



STEP Matters

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In this Issue

Diary Dates.....	1
Walk to Bantry Bay	1
Talk on Ticks.....	1
Elephants in the Lane Cove Valley?.....	1
Middle Harbour Map	2
Eradication of Bridal Creeper on Lord Howe Island.....	2
Holiday with a Difference	2
A New Approach to Transport	3
Report of the Walk Along the Murrumbidgee Track	4
Eco-friendly Pest Management.....	4

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Diary Dates

1 July Talk on Ticks
1 August Walk to Bantry Bay

Walk to Bantry Bay

Date: Sunday 31 August
Time: 10 am
Place: End of Currie Road,
Forestville
Grade: Moderate (part of the
track is steep, rocky
and slippery)
Contact: Gerald Holder
(9416 4820)

Here is an opportunity to go on a spectacular spring bushwalk in Garigal National Park. The walk will take in great views, magnificent spring flowers and a historic site.

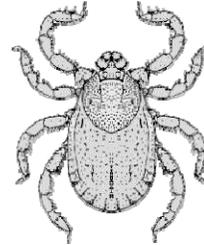
From Currie Road we will cross Forestville Park and walk to the Bluff for extensive views of Middle Harbour and the city. We'll then turn back via the Harbour to Hawkesbury Track, cross the Natural Arch and Bate Creek and follow the Magazine Track behind the explosive sheds to Flat Rock Beach. We climb back over the top to the Harbour to Hawkesbury Track and return to Currie Road.

Don't forget to bring water and your lunch.

Talk on Ticks

Date: Tuesday 1 July
Time: 7.45 pm
Place: St Andrews Church
Hall (Vernon Street,
South Turrumurra)
Contact: Neroli Lock
(9489 5794)

It's been a bad year for ticks. Come and learn all there is to know about these bloodsucking, ectoparasites from tick expert, Steve Doggett.



Elephants in the Lane Cove Valley?

John Martyn

Well, it depends on what you've been smoking; but it **was** true once. Dariel Larkins (local bird guru) knows a guy who grew up in North Epping in the 50s and 60s. When the circus came to the area they used to take the elephants down to Duckys Waterholes for a swim.

For those of you who don't know where that is, it is on Devlins Creek just downstream from the Byles Creek confluence. The larger waterhole is really big and round, and obviously at least elephant-deep (the water is too dirty now to tell).

STEP Inc

Community-based Environmental Conservation since 1978

PO Box 697, Turrumurra, NSW 2074

Middle Harbour Map

John Martyn

Is it possible to bushwalk all the way from Thornleigh to North Head via North Sydney, then walk back north to St Ives or Belrose? Well, 'yes and no'!

It is certainly possible to walk it — you would need about three days of course unless you are super-fit — but unfortunately the bush is not continuous. You would have to include a few street sections, but there is probably more bushland along the route than you imagine. And the good news is that should you want to attempt it, or walk in any of the areas on route, STEP will be able to provide all the maps you will need by the end of this year.

Following the late 2000 release of our full colour map *Walking Tracks of the Lane Cove Valley*, STEP is nearing completion of a much more ambitious mapping project based around the Middle Harbour catchment.

Coverage extends from Mona Vale Road to Manly and North Head, and around the Harbour shoreline past Middle Head. The southwestern limit has now been extended past the Harbour Bridge to join up with the Lane Cove Valley map at Greenwich. It will now include delightful and popular bushland reserves such as Balls Head and Berry Island as well as all the popular shoreline walks from Manly via the Zoo to Cremorne Point, plus half of the newly created Harbour to Hawkesbury route.

If you have bushwalking relatives or friends, or want to introduce some new north shore residents to the bushland, the maps will make excellent presents. STEP still has a large stock of the Lane Cove maps available for sale now, but the Middle Harbour series is scheduled for release in late November 2003 in time for the Christmas present season.

Our ultimate objective in all this is conservation of bushland, to encourage the public to discover the priceless natural areas on their own doorstep by providing the means to navigate through them without getting lost.

Maybe one day the natural areas of Sydney Harbour and its catchments will be considered for World Heritage listing, but in the meantime we must never take them for granted, and should continually encourage others to discover and enjoy them.

Eradication of Bridal Creeper on Lord Howe Island

Bridal creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*) poses a significant threat to Lord Howe Island's biodiversity, particularly the availability of suitable nesting sites for migratory seabirds, including the nationally-listed Fleshy-footed Shearwater (*Puffinus carneipe*).

Bridal Creeper was initially brought to Australia from South Africa as a garden plant, popular for use in bridal flower arrangements. It is now listed as a weed of national significance, having invaded all southern states of Australia.

Mapping activities by the Lord Howe Island Board have found that it is more widespread than first anticipated. It is currently limited to two main areas of the island, the largest infestation being in the northern hills with smaller outbreaks in the central part of the settlement region.

