



STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978. No. 99 Nov 1999

CHRISTMAS BARBECUE MERRY XMAS & a Happy New Year

Our Christmas Barbecue has become very popular over the last few years.

This year's will be at the same venue, which has proved so convenient and has such pleasant surrounds, at the back of Leuna Ave., Wahroonga. It is accessible from the end of The Broadway.

Sunday 12th December, from 4.30 pm or thereabouts, with the facilities provided by Neroli and Harry Lock, as in past years. We hope the weather will again treat us kindly, and hope to see as many members and friends as possible. BYO food and drinks please.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A small group of loyal members attended the AGM on 20th October, 1999, and the formalities were disposed of in record time. The President's report and Treasurer's report were tabled and accepted, and the election of office bearers resulted in two new committee members being elected, in addition to the existing members, who were re-elected.

Following the official business, Brendan Neilly, from the NPWS, gave an enthusiastic account of his duties and activities in rescuing and looking after wildlife.

He illustrated his talk with a series of slides, and also had a recently rescued water dragon with him to illustrate one aspect of his duties. Part of his duties is the enforcement of wildlife conservation laws, apprehending unlawful capture and sale of native fauna, and taking the unlawfully kept animals into custody for rehabilitation and release. His enthusiasm was infectious, and especially so when he talked about his educational activities with primary school children.

To thank him for his time and effort he was presented with a copy of the Field Guide to the Bushland of the Lane Cove Valley.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is a privilege to present my second Annual Report to you as President. We have had a busy year, as usual, which I will briefly summarise.



This year we were joined by 55 new members from KUBES, after the KUBES committee decided to dissolve and transfer its members to STEP. KUBES has played a vital role in the conservation of bushland in Ku-ring-gai over the years, so it is with regret that we heard of its decision. Nevertheless, the merger of STEP and KUBES has resulted in a united membership of over 400, which provides a strong and effective voice for bushland conservation in Ku-ring-gai. The addition of former KUBES member Bill Jones to the STEP committee has helped to co-ordinate the merger, resulting in a smooth transition.

In February, STEP submitted an application to the Natural Heritage Trust to develop stormwater controls and regenerate bushland at a site at Morona Avenue, Wahroonga. The area of affected bushland is within Lane Cove National Park, although the stormwater is produced and piped through Ku-ring-gai Council land. Neroli Lock from the STEP

Committee spent an enormous amount of time and effort co-ordinating the proposal with staff from Lane Cove National Park, Ku-ring-gai Council and the Lane Cove Catchment Management Committee. Students from Macquarie University have already started work on the site and it is proposed that the site be used for educating local school students about the value of bushland and problems of stormwater management and invasion by exotic plant species. Despite its high rating, the application was failed on a technicality, which we will be appealing. However, we plan to submit a similar application to alternative funding bodies in the next year.



There have been several major issues that STEP has been active on in the past year. We have continued to work towards better long-term protection and co-ordinated management of the bushland within the Lane Cove River catchment that is currently

managed by Ku-ring-gai Council. The talks by Lynne McLoughlin from Macquarie University and Terry Wilson from Lane Cove National Park on 'Visions for the Lane Cove National Park' at last year's AGM were well attended and much appreciated. That meeting succeeded in getting together members of Council and NPWS - no small achievement! Following that we met with Mayor Dobbin, David Young and Rhonda Bignell from Council to further discuss the incorporation of Ku-ring-gai's bushland into Lane Cove National Park. Since the State election in March, the issue has unfortunately lost much of its momentum, as John Watkins (MP for Gladesville and in charge of the Working Party on additions to Lane Cove National Park) has assumed ministerial responsibilities. Nevertheless, we will continue to work towards our goal of achieving long-term protection for this valuable bushland, under the NPWS.



We have also contributed to the EIS for the proposed Parramatta-Chatswood Rail Link. Erica Adamson from Kinhill (Project Manager for the EIS), spoke with members of the Committee, and we made a submission in March. The area of concern for STEP is the crossing of the Lane Cove River. Our position is that while we strongly support the development of public transport, the river corridor must be protected from any adverse impact of the rail crossing. Thus any crossing must use underground shield or deep rock tunnels to



minimise impacts on the river and adjacent bushland. Our preferred route is from Parramatta to St Leonards, thus avoiding any impact on Lane Cove National Park, and providing important public transport to Lane Cove and Artarmon industrial areas.

We were represented on Council's B2/B3 rezoning committee, identifying bushland areas that must be preserved and areas acceptable for housing development. Council is still awaiting the Rezoning Application for this land from the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning.

