



STEP Matters

Number 127, November 2004

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STEP Committee

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Bruno Krockenberger
Neroli Lock
John Martyn
Tony Morrison
Ann Perry
Jenny Schwarz
Helen Wortham

Diary Dates

- 12 Dec Walk in Blue Gum High Forest (see next column)
12 Dec Christmas Barbeque (see next column)

New Committee Members

Welcome to our new committee members: Tim Gastineau-Hills, Susie Gemmell and Ron Howlett.

Walk in Blue Gum High Forest

Date: Sunday 12 December
Time: 2 to 3.30 pm
Place: Entrance on Rosedale Road near Vista Street
Contact: Neroli Lock (9489 5794)

Come for an easy walk through the largest remnant of the magnificent Blue Gum High Forest which once covered the North Shore, from Crows Nest to Hornsby and through Pennant Hills to Ryde.

See the tallest trees in Sydney and listen to the birds. Imagine Arthur Phillip walking through this forest in 1788 as he began to explore a foreign land.

Remember to wear walking shoes and a hat. Bring water, and a raincoat if rain is forecast.

Christmas Barbeque

Date: Sunday 12 December
Time: 4.30 pm
Place: Behind Leuna Avenue, Wahroonga (access from The Broadway)
Contact: Neroli Lock (9489 5794)

Please join us to celebrate the end of a successful year. We will provide a gas barbeque, hot water and wine, but bring your own food.

To those members who cannot be there, the committee would like to thank you for your continuing membership and wishes you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Map Launch

About 100 members and guests attended the official launch of STEP's new maps of the Walking Tracks of the Middle Harbour Valley and Northern Sydney Harbour Foreshore on Sunday 14 November at the Visitors Centre of Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Gardens.

Jocelyn Chenu provided excellent finger food which was thoroughly enjoyed by all, whilst Bob Cross acted as MC, introducing the official guest speaker, Dr Robert Lang, Chief Executive of the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority.

Dr Lang's address was followed by John Martyn's acknowledgement of all the contributors to this project and by Michelle Leishman's expression of appreciation to John Martyn for his magnificent efforts over the last four years. She presented John with a gift of appreciation.

Dr Lang was presented with a set of STEP's publications, the two new maps as well as the Lane Cove Valley map and the Field Guide.

The following is a copy of Dr Lang's speech.

Firstly, let me thank you for inviting me here today to the launch of STEP's new maps of Walking Tracks of the Middle Harbour Valley and Northern Sydney Harbour Foreshore. I believe these maps will play a vital role in encouraging people to make use of our spectacular harbour parks and foreshores.

STEP Inc

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

As the Chef Executive of the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, one of our key roles is to manage just a small part of Sydney Harbour's parks and open space and to enhance public access to the foreshores. In this regard, we have a similarity of interest and we are delighted with STEP's initiative.

Today I would like to talk about three things — sustainability, biodiversity and climate change, and how public access to our magnificent natural environment in Sydney can help educate people in the importance of these issues.

But by way of introduction, if I may, let me first tell you a little bit about the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority.

Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority

Our organisation not only manages some of Sydney's most significant foreshore areas but our role is also concerned with the preservation of Sydney's heritage, whether it be natural, cultural or a combination of the two.

Natural Heritage

On the Natural Heritage front, we have a role in managing existing parks and in creating new ones. Availability of, and access to, public parks and open space are fundamental to achieving a successful urban environment.

For our part, we manage approximately 430 hectares of existing parkland, including Pyrmont/Ultimo, Darling Harbour, and Dawes Point Park and First Fleet Park in The Rocks.

Over the past ten years we have spent over \$50 million, creating over 10 hectares of new urban parkland in Pyrmont–Ultimo.

Similarly, at a cost of some \$40 million when complete, we are currently working on the transformation of the old Caltex Refinery site at Ballast Point into a harbourside park for the enjoyment of all Sydneysiders. This project will return one of Sydney's most significant headlands to public ownership and into a natural

parkland to mirror Balls Head on the northern side of the harbour.

