



# THE COLONG BULLETIN

Bulletin 203

THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD

March 2004

**PROTECTING WILDERNESS AND NATIONAL PARKS**

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A Wilderness is hereby recognised as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. **US Wilderness Act, 1964.**  
There are now 269 million sq. kilometres of wilderness in the US.

## Wilderness Resurgence for the Greater Blue Mountains and Beyond

**T**HE 'Wilderness' word has suffered the insult of being placed in parenthesis when used by certain postmodernist philosophers and some Aboriginal spokespersons who claim it must be so quarantined to be politically correct. Despite these critics, the community remains sympathetic to wilderness because most

people intuitively understand and appreciate wilderness as the most intact, best quality natural bushland remaining.

A seminar is proposed to encourage wilderness supporters who have been embarrassed by these attacks and to renew their support for wild places. The seminar is to take stock of where we

are, examine some of the attacks on wilderness and how they relate to the dedication and management of wilderness in the Greater Blue Mountains and elsewhere. The seminar aims to inspire participants to celebrate wilderness, participate in wilderness education programs, and support campaign strategies.

**The wilderness seminar will be on Sunday 28th March** at Blackheath in the NPWS Blue Mountains Heritage Centre on Govetts Leap Road has been convened for wilderness supporters and invited guests.

**To Register:** The cost of the seminar has been kept down to \$20 (\$15 concession). Colong members can register by either sending a cheque to the Colong Foundation at level 2, 362 Kent St,

### In this issue...

Wilderness Resurgence for the Greater Blue Mountains	1
Order of Australia awarded to Keith Muir	2
Feral Horse Action Alert	3
Authorities Confirm Colong's Concerns	4
Sydney Catchment Authority Review	5

Tasmania's Choice - Tourists or Woodcips?	5
NCC Annual Conference	6
Our Blinkered Economists	6
Control of Flights Over Parks	7
Visit to Southern Forests and Koskiuszko	8
Clarence Colliery Expansion	10

*continued on page 2*

#### THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS

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# Order of Australia Medal awarded to Colong Foundation's Director

Keith's award gives recognition to the public significance of his work at the Colong Foundation. He became a volunteer worker for the Total Environment Centre in 1985 and worked for many years with the Friends of the Hacking River as its Secretary. This organisation helped secure additions to Royal National Park and stop urban expansion at Helensburgh that would have linked Sydney with Wollongong. He was appointed Director of the Colong Foundation in 1991 after he revived the campaign for the protection of the Nattai Wilderness, which was declared in December of that year, becoming the first wilderness to be protected under the Wilderness Act, 1987. He then led a successful campaign for the declaration of the Gardens of Stone National Park and played a crucial role in securing World Heritage listing for the Greater Blue Mountains. More importantly, he developed a series of NSW based campaigns that helped to expand the wilderness estate

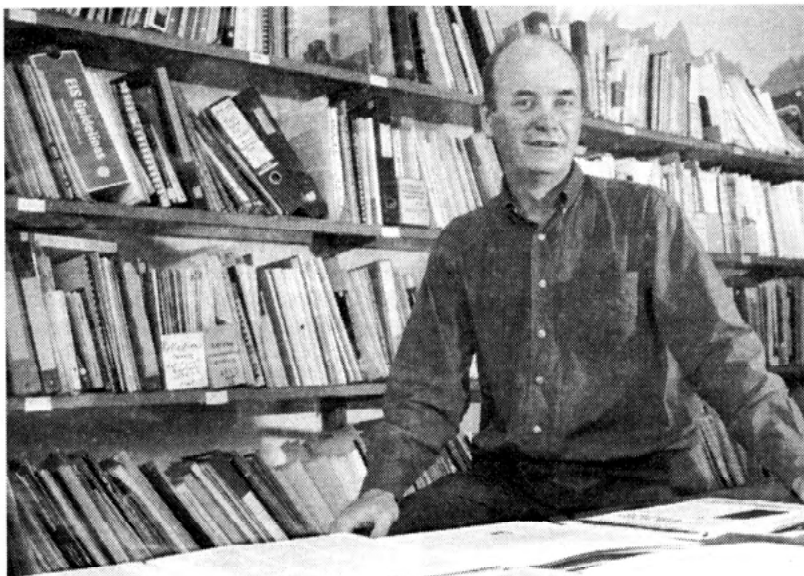


Photo: Aaron Brown, the Inner Western Suburbs Courier, 26 Jan. 2004

from less than half a million hectares in 1991 to 1.8 million hectares to date.

