Peter Duncan, Director of Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust, will do the honours, and there will be champagne and other refreshments and finger food.

If you have forgotten to send your RSVP, there is room for one or two more if you call Neroli on 9489 5794, but hurry or you'll miss out.

**CHRISTMAS BARBECUE** -- This has become a definite must-be-there annual event.

It will again be at the rear of Leuna Ave., Wahroonga, where Harry and Neroli Lock will provide the facilities.

Bring your own food and drink and join us to reflect on the year's events and talk about the new project at Morona Ave. with local residents, who will hopefully join us also.

We will start at 5.00 pm and there will be plenty of daylight left for the kids to play on the grass and the playground.

### Annual General Meeting

The STEP AGM was held on Wednesday, 18th October, at St. Andrews Uniting Church Hall, South Turramurra.

The formal agenda, consisting mainly of President's report, Treasurer's report and the election of office bearers was concluded expeditiously, to be followed by a talk by Dr. Lesley Hughes.

The President's report and a summary of Dr. Hughes' address are reproduced later in this newsletter. Copies of the Treasurer's report and the audited accounts were handed to attendees at the meeting, but will not be reproduced in the newsletter. Information is available to members from the Treasurer if required.

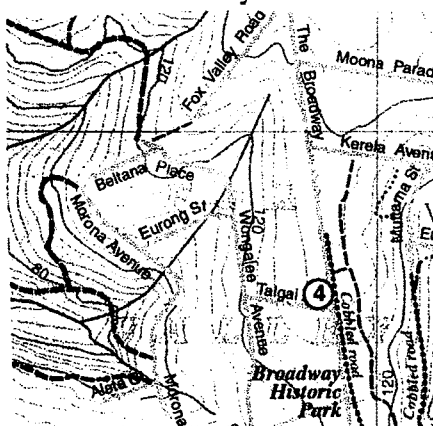
The new committee is:

Michelle Leishman -- President,  
Hugh Roberts -- Treasurer and Public Officer,  
Chris Maxworthy -- Secretary, and other members are  
Neroli Lock, Helen Wortham, Bill Jones, John Martyn and Bruno Krockenberger.

### President's Report

My report this year is in abbreviated form, due to time pressures, but

STEP's activities have been no less hectic than in other years.



The year 2000 has significance for us, not for the Olympics, but for the great effort that has gone into the production of our new map for the walking tracks in the Lane Cove Valley.

The launch of the map will be on 9th November, and I trust that many of you will be there.

On that subject I would like to record my thanks to John Martyn and his team of volunteers for the tremendous effort he and they have put into this project. Without John's enthusiasm and the donation of his time and the use of his sophisticated computer equipment it

would not have been possible to produce a map of such quality and elegance.

STEP will benefit by reputation and financially from the publication of this map for years to come, and that will enable us to undertake more extensive work to enhance the appreciation and enjoyment of our urban bushland.

Now to report on the year as a whole:

### Committee

The committee has met monthly, except January, to deal with the business at hand, in addition to planning meetings for the map launch.

Unfortunately Jennifer Schwarz tendered her resignation from the committee during the latter part of the year and we thanked her for her contributions and expressed the hope that she would be able to rejoin at some future date.

The committee has worked smoothly and effectively, and I take this opportunity to thank them all.

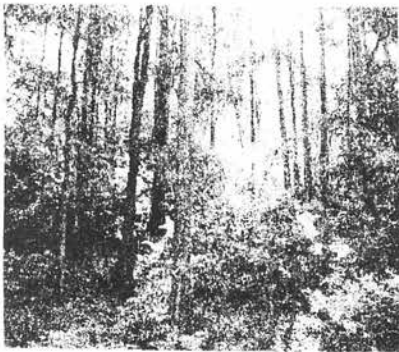
### Representation

STEP has been represented on Ku-

ring-gai Council's Bushland Advisory Committee, and has remained a member of the Union of Lane Cove Valley Conservationists, although we have had problems in attending their meetings.

### **Activities**

We organised 2 bushwalks during the year, the autumn walk from Fiddens Wharf to Lane Cove National Park and the Spring Slippery Dip Walk in Garigal National Park.



The two talks for the year were by Valerie Close on the "Backyard and Beyond" and by Nancy Pallin on "The Role of Bats in the Bushland Ecology".

### **Newsletters**

Although the timing wasn't always right we published the usual six newsletters for the year, and provided a monthly column for the Ku-ring-gai Observer for most of the year.

### **Submissions**

STEP made formal submissions to Ku-ring-gai Council regarding the Residential Strategy, Canoon Rd. Draft Plan of Management, The SEPP 5 Application for Mt. Pleasant Ave., and to the Project Managers of The Parramatta Rail Link.