The plan calls for a dense canopy of native trees and shrubs which will restore a major item of natural heritage to Sydney.

Like STEP, which has made a fantastic effort in making national parks and the foreshores accessible for all, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority is most excited by the opportunity to create a continuous foreshore walkway from Woolloomooloo Bay to the Anzac Bridge.

We have already completed about 60% of this 15 km project and expect to finish it by 2008. Such an unbroken chain of foreshore promenades would not only be unique to Sydney — it would be unique in the world.

Cultural Heritage

As I mentioned earlier, we are also very active in preserving our cultural heritage. Over \$1 million is allocated each year to heritage and cultural capital works to protect and preserve a variety of Sydney's and Australia's most important heritage assets, including existing and potential archaeological sites, landscapes, buildings, engineering structures and monuments.

For example, right at the moment at Dawes Point, just under the Bridge near Circular Quay, we have completed major archaeological works on the old Fort site, and are near the end of an 18-month remediation project to preserve and restore the 120-year-old sea wall and nearby Hickson Road Reserve to their former glory.

We also maintain and repair the historic Pyrmont Bridge in Darling Harbour, which celebrated its centenary in 2002 and is the oldest electrically operated swing-span bridge in the world.

Jones Bay Wharf on the Pyrmont Peninsula was recently awarded the annual Greenway Award for conservation by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. The project saw the transformation of an old

maritime wharf into a useful contemporary space that houses a combination of commercial business and waterfront dining.

This project shows the importance of a commitment to sustainability and effective re-use of cultural, structural and natural assets.

Sustainability

Which neatly brings me to the topic of sustainability.

I have been personally involved in sustainability for the past ten years. I have been an advocate for renewable energy, active in encouraging the Australian Government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol on climate change and to adopt emissions trading, and I was co-chair of the NSW Sustainability Advisory Council which developed new regulatory tools for reducing energy and water use.

Certainly, at a time when sustainability is a fashionable term to bandy about, I believe it's important to put your words into action. Our priority at the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority is triple-bottom-line sustainability, which means achieving social, economic and environmental sustainability in everything we do.

For example, we are currently planning a building at Darling Island which will be at the forefront of sustainability with potentially a 6-star green building rating. It's a medium-scale commercial office project planned with significant environmental design elements that will set a new benchmark for environmentally sustainable design.

Of course, we also have a view on what should happen at other sites around the harbour, not just our own. For example, at Darling Harbour East — on the current Sydney Ports site, which the Government is currently assessing for a new use when the existing port facilities close in 2006 — we would like to see:

- a sustainable combination of substantial new open space;
- appropriate commercial activation of the highest architectural and environmental quality along Hickson Road, similar to the highly acclaimed Bond building;

- some recognition of the site's waterfront heritage.

I believe this would return this important piece of foreshore to the public and significantly augment our vision of a continuous foreshore walk around the Harbour from Woolloomooloo Bay to Anzac Bridge.

The Maps

Now that brings me back to why we're gathered here today: the launch of the maps of Walking Tracks of the Middle Harbour Valley and the Northern Sydney Harbour Foreshore.

I know from experience that there is a lot of work that goes into providing the facilities for public pedestrian access to the foreshore. As I understand it, we wouldn't be here today were it not for the hard work and extensive effort put in by John Martyn, who has acted as planner, drafter, technical expert, team leader and co-ordinator, ably assisted by his team of mappers, checkers, photographers and researchers.

Together, they've given up many hours of their time to walk the tracks, locating them accurately in relation to contour lines and other features, and researching natural and historic details.

Besides allowing public access to our magnificent national parks and foreshores, I think these maps have, perhaps a greater role in educating people on the importance of environmental issues.

I believe that initiatives like this can only help to alleviate some of the most pressing issues facing our society today here in Australia and globally.

Biodiversity

By encouraging people to use these maps when out walking, we engender greater understanding of the rich and wonderful biodiversity right here in Sydney. This is vital at a time when a 2003 report by the Federal Government's National Land and Water Resources Audit stated that the nation's biological wealth is in danger of collapsing and almost 1600 species are threatened.