## Wilderness Resurgence

*continued from 1*

Sydney NSW 2000 or email [keith@colongwilderness.org.au](mailto:keith@colongwilderness.org.au) advising of your intention to register on the day. You should bring your own lunch or buy it in Blackheath before the seminar that starts at 9.30 am.

**Who can attend:** This seminar is not open to the general public or the media, but rather to those who have a long-standing interest in wilderness conservation, Traditional Owners, academics etc. There may be another seminar open to the public later in the year. If you think you know someone who should attend then contact the Network and provide us an email address (if you can). Contact Haydn Washington, phone 6379 6257 or email [haywash@bigpond.com](mailto:haywash@bigpond.com)

**Topics:** 'Why it is time for

wilderness resurgence', 'The Wilderness Knot', 'Reconciling the concepts of wilderness and indigenous landscapes', 'Wilderness one Aboriginal perspective', 'Wilderness campaigns yet to be won in the Blue Mountains', 'a Wild Country Program for NSW', 'In Praise of Patriotism: Wilderness and the Nation State' and others.

**Speakers:** include Peter Prineas, Haydn Washington, Bill Lines, Keith Muir, Wyn Jones, Mark Tredinnick, The Wilderness Society, and others.

An open forum in the afternoon will canvass the views of participants in regard to wilderness resurgence.

The seminar is being organised by the Greater Blue Mountains Wilderness Network and will be followed by a campfire that night, and day walk on Monday 29th March. ■

## WHO CARES ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT?

As Ross Gittens writes (SMH 1.3.04) economists believe the only way to change peoples' behaviour is "by means of economic incentives and disincentives". The Department of Environment's survey of environmental knowledge 'disproves the economists' belief - 47 per cent of people are concerned for future generations. The environment rates third after family and friends in personal priorities and flora and fauna protection rates below water and air as an environmental issue.

Surprisingly 40 per cent would agree to increased taxes if extra money were used to fix environmental problems.

# FERAL HORSE ACTION ALERT

## PLEASE MAKE A SUBMISSION TO GUY FAWKES RIVER HORSE PLAN

**DEADLINE: 26 March 2004**

The Guy Fawkes River Horse Management Plan needs your support. After a Ministerial announcement that feral horses were to be humanely removed from the park, the NPWS Northern Directorate, through community consultation, has produced a plan that will see: horse removal within five years; a managed herd off park; and monitoring of the plan's effectiveness, humaneness and ecological impacts. The team has worked hard to produce the best plan possible, despite the continued ban on the most humane and effective control method - aerial culling. The Plan is a relief after the appallingly weak response to the feral horse population explosion in Kosciuszko.

Your comments are invaluable, as there is absolutely no doubt that there will be submissions that continue to argue against the removal of horses from national parks, even if special "brumby" areas are established off park land.

### HOW TO MAKE A SUBMISSION

- 1. Online:** Go to NPWS web-site (Google search NPWS or National Parks and Wildlife Service) and click on "Managing Guy Fawkes Horses" or go directly to [http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/npws.nsf/Content/guy\\_fawkes\\_horses\\_draft\\_plan](http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/npws.nsf/Content/guy_fawkes_horses_draft_plan)
- 2. Email:**  
[dorrigio@npws.nsw.gov.au](mailto:dorrigio@npws.nsw.gov.au)
- 3. Fax:** 02 6657 2145
- 4. Mail:** NPWS, Reply Paid 170, Dorrigio NSW 2453

NPWS has requested that submissions be framed under specific headings. Find Colong Foundation endorsed comments below. For further information contact Fiona McCrossin.

