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

DECEMBER 2019 - No. 278

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Recently the Prime Minister was reported saying that there is no evidence to link the recent bushfires with climate change. This is not correct and there is scientific evidence showing the link. Some argue that bushfires have always been a feature of the Australian landscape and that they are caused by natural events such as lightning or are deliberately started. This ignores the impact of climate change in creating the conditions for bushfires.

The prerequisites for a bushfire season are high temperature, low humidity and strong winds that coincide with long periods of low rainfall. In an article published by *The Conversation* (10 Oct 19) scientists have shown that these conditions are driven by climate modes such as the El Niño Southern Oscillation.

Researchers **Chris Lucas** (Senior Research Scientist, Australian Bureau of Meteorology) and **Sarah Harris** (Manager Research and Development, Country Fire Authority) have found that over more than four decades the climate modes have affected the variability of Australia's fire weather. Lucas and Harris state,
Long-term climate change in Australia is an undeniable reality. [...] The changed conditions has led to an average increase in the severity of seasonal bushfire weather across Australia [...] Our research has made clear that climate modes bring large and rapid swings to the fire weather, while human-induced climate change gradually increases background fire weather conditions.

The Prime Minister may point to the climate modes such as El Niño as the cause of Australia's fire weather but it is not correct to stop there and ignore the human induced climate change which gradually increases background fire weather conditions.

Frank Breen

President

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HUNTERS HILL COUNCIL IS REVIEWING THE PLAN OF MANAGEMENT FOR BORONIA PARK

The current Plan is barely 4 years old but due to changes to the Crown Lands Act & Regulations, Councils have been instructed to update Plans for all their Crown Land reserves to align with the requirements of the Local Government Act. There are also two major drivers for making this Plan the first Crown land management plan revised in Hunters Hill Local Government Area (LGA), being the receipt of three government grants - two amounting to \$1.5m for 'upgrading sporting facilities' and another of \$200,000 towards an 'inclusive playground' via the Touched by Olivia Foundation (TBO).

The \$1.5m combined Commonwealth and State funding has been promoted by Hunters Hill Council to provide a 'sport/community facility' primarily for use by the HH Rugby & Cricket Clubs. The new Plan, if adopted, will authorise a 20 year lease by the two Clubs, effectively alienating more public access across Boronia Park. Future leases and licences would greatly increase the sporting interests' franchise over this important and much-loved local park and bushland.

The new Plan, if adopted, can facilitate a future Development Application of significant size and scale with "a building footprint of up to **525 square metres** (excluding surrounding paved areas, rainwater tanks, and other ancillary elements) and double storey to a maximum height of 8 metres above surrounding ground levels (see Action PDFL31)". This is around 25% bigger than the Hunters Hill Sailing Clubhouse at Clarkes Point. In addition, they propose "a new amenities and storage building, shown on the Landscape Concept Plan as a low-profile single storey building with a footprint of no larger than 80 square metres (excluding surrounding paved areas and other ancillary elements) (see Action PDFL32)". These details are in the draft Plan and are of great concern.

There are 4 siting options for each proposal. The only supportable site for a Club building would be alongside the grandstand, backing onto Ryde Rd ('Site 1' in the draft Plan), combined with upgrading the grandstand which has been badly neglected by Council and sporting clubs. This site was identified in the previous 2015 Plan as the most appropriate. Construction of large centrally located buildings within open parkland, if permitted, will drastically impose on the Park's cultural and ecological values.

The playground should not be sited in Boronia Park at all but in Riverglade reserve where it is needed. The TBO funding application was in fact for a site within Riverglade but Council now wishes to place it in Boronia Park which already has two playgrounds that could be easily upgraded.

There are also two sites proposed for a BMX track, neither of which is suitable for Boronia Park and, again, this can be better placed elsewhere in the LGA to provide for this age group.

Another proposal of major concern is to include floodlighting on Oval 3 which is currently prohibited in the 2015 Plan. It is critical that this is not permitted to occur as it will inevitably affect nocturnal wildlife including microbats, and potentially local residents, due to increased usage, noise and light disturbance. The Draft Plan fails to properly consider these impacts or the proposed off leash dog zone on Oval 3.

Public confidence in Council's stated commitment to maintaining public access is undermined by the intent of the Plan and the past history of infrastructure built on Boronia Park. The construction of Oval 3 some years ago has left an environmental legacy of dead trees and uncontrolled sediment run off.