This year has been particularly interesting with the local council elections held in September. STEP sent a questionnaire in August to all candidates in all Wards and published a summary of the responses in a special edition Newsletter before the election. We also hosted a Public Meeting for candidates in the Comenarra Ward on 6th September to meet and answer questions from the electorate. The results of the election were a clear vote from the community against further development in Ku-ring-gai, with the election of seven Ku-ring-gai Preservation Trust candidates. The new and relatively inexperienced Council, under Mayor Tony Hall, has an enormous responsibility to achieve a good outcome for Ku-ring-gai in the Residential Strategy process, and in the good governance of Ku-ring-gai over the next four years.

Obviously an active area

for Ku-ring-gai this year has been the Residential Strategy. We have attended meetings and workshops and tried to keep members informed of the complicated twists and turns of this process. We will continue to work with the newly-elected Council to achieve the deadline of March 31st 2000 for submission of a strategy acceptable to both the community and the State Government.

Other issues that we have been involved in are the preservation of the Mona Vale Road bushland corridor (attending rallies and writing to relevant Ministers and the Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council urging the sale of bushland to be stopped and seeking an acceptable solution) and the development of a draft Plan of Management for the Canoon Road Netball Complex (attending meetings and supporting the development of the draft POM).

During the year we have also had meetings with the State member for Ku-ring-gai Barry O'Farrell, and with staff and Councillors of Ku-ring-gai Council, on a variety of environmental issues.



Finally, we continue to sell copies of our second print run of the Field Guide at a steady pace. The production of the revised and expanded STEP map is well under way. The new map will cover both the upper and lower parts of the Lane Cove Valley and will be in full colour, including some photographs and text on significant features. We hope to produce this by mid-2000.

Many thanks to John Martyn and his band of volunteers!



Activities

STEP had two successful and enjoyable bushwalks this year, both organized by Bill Jones. The Autumn walk was in Sugarloaf Reserve, Lane Cove National Park, while the Spring walk, held in conjunction with the Australian Plant Society, was along the Cascade Trail in Garigal National Park.

We hosted talks by Lynne McLoughlin (Macquarie University) and Terry Wilson (Lane Cove National Park) on 'Visions for Lane Cove National Park', Richard Major (Australian Museum) on 'Pied Currawongs and their effects on urban birds' and the Colong Foundation on their Wilderness 2000 campaign.

As usual, we supported the Clean-Up Australia Day, organising a STEP site at South Turrumurra, and set up our display stand at both the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Festival and the Ku-ring-gai Community Fair.

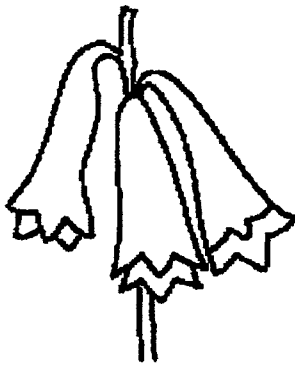
Newsletters

We published 6 newsletters (no.s 93 to 98), which is our main way of communicating with our members, advertising our activities and providing news and information on both the activities of the committee and general environmental issues of interest. Thanks to Bruno Krockenberger who produces the newsletter, as well as a monthly contribution from STEP to the Ku-ring-gai Observer.

Committee

The committee met monthly, with

the exception of January, to deal with the business at hand. All current committee members have indicated their willingness to remain for 1999/2000, and Joy Jackson, a resident of Turrumurra, will be joining us. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the committee members of 1998/99 for their hard work and enthusiasm, particularly Hugh Roberts who does an exceptional job as Treasurer, Secretary and Membership Secretary, Helen Wortham as Minutes Secretary and Publicity Officer, and Neroli Lock as Display and Grants co-ordinator.



Representation

STEP was represented on the following bodies: Ku-ring-gai Council's Bushland Conservation Advisory Committee and Parks & Reserves Committee, The Lane Cove Valley Catchment Management Committee, and The Union of Lane Cove Valley Conservationists. With the election of a new Council, both the Bushland Conservation Advisory Committee and Parks & Reserves Committee have been terminated. However we hope that some new form of Advisory Committee for bushland will be formed which we can participate in, as we believe that community and expert advice to the Council is essential for good bushland management. We continued our membership of the NSW Nature Conservation Council.

Finances

STEP's financial position remains healthy. Details are contained in the Treasurer's Report.

Challenges for the coming year

As always, STEP will continue in its core activities which are to monitor Council, to have representation on and co-operation with other community groups, to produce a newsletter to inform our members, to promote environmental awareness and bush conservation, as well as other activities such as holding bushwalks and talks, and stalls and fundraising. We face new challenges with a new Council, many of which are first-time Councillors. STEP hopes to work with the new Council to promote the enhancement of our urban environment rather than its gradual deterioration under the pressures of population growth, and to promote awareness of the value of every parcel of our precious urban bushland to ensure its proper management and protection. We will continue to strive to maintain or expand our membership to ensure that we remain an effective community voice in Ku-ring-gai.