### A) BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

#### Support:

- Goal for effective and humane removal of horses so that the park may be managed free of

horses

- Clear statements about the ecological impacts of horses on the park
- Humane management of the horses outside the park by people with an interest in their heritage value
- Recognition that, under previous management regimes, horses were sent to the abattoir if not valued for human use (a far less humane outcome than on site shooting under strict protocols)
- Objective that capture and removal methods do not cause a significant impact on the environment
- Evaluation and appropriate modification of removal methods

### B) HORSE MANAGEMENT METHODS

#### Support:

- Clear discussion of: efficiency; level of humaneness; ecological impact; conflicts with other users; and wilderness protection, in relation to capture and removal techniques
- Performance based contracts
- Reconsideration of alternative control methods if those to be trialled are not initially effective, or are of limited effectiveness as

the Park's horse population decreases (alternative methods should include both ground and aerial shooting under strict protocols e.g. FFAST (Feral Animal Aerial Shooting Training) protocols for aerial shooting)

#### Do not support:

- That "acceptance by the wider community" should be a consideration for management decisions if this "acceptance" negates the use of methods which have been independently declared both humane and effective

### C) CONTROL METHODS TO BE TRIALED

#### Support:

- Trapping in yards and trap paddocks with strict monitoring of ecological impacts, including those of trap construction and removal
- Trapping of horses using low stress behavioural techniques with strict monitoring of ecological impacts
- The exclusion of roping as a capturing technique due to its relative inefficiency, infliction of stress on the horses and the

*continued on page 4*



## FERAL HORSE ACTION ALERT

continued from 3

ecological impacts of running horses

- The use of mustering in specific areas of the park, only if other, less ecologically damaging and more humane, techniques prove ineffective

### D) FUTURE USE OF HORSES REMOVED FROM THE PARK Support

- Concept of privately funded "Wild horses sanctuaries" (p 21) as an example of a "managed herd" off park, and congratulate the plan for actively supporting this initiative

### E) MONITORING AND EVALUATION Support

- Annual evaluation of effectiveness of trial, with consequential modification of techniques, in order to reduce the horse population to zero in five years
- Monitoring of impact of horses on flora, fauna and soils, only in that it may provide more quantitative, site specific data in order to reduce polarisation of the current feral horse debate. Previous research, and extrapolation of impact data from other sites, continues to support the NSW legislative mandate to remove feral horses from conservation reserves.
- Monitoring of the environmental impact of the removal programme

### Do not support

- Any decision to stop managing horses, if the control methods prove to be causing "greater environmental damage than the existing presence of free-ranging horses in the park" (p.23). Rather, poor control outcomes should give a clear direction to government that they must lift the NSW ban on the most humane, effective and, arguably, least ecologically damaging method of removing horses from the Guy Fawkes River landscape, that is aerial shooting. ■

# Authorities Confirm Colong's Concerns

OBTAINING the *Australian Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment* and the NSW *State of the Environment Report* was not easy. The Commonwealth publications bookshop was closed, and the NSW Government bookshop did not have the *State of the Environment Report*. However Mr Peter Woods of the Australian Government Environment Department obliged with the *Biodiversity Assessment* and the NSW Government bookshop tracked down the *State of the Environment Report*. If the information in these reports is to be widely used they should be sent free of charge to the leading environmental organisations and universities, and sold in government bookshops.

In a letter to the Minister for the Environment, Dr. Roy Green, Chairman of Land and Water Resources Advisory Council, writes that the *Biodiversity Assessment* identifies the need to significantly enhance biodiversity conservation through:

□ investing in protective management in order to minimise the impact of threatening processes such as clearing of vegetation, overgrazing, weeds, feral animals and inappropriate fire regimes;

□ consolidating the national reserve system across priority bioregions to protect poorly reserved and threatened habitats;

□ engaging the broader community in the recovery of threatened species and ecosystems;

□ identifying specific biodiversity conservation objectives as part of natural resource management; and

□ building awareness and identifying priorities for investment through the continued collection and assessment of information on Australia's biodiversity.

These means of enhancing biodiversity are those employed by the Colong Foundation.

The most common threatening processes for threatened species are described in the report as vegetation clearing, particularly in Queensland and New South Wales, continued loss of native vegetation in Tasmania,

increased fragmentation of vegetation remnants in New South Wales and Western Australia, overgrazing and feral animals across much of central and Western Australia, inappropriate fire regimes in northern Australia, and changed hydrology from various causes.

The Assessment states that there is an urgent need to implement a strategic plan for consolidating Australia's protected area. In other words, add inholdings and privately owned wilderness, such as Green Gully, to declared wilderness areas.

