

THE COLONG BULLETIN

Bulletin 195

THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD
PROTECTING WILDERNESS AND NATIONAL PARKS

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The 2002 Wilderness Decision

by Keith Muir

MINISTER for the Environment, Bob Debus, in his press statement of 28th September 2002, described wilderness as "the jewel in the conservation crown." There were indeed several magnificent wilderness jewels installed in the northern NSW reserve crown, including Levers Plateau, and two small coastal areas, and new large additions – including a 35,000 ha extension to the Guy Fawkes Wilderness. The jewels were

cut to accommodate the horse riders and 4WDs, creating the usual flaws. In total, the decision will see declared 273,500 hectares under the *Wilderness Act, 1987* out of the 720,000 hectares that conservation groups proposed for protection. This decision is, however, very asymmetrical and requires a regional critique.

Northern NSW

In the north, national parks built with a wilderness core still propel the NPWS conservation management vision. Of the 275,000 ha of wilderness proposed for protection

in Northern NSW, 226,207 ha was formally identified and 151,500 ha will be declared under the *Wilderness Act*. In other words, just over half the area proposed will be protected.

For the remaining identified wilderness, a protection program is in place, which includes acquisitions through the Dunphy Wilderness Fund and interim protection of state forest leasehold areas within informal reserves. While in the past 90 to 95 per cent of nominated wilderness areas have been protected, this out-

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Australia's future relies on healthy soil, air and water systems, and wilderness provides their best protection. It contains most of our ancient forests that purify our air. Its pristine catchments yield water that does not require expensive treatment. Wilderness is where we find peace, solitude and an opportunity for reflection away from machinery and the pressures of modern living. Many plant and animal populations will survive only if we preserve wilderness. Australia's distinctive heritage of wild landscapes and unique wildlife is at risk if we give in to the pressures of exploitation.

The Hon. Richard Jones,
opposing the *Wilderness Amendment (Procedure) Bill*
on 24th October, 2002.

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2002 Wilderness Decision

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come should be considered good in the context of the difficulties presented, particularly the security that Forest Agreements have granted to the loggers.

It is, however, of significant concern that only about 1,500 ha of the new wilderness was formerly leasehold land within state forests. Hopefully, all these acquired wilderness lands and other icons, like the Chaelundi wilderness, will be protected. In the next twelve months about 60,000 ha of private wilderness land that has been voluntarily acquired will be secured under the *Wilderness Act*.

With continued Government resolve and funding there is also a very good chance that the 60,000 ha of Crown leasehold in state forest can be further protected.

Southern NSW

In southern NSW, the "jewel" was substantially reduced due to the NPWS Southern Directorate's view of wilderness as an outmoded concept. Out of the 445,000 ha of wilderness in Southern NSW proposed by environment groups, 300,000 ha were assessed. Of this, the National Parks and Wildlife Service reduced the identified area to about 200,000 ha (to which should be added the 19,000 ha of previously identified wilderness still awaiting protection, including the Deua River headwaters).

The Government decided to declare 122,000 ha, just one quarter of the area sought. This decision was one-sided advice from the NPWS who had over-reacted to the 4WD and horseriding lobbies.

Retention of 4WD and horseriding access was the priority in southern NSW, with only one per cent of the 4WD roads in the wilderness areas of Kosciuszko National Park to be permanently closed. The descriptions of the decision provided in the NPWS public information kit outline the need to omit substantial areas for 4WDs and horseriding access. This is in marked contrast to Northern NSW where access concessions were limited to particular access routes. In

order to protect core park areas, over a third of the 4WD tracks in the wilderness proposals of northern NSW will be closed.

To accommodate the access lobby in southern NSW, four entire wilderness areas were rejected: Brindabella; Tabletop; and two very large additions to the Deua wilderness.

Mr Malcolm Jones, Upper House Leader of the Outdoor Recreation Party, in reply to the announcement said "the new wilderness areas appear at first glance to be providing access better than ever before. Perhaps our message is getting through" (*Bay Post*, 2.10.02).

In May 1999, at the outset of the Wilderness 2000 Protection campaign, it was clear that Southern NPWS had abandoned wilderness. By November the NPWS announced at an 'Access for All' rally near Braidwood that it had "cut by about half the area of potentially identifiable wilderness" (ABC radio, 20.11.99). Despite the three year Wilderness 2000 campaign, the Southern NPWS people considered only local interests, including 4WDing and horse riding 'stakeholders', those who want to develop parks and those that do not like national parks.

Our message, that wilderness is the foundation upon which national parks are built, did not get through, despite being endorsed by over 17,000 submissions, which were gift-wrapped and presented to the Premier at a hugely successful event.

Where to now?

NPWS Southern Directorate has set a course for major conflict with the NSW environment movement.

The Brindabella Ranges 4WD Club, set up to take extreme 4WDing, like crawling up granite torrs in Kosciuszko and the Brindabellas, illustrates the risk the NPWS is taking by abandoning wilderness to user group pressures.

The Deua National Park, which is covered in hundreds of kilometres of fire roads, is now well down the park abuse trajectory.

