



THE COLONG BULLETIN

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THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD

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PROTECTING WILDERNESS AND NATIONAL PARKS

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In this issue...

Decibel Park	1
The Eternal Frontier	2
Meeting Dates	3
Myall Lakes Draft Plan	3
Blue Mountains Wilderness Additions	3
Ecological Pioneers	4
Park Input into Regional Economy	5
Parkland Aquisition Programs	5
Walking on the Far Side	6
Horse Riding and National Parks	8
Action for the Environment	9
Multiplication of Land Clearing	10
NCC Annual Conference Resolutions	11

Decibel Park

IN response to public opposition in which we strongly participated, Badgerys Creek Airport has not eventuated. Our opposition was based on the inevitability of flight paths low over the Blue Mountains National Parks. We opposed helicopter flights over the mountains and the Blue Mountains City Council raised the voluntary Fly Neighbourly height limit above ground level to 2,000 feet but this still enables helicopters to fly below the 3,000 foot cliff lines. We more recently opposed the Australian Fighter Flight Centre's tourist flights over the mountains at near the speed of sound. The planes perform rolls,

dives, loops and sharp banking. They fly low, to within 500 feet of the ground, and follow the contours of the landscape. So much for Fly Neighbourly!

There is even more excitement to come. By the end of the year the AFFC will have planes capable of breaking the sound barrier. In Europe breaking of the sound barrier has been prohibited, but the people of the mountains will have to bear the sonic booms.

We have asked Senator Hill, the Federal Minister for the Environment, to call for an environmental impact statement, and the Civil Aviation Authority was developing a noise standard for environmentally sensitive areas, but both helicopter and attack aircraft flights continue.

So if you have \$1595-\$2995 to spare, don't miss the thrill of zooming over the mountains at near or above the speed of sound. Don't worry about the importunious tourists on the ground beneath seeking quiet enjoyment of the natural environment. And the devotion of the mountains to aerial acrobatics could be celebrated by re-naming the Blue Mountains National Park, Decibel Park. ■

Given our technologies and consumption rates, Australia is overpopulated, a conclusion reached by the CSIRO and the Australian Academy of Sciences. Land and water degradation and the biodiversity loss are huge problems which are not being addressed.

Alan Jones, Australian Museum. SMH, 9.9.01

There's got to be a smarter way of this country securing an economic future than simply saying we are going to ramp up population. To the people who live in our city it's clear that we are already bursting at the seams.

Bob Carr, SMH 31.8.01

THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS

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The Eternal Frontier

by Tim Flannery

Published by Text Publishing

Reviewed by Alex Colley

TIM FLANNERY'S book is described as "an ecological history of North America and its peoples." It is perhaps the first history which recognises that the history of peoples and their future is not simply a matter of politics, wars and economics but is dependent on their treatment of the environment. America is rich in natural resources, and this is the basis of its rise to become the world's superpower, but its resources "have been mined to provide a capital that is the envy of the rest of the world".

The history starts with the asteroid that struck the Yucatan Peninsula 65 million years ago, eliminating the dinosaurs. From then until recent times there were violent swings in climate. Many animals became extinct and there were new arrivals, including African animals. Fifteen million years ago these included the elephant, buffalo, rhino and lion, and mammoths and mastodons arrived 17 million years ago, but it was the arrival of the Clovis people, who crossed the plains of Beringia from northern Asia to northern America during the ice age some 13,000 years ago, that had the greatest impact since the Yucatan asteroid. They had already developed effective means of killing live animals - the spear thrower and drive hunting. When they entered the New World they started to manufacture the Clovis stone point for their spearheads. Within 300 years nearly all the megafauna, including the African elephant and the mammoth and other creatures such as the sabretooth, a tapir, a giant sloth and the stag-moose, were extinct. Clovis points have been found in mammoth bones. Some 700 years after that an improved stone point was made, then drive hunting was adopted and the long horned bison too became extinct. There is evidence that large herds were slaughtered and much of the meat wasted, but, Flannery writes, "This waste, how-

ever, seems minimal when compared with that of nineteenth century Europeans, who slaughtered bison merely for their tongues or skins, just one skin making it to market for every five animals slaughtered." The American curlew, once one of the most abundant birds, suffered a similar fate; the last confirmed sighting was in 1974. Buffaloes, which in terms of kilograms of matter belonging to one species, formed the greatest aggregation of living things ever recorded, were reduced to just 600 animals and were saved from extinction by protection in reserves and some private lands. By the middle of last century the grizzly and the wolf were all but extinct in the U.S. Fish too suffered. Four out of every ten species are either extinct or vulnerable to extinction, summing up the impact of European exploitation.

In his book *Guns, Germs and Steel* Jared Diamond blames germs for the elimination of some two thirds of the native population after the European invasion, a factor which applies to the elimination of much of the Australian Aboriginal population, but it was guns which eliminated much of the fauna. "Much of the native fauna and flora of the continent", Flannery writes, "came to be seen either as a resource, or as a pest to be gotten rid of." One of the first species to go was the carrier pigeon, some flocks of which were estimated to contain up to two billion birds. The breech loading gun enabled a hunter to kill up to 50 birds in the time a hunter with a muzzle loader could prepare his charge. Pigeon shooting competitions were organized, one competitor having to produce 30,000 carcasses to win. The birds were reduced to the edge of extinction within the U.S. as were the grizzly and wolf. The last wild bird was killed in 1900. Many other breeds of bird were decimated. Flannery summarises America's environmental exploitation as follows: "In the 1950s North Americans had eliminated about four-fifths of the continent's wildlife, cut more than half its timber, all but destroyed its native cultures, dammed most of its rivers, destroyed its most

productive freshwater fisheries and depleted a good proportion of its soils ... North America's pre-eminence has come about because the resources of a rich, yet middle-sized continent, have been mined to provide a capital base that is the envy of the rest of the world."

Australia too has suffered environmental destruction by Euro-Asian invaders as described in Flannery's book *The Future Eaters*. "Around 100,000 years ago Homo sapiens developed the means of graduating from reliance on scavenging and plant life to becoming a predator. This he describes as the first leap forward. A second leap forward occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries, fuelled by exploitation of the rich soils of America and European colonies. Australia, like America, has been a frontier invaded by Euro-Asians exploiting its natural resources. *The Eternal Frontier* strengthens Flannery's view "that the weight of evidence is now clearly in favour of a very rapid human-caused extinctions". Most mammal extinctions in Australia have occurred in the last 30 or 40 years and these account for just under one third of all mammal extinctions world wide over the last 500 years. Throughout the world megafauna, such the mammoth the moa, the whale and the dugong have suffered extinction or near extinction during the last 100,000 years, but never more rapidly than during the last two centuries." He believes we are in the middle - or perhaps at the end - of a third leap. He does not specify the elements of the third leap, but I believe it is the internal combustion engine, which enables us to reach and exploit anywhere on earth in a matter of hours, and electricity, both of which are prime sources of pollution and global warming.

