

# STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978. No.90 July 1998

## COMING EVENTS

**ANTARCTICA** On Wednesday 22nd July at 8.00 pm STEP will host a talk by Dr. Damian Gore from the School of Earth Sciences, Macquarie University, on 'Science, Tourism and Environmental Crises in the Australian Antarctic Territory'.

Damian is an active research scientist in Antarctica and editor of the Antarctic Society Bulletin. He has been to the Australian Antarctic Territory four times and has a wealth of experience on Antarctic issues.

Damian is also an excellent photographer and his talk will be illustrated with many of his beautiful slides. Anyone interested in Antarctica should not miss this talk.

### CALENDAR

**Future Walks: West Head Wildflowers** 20th September, 1998.

**Chase Alive Guided Night Walk** 6th November, 1998.

**KMC Festival of Wildflowers** 29th and 30th September, 1998.

**KMC Community Fair** 18th October, 1998.

**STEP Annual General Meeting** 14th October, 1998.

### PAM MORSE STUDY GRANT

This year was the first year that a study grant was offered from the \$5000 Pam Morse Bequest.

It was to be available to students 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. It is expected that such studies will allow a better understanding and management of Ku-ring-gai's urban bushland, although the study area will not be limited to Ku-ring-gai. The committee was pleased with the response and decided to award the grant to three students:

They are

Mr. Paul Rymer, at University of Western Sydney,

Hawkesbury campus, for his project on "The reproductive biology and population genetics of *Dillwynia tenuifolia* (Fabaceae), a rare and threatened plant" (\$200);

Ms Emilie Warner, at the School of Biological Sciences, University of Sydney, for her project on "The Role of Herbivory in Plant-Plant Interactions" (\$200);

Ms Liz Watson, at the School of

Environmental and Engineering Studies, University of NSW, for her project on "Assessment of State Environmental Planning Policy No. 19 'Bushland in Urban Areas' (\$100).



### STEP'S TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

On 30th May some one hundred members and guests gathered to celebrate STEP's twentieth anniversary.

S.T.E.P. was formed by twenty eight Turramurra residents who were concerned about the loss of urban bushland, and who wanted to halt the degradation of their local environment

STEP Incorporated grew from this beginning over the next twenty years to its present membership, and its respected position in the

community of the Ku-ring-gai area. Greg Bloomfield, who chaired the inaugural meeting, recalled the excitement of the heady days of grassroots activism to stop the destruction of ridgetop bushland slated for use as netball courts. Although they were frustrated in their objective in this case, they found empowerment in their common purpose and determined to show that the community can make a difference.

Current President, Michelle Leishman, then forcefully restated STEP's position of implacable opposition to loss of further bushland through inappropriate solutions to the urban problems of transport and development, which raise their heads at frequent intervals. She emphasised that bushland is irreplaceable and therefore priceless, once gone it is lost forever.

Densy Clyne then entertained members and guests with whimsical reminiscences of her Turramurra garden, which provided a source of inspiration and fostered her love of nature. Her talk was accompanied by some magnificent slides and when the slide projector unfortunately failed she switched over to a

facinating video, which showed the close relationship between native bees and certain flowers in the pollination process.

Yvonne Langshaw, STEP ex-President and well-known local artist, displayed her evocative paintings of Australian landscape. Barbara Bryan, Vice-President of the North Shore Camera Club, showed some stunning photographs, with interesting special effects.

We were privileged to have Barry O'Farrell, MP, Member for Northcott, John Watkins, MP, Member for Gladesville, Councillor Elaine Malicki, and Arthur Willis, Head of the Northern Region of NPWS, join us in our celebration. Seven of eight Presidents of STEP were present, but unfortunately Jenny Simon was unable to attend and make it a 'full house'.

The celebration was an affirmation of STEP's pride in its achievements and a commitment to pursue the objectives of bushland conservation, fostering knowledge and appreciation of bushland.