The current Southern NPWS leadership is set to facilitate park development, sympathising with more access for 4WD vehicles, horseriders and ski resort developers. ■

THE LAST REFUGE FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES

To preserve endangered species it is necessary to preserve their habitat.

There are two methods of doing this: one is to protect the habitat from development by making it a reserve; the other is to fence it.

The larger the area reserved the more effective it becomes as a refuge. East of the Great Dividing Range there are many substantial wilderness areas which are the habitat of endangered species. West of the Range nearly all the land has been long since cleared and grazed or farmed. Three wildernesses remain in the Central West – Mt Kaputar, Pilliga and Bebo. Though degraded, they are capable of restoration. The Western Conservation Alliance states that more than 191 animal species are under threat in western woodlands. The threat to Pilliga caused by plans for wood fired electricity generation and charcoal burning has been removed, but development of coal and gas resources is proposed.

The second method of preserving remnants of endangered species is to fence the species in and the feral animals out. This has been done by Earth Sanctuaries, and in Queensland 2,500 ha of the habitat of the hairy nosed wombat and an area at Davenport Downs, one of the last retreats of the bilby, is being fenced. It is hoped that these animals might be reintroduced to other areas, but whether they can regenerate remains to be seen. The Colong Foundation hopes that means can be found of preserving the dingo in at least some areas because of the dingo's suppression of feral animals. ■

New National Parks for Western NSW

THE announcement of over 350,000 hectares of new national parks in the Western Division, jointly purchased by the State and Federal Governments, is a great step forward for conservation in NSW.

The decision will create a fantastic green crescent of national parks stretching from the Queensland Border to the Darling River.

The Gunterbooka National Park near Burke has been expanded to 65,000 ha. It protects dramatic range and river country along the Darling River. A massive 230,000 ha Paroo-Darling National Park north of Wilcannia will protect an 80 kilometre tract of the Paroo Overflow, its associated ephemeral lakes and the low rocky ranges to the Darling, where the park also has a 60 kilometre river frontage. These two announced parks contain wilderness

investigation areas but it is very early days for our investigations out west.

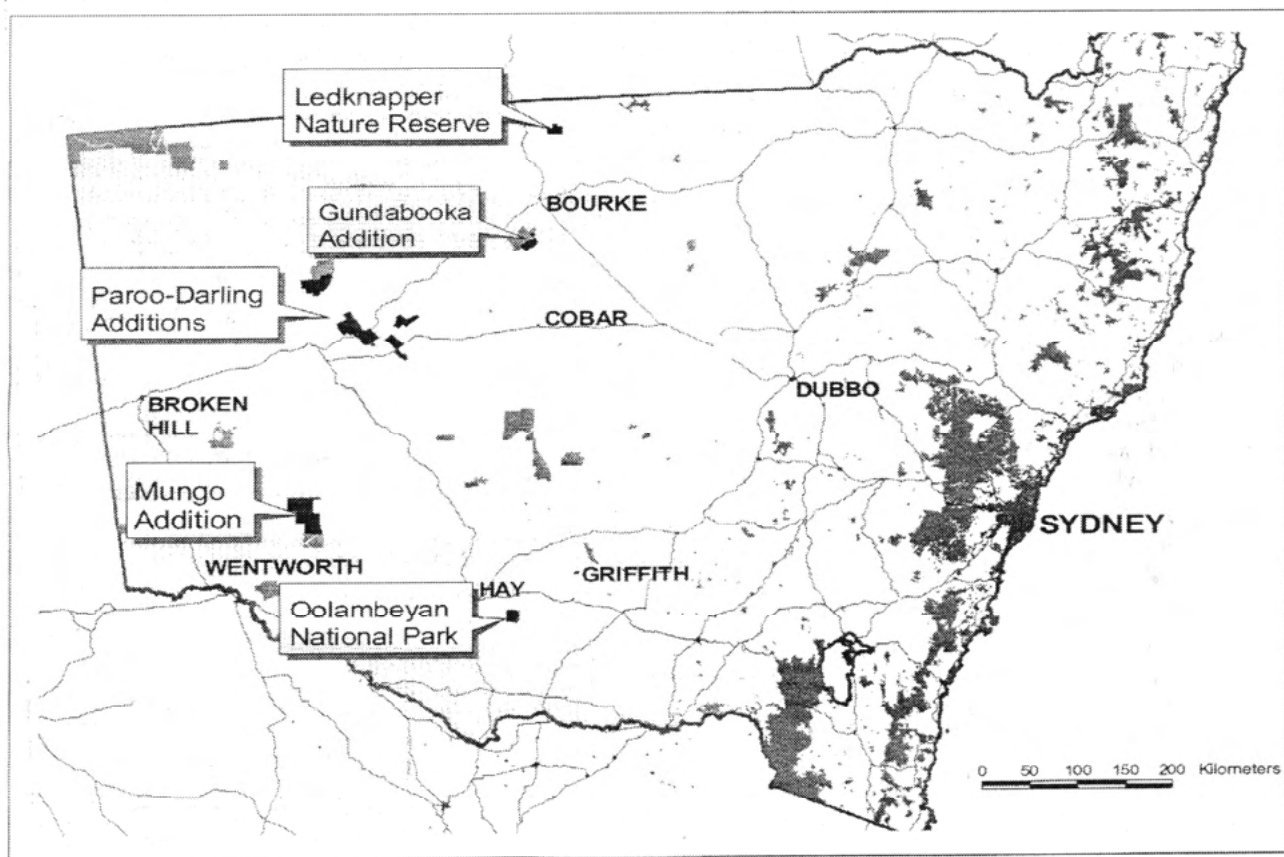
One feature that does need urgent further protection, however, is the Paroo, perhaps the only major stream in Outback NSW that still could be considered a wild river. The Paroo must flow free, so that it can continue to feed its billabongs and lakes that support over 140 species of waterbirds. Queensland cotton farmers are keen to pump the Paroo dry. A new park without water would be very sad.