He does not specify any means of halting the exploitation of the world's natural resources and it is probable that so-called Homo "sapiens" will continue to exploit them till they are used up. Number 1 threatening process, as listed

continued on page 3

in the *NSW State of the Environment Report*, is the loss of habitat. This can be halted by reserving habitat, and the most effective habitat is wilderness. Flannery rejects the concept of wilderness because "the entire continent has been extensively managed for 60,000 years by its Aboriginal occupants". The "management" consisted of lighting fires, which would burn till it rained or they reached previously burned bush. Nevertheless a large number of species survived till the arrival of the Europeans and the much burnt wilderness is the best preserved natural environment left. ■

Meeting Dates
*Meetings will be held
on November 15th and
29th, December 13th
and January 10th.*

Horseriding and 4WDs in Myall Lakes NP

The NPWS Draft Plan of Management for Myall Lakes N.P. states that, because of the sensitive nature of the coastal land based environment there will be no provision made for horse riding. "Horses" it states, "have been found to cause erosion of soils and tracks, increase soil compaction, and introduce and plant species to the area. Horseriding can conflict with other recreational uses"

The Draft Plan is ambivalent however on 4WD vehicle driving. Although it is admitted that 4WD beach driving "can impact on the dune environment through removal of vegetation and soil compaction, and on wildlife through direct mortality, disturbance, noise and habitat impact, and can conflict with other recreational users," it is planned not to ban it, but to "provide for safe 4WD beach driving and pedestrian activity." ■

Blue Mountains Wilderness Additions

FOUR wilderness additions are required to complete the wilderness protection within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage area. These are the Yengo and Murrumbidgee areas, and additions to Wollemi and Kanangra-Boyd, and are described below:

Kanangra-Boyd:

The announcement of the transfer of 40,000 ha of Sydney Water Authority lands to the NPWS, on the 29th June this year by Premier Bob Carr, will also assist in wilderness protection. About 7,300 ha of this proposed addition is within the NPWS identified Kanangra-Boyd wilderness. It is hoped that this area, containing the lower Kowmung River and its junction with the Cox's River, will be declared concurrently with the announced national park addition.

Wollemi:

As one of its 1999 election commitments, the government undertook to add State Forests and Vacant Crown Lands within the NPWS identified wilderness to the declared Wollemi wilderness. Over 2,120 ha of Coricudgy State Forest, 2,380 ha of Newnes State Forest and a further 1,043 ha of vacant Crown land were identified as part of the wilderness by the NPWS.

The state forest areas are not part of any Forest Agreement and being very scenic areas, they should not be logged. The Department of Mineral Resources has no doubt objected to the transfer of these wilderness lands. In the case of the Coricudgy State Forest area, it is almost impossible to imagine how any coal in the area could ever be mined. The proposed addition is a deep incursion into the Wollemi National Park, surrounded by cliffs on three sides. Coal mining in this area would wreck the adjoining national park.

Yengo:

The Lower North East Forest Agreement requires consideration of the Yengo wilderness to be complete by 1st January 2001. The 105,000 ha Yengo wilderness was to be placed on exhibition with the other Northern Zone areas. However, while the NPWS Northern Region has completed the assessments for 24 areas, the Central Region failed to complete just one. Meanwhile the user groups are objecting to the plan of management and the foreshadowed wilderness area. The wilderness will be the last large wilderness in eastern NSW to be assessed.

Murrumbidgee:

The 28,000 ha Murrumbidgee wilderness was omitted from the Southern Wilderness Assessment Report, despite being included in the preceding community consultation for these areas. The area does not contain state forest and the delay to consider forest issues is unnecessary. Given that the area is within the Warragamba Special Area catchment, wilderness protection should take priority over the Bicentennial National (Horseriding) Track and other competing interests in the area.

The reservation of these areas, including in the case of Kanangra-Boyd and Wollemi additions already approved for declaration by Government, should be a priority for the management of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Given the proximity of these areas to Sydney, off road vehicles and horse riding in these areas would greatly increase if access to the parks is promoted by users groups and the wilderness is not protected. A quick examination of the damage caused by off road vehicles to the Newnes Plateau and horse riding damage to the Kur-ring-gai National Park suggests that this alternative park management vision has little to commend itself. ■

Ecological Pioneers

A Social History of Australian Ecological Thought and Action

By Martin Mulligan and Professor Stuart Hill

Published by Cambridge University Press, RRP \$39.95

Reviewed by Alex Colley

THIS a book with a purpose, which is clearly stated in the words "We believe that all of us need sources of inspiration from the past as we head towards our uncertain future." Perhaps the greatest uncertainty is how long the world environment will support "a belief in endless growth." The book should be of world interest because, as the authors write, "Green politics originated in Australia and Australians have been at the forefront of innovative conservation approaches. It is of course the originators who make history and their achievements are described."

The word "ecology" was first used in 1866 and did not achieve common use for a century, but the idea of ecology was achieved in the beliefs of nature lovers. Although the early settlers found the Australian landscapes "weird melancholy or fearsome," their perceptions were changed by artists and writers. Among the earliest artists were von Geurard Martens and Buvelot. Tom Roberts and Frederick McCubbin freed landscape art from deference towards English culture and compared Stretton and Conder. By the 1950s artists such as Drysdale, Nolan and Boyd attracted international attention to Australian art. Adam Lindsay Gordon was the first writer to achieve publicity for the Australian way of life and the beauty of its landscapes. Marcus Clark, although describing the "weird, melancholy" of Australian scenery, drew attention to its unique character. The Bulletin

writers of the 1880s publicised the challenging landscapes. Later on came Dark, Wright, White and Plumwood.

