



# STEP Matters

Number 130, August 2005

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## STEP Committee

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Michelle Leishman

### Committee

Tim Gastineau-Hills  
Bruno Krockenberger  
Neroli Lock  
John Martyn  
Tony Morrison  
Ann Perry  
Helen Wortham

## Diary Dates

- 28 Aug Walk in Lane Cove  
National Park
- 6 Sept Talk on Exotic Weeds
- 25 Sept Walk West Head  
(details to be advised)
- 18 Oct Annual General Meeting  
(details to be advised)
- 11 Dec Christmas Barbecue  
(details to be advised)

## Walk Pennant Hills Fire Trail and Devlins Creek, Lane Cove National Park

Date: Sunday 28 August  
Time: 12:45 pm for a 1 pm start  
Place: Day Road picnic area  
carpark near the end of  
Day Road, Cheltenham

Grade: Medium — an initial hill  
climb, then easy walking  
at first on a level fire trail,  
which then drops down to  
the lower creek level and  
back to the start

Bring: Water, walking shoes/  
boots, appropriate hat,  
binoculars (optional) and  
wear sunscreen

Leader: Bill Jones (9498 6052)

We cross Byles Creek and come  
quickly to an area where a  
second creek enters Byles  
Creek. This presents an  
opportunity to see weed-free  
rainforest species.

We will follow the track up the  
hillside on to the ridge top with  
Sydney sandstone vegetation. At  
the top of the hill, we will pass  
through some of the diverse flora  
of Sydney sandstone. Here we will  
search for some of the rare and  
threatened species located on  
these ridge tops. We will compare  
this vegetation with that found  
across the Lane Cove River in  
Wahroonga and Turramurra.

We continue down to Devlins  
Creek at its junction with the Lane  
Cove River, observing changes in  
species. By comparison with the  
area seen at the beginning, this  
creek is very weedy and yet there  
are special birds found here.

Further along the creek we pass  
the feature for which this stretch  
is well known, Whale Rock. A  
short distance on, we turn off  
Devlins Creek and rejoin Byles  
Creek and return to our starting  
point.

Those who wish will be able to  
visit AHIMSA, the National Trust  
property at the end of the walk.

## Talk on Exotic Plant Invasion and Bush Regeneration

Date: Tuesday 6 September  
Time: 8 pm  
Place: St Andrews Church Hall  
(Vernon Street, South  
Turramurra)

Contact: Michelle Leishman  
(9489 8972)

Do join us for this rescheduled  
talk when Dr Michelle Leishman,  
STEP's president, will tell us  
about recent experimental  
findings on the factors that  
contribute to the success of  
exotic plants in urban bushland  
on Sydney's Hawkesbury  
Sandstone. Michelle will also  
discuss the implications for bush  
regeneration.

Farewell to Jenny Schwarz, a  
dedicated and long-serving  
committee member, who has  
recently relocated to  
Tasmania. We'll miss you  
Jenny, but we hope you enjoy  
your sea change.

## STEP Inc

Community-based Environmental Conservation since 1978  
PO Box 697, Turramurra, NSW 2074

## Gordon Creek Bridge

**John Balint**

For many years on my walks through the magnificent bushland in East Killara I often wondered about the origins of the old timber bridge over Gordon Creek. Initially I thought it might have been part of an early road through the district. However my research has led me to discover some of the fascinating story of Sydney's early sewerage development, the important role the Gordon Creek Bridge played in this and has led me to try to save this historic structure from certain demolition.

One hundred years ago, at the time of the move to Federation, the North Shore was caught up in a major environmental and health crisis over the sewerage system or really the lack of it. The population on the North Shore had expanded rapidly in the late 1900s, spurred on by overcrowding in Sydney and the opening of the Turrumurra to St Leonard's railway in 1890. The panic that occurred with the 1900 plague in Sydney also assisted the boom in development on the North Shore.

Prior to this in the 1880s the Sydney sewerage system south of the harbour had been developed to collect sewage and discharge it untreated into the ocean at Bondi and Long Bay (Malabar). This was obviously a major improvement for the people of Sydney compared to the previous system of combined sewage and stormwater discharge directly into the harbour. However it did set an important environmental precedent for Sydney that is still raising controversy today.