The massive dust storm that blew millions of tonnes of topsoil into the Pacific this week is a timely reminder that we must reverse the trend of land degradation in the outback and in central western NSW. Integrated new conservation measures such as this wonderful national park announcement, as well as a ban on

clearing bushland remnants, stream flows for the environment, and sustainable farming practices are essential. The ecology of our arid continent is so very fragile, and if we continue to ignore it, it will just blow away.

The other new parks announced last month include the 22,000 ha Oolambeyan National Park near Hay which is the key refuge for the Plains Wanderer, an endangered woodland bird, and a new 16,000 ha Ledknapper Nature Reserve near the NSW-QLD border. The Mungo National Park has been tripled in size to 89,000 ha, further protecting outstanding Aboriginal heritage at Wilandra Lakes World Heritage area.

These new park reservations raise to 1.75 million hectares the area of parks reserved by the Government. ■



The dissolution of Wilderness

by Keith Muir

IN its tortuously titled 'Summary and Analysis of Submissions from Public Exhibition and Declaration Recommendations Report' the NPWS Southern Directorate has cooked up an anti-wilderness soufflé. The NPWS made our strength and respect in the community a weakness. The NPWS Southern Directorate took 18,316 pro-wilderness submissions out of a total of 26,545 submissions (or 69 per cent) and made a strong case against wilderness protection.

The NPWS submission analysis report said "Placing an emphasis on submissions potentially turns the summary into a vote-counting exercise and may agglomerate submitters into groups..." Instead, each submission was double, triple, quadruple or more counted according to various issues raised in that submission.

The devil in the detail

The massive number of pro-wilderness form letters was effectively ignored in the development of recommendations. Expressing support for the detailed and specific environment groups' wilderness proposal, which were displayed at our letter collection stalls did not count.

The 855 hand written pro-wilderness letters supporting the Wilderness 2000 Protection Plan were treated as form letters by the NPWS who ruled these expressions of concern did not contain sufficient original opinion to be personal letters, but followed environment group advice.

Next, the pro-wilderness representations that were based on web site and e-mail advice from environment groups were culled out of the personal letters. These 909 pro-wilderness submissions were

defined as 'hybrid' submissions "where individuals had obviously placed their own comments into the layout of an existing form letter". So the hybrids were not "personal submissions" either.

Once the hand-written and hybrid submissions supporting the environment groups' Wilderness Protection Plan were discarded (at least 1,764 submissions), 70 per cent of the remaining submissions were anti-wilderness, a mere 330 submissions.

This majority of "real" personal submissions that opposed wilderness were subjected to a separate local issue analysis, detailing concerns about 4WD roads and horse trails. The 'minority' view of the "real" personal submissions supporting wilderness protection was not detailed. The wilderness recommendations for Southern NSW were therefore based on the issues raised by the 'majority' view of these 'real' anti-wilderness personal submissions.

Meanwhile, the Wilderness 2000 Protection Plan report was dismissed with the words: "the plan represents a long-term and wide-ranging declaration scenario for both the northern and southern areas of the State". The NPWS report does not critically examine or report on the specific protection and management plans for each wilderness area contained in the Protection Plan even though it had been supported by 17,000 submissions.

The diminutive details of the case against

In developing its recommendations, the NPWS report stretched anti-wilderness submissions thinner than glad wrap. The maximum number of specific objections received for the retention of any

Wilderness goes to NSW Ombudsman

The Colong Foundation for Wilderness, Nature Conservation Council of NSW, National Parks Association of NSW, Wilderness Society and Total Environment Centre have referred the NPWS Southern Directorate's assessment of wilderness submissions to the NSW Ombudsman for review.

The 'Southern CRA Wilderness Assessment - Summary and Analysis of Submissions' report only considered park access issues from one side of the debate; those opposed to wilderness.

Park access issues were a key determinant in the development of the NPWS wilderness recommendations presented to, and subsequently accepted by, government. The NPWS Southern Directorate did not follow due process and properly consider specific protection plans against the plans made by those who want to develop, drive and ride all over wilderness. The NPWS also did not consider the relative merit of both sides of the argument when developing its recommendations.

