

# THE COLONG BULLETIN

Bulletin 174

THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD

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## Nature's Last Refuge

**S**ECITION 72 (4) of the National Parks and Wildlife Act stipulates that in plans of management regard shall be had to:

- (a) the conservation of wildlife
- (b) the preservation of each national park
- (c) the prohibition of the execution of any works affecting the natural condition or special features of each national park.

Following the passage at the Nature Conservation Council's Annual Conference of the Colong Foundation's motion opposing the provision of overnight accommodation in national parks, John Connor, executive Officer of the NCC, wrote to Pam Allan, Environment Minister, quoting the motion and the reasons for it. Pam Allan replied that accommodation for park visitors would be covered by

s72(4)(e) of the Act - "the encouragement and regulation of the appropriate use, understanding and enjoyment of each national park....by the public." The letter continued, "The NPW Act clearly envisages the provision of overnight accommodation as the Minister is empowered by s151 to grant leases for 'accommodation hotels; facilities and amenities for tourists and visitors' and 'buildings erected for residential occupation'."

Clearly sections 72(4)(e) and 151 conflict with s. 72(4) (above) since any works, which include not only buildings but supporting infrastructure, will affect the natural condition of the parks. The Colong Foundation believes that all forms of overnight accommodation and commercial services, as well as private dwellings, should be provided outside the parks

to the benefit of the local business community. If such development of visitor services (as opposed to private development) is to be permitted within parks, then such compromises are less damaging when located, not in the inner sections of the parks, as it has been in Kosciuszko, Warrumbungles and Marramarang, but near the outer boundaries. If the sections quoted by the Minister are to prevail over s72(4), no part of national parks, other than declared wilderness managed in accord with the NPWS Wilderness Guidelines, is secure from development. Although wilderness areas have been fragmented and tailored to accommodate destructive recreational interests and the guidelines are often breached, wilderness management remains the only assured means

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Human society can never be dominant over nature, only embedded within a living environment with which it exchanges matter, energy, and information: a subordinate part of a larger world, limited by it and totally dependent on it.

**Brian J. Fleay in *The Decline of the Age of Oil*.**

THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS

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## Nature's Last Refuge

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of effectively preserving the remnants of the natural environment. The wilderness policies of the Government and the opposition, which unfortunately arrived too late for inclusion in the last Bulletin, will determine the future of these remnants. For this reason we provide the following synopsis of their policies. Photocopies of the full policies are available on request and brief summaries of these policies will be included in the Wilderness Red Index.

### CARR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS FROM THE COLONG FOUNDATION

#### Status of Wilderness Proposals

Of the 26 nominated wilderness proposals listed by the Foundation, 23 will be assessed and exhibited before the end of 1999. Fifteen of these will be determined by the end of 2000. The assessment of Pilliga is almost complete and 1,400 ha. of State Forest and vacant Crown land will be added to Wollemi during 1999.

#### Off road vehicular and equestrian access within national parks

##### • Off road vehicles

Vehicles cannot be driven off public roads except to access designated NPWS camping areas, parking bays or picnic areas where vehicle access is not prohibited by sign or barrier.

##### • Equestrian

Horse riding is not permitted in nature reserves, declared wilderness areas, Aboriginal cultural sites, special scientific areas or areas where the introduction of horses would present a major threat to the ecology of the park or other park users. Special restrictions apply to overnight camping with horses. For example minimum distances from other users and streams; management of horse food and manure.

#### The retention of existing national parks and wilderness areas without reduction in the existing boundaries.

The Carr Government is committed to developing a comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) reserve system. We are committed to maintaining the existing reserve system. Occasionally minor adjustments are needed to reserve boundaries. Revocation of an entire wilderness requires an Act of Parliament. Subsequent representations by the Total Environment Centre produced a commitment to examine ways to strengthen the Wilderness Act to mirror the statutory protection given to national park boundaries in the National Parks and Wildlife Act).

#### The location of a second airport.

The NPWS prepared comments on the draft Badgerys Creek, identifying the potential for extensive impacts on national parks and reserves. The Commonwealth Minister for Transport has indicated that if the Badgerys Creek option does not proceed then alternative sites outside the Sydney Basin will need to be considered. The four sites suggested by the Minister are Canberra, Goulburn, Newcastle and Newnes. Both the Canberra and Goulburn options also have the potential to link to the Very Fast Train proposal. None of these options have been subject to detailed scrutiny as part of the environmental impact process.

#### Resort, Cabin, Sporting and other forms of development in National Parks

The NPW Act acts as a constraint on the type of development that can take place. It has to have a nexus with the purpose of reserve establishment and to provide services and facilities to the public or the management. In parks with limited public facilities, there is a need to improve the basic level of facilities. In areas remote from towns and cities, this may involve the construction of accommodation facilities.

#### Land clearing

The Carr Government will continue to investigate and act on opportunities to improve the effectiveness of the Native Vegetation Conservation Act and to simplify its administration. This process will involve consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

## WILDERNESS PROGRAM ON COURSE

The good news is that, with the recent addition of 460,095 ha to the wilderness estate, including an additional 76,000 hectares to the Wollemi wilderness in response to the campaigning of the Colong Foundation, and the time table for the assessment of the nominated wilderness areas adopted, together with the date of the determination of many of them, the future of wildlife in NSW will improve. These gains are despite the foreshadowed approval of development within the non-wilderness areas of our national parks, for example the proposed private apartment/resorts at Perisher that adjoin the proposed Jagungal wilderness extension and the cabins in the Warrumbungle National Park.

