



Wallumetta

The Newsletter of Ryde-Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna
Preservation Society Inc.

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PRESIDENT'S NOTE

The Interim Report of the Independent Review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act has now been released by Professor Graeme Samuel.

How do the Interim Report and the Government response measure up?

Members will recall that one of the Society's concerns about the Ivanhoe Estate project was the reliance by the proponent on biodiversity offsets to compensate for removal of critically endangered Sydney Turpentine and Ironbark Forest on the site. Importantly the Interim Report states:

Offsets do not offset the impact of development, and overall there is a net loss of habitat. Proponents are permitted to clear habitat in return for protecting other areas of the same habitat from future development. It is generally not clear if the area set aside for the offset is at risk from future development. (p14)

The Society was truly justified in questioning offsets in respect of the Ivanhoe Estate proposal. However the Interim Report does not rule out offsets and instead recommends measures to incentivise investment in restoration. This will not prevent a net loss of the relevant critically endangered ecological community.

The Interim Report recommends an independent and effective regulator to enforce National Environmental Standards. Unfortunately the Federal Government has rejected the need for an independent regulator and claims the federal department is sufficient for this role.

Another matter of concern is the recommendation for new bilateral assessment and approval agreements for conducting reviews of proposals. Already the Federal Government has flagged its intention to amend the existing law to delegate environmental approval powers to the states. As such the assessment and approval will be subject to resourcing and other priorities of each State.

The Interim Report also excludes a trigger for review of matters affecting the climate and other environmental matters such as land clearing. The report states that existing separate legislation is appropriate for these matters. The requirement to conduct an EPBC assessment should extend to these other matters unless the equivalent provisions exist in the relevant separate legislation.

A further concern is the recommendation to provide only for limited merit review. This would curtail consideration by Court of matters not raised during the assessment process.

There is the opportunity for comment on the Interim Report and the Society will make a submission on these matters. **Members are encouraged to also make submissions** and to let us know their views. The following provides a link for submitting comments on the Interim Report and provides further links to the report and other relevant information: <https://epbcactreview.environment.gov.au/get-involved>.

Frank Breen,
President

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NSW FORESTRY CORPORATION ACCUSED OF FELLING GIANT TREES IN STATE FOREST

The NSW Government's own logging corporation has been caught red-handed cutting down giant trees that were earmarked for protection in Wild Cattle Creek State Forest near Coffs Harbour.

Shirley Hall of the Nature Conservation Council said, "This outrageous destruction shows NSW Forestry Corporation can't be trusted to obey already weak forest protection laws. It's clear we need to end native forest logging."

This is not the first time Forestry Corporation has been caught breaking the rules but this time the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) has issued the first stop-work order in 20 years. That means logging in Wild Cattle Creek has stopped, at least for the time being. And if the EPA decides to prosecute, Forestry Corp could be fined up to \$5 million.

Sadly, even if the EPA does prosecute, Forestry Corporation will just move into another forest and start the cycle of destruction all over again.

Communities are rising up against logging destruction. The Gumbaynggirr Conservation Group recently filed a court case against Forestry Corporation and stopped logging in Nambucca State Forest... but then Forestry Corporation moved its machinery into Wild Cattle Creek State Forest and cut down two ancient, giant trees that were protected by law.

Shirley asks that we share this story with family and friends: "We need to use every tool at our disposal to defend our forests, especially the power of stories to motivate people to demand change... The more of us taking action, the closer we can get to saving our forests from logging."

"We know decision-makers — from Environment Minister Matt Kean to the managers at Bunnings — are watching the public reaction to these events very closely. When hundreds of people take action to highlight the atrocities of logging, we show decision-makers that we are powerful together. This is the story they do not want people to read... we need to make sure it goes viral."



BUNNINGS NEED OUR ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Hardware giant Bunnings stopped sourcing timber from Victoria's wildlife-rich forests after the Federal Court found they were being logged illegally.

Now the logging industry and the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) are pressuring Bunnings to back down. They have used log trucks to blockade Bunnings' central store in Melbourne.