It was not however until the second half of last century that nature conservation became a mainstream political issue. Organisations with limited objectives were formed, such as the Northern Districts Conservation League in Bendigo, believed to be the world's first conservation organisation, and a campaign in 1908 for a nature reserve on the Gordon River. The Wild Life Preservation Society was founded in 1909. As early as 1861 there were anti-logging campaigns. Collins and Leahy successfully campaigned for Lamington National Park, which was created in 1915, but it was Myles Dunphy, who meticulously researched, mapped and advocated most of the major national parks in NSW, who laid the foundation of the NSW natural environment conservation movement. Conservation moved from limited campaigns and generalisations to state wide specific objectives. It is unlikely that many of these objectives would have been achieved without the formation of the National Parks Association in 1957 and the Colong Committee, founded by Myles' son Milo in 1968. Although the Colong Committee is credited with showing that "a direct appeal for public support could win the day on conservation issues, which proved to be a significant turning point for the conservation movement nationally," the book does not recognise the major achievements of the campaigns launched by Colong. It led the campaign for Myles Dunphy's Greater Blue Mountains National Park and for the World Heritage listing of the area and initiated the state wide campaign for rainforest preser-

vation which culminated in World Heritage listing of the rainforests. It is disappointing too that Colong's books are not listed in the bibliography, particularly Geoff Mosley's books on the Battle for the Bush and World Heritage for the Blue Mountains. It is regrettable that, as a leading campaigner for the preservation of whales and for the Antarctic wilderness, Geoff is not included amongst the ecological pioneers.

There is a notable lack of economists and businessmen among the ecologists, but one at least deserves a mention – Nugget Coombs, author of "The Return of Scarcity."

The formation of the School of Social Ecology by the University of Western Sydney and the writing of this book by two of its members confers an aura of respectability on ecologists, not so long ago described as ratbags and worse. It is a valuable reference book and in the years to come, when scarcity closes in, many species become extinct and global warming increases, it will be an invaluable historical record of conservation pioneering. ■

World Heritage Integrity

Concerned that the Blue Mountains World Heritage area contains over 15,000 ha of inholdings which pose a threat to nature conservation, the Blue Mountains Conservation Society is seeking \$12 million Commonwealth funding for acquisitions. The World Heritage assessors share the Society's concern. The money would be allocated to a trust fund, such as the Dunphy Wilderness Fund. The Society is also seeking another \$400,000 for pest species management budget which would bring the budget up to \$610,000 a year.

Park Input into Regional Economy

by Louise Micallef

NATIONAL Parks and Wilderness areas play a key role in the conservation of natural and cultural heritage. Protected areas are also valuable public assets in terms of their potential to encourage economic activity.

Most of Australia has been exploited by rural and logging industries since European invasion in 1788, and it has now reached its ultimate capacity. As noted in the March 2001 Colong Bulletin, much opposition to the establishment of National Parks by rural and logging industries is "based on self interest – not regional economic interest".

The securing of natural areas along with effective conservation management provides local and regional benefits and ensures present and future generations have access to these natural assets and economic opportunities.

The table below displays the economic and social benefits generated by various National Parks. Economic activity is mainly stimulated by visitor expenditure, which directly benefits local businesses concerned with accommodation, food and shopping services within the area. In addition, well presented and managed visitor centres create employment opportunities and income. The Minnamurra Rainforest

Centre, for example, located at the edge of the Budderoo Nation Park has generated 119 jobs.

The recognition of national parks providing jobs and generating wealth will help stop regional NSW viewing national parks as wasted land. There is of course a danger in maximizing the economic benefits of lands set aside for conservation. Building partnerships with tourist industry could very quickly result in park management being usurped by these interests as they are given more of a say on park advisory committees.

To restate the primary nature conservation purpose of national parks, the Colong Foundation has presented a number of motions at the NCC Annual Conference. One motion seeks to prevent Memoranda of Understanding (exclusive agreements) between the NPWS and park user groups, including tour operators. Another calls for tourism concessions and facilities to be built outside NPWS reserves. A third motion proposes that NPWS Advisory Committees have a majority of representatives with experience or expertise in nature conservation. These policies are necessary when some of the NPWS initiatives for regional economies include upgrading or construction of roads and infrastructure in national parks. ■

National Park/ Wilderness area	Annual Visitation	Gross Regional Turnover	Jobs Generated
Gibraltar Range NP	40,000	\$1,467,000	30
Coolah Tops NP	4,000	\$461,000	8
Dorrigo NP	160,000	\$4,048,000	71
Warrumbungles NP	50,000	\$3,700,000	66
Minnamurra Rainforest Centre	140,000	\$4,150,000	119

NPWS Environmental Economic Series,
"The Contribution of National Parks to Sustainable Rural and regional Development", 1999

Parkland Acquisition Programs

IN his report to the Parliament's Budget Estimates Committee, Brian Gilligan, the Director General of the NPWS, outlined the land acquisition funds provided to complete the reserve system for the current financial years as follows:

- General Fund for priority acquisitions anywhere in NSW, \$2.2 million;
- Open Space Fund to acquire land for national parks on the north coast, \$3.6 million;
- Crown Leases Fund for the acquisition of Crown leases formerly within state forests, \$1.0 million;
- Occupational Permit Fund for the acquisition of private lands associated with these permits in former state forests, \$0.47 million;
- Dunphy Wilderness Fund for private land in wilderness, \$2.0 million (first allocation of the new funding);
- Southern CRA Fund for acquisition of inholdings with and adjoining new parks in the Southern CRA Region, \$1.2 million;
- Western Program for acquisition of western properties, including those approved by the Federal Minister for the Environment under the National Reserve System Program (eligible for \$1 for \$1 Federal grants), \$2 million;
- Inholdings Program for park inholdings, \$0.5 million.

In total almost \$13 million is available. With further money available under the Federal grant scheme and the \$2 million for acquisitions in the Special Area catchments, these allocations will convert into well over 100,000 hectares of new national park. Although the Colong Foundation has not kept a close record on previous acquisition budgets, \$13.6 million was spent last year on land acquisition. Such an on-going acquisition program must be a record no previous NSW government has achieved. Much of the acquired land is Crown leasehold, that will spread the taxation dollar further and result in significant long term advances for nature conservation. ■

