

THE COLONG BULLETIN

87

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The Australian continent faces irreparable damage unless the continued plundering of its natural resources is arrested. Its desert areas, exceeded only by the Sahara, are expanding rapidly, threatening to devastate the nation's food production ability and thwart future development.

- Mr. Sam Clayton, H.D.A., first recipient of the Sir William McKell medal for outstanding service to Soil Conservation in Australia, first Soil Conservation Commissioner, N.S.W., quoted in "Wambaliman", the Newsletter of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, Maryborough and Bundaberg Branches.

PARKS ARE FOR PRESERVATION

Country recreation takes many forms. A large number of people don't like it at all - they prefer to holiday in another city, such as the Gold Coast, or a country town. Others find it cheaper, or more enjoyable, to go to a caravan park, and many are happy just to drive around.

The demand for these varied forms of recreation is adequately met by private enterprise. A road network encompasses the whole State, virtually all of which is within three miles of it. Off-road vehicles bring most of the rest within the reach of vehicles. Those who try to "get away from it all" by driving to a supposedly remote place are likely

to find when they get there that it is all there already because wherever they can drive, so can several million others. Natural areas once protected by inaccessibility are now open to all. Some such areas may be protected for a time by enlightened landowners, but these are not open to the public, nor can protection be permanent. The only way to protect our natural heritage is

THE COLONG COMMITTEE LTD A NATIONAL WILDERNESS SOCIETY

18 ARGYLE ST. SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA 2000
TELEPHONE: (02) 27 4714

PATRON: Myles J. Dunphy, O.B.E.

CHAIRMAN: Peter Maslen

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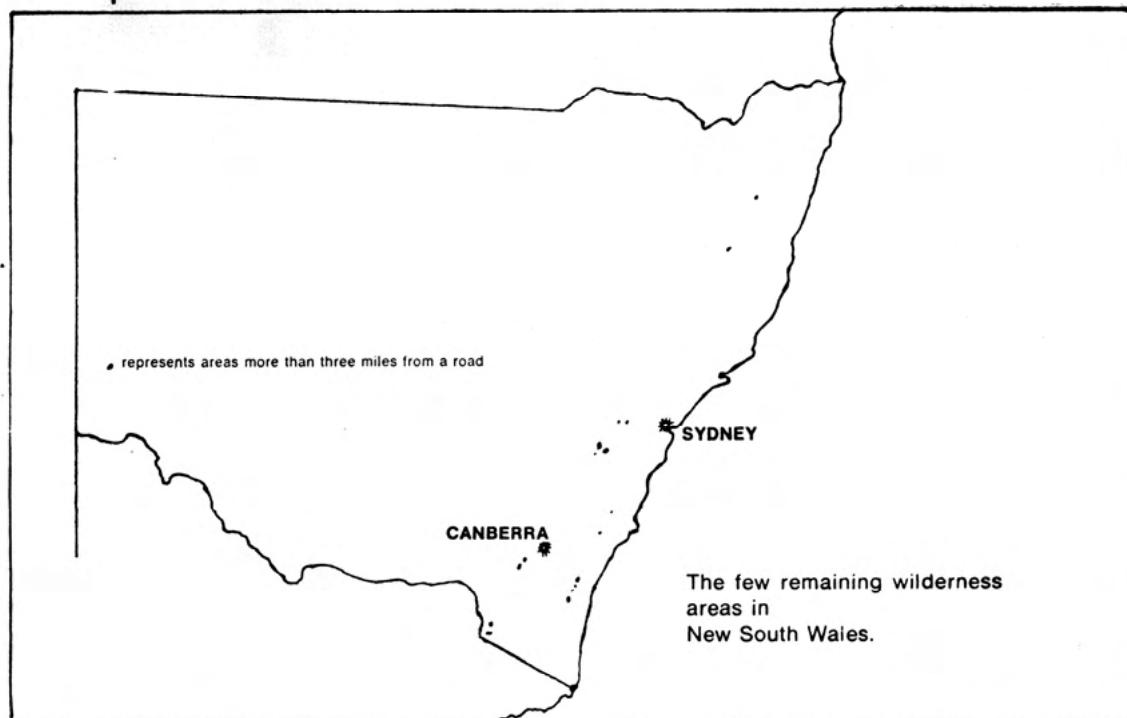
HON. TREASURER: Charles Culberg

HON. PHOTOGRAPHER: Henry Gold

HON. AUDITOR: Arthur Andersen & Co.