The Bob Brown Foundation has launched a quick response in which supporters are calling to support Bunnings. Dr Bob Brown said: *"By its ban on timber from wildlife-rich native forests in Victoria, Bunnings has shown how Australia can keep its forests but have plentiful wood from plantations to meet its timber needs. Bunnings is one popular winner here. The CFMEU's Michael O'Connor's actions bring to the fore all the epithets used against environmentalists defending forests – 'job-killers', 'radical' etc. For every one of their callers to Bunnings favouring forest destruction we will get two, if not ten, to congratulate Bunnings."*

COVID-19 – AN EXCUSE TO FAVOUR PROPERTY DEVELOPERS

Readers may recall articles in Wallumetta in 2017 alerting us to proposed re-development of the IBM site in West Pennant Hills. This sale to Mirvac had gone unnoticed some years earlier so local residents and others familiar with the values of the site were shocked by the developer's proposal for 600 residential dwellings. The combined IBM site and adjacent Cumberland State Forest has provided a rare remnant with relatively fertile deep soils supporting tall trees with areas of rich understory, a haven in our growing suburbs. It was recognised for its bird species including the Powerful Owl, Satin Bowerbird, Tawny Frogmouth and the Grey Goshawk.

Powerful Owls, listed as a Vulnerable Threatened Species, have been known to breed on the Mirvac/IBM site over many years. The retention of nest trees is crucial to the success or failure of breeding for this magnificent apex predator. Our Society wrote opposing the over-development on ecological grounds and the fact that the old IBM buildings have merit for re-purposing such as educational and/or community use within the existing campus style setting, potentially providing many hundreds of ongoing jobs and allowing mature vegetation over the whole site to be protected, in particular the critically endangered Blue Gum High Forest and Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest.

The Mirvac proposal as submitted had been rejected by The Hills Shire and Hornsby Councils and residents alike. However, the project was recently included within the NSW government's Covid-19 'Accelerated Approvals' list compiled by the Urban Taskforce developer group. It has now been approved. To add to the outrage, the 12 hectares of forest which Mirvac promised to donate and protect was reduced by 25% and will not be handed over for at least 5 years when the development is completed. Much of this could be severely impacted by then.

There are so many projects that could have provided the 300 construction jobs, served the community and offered environmental and social benefits, such as affordable housing and other much-needed public infrastructure. The pandemic should not be used as a reason to expedite decisions on inappropriate development.

NARRABRI COAL SEAM GAS PROJECT - SUBMISSIONS NEEDED!

Last week the Independent Planning Commission (IPC) held its online public hearing into the Narrabri Gas Project. This large coal seam gasfield is proposed for the eastern Pilliga forest in Gomeri/Gamilaraay country in North West New South Wales.

Suellyn Tighe, a Gamilaraay woman from Coonabarabran, told the Commissioners, *"The Gamilaraay people have for thousands of years maintained a careful and respectful relationship with the Pilliga forest. This is evidenced by the many cultural sites archived by the very land itself."*

It's not just the cultural heritage of the forest they want to protect, but the water resources beneath it and the plants and wildlife it supports.

Lock the Gate Alliance <http://www.lockthegate.org.au/> is appealing for every individual to make a submission. **It takes only a few minutes and it's crunch time for the Pilliga and NW NSW as the final decision is about to be made. Submissions deadline is Monday 10 August 2020.**

All the info you need is right here: www.csgfreenorthwest.org.au/narrabri_decision

AND IF YOU'RE IN GOVERNMENT AND WANT TO HELP THE FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY, WHAT DO YOU DO?

Hand-pick members of the National COVID-19 Co-ordination Commission (NCCC) manufacturing taskforce!