A group of volunteers from the mainland, Friends of Lord Howe Island, have helped to undertake eradication works in these areas as part of bush regeneration activities. The volunteers are digging out the individual plants in the settlement by hand and have completed a sweep of the lagoon foreshore area. These settlement areas will then be checked annually for seedlings, to ensure that Bridal Creeper does not reinfest these sites.

In the northern hills dense infestations will be sprayed with

herbicide and scattered infestations will be dug out by hand.

Work has now begun in the Big Muttonbird Ground area to protect the nesting habitat of the Fleshy-footed Shearwater, and on the northern cliffs to protect the nesting sites of the locally-threatened Red-tailed Tropic-bird (*Phaeton rubricauda*).

The Red-tailed Tropic-bird nests on the cliffs of the northern coastline and, while their nests are above the ground, Bridal Creeper has the potential to change the vegetation structure of their natural habitat from open areas between shrubs to thick towers of weed between shrubs. This change restricts the availability of suitable nesting sites.

The mapping activities have also helped to educate local residents and tourists about the potential problem of Bridal Creeper if it is allowed to spread.

First published in *Natural Heritage*, Issue 14, Summer 2003.

Note: The Commonwealth Government's Natural Heritage Trust has given the Lord Howe Island Board a grant to protect threatened seabird habitat through the eradication of Bridal Creeper.

Holiday with a Difference

Fancy a week on beautiful Lord Howe Island helping to eradicate Bridal Creeper and *Asparagus Fern*? What a wonderful way to combine a holiday with some conservation work.

Stay at Pinetrees, weed for three hours daily, and then participate in guided walks, slide shows and talks run by Ian Hutton, author and resident naturalist.

This is a great opportunity to meet like-minded people and explore the beauty of one of the world's most beautiful natural wonders.

Some vacancies still exist for 21 to 28 June ... contact Neroli Lock (9489 5794) for more information.

A New Approach to Transport

Kate Read

Ask residents of urban centres what they love about their towns and they'll list a range of things that keep them in their urban setting. Ask them what irks them about their cities and odds on they'll say the traffic. From the business person travelling along congested roads at 15 km/h, to school children who have to be driven to school because parents worry about the roads being dangerous, something clearly isn't working in our cities.

It's Time to Redress the Balance

In NSW there have been a plethora of government reports recognising the need to redress the balance between road infrastructure and more sustainable transport. Unfortunately on-ground infrastructure funding continues to prioritise private motor vehicle use over mass transit, walking and cycling.

For our major cities in particular, this bias is having huge impacts.

- Car use in Sydney (measured in vehicle kilometres travelled) has grown in the last decade by 24% compared to the population growth, which was 7%.
- High car use contributes to the fact that Sydney residents frequently breathe in pollutants at levels that fail World Health Organisation standards.
- Sydney's per capita pollution is higher than New York and London for many pollution types.

Are More Roads the Answer?

The provision of more and more road infrastructure in our cities is unfortunate because each freeway or tollway constructed woos more of us off public transport and into our cars — cancelling out any promised benefits.

When the Sydney Harbour Tunnel opened in 1992, an additional 9,300 trips per day were made across the Harbour. We were

enticed into the city by the short-term relief that the tunnel provided. However in only eight years, Harbour Bridge congestion was back to exactly what it had been when the tunnel opened, and the increased traffic in East Sydney, eventually lead to the construction of the Eastern Distributor.

Have we learnt a lesson from this? Apparently not. The EIS for the Cross City tunnel (Kings Cross to Darling Harbour) shows clearly that the tunnel will cause a drop in public transport use, which is totally contrary to State government policy.

In Sydney's north, another so-called 'missing link' is being proposed — to solve the traffic problems that will be caused by the Western Sydney Orbital. This is interesting, as the Orbital was itself marketed as the final missing link in the orbital network.

Shifting bottlenecks and traffic growth seem the only long-term results of the current approach.

Mass Transit Projects

The mass transit projects listed in the NSW Government's *Action for Transport 2010* need to be brought forward and prioritised over road development projects. Despite the fact that residents need these rail links *now*, many of them are still firmly on the drawing board with no funding to back up commitments.

The Parramatta to Chatswood, Strathfield to Hurstville and north-west rail links would provide tens of thousands of residents with a sustainable alternative to their private motor vehicles.

Light Rail

Light rail deserves far more attention from our politicians and transport chiefs, having had enormous success in cities around the world in increasing public transport use and contributing to more liveable cities.

The proposed Baylight Express light rail project linking the southern suburbs with the city would provide 50 km of public transport infrastructure to ease traffic congestion, improve air quality and improve accessibility for the region.

Baylight would provide residents with a public transport option that, unlike buses, does not get stuck in motor vehicle traffic.

CBD and Ashfield light rail extensions should also be expedited.

Travel Demand Management Programs

The Government needs to consider seriously travel demand management programs as a way of decreasing the distances we need to travel to access services and jobs, and to encourage people to make different choices about the way they travel.