Its treatment of handwritten pro-wilderness letters as form letters is incorrect and inconsistent with the assessment of wilderness submissions made by the Northern Directorate. All hand written submissions were treated as personal letters by the Northern Directorate. The Southern Assessment should be ruled invalid. The access and other management issues outlined in the Wilderness 2000 Plan and other detailed pro-wilderness submissions should be reconsidered and reported to Government. ■

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State Opposition Opposes Wilderness

THE Upper House debate on the Wilderness Amendment (Procedure) Bill, drafted by The Hon. Malcolm Jones (Outdoor Recreation Party) and supported by the State Opposition, confirms the Opposition's anti-wilderness policy. The bill listed forms of "appropriate recreation" in wilderness areas, including horse riding and vehicle-facilitated camping. The purpose of the bill was to legitimise horseriding and 4WD driving in wilderness; item [2] of the bill specified the omission of the words "solitude and appropriate self reliant" from the definition of wilderness in the *Wilderness Act 1987*.

Item [4] of the Bill stipulated that land could not be identified as wilderness if it had been in any way affected by rural, mining, defence or other uses, or 4WD roads. Since there are no extensive areas not so affected, this provision would have prevented any future wilderness declarations.

Item [5] of the Bill omitted restoration as a wilderness manage-

ment principle. The Outdoor Recreation Party has spent its entire existence arguing that wilderness, that has been declared under the *Wilderness Act*, is not managed, but now, with the support of the Coalition parties, they have proposed legislation to require the NPWS to neglect these areas. Such a change to the Act could have precluded rehabilitation following bushfire fighting activities, as well as weed and pest control, as these activities could be defined as wilderness restoration.

The Shadow Environment Minister, Ms Patricia Forsythe, led the debate for the Opposition in the Upper House. Contrary to traditional Coalition practice, the Liberal Party has deferred to the National Party on this core policy area within national parks.

The Coalition Parties have now voted for anti-wilderness legislation three times: once in April 1993; then in April 2000; and again in October 2002. The Coalition will find that, by associating itself with the Outdoor

Recreation Party, it has hitched itself to a raft of other anti-conservation policies that are behind the rhetoric of the access lobby, such as hunting in national parks which they also support.

Further evidence of the Opposition's anti-conservation policy was quoted by Bob Carr at the NCC Annual Conference. Mr. Brogden and other Opposition members: supported the Blue Mountains super-highway; opposed the inclusion of state forests in national parks; wanted to leave it to landholders to vote on native vegetation issues; opposed the Pilliga and Goonoo national parks; and wanted to allow grazing in national parks.

To win Government, the Coalition Parties must become a credible voice in the nature conservation debate, as they did in the run up to the 1988 election. The Coalition is only heeding to one side of the wilderness debate. Opinion polls have consistently recorded 80 per cent or more support for wilderness. ■

Dissolution of Wilderness

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particular access route was 36, for the recently rediscovered Shoebridge Bridle Trail, in the Buckenbowra Wilderness. These objections ensured its retention.

The next major specific objection (in the eyes of the Parks Service) was the 4WD Minuma Fire Trail in the Deua, with just ten lousy objections to its closure, but most 4WD tracks in this wilderness received only two or three submissions supporting their retention. Incredibly, this tiny level of specific concern was enough to ensure the Deua River Valley and its extension into Donalds Creek were omitted from NPWS recommendations and were subsequently accepted by Government.

The Brindabella Wilderness was rejected on the basis of one submission per trail(!), and the Tabletop Wilderness received four complaints relating to huts and two relating to 4WD tracks, as well as an objection that its protection would limit ski resort development at the Selwyn resort. That was the end of Tabletop Wilderness, now to be thrown open to resorts, tourism, commercial horseriding and 4WD vehicles, the latter being prohibited by the Kosciuszko Plan of Management.

The Western Fall Wilderness was reduced to accommodate the ski industry representative's concerns with the Guthega resort "in regard to the potential impacts on future development proposals" and to provide for commercial ski tours. This removed Mount Tate

MEETING DATES

*Meetings will be held at
2pm in our Kent St.
office on November 28th,
December 12th, January
16th and 30th.*

and the tops of the Main Range from the Wilderness.

In all the above cases, specific pro-wilderness plans were not reported. The NPWS report also incorrectly stated that there were no submissions opposing 4WD or horseriding recreation in these wilderness areas.