The NSW *State of the Environment Report* quotes the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council Report conclusion that "Australia's natural systems are in decline... the causes are extreme human alteration of ecosystems, without recognition of the processes that need to be maintained so that essential ecosystem services continue to be delivered to us."

Chapter 2 is devoted to population and settlement patterns. It states that "in the coastal regions population growth and development creates strong pressure on the environment, with impacts such as loss of ecosystems, and sedimentation and nutrient pollution in coastal lakes and estuaries... Sound planning is needed to minimise these impacts." As reported in our last *Bulletin*, planning is very unsound.

The degradation and loss of terrestrial ecosystems is described as a major threat to biodiversity. "Reducing and fragmenting habitat can lead to the extinction of species." This is simply a reason for more wilderness. "Net loss of native vegetation is continuing despite efforts to revegetate. Outside of reserves the estimated regeneration of native vegetation is between 50% and 85% of the area being cleared each year. One third of the terrestrial vertebrate animals are considered to be under threat."

Both of these reports stress the significance of preserving the natural environment. ■

# Sydney Catchment Authority review

by Keith Muir

THE Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal is reviewing the operation of Sydney Catchment Authority. An issue paper was prepared that describes the licence conditions controlling catchment management operations and how the Catchment Authority's performance is measured.

The Catchment Authority considers it should be accountable to its Minister and not the Tribunal. It is reluctant to provide a water quality risk management plan and other performance measures sought by the Tribunal. The NPWS provides catchment management for inner catchment areas within national parks on behalf of the Catchment Authority and so is tied up in this debate that determines the Authority's finances.

Following the 1998 water crisis, Peter McClellan QC recommended measures to reduce the risk of water contamination in a special inquiry into Sydney's water supplies. It now appears that the Catchment Authority is determined to undermine the monitoring and independent auditing specified by McClellan, arguing that it is too expensive. Monitoring means more than just taking water samples because once the water supplies are polluted it is too late; catchment protection has failed. The Authority has forgotten it was set up to ensure major improvements are made in catchment protection.

It is essential, for example, that the Tribunal be allowed to conduct an annual examination of the strategic catchment plan for the Special Area Catchments. This plan determines what work is done in the catchment and the funding for the NPWS programs, such as for effective pest control. The Authority wants to replace particular compliance monitoring programs for the inner catchment with more generalised information covering the entire catchment.

National Parks comprise 215,000 hectares of the catchment Special Areas, for which the Authority provides \$1.8 million to the NPWS to undertake 37 key actions under the strategic catchment plan. It is the ecological integrity of these catchment Special Areas that are next to our water storages that provide critical water cleansing services. If these inner catchments were man-made water treatment plants each would have precise water treatment performance requirements.

These catchment Special Areas are nature's treatment plants and must be operated with careful monitoring to ensure correct functioning. To continue to operate the inner catchments on less than half the per-hectare funding provided to the outer catchment is just asking for trouble. And the NPWS receives no funding for compliance monitoring for any of the 37 action areas. The NPWS operational budget is subsidising the provision of catchment services and monitoring at the expense of park management elsewhere.

Unfortunately the Tribunal has its deferred review of the Catchment Authority because the regulatory environment is so uncertain. The legislation governing the Authority is being reviewed, along with about every aspect of catchment management. Let's hope that the NPWS can continue to protect the inner catchment for us until it gets the funding it deserves for the management it provides. ■

## MEETING DATES

*Meetings will be held in our Kent St. office at 2pm on March 18th, April 1st, 15th and 29th, and May 13th and 27th*

## Tasmania's Choice Tourists or Woodchips?

The world's largest remnants of temperate rainforest are in Tasmania. As temperate rainforests in other places continue to be logged, Tasmania's forests may become the only substantial temperate rainforests left. As such they will, if preserved, become, along with Tasmania's very tall trees, world famous tourist attractions.

The three very large ferries operating from the mainland to Tasmania each carry 1400 passengers. The off peak minimum fare from Sydney to Davenport is \$230, covering both passenger and car. In Tasmania they will travel by car or bus. What will they see?