In Perth, one such program (Travelsmart) succeeded in reducing car use by 10%. The program also saw a near doubling in cycling and a 25% rise in public transport use amongst participants. All major states aside from NSW now have the Travelsmart program in operation.

The community also needs to be far more involved in the processes that decide what sort of city our decision makers create for us. We need to heed the words of Jamie Lerner, the Mayor of Curitiba who brought vision and courage to the planning of his city. Of the importance of transport to city planning he said:

Transport is so important you can't leave it to the experts. They will solve the problem of transportation, but they won't link it to the problem of the city. So many cities have been killed by traffic engineers.

Let's not let them ruin our cities.

First published in *Environment NSW*, Autumn 2003, NCC.

Cities that lock us into spending more time and money on travel, make our lives more harried.

Excessive road noise on our city streets do not invite us to use the surrounding pavements for outdoor cafes and green space.

We spend far too much time planning for vehicles, and far too little time planning for people.

Report of the Walk Along the Murrua Track

Neroli Lock

Will we ... won't we ... will we ... won't we ... yes, we will walk in the rain! On Sunday 27 April, the day El Nino departed, fifteen suitably clad walkers set out, under the intrepid leadership of Bill Jones.

Due to water flows we diverged from the intended route and followed the fire trail north towards Bobbin Head. The Murrua Track traverses typical ridge top vegetation and some heathland.

After the prolonged dry spell it was surprising to see a variety of plants blooming. The beautiful *Crowea saligna* was one of special note. We were lucky to see two rare and endangered/vulnerable plants, *Darwinia biflora* and *Tetradthea glandulosa*. *D. biflora* showed its resprouting ability where it had been slashed alongside the edge of the fire trail.

We also saw *Persoonia pinifolia* and *Pultenaea elliptica*, both of which are pollinated by native bees. Although they were not in bloom, quite a few of the native epiphytic orchids, *Cymbidium suave*, commonly referred to as the Snake Flower, were spotted growing in the 'arms' of eucalypts. Pollination of these orchids is also by native bees and the flowers are highly fragrant.

We easily identified *Eucalyptus squamosa*, a small, rare shrubby tree with scaly bark which is restricted to lateritic tops. Another eucalypt we saw was the Grey Gum (*E. punctata*), a beautiful specimen with its matt steel-grey bark marked with patches of red and cream. The wet weather really accentuated bark colours.

We were fortunate that the rain eased off and we were able to sit on a rocky outcrop overlooking the valley and enjoy a short break before the return journey.

By the time we reached our cars the rain had started again in

earnest, but it did not prevent us from enjoying a delightfully fragrant cup of plunger coffee and a piece of homemade cake, thoughtfully supplied by John and Isolde Martyn.

All in all, it was unanimously agreed by all participants, that this had been a most interesting and enjoyable walk. Confucius might well have said 'They who walk in rain will be rewarded'.

Eco-friendly Pest Management

On 8 April, Anne-Marie Poirrier gave a most interesting talk that was full of practical hints and strategies on how to control pests in the home. She stressed that effective pest management is not always found in a can and that pesticides should be the **last** option!

Anne-Marie recommended using integrated pest management principles. The strategy uses complementary techniques (physical, cultural, biological, educational and chemical) with a priority on non-chemical control measures. It also requires on-going monitoring and assessment.

When low impact strategies are not successful use a low hazard pesticide application. However low toxic pesticides blanket sprayed can be more harmful than highly toxic localised applications.

Termites

CSIRO studies estimate at least one in five homes is attacked by termites at some stage in its life.

When designing a new house:

- install a non-chemical permanent physical barrier such as Granitgard or Termimesh
- use naturally resistant timbers such as native cypress
- use paints and oils that seal timbers against termites

You should also:

- ensure the perimeter of the building is easy to inspect
- keep garden beds close to the house low

- store timber correctly
- keep irrigation systems away from the house
- arrange an inspection every year by an appropriately qualified inspector

When termites are located baiting is the least toxic choice.

Cockroaches

- Fill in cracks and crevices
- Don't leave water in the sink overnight
- Fix leaks
- Don't leave food around
- Use non-chemical traps such as Agrisense Lo-line sticky traps (see below)
- Store food securely
- Ventilate around electrical equipment to reduce heat
- Empty rubbish bins each night
- Ensure compost heaps are functioning effectively so that they don't encourage cockroaches
- Don't build in dishwashers as this keeps hot moist air in

Try making your own traps. Use a jar with vaseline smeared around the top and bait with banana. Alternatively use a margarine container with the lid on. Cut a small hole in the lid and fill with red wine or beer.

You can buy Agrisense Lo-Line Cockroach traps (\$18.70 for a pack of ten including GST) from Anne-Marie. She is also available for consultations and can help you find the best pest management firm for your home or workplace.

Anne-Marie Poirrier, Building Ecology, PO Box 5102, Turramurra 2074 (0419 255 855, am1base@hotmail.com).