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**THE WEST IS BLOOMING AGAIN**

John Martyn, whose professional activities take him to Western Australia frequently, believes that anyone with a spare long weekend in August (second and third weeks will be best), some spare cash (unfortunately flights are expensive) and a desire to see the spectacular wildflowers of WA's dry inland, should grab the opportunity this year.



The picture shows from left: Michelle Leishman, current President, with past Presidents Greg Bloomfield, Bruno Krockenberger, Helen Preston, John Burke, Yvonne Langshaw and Alan Catford.



The picture shows from left: Barbara Bryan, Densy Clyne and Yvonne Langshaw

All you need is a hire car and a road map. You head up the sealed Great Northern Highway from Perth towards Meekatharra and drive beyond the wheatbelt at Wubin. You need travel no further than the Mt. Singleton area, about 5 hours drive from Perth, whereafter you can return to Perth, or cut across to Geraldton via Mt. Magnet.

It is a long day, so you can try for limited accommodation in the area, but it is heavily booked in the wildflower season.

Guided bus tours are also available. It is a mystery to John, why the WA tourist authorities do not promote this world class spectacle in advance, when weather patterns allow one to predict an exceptional year. This year it has rained and rained, and is still raining. So far John's predictions have never failed and it should be a wonderful display.

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## MAP VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

As we have previously advised, STEP's stock of the highly popular map of the Lane Cove Valley is sold out.

Changes to the track system, mostly due to the M2 motorway, mean that we cannot simply reprint the old one, and the Committee decided to publish a new edition, with more information.

Since the last map was created, our partner in the venture, the State Government Land Information Centre, has converted to digital data base. The maps in STEP's Field Guide to the Bushland of the Upper

Lane Cove Valley were also computer generated, and hence STEP is in a position to easily combine its own digital map data with a base of contours and roads provided by LIC.

Sounds easy, since our resident expert, John Martyn plays the computer like a violin, or should we say like a guitar, at which he is better than at the violin. But it is a little more complicated than that.



Much of STEP's existing track data needs to be checked. Some routes that are overgrown and impassable, or closed by Council for regeneration, will need to be identified and coded or deleted. But we also plan to extend the coverage downstream from De Burghs Bridge at least as far as Fullers Bridge, to be printed on the reverse side of the sheet, all based on data that needs to be gathered in the field.

Furthermore the flexibility of computer graphics facilitates the display of many features not included in the first edition, such as cliffs and variations in the vegetation types, and should we decide to include these, such features also need to be captured in the field.

**WE NEED VOLUNTEERS --** people who are familiar with the local bush, or want to become familiar, and can read a map and know with reasonable accuracy where they are located on it at any particular time.

If you are interested in being part of this exciting new project, and can give any time at all, even just to

check the tracks in bushland near your home, then please let us know by contacting John Martyn on 9983 1334, or fax 9983 1334, or e-mail martyn@hutch.com.au.

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## PAMPAS GRASS ERADICATION

Pampas Grass is a noxious weed, which must be fully and continuously suppressed and destroyed in accordance with the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*.

An eradication project was started in the Cowan Catchment in 1997 with the assistance of volunteers who searched for pampas grass within the catchment and mapped its location. During the remainder of 1997 the constituents of the Cowan Catchment Management Committee, ie. local government, State Government authorities and community organisations, endeavoured to eradicate pampas grass from land under their control. Cowan Catchment extends over 16430 hectares and is bounded by the Hawkesbury River to the north, Telegraph Rd., Mona Vale Rd., The Centre Track and West Head Rd. to the east and the Pacific Highway to the south and west.

The Pampas Grass Eradication Project is coordinated by the CCMC in partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Hornsby, Warringah and Ku-ring-gai Councils.

Although 80% of the pampas grass identified in the catchment has been destroyed, the project is not over and continued monitoring is essential. For this purpose volunteers are required to search for and map the location of any pampas grass, which has either regenerated or has been missed, otherwise past efforts will be eroded.

To obtain a pampas grass search kit you can contact Jo Ann on 9482 7187, or visit your Catchment Centre at Suite 205, level 2, 16 Hunter St., Hornsby. For further information contact Jenny on 9985 7644.

