

BLUE GUM FOREST CAN IT, OR SHOULD IT, SURVIVE?

On the 15 October 1977, a working party co-opted by the Blue Mountains National Parks Advisory Committee, made a field inspection of the Upper Grose, with particular attention being given to Blue Gum Forest.

Bushwalkers were represented by Peter Harris (F.B.W.), Dennis Rittson (F.B.W.) and Neil Mattes (Venturers). The convenor, Paul Barnes, has sent Federation a summary of the recommendations.

The recommendations have been forwarded onto the full Blue Mountains National Park Advisory Committee who will use it as a basis for their report to the Blue Mountains National Park Management who will submit it to the Wildlife Service which in turn approaches the Minister for Lands.

This is a rather cumbersome system which is a left over from the days when parks were managed by individual trusts. Most of the Trusts stayed on as Advisory Committees when the Wildlife Service took over management. It's easy to see that any recommendation made at the level of Federation's involvement could suffer, to a greater or less degree, some modification on their way up to the Minister.

Partially because of this and partially because the report from the Advisory Committee arrived with scarcely enough time for Federation to consider the controversial points and make our opinions known before the report went on, the Conservation Convenor, Bruce Vote, sent our comments from the November F.B.W. meeting straight to the Director of the Wildlife Service.

Bruce's main point was on the provision of additional heliopads as set out in Recommendation No. 20. as an adjunct to fire fighting and search and rescue operations.

Several other points were discussed at Federation but the one that I really want to elaborate on, and its what all this is leading up to, is the concept that appears in Recommendations 9 & 18. In other words should Blue Gum, once it is being properly managed to minimise the destructive effects of continuing heavy visitor usage, be allowed quite literally to stand or fall on its own capacity to survive.

The Forest is a result of a rather special set of events. One theory goes that 3 or 4 hundred years ago, a catastrophic event occurred (bushfire perhaps) which cleared the prevailing vegetation at the junction of the Grose and Govetts Leap Creek. This fortuitous clearing of the canopy allowed for the generation and growth of a large stand of Eucalyptus Deanii which has grown to become what we know now as the Blue Gum Forest.

Now there are two points here: Firstly the trees in this stand are all the same age and secondly Eucalyptus Deanii require a lot of light to germinate and grow. There's little natural new growth because of this, the effects of feral herbivores notwithstanding.

The trees at Blue Gum are all very old and are basically the same age. They are almost all the original trees from that distant catastrophe. They are also all starting to die. If you look up into the canopy you'll see the dead branches. And there are very few new saplings growing up to replace the oldsters. They can't, there's not enough light at the forest floor to allow this.

As well as this fact, the Grose River, as a result of its normal evolution, is cutting into its banks and undermining and bringing down quite a few of the Deanii. It's ironic that the banks are one of the few spots where the break in the canopy caused by the River itself would allow for regeneration.

The delegates at the November meeting expressed the two opposing viewpoints that, firstly, come whatever, there should be a hands off policy with respect to interfering with the natural system in the Grose and secondly that Blue Gum should be managed to ensure its survival. I would think that these two viewpoints would be widespread amongst bushwalkers.

I personally support the latter viewpoint if only because of Blue Gum's uniqueness and rather than justify or rationalise my feelings with such statements like its a viewpoint consistent with the maintenance of the status quo which is a common approach in the Conservation movement, I'll say this in support of the preservation of the Blue Gum Forest.

Blue Gum is beautiful despite the ravages of years of over use and abuse it remains a serene and majestic place of inspiration and quiet contemplation. The camping moratorium is succeeding in removing the grossest signs of abuse and Blue Gum's halcyon days are returning.

I will not see all this come to end if there is anything I can do to stop it and it seems to me that regeneration programmes can ensure Blue Gum's survival. The text book or academic approaches that say that what's happening in Blue Gum now should be inevitable because its natural only get me angry. They remind me of the anti-anesthetic campaigns conducted last century on the premise that pain is to be endured because it is 'natural'.

I want to see Blue Gum stay because of what it means to me. Its uniqueness is worth preserving and I'll oppose its demise just as I oppose the shabby fire roads, dams, mines and power lines that threaten to clear the Northern Blue Mountains. I don't care what is causing Blue Gum's last years I'm against it.

I would be most interested in seeing other peoples viewpoint on Blue Gum's future, perhaps towards producing a Federation Policy on it.

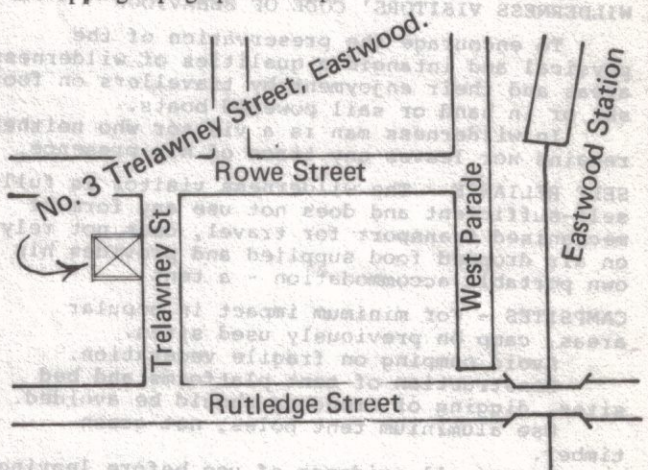
DENNIS RITTSN, K.R.C.