The cosmetic strips along tourist routes do not hide logging damage. In a letter to the SMH on Jan 19th Wendy Harmer wrote: "There is now hardly a hillside in the whole of eastern and southern Tasmania which has not been scarred by clear felling and plantations... and this is supposed to be the Holiday isle. It was more like driving round a giant industrial estate... Trucks were coming at the rate of one every four minutes... Locals have complained of logging trucks rumbling past their houses from midnight to dawn."

At considerable personal risk green activists have opposed extensive logging in the south west forests and the Styx Valley where trees centuries old and up to 190 metres tall and being logged. The woodchip company Gunns Limited, a company whose share price has risen 900 per cent in five years, does most of the logging. The woodchips are used to manufacture paper, most of which will become advertising material and packaging material.

Three decades ago the Tasmanian Government acceded to the Hydro Electric Commission. Only Federal intervention saved the Franklin River. Today both the Government and the Opposition favour Gunns. Again only Federal intervention will conserve Tasmania's natural assets. If the A.L.P. intervenes it will secure Green preferences and probably be elected, despite the possible loss of one or two seats to Tasmania's vandal voters.

## *Our Blinkered Economists*

In his paper *Global Corporate Capitalism*, Ian Edwards of TEC writes:

The idea that there is such a subject as pure economics is a dangerous illusion achieved at the expense of ignoring all factors, such as the depletion of the earth's resources and the pollution of the biosphere which can't be given a precise, preferably monetary, value. For the sake of our descendants we need to insist that:-

- Rates of use of renewable resources do not exceed the rates at which the ecosystem is able to regenerate them (e.g. the earth's forests and fisheries are both being depleted at an unsustainable rate.)
- Rates of consumption or irretrievable disposal of non-renewable resources do not exceed the rates at which renewable substitutes are developed and phased into use. The world is running out of coal and oil and we need to develop renewable resources of energy such as solar and wind power.
- Rates of pollution emissions do not exceed the ecosystem's natural assimilative capacity. Greenhouse gases and noxious industrial effluents are destroying our environment with consequences such as global warming resulting in climate change and rising sea levels. Market forces have no concern for the victims of these changes.

Rod Stevenson of the Queensland Conservation Council writes: "It will be difficult, if not impossible to save the planet until a broader notion of public property evolves and there is a recognition of our place as part of the environment rather than owners of the environment for our pleasure."

# Colong Foundation Motions adopted at the Nature Conservation Council Annual Conference

THE Colong Foundation submitted six of the eight Wilderness and Natural Areas motions passed at the October Annual Conference of the Nature Conservation Council, attended by representatives of 44 conservation organisations. These were:

### That the NCC

- call on the NPWS to discontinue zoning parks under the recreation planning framework that would legitimise recreational horseriding and 4WD recreational use across broad areas of parks; and

- request that all national parks be managed as unmodified natural areas, with provision of prescriptions in plans of management which allow for appropriate public vehicle access on defined routes, to be generally restricted to the edges of parks, and be associated with a number of small, compact, low-impact camping areas and other facilities such as lookouts, established in areas of low environmental sensitivity after environmental assessment and review.

**Action:** NCC to write to the Minister for the Environment.

### That the NCC

- call on the NPWS to reject the placement of declared wilderness areas within two kinds of recreation management planning zones.

**Action:** NCC to write to the Minister for the Environment.

### That the NCC

- oppose the location of a 27 million tonne sand quarry proposal adjoining the World Heritage Blue Mountains National Park at Newnes Junction;

- call on the NSW Government to add the site to the Blue Mountains National Park; and

- call on the NSW Government to develop a strategic plan for the sup-

ply, use and re-use of extractive minerals for the Greater Sydney region that would protect areas of conservation value across the state.

**Action:** NCC to write to relevant ministers.

### That the NCC

- support the Kosciuszko National Park Plan for Environmental Protection and Restoration, and call for its implementation as soon as possible.

**Action:** NCC to publicise issue, write to relevant Ministers.

### That the NCC

- call on the NSW Government to reserve the remaining unprotected wilderness areas in NSW; including Tabletop; Brindabella; the Deua headwaters and the central Deua Valley; the Badja extension to the Tuross wilderness; the western side of the Shoalhaven Gorge (West Ettrema addition); North Ettrema; Murruin; Yengo; Mummel Gulf; Tug-golo; Cataract; Stockyard Creek; Chaelundi; Timbarra; Bald Rock; Pilliga; Mt. Kaputar additions and Bebo.