Submissions are due by **11 December** - If the proposals for this heritage-listed reserve concern you as much as they do our Society, please take this opportunity to provide feedback to Hunters Hill Council.

A valid submission must include name, residential address, and a day time contact phone number. Send submissions and comments to: council@huntershill.nsw.gov.au

The Plan of Management draft document can be found here:

<http://www.huntershill.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Boronia-Park-DRAFT-Plan-of-Management.pdf>

CITY OF RYDE HERITAGE REVIEW 2019

In November 2017 City of Ryde Council voted to fund a review of archaeological, landscape and built heritage covering the period to the end of the Second World War. The aim was to identify items worthy of inclusion on the appropriate schedule within the city's Local Environment Plan. At the time Council recognised the place of Ryde in Australia's history. Significant landscapes, the area's Indigenous past and its significant people and this area's being the third European settlement of the colony were factors to be considered. Subsequent housing stock represents changes in suburban living as Ryde's orchards and market gardens disappeared.

GML Heritage Consultants were engaged to undertake the research and to conduct consultation with the community. Representatives of the consulting firm gave a presentation to the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) which enabled me to report on the process and to ask for recommendations to be submitted.

In due course GML presented their findings to Council. They recommended that 44 items be added to the schedule. This information was available (and still is under *Heritage Review*) on Council's website, in printed newsletters and at community meetings held in various locations. Submissions were sought from the general public, both within and outside Ryde, and there was a short online survey also available. The consultation period finished at midnight on 10 November 2019.

It was pleasing that new landscape items were recommended. Brush box street trees in three places were mentioned as were seven parks and a reservoir in its surroundings. In the past it may have been that only, as an example, memorial gates to a park were protected but not the park itself. In this latest review parks in their entirety are recommended.

The two archaeological items were Squire's Brewery and Halvorsen's Boat Yard in Putney and Glades Bay Baths in Gladesville. Six additional heritage conservation areas in Denistone, Eastwood and Gladesville were also considered for inclusion.

The built items covered properties including Federation cottages, Inter-war bungalows and Victorian Georgian villas, two shops, one licensed hotel and one public school.

The responses are being collated at present and eventually will be the subject of a report to Council. You may be aware as a result of local and metropolitan press reports that there have been some very well-attended Council meetings when the review has been discussed. Police have been called on occasions. The main point of contention is the heritage conservation areas and the imposition of heritage listing on homeowners who may have plans for their premises not compatible with that listing. Heritage items and properties located in heritage conservation areas are provided with protections guarding them from inappropriate development. New works are required to be sympathetic to the character and style of the heritage item and/or the heritage conservation area.

Lyn Langtry RHFFPS Representative on HAC

ON THE EDGE: FRAGMENTED FORESTS SIGNAL BIODIVERSITY CRISIS

Road-making and industry in the world's forests is having a profound effect on wildlife – reports by Tim Wallace and Barry Keily, published by Cosmos Magazine, September 2019.

"Edge effects" are reshaping forest ecosystems, with dramatic effect on biodiversity within them.

The way "edge effects" alter the amount of effective habitat area for forest-dwelling creatures is as important as the total amount of habitat for preserving biodiversity and ecological balance.

A simple fire track can alter the ecological balance, increasing the abundance of animal species adapted to the forest-edge while reducing those dependent on the forest core. Small amphibians, for example, may need the high humidity of the forest core to avoid overheating and dehydration, maintain gas exchange and protect their eggs. Larger forest core reptiles may also be more vulnerable to overheating by greater sun exposure at a forest edge.

BETTER TOGETHER: FOREST FRAGMENTS ARE HEALTHIER WHEN CONNECTED

Ecologists have now verified the long-held assumption that plant populations in small, isolated fragments of bushland benefit when those fragments are connected by wildlife corridors.

A group of researchers led by Ellen Damschen from the University of Wisconsin–Madison has provided clear evidence to support this contention after a series of experiments conducted over 18 years at the Savannah River National Laboratory in South Carolina, USA.

The results were clear cut. Species living in interconnected areas had an average 2% reduced likelihood of extinction, and the same areas were 5% more likely than isolated plots to be colonised by new species. That might not sound like much but, over the long duration of the experiment, the benefits continued to accrue.

Connected plots contained 14% more species than the isolated zones. Given that two decades is a very short length of time in the life of woodland, it is very likely that the positive outcomes will continue to grow in magnitude in the future.