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S & R ALERT

At 4.30 p.m. on the 21st December Nicholas Bendelli became separated from his two companions whilst nearing the end of a two day bushwalk in the Turoos area. Investigation revealed his foot prints coming to within 50 yards of their car. A localised search was made of the area by his mates, Chris Cosgrove and Ross Bradstock, revealing no trace of Nick's fate. Walking to a local farm (it was Nick's car) they initiated a larger search with police and locals, which, despite retracing the previous days walk, failed to unearth the missing party. On the evening of the 22nd Chris and Ross rang me from Cooma in order to mobilise S and R for a full scale search only to find that Nick had been in touch with me, via his mother whom he had rung from a farm 10 miles from his car 26 hours after being missed, to express concern for Ross and Chris.

It seems that Nick had inexplicably crossed the road near the car without noticing it and, unsure of his position, kept walking, crossing another main road 3 miles away and continuing 10 miles passed that before realising that he was definitely in error and retracing his steps to the main road along which he walked till finding a farm and phone.

So what could have been a major false alarm was averted and Nick was handed over to the custody of his friends who were at last free to return to Sydney.

The University of New England is running a series of schools aimed at increasing general knowledge and appreciation of the environment. They do this by examining various field sites, building upon basic skills such as plant and animal identification, interpretation of geological features and animal behaviour to give an ecological overview of the sites. This years programmes are to be held at Yarrahappinni near Kempsey over Easter, Mt. Kaputar, June 3-5, Poppinbarra, 30 km from Wauchope in the Hastings Valley and the Barrington Tops in December. Fees vary from \$25 to \$50 for adults \$40 to \$80 for couples and \$50-\$100 for families depending on the amenities supplied which vary with the sites.

A five day workshop studying the field of native photography is held in September between the 18th and the 22nd at Burrendong Sport Recreation Centre on the foreshores of Burrendong Dam near Wellington.

Two Programmes are offered on an Australian Heritage theme, one is a "Journey into the Past" - an 800 km bus tour visiting various historical sites and the other is a Folk Song workshop, they are held from 6-10 March and April respectively, the workshop being located at Nundle 30 km from Tamworth.

Lastly there is a study of the geology of the New England Region through a series of five schools, the first being an introduction to geology followed by four, more specialised programmes of the various geological features of the New England Region.

Anyone interested in these educational programmes should contact the University of New England via the Department of Continuing Education, Namoi Regional Office, P.O. Box 59, Tamworth 2340.

WHAT'S NEW.

Looking round the bushwalking shops the following were noticed:

- Complete Guide to the Warrambungles - Alan Fairley \$4.00
- The Alpine Track (Walhalla to Mt. Bogong) \$4.00
- Reprint of the Trucanas book \$26.00
- Discovering Fraser Island \$3.00
- Mountaineering - The Freedom of the Hills \$14.00
- 100 Walks in N.S.W. - Tom Tyrell \$4.00
- Penguin "Book of the Bush" \$4.00
- Also updated edition on Bungonia Caves

Alliance are selling dehyd "Prime Beef Steak" a dehyd hamburger. All you do is to soak then grill/fry. Reports indicate it is quite good (for a dehyd) and sells for \$2.70.



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MAPS

1. A vegetation map of N.S.W. 1:1,500,000 has been published for the Dept. of Decentralisation by the Central Mapping Authority and is available from the Lands Dept.
2. Dave Kelly has obtained a map index for New Guinea. About half the country has been mapped so far in 1:100,000 by the Australian Army Survey Corps, but coverage should be complete by the end of 1978. As 1:100,000 sheets are finished, a new 1:250,000 series is being published from the larger scale maps to replace the original inaccurate 1:250,000 series. New Guinea maps are available only from the National Mapping Bureau, Dept. of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 5665, Boroka, Papua New Guinea. For more information, contact Dave Kelly, phone 797 6563.

LITERARY ASPIRATIONS?

If you have a point to raise, information to spread, a grievance to air, malicious rumours to disseminate, an experience to boast about or a story to relate, then what better medium than the newsletter? After all its free, doesn't discriminate much and has a wide circulation. It is also an excellent medium in which to advertise at most moderate rates.

The newsletter is an organ for keeping bushwalkers in touch with bushwalkers, so if your itching about something then spread it through the newsletter.

Items can be mailed to Tom Williams, 60 Levy Street, Glenbrook 2773, preferably before the start of the month desired for publication.

This newsletter is usually published monthly and is distributed free, through the clubs, to all members of affiliated clubs. Mailing list subscriptions \$3.00.

All material not otherwise acknowledged can be attributed to the Publications Officer. Any opinions expressed are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Federation.

The deadline for the next issue will be Monday 13 March and will be available at the Council meeting on Tuesday, 21 March 1978.

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