



STEP Matters

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STEP Committee

President

John Burke

Committee

Michelle Leishman
Tim Gastineau-Hills
Bruno Krockenberger
Andrew Little
Neroli Lock
John Martyn
Ann Perry
Jim Wells
Helen Wortham

Diary Dates

14 May	Walk in Royal National Park (see this page)
4 June	Hornsby Diatremes Walk (see next page)
6 June	Talk on Australian brush turkeys (see this page)

In addition, we are planning at least two further talks, and two walks to:

- Cumberland State Forest (winter)
- La Perouse (spring)

Talk: Australian Brush Turkeys, our Urban Wanderers

Date: Tuesday 6 June
Time: 8 pm
Place: St Andrews Church Hall (Vernon Street, South Turramurra)
Contact: Michelle Leishman (9489 8972)

In recent years brush turkeys have been showing up more and more in suburban bushland and even in back yards in Ku-ring-gai and adjoining areas.

They belong to the family known as megapodes, which also includes the mallee fowl. They are large, conspicuous, mainly solitary birds. The male builds large mounds of decaying vegetation in which the eggs are incubated by the heat of decomposition.

The favoured habitat is rainforest and adjoining eucalypt forest and woodland, but they are increasingly becoming familiar as urban wanderers.

Dr Ann Goeth from Macquarie University will present this talk.

Walk: Royal National Park Palm Jungle Loop and Forest Island

Date: Sunday 14 May
Time: 8am for 8.30am start.
Venue: Royal National Park (\$11 entry per vehicle)
Meet at Waterfall railway station car park.

We start from Garrawarra Farm
Car pooling encouraged.

Duration: Full day
Grade: Hard (Palm Jungle Loop Track) and easy (Forest Island)
Two half-day bushwalks covering 15km, with some lengthy steep sections of track encountered during the morning,
Bring: Lunch and snacks, water, sturdy walking shoes/boots, wind/rain protection, appropriate hat and sunscreen. Binoculars recommended.

Leader: Andrew Little
Contact: Andrew Little phone 9924 7212 between 6.30 and 8.00pm.

Maps: Royal National Park Tourist Map 1:35000 LPI, Otford 1:25000 LPI.

Two excellent and contrasting pockets of rainforest will be explored on two bushwalks led by STEP member Andrew Little. The walks are in two separate sections and travel by car is necessary between them. Car pooling is recommended.

The first is the Palm Jungle loop track (10 km), starting from Garrawarra Farm, which features panoramic coastal views and the beautiful Burning Palms (remnant littoral rainforest).

After lunch we wander the Forest Path Walking Track (5 km),

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through some of the last, huge old growth Turpentines and one of the best examples of warm temperate rainforest left in Sydney.

Both walks showcase a wide range of other vegetation types, from coastal heath to dry and wet sclerophyll forest.

Numbers are limited to 15 and due to the length and difficulty of the morning walk STEP recommends experienced walkers only.

Booking essential.

Andrew Little 9924 7212 between 6.30pm-8pm

Hornsby Diatremes

About a month ago John Martyn sent this email to Committee members:

Yesterday Jim Wells and I visited an area of blue gum forest in Thornleigh/Westleigh that Jim had highlighted as worth a STEP bushwalk one day. It turned out to be a patch that I had walked on a few occasions with friends who live around the corner from it. It is stunningly beautiful. It is roughly 1.5km SW of Old Mans Valley, Hornsby, in a tributary of Larool Creek, which is off Waitara Creek. It has understory of rainforest species, mainly scattered lillypilly and two species of water vine (Cissus spp) plus abundant ferns, and on a previous trip I think I found brush turpentine Rhodamnia rubescens, also recorded at Browns Field but really hard to find there. It is mostly situated in a broad embayment bordered by Quarter Sessions Rd, Russell Cresc and Higgins Place. I have long suspected there is a diatreme there, not only because of the vegetation, but also the profile of the valley, and lack of sandstone outcrop, but had been unable to find direct evidence because of the deep soils.