The report makes a grim prediction about the ecosystem on which most of Sydney sits — the Cumberland Plain. It is considered one of the most endangered ecosystems on the continent.

The audit says that only 13% of the native vegetation on the plain remains. About 90% of the riverside vegetation is gone and 85 species are listed as endangered or vulnerable.

Through allowing people to see for themselves the treasures that remain, in the relatively controlled surrounds of a national park, we can hope that greater knowledge and understanding will lead to increased public and governmental effort to preserve the biodiversity in New South Wales.

Climate Change

At the same time, we only have to look at the ongoing water shortage crisis alongside floods in Queensland and other extreme climate events, to see that Australia's, and indeed the world's, climate is changing.

The UN predicts that by 2020 the number of nations experiencing severe water shortages will be as high as 50, up from 30 at the turn of the century. At the same time, sea-level rises and rising sea temperatures could see the complete disappearance of coral structures such as those at the Great Barrier Reef and in the Caribbean and Indian Ocean.

Thus, climate change has become a focus of attention around the world. It is curious, therefore, that Australia is one of only two developed nations in the world that have *not* ratified the Kyoto Protocol.

Only a week ago, Russia's President, Vladimir Putin, signed a bill confirming Russia's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, clearing the way for the global climate pact to come into force early next year. Australia, however, will be excluded at our economic and environmental cost.

Both houses of the Russian Parliament last month ratified the protocol, which aims to stem global warming by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Putin signed the bill last Thursday.

The next round of international climate talks is scheduled for next month in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

It is vital that organisations such as STEP encourage people to get out and experience the environment as it is. Not just because it's under threat so much as that by engaging people with their environment, and letting them experience the wonders on offer so close to the city, we can increase their understanding of both the value and the potential of our foreshore as a complement to, and an occasional antidote for, urban living.

Conclusion

So let me wrap up by noting that data from a recent NSW Child Health Survey found that 40% of children, aged 5 to 12 years, reportedly watch two hours or more of television or videos a day on average, and 15% are reported to play computer games for an hour or more a day on average.

Imagine how wonderful they'd feel if they spent the same amount of time walking in the Middle Harbour Valley, using these maps to increase their understanding and enjoyment of one of the jewels in Sydney's crown!

Having these maps as a resource can not only help increase people's usage of these areas, but hopefully, through that experience, help them realise the importance of environmental issues such as sustainability, biodiversity and climate change.

So, please join me in congratulating John Martyn and the team at STEP for their fantastic efforts in creating these landmark maps.

President's Report 2004

It is with pleasure that I present the President's Report for the year to October 2004.

This has been a busy year for STEP. A great deal of the committee's time has been involved with the production and launch of our two new maps, Walking Tracks of the Middle Harbour Valley and Northern Sydney Harbour Foreshore:

- Sheets 1 and 2, Bungaroo and Roseville Bridge; and
- Sheets 3 and 4, Northbridge and North Harbour.

We are truly delighted with the maps—they represent four years work by volunteers under the direction of John Martyn. They look beautiful and I'm sure they will be a fantastic asset for the people of Sydney to better enjoy our wonderful bushland.

I particularly thank John Martyn for the huge effort he has put into this project, his group of volunteers, and Bruno Krockenberger who has managed the final production and launch, as well as Ku-ring-gai Council for \$1000 towards its production.

Two thousand of each sheet have been printed so I urge all members to purchase their own copy at the special rate of \$15 per map, and to spread the word to the general public to ensure sales (\$20 per map for non-members).

Another major issue this year has been the formation of the Blue Gum High Forest Group, led by Neroli Lock and Nancy Pallin. BGHF is listed as a threatened ecological community under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act, and Ku-ring-gai is fortunate to have the largest remnant (Dalrymple-Hay Nature Reserve plus adjacent land) plus several other smaller remnants. STEP is the lead organisation for this group which aims to preserve all BGHF in perpetuity.