Predictably, its report about to be published recommends "cutting red and green tape" to help the gas industry rapidly increase gas extraction and create up to 170,000 manufacturing jobs; plus tax incentives for the construction of gas infrastructure and letting pipeline owners charge higher prices. See the report published by the Sydney Morning Herald on 29 July 2020 at

https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/covid-taskforce-urges-government-support-for-new-gas-projects-20200728-p55g8q.html?utm_medium=email&utm_source=actionkit

We encourage readers to take action to stop our money being used to support the gas industry; it's easy if you go to <https://fossilfuelwatch.good.do/stopthegas-firedrecovery/emailscootmorrison/>

THE TREE REPORT

*Responding to the drought of 2019, followed by tragic bushfires and now the Covid-19 pandemic, Planet Ark produced this report, subtitled **Regenerating Our Land / Our People / Our Future**.*

- **Regeneration for Our Land**

Over the last three years, much of eastern Australia has been subjected to severely dry conditions, with rainfall in many parts of the region being near or below record low values. A main driver for these drought conditions has been cooler sea surface temperatures in the eastern Indian Ocean – a climatic event called a **Positive Indian Ocean Dipole**. This has led to the worst droughts and bushfires in southeast Australia.

These occurred more frequently in the last few decades than in the last 300 years. Recent years have seen record-breaking high land temperatures, with the summer of 2018/2019 being Australia's warmest on record. This tragic combination of drought and heat created ideal conditions for extreme bushfires in summer 2019/2020, with more than 5.3 million hectares of land burnt in NSW and an estimated one billion animals killed across Australia. The report goes on to examine:

- How are our Ecosystems Affected by Bushfires?
- The Importance of Regeneration

- **Regeneration for Our People**

Hardships Australia faced in the last year – including drought, bushfires, floods and a pandemic – resulted in direct physical hardships and impacted our mental well-being. Traumatic events are major risk factors for post-traumatic stress disorder later on; our nervous system takes many months and sometimes even longer to finally settle. But, like the rest of nature, we are often capable of adaptation and regeneration. Even though the future is uncertain, we naturally take opportunities to increase our resilience and recovery. Detailed topics include:

- The Effects of Trauma
- Looking Out for Each Other
- The Need for Good Role Models
- Connecting with Nature & People to Regenerate

- **Regeneration for Our Future**

It will be important to develop a sustainable future, built on a harmonious relationship between humans and the natural world, with human and ecological resilience. Resilience is a theme that appears often when looking to the future, particularly after exposure to trauma such as the horrific 'black summer' bushfire season and Coronavirus pandemic. Building resilience in our mental health and our drought stricken, burned landscapes will assist in regeneration and recovery after what has been a devastating year for Australians. Topics are:

- Innate Human Resilience
- Defining Ecological Resilience
- Australia's Changing Fire Regime
- A Slippery Slope to Biodiversity Loss
- Building Resilient Futures
- Our Goals Moving Forward
- Practical Steps to Regeneration

The full report may be found at the Planet Ark website <https://treeday.planetark.org/research/>



WHAT'S IN A (SCIENTIFIC) NAME: 8. UNMENTIONABLE ORCHIDS

What's in the name of the Orchidaceae family? Answer: quite a lot!

In Ancient Greek *orcheis* means “testicles”. Two Mediterranean plants were given this name because of the shape of their tubers. They were described by the botanists Theophrastus (c.370-c.286 BC, a pupil of Aristotle), and Dioscorides (1st century AD). One has been identified with *Anacamptis* (formerly *Orchis*) *papilionacea*, one of the Butterfly Orchids, and the other with *Orchis italica* (formerly *O. longicruris*), the Naked Man or Italian Orchid.

In modern botany *Orchis* was taken as the type genus of the family which was given the name Orchidaceae. The term “orchid” was introduced into English in 1845.

Orchidaceae are the largest family of plants, found on all continents except Antarctica, with over 25,000 species distributed over hundreds of genera. They are noted for the eccentric shapes of their reproductive organs. Typically, one petal has evolved into a “landing strip” for insects, called a *labellum* (Latin, “little lip”), guiding them to where they are needed for pollination. To learn more, see any handbook, or the Wikipedia article on Orchidaceae.

Several orchids are native to our area. Here are some listed as common in the Field of Mars Reserve, in its *Plan of Management*, published by the City of Ryde, 2009, p. 79.

Acianthus fornicatus, Pixie Orchid or Pixie Caps. Like many botanical terms, the genus name is made up of Greek words disguised by a Latin spelling and word-ending. It means “spikey flower”, from Greek *akis*, “sharp point” and *anthos*, “flower”, as in “chrysanthemum”. As for the species, despite the name these Pixies are not specially naughty!