We also pursued the matters of the Mona Vale road Corridor and the funding for the incorporation of the extra bushland from Hornsby Council etc into the Lane Cove National Park by letters to relevant authorities.

### **Financial**

STEP's finances continue to be in good shape and will further improve as a result of map sales. Our Treasurer, Hugh Roberts, will present his report shortly.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Hugh for his unstinting efforts to sort out our accounting and membership system and deal with the various investments. Things are now running more smoothly than ever before. Apart from his treasury duties, Hugh has also acted as Secretary and Public Officer.

### **EPA Grant**

STEP was successful, in conjunction with Ku-ring-gai Council and NPWS, in obtaining a grant from the Environment Protection Authority for work over a three year period to control the stormwater pollution and weed infestation occurring at Morona Ave., Wahroonga, thanks to the efforts of Neroli Lock and Michelle Leishman.

STEP's role in this project will be to provide the web site educational material relating to the project and a continuing coordination effort.

### **The Coming Year**

STEP faces the challenges which tend to come from unexpected corners, in addition to the known challenges such as the

- \* B2/B3 Rezoning exercise,
- \* Residential Strategy,
- \* Parramatta Rail Link

and the ongoing SEPP 5 schemes.



But perhaps the biggest challenge for the coming year will be to find suitable ways of promoting our objectives with the resources, which we have been able to generate over a few years, and which will continue to flow. We will need to devise educational or direct action projects, such as the Morona Ave. project, to make a positive contribution to the conservation of our environment.

The new Committee will need to address this challenge urgently, and any suggestions or ideas from you, the members, would be greatly appreciated.

Finally I would like to thank you all for your support during the 1999/2000 year.

Bruno Krockenberger.



### **Climate Change -- Is It Upon Us?**

Dr. Lesley Hughes from the Department of Biological Sciences, Macquarie University, concentrated on the mounting evidence of biological reaction to climate change.

She started with the climate records which show that the average global temperatures have risen steadily during the 20th century, with 1998 being the warmest year ever recorded.

Average global temperatures are predicted to rise by 1-3.5 degrees C in the 21st century.

A 1 degree temperature change

equates to a latitudinal climate shift of 100 to 125 km, so a 3.5 degree rise would equate to moving local climate 400 km closer to the equator, ie. Sydney would have the climate currently prevailing at Coffs Harbour.

This rate of climate change is more rapid than any experienced during the last 10,000 years.



In a landscape modified by man, where the natural areas are separated by agricultural and/or urban development, species may find it more difficult than in the past, to track changing climate by moving across the landscape in response.

To keep within their current climate zone, to which they have adapted over many generations, species may have to move at the rate of 10-40 km per decade. For long-lived species such as trees these rates of movement are faster than anything achieved before. They could be left behind in a climate zone, which is not conducive to their continued reproduction. Even relatively mobile species such as butterflies could be negatively affected by such rates of movement.

Already there is evidence of reaction in the biological world to warmer temperatures.

Most of the evidence stems from the northern hemisphere, where data has been collected over long time periods.

Earlier flowering times of plants, earlier nesting of birds, the

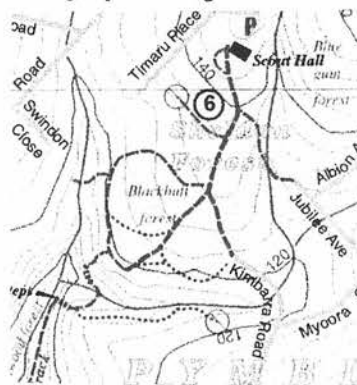
movement of plants and animals to higher altitudes and the movement of fish towards polar ocean regions. Although this may appear to be an overly depressing message, it is important to recognise that the scale of global climate change which many of us will witness in our own lifetime is enormous.

The decisions we make now for conservation will be crucial to the connectivity between nature reserves which will be necessary to allow the movement of species in response to climate change.

The most vulnerable species such as habitat specialists will require proactive conservation plans to survive. Cosmopolitan weed species, which are well adapted to change will require more intensive effort to control.

Perhaps the ultimate action may be to anticipate change by planting slow maturing long-lived species such as trees into reserves which will achieve their preferred climate when the trees reach maturity. This aspect of climate change is not widely appreciated in the community and it was therefore doubly interesting to the audience.

We thank Dr. Hughes for her thought provoking talk.



#### BOOK REVIEW

Jocelyn Howell and Doug Benson of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, have just released a new book entitled "Sydney's Bushland-- More Than Meets The Eye".

This is a delightful and informative book, in full colour, with 370 photographs of Sydney's beautiful bushland.

The book is divided into three sections.

The first, "A Closer Look at Sydney's Bushland" describes in simple terms how ecology and climate have shaped the landscape and its vegetation, and describes the different types of vegetation, from rainforests to woodlands, heath and estuaries.