Well yesterday we found some scraps of highly weathered, but unmistakable, volcanic breccia in one isolated location, as spoil

from an old sewer line trench, so I am now certain there is a diatreme. From the vegetation boundaries and valley profile I think the body is around maybe 600 metres long and up to 300 m wide, with the same NE-SW direction of elongation as the Hornsby diatreme. In fact it is separated from the SW edge of the latter by only 300 to 400m of sandstone, and is sort of en-echelon from it. So it is actually about three times the area of Browns Field but Dave Roots is unaware of it and it does not seem to be on maps. Maybe I'm over the top with excitement and lots of people know about it, but the very comprehensive Berowra Valley guide says nothing about it either.

(See photo page 6)

Consequently the Committee decided to do the.....

Hornsby Diatremes Walk

When: Sunday 4 June

2006, 12:45pm for a 1pm start

Where: Old Mans Valley, Waitara Creek and Dog Pound Creek, Hornsby

Duration: About two hours

Grade: Moderate – about 3 kilometres with some hill climbing on fire trails and foot tracks

The walk will explore the geology and vegetation of the Hornsby and Dog Pound Creek volcanic diatremes. These are now broad valleys with very beautiful Blue Gum Glen Forest, which features tall Sydney Blue Gums among a number of rainforest species including lillypilly, sassafras, scrub turpentine and vines. Exposures of volcanic rocks will also be visited.

Meet at the start of the fire trail on Valley Road, next to the park and playground, at the bottom of the long winding Pretoria Parade. Be sure to bring snack food, water and a hat. In wet weather, consider salt (or your own magic remedy!) for leeches.

Complimentary afternoon tea is provided at the conclusion of the walk.

For more information visit

[http://www.step.org.au/walkstalks](http://www.step.org.au/walkstalks.htm)

[.htm](http://www.step.org.au/walkstalks.htm) or contact John Martyn

(9449 7962), who coordinated

the production of our walking maps and *Field Guide to the Bushland of the Upper Lane Cove Valley*.

UTS Ku-ring-gai Campus

The University of Technology Sydney is seeking to sell its Lindfield campus.

With staff and student numbers at the campus declining in recent years, the university believes it can accommodate all of its students at its Broadway campus.

The University paid a token \$1 for the site to the Government in 1989, and now wants to realize its market value to bolster its resources and Broadway facilities.

However, the university's plans to have the site rezoned to maximize its value have been opposed by Ku-ring-gai Council. A proposal for up to 570 homes, commercial premises and public buildings was lodged in 2004.

But Ku-ring-gai Council regarded this as an inappropriate use for the site.

The Council and local residents

are concerned about the site's capacity to accommodate large-scale development, with specific concerns about traffic and impacts on ecology.

A university working party headed by Teaching and Learning Pro-Vice-Chancellor Richard Johnstone is reviewing proposals for alternative educational uses for the site, however it is understood that the university's preferred option is to dispose of it. There is speculation that the sale could earn the university up to \$100 million.

Following Council's rejection of its rezoning proposal, UTS approached the Planning Minister, Frank Sartor, to declare the campus as a State Significant Site.

If this approach is successful the Minister will exercise complete planning control with the power to override all environmental policies governing the site.

Mayor Elaine Malicki and the Council's Open Space Director Steven Head have met with the State Planning Department but a Council submission will have no more influence than a resident's challenge.

Cr Malicki has been reported as saying that the Council must wait like everyone else for the department's 30 day exhibition period before making a submission. Department staff could not estimate a date but indicated they were not satisfied with UTS's initial rezoning plan which was similar to one Council received earlier.

Environmental Education

As part of STEP's activities in promoting environmental education John Burke and Jane Gye had discussions with the headmaster of Warrawee Primary School regarding ongoing support for the use of its

bush maintenance program as an educational resource. In a follow-up letter John wrote, , *".....it was obvious that you appreciated the importance of the bush areas at Warrawee and very heartening that you intend to make them an integral part of the school rather than have them as curious appendages - as has sometimes been the case.*

..... STEP(has) funds to support such maintenance(and) we hope that you will come back to STEP should funding become a problem.

..... you will need experienced regenerators to work within the bush and to supervise any parents who may volunteer but who are not trained regenerators. Jane Gye can assist you in sourcing such people and of course works herself in this field.