## CANOON ROAD DISCUSSION PAPER

Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council has issued a Discussion Paper on the Canoon Rd. Recreation Area for exhibition and public comment.

In 1994 a Working Party made up of residents, the Ku-ring-gai Netball Association representatives and Council prepared a report after many meetings over a prolonged period. This report covered most of the issues, which are reiterated in this discussion paper. STEP participated in those meetings and supported the report at the time.

STEP also submitted a separate statement to Council to emphasise three points, which were desirable in STEP's view:

\* The location of netball courts was totally inappropriate in the first instance, and has proved to be an ongoing problem for the KNA and for the local residents, as well as having destroyed prime bushland and compromised adjacent bushland.

\* While not wishing to disadvantage .....girls'sport, in comparison with.....boys..... sport, partial relocation of netball courts to another venue, ie. split venues, would be a desirable objective; ideally from many points of view total relocation would be desirable. We suggest that a review of facilities for boys' sports throughout the municipality may yield a possible reallocation of space for netball courts.

\* Return of any area, currently parking or netball courts, resulting from the above, to bushland reserve with appropriate rehabilitation, in conjunction with remediation of stormwater run-off works.

The 1994 report also recommended complete relocation of the netball facilities as the best solution for residents and the Ku-ring-gai Netball Association.

In keeping with Council's previous assurances that night lighting would not be contemplated at this venue, this option was not canvassed in the current discussion paper.



STEP will again make a submission to Council on this matter, but it is important that Council also hear the views of residents and concerned persons. STEP's response will be substantially in line with the 1994 submission, and individuals are, of course free to use STEP's comments together with their own particular concerns in their response to the discussion paper.

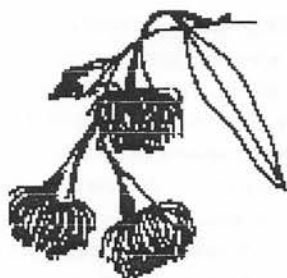
The Discussion Paper is on exhibition until 20th July, 1998 at the following locations:

Council Chambers, Level 4, 818 Pacific Highway, Gordon, Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 4.30 pm, Ku-ring-gai Library, 799 Pacific Highway, Gordon, Monday to Thursday 10 am to 9 pm, Friday 10 am to 6 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10 am to 5 pm.

We encourage members to avail themselves of this opportunity to peruse the Discussion Paper and have a say.

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**ANNETTE BOWLING +**  
Sadly, we have to record the death of one of our longstanding members, Annette Bowling, who passed away on 13th May, 1998. Our sincere condolences go to Dr. Keith Bowling and his family.



## BOOK REVIEW

### *The Law of the Land*

by Henry Reynolds.

Historian Geoffrey Blainey has in the past condemned what he calls the 'black armband' view of the history of early European settlement. In doing so he has emphasised the positive aspects of European endeavours and development, and has downplayed the justice or otherwise and the impact on indigenous people. In this book Henry Reynolds meticulously sets out a reassessment of the legal and political arguments used to justify not only the basis but also the method of proceeding with European settlement of Australia. His research was carried out in the Australian National Library, the Practitioners' Library of the High Court and the British Library, in London.

The book shows the persistent concern felt by the British Colonial Office about the way land was appropriated in the new colony. His conclusions form a compelling case for the belief that the British Government conceded land rights to the Aborigines early in the nineteenth century, as soon as it recognised that Sir Joseph Banks' description as 'terra nullius' was in fact not borne out in practice.

Reynolds shows that the concept of *sovereignty* by the crown did not negate prior possession, and that this was clearly understood by British authorities. However local political settler interests preferred to promote terra nullius to justify their claims.

An early Protector of Aborigines, G.A. Robinson, is quoted from his letters:

*I am at a loss to conceive by what tenure we hold this country, for it does not appear to be that we either hold it by conquest or by right of purchase.*

*The Law of the Land* by Henry Reynolds, Penguin paperback, ISBN 0-14-016703-X