Walking on the Far Side

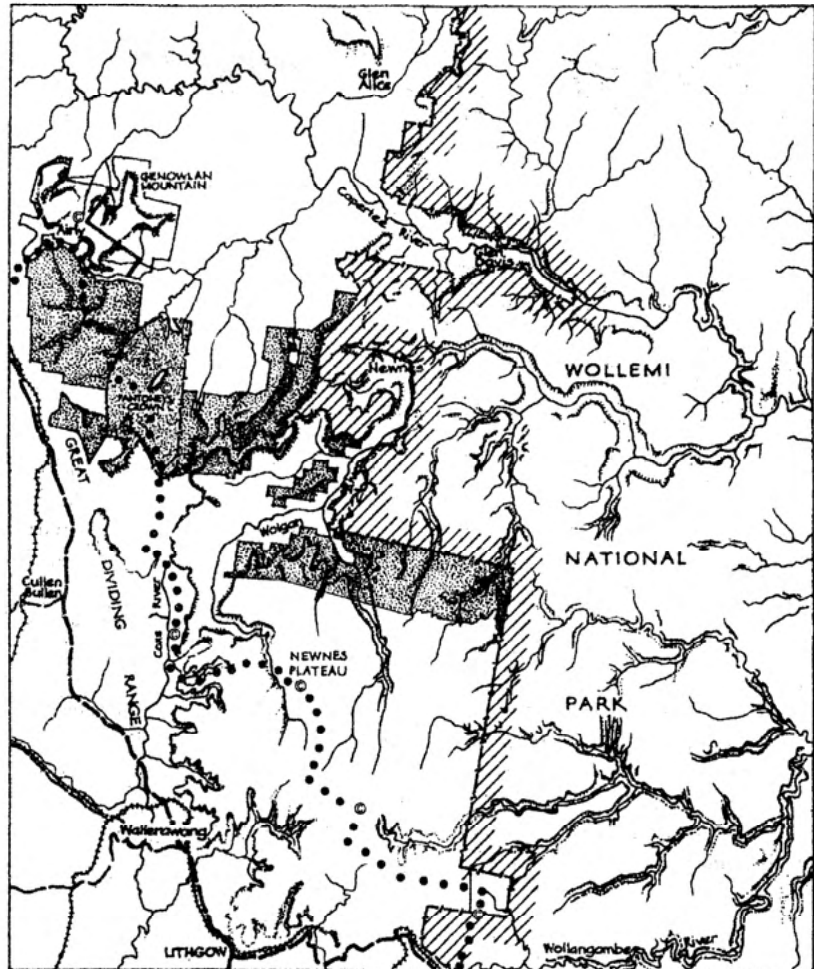
15 to 22 September, 2001

by Keith Muir



THE Capertee village is a leisurely three and a half hours travel by train and bus from Central Station. For Malcolm Carr, Andy Cairns, David Bowskill and I, it was the starting point for a week long adventure to see the damage to public lands along the western (or far) side of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage area. Travelling by public transport proved to be an excellent way to start. Everyone was completely organised and relaxed, there were none of the usual hassles associated with cars trips.

Airly, our first destination, is the site of a proposed coal mine, but little work has commenced despite being approved 10 years ago. We camped near historic old oil shale workings and on the way there met Col Ribaux, who owns a nearby gold and diamond mine. He was using a tomahawk to search for clues apparent only to old prospectors and hidden amongst fossils of these shale deposits. He loves and conserves his mountain in his own way (which includes considerable numbers of 4WD access tracks and numerous trenches here and there in the search for gold) but he remains totally opposed to the NPWS and national parks. One has to be careful talking to Col about conservation issues (Malcolm collected a number of fossils and carried them throughout the trip in his huge pack).

Like ancient oil shale miners we camped snug on the north-east face of Airly, overlooking the Capertee Valley – the most scenic valley of all in NSW. The view of Tayan Peak – a mini Mount Fuji – in the purple light of early morning is with me yet. Group dynamics became apparent early on Tuesday, because of our divergent ideas about what was meant by getting up for an early start. At that moment I concluded that leadership was about making as much noise as necessary to wake the recumbent, and



LEGEND

-  Gardens of Stone National Park
-  Wollemi and Blue Mountains National Parks

● Camp site ● ● ● ● Walking route

GUMTREE SONGLINE - FAR SIDE WALK

a cup of tea also helped.

Later, after 18 kilometres at 5pm, the Parish of Coco had lived up to its name, as the saddle near Pantoneys Crown makes for interesting navigation. There are ever so many gullies, and our dead reckoning was just a step away from being benighted without any water. We made camp on Crown Creek after dark – a cute swamp wallaby with lovely rounded ears bounded off in the right direction, all we had to do was follow.

Next day after struggling over Baal

Bone Gap we entered a fantastic realm of low narrow creek valleys, grassy flats and pagoda-lined ridges. Coal mining is tearing the heart out of this part of the proposed extension to the Gardens of Stone National Park. A new powerline, dams, pumping stations and pipelines have been cut the landscape, and cliff collapses and water pollution scar and poison it.

Nearby Gardiners Gap (named after Jackie Gardiner) is protected and has

continued on page 7

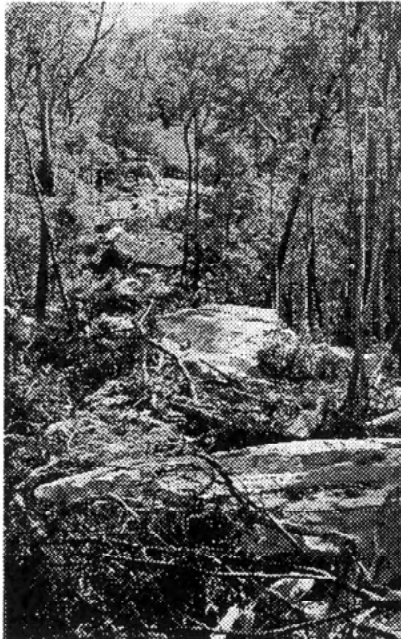
Walking on the Far Side *continued from page 6*

retained some of its bushranging romance. Monday night's camp on Long Swamp on the headwaters of the Coxs River was ideal, except for the scars of the modern-day bushrangers – trail bikes and 4WD vehicles. These motorised denizens have torn up every mine exploration road in this wonderful area creating erosion gullies.

Next day, Tuesday, we headed east to Lambs Creek, another classic grassy valley that offered wonderful walking. A cliff fall has created a rock block up, which had closed off the head of this creek. Scrambling over this and fighting through the scrub led our party directly onto the Temple of Doom, aptly named for its forbidding twin towers. The view from this native pagoda rock temple is well worth a look and, like most of Newnes Plateau, offers views of the Wolgan, the Gardens of Stone and north Wollemi.