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Wilderness remnants in New South Wales, from Australian Conservation Foundation Survey, published in "Habitat" March/April 1975.

to create national parks and manage them so as to preserve their natural features. The only completely natural area is wilderness, and the Colong Committee is working to have large areas within our parks so managed. We do not hold that it is practical that the whole of the park system should be wilderness, but we do believe that environmentally damaging forms of recreation should be excluded.

In the last Bulletin we described our submission for the management of Kakadu. The principal features of the submission were the restoration of mined areas, the exclusion of urban development and resorts, the substitution of bus transport for private cars, the closing of unmaintained roads, non-motorised water transport, reversion to a natural fire regime, and elimination of feral animals.

In our submission on Kosciusko we advocated the non-renewal of resort leases on the snow fields and substitution of bus transport for cars. The ski-tube project would be even better, if the rail system extended to

Jindabyne. It could allow enjoyment of the snow fields without unacceptable damage to the Park. The fulfilment of the Government's present plans for residential resorts will create the fourth largest city in the state within the Park during the winter season.

In December 1975 the Colong Committee made a submission to the Director of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and in March 1979 a submission to the Blue Mountains National Park Advisory Committee (see Bulletin No. 54). The main points of these submissions were that camping areas should be located at the park entrance and access to the Park by bus only. On 19th September Milo Dunphy, a member of the Blue Mountains National Park Advisory Committee wrote to the Superintendent of the Blue Mountains District NPWS on behalf of the Colong Committee saying that:

The sight of the Boyd Crossing campsite during the Advisory Committee's inspection on 8 and 9 September underlined for me the need for the bus service solution.

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Boyd Crossing has provided a pleasant, sheltered campsite for three generations of my family. Its present condition is disgusting and unless revegetated and reorganised I expect I will never use it again. The situation is almost entirely due to the use of too many cars.

The least that should be done is immediate replacement of missing bollards and a weekend check on them by your ranger.

But the only measure which will prevent the same disaster overtaking every public campsite which may be provided on the Boyd is the prohibition of private cars and substitution of a bus service. Few Service areas suit such a solution as well as Boyd Plateau with vehicular access limited to one northern point.

Perhaps the Service should seek a special Departmental Bicentennial Grant for the purchase, operation and maintenance of the buses.

Alternatively a franchise to a private operator could be advertised.

The Colong Committee recently received a copy of the Myall Lakes National Park Plan of Management. It clearly establishes that preservation is the prime aim. On page 5 it is stated that

The commitment to encourage and regulate "appropriate use" of a national park involves the Service in providing a range of opportunities for visitors to interact with the natural and cultural features of a park, wherever this is compatible with the goal of conserving natural features and processes. One conclusion from this reasoning is that national park management should avoid creating artificial features or promote the use of features in a way that destroys natural and/or cultural values in a park.

These principles are repeated on page 46 (primary objectives of management) and on page 72, where it is stated that *The fragility of many of the environments within the park....necessitate a redirection to low key, more tranquil forms of recreation both on land and water.*

This contrasts sharply with the more disruptive types of use that have developed in recent years, particularly as a result of the high degree of vehicular access afforded by the opening of the mining roads to the east and the related increase in power boating use of the lakes.

The Plan itself breaches the principles which the Service professes to have adopted in three vital respects:

1. Although mining roads are one of the "more disruptive types of use", and three good reasons are given on page 75 justifying their closure, there is no commitment to close the north-south mining road so strongly opposed by this committee. It is proposed that an alternative road take its place. How this road will be any less disruptive than the existing one is not explained.

The road is described as "a through road to serve the local community", as is the road from Cape Tribulation to Bloomfield.

2. There is no place for the off-road use of vehicles in any national park. Such park use is far from being a type of use "resulting from the high degree of vehicular access" already afforded. The admission of off-road vehicles to the greater part of the coast, not only degrades the recreational value of the park, and its natural features, but is in direct contradiction of the evidence submitted by NPWS officers in the SPCC Off-Road Vehicle Inquiry.