The NPWS report, in my view, represents a most serious case of both misrepresenting public opinion and misleading government. ■

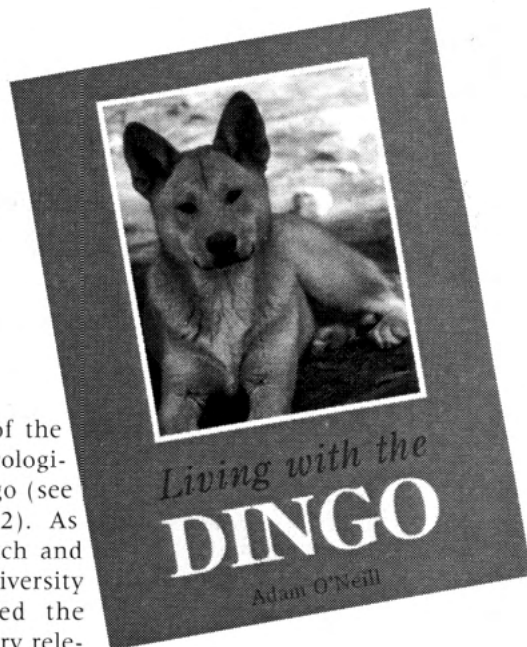
Living with the Dingo

Living with the Dingo
by Adam O'Neill
published by Envirobook,
107pp., rrp \$18.95
Reviewed by Alex Colley

ADAM O'NEILL, a professional eradicator of feral animals and a talented observer, is well qualified to write this book, the theme of which is that "dingoes play a critically important role in maintaining ecological balance in Australia."

Professor John Pettigrew first

brought to the attention of the Colong Foundation the ecological significance of the dingo (see Colong Bulletin Nov. 1992). As Director of the Vision Touch and Hearing Centre of the University of Queensland he studied the vision of birds, which is very relevant to human vision. At the same time a grant from the Australian Research Council enabled a study of bilby, feral cat, fox and dingo numbers. The site of the study, Davenport Downs in central



Queensland, was not a stock breeding station but a fattening property. Dingoes were not therefore a problem. However, dingoes

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A Sense of Wonder

by Haydn Washington
rrp \$19.95, 112 pages
Published by Ecosolutions Consulting (Nullo Books)
Reviewed by Keith Muir

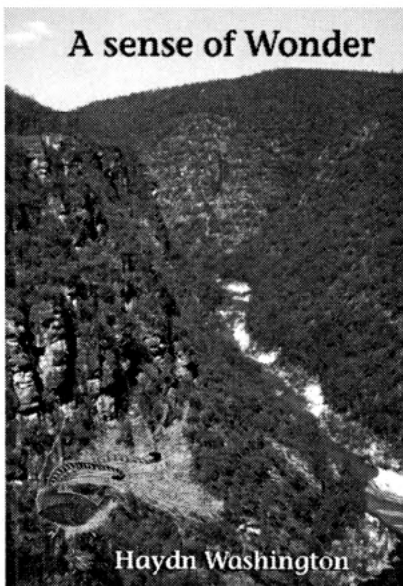
Haydn Washington is an ecologist and author of *Ecosolutions: solving environmental problems for the world and Australia*, so it is not immediately obvious why he should write a book on natural philosophy. At the launch of his new book *A Sense of Wonder*, Haydn explained that like *Ecosolutions*, he saw a crying need for the book. In the case of *Ecosolutions* he outlined environmental solutions to a despairing public who were being inundated and turned off the environment with eco-crisis stories in the media and gloom and doom literature, prevalent in the late 1980s and early 90s. In the case of this new book, Haydn discovered that today's citizens, perhaps more than anything else, need to rediscover their sense of wonder at the natural world. Society was never going to turn around the envi-

ronmental crisis until we first addressed our apathy toward nature. For, if people do not relate to nature, they will never see an environmental crisis and feel sufficiently motivated to really do something about it.

Many *Bulletin* readers would know how important it is to continually

renew your relationship with nature. This book provides some ideas that may help you to explain your intuitive understanding of the natural world and suggests ways to help others rediscover the delight of being in the bush. This is an important book, for it is really surprising just how many professional conservationists, even inside the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the environment movement, have forgotten the absolute importance of renewing those links with wild places.

Haydn is not pretending to be a latter day Henry Thoreau or John Muir, but he has attempted a detailed and helpful explanation on why everyone should reconnect with wilderness. I hope *A Sense of Wonder* sparks other writers to explore and express the tremendous untapped wealth of literary possibilities contained in wilderness and thereby help to create a popular resurgence in nature conservation.



Living with the Dingo

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disappeared from one area, adjacent to a bore watering point, probably due to the fact that they were shot for the bounty. The area was overrun with cats which preyed on the bilbys. It was also noted that the highest densities of cats were found on properties adjacent to Davenport Downs where dingoes had been eliminated by baiting. From a scientific aspect this afforded experimental evidence that, where the dingoes were eliminated, foxes and cats proliferated and smaller species, such as bilbys, were destroyed.

O'Neill writes that "For the last 200 years the dingo has been, and probably still is, the most persecuted animal in the history of Australia. By 1863 there was scarcely a dingo left south of the Murrumbidgee. In the 1930s the price of a dingo's head was 2 pounds. An 8000 km. fence has been erected to contain them."

O'Neill provides abundant evidence that, when the dingo is eliminated, foxes and cats proliferate. This was the case in the Riverina and also in many arid areas. Baiting, aerial or ground based, is the main means of eliminating dingoes. When the dingoes go there is an upsurge in smaller native mammals. Baiting, however, does not eliminate foxes and cats. Foxes avoid baits and cats prefer the fresh prey that they kill. With the demise

of the dingoes the foxes and cats soon breed in large numbers or infiltrate from adjoining areas and destroy the native mammals. The dingoes, like other Australian animals, adapted to the climatically uncertain Australian environment, increase slowly and may never return to the baited territory. With their disappearance kangaroos breed up, and this is perhaps the main reason why they are now a pest in many areas.