#### The preservation of old growth forests.

The Carr Government has adopted a policy that there will be no logging of high conservation value old growth forest.

#### COALITION POLICY

Marie Ficarra, the previous Shadow Minister for the Environment, provided the following policy decisions of direct interest to the Colong Foundation:

#### National Parks and Forestry

Implementation of the National 2020 Vision to treble native forests in NSW as a part of the National Climate Change Response Strategy. Sustainable forestry will be trialed on privately held forest lands.

#### National parks and reserves

Funding from Consolidated Revenue guaranteed to maintain existing National Parks and Nature Reserves. The new national parks, which were originally State Forests to receive greater cooperation between NPWS and State Forests as management

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# The Dunphy Wilderness Fund

by Keith Muir

**E**STABLISHED in September 1996 to celebrate the contribution made by Myles and Milo Dunphy to conservation, the Fund provides a million dollars per annum for the purchase of private and leasehold lands within NPWS identified wilderness areas.

In 1997, the Carr Government enshrined Milo and Myles in legislation by a minor amendment to the Wilderness Act renaming the section 23 Wilderness Fund, the Dunphy Fund. Unfortunately, the NPWS does not like the statutory fund and does not use it! The money the NPWS receives for the Dunphy Fund is put into another acquisition budget that is a line item in the Service budget.

Funding was to lapse in July 2001, but representations by Total Environment Centre just prior to last month's election produced a commitment that the Carr Government, if re-elected, would make funding of the Dunphy Fund part of normal bud-

getary processes and additional to the existing NPWS budget. Whether this money goes into the statutory fund or into some other sort of fund is something the Foundation is actively discussing with the NPWS through its representative on the Dunphy Wilderness Fund Reference Committee.

The NPWS 1997/98 Annual Report lists a total expenditure of \$1.15 million on the acquisition of 8,300 ha using the Fund. Since July 1998 until March of this year a further \$1.8 million has been spent acquiring an additional 17,700 ha. So far a total of 18 properties have been acquired in the Guy Fawkes, Macleay Gorges, Willi Willi (Werrikimbe), Wollemi, Kanagera-Boyd, Nattai, Tuross, Brogo and Budawang wilderness areas.

In addition to government funding, public donations to the Fund now total \$73,100. The entire amount was contributed by the Budawang Committee for the acquisition of Crown leasehold lands at Corang Peak in the Budawang wilderness.

The NPWS has flagged 33 properties, covering over 40,000 ha, that would be desirable to acquire with the permission of the owners. It is also Government policy to purchase certain annual grazing concessions over public land in wilderness areas where the affected grazier could experience financial hardship through wilderness reservation.

During the next few years, the purchase of private land and compensation of graziers will exceed the Government funding and so a program to promote public contributions has been initiated. A Reference Group comprising representatives of the National Parks Association, Colong Foundation and the National Parks and Wildlife Foundation, as well as the NPWS, has been convened to steer the fund raising and consequent public promotion of the Dunphy Fund.

In the United States land philanthropists have played a crucial role in protecting wilderness areas. Land politics in the US has resulted in a much greater contribution of private effort in park land purchases than in Australia.

Nationally the Australian Bush Heritage Fund and in NSW the Dunphy Wilderness Fund, are now moving to redress the imbalance.

The initial U.S. national park purchase of 5,000 acres by John D. Rockefeller in 1916 secured the core of the Acadia National Park, the first park east of the Mississippi River, and the first park created solely by land donors. In the 1920s Rockefeller helped fund land-acquisition of the Great Smoky Mountains, Shenandoah and Blue Ridge National Parks and acquisition of additions to Yellowstone National Park were also made (the Grand Teton National Park). Another prominent philanthropist was Percival P. Baxter of Maine. He purchased 202,000 acres to create the Baxter State Park surrounding Mt Katahdin. The donor attached one condition to his gift, the requirement that the park remain for all time inviolate from mechanical intrusions by man. At a little nook in the park called Thoreau Spring there is now a bronze plaque which recites Percy Baxter's creed:

"Man is born to die. His works are short-lived. Buildings crumble. Monuments decay, wealth vanishes, but Katahdin in all its glory forever shall remain the mountain of the people of Maine" (quoted in Udall, S. 1964).

Wilderness conservation requires strong support of activist organisations, like the Colong Foundation and The Wilderness Society, but some wilderness supporters consider these groups are too political (although the Colong Foundation is not Party political). For these wilderness supporters it will be possible to bequest a green legacy for future generations and for nature through the Dunphy Wilderness Fund. But as I write these words I can imagine Milo remonstrating with me - he would argue that dollars spent buying land are better spent running wilderness campaigns to save thousands more hectares per dollar. He's right, but unfortunately many who would donate to the Dunphy Fund for a wilderness memorial won't support environmental lobbyists. ■

## Nature's Last Refuge

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skills and detailed knowledge of the new areas reside with them.

### Riverkeepers Scheme

Extension of the Georges River Riverkeepers Scheme to establish community-based environmental guardians on all major river systems.

### Feral animals and weed eradication

Cooperation on a range of federal programs which benefit local communities.

### Expansion of Bushcare, Land care, Beach Watch and Coastal Protection Programs

The current Shadow Environment Minister is Ms Peta Scaton, Member for the Southern Highlands, who replaces Ms Ficarra who unfortunately lost her seat on March 25th. ■

# GREENHOUSE EFFECT UPON US as land clearing continues

**A**T meetings of scientists at Rio de Janeiro and Kyoto agreement was reached that there is undeniable evidence that the earth is warming up at a rate greatly exceeding that which could be attributed to natural causes. They have predicted

that this will cause extreme floods, droughts and storms and there is ample evidence that this is already occurring. Last year was the hottest on record and five of the warmest years on record since 1860 have occurred during this decade. Perhaps the most convincing evidence is pro-

vided by the giant reinsurance business, Munich Re, which has said that the number of "great natural catastrophes" had been three times larger in the 1990s than it was in the 1960s and that hurricanes, floods and other natural disasters cost 50% more in 1998 than they did in 1997.