3. The main feature of the park is the lakes. We entirely agree with the view expressed in the first two paragraphs of section 2.2, which lead to the objective of favouring non-motorised boating. Unless agreement is reached with the Maritime Services Board on this objective, the Plan is virtually devoid of substance.

In view of the fact that the Plan of Management contradicts the principles which it ascribes to the Service, we believe it should be withdrawn and re-drafted.

The Colong Committee entertains no illusion that its policy of excluding mechanised recreation, other than bus transport on existing roads, and

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locating all overnight accommodation outside the parks, will be readily accepted. Nearly everybody likes to think they can drive their car into a natural area, park where they like and stay nearby at a hotel or motel. Few count the environmental damage of roads to flora and fauna and landscape, or the visual and auditory pollution they introduce. Many enjoy bush bashing in off road vehicles and are encouraged to do so by the type of advertising employed by vehicle manufacturers.

Today the Colong Committee is a small voice crying in what is left of wilderness. But we believe that as environmental degradation spreads in areas such as Kosciusko, Kanangra-Boyd, Kakadu and Myall Lakes, the logic of events will force the acceptance of our policy. When the Committee was established, 16 years ago, there was little demand for wilderness preservation. Today demand is strong and the realisation that you can't take everything with you into the parks, and at the same time preserve their natural features, will come.

PARK MANAGEMENT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Committee's principles of park management, as evident in the above submissions, are entirely in line with those of the National Parks Authority of W.A. Our discussions with the NPWS of NSW lead us to believe that they are accepted by the Service, but are "bent" to accommodate development and automotive pressure groups.

The keynote of a brochure written for the National Parks Authority of W.A. by Dr. Francis G. Smith, Director of National Parks 1974-80, and distributed for general information is that:

National parks are established to preserve for all time, scenic beauty, wilderness, native wildlife, indigenous plant life and areas of scientific importance, and to provide for the appreciation and enjoyment of those things by the public in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the future. (Underline by Dr. Smith).

On wilderness, Dr. Smith writes:

In some parks, an area may be classified as a Wilderness Area. Such an area has characteristics which are the result of the interplay of purely natural processes, and is large enough and so situated as to be unaffected by what takes place in the areas around it. In order that the enjoyment of a completely natural unspoilt environment may be experienced, access to and within a Wilderness Area is by foot only. The only development in a Wilderness Area would be foot tracks. No vehicles or mechanical devices are permitted in a Wilderness Area except for search and rescue operations or the preservation of the wilderness itself. The Wilderness Area would be surrounded by an adequate buffer Natural Area.

On recreational developments within parks he states:

A National Park is not a scenic location for a golf course, amusement park or a spectator sports event. Such recreational events have their own built-in values and rewards and need not be enjoyed within a National Park.

To some, the provision of facilities or development in a National Park consists of making highway type roads, large parking areas and erecting lavatory blocks on the sites with the best views, without regard to the effect on the scenery nor consideration of the impact the resultant visitor use will have on the natural resources of the Park.

The construction of a road to or within a National Park, or for that matter to or within any piece of unspoilt countryside, can have the most devastating effect on the scenery, the flora and on the use of the area. Once a mistake has been made it is exceedingly difficult and expensive to rectify, and often the damage done is irreparable.

THE OPENED AND SHUT ROAD

In our July issue we said of the Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield road "It is obvious that a road in this terrain and climate will have to be thoroughly drained, graded and surfaced, and kept that way if it is to be usable. Simply

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pushing a bulldozer through the scrub is not only destructive, but useless". Nobody should have been more cogniscent of this fact than the Queensland Minister for Conservation, the Hon Martin Tenni. Nevertheless the bulldozers were pushed through with great haste to build an unsurfaced earth road.

The Minister "opened" the road on October 7th before an audience composed largely of police and protestors. There were no cheers, only the chanting of the protestors and the angry retorts of the Minister, uttered even as he cut the ribbon.

That evening the first of the 150-odd inches of rain that are to be expected in the next six months fell. Result: 50 cars, and two buses carrying pensioners, bogged.