**Action:** NCC to write to the Minister for the Environment

Another motion submitted jointly by the Blue Mountains Conservation Society and the Colong Foundation was:

### That the NCC

- write to the Minister for the Environment and member for the Blue Mountains, The Hon. Bob Debus, to thank him for his efforts to date to ensure that the Draft Strategic Plan for the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area provides the highest possible protection for the Area, and request that the NPWS

*continued on page 7*



## Colong Foundation Motions

*continued from 6*

further amend the Draft Plan by:

- deleting reference to recreation and access issues being granted priority attention in the review of relevant reserve plans of management;
- reinstating the reference to the four categories of identified strategic threats to the outstanding universal values of the WHA, including threats from recreation and tourism activities, that have been deleted from the May 2003 version of the draft;
- including a recognition that the protection of declared wilderness areas and protected catchment areas are fundamental to protecting the World Heritage Area;
- including a recognition of the benefits of, and a procedure to pursue the establishment of a broad buffer zone around the World Heritage Area that would protect the property, including its integrity and outstanding universal value, from inappropriate tourism and other development proposals, such as quarries and mines and ensure that adjoining lands are managed in sympathy with the World Heritage property; and
- including a recognition of the likely severe environmental impacts of human induced climate change and the development of measures to ameliorate these effects.

**Action:** *NCC to write to the Minister for the Environment to ensure that the Draft Plan be amended be amended as noted above*

The Colong Foundation supported another motion on Wilderness and Natural Areas, submitted by the Hornsby Conservation society.

### That the NCC

● call on the Premier, the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, the Member for Hornsby and the member for Ku-ring-gai, to recognise the classification of Berowra Valley as a regional Park in 1998 was not appropriate, and should be corrected as soon as possible by its re-classification as Berowra

Valley National Park, under the normal management of the NSW NPWS.

**Action:** *NCC to write letters as above.*

Three motions on Legislation and Land Use submitted by the Colong Foundation were carried. These were:

### That the NCC

● prepare an environmental levy policy;

### That the NCC

● call on the NSW Government to hold all money related to the Dunphy Wilderness Fund in the Dunphy Wilderness Fund as a statutory fund under section 23 of the Wilderness Act, 1987, and be used for the Fund's stated purposes;

**Action:** *Write letter to relevant Minister*

### That this Conference

● express its concern at the NSW Government's administrative arrangements for natural resource management, which threatens to marginalise the Minister for the Environment and his Department of Environment and Conservation and prevent their effective participation in the formulation of natural resources policy;

● express its concern at recent statements about a future transfer of threatened species administration from the Minister for the Environment to the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources and request the NSW Premier to urgently issue a statement on behalf of the Government confirming that the Minister for Environment and his Department of Environment and Conservation will continue to retain responsibility for threatened species, wildlife and biodiversity, and

● request the NSW Premier to ensure that the proposed Natural Resources Commission and the Natural Resources Advisory Council will be answerable to a Cabinet Subcommittee jointly chaired by the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources and request that the Premier make a public statement on behalf of the Government confirming these arrangements. ■

## More Medals for TEC and Colong Workers

Last May Jeff Angel, Director and Fran Kelly, Natural Areas Campaigner of TEC, Keith Muir Director and Alex Colley Hon Secretary of Colong, were awarded Centenary Medals. On Australia Day Jeff was awarded an Order of Australia Medal "for service to conservation and the environment as a member of a range of organisations and committees concerned with environmental protection and conservation." Keith was awarded an OAM "for service to nature conservation, particularly through the Colong Foundation for Wilderness." Recognition of the valuable contribution of these dedicated workers for the environment is much appreciated.