For further confirmation of the greenhouse effect we need look no further than Sydney, where there have been three storms of unprecedented intensity during the last decade, the last one causing damage estimated at \$1 billion.

At the Kyoto Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change the Federal Government undertook to limit the increase in greenhouse gas emissions to 8% by 2010. The increase allowed was contingent on reduction of land clearance. However the Commonwealth State of the Environment Report states that an inventory which the Panel required the Government to prepare suggests that land clearing may be contributing up to 27 per cent of total greenhouse gas emissions, but the limited information available indicates that emissions could be anywhere between 7% and 45% of total emissions. Emissions will be further increased by the new tax proposals which will reduce petrol and diesel fuel taxes by \$3.5 billion.

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW quotes Bureau of Resource Sciences figures that show that while NSW cleared 52,000 ha. of agricultural land between 1991 and 1995, just 1,100 ha. of native vegetation grew back. Tree planting on farms contributed only 140 ha. By the middle of the decade of Landcare we had cleared 50 times more than grew back naturally and almost 400 times the area replanted. The NCC states that the BRS study underestimated the real clearing rate because it did not consider changes to grasslands, woodland where the crown cover is less than 20 per cent, open woodlands, heaths or most shrublands. The total clearing figure, the NCC estimates, is probably more than double this.

The worst clearing occurred north west of Condobolin and on the far north coast, where forestry, urban development and plantation establishment threaten one of the richest natural regions in the State. ■

## WANTED WILDERNESS STALWART

The Colong Foundation requires an Assistant Director to undertake lobbying, research and a range of executive secretarial duties. Knowledge of and commitment to national park and wilderness issues, campaigning experience, writing and public speaking experience essential.

### JOB DESCRIPTION:

The Campaigner to work with an experienced Committee on a range of small to medium sized campaign tasks, concentrating on lobbying and media work, maintaining relations with local conservation groups, as well as assisting volunteers.

#### Specific duties include:

- ✓ maintenance of the membership support base and other secretarial duties, such as agenda and minutes preparation;
- ✓ preparing submissions and campaign resource materials on issues, government reports and legislation;
- ✓ communications with other environment groups on wilderness issues, supporting Colong Foundation policy and writing supporting letters for smaller groups;
- ✓ developing policy and undertaking research;
- ✓ preparing media releases and representing the Colong Foundation in the media;
- ✓ liaise with peak environment groups, other national park interest groups, parliamentarians and public servants, where required.

The position is responsible to the Executive Director and the other Directors of the Colong Foundation. A part time applicant with agreed flexible hours of work would be considered.

**WAGE:** 3 dwp, \$15 per hour.

#### Apply to:

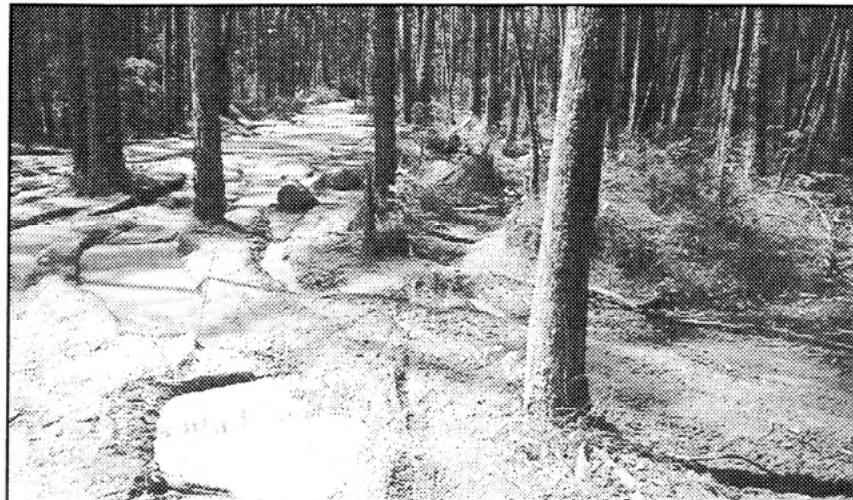
Keith Muir, Colong Foundation for Wilderness,  
Level 2, 362 Kent Street, Sydney, 2000  
Phone (02) 9299-7341; Fax (02) 9299-5713.  
Applications close June 30, 1999.

## PLOUGHING THE LANDSCAPE

The Outdoor Recreation Party demands "access" to public lands, which means the right to drive or ride anywhere within them. Such access has been permitted in Tasmanian and Victorian national parks. In a letter to the Hobart Mercury of Jan 29th. Rowena Smith writes:

On Anzac Day 12 years ago, as a young teacher stationed at Rosebery, I walked to the Montezuma falls. This year we (her family) returned. Obviously the track has been discovered by many more people. That's great. But once where we walked, more have travelled by the ubiquitous 4WD. The destruction from their tyre treads was evident. In a wet climate the resultant erosion was rapidly degrading this historic rail route....In ten years what will the Montezuma track be like? in 20 years?