Nearby, the track to Wolgan River Falls appears as a scene-of-valiant-struggle where mechanical 4WD vehicle beast is mercilessly pitted against an innocent pagoda landscape. In this battleground heavy, giant rubber wheel-spinning monsters have reduced the rough old tracks to a moonscape. Trees have been ring-barked by winch cables, then pulled over and collected into neatly chain-sawed stockpiles alongside the favourite hill climbs. We boiled all the water taken from the Wolgan River at camp because of upstream pollution from the Springvale mine – multiple land use is a brave new world.

Winch scar from a 4WD vehicle is ring barking this tree. Many other nearby trees have been pulled over at a hillclimb near the Wolgan River.



Cliff collapse caused by mining at the Baal Bone colliery.

Next day a 12 kilometre road bash along Sunnyside Ridge leads to Newnes Pine Forest was easy and there was time to visit Birds Rock Flora Reserve. This lookout offers the best view of the Newnes Plateau. Hooray that this site did not become home to the biggest power station in NSW, as proposed in the late 1970s. The Bungleboori camp in pine forest, however, had been recently totally destroyed by trail bikers. The tap was knocked off the water tank, the grass torn off picnic ground, the bollards and picnic seating burnt, so the picnic area is a ruin.

At this point we had planned to catch up with Wyn Jones, prime organiser of the Gumnut songline walk to celebrate World Heritage list-

ing, but instead we were compelled to walk a further 4 kilometres to find water. Our small party then walked through the lost city of pagodas on Bungleboori Creek, not south to look at sand mines as planned. Ironically, the trail bikes had given us deliverance from another day's road bash. It seems incredible that Clarence Colliery is mining under this creek! The warning signs to advise of the danger of cliff falls, but we saw them only as we were leaving the area.

Our journey then lead east to Gooches Crater – a landscape with the lot – upland swamps, wetlands, rare plants, a slot canyon, extensive pagodas formations, a natural rock bridge and majestic old growth forest. All this could be deprived of life giving water and reduced to rubble by mine subsidence if unrestricted mining is approved. Although the nearby Clarence mine expansion proposal is now on hold, it is unclear whether Gooches Crater will be protected.

Further east 14 olympic swimming pools a day of pollution are still discharged to the Wollangambe River, a formerly pristine wild river in the Wollemi wilderness visited by thousands a year. Our party was inspired to further action to protect these neglected bits of the Gardens of Stone.

After crossing the blackened Wollangambe, it took three hours to reach Bell Station and flag down the best stretch limo in the State – the Lithgow to Sydney interurban train. You can't beat trains for a hassle free trip. The Far Side Walk was one of the best trips I have been on in recent years, due to the excellent company and the incredible variety of sandstone scenery. ■

The 4WD sport of hill climbing is badly degrading the scenic Wolgan Falls area.



Horse Riding and National Parks

FOR years peak environment groups, like the National Parks Association, the Nature Conservation Council and The Wilderness Society, have opposed horse riding in national parks due to the damage caused to natural values. Park management expert, Ian Brown (1997) confirmed these concerns, reporting that horse riding is having severe impacts on seven national parks in the Sydney and Newcastle regions. NPWS executive members Bob Conroy and Bob Harden (1997) have also questioned whether commercial horse riding is appropriate to NSW parks due to the "reported frequencies of the types and extent of impacts associated with horse riding". Given this body of professional experience regarding the degradation caused by recreational horse riding, we are disappointed that the NPWS has proposed to weaken its horse riding policy.

NPWS Policy review

Horse riders are dissatisfied with the limitations on horse riding in parks and have sought to change the NPWS policy on recreational horse riding. A preliminary draft of the policy proposes to reduce riding access limitations and water down previously prominent statements on the damages caused by horse riding to natural values.

One of the proposed policy changes is to allow riding can be off tracks. Pro-horseriders argue riding spread out across the landscape (called broadacre riding in the draft NPWS policy) reduces the environmental damage. Commercial horse riding tours, particularly Peter Cochrane's outfit, are already wandering off track around the karst valleys of the Blue Waterholes area within Kosciuszko National Park. Karst soils are more prone to weed invasion due to the higher nutrient status and dispersion of

weeds in horse manure is a real risk for this area.

Boardacre riding has nothing to do with mitigation of environmental impacts, as purported in the draft policy. The reason the draft policy contains statements about broadacre riding is that the riders do not want to be confined to specific riding tracks. For example, horse riders want to access mountain peaks like Tabletop and Mount Morgan in Kosciuszko National Park, and to do that they must ride off track. The damage already caused by riding access to Mount Morgan illustrates why this broadacre policy is inappropriate.

Horse riding and current park management

Under existing regulatory arrangements horse riding facilities have been expanded over the last decade in the Long Plain and Tantangara areas of Kosciuszko National Park. At seven camps these facilities include toilets, fenced yards, hitching rails and loading ramps for truck type horse floats, as well as upgraded roads to these facilities. The site hardening and development limits damage to the national park in the short term, but does not control use pressures because the facilities attract more commercial use, in the same way as freeways attract traffic. Some of the consequences of these facilities are the establishment of patches of oats and legumes (weeds), creek bank damage and excessive firewood collection around the camps.

Following the concerns raised regarding these developments, the NPWS have placed a moratorium on the development of future horse facilities in the Tantangara area until a new park plan of management is made, but pressure is mounting for more horse riding access and facilities.

In another development, the NPWS is considering changing a number of nature reserves into national parks,

allegedly to permit horse riding. The riders are claiming hereditary and traditional access to areas such as the newly created Karuah, Khappinghat and Wallaroo nature reserves. These park 'recategorisation' proposals are driven by the presumption that past use or interest by horse riders have priority over nature conservation.

The horse riding fraternity downplay the damage they do. After relatively little use, horse riding can turn walking tracks into trenches. The presence of horse manure is an undeniable reality that can make for unpleasant camping, breed enormous numbers of bush flies and foul otherwise potable water supplies. The riders claim that horse riding does less damage to parks than mountain bikes, but this must be incorrect as horse riding, unlike bike riding, is done off track, introduces weeds, and horse camps leave a larger footprint, as the horses wander around at camp, to graze and drink and defecate.

On the good news front, the NPWS recently moved to ban horse riding in parts of Garawarra and Dharawal State Recreation Areas. The Burgh Track, a very steep track from Helensburgh station used by Otford Valley Farms (an equestrian outfit), was eroding badly due to horseriding. Unfortunately in the nearby Dharawal decision, the NPWS has allowed commercial horseriding but not private individuals. This is an inconsistent management position and unsound because the Dharawal is a pristine area. A visit to the park will reveal locations where weeds are spreading into the formerly weed free bush from the horse manure. The Dharawal area should be a nature reserve and probably would become one, but for the underlying Metropolitan colliery. The Australian Horse Alliance has argued that these closures are unreasonable as the

continued on page 9

NPWS lacks adequate grounds but a site inspection of these parks confirms the horse riding damage.