The BGHF group has been very busy developing an application to have the community listed as critically endangered under the Federal Environment Protection

and Biodiversity Conservation Act, producing and distributing brochures, lobbying politicians at local and State level, leading ten walks and several talks on the BGHF and making a submission on the Development Application for 100 Rosedale Rd, St Ives. STEP also made a separate submission to Ku-ring-gai Council on this Development Application.

The application for re-zoning of the UTS campus at Lindfield has also been a focus area for STEP this year. John Burke was our representative on the Community Forum Group and we made a detailed submission to Ku-ring-gai Council on the preliminary exhibition of the UTS application for rezoning. The UTS campus contains a substantial area of bushland that would be severely affected by the proposed development of 500 dwellings.

It is STEP's position that the impacts of the development on the bushland, particularly the loss of more than 50% of the bushland on site (4.6 ha lost) either as a fire Asset Protection Zone or cleared for housing, is unacceptable.

STEP has continued to lobby for more bushland to be protected along the B2 road reservation (Fox Valley and South Turrumurra) on the basis of its value as a community asset and important bushland corridor. Another submission will be made on the draft LEP by 5 November.

Other STEP submissions were on the Section 94 Developer's Contribution and Sustainable Cities 2025. We also continued to lobby the NPWS and State Environment Minister (fairly unsuccessfully) for proper accounting of the funding promised to Lane Cove National Park associated with the addition of land to the northern section of the park.

STEP has also been involved with the development of the water-wise garden at Turrumurra that is supported by Ku-ring-gai Council as a display and education resource.

Activities

We have undertaken a range of activities this year, including Clean-up Australia Day, four talks (on Blue Gum High Forest, fantastic fungi, Australian native orchids and our AGM talk on fences, technology and land management in the arid zone) and eleven walks (ten through BGHF and the spring walk on the Bobbin Head Track led by Bill Jones).

We have continued to support the Intel Young Scientist Environment Award, which was presented at Parliament House by STEP member and judge Syd Smith to Daniel Tracey of Barker College for his project *Domestic Water Recycling and Waste: An Investigation*, and a highly commended certificate to David Llewellyn of Great Lakes College for his project *Effects of Toxic Riparian Weeds on the Survival of Aquatic Invertebrates*.

Newsletters

We published six newsletters (numbers 121 to 126) thanks to Bruno Krockenberger and Helen Wortham.

Representation

STEP is represented by Neroli Lock on Ku-ring-gai Council's Natural Areas Advisory Committee. This year the Union of Lane Cove Valley Conservationists was dissolved with member groups sharing the remaining funds.

Committee

The committee has worked effectively throughout the year, meeting monthly and communicating regularly by email. I would particularly like to thank Helen Wortham for her tireless efforts on membership, sales, newsletter editing, web page and countless other tasks—she does a fantastic job and deserves special recognition. Thanks also to Bruno Krockenberger for map management, compiling the newsletter and chairing meetings when I can't be there, and to Neroli Lock for her work in the BGHF group, as minutes secretary and for the thankless task of chasing insurance issues. Thanks to all other committee members and helpers for your contributions through the year.

The Coming Year

Next year will be busy with the launch, publicity and sales of the new Middle Harbour maps. Hopefully, additional sales of the Lane Cove map and Field Guide will be promoted by the publicity for the Middle Harbour maps. Once the map costs have been covered we will be able to put the sales proceeds towards conservation issues.

Continuing projects for STEP are likely to be the UTS re-zoning, the release of the F3–Sydney Orbital link road EIS, the B2/B3 rezoning, and preservation of Blue Gum High Forest.

It has been a pleasure to serve as president and I am sure that the incoming committee will have an enjoyable and productive year representing STEP's members and working for Ku-ring-gai's environment.

Membership Renewal and Order Form

Use the form below:

- to renew your membership **(only do this if the year 04 is shown on the bottom of the address label overleaf)**
- to order our maps

✂

Please complete the form, 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, Turramurra
NSW 2074

STEP Encourages Environmental School Research

STEP has once again inspired young scientists to undertake an environmental research program as part of the Intel Young Scientist awards. At a high-level function held in State Parliament House on 25 October which was attended by the Governor, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, and Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, the top science students in our schools were recognised and given awards for their projects.