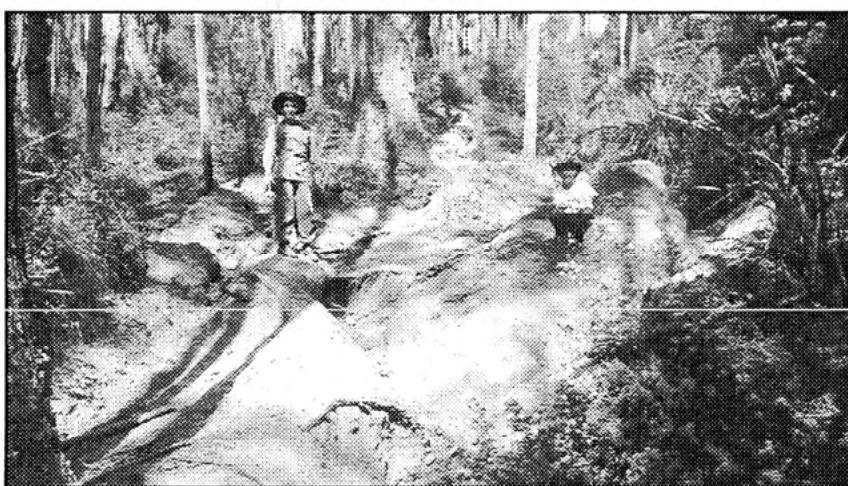
Last year we walked into Lake Fergus



on the Central Plateau and were appalled at the serious erosion 4wds had caused across the waterlogged grass plains. I have heard the argument that "traditional" land users spout, but c'mon, what is traditional about a 1998 4WD vehicle? Or indeed a "quad" motor bike that wreaks havoc among the dunes, the middens the beaches of the West Coast?

At Temma there is a sign erected by Parks and Wildlife. It says "Abuse it and you lose it." It's just not enough - simply not enough. Why is it that nowadays it seems to be politically incorrect to challenge "traditional" use and just say "no" to such destructive, inappropriate and unacceptable recreational pastime in such fragile areas".

In the VNPA December issue of Park Watch John Kowarsky writes: "Letting motorised vehicles loose anywhere on public lands is tantamount to allowing people to plough the landscape." He has provided us with these photographs of holes, channels and multiple tracks on the Silvertop Fireline track in the Bunyip State Park. ■



## Asteroid Impacts Unnecessary

In last July's Bulletin we were pleased to report that the mile wide asteroid 1997XF11, which had been predicted to hit the earth on Oct. 26th 2028 would, in the light of further calculation, miss the earth by 30-40,000 miles. Even later estimates are that it will miss by 996,000 km.

Andrew Glikson, in an article in the Australian Geologist, reports that another much smaller asteroid, called 1989 FC, measuring only 500 metres, missed the earth by 650,000 km. If it had hit the earth, at a velocity of some 30 km. per second, 1989FC "would create a crater about 10 km. large, release energy almost equal to the world's nuclear arsenal, trigger an earthquake magnitude 9 to 10, spread a hot plume burning tens of thousands of square kilometres around the crater, eject billions of tons of rocks and dust, cloud the stratosphere, with consequent lowering

of temperatures and partial blocking of photosynthesis for several years, induce acid rain due to atmospheric reaction of nitrogen and oxygen, and deplete the ozone layer. Ironically, some of these consequences resemble the effect civilisation itself has on the environment. At the rate technological societies are devastating the natural environment, who needs cometary impacts?"



## People for Profit

Mr. Kennett wants a bigger population not because he wants to fill the empty centre. He wants consumers. He and the business lobby, with which he is so cosy, want to ensure economic growth and they think the only way to achieve that is to throw more bodies at the tills.

Dierdre Macken, S.M.H, 21/4/99

**The Colong Foundation for Wilderness Limited**  
**Profit and Loss Statement for the year ended 31 December 1998**

	<b>1998</b>	<b>1997</b>
	\$	\$
<b>Income</b>		
Donations		
- general	24,715	34,667
Interest on investments	10,735	13,188
Sales of "Wild Places"	8,370	1,102
Annual membership fees	3,655	2,880
Sales of Blue Mountains books and posters	1,981	1,268
Painting Exhibition	1,490	-
Advertising Revenue from "Wilderness Advocate"	1,200	-
Subscriptions to bulletin	160	160
Sales of other publications, net	-	266
Wollemi	-	175
Red Index	-	60
Fighting Fund Donation	-	2
Photo Exhibition Parliament House	-	8
	52,306	53,776
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Research officer and other wages	28,194	25,988
Rent	5,849	5,485
Publication of "Wilderness Advocate"	4,693	-
Secretarial expenses	3,824	4,075
General Wilderness	3,165	282
Audit Fee	3,000	-
Bulletin costs	2,715	2,303
Depreciation	1,884	606
Publication of "Wild Places"	700	17,199
Bank charges	369	259
Subscriptions to other conservation groups	276	159
Wollemi	-	1,544
	54,669	57,900
<b>Net Surplus</b>	<b>(2,363)</b>	<b>(4,124)</b>

# NSW Biodiversity Strategy

## Report published by the NPWS

The foreword to this report, signed by Pam Allan and Bob Carr, states that "Biodiversity is vital in supporting all life on earth. It provides all of our food and many industrial products and medicines. Biodiversity also ensures clean air and water and fertile soils." In other words, biodiversity is not just a matter of saving specimens in zoos or enclosures, but of conserving nature. It is described as a major challenge. "Population growth, settlement patterns and our consumption of resources are exerting major stresses on our natural environments."

The report quotes official estimates that 72% of NSW is affected by land degradation, dryland salinity costs \$240 million per year in lost agricultural production, soil structure decline is costing Australian farmers as around \$200 million annually and the loss due to weeds is estimated at \$3.3 billion. Land clearing is considered the biggest single threat to biodiversity. Although 61% of woody native vegetation has been cleared or thinned, land clearing continues at the rate of over 150,000 ha. a year.