The general assumption of horse riders and 4WD recreational drivers is that if it is not wilderness then access to a national park should be unrestricted. Fortunately the NPWS in the northern region has taken a stronger position with the draft Myall Lakes National Park plan of management. The draft plan does not permit horse riding and 4WD access is to be prohibited from some of the park's marvellous beach frontages.

Horse riding and wilderness

Unlike vehicles, horses can go just about everywhere in a national park provided there is water. This freedom of movement has implications for easements through wilderness areas, such as the Bicentennial National (horse riding) Trail. The Trail organisers have even requested permission to bulldoze a track down the Kunderang Brook through the heart of the wilderness to make the going easier for riders – so much for their concerns for nature conservation. The trail currently provides riders with unrestricted access to declared wilderness areas in northern NSW, such as the Macleay Gorges and Washpool, regardless of that access being illegal. Voluntary Codes of Practice for Horse Riding, prepared by horse groups, do not discourage this illegal use as wilderness is not mentioned, ignoring their responsibilities to educate riders on park management.

There are ample horse riding opportunities provided on private land in rural districts, quiet rural roads, in state forests, and appropriate areas of selected regional parks and state recreation areas. Such opportunities over a wide range of land types makes unnecessary any provision for damaging access to the 6 per cent of the state set aside for nature conservation in reserves.

In southern NSW, the NPWS has shown little concern for the Deua wilderness. Prior to deciding the fate of this wilderness and without a plan of management, the Service has built holding yards for horses and a toilet at

ACTION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

AT the NCC Annual Conference a motion was adopted, moved by Colong, congratulating the Carr Government on its nature conservation achievements regarding:

- ✓ Its sustained support for World Heritage listing of the Blue Mountains, including the vigorous pursuit of the area's formal nomination that was achieved only 2 years after it was elected;

- ✓ The creation of 240 national parks, covering 1.4 million hectares;

- ✓ The declaration of nearly a million hectares of wilderness and the subsequent assessment of a further 1½ million hectares of proposed wilderness in eastern NSW;

- ✓ Recent announcements include the \$5 million refinancing of the Dunphy Wilderness Fund; and

- ✓ The \$7 million for western lands acquisition, declaration of the Grose wilderness and agreement to assess the Pilliga and Goonoo proposed national parks.

In the booklet *Action for the Environment* the Government describes the measures it has taken on outstanding environmental issues. The action has followed, rather than been initiated by the Government. Most of it has been proposed and promoted by community organisations for long

periods. It is to the credit of the Government that it has listened to community concerns and acted upon them.

The most comprehensive action has been in the field of nature conservation, community promotion of which dates back more than 70 years. Previous governments have created national parks and wilderness areas, but not on the scale of the Carr Government. The Threatened Species Conservation Act is the outcome of the efforts of the wildlife conservation societies over more than 70 years. The decision to create an average of 200 km. of cycleways a year for 10 years is probably the outcome of the campaigning of Bicycle NSW. The Government describes motor vehicles as the biggest contributor to air pollution and in response to public advocacy for more and better public transport is constructing new railway lines and planning 100 km. of bus only roadway in Western Sydney. Other responses to public concern include \$100 million in investments for renewable energy projects, control of coastal development (in response to Total Environment Centre campaigning), threatened species recovery plans and \$39 million for pest control. ■

Bendethera on the Deua River. The proposed options for protecting the Deua wilderness omit Bendethera area and provide access to the Bendethera Caves. Access to the caves (marked as a walking access on forestry project maps) was once closed due to damage to Con Creek caused by 4WDs and horseriders. The NPWS should not sacrifice wilderness in this wonderful area to develop relationships with the local community. Ironically 76 per cent of people in the Eden-Monaro electorate support wilderness protection, so it is the anti-wilderness minority with which the NPWS wants to work.

Wilderness protection is not simply a conflict between bushwalkers, horse riders and 4WD vehicles, which it is so often portrayed. Wilderness manage-

ment is about setting aside for nature some of the least disturbed parts of NSW and in those areas placing nature conservation management before park use. Bushwalking is self reliant and can be a very minimal impact on these areas, there is no such thing as minimal impact horse riding as a horse and rider weights a heavy 500 kilograms and eats its way through the park. The Australian Trail Horse Riders Association has proposed to include horse riding as a self reliant recreation and be allowed into wilderness, but its not self reliant (just ask the horse). The NPWS developed a discussion paper to consider this proposal but the Environment Minister rejected this proposal (see 'Bob Debus stands firm on horse riding' – *Bulletin 180*). ■

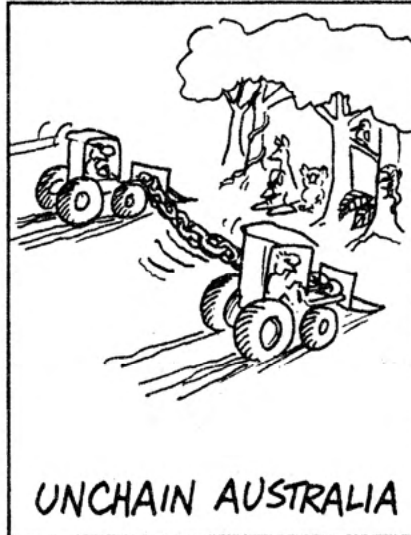
Multiplication of Land Clearing

NPWS researchers Stephen Cox, Dominic Silvertsen and Michael Bedward recently reported in *Cunninghamia* 7 (1): 101-155 on their finding that substantially more clearing had occurred in western NSW than previously thought. "Average annual clearing rates were 8 times higher than those derived from the previous mapping," the authors said.

Over 110,000 hectares of native woody vegetation were cleared between 1985 and 2000, or a staggering 16% of the vegetation remaining in 1985. Clearing was highest in the four years prior to the introduction of the Native Vegetation Conservation Act, with the highest rate, over 10,000 ha/year, in the period ending 1998. The remaining native vegetation has become increasingly fragmented, with the number of vegetation patches rising from 535 to 684 and the average size dropping from 141 ha to 95 ha. Particularly large areas were cleared east of Collarenebri and Mungindi. Northeast of Moree, where native woody vegetation was already highly depleted in 1985, and further clearing has resulted in losses of over 40% of the remaining woodland areas.