STEP has been part of Intel Young Scientist for the last few years, providing a certificate, a cheque for \$200 and STEP membership to the top student research program that promotes an enhancement and knowledge of the environment.

This year the best environment entry came from Daniel Tracey of Barker College. Daniel undertook a research program into the effects of different types of grey water on plants, a most useful study given the recent scarcity of water and the need to examine our options to counteract drought and possible climate change. A highly commended certificate was also awarded to David Llewellyn of Great Lakes College for his excellent study on the effect of riparian weeds on stream invertebrates.

The Intel Young Scientist is an initiative of the NSW Science Teachers' Association. This is one of the ways that STEP encourages the teaching of environmental education in schools. STEP member, Syd Smith, presented the awards on behalf of STEP.



Daniel Tracey being presented with his award by Syd Smith

	Unit cost	Number	Cost (\$)
Membership (only complete if 04 shown on address label overleaf)			
Single (per financial year)	\$16		
Family (per financial year)	\$20		
Life	\$200		
Field Guide to the Bushland of the Upper Lane Cove Valley	\$30		
Maps of Walking Tracks			
Lane Cove Valley			
STEP member	\$15		
Non-member	\$20		
Middle Harbour Valley. Sheets 1 and 2, Bungaroo and Roseville Bridge			
STEP member	\$15		
Non-member	\$20		
Middle Harbour Valley. Sheets 3 and 4, Northbridge and North Harbour			
STEP member	\$15		
Non-member	\$20		
Donation (donations of \$2 or more tax deductible)			
		Total cost	

Threatened Species

The Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) is listed as vulnerable under Commonwealth legislation, but as endangered under NSW legislation. It is a migratory species which only breeds in Tasmania's blue gum forests, but travels as far as NSW to feed in ironbark forests and woodlands on the nectar of these winter flowering trees. It also feeds on the sugary shelters of lerps (small insects that live on gum leaves). The Spotted Gum Forests of Tomalpin (Hunter Valley) have been identified as the most important habitat in NSW for these birds. More than 85% of its preferred winter habitat has been cleared and every year 50 to 100 hectares of its breeding habitat in Tasmania is being destroyed for woodchips.

Grassy White Box Woodland, listed nationally as well as under NSW legislation, also supports the Swift Parrot, and in spite of a wide geographic distribution has been reduced to less than 10% of its original extent and is mostly in poor condition due to intense grazing. It is also threatened by further clearing for agriculture.

Grassy White Box Woodland is generally dominated by the White Box (*Eucalyptus albens*) but sometimes forms associations with other species such as Blakely's Red Gum (*E. blakelyi*) and Yellow Box (*E. melliodora*). The understorey generally takes the form of an herbaceous native ground cover. It also supports the Squirrel Glider.

The NSW Nature Conservation Council is actively lobbying for acts to save such threatened species, listing 565 threatened plants, 254 threatened animals, 65 endangered ecological communities, 22 key threatening processes, on which 68 recovery plans have been finalised and 37 plans released for comment.

Sydney's Natural Heritage

The NSW Nature Conservation Council is calling attention to the current State Government initiative to develop a Sydney Metro Strategy. The process is well underway and there have already been some community forums; however, there are further opportunities for the community (that means individuals too) to contribute ideas for practical measures to protect biodiversity.

NPWS has already mapped much of Sydney's bushland to identify valuable remnant vegetation, but the potential for long-term conservation is greatly reduced if the land is divided between a large number of individual landholders or on private land.

Therefore, in the interest of conservation of urban bushland, the community must push for information relating to zoning and tenure to be combined with existing bushland mapping for areas designated to be protected under the strategy.

The role of local councils and their employees needs to be defined and councils need to sign on and agree to participate in the strategy to avoid continuation of ad hoc planning and its detrimental outcomes.

To have a say on the strategy, go to www.metrostrategy.nsw.gov.au and follow the links to the Your City Your Say section of the website.

For more information contact Craig Morrison, Community Support Officer (Environmental Advocacy), Sydney Metropolitan CMA, on 9279 2466.



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