Nine "broad categories" of threats are listed. These include several of the Colong Foundation's main campaign targets such as loss and fragmentation

of habitat, increasing population and resource use, inappropriate fire regimes and climate change. The recommendations for managing threatening processes, however, are largely in the form of a plan for a plan. The modification of natural ecosystems is to be "minimised," weeds and pest animals are to be "effectively managed," fire regimes are to be "improved". Water resources are to be "effectively managed." Although the main threats are clearly understood by conservationists, existing knowledge is to be "reviewed and applied." If these threats are to be met, objective action must be formulated.

The preservation of habitat is described as "ex-situ" conservation and the report states that biodiversity is best preserved in-situ. In other words, the preservation of biodiversity depends on the preservation of habitat. By far the most effective protection is wilderness.

A recommended objective is the establishment of community partnerships. Non-government organisations are described as "key strategy stakeholders." They are of course, far more than "stakeholders." Non-government organisations are the engines of biodiversity conservation. As the House of Representatives Committee on the Environment reported in 1993: "Most – if not all – Australia's protected areas

exist as a result of lobbying by community groups". The NPWS itself came into being as a result of the National Parks Association lobbying, and the Wilderness Act and the wilderness management guidelines were the outcome of Bob Carr's acceptance of a Colong Foundation proposal. The significance of N.G.O.s should be recognised by appropriate government funding assistance, none of which comes the way of the Foun-

## Scientific Rainforest Logging

The Japanese do scientific whaling, and it appears, State Forests is conducting a bit of scientific rainforest logging in NSW.

State Forests (alias the NSW Forestry Commission) are examining the effects of rainforest regeneration in 22 log dumps "five to ten years after selective logging of subtropical rainforest ceased" (State Forests, 1999, pg 5).

Scientific rainforest logging at North Washpool (isn't that NPWS identified wilderness?) continues, and so does State Forests' belief that it all grows back. The organisation's Forest Research and Development Division Annual Report explains —

"Rehabilitation measures, including vine brushing, vine tower and tick bush removal (read weed removal), and enrichment planting of rainforest canopy species, were used to release rainforest seedlings from invasive vine and shrub competition. ... However, a two-year drought killed some seedlings, especially supplementary planted stock."

It's time for the Carr Government to ban all rainforest logging in NSW. We hope that the logging controls in the Integrated Forestry Operation Approvals that accompany the timber industry's recently granted 20 year resource security agreements will stop further experimental logging in the search for effective rehabilitation techniques. ■

## Feral Control in the Blue Mountains National Parks

COUNTERING suggestions that the park was devoid of wildlife and overrun with feral animals, NPWS District Manager, Geoff Luscombe, said that the reserve, which harboured 409 species of native vertebrates, included at least 32 endangered animals. "Large conservation reserves where natural processes can be maintained are a first line of defence. We are lucky in the Blue Mountains region to have the largest park system in the state. In the Blue Mountains alone the NPWS is running 62 separate programs in co-operation with park neighbours and other agencies to control feral animals and weeds in the park and on the boundary. Most of the park is free from pigs, including the Grose valley but they have penetrated some sections from adjoining lands. We know where they live and we're steadily getting them down. In the past year 886 goats and 308 pigs have been removed from infected sites. Research has shown that foxes and feral cats occur in greater densities near urban settlements, than rural areas, with natural bushland having the least of all. They seem to love garbage." ■

from the *Blue Mountains Gazette* March 24th 1999

# Expansion of the National Park Estate

STEPHEN Lord, Senior Vice President of the National Parks Association, reported in the April edition of the NPA Journal that the Carr Government has reserved parks "at a greater rate than any government since the inception of the NPWS". He also noted that a comprehensive and adequate reserve system for NSW will require continued expansion of the park system and a major funding commitment to achieve this end.

The Carr Government's 1999 conservation policy was developed partly in response to environment group questions. The policy commits the Government to double NPWS acquisition funding this year and to establish a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative reserve system over a 10-year period. The million dollar annual funding of the Dunphy Wilderness Fund will also play an important part in filling out the reserve system of the state. And the implementation process will involve a reserve establishment Working Group for the State's west, with environment groups being represented, as well as the better known forest policy.

## Identifying areas for protection

Resolving the areas to be protected has been a matter of long dispute between scientists and other environmentalists. Conservation organisations have concentrated on the "holy grail" of forests and coastal communities. Over the last thirty years, 85% of areas protected in these communities have been on vacant Crown land. This supply of land is diminishing and according to Smith (1998) "cannot be expected to provide more than a small contribution to filling the remaining gaps" (A comment apparently exclusive of the Government's forest policy that operates mainly on State Forests).

Smith explains that "the current conservation reserve system in NSW

does not include all ecosystems. ... Fertile coastal plains, commercial forest ecosystems, the tablelands and the western slopes and plains remain poorly represented in the reserve system". "To complete the reserve change in emphasis in recent years from protecting scenery toward protection of biodiversity, particularly to prevent species extinction will push new park reservations into lands with a longer history of use, disturbance and modification" (emphasis added).

Whether conservation of private and state forest lands will just perpetuate the current practice of conserving the steep and infertile lands remains to be seen. The outcome will certainly be contingent on funding for private land acquisition and a continuing strong commitment to the forest conservation and reform processes.

In 1994, it was estimated that up to two billion dollars would be required to ensure areas in each of NSW's 17 bioregions reached the minimum standard of protection in conservation reserves. Many of the poorly protected bioregions are in the Crown leasehold lands of the Western Division of NSW.