..... We look forward to seeing Warrawee developing its environmental education potential and to offering our assistance wherever it is needed."

STEP is also trying to generate interest in other (Ku-ring-gai initially) schools, which may have natural bushland within their grounds, to use bush regeneration and maintenance as an environmental education resource and would be prepared to support such activity as outlined above for Warrawee Primary. STEP is following with great interest a proposal by National Parks and Wildlife Service to develop a teaching resource kit for environmental education in secondary schools.

Australian Plant Society

The North Shore Group of the Australian Plant Society conducts walks and talks at the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Gardens on Tuesdays. Meet at the Visitor Centre at 10 am for a talk followed by a guided walk. The cost is \$4 per head and you are advised to wear suitable footwear and to bring a hat and water.

Contact: Bill (9498 6052), Bob (9417 5217), Margaret (9489 2960) or Julia (9498 4547)

May

- 9 Monocotyledons and dicotyledons
- 16 Plant pollinators
- 23 Ferns
- 28 Plant communities

June

- 6 Flannel flowers, mintbush, daisy and Goodenia families
- 13 Rainforests
- 20 Longer walk (bring lunch, return approx 2.30 pm)

July

- 25 Acacias (*Fabaceae*/*Mimosaceae*)

August

- 1 Epacris and Woollsia (*Epacridaceae*)
- 8 The pea family (*Fabaceae*)
- 14 The Boronia family (*Rutaceae*)
- 21 Hakeas and grevilleas (*Proteaceae*)
- 29 Eucalypts (*Myrtaceae*)

September

- 5 Orchids (*Orchidaceae*)
- 12 Waratahs (*Proteaceae*)
- 19 Longer walk (bring lunch, return approx 2.30 pm)

October

- 17 Grass trees, Lomandras and Tetrathecas
- 24 Grasses (*Poaceae*)
- 30 Reeds, rushes and sedges

November

- 7 Bird walk (8.30 am start)
 - 14 Callistemons, Kunzeas, Melaleucas (*Myrtaceae*)
 - 20 Leptospermum, Baeckeas (*Myrtaceae*)
-

Other Events in Ku-ring-gai

18 June

Festival on the Green

St Ives Village Green (organised by Ku-ring-gai Council)

STEP President

After nearly nine years as President of STEP, Michelle Leishman has indicated that from April 2006 her academic workload, with additional teaching duties, would prevent her from continuing with the STEP presidency.

Michelle has been an excellent president, she has lent the office a high degree of scientific credibility and commanded the respect of those with whom she has interacted as president. The Committee expresses its appreciation for her unstinting efforts in pursuing STEP's interests and her leadership over the years. Apart from the presidency she has managed an academic career as well as two further additions to her family in that time.

Michelle has agreed to remain as a Committee member. The Committee has been seeking a new president within its ranks, as envisaged by the constitution.

Under the circumstances John Burke has declared himself willing to take it on.

John is an excellent candidate for the position, since he comes to the task with a successful record of many years as president in the past, years in which he raised the profile of STEP in the community to the point of being the pre-eminent local conservation group, with widely acknowledged influence and a flourishing membership.

The Committee welcomes its new president and believes the general membership will support his election at the next Annual General Meeting in October

Invasive Species

The following article is reproduced from the May 2006 edition of BUSHRANGER, the newsletter of the Lane Cove Bushland and Conservation Society,

Our continent is being besieged and 'eaten from within' by swarms of foreign plants, animals and diseases, collectively known as 'invasive species'. Along with climate change and land clearing the invasion of native ecosystems by exotic organisms is one of the top three threats to biodiversity in Australia.

Weeds alone have been implicated in the extinction of four plant species, while invasive animals, particularly the fox, rabbit and rat, are thought to have contributed to the demise of many of Australia's now extinct mammal and bird species.

At least 49 naturalised non-native species are known to have a direct impact on threatened native species in Australia. Some animals are unofficially protected because they are considered 'cute' or have an economic or recreational value to some, and are allowed to breed and spread.