Fornicatus in Latin means “vaulted, arched”, referring here to the dorsal sepal. It is derived from *fornix*, meaning “vault, arch, arcade”, and by extension “brothel”, since these places were associated with prostitution in ancient Rome. Hence the Latin verb *fornicor*, and English “fornicate”.



Caladenia catenata, White Fingers or White Caladenia. *Caladenia*, from Ancient Greek *kalos*, “beautiful”, and *aden*, “gland” (as in “adenoids”), refers to projections on the *labellum*, known by the Latin term *callus* (plural *calli*), “hard skin, callus”. *Catenata* “chained” or “forming a chain”, refers to the *calli*.



Cryptostylis erecta, Hooded, Bonnet or Tartan Tongue Orchid. (We can see why standardised scientific names are essential!) *Cryptostylis*, from Greek *krypto*, “hide”, and *stylos*, “pillar, column”, refers to the reproductive structure known as the column, which in this case is enclosed at its base. *Erecta* means what it sounds like, describing the *labellum*.

Dipodium variegatum, Slender or Blotched Hyacinth Orchid. The genus *Dipodium* is named after the “two” (Greek *di-*) “little feet” (*podia*), also called stipes — the stalks that support the *pollinia* or aggregations of pollen grains in the flowers. *Pod-*, “foot”, occurs in words like “podiatry”, “tripod” and “podium”. *Variegatum* refers to the darker blotches on the pale pink flower and the ovary.



NEWS FROM THE FIELD OF MARS

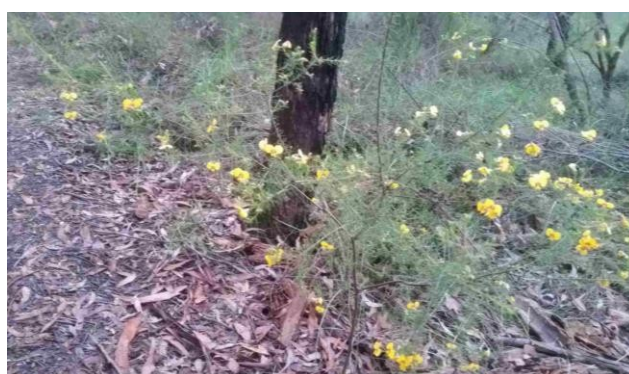
We expected mild weather during autumn and early winter would be favourable for the health of the natural bushland, but several trees have been falling recently. This is possibly a delayed result of the extreme weather conditions of 2019. A few more have fallen across tracks, but fortunately none were large and we were able to clear them easily by using a handsaw.



Wildflowers along the Sand Track are looking good. Taken in July, these are photos of Wattle [*Acacia terminalis*], Egg-and-Bacon [*Dillwynia retorta*] and Rice Flowers [*Pimelea linifolia*].

Several other flowers

have since appeared including Boronias near the log seat at the Sand - Warada Track junction, and native orchids (*Dipodium variegatum*) have appeared along the Sand Track.



Council Works Staff Versus Viminaria...

At the beginning of June we were upset to discover that the native grasses and some recently planted *Viminaria juncea* (native broom) seedlings had been whippersnipped in the Rod Wallace Memorial Garden beside the Visitor Centre. The Habitat Community Native Plant Nursery donated some Hakea, Bauera and Einadia seedlings which we have planted in their place, and added stakes



in the hope that these will protect them from Whippersnippetman.

We moved one of the fallen branches so visitors will not take a short cut to the toilets by walking over the native grasses which now resemble a shaved lawn and would not survive heavy traffic.

City of Ryde Council's Natural Areas manager followed up with relevant staff and apologised on their behalf.

... but wait, there's more!

A few weeks later, at the top end of the reserve between Cemetery Creeks 1 and 2, the remains of a pine tree were cut down on the boundary behind the cemetery crypts. Lopped trunks were dumped into the natural bushland where we have been nurturing several endemic seedlings. These were completely covered and some were broken. Damage would not have occurred if the trunks and branches had been left in the ample space alongside the fire trail and this is where we moved them to, so the seedlings will have another chance to survive.