Obviously the funds for protecting the Western Division will not be forthcoming in the short term and so the importance of 'off-reserve' conservation is of growing importance.

Whatever you think of John Wamsley's Earth Sanctuaries approach, it can achieve effective wildlife conservation on private lands. It is a useful adjunct to national parks but can never replace or take them over. The method of fencing off land and removing feral animals within the fence is only as good as the maintenance and on-going management. As the areas fenced become larger, cover more rugged terrain and more in number the chances of the fencing system failing increases. To maintain 40,000 km of fences around national

parks is impossible. Fenced Sanctuaries, such as the one at Western Plains Zoo, have problems with feral animal entry and it is unlikely that other sanctuaries are immune to this problem. At best the approach gives endangered wildlife breathing space whilst an integrated system of endangered species recovery is developed that removes all key threatening agencies from its natural habitat, including but not limited to, the ferals.

Another land conservation approach pioneered by the US-based Nature Conservancy is to locate and purchase tracts of wild land mainly using bequests. Unlike Earth Sanctuaries or the Australian Bush Heritage Fund, this organisation is not a land-managing agency, and as soon as legal safeguards are assured, it turns its holdings over to a government agency or local managing organisation. Funds collected from the public in this manner can supplement acquisitions by the Natural Heritage Trust (the rapidly-diminishing, Telstra money) and NPWS acquisitions.

Reserving key parts of western NSW will be difficult because it is nearly all private land and much of it is in a degraded state. To identify key sites for protection is a task in itself in that open, flat, largely overgrazed land as much of the native flora is destroyed and there is no protection against feral animals. To that end the Carr Government's commitment to the Western Region Conservation Project to identify these areas is essential. Only time will tell whether enough land in an undegraded state is available for the Nature Conservancy approach to work or whether a more cash hungry, active recovery and management approach is required.

The number of wilderness areas in the Western Division is also unknown, unlike the eastern part of the state where the core areas have been well known for some time. Whatever the case national park reservation and wilderness protection in the west is likely to be a contentious. ■

Reference: Smith, S. (1998) National Parks in NSW - Research Briefing Paper No 22/98 Parliament NSW, Sydney.

# Official recognition for the Grose...at last

**H**IN January 1996, the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs made a comprehensive nomination of the Grose for assessment under the Wilderness Act, 1987. The NPWS assessment of the nomination, released in March, recommends a 36,000 hectares wilderness but almost a third of the NPWS identified wilderness (13,700 hectares) was not recommended for protection.

The NPWS recommendation excludes a large chunk of identified wilderness west and south of Mount Hay. Even part of the Blue Gum Forest is left out, south of where the Perrys Lookdown track traverses the forest and joins with the Lockleys Pylon track.

The recent tourist resort proposal by Earth Sanctuaries at the head of the Grose Valley reminds us just how vulnerable the area is to inappropriate development. The plateau edges near Blackheath, above its famous cliff lines, are potentially most threatened by this form of commercial development. Expansion of the wilderness to include as much of these areas as possible will provide an increased level of statutory protection to these national park areas.

The following map shows the enlarged area environment groups, including the Total Environment Centre and the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, that will protect most of the NPWS identified wilderness.

The conservation group boundary seeks to limit vehicle access along the Mount Hay Road. It will also limit the erosion and damage caused by the current use of this 11.5 kilometre long dirt road. To regulate vehicle access, a car park is proposed to be located at Fortress Ridge, a kilometre or so south of the Lockleys Pylon walking track. This will enable the wilderness boundary to include the cliff tops around Govetts Creek that have been subjected to vehicular abuse in the past. Such roads are always a temptation to 4WD bush bashing, vehicle thieves, rubbish dumpers and arsonists.

Other visitor use patterns have been accommodated in the groups'

wilderness boundary, by making the wilderness boundary match up with the NPWS identified wilderness area, but excluding private lands. The groups' boundary has adopted an easement approach to provide access to key picnic areas, rather than avoiding these facilities and smoothing out the wilderness boundaries. The latter exclusion method only serves to reduce the wilderness area and leaves open large tracts of the NPWS identified wilderness to vehicle access and potential development.

The Victoria Falls Road has been excluded, but the area north of the Mount Victoria village contains old mining relics, historic walking tracks, evidence of past clearing and 4WD roads that have been rated as allowable in wilderness and are capable of restoration. Most of the Govetts Creek catchment and cliff top areas should be declared wilderness, except for the heavily used Acacia Flat camping ground and a handful of heavily maintained walking tracks that descend from the escarpment.

The area west of Falconbridge should not have been excluded from the NPWS identified wilderness. Why the area was rejected is not adequately explained. The area east of the Paterson Range Fire Trail has some buildings and clearing done more

than a century ago. The extent of development should not preclude wilderness recommendation but the area is not essential to the integrity of the Grose wilderness and was excluded from the environment groups' proposal.

The NPWS report also rejects the claim that the Grose is a wild river. It was considered too polluted. This finding is at odds with several previous studies. Mr Peter Helman recognised the Grose River as a wild and scenic river in 1981 and this finding was confirmed by a Wild and Scenic River Committee in 1984 and again by Cameron MacNamara for the Department of Water Resources in 1987.

The Colong Foundation is seeking connection of the Blackheath township and Medlow Bath village to the 40 kilometre long sewage tunnel by a pipeline. This action is consistent with the river's Protected Waters classification and its wild nature. Future land use decisions effecting this catchment will be positively effected by setting higher standards of pollution control and reminding managers of the significance of wild streams.