O'Neill has presented a well supported case for the preservation of the dingo. The main difficulty is the fact that they have interbred with feral or domestic dogs. This has meant the fragmentation of the dingo packs led by a dominant dingo dog. After baiting, dingoes may return to the baited area from adjoining areas, but not as a pack. It is these disoriented remnants which mate with domestic and feral dogs. It is a mixture of dogs and dingo half breeds which cause stock losses. Can selective preservation of pure bred, or near pure bred dingoes be achieved? Is there an alternative to baiting? There are alternatives, though they would prove expensive. One is to use areas subject to dog depredation for fattening of stock rather than breeding. Another is to exclude dogs by erection of electric fences.

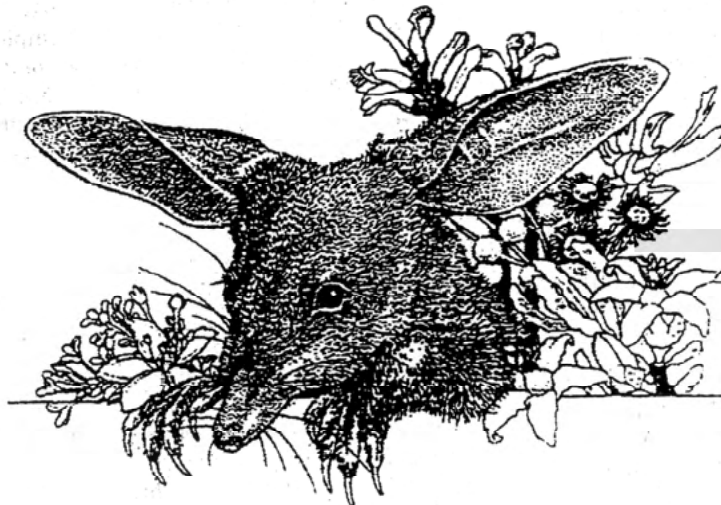
For the last 200 years the dingo has been, and probably still is, the most persecuted animal in the history of Australia.

Another is to put dog proof fences round dingo habitats and eliminate the dogs within it (on the lines of the Earth Sanctuaries reserves). Perhaps the most practical measure is to shoot the offending animals, as O'Neill has done within the Scotia Sanctuary.

There are many difficulties to be overcome if the dingo is to be preserved, but as he concludes: *Only when we put away the poison baits and concen-*

trate on rehabilitating our environment as a whole, will our endangered species have any hope of survival. The dingo has 4,000 years of experience in managing Australian land systems and controlling the animals that existed within them. I believe that the dingo is our only chance for reconciliation. ■

[Note: The Colong Foundation for Wilderness agrees with Mr O'Neil that dingoes should not be baited within their core habitat on public lands, but, to effectively control hybridisation with feral dogs, the Foundation does not rule out baiting around the perimeter of national parks and state forests. Such baiting can prevent entry of dogs into these core areas; kill off rogue feral dog populations; and prevent attacks on stock. Baiting could also be considered as part of a dingo recovery program to kill off feral dog populations in core dingo habitat on public lands to allow subsequent expansion of dingo populations into these areas.]



The Black Christmas **BUSHFIRES**

by Alex Colley

DROUGHTS, floods and bushfires are unavoidable disasters. Droughts and floods cannot be controlled, but the incidence and damage of bushfires can be reduced. After every fire disaster there is an Inquiry. There have been nine State inquiries or reports since 1994, since when over 300 homes have been lost. The latest report was produced by the NSW Joint Select Committee's Inquiry into the 2000/2001 fires, which shrouded the city in smoke for several weeks.

Impacts of global warming

The present below zero El Nino Index, recorded during a prolonged drought, supports a prediction of an exceptionally hot dry spring and summer, an effect no doubt enhanced by global warming. In 1999 Australia's policies on global warming were referred to the Senate Environment Communications Information and Arts Reference Committee. In November 2000, the Committee's report entitled *The Heat is On* was handed down. Evidence presented to the Committee left no doubt that Australia's climatic extremes would be amplified by global warming. Climate scientist, Dr. Barrie Pitcock, described Australia as the OECD country most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change because of its low latitude and naturally occurring high temperatures, which are already above optimum levels. Professor Schellnhuber, from the Inter-Governmental Panel on climate change, told the Committee that Australia may be among the most vulnerable regions. Scientific opinion was that Australia could become much drier. The Committee concluded that this "would have severe implications for Australia." However, the Committee, composed

entirely of politicians, did not recommend the only effective means of substantially reducing greenhouse emissions - a carbon tax.