Meanwhile on the north side of the harbour, disposal of sewage was being handled by overloaded and unhygienic systems. The system north of the harbour included a septic treatment plant at Chatswood (Scott's Creek) discharging into Willoughby Bay, septic treatment tanks at Balmoral, and the North Sydney sewerage system discharging through the Folly

Point (Primrose Park, Mosman) treatment plant. There was no sewage system north of Chatswood, generally individual septic tanks and night soil collection was used.

In the early 1900s a new scheme was developed for the north side of the harbour based on the discharge of raw sewage into the ocean. A Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works held in 1916 considered the proposal to build a Northern Suburbs Outfall to discharge sewage into the ocean at Blue Fish Point at North Head (the location of the current treatment plant). The committee stated in their report:

Many complaints have been received by the Health Department particularly in the Shire of Ku-ring-gai ... as to the difficulty of dealing with the waste water from dwellings, and the disposal of effluent from septic tanks. In particular, Roseville is gradually being built upon, and as settlement becomes more marked frequent complaints are received as to the disposal of the waste water.

Manly residents were not so enthusiastic. Manly had recently installed its own sewerage system discharging into the ocean north of Blue Fish Point. The rock cutting can be seen when you walk through the car park at Shelley Beach and look out over the ocean. They believed, based on their experience, that the northern beaches would be badly polluted by this new outfall. Alderman Ellison Wentworth Quirk of Manly stated in evidence to the committee that 'there is a possibility of its ruining, not only the main Manly Beach but all the beaches as far north as Barrenjoey'. The committee decided, based on so-called expert opinion, that this pollution would not occur. How wrong they were.

Construction of the outfall system at an estimated cost of £2,236,000 was completed in 1930 under Chief Engineer Ernest de Burgh. William Hudson of Snowy Mountains Scheme fame also worked on the outfall project. An

important part of the system for Ku-ring-gai was the West Middle Harbour submain extension north along the western side of Middle Harbour to collect sewage from Lindfield, Killara and Gordon. This was completed in 1927 and involved tunnelling through the rocky ridges of East Lindfield and East Killara.

The old timber bridge over Gordon Creek is one remaining visible part of this system. It was built as an aqueduct to take the West Middle Harbour submain over Gordon Creek. Walkers following the walking tracks along the western side of Middle Harbour Creek, in what is now Garigal National Park, have used this bridge for some seventy years.

The bridge has deteriorated due to lack of maintenance and was closed in 1998, preventing walkers from following the heritage tracks through the pristine bushland from Roseville to St Ives, a distance of some 10 kilometres.

A heritage assessment carried out in 2003 by National Parks nominated the bridge as having high local heritage significance and recommended an engineering assessment to estimate the cost of restoration. Unfortunately funds have not been forthcoming for this, but there is now hope that this assessment may be done in 2005/6. In the meantime the bridge is still under threat of demolition and is effectively being demolished through neglect.

The bridge is an impressive timber structure, 80 metres long and stands some 15 metres above the creek. You can have a look at the bridge, using your new Middle Harbour map. Either walk down the fire trail from the end of Barrie Street, East Killara, or walk in along the fire trail from Arterial Road, Lindfield, near Soldiers Memorial Park.

If you have any information on the history of the bridge and the tracks leading to it, or want to be involved in saving the bridge, please contact John Balint on 9498 7527.

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**Membership Renewals Due**

If the year '05' is printed underneath your address on the next page, 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 Treasurer  
Step Inc  
PO Box 697  
Turrumurra, NSW 2074

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

You may be interested to know that we've sold approximately 1400 of our new Middle Harbour maps since they were launched in November last year.

Contact Helen Wortham if you have any problems (9144 2703, [secretary@step.org.au](mailto:secretary@step.org.au)).

**Conference: The Great Greenhouse Gamble**

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) is convening a conference entitled *The Great Greenhouse Gamble* on 15 and 16 September at the Powerhouse Museum. NCC is currently calling for papers on the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and natural resource management.

Increasing temperatures, reduced rainfall and more frequent extreme weather events are already showing up endangering our environment.

The environmental, social and economic impacts of climate change are becoming apparent as we gamble with the very processes necessary to maintain the healthy and resilient land systems and diversity of the planet.