The speed with which the road was pushed through, and the two to three chain width of rainforest destroyed for a two lane road, lend credence to the claim of the protestors that the real aim is to so degrade the area as to render it unacceptable for World Heritage listing. This view is further supported by the fact that car bodies have been dumped alongside the road and rocks weighing many tons rolled down the foreshore hills on to the coral reefs below.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE NATURE CONSERVATION COUNCIL

In our last issue we gave the text of three motions to be moved at the NCC Conference by the Colong Committee.

The first motion - on the circulation of Conference minutes - was rendered ineffective by removal of the provision that minutes be sent out within two months of the Conference.

The second motion, expressing opposition to the proposed Clyde River power line was passed.

The third motion - on wilderness policy - was referred to the Executive.

* * * * *

DESTRUCTION OF FORESTS

Two examples of disastrous forest destruction in overseas countries have come to the notice of the Committee.

In response to a request, on behalf of the Colong Committee, by Professor Pettigrew, for information on the dying forests in Germany, Professor Gerhard Neueller, ex physicist, now a world renowned zoologist at the University of Munich, writes:

The forest destruction is continuing with increasing speed. For instance in the Black Forest in some of the high mountain regions large areas are already more or less devastated. Unfortunately our politicians listen more to the automobile industry than to the biologists and recently decided that we will have cars with United States standards only in '89 at the earliest. It is moving to see how these pines deteriorate, become brown and finally disappear. It is also a show case of human inefficiency and our remarkable ability to close the eyes in the face of a major catastrophe.

From East Kalimantan, a province of Borneo, comes a report, published in The Environmentalist Vol 4 No 2, of what may be the worst continuous forest fire on record. At least 13,500 square miles of tropical forest were burnt between February and June last year. The loss is at least 11 times bigger than the combined area of the many separate bush fires that swept Australia in 1982.

The region is one of the dampest on earth and the area destroyed included 800,000 ha. of primary tropical moist forest - i.e. rainforest. The forest became fire prone as a result of one of the worst droughts on record, lasting two years and caused by the unusual behaviour of the ocean current known as 'El Nino'. But this is only part of the story. The report states that:

Indonesia has encouraged selective logging in many parts of Borneo and timber extraction operations have left huge areas gaping half-open till natural regrowth can fill the gap. Where this has happened, the forest floor, already littered with logging

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debris, acquires a profusion of shrubby growth where before it was kept clear by lack of sunlight. In a time of drought followed by wildfire, this undergrowth has a kindling effect, stirring the flames into an escapable ball of fire. In unlogged forest, fire often passes through with only superficial effects, leaving the trunks of forest giants charred but otherwise alive and well.

The fire has a moral for Australia, a country notoriously prone to droughts. Selective logging, so much favoured by the Forestry Commission, could, by littering the forest floor with logging debris and admitting sunlight to dry it out, expose our hitherto unburnt rainforests to uncontrollable fire.

SUBMISSIONS FOR BICENTENNIAL GRANTS

The Colong Committee has written to the N.S.W. Council of the Australian Bicentennial Authority supporting a submission by the Total Environment Centre for a grant under the Commemorative Programme for a proposed museum of bushwalking and bushwalkers centre. The museum would be a discrete element on the same site on Govett's Leap Road, Blackheath, as the Heritage Centre proposed by the N.S.W. National Parks and Wildlife Service. The proposal is summarised as:

A permanent museum of the bushwalking movement, with public displays, at the entrance to the Blue Mountains National Park, the area where the bushwalking movement began. From the early bushwalkers of N.S.W. came the strongest strand of the present-day conservation movement in this State. One of the most important and successful national park concepts in the State is the Greater Blue Mountains National Park. This concept was put forward by bushwalkers/conservationists in 1934 and is now almost fully realised. Thus the Museum will be an important educational and cultural resource regarding the growth of the conservation movement and Australia's only indigenous sport: bushwalking.

The proposal also includes a facility for modern bushwalkers visiting the Wollemi, Blue Mountains and

Kanangra-Boyd National Parks. This bushwalkers' centre provides storage, toilet, cooking and rest facilities for those using the park.

Funding sought for this project is seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$750,000), over three years.

In describing the need for the project the submission states that:

Surviving members of the early bushwalkers are very few now. Only three members of the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council remain.