Report of the NSW Joint Select Inquiry

The NSW Joint Select Inquiry report that the prime aim of bushfire risk management is to protect lives and property. Management also aims to minimise the impact of both hazard reduction and potential bushfires on biodiversity and biophysical processes. The findings of the Inquiry are not new, but they do cover the main features of Colong Foundation policy. The first finding is that all land owners and their agents are responsible for implementing appropriate measures, including hazard reduction. The third finding is that the implementation of hazard reduction must regard the principles of ecologically sustainable development (This must mean that the burning of national parks is not the answer). It is recognised that bush fire risk can be mitigated through appropriate land use zoning. This finding is opposed by development interests on the ground that it would "stunt city growth" (see SMH 24.8.2002). It is accepted that fire trails provide the opportunity for fires to be started deliberately, or accidentally, and that they can be used by people dumping rubbish or used by recreational groups such as horseriders and four wheel drivers, causing recreational damage. However, despite the recommendation that hazard reduction "must have regard to the principles of ecologically sustainable development," there is no recommendation that the use of fire trails be restricted to fire fighting. It is recommended "That land management agencies be encouraged to explore with appropriate recreational groups arrangements for maintenance of the trails." This

will no doubt lead to more fire trails in national parks being opened to 4WD vehicles, at least until it is realised that this will increase erosion of these tracks making them useless for fire management.

Rural Fire Commissioner Phil Koperberg pointed out that the majority of houses lost in the 2001 fires were inadequately prepared. After the destruction of 10 houses in Thurlgona Street Engadine in October 2002, he said that the residents would not be permitted to rebuild houses anything like the houses they had lost. He said that control burning would not have prevented the loss of the homes. Because of the design of the houses, their location on a steep slope and the intensity of the fire, they were "almost unsurvivable, unless there was bare earth."

The report recognises the capability of aircraft including leased air cranes, particularly in support roles, in periods of high danger, though it does not cover the Colong suggestion that aircraft could be used in early detection of fires during periods of high fire danger. However, it is pointed out that in conditions such as prevailed in 2001 a fire will burn out of control within 5 or 10 minutes. Early detection and aerial water dumping must be supported by ground control to be effective.

Many problems are relegated to research, but as Professor Whelan pointed out, there is no simple solution. Losses of fauna and flora, and of soil following ensuing wet periods, cannot be quantified. The best that can be done is to adhere to the recommendations of the Inquiry.

The report does not cover the causes of bushfires, because the Committee is awaiting a Police inquiry, though many submissions offering opinions were received. Most

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HORSE RIDING IN WORLD HERITAGE NATURAL AREAS

In breach of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 which states that the primary concern of the Service is the protection and management of native flora and fauna, the National Parks and Wildlife Service is currently negotiating with the Australian Horseriders Association the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding which will allow groups of up to 20 to camp overnight in several North Coast parks, including Gibraltar Range and Oxley Wild Rivers National Parks.

Under the regulations of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth), Environment Australia has the final responsibility for the management of Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves Australia (CERRA) World Heritage area. The two national parks mentioned above are part of CERRA. As horseriding is not regarded by Environment Australia as an appropriate recreational activity in CERRA properties, it appears NPWS would be in breach of the regulations under the EPBC Act, which states that the prime purpose is to "protect and conserve," if they gave into pressure from the horseriding lobby.

Black Christmas Bushfires

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fires result from human activities, including arson, and it is to be hoped the Police inquiry will recommend detection measures.

The Assistant Police Commissioner, John Laycock, has said that police would be out in the bush on trail bikes and on patrol for arsonists. Arsonists in bushland are difficult to apprehend, but many will be known to their associates. Assistant Commissioner Laycock's appeal to the public to look out for suspicious behaviour is therefore very important. Let us hope that any caught are dealt with severely. ■

Colong Bulletin 195, November 2002

EXPLOITATION BEFORE CONSERVATION

In the last Colong Bulletin Keith Muir wrote:

The National Parks and Wildlife Service appears to be losing its understanding of conservation and national parks through the accommodation of stakeholders, while through the same process rapidly alienating traditional supporters, who have unstintingly given their time and effort to protect these precious areas.

Keith described a number of examples, including the Memorandums of Understanding which enabled 4WD access to Nattai and Chaelundi National Parks, the bisection of Guy Fawkes, Washpool and Macleay Gorges Parks to accommodate the Bicentennial National Trail (despite an assurance that the Trail would not go through wilderness areas) and concessions to horseriders and boat owners in Ku-ring-gai NP. In the National Parks Association October Journal, Stephen Lord lists a pattern of deal makings between the NPWS and high impact users. These are: the continued provision of private moorings; an expansion of horseriding on management trails; the use of power boats on Smiths Creek; permission for cycling events on management trails; commercial rock climbing and abseiling without permits; and private encroachments of buildings and moorings on National Park lands. Stephen Lord writes:

None of the above planning decisions were flagged in the draft plan and none were endorsed by the Advisory Council. Such major changes in the management planning decisions between a draft and adopted plan for a National Park is unprecedented in the history of the NPWS. ■

NOW OR NEVER

In Victoria, two-thirds of our native vegetation has been cleared, and significant proportions of what remains are degraded. This unequivocally establishes a general context of scarcity for nature conservation in the State that we must battle to keep in front of decision makers' eyes. Failure to do so means we will have lost the 'context game' and will be forever caught in the process of division and diminution of what little remains.