## Control of Flights over Parks

The auditory and visual impact of low flying aircraft on national parks has been a continuous concern of the Colong Foundation. Because we believed that an airport at Badgerys Creek would inevitably mean low altitude flights over the Blue Mountains, our Director became the executive officer of the Alliance for an Airport Outside Sydney chaired by Bob Walshe. We also opposed low level helicopter flights. The next assault was that of the Jet Flight Centre, which proposed to fly jet fighter aircraft at subsonic speeds at a height of 500 feet above mountain valleys. We are pleased to have received a letter from Peter Langhorne, Chief of Staff of Ministry for Transport, detailing proposals for the control of flights over national parks and Heritage areas. Operators will have to secure the support of both the local airport and the local Council. Permits will include specific noise abatement procedures. Aircraft must maintain an altitude of not less than 3000 feet above ground level for propeller driven aircraft or 5000 feet for subsonic jet aircraft when overflying national parks and the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage area.

# Summer Visit to NSW's Southern Forests and Kosciuszko

by Keith Muir and Fiona McCrossin

**A**FTER a year desk bound, it was time for new adventures, and nothing could be more rewarding than seeing some of our best native forests. We travelled 2000 kilometres by car. The purpose of the trip was to discover the extent to which the NPWS was pegging away developing the southern forest escarpment parks, unregulated by community approved plans of management and to renew our acquaintance with a deeply troubled Kosciuszko National Park.

Monga National Park, a pleasure to visit because of its outstanding diversity and cool weather above the steamy coast, was our first stop. Key visitor management decisions have been pre-empted by the NPWS for this park. For example, the 'Penance Grove Boardwalk' takes you through a grove of decapitated tree ferns. There are dozens of headless black trunks explaining to visitors one of the more unsavoury aspects of forestry operations. Its location close to an existing road and picnic facilities is sound, but visitors may be unable to understand the importance of this patch of pinkwood rainforest because of the headless tree ferns.

The Mongarlowe River Picnic



*Fun in the snow above Charlotte Pass*



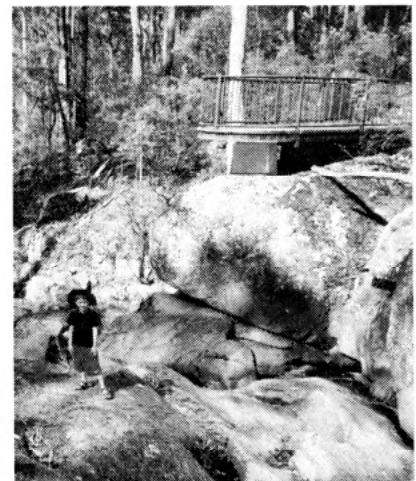
*A mountain bike rider descends the Thredbo Cannonball Run (note the shared path walker/rider sign on right)*

Ground has a tree stump as a central feature, the consequence of enthusiastically managing visitor risks. A new walking track leads from this picnic ground to the river, duplicating a fire trail that crosses the river. The fire trail offers far more variety and interest than the new track. Further downstream, a four-wheel drive track crosses the river and enters the pristine Buckenbowra Escarpment. This short road should have been closed. It serves no other purpose than to degrade this wonderful area. A few young men came roaring across the river in a four wheeled land crusher before coming back 10 minutes later. There is no benefit to the NPWS decision of excluding this rare pristine escarpment area from the Buckenbowra wilderness.

Further south, the Cascades camping ground in Wadbilliga National Park is an informal facility in need of improved vehicle management, as 4WD vehicles are trampling the grassy site into dust.

The Cascades has the worst example yet seen of a lookout imposing and degrading the central scenic feature of an area. A huge steel gantry lookout is built over the 'Cascades', so everyone enjoying the water below sees the ugly structure that juts out above it. The teenagers play-

ing in the water must look up at the imposing steel platform all day. The lookout is a thoughtless and expensive stainless steel abomination that should be removed. Another facility overkill occurs on a creek crossing on the track to Tuross Falls lookout. A tiny creek is crossed by a structure with heavy guard rails more suited to elephants than people, denying intimate contact with the natural surrounds. A log would have provided an adequate crossing, which can be stepped over by most people.