Thus much of the early equipment, letters, maps, sketches, paintings and photography has already disappeared. More will disappear in the next few years unless action is taken now. Much still remains in descendants' hands but a few major collections such as that of Myles Dunphy still exist in the original hands.

The Mitchell Library holds a certain amount of information but its space and curators' time have to be allocated between many subject areas.

One objective of the Museum should be to gather as broadly representative a collection from the bushwalking movement as possible. It should also aim to present this material in displays at the Museum and in the form of travelling exhibits. Such aims require the part-time services of conservator(s) display artist and curator.

In supporting the submission the Colong Committee wrote:

We consider it most important that the contribution of bushwalkers to the conservation of natural areas, not only in the Blue Mountains, but throughout the State, be recognised in tangible form. The proposed museum would interest not only bushwalkers, but a wide section of the public.

The museum will be of great historical interest. If it had not been for the conservation efforts of bushwalkers, most of our wilderness areas would have been lost to development. We believe too that the work of this Committee is

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already of historical interest and will be further appreciated in the future. The 86 issues of the Colong Bulletin would be a contribution we could make to the museum, together with photographs and documents. We have already published a book on our rainforest campaign, and hope to follow it with others on our other campaigns.

The Australian Conservation Foundation has made an application to the Council for the funding of a N.S.W. Wilderness Study.

The aim of the study would be to:

- * Expand the Helman Wilderness Study (1976) (which covers the eastern quarter of NSW) across the whole of N.S.W.
- * Bring the Helman Study (1976) up to date.
- * Also identify wild or natural areas which do not meet the size criterion for wilderness but which nevertheless have some wilderness quality, e.g. a small undisturbed catchment, an isolated plateau or range of hills.
- * Identify threats to the wilderness and wild areas.
- * Identify the administrative and other decisions by which existing wilderness areas can be enlarged.
- * Provide a reference document for departmental planners and a factual platform for conservation campaigns to dedicate the areas.

A RAINFOREST MAY REGENERATE - SOMETIME

During the rainforest campaign the Forestry Commission claimed that its research proved that rainforests would regenerate after logging. Dr. Ivor Newman carefully examined the Commission's available research and found that the only conclusion which might be inferred from the short term experiments it had conducted was that rainforest trees took many centuries to mature. Messrs King and Chapman of the Commission have now published the result of a study of the "Floristic Composition and Structure of a Rainforest 25 Years After Logging".

The study is based on the assessment of the floristic composition of an area logged in 1949. They conclude that:

Over 94% of the area structural recovery is expected to occur 140-190 yr after logging. In the remaining gaps covering 6% of the area the recovery time may increase to 250 yr....Logging has not decreased the floristic diversity of the stand.

The questions of whether, after 140-250 years, the stature of the trees will equal that of those removed, and whether the trees removed will be replaced in the original proportions are not answered. The Colong Committee's assertion that it would take many centuries for the forest to regenerate, and that, if it did, species composition would be different, needs no amendment. The damage inflicted on the Daintree rainforest will not be repaired for many centuries, if ever.

SUPPORT FROM SWITZERLAND

We have received a letter from Werner and Doreen Grossmann-Hoskins, long-time and enthusiastic supporters of the Colong Committee, who live in Switzerland. They have written to Messrs Bjelke-Petersen and Hawke urging the gazettal of the Greater Daintree National Park, as proposed by the A.C.F. Any individual letter to a political leader is valuable, but one coming from the citizens of an overseas country particularly so.

It is nearly 20 years since the Grossmanns spent 6 weeks in Australia and visited Noosa and Lamington National Parks, but they have been dedicated supporters of rainforest preservation ever since. In Europe they have urged the Austrian Government to abandon a hydro scheme on the Danube, quoting "the recent victory of the conservationists in Tasmania and the progressive rainforest conservation policy of the NSW Government".

They are at present on a 3 months visit to South Africa, and are hoping that their visit may show the conservationists who are fighting to preserve the Cape flora that their endeavours are being appreciated. "Of 8550 species of flowering plants found

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in the Fynbos communities alone," they write, "1621 are threatened with extinction."

SIMPLY LIVING MAGAZINE

The Colong Committee has received an invitation from Michael Kennedy, Environmental Correspondent of "Simply Living", to send in "good, strong environmental articles for publication."