Wilderness declaration protects the most biologically complete areas from the damage caused by all forms of development, vehicular and equestrian use. It is the only land category that does so. Gazetting the Grose wilderness would help to ensure the area remains secure from developers and the damaging effects of increased tourism following World Heritage listings for the Blue Mountains. ■

## ENCLOSURE NOT THE ANSWER

WMC Resources Ltd, the South Australian Department of the Environment, Heritage and Natural Affairs and the University of Adelaide have combined to create a 13 sq. km. wild life preservation enclosure site on the northern edge of the Olympic Dam mine lease. Writing in the Wambaliman March issue, Pam Soper describes this as "a step in the right direction", but comments:

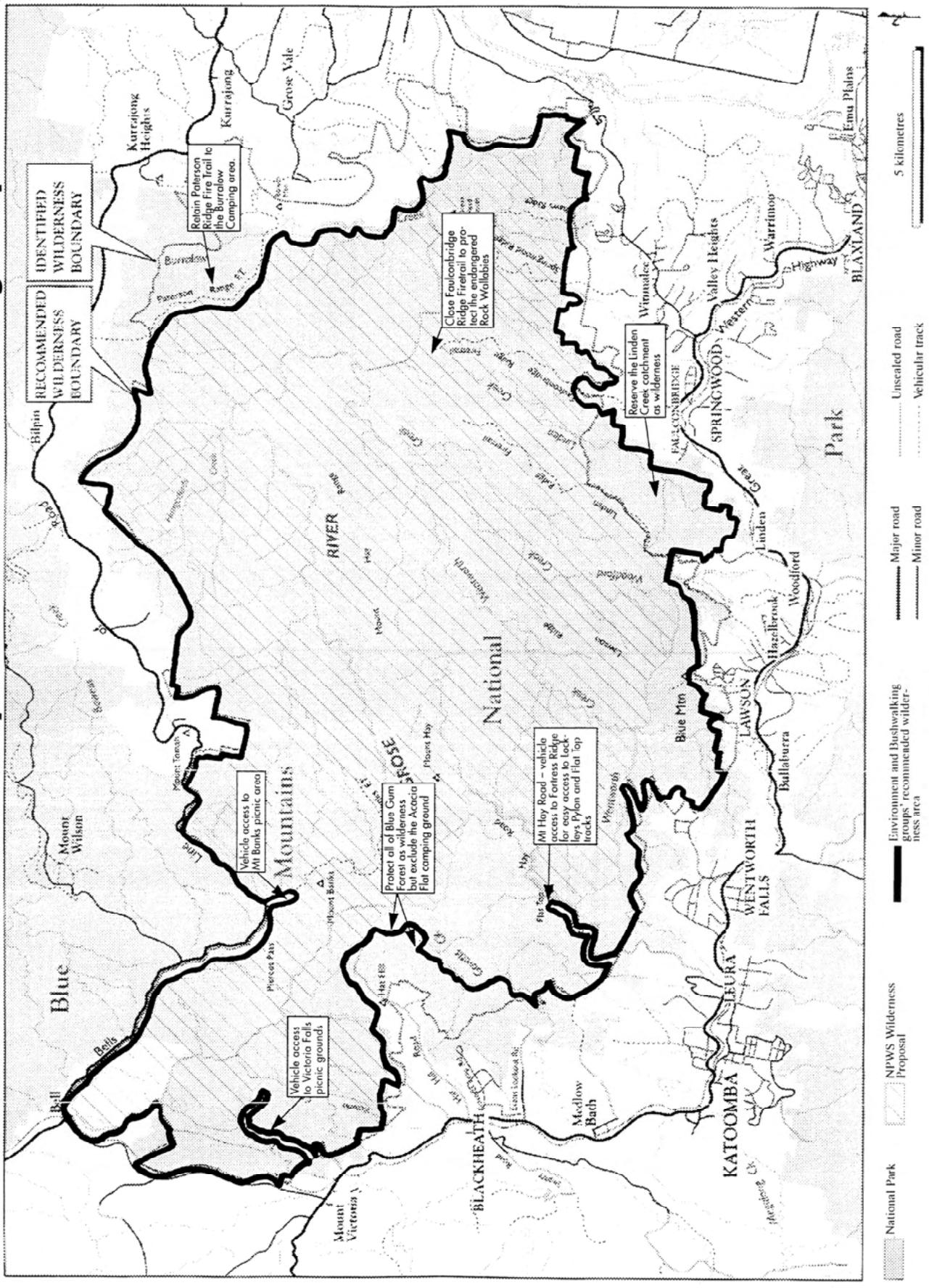
"The project provides an opportunity to gain useful field data on the most effective methods to achieve destruction of feral species, and increase knowledge of captive breeding and release and of native species back into the wild."

However, the program is about construction of an enclosure, and all the various scenarios that may arise with breeding and survival of native animals, in what may become an alien landscape, where additional food stocks have to be brought in, and eventually animals culled.

A far better plan would be to develop an extensive, and ongoing program to eradicate feral species, to ensure that all remaining, relatively intact, representative systems throughout Australia are given a protective status, and develop a well funded and planned approach to restoration and vegetation over the next 5 to 10 decades. Such plans of course would need to be enshrined in legislation that could not be tampered with by successive governments.

With a well funded, well planned, three pronged approach, there exists an opportunity to ensure survival of species in their natural habitats, and ultimately the survival of homo sapiens."

## The Grose Wilderness recommended by Environment and Bushwalking Groups



## SUPPORT THE COLONG FOUNDATION!

To: The Treasurer, Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd.  
Level 2, 362 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000

The enclosed remittance or advice covers the items(s) indicated by a tick. (One cheque is sufficient to cover subscription and donation.)