The second section, "Bushland Ecology", is full of all sorts of interesting information about Sydney's plants, their survival tactics and their relationship with wildlife, insects and even fungi.

The third section, "Out and About in Sydney's Bushland", describes places where Sydney's bushland can be easily experienced -- in a morning, a day or even a bit longer.

The book is written in a very easy-to-read non-technical style and is packed full of beautiful photographs.

For Sydneysiders or their visitors who are interested in bushland this book will be an invaluable source of information and enjoyment.

It is available at Royal Botanic Garden Shops (telephone orders welcome on 9231 8125) or good book stores, and retails for \$27-95.

Order forms are also available from Michelle Leishman (tel/fax 9489 8972)

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Apologies to Life Members**

Due to an oversight Life Members were not sent an order form with the last newsletter, as were other members.

An order form is therefore enclosed herewith to allow life members to order their new map.

Would you please also check your personal details on the form and correct or complete address, phone number, e-mail etc to ensure that our membership data are correct. Our apologies for the previous oversight.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **The Upper Lane Cove Valley**

*The following is an extract from information shown on the new map.*

The Upper Lane Cove Valley was formed by a complex system of streams draining into the Lane Cove river from the gently southward dipping southern fringe of the Hornsby Plateau, where Hawkesbury Sandstone emerges from beneath its cover of Ashfield Shale.

The Ashfield Shale persists on the shoulders of the valley system but the watercourses have cut deep valleys through it into the underlying sandstone.

Once a source of timber, the tall blue gum, blackbutt and ironbark forests that once grew on the rich Ashfield Shale soils were cleared in the early to mid nineteenth century and eventually turned over to orchards.

These were in turn consumed by residential and commercial development. Patches of Ashfield Shale tall forest remain at Sheldon Forest, Turramurra, and around Wahroonga and Thornleigh but it has almost disappeared. The best place to see it is at Sheldon Forest which is served by an excellent system of walking tracks.

Deeper into the valley system the steep, rough terrain and poor soils

of the Hawkesbury Sandstone resisted much of the urban development, and the bushland survived to be valued for its natural character and to be incorporated into reserves and national park.

The vegetation on the sandstone soils is diverse with almost 500 native plant species recorded. These in turn support a large range of bird and animal species.

The variety of vegetation communities is enhanced by the diversity of settings and microclimates.

Deeper valleys are moist and support tall blackbutt, blue gum, angophora, turpentine and sheoak forest with similarity to the forests on Ashfield Shale. There are also moist pockets of coachwood rainforest.

The striking salmon pink trunks of angophora, or Sydney red gum, dominate the mid to upper valley slopes, along with Sydney peppermint.

Both species become shorter and more twisted towards the exposed, fire-prone ridgetops where they are accompanied by scribbly gum, dense stands of black sheoak, banksias, hakeas, wattles, tea trees and tick bush.

The flowering shrubs, undershrubs and herbs are here at their most prolific.

Enhancing the diverse flora of one of the valleys is a geological anomaly in the form of an ancient volcanic vent whose rich soils support a true rain forest community.

The Browns Field Diatrema in Wahroonga has been cleared of much of its original vegetation but a surprisingly large range of rain forest trees and shrubs survive in pockets along creek lines. These include jackwood, wilkea and sassafras, which elsewhere in the Sydney area are restricted to the coast or Blue mountains. Like rainforests elsewhere there are palms, climbers and numerous fern species.

### **NATURAL ADVANTAGE A Blueprint for a Sustainable Australia**

This publication from the Australian Conservation Foundation was launched by the Governor-General, Sir William Deane, in October and was supported, as a basis for a more informed debate, by a number of industry leaders such as the Visy chairman, Dick Pratt, and BHP CEO, Paul Anderson. It emphasises the need for leadership and draws attention to the opportunities which would arise if Australia were to take positive steps to address change rather than suffer decline as a consequence of forced change.

It defines sustainability and the challenges to be met and sets out a blueprint for action.

It calls for:

- \* Cutting environmentally damaging subsidies,
- \* Environmental tax reform,
- \* Building social capital through community participation,
- \* Green and social accounting in order to measure real progress,
- \* State of the environment reporting and auditing,
- \* A national salinity plan,
- \* Land and water repair, including a national rivers and estuaries plan,
- \* More emphasis on biodiversity conservation,
- \* A forests and woodlands preservation effort,
- \* A plan for coasts, oceans and fisheries,
- \* The need to foster sustainability in the regions,
- \* Environmental modernisation of industry,
- \* Environmental employment,
- \* More positive greenhouse action,
- \* Sustainable urban and transport planning.

In all these aspects it draws on action being taken overseas, mainly in the European sphere, not on visionary statements.

The publication is available from the Australian Conservation Foundation, 340 Gore St., Fitzroy, 3065, phone (03) 9416 1166.