There are several issues that will keep STEP's members busy over the coming year. These are the continuing issues of the development of an appropriate Residential Strategy for Ku-ring-gai, the rezoning of the land released from the reserved B2/B3 freeway corridor, the proposed Parramatta-Chatswood Rail Link and the development of an acceptable Plan of Management for the Canoon Road Netball Complex.

STEP will also continue to actively promote the preservation of the Mona Vale Road bushland corridor and the long-term protection of bushland in the Lane Cove River Catchment. Another potential issue will be the proposal by the Sydney Adventist Hospital to develop an aged care facility in a bushland area at Coups Creek in the headwaters of the Lane Cove River valley.

I will be standing down as President

for the following year as I am expecting my second child in December and feel that I won't be able to devote the time that is necessary to such a position. I will however remain on the Committee in the position of Vice-President. It has been a pleasure to work with the Committee over the past year and I thank them for their enthusiasm, help and support.

SPRING BUSHWALK

The area around the Cascades is well known as good for birdwatching and for wildflowers.

The Cascades, at the junction of French's Creek and Middle Harbour Creek is an area of rock over which the creek cascades and includes several rock natural pools. A sandstone wall was constructed in the late 20's to dam the creek for swimming. The remnants of this wall and the rock structure built to hold a diving board may still be found. Scouts used to camp here regularly.

On 10th October Bill Jones led about thirty walkers along this track in fine dry weather. Because of the large number of walkers he had to call on his wife, Noela, to provide comment and information to bring up the tail end of the group.

Bill reports:

We left behind the weeds of the urban area adjacent to Acron Oval at St. Ives and entered Garigal National Park. Going down into the valley of Middle Harbour Creek, the Sydney Sandstone vegetation was essentially weed free with much of it still in flower. We took the opportunity to deviate off the main Cascades track via the Lower Cambourne and Bare Creek track circuit on the way.

A large variety of wildflowers were spotted.

The large-fruited Red Mahogany (Eucalyptus scias ssp. scias), a tree with a sporadic distribution and relatively uncommon, the Yellow-top Ash (Eucalyptus luehmanniana) a rare mallee found in hanging swamps and the powerfully scented Boronia floribunda were found along

the Lower Cambourne track.

On the Bare Creek track a large, impressive sandstone rock face was dripping water, and, rare in Sydney bushland, it was weed free.

Finally, along Middle Harbour creek, the creek-side vegetation was a delight, with water gums, black wattles, coachwoods etc present.

Some of the birds observed were

Crimson Rosellas, Brown

Thornbills, Variegated Fairy Wrens

and Golden Whistlers.

After a short break at the Cascades

we headed back up the Cascades

track to the starting point at Acron

Oval.

STEP COMMITTEE

The new committee for the coming year, elected at the AGM is:

President - B. Krockenberger,

Vice-President - M. Leishman

Secretary/Treasurer - H. Roberts

Committee members - H. Wortham,

W. Jones, N. Lock, J. Martyn,

W. Lennie, J. Schwarz, S. and D. J.

Jackson, the latter indicating that they would act as alternates for the purpose of meetings.

B2/B3 CORRIDOR

The study commissioned by DUAP and the RTA into the corridor land was in progress with community input, when a new factor was introduced by the recently elected Council.

The new factor seemed to be that this land should be used for medium density to satisfy the requirements of the State Government's residential strategy, although it has been difficult to glean the real intentions from the information, which is available in the public domain.

Council has now requested the firm of environmental consultants, engaged for the residential strategy, to consider the B2/B3 corridor land as part of the overall study, in parallel to the DUAP/RTA study. The suggestion that the abandoned corridor could be the magic answer to the residential strategy problems is ludicrous.

Sections of the abandoned corridor contain high value bushland, some in the form of ridge top heathland, some in the form of turpentine forest, most of it as important flora and fauna links.

No doubt some small portions are suitable for residential and community development, but nobody should be misled to regard the corridor land as the solution to the residential strategy problems. By far the largest part of it should never be alienated for residential development, because of its natural values. Being located at extremities of Fox Valley and Kissing Point, both single access areas, both bushfire prone areas, causes traffic and emergency access problems. Being located more than 500 m from the main public transport nodes also makes these areas unsuitable for increased density development.

The consultants, Conacher Travers, have access to Council's records, but would like to fill gaps from local knowledge, especially relating to endangered species or threatened habitat.

If you have knowledge or could provide information of this nature, please contact Don Foley, phone (02)4325 0828, fax (02) 4325 0758 email dunnart.@bigpond.com

Public Meeting

Because of community concern about the proposal to develop medium density on corridor land, a public meeting has been arranged for **Thursday 2nd December, 1999, at 7.30 pm** at the **Turramurra High School**, to discuss possible action plans.

email REGISTER

To make communication with members easier Hugh Roberts (STEP Sec/Treasurer) is establishing an email register of members. If you have email please send a message to Hugh on **hkr@bigpond.com** with subject STEP member email.

MERRY CHRISTMAS