There is no particular word length requirement, just a criterion for impact and factual writing on environmental problems that would be of concern to all Australians. In addition such articles should be accompanied by high quality graphics and photographs, preferably original negatives.

The Colong Committee has authorised the

publication of articles from the Colong Bulletin, provided they are acknowledged, and hopes some members and supporters will respond to the invitation.

The address of "Simply Living" is P.O. Box 704, Manly 2095. Telephone (02) 977 8566.

GRAY WOULD STILL BUILD FRANKLIN DAM

I believe that ultimately the dam will be built and that common sense will prevail.

I said that on the day the Prime Minister and I signed agreements for compensation and I've never moved from that position.

- Mr. Gray, Premier of Tasmania, October 20, 1984.

WILDERNESS IN AUSTRALIA - STATISTICAL SUMMARY

Using National Mapping statistics, Helman (Wilderness in Australia) Leslie and Taylor (S.A.), Feller (Vic.) and Jones (Tas.), Pat Thompson has produced the following, necessarily tentative, summary of Australian wilderness areas.

	State Area	Wilderness Area	NP or Equiv. Reserve	Aboriginal Land	Unreserved	Arid or Semi	Temp.
	000ha	000ha	000ha	000ha	000ha	000ha	000ha
QLD	172,720	4,842	2,137	1,900	805	1,140	3,702
NSW	80,160	1,548	1,351	-	197	526	1,022
VIC	22,760	628	348	-	280	345	283
TAS	6,780	674	445	-	229	-	674
NT	134,620	48,437	940	27,511	19,986	33,968	14,469
SA	98,400	19,705	3,306	6,000	10,401	19,613	92
WA	252,550	87,603	10,712	10,199	66,692	82,903	4,700
ACT	240	20	20	-	-	-	20
<hr/>							
AUSTRALIA	768,200	163,457	19,259	45,610	98,590	138,495	24,962

Less than 12% of wilderness land has been reserved, though most of the unreserved land consists of arid land - mostly desert.

Although NSW leads all the rest in percentage of wilderness reserved, only 297,300 ha. of the 1,016,000 ha. core area identified by the Helman study has been declared as wilderness.

FORM FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS

To: The Treasurer
Colong Committee
18 Argyle Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir,

I enclose \$5.00 being my subscription for all issues of the Save Colong Bulletin to the end of 1985.

I enclose \$..... being a donation to the Colong Committee's Fighting Fund.

I enclose \$..... being an interest free loan repayable at 4 week's notice.

I have donated \$..... to the Australian Conservation Foundation, expressing a wish that my donation be spent for the purposes of the Colong Committee. I would like the grant which this has enabled, to be allocated to the Committee's Fighting Fund/Investment Fund. (Please use form letter below).

NAME: (Mr/Mrs/Miss).....

ADDRESS:..... POSTCODE.....

SIGNED:..... DATE:.....

To: The Director
Australian Conservation Foundation
672B Glenferrie Road
HAWTHORN VIC 3122

I attach a donation to the Australian Conservation Foundation. I prefer that this donation should be spent for the purposes of
(insert name of your organisation). I understand that this donation is tax deductible and therefore look forward to your receipt.

NAME: (Block Letters).....

ADDRESS:..... POSTCODE.....

\$..... SIGNED:..... DATE:.....

ORDER FORM - 1985 CALENDAR

1985 Wilderness Calendars are now available, containing 13 Henry Gold coloured photos, reproductions, an introduction by Milo Dunphy, a map showing the location of the wilderness areas depicted, and a table of phases of the moon. There is space below each date on the calendar grid for the noting of engagements. By purchasing your calendar from the Colong Committee, rather than commercial booksellers, you will be contributing to wilderness conservation.

It is an ideal gift for your conservation friends, or anybody else. Price includes postage to any address - \$6.95.

To: The Secretary
Colong Committee
18 Argyle Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Please send copies of the 1985 Wilderness Calendar to:

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:..... POSTCODE.....

Enclosed is..... for \$.....



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Enquiries please ring TEC during business hours on 27 4714.

* * * * *

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or from
Colong Committee for 80¢ posted

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