*An unnecessary viewing deck spoils the granite boulder gardens of Myamba Creek.*

Wow-factor lookouts projecting into the air are considered necessary, only if you assume that nature is not good enough. The shrunken vision of park planners is everywhere apparent in these nature-deprecating edifices. On Myamba Creek in the South East Forests National Park another of these concrete and steel structures lords over a creek where even the smallest children can clamber in safely. There is a place for lookouts and raised walkways to protect visitors, the ecological integrity of a Park, and present the environment to advantage, but the wow-factor

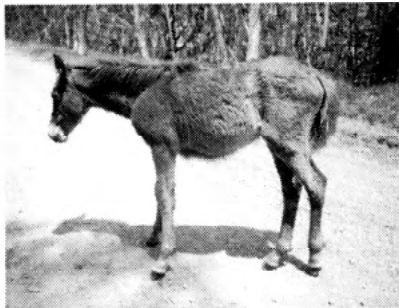
*continued on page 9*



## Summer Visit, *continued from 8*

fashion should not be part of these considerations. Such structures are expensive and make visitors spectators rather than participants.

The campsite in the Coolangubra section of the South East Forests National Park lies at the head of Waratah Gully next to that act of eco-terrorism, Wog Way. The information board features a marvellous map of every snig track and 4WD road ever constructed to the exclusion of other information. It is an invitation to bush bashing.



*Emaciated foal on Tantangara Road*

In the Mines Road section of the Coolangubra, a large thicket of regrowth illustrates the ravages of former logging in this wilderness area. Fifteen years before, one could find gentle paths through the upper catchment of the region's rivers; the huge Eucalypts, with their spectacularly diverse understorey, long since chipped and sent to Japan, with a few arboreal edifices retained in an abysmal attempt to supply the needs of old growth dependent species. Without wanting to sound too anthropomorphic, one can only begin to imagine the misery encountered by these species as they searched, and competed, for scarce food, shelter and nesting sites. However, in over 113,000ha of forest, of the 30 years of State Forest logging is over, the alternate coupes remain unlogged, and the forests now need to be managed to maximise their rehabilitation, gently nurtured as they return to their former peace and glory.

The Coolangubra, identified as wilderness by the National Parks and Wildlife Service just 15 years ago, after millennia of evolution, must be restored, with that epitome of State

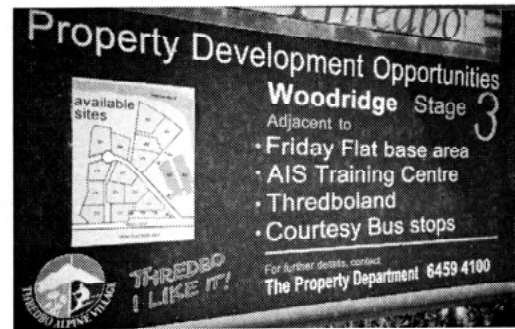
Forest vandalism, Wog Way, and all tributary roads established for logging, closed and allowed to revegetate.

### **Kosciuszko manoeuvres**

The confusing management priorities of the southern escarpment forest parks prepared us for Kosciuszko. One of the high points of the trip was crossing Mackillop Bridge. Seeing the Snowy River with a cheery flow made the best New Years Eve celebration possible. Dozens of visitors were discovering the delights of environmental flows along the river. Another special event was New Years day when we swam in the Snowy below Charlotte Pass after a snow fight on a slope leading to Blue Lake. Swimming in the Snowy and encountering snow were two firsts for Fiona's small children and the delight in their faces, surrounded by the magnificent alpine national park, could not help but produce one of the most moving moments of the journey. That such children can continue to enjoy the delights of our natural places is one of the key drivers in many of our campaigns.

The Snow Gum Walk, and lookout at Charlotte Pass, demonstrated that the NPWS can build sympathetic structures, and address impacts, particularly visual blight, which was obviously not of primary consideration in the construction of recent facilities in the Southern Escarpment Parks.

The marked disparity between the summer ghost town appearance of Perisher and the theme park playground of the Thredbo ski resort, portends of bad things to come. The development axe hangs by a thread over Perisher with plans linking it to Guthega ski resort by road and ski fields. The vast Perisher carpark appears like a disputed expanse, a shopping mall blight, transplanted from a metropolitan area onto our highest national park.



*"Property investment opportunities" advertised at Thredbo.*

If the planned mega-resort goes ahead, it will generate property speculation, quick profits for developers, and more wilderness-flooding dams and snow-making machines to make good when nature fails to serve man with snowfields.

Thredbo's "real estate" agent depressingly reveals the "market" view of the future. The national park is for sale in the shop window. Nearby the 'Cannonball Run' shoots mountain bike riders down a