**Michael Fendley, VNPA Director,
in 50 Update, October 2002**

Growth Before Safety

The Colong Foundation has long allocated the blame for property damage by bushfires to those who build inflammable houses in inflammable bushland and councils who let them do it. We are pleased that, since August 1st, development applications in bushfire-prone lands have had to be referred to the Fire Service for approval. This policy is opposed by the Planning Institute, developers, real estate agents and some councils. These interests want to be free to clear bushland for development. David Broyd, President of the NSW branch of the Planning Institute, said "If we are going to achieve 500,000 new homes for Sydney in the next 30 years there will need to be a balance," (SMH 24-8-2002). Such a "balance" would ensure that urban expansion proposals proceed and destructive clearing in fire prone areas would greatly increase.

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Return to Eden

IN November 1998 I did a walk along Murramarang National Park. This is a strip of the mid south coast of New South Wales. It is a special area for me. It is where the forest meets the coastline, forest meets beach. It is as Cook would have seen it as he came up the coast, there is a mountain, a mountain range a bit further back and the forest still extends up and over it. Murramarang is beautiful, and on an early summer day, a sparkling day, a Saturday morning, it was a beautiful coastal walk to make along beaches, then into a woodland, and out at the end of traversing that strip of coast onto a beach where kangaroos could be seen on the sand and behind which is a coastal lake, one of a series of coastal lakes on that part of the coast.

In November 1999 I flew the whole length of the New South Wales south coast. I flew down to Tuross with its beautiful river and

estuary, and the next day helicoptered down to the Victorian border to the Nadgee Nature Reserve (our last coastal wilderness in New South Wales) and then flew back up the Tuross and the day after right up the coast on a beautiful clear day over Jervis Bay, the last natural harbour on the east coast. It was gloriously beautiful, there were countless coastal lakes and, as I said, right down to the Victorian border, a coastal wilderness. There are no roads and it is as wild as when Cook first sighted it. This is special. It does not exist anywhere else in the world... Villages and towns should be contained within clear limits: coastal sprawl should not be allowed to swallow up farmland; agricultural zonings should be protected along the coast... So I come to the vision of the coast after addressing the issue of population policy, ... The housing industry and the shopping centre industry are great advocates of Australia having

a population of 50 million... it is not a build up of population of inland centres. It is the loss of green space up and down the east coast of Australia, all of it – existing farmland and the natural countryside – under urban sprawl and intensive city development.

We still have a lot of our natural world left to save... I think a large part of our future lies in tourism – is based on the uniqueness of this land. People will come here to have the wonderful experience of walking through an old growth forest or a rainforest and catching glimpses of water... We still have wild country. We still have authentic forests and, moreover, some on the coast. We still have coastal lakes. This is special and ought to be conserved. Our love of this place, our simple patriotism, insists it be conserved.

Bob Carr - Address to the Brisbane Institute, 18 April 2000

Barely 1% of the world's seas and coasts are protected - IUCN.

The Durras Mountain escarpment and the coastline between Pretty Beach and Depot Beach are key dramatic elements of the much enlarged Murramarang National Park.



***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 for 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. 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 listing of the Blue Mountains as World Heritage.

It is at present working for the protection of threatened wilderness in NSW; the preservation of national parks from commercial development and damaging use; and 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

- | | Price Posted | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| WILD PLACES | 27.50 <input type="checkbox"/> | THE BAREFOOT BUSHWALKER | 27.50 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>The meticulously researched, beautifully written book on wilderness by Peter Prineas with photographs by Henry Gold (285pp)</i> | | <i>by Dorothy Butler, Australian Geographic award winner. A story of a lifetime of adventure in wilderness and high mountains (292pp)</i> | |
| BLUE MOUNTAINS FOR WORLD HERITAGE | 17.60 <input type="checkbox"/> | CLASSIC BUSHWALKING MAPS | by Myles Dunphy |
| <i>Geoff Mosley provides a comprehensive explanation of the wealth of heritage values in the Blue Mountains (135pp)</i> | | <i>(Gangerang and Kowmung Maps)</i> | 6.00ea <input type="checkbox"/> |
| HOW THE RAINFOREST WAS SAVED | (59pp) 9.00 <input type="checkbox"/> | WILDERNESS RED INDEX | – complete \$110 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| PARK OR PINES | – The Battle for the Boyd (42pp) 9.00 <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>The Index describes the land ownership, values, history and threats to NSW wild places</i> | |
| THE BATTLE FOR THE BUSH | 27.50 <input type="checkbox"/> | – Summary brochures | \$2.20 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Geoff Mosley's account of the genesis of the nature conservation movement and saving of the Blue Mountains environment (174pp)</i> | | – Listing of individual areas | \$5.50 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| MYLES DUNPHY (SELECTED WRITINGS) | 43.95 <input type="checkbox"/> | THE COLONG STORY | (42pp) 9.00 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | LIVING WITH THE DINGO | (107pp) 19.00 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <i>by Adam O'Neill</i> | |