The finding is significant, in light of recent mapping work that found that more than 70% of forest around the world lies within just one kilometre of an “edge”, defined as boundaries such as roads, tracks, housing developments, farmlands or mines.

“Conservation strategies to mitigate biodiversity losses due to habitat fragmentation and loss are urgently needed, and habitat corridors feature prominently in global conservation plans,” they conclude. “Our study shows that efforts to increase connectivity will pay off over the long term.”

WHAT HAPPENS TO SMALL ANIMALS IF YOU LOSE THE BIG ONES?

A recent study gives valuable insights into the potential repercussions for smaller survivors as human activity drives modern megafauna towards extinction.

Dr Aniko Blanka Toth of Macquarie University studied megafaunal extinctions for clues to the effects of our current extinction crisis. Large mammals are among the most endangered, and these threatened species greatly influence their ecosystems. Thousands of years ago, many large mammals went extinct at different times, shortly after human colonisation on each continent.

Following the extinction of megafauna including mammoths, sabre-toothed cats and Australia’s diprotodons (giant wombats), many surviving mammal species went their separate ways. This weakened connections between species and may have made ecosystems more vulnerable.

Smaller mammals often distanced themselves from neighbouring species and were found together much less often than expected. Surprisingly, this separation occurred while many survivors were claiming new habitats after the extinctions.

At first, different species occupied the same area while co-habiting but, afterwards, these animals occupied the same area but were more segregated. Survivors may have rapidly become more abundant as large mammals disappeared, causing more competitive interactions. This could have prompted them to exclude each another from individual sites. Repercussions of past megafauna extinctions continue, with species increasingly segregated and interacting more opportunistically.

After extinctions, people introduced invasive medium-sized carnivores such as foxes and feral cats, whose spread went unchecked for years. This devastated the diverse smaller Australian marsupials. Feral cats are now a major environmental problem in Australia. Had the marsupial lion still been around, it may have controlled these animals and slowed their spread.

Lesson for Australia:

It may be just as important to protect interactions as it is to save individual species. When introducing or eliminating species as part of environmental initiatives, it’s crucial to consider all interactions we are adding, as well as those being taken away.

WHAT'S IN A (SCIENTIFIC) NAME – 5. PROTEUS' PROGENY (Continued)

The Protaceae family, named after an ancient sea-god (Proteus by name and protean by character) has too many local representatives to fit into one *Wallumetta*!

The genus *Hakea* is named after an eighteenth-century patron of botany, Baron Hake of Hanover.

- *Hakea sericea*, Needlebush, is a prickly plant, as its English name suggests, but its botanical Latin species name, *sericea*, means “silky”, referring to the hairs on its young leaves. (We’ve met the term *sericea* before; note how the same species names occur repeatedly.)



Lambertia, a genus named after the botanist Aylmer Burke Lambert, is represented by:

- *Lambertia formosa*, literally “handsome *Lambertia*”, the familiar Mountain Devil, so-called from the devil-ish “horns” on its grey-brown seed pod.

Lomatia derives its genus name from the Greek word (not Latin, pace Robinson’s *Field Guide*) *loma*, “fringe, border” of a garment, or from the diminutive *lomatia*, “little fringe”.

- *L. silaifolia*, Crinkle Bush, or Parsley Bush or Fern-leaved *Lomatia*, is the genus’ only common local representative. Latin *silaus* is a type of parsley (again, Robinson is not quite correct).

Persoonia, known collectively as Geebungs, is a genus named after yet another botanist, Christiaan Henrick Persoon. Common species in our district are:

- *P. lanceolata*, Lance-leaved Geebung, whose lanceolate leaves really do resemble the head of a “little lance” (*lanceola*).
- *P. levis*, Smooth or Broad-leaved Geebung; *levis* = “smooth”, with a long *e* sound (like *ai* in English *lair*), distinguishing it from the similar word *levis* with *e* as in “let”, meaning “light”.
- *P. linearis*, Narrow-leaved Geebung, from the “linear” shape of its leaves. *Linearis* is derived from *linea*, “line”, which originally meant a string or thread and is a derivative of *linum*, “flax”. Fibres extracted from flax plants have been used for thousands of years to make textiles (hence English “linen”) and also rope and twine.