Preparing to incorporate climate change and its predicted impact into resource management and biodiversity policies is vital in order to adapt to, abate and mitigate these impacts. NCC says now is the time to set the associated priorities, which it plans to be aired and defined at this conference.

The objectives of the conference are:

- to provide a scientific update on climate change;
- to raise awareness of, and focus on, the impacts on biodiversity and resource management and identify any research gaps;
- to define links between current legislation, policy and programs and our climate future; and
- to develop tools to integrate climate change implications into policy and planning particularly focusing on integration of good science and regional/local knowledge into climate change response.

Major conference themes will be:

- policy and management approaches for a systematic climate response
- impacts on terrestrial and marine ecosystems including alpine, inland and coastal river systems and fisheries
- social, economic and environmental risks and strategic responses
- integrating climate change into community conservation activities and campaigns

For more information contact Melinda Cook (9279 2522, [mcook@nccnsw.org.au](mailto:mcook@nccnsw.org.au)).

	Unit cost	Number	Cost (\$)
<b>Membership</b> (only complete if 05 is shown on address label on next page)			
Single (per financial year)	\$16		
Family (per financial year)	\$20		
Life	\$200		
<b>Field Guide to the Bushland of the Upper Lane Cove Valley</b>	\$30		
<b>Maps of Walking Tracks</b> (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		
<b>Donation</b> (donations of \$2 or more tax deductible)			
E-mail address .....		Total cost	

### National Threatened Species Day

National Threatened Species Day on 7 September is intended to raise awareness of the plight of more than 1600 Australian native species and ecological communities at risk of extinction. It is held on the same date the last known Tasmanian Tiger died in captivity at Hobart Zoo in 1936. The day is also the start of Biodiversity Month, which runs for all of September.

The Threatened Species Network (TSN) is a community-based program which promotes activities during Biodiversity Month to raise awareness and to help celebrate the work of dedicated groups and individuals. TSN encourages community groups, government agencies, conservation organisations, industries and schools to run events in their local areas.

TSN offers free information kits about threatened species to hand out at events and provides a calendar of events for Biodiversity Month on-line at [www.wwf.org.au/tsn](http://www.wwf.org.au/tsn). Information can also be obtained from Alison Colyer (8202 1222, 0410 636 538, [acolyer@wwf.org.au](mailto:acolyer@wwf.org.au)).

### UTS Draft Heritage LEP

On 26 April, Ku-ring-gai Council adopted the Draft (Heritage Conservation) Local Environmental Plan (LEP) No 30 for the UTS Ku-ring-gai Campus. The LEP will now go to the Minister (Assistant Minister for Planning, Dianne Beamer) for approval/gazettal so that the UTS site can be listed as a Local Heritage Item. The Minister will, no doubt, be guided by the NSW Heritage Office, who will assess Ku-ring-gai Council's proposal and provide the Minister with a recommendation.

The UTS rezoning application will have come before Ku-ring-gai Council before this goes to press for a decision to accept or refuse the rezoning proposal. The unanimous decision by Ku-ring-gai Council to approve the Draft Heritage Conservation LEP is a good sign.

### Wingham Brush

*Australian Landcare* magazine reports that Land and Water Australia has awarded a Community Fellowship to John Stockard, a Wingham dentist, for his work at Wingham Brush, where a 9 hectare remnant of rainforest has been restored to its natural state over the last 25 years.

Nancy Pallin, with her Bat Society hat on, was involved in the project, since the Brush is home to a large colony of Grey-headed Flying Foxes. It is also home to brush turkeys and many other bird species as well as skinks, diamond pythons, tree snakes, several possum species and insectivorous bats.

All the weed eradication and bushcare work was done by a group of volunteers, and National Parks and Wildlife Service has constructed boardwalks to allow better public access and to ensure it does not impact adversely on the Brush.

Wingham Brush, which has now been declared a nature reserve, is virtually adjacent to the Wingham main street and two schools back on to it. These schools as well as other schools from Port Macquarie and the Hunter region use it to study conservation and ecology.

The area of the Brush was originally intended for wharf development for the river traffic, but as the river became less used the wharf extension did not take place and the Brush was left in its natural state, except for an almost overwhelming weed infestation.

Wingham Brush is worth the 15 km detour from the motorway at Taree since it is easy to access and is an excellent example of sub-tropical rainforest.



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