According to the NSW EPA State of the Environment report native vegetation clearance is the single greatest threat to terrestrial biodiversity in NSW. This is particularly the case in the wheat belt of central NSW where most of the original temperate woodlands have been cleared for agriculture over the last 200 years. In these circumstances, future agricultural production and incomes will also decline due to soil erosion, salinity and loss of insect pollinators from continued over clearing in the region.

In 1998, the State Environmental Planning Policy 46 on the protection and management of native vegetation was replaced by the *Native Vegetation Conservation Act*. In 2001 clearing and fragmentation of native vegetation was listed on a preliminary basis as a Key Threatening Process under the *NSW Threatened Species Act*. Considering all of the above and these regulatory



actions, it is alarming that there is little reliable, detailed information available on the distribution and extent of land clearing in central NSW.

Clearing studies use satellite data that have not reflected the true situation with western woodlands clearing as the technique ignores clearing where tree cover is less than 20%. In the NSW northern wheat belt, natural tree cover can be as low as 5% cover. This area extends north of Narrabri, from Walgett to the Queensland border including the towns of Moree and Collarenebri, a total area of about 2.4 million hectares but Crown land accounts for only 5% of this area, and only five small nature reserves occupy just 0.05% of the area. There are no State Forests in the area.

The Moree area had the highest wheat yield per hectare in NSW for the 1997-98 crop and so there is considerable economic pressure to clear more land, regardless of land degradation. The area was once part of the continuous belt of temperate woodlands that extended from Queensland to Victoria. Woodlands included River Red Gum, Coolabah, Black Box and Brigalow. Other woodlands include Poplar Box, White Cypress Pine, Belah, Myall, and Ironbark. There were also extensive lignum shrublands, wetlands and native grasslands.

In the most highly depleted bioregion

studied, the "Northern Outwash", the clearing rate steadily increased over the study period despite the province having only 8% native woody vegetation cover in 1985. The authors reported that the "Coolabah dominated woodlands were particularly heavily cleared during the study period. ... The present rates of decline are thus of serious concern and, if maintained, would be expected to lead to population decline in a wide range of species."

The NPWS study reveals that the nationally based satellite mapping is blind to clearing in the sparse woodlands of western NSW. The report states that "Thus far, the Native Vegetation Conservation Act, as well as State Environmental Planning Policy No. 46 that preceded it, appear to have failed to prevent further decline in this very extensively cleared province." It is hoped that with the realisation of the failure of national satellite mapping to see the continued woodland clearing, the Carr Government will now intervene to stop any further clearing. Effective action will require adequate funding of conservation schemes and again this year a near record amount of money is being spent on land acquisition in NSW for new national parks. Some of these funds will certainly be spent in the priority areas of western NSW.

Leave it to the Volunteers

Governments are showing an increasing tendency to divert work to volunteers without compensation; the promise to apportion revenue obtained from gambling proceeds to volunteer organisations has long been forgotten. Many volunteers are quite prepared to accept the obligations which the work entails but there is a limit. The final work often falls back to the dedicated few, who, if too much is asked, will drop out if they find the work too onerous or time consuming, or interfering too much with their domestic life. Governments must expect to provide some administrative support to volunteer organisations if they are to continue to address public needs.

Reg Alder, writing on The International Year of the Volunteer in NPA of ACT Bulletin Sept. 2001

NCC Annual Conference 2001

RESOLUTIONS

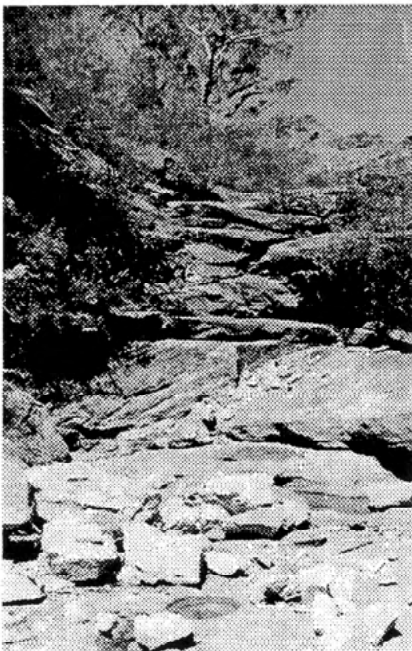
THE Nature Conservation Council of NSW annual conference is the peak policy and decision making forum for the environment movement in this state. At this conference Colong raised a number of important issues. As well as acknowledging the achievements of the Carr Government, some of the key Colong motions passed at this years conference were:

Independent inquiry on dingo management

That the NCC calls on the Minister for the Environment to commission an independent inquiry and report on dingo management, particularly in protected areas and state forests in the light of previous research by Professor Pettigrew and Dr. Andrew Smith, together with the in press manuscript by Adam O'Neil which demonstrate that dingos are essential for the survival of a substantial number of Australian fauna.

Coal mining in Special Area catchments

That the NCC call on the government to adopt the following pre-



ferred regulatory system for coal mining in Special Area catchments and other environmentally sensitive areas, including under water-courses:

- The prohibition environmentally damaging coal mining;

- Development of regulated mining that includes:

- Definition of mining prohibition areas prior to development consent for key resources such as streams, stored waters, upland swamps, groundwater dependent ecosystems, rainforests and wet sclerophyll forests; and

- Definition of mining protection zones prior to development consent for other vital areas like cliffs and cave sites;

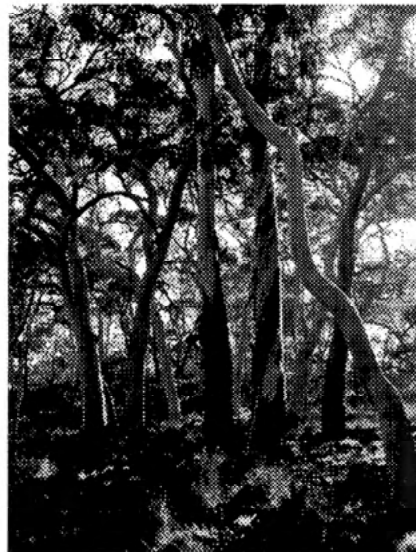
- Further legally enforceable independent control to impose prohibition or protection zones through decisions by both the SCA Board and EPA Board so as to ensure the adequate protection for natural resources (these powers could be established through either an environmental planning instrument and/or amending legislation);

- Monthly public internet reporting of subsidence damage monitoring, including qualitative and quantitative effects, such as those on water quality and water flow, and advice from an expert ecological committee regarding effects on ecological integrity.