No one knows how many foreign invertebrates are in the country, but a relatively recent arrival, the fire ant, is cause for particular concern. This South American species has had a huge economic and ecological impact in the U.S. since it was accidentally imported in the 1930s, and it is beginning to do the same here.

Most of our worst weeds and feral animals have been deliberately and legally imported, in some cases by government agencies themselves. Included in this list are mammals (rabbit, fox and feral pig), birds (starling, myna, sparrow), fish (mosquito fish, carp), our ugly amphibian (the cane toad), and many weeds (Lantana, Patterson's Curse, and pasture plants such as buffel grass).

Amazingly, and unfortunately, we are still making 'cane toad' mistakes, over and over, particularly with regard to plants.

<p>An average of ten new weeds establish in Australia each year, and most of these are escaped garden plants.</p>
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At last count, included in the approximately 8720 plants for sale in Australia were over 1130 known weeds, including at least 62 agricultural weeds.

Some of the worst invasive plants currently being sold in Australian nurseries are asparagus fern, broom, fountain grass, gazania, glory lily, hybrid mother of millions, Japanese honeysuckle, pepper tree, periwinkle and sweet pittosporum. These plants and others already residing in Australian gardens represent the 'next wave' of garden escapes and problem weeds for Australia.

In his ground-breaking 1999 book 'Feral future', Professor Tim Low made the point that at the same time that land managers and community groups were trying to control existing weeds, new ones were constantly being introduced into the country and others were being allowed to escape. The government paid little attention to *environmental* weeds as distinct from agricultural ones.

The recently formed non-profit, non-government Invasive Species Council of Australia (ISC) is dedicated to the problem of invasives, and is working hard to make governments, industries and individuals aware of what must be done to prevent the problem getting worse.

The ISC is calling on the Australian Government to honour its promises, one made in 2005 to change to a 'permitted list' system by 2006; and another made in the 1997 National Weeds Strategy to establish a national 'rapid response' system to quickly locate, identify and

eradicate outbreaks of new invasive species. Currently, rapid response systems vary across states, are uncoordinated and underfunded, and don't target the most threatening new weeds.

The ISC is also calling for a mandatory plant labelling system for the nursery industry that advises customers of a plant's 'weediness'.

Without doubt the best – and most cost effective – way of dealing with a problem is to not let it become a problem in the first place. 2006 is a time for action. The ISC is lobbying governments and industry to make changes that will make a real difference in the fight against new invasives – particularly stopping the flow of new weeds. This presents a wonderful opportunity for us to get involved and support their efforts by writing to the Ministers for the Environment (The Hon. Ian Campbell) and Agriculture (The Hon Peter McGauran) House of Representatives, Canberra ACT

2600 and joining the ISC (see www.invasives.org.au).

If you're concerned about the survival of our continent's unique flora and fauna make a stand against the onslaught of invasives!

Membership Renewals Due

If 'membership overdue' is written underneath your address at the bottom of page 4, your membership is due for renewal. Please complete the form at the bottom of this page, indicate any changes needed to the address label, and mail the completed form and payment (by cheque made payable to STEP Inc) to:

The Secretary
Step Inc
PO Box 697
Turrumurra, NSW 2074

You can also use the form to order any of our publications.

NPWS Fire Management

NPWS has issued a draft document on fire management for comment. STEP is examining the document with a view to commenting, but if any member would like to take a look, please contact Tim Gastineau-Hills, 0419 251 586 or tghill@yahoo.com It is open for comment until May 26.

	Unit cost	Number	Cost (\$)
Membership (only complete if 05 is shown on address label on next page)			
Single (per financial year)	\$16		
Family (per financial year)	\$20		
Life	\$200		
Field Guide to the Bushland of the Upper Lane Cove Valley	\$30		
Maps of Walking Tracks (cost of maps to non-members is \$20)			
Lane Cove Valley	\$15		
Middle Harbour Valley. Sheets 1 and 2 Bungaroo and Roseville Bridge	\$15		
Middle Harbour Valley. Sheets 3 and 4 Northbridge and North Harbour	\$15		
Donation (donations of \$2 or more tax deductible)			
E-mail address			Total cost