The bush with dumped remains of pine tree before... and after our rescue.

We wonder what else will need protection from workers and their machines.



Photo by Bev Debrincat

But they are not the only ones damaging the bushland. We recently learnt that somebody has cut a path and clearing into the bush near the Warada Track, dumped a shopping trolley, moved rocks and chopped saplings in the natural bushland both there and along the main tracks.

Bushcare

And now for some good news! With the easing of restrictions, bushcare groups are returning, starting with smaller groups. During autumn, several sites became infested with Cobbler's pegs [*Bidens pilosa*] and Paddy's Lucerne, now being tackled.

Visitor Centre

After the shut down for over two months from mid-March, we reopened the Centre on Saturday 23 May. Large numbers are visiting the Reserve, many for their first time, probably because bushwalking is one of the few activities people can enjoy during the coronavirus restrictions. Popularity of the reserve continued through June with, on average, 180 visitors counted each day and 35 per day coming in to the Centre. Numbers fell with the easing of coronavirus restrictions, but bushwalking in the Field of Mars remains popular.

In the Centre we are following a Covid Safe Plan which entails our volunteers washing, then disinfecting, all chairs, handles, hard surfaces and commonly-used items including the computer. Signs and sanitising equipment are prominently placed, and visitors are following our precautions.

With the increased number of visitors, many more track notes have had to be printed and we've taken the opportunity to update these and associated leaflets. A popular recent addition is our guide to birds in the Field of Mars Reserve.

Owing to rain on the last Sunday of July, very few visitors came to the Centre that day but an Eastern great egret liked what it saw in the flooding creek nearby.





Ryde District Historical Society (RDHS) members came for lunch on Wednesday 15 July 2020. John and Sharrie came along to chat with them, and some members remembered swimming in the waterhole John mentioned in the June 2020 Wallumetta. There was also a visitor whose grandfather owned a farm, "The Cascades" along Wellington Road, in what is now part of the reserve around Cemetery Creek O. We look forward to maintaining a co-operative relationship between RHHFFPS and RDHS as we share a common interest in natural heritage.

Vale Sylvana Newman

Sylvana died recently at age 99, just short of her 100th birthday. It was fortunate that she was able to come to our 50th anniversary celebration a few years ago. The Newman family – Bill and Sylvana, with children Lynne, Laurie and Anne – were active members of our Society in our early years when we held working bees every Saturday to develop the Field of Mars Park into the Reserve and Wildlife Refuge that it is now. In those days, along with founding member Kelvin Ward, Sylvana was a science teacher at Hunters Hill High School. Benefits of her family's efforts can still be seen around the Strangers Creek track.



EVENTS (subject to current Covid-19 restrictions)

2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – Saturday 15 August, 2pm.

This will be held at the Visitor Centre, Field of Mars Reserve and Wildlife Refuge, followed by afternoon tea. At this meeting members may review the reports on our operations during 2019, and elect the Management Committee for the year to March 2021.

We hope to organise further events after the AGM, though of course it all depends on developments with Covid-19. Members will be informed in advance by email, as always, and in the next Wallumetta.

OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT WOMBATS

The Colong Foundation presents a distance education interactive discussion course: *Wombats, Wattle, Wilderness, World Heritage and Wellbeing (WWWWW)*. A minimum of six people come together to read, talk and discuss and email their reflections to the Worker's Educational Association (WEA) tutor, Janine Kitson, who then responds to it.

WWWWW deals with the connections between wombats, acacias, wilderness, the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and wellbeing. It highlights Australia's history of land clearing where today only 2% of the Brigalow Belt in Queensland is protected in reserves, including the tiny Epping Forest National Park, home of the critically endangered Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat.

The WEA Sydney WWWWW Discussion Group course costs \$68 per person to enrol in (minimum of six people to enrol) and is available at <https://www.weasydney.com.au/course/D243>

Win this bright Yarnknit* rug!

Tickets \$2 each / 3 for \$5

available at the Field of Mars Visitor Centre.

* Hand-knitted and kindly donated to RHHFFPS by the Holy Spirit Yarnknit Group of North Ryde.