Finally, we can hardly omit one of the most iconic of the *Protaceae*, even if you are less likely to see it in the wild in our district:

Telopea speciosissima, the Brown Waratah, the floral emblem of New South Wales and of various other organisations. The common name is indigenous, also used in the form *warada*, after which a track was named in the Field of Mars Reserve. *Telopea* is derived from the Greek word *tele*, “distant”, as in “telephone” (“distant voice”), while the *op-* element is connected with seeing, as in “optic”; hence *Telopea* = “visible from afar”. *Speciosissima* = “most handsome”, “most beautiful”. The Sydney suburb is named after this genus.



NEWS FROM THE FIELD OF MARS



Sunrise over the Field of Mars 21.11.2019 - photo by courtesy of Pamela Ward

Unusual Weather

At the time of writing we are very fortunate that there have been no bushfires in the Field of Mars Reserve. Reptiles, like this water dragon seen near the western end of the Kunzea Track, seem



to be enjoying the current weather conditions. Fire weather warnings advise against bushwalking, but trees in the bush do provide some relief from smoky air around the Sydney basin.



Regeneration After July 2018 Fires

There has been pleasing regrowth and some species, like the *Lambertia formosa* (mountain devil bush) in the foreground, have actually benefited. Nevertheless, uncontrolled fires are a concern in urban bushland areas and we need to remain vigilant.

Bushcare

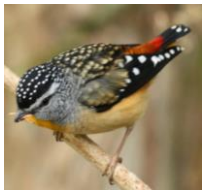
Volunteers assess risks before each session and, during extreme weather conditions, our activities are either cancelled or modified. Most sites are near the boundaries of the Reserve, so quick exits are possible in emergencies. Near the cemetery we control invasion of artificial flowers and their plastic wrappings.

Generally it has been business as usual, controlling infiltration of invasive weeds. At the Monash Road site, we continue to remove weeds and allow space for regeneration of native species:



The Great Aussie Bird Count

Over the past few years the Ryde East (School) Natural Environment Group has conducted bird counts in the northern areas of the Field of Mars Reserve and Tyrell Park. Because of extreme weather the count had to be postponed until November so it was not possible to submit results to Birdlife Australia this year. Interesting observations are that there was an overall decrease in the



number of birds counted, possibly as a result of the hot weather. Once again, dominant species are noisy miners and rainbow lorikeets, with most other birds being predators including ravens, magpies and kookaburras. Wattle birds enjoy the bottlebrush bushes in the cemetery, and this year the children were excited to spot a spotted pardalote near the Sand Track at Cemetery Creek 2.

Visitor Centre

Even more exciting was the sighting of these waterhen chicks near the Visitor Centre... along with the usual families of ducks and other birds. Members are always welcome to join our team of volunteers to keep the Visitor Centre open on weekends. We do four-hour shifts. No specialised skills are required, and Alfred will happily provide the small amount of training needed. Frequency and times of each person's shifts are negotiated individually, according to preferences and availability. If you are interested please phone Alfred on 02 9879 6067.



RECENT EVENTS

- Sunday 6 October – **Bird Walks by Cathy Goswell** of the Cumberland Bird Observers Club and RHHFFPS. These walks were well-advertised and both were well-attended.
- Monday 14 October – the film **2040** was organised by the Ryde Gladesville Climate Change Action Group and shown at Macquarie Event Cinema, 7pm. By all accounts it was well-attended and well-received. It is worth looking out for an opportunity to view if you missed it.
- Thursday 7 November – **Be Fantastic. Cut Single-Use Plastic! Sustainable Solutions Expo** heralded the launch of free toolkits for local businesses, new tips and skills, and opportunities



to meet suppliers, innovators and change-makers and share stories of plastic-free journeys with others in the community. The 1st East Ryde Joey Scouts attended by special invitation, in recognition of their involvement in various environmental programs and work.

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COMING EVENTS

- Saturday 7 December 12pm – **End-of-year Get-Together for Society members:** Join us from midday at the Visitor Centre, when we will light the gas for a barbecue + salad lunch and chat... and maybe a bushwalk for those interested.
- Saturday 21 March 2020 2pm – **RHHFFPS AGM**
- Sunday 1 March 2020 – **Clean Up Australia Day** (for members only)
- Saturday 11 April 2020 – **Bird Walks with Cathy Goswell**, 8.30am and 10.30am

Win this bright Yarnknit* rug!
Tickets \$2 each / 3 for \$5
available at the Field of Mars
Visitor Centre.



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