- Membership application (see below) (NB Membership application covers Bulletin subscription)
- Membership renewal (\$20)       Life Membership (\$500)
- Colong Bulletin Subscription to 31/12/99 (\$10) (Non-members only)
- Tax deductible donation of \$..... to the Colong Wilderness Fund (*cheques to be made payable to the Fund*)  
NAME (Mr, Ms, Mrs, Miss) .....
- ADDRESS .....
- ..... P/CODE ..... DATE .....
- SIGNED .....
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### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION Why not join or invite a friend to join?

- Yes, I wish to become a member of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. I subscribe to the Foundation's aim of preserving Australia's wilderness remnants. I accept the liability provided in the Colong Foundation's Articles of Association to guarantee \$20 should it be needed in the event of the winding up of the Foundation. Signed .....



### PROGRESS OF THE FOUNDATION

The Colong Foundation is the longest-serving community advocate for wilderness in Australia. It has initiated or been part of Campaigns that have secured over a million hectares of national parkland, most of which is wilderness. But a further million hectares of wilderness in eastern NSW is still not reserved under the Wilderness Act, although much of the area is now in national parks.

Now more than ever the Colong Foundation needs your support. Well financed anti-conservation lobbies, representing resource development, 4WD enthusiasts, equestrian and commercial tourism interests, have greatly increased development pressures on wild places.

The Foundation originated as the Colong Committee which was appointed in 1968 by a meeting of conservation societies to prevent quarrying of Colong Caves. Shortly afterwards the committee extended its objective to cover the saving of the Boyd Plateau from becoming the site of a 15,000 acre pine plantation. Both objectives had been

achieved by 1975 when three new objectives were adopted. The first of these was the creation of a Border Ranges National Park, an objective which escalated to become the rainforest campaign. The other objectives were the creation of a Greater Blue Mountains National Park and a Kakadu National Park. The rainforest parts and Kakadu are now World Heritage Areas. The Greater Blue Mountains Park is in being in fact, though not in name. Recent campaigns for the Gardens of Stone and Nattai National Park have been successful. The Foundation's proposal for a Wilderness Act was accepted in 1987. It has been supplemented by the Red Index of Wilderness now being updated and extended to other states. It has successfully campaigned for the nomination of the Blue Mountains for World Heritage listing. It is at present working for the protection of threatened wilderness in NSW, for the preservation of national parks from commercial development and damaging use, and for the preservation of old growth forests.

### BULLETIN SUBSCRIPTION

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Non-members of the Foundation may subscribe to the Bulletin for a fee of \$10 (covers all issues of the Bulletin for a calendar year).

### A BEQUEST

*Please remember us in your Will.*

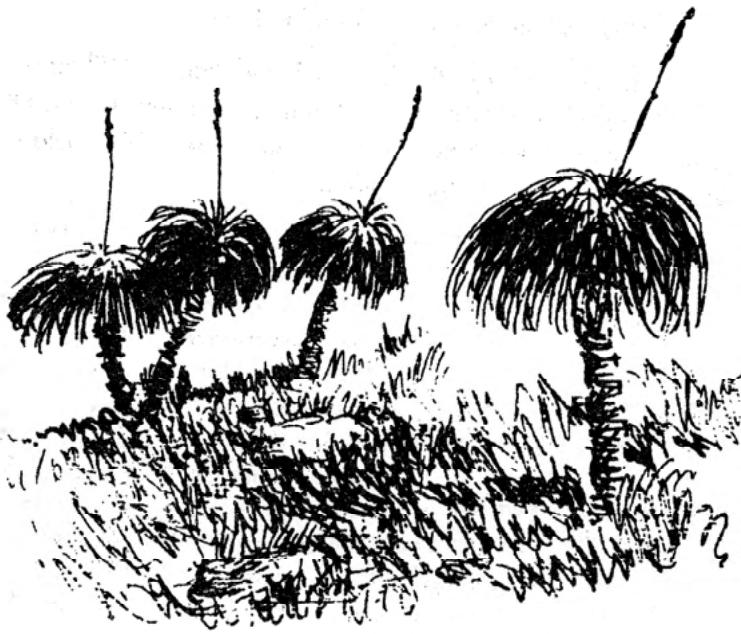
The Law Society of NSW recommends the following wording...

"I bequeath the sum of \$... to the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. for its general purposes and declare that the receipt of the treasurer for the time being of the Colong Foundation of Wilderness Ltd. shall be complete discharge to my executors in respect of any sum paid to the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd."

# THE COLONG FOUNDATION

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SENDER: THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS  
Level 2, 362 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000



## PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM THE COLONG FOUNDATION

	Price Posted \$
<b>WILD PLACES</b>	34.95
<i>The meticulously researched, beautifully written book on wilderness by Peter Prineas with photographs by Henry Gold (285pp)</i>	
<b>BLUE MOUNTAINS FOR WORLD HERITAGE</b>	16.00
<i>Geoff Mosley provides a comprehensive explanation of the wealth of heritage values in the Blue Mountains (135pp)</i>	
<b>THE COLONG STORY</b>	8.00
<i>Describes the first major conservation battle in NSW (42pp)</i>	
<b>HOW THE RAINFOREST WAS SAVED</b>	8.00
<i>Story of the campaign initiated by the Byron Flora and Fauna Conservation Society and the Colong Committee (59pp)</i>	
<b>PARK OR PINES</b>	8.00
<i>The story of how the Boyd Plateau was saved (42pp)</i>	

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