Inquiry into coal mining in drinking water catchments

That the NCC recommend to the Government a fully independent and well resourced inquiry into the crucial issue of underground coal mining in drinking water catchments and other environmentally sensitive areas, particularly the Met-

Waterfall and pool destroyed on Native Dog Creek – many pools in our drinking water catchments are incapable of holding water following coal mining.



Unlike other areas in the Southern Forest Region, the Murrumbidgee wilderness has not been assessed.

ropolitan Catchment and environs west of Wollongong.

Protection of Wilderness

That the NCC calls on the Minister for the Environment to require the NPWS to expedite the Pilliga, Yengo and Murrumbidgee Wilderness Assessment Reports.

That the NCC calls on the Government to reserve as national park and declare under the Wilderness Act the NPWS identified wilderness that remain threatened by logging in the Deua River headwaters (3,600 ha), the Badja section of the Turoos wilderness (6,450 ha) and north Kosciuszko (6,500ha).

That the NCC calls on the government to declare the promised additions to the Kanangra-Boyd and Wollemi wilderness areas.

That the NCC:

- commend the Government's efforts to protect wilderness on leasehold lands within state forests; and

- urge the Forestry sub-commit-

continued on page 12

The United Nations Environment Programme defines closed forests as those with a closed covering of trees with their crowns interlocking and a canopy density of 40% or above. Australia, which has covered forests on 4.6% of its area, is cutting down these forests and exporting them as woodchips to Japan, which has forests on 55.4% of its area.

Forests Cut Down for Power and Woodchips

According to a nationwide Morgan Poll in March, about 88 per cent of Australians oppose the establishment of wood-fired power stations burning native forests. The opposition arises from decades of watching the woodchip industry devastate our native forests. The woodchippers have always used the waste lie which has perpetuated an industry which now exports 7.5 million tonnes of forest per year.

**Glen Klatovsky, NSW Wilderness
Society campaign manager.
SMH 27.9.01**

We are seeing the greatest rate of destruction of forests in our history, with 150,000 trucks going to the woodchip mills this year alone.

Bob Brown. SMH 17.10.01

NCC Resolutions 2001 *continued from page 11*

tee of Cabinet to expedite immediate national parks protection of all State Forest informal reserves within wilderness capable areas and other areas adjoining existing national parks, including all areas of old growth forest areas larger than 500 ha.

Support for national park protection and off-park facilities

That the NCC confirms its position that facilities and concessions should be built outside reserves, and:

- ❖ Opposes any proposal to extend the Minister's power to grant leases and licences in parks;

WANTED

Wilderness Campaigner

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.

A part-time applicant with agreed flexible hours of work would be considered.

Wage: 3dpw, \$15 per hour.

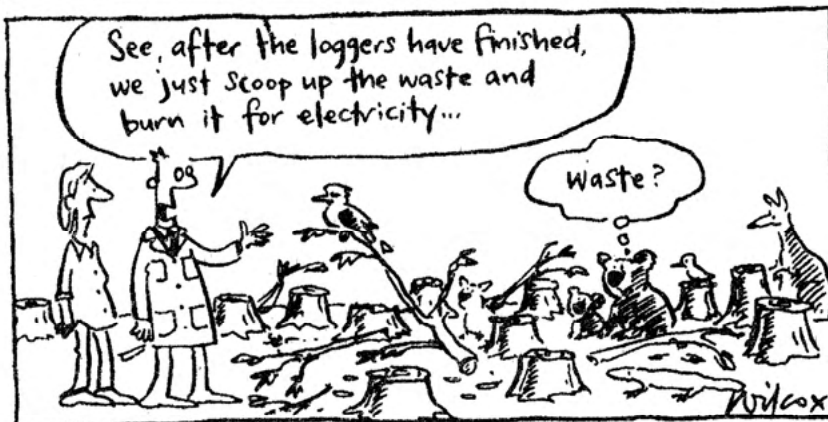
For a job description contact:

Keith Muir, Colong Foundation for Wilderness

Ph (02) 9299 7314 fax 9299 5713

email keith@colongwilderness.org.au

Applications close 15 October 2001



- ❖ Requests that a public, internet accessible register of current leases and licences be developed and the updated monthly;

- ❖ Requests that a process of public exhibition of proposed leases and licence concessions inside parks be developed; and

In regard to commercial concessions and leases provisions:

- All concessions should have a nexus with the purpose of the reservation;

- No concessions of a private or semi-private nature should be granted;

- No residences should be provided within reserves other than for essential management purposes;

- The NPWS should not encourage a real estate market based on

interests in land within its reserves and should not create leasehold and strata titles for the development of residential apartments or villas which provide the basis for such a market;

- The NPWS should not encourage developments of a village or urban nature within its reserves;

- The NPWS should plan and manage its reserves to make the maximum use of visitor accommodation and related facilities off-reserve; and

- The NPWS should discourage the amalgamation or amassing of concessional interests within its public reserves and avoid the creation of commercial entities which may exert excessive influence on their management. ■

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 item(s) indicated by a tick. (One cheque is sufficient to cover subscription and donation.)

- ☐ Membership application (\$25) to 31 December 2002
(NB Membership application covers Bulletin subscription)
- ☐ Colong Bulletin Subscription (\$11) to 31 December 2002
- ☐ Membership renewal to 31 December 2002 (\$25) ☐ Life Membership (\$550)
- ☐ Tax deductible donation of \$____ to the Colong Wilderness Fund (cheques to be made payable to the Fund)
- ☐ PLUS \$____ being for publications as indicated on the reverse side of this form.

NAME (Mr, Ms, Mrs, Miss)

ADDRESS

.....P/CODEDATE

SIGNEDAMOUNT

Payment by credit card. Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Bankcard ☐ Expiry date ____ / ____

Card # ____ / ____ / ____ / ____

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

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."



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 up-dated 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.

THE COLONG FOUNDATION

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



PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM THE COLONG FOUNDATION

WILD PLACES

The meticulously researched, beautifully written book on wilderness by Peter Prineas with photographs by Henry Gold (285pp)

Price Posted
27.50 ☐

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Geoff Mosley's account of the genesis of the nature conservation movement and saving of the Blue Mountains environment (174pp)

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A biography, written by Peter Meredith, of The Colong Committee's Patron, Myles Dunphy OBE, and its founder, Milo Dunphy AM D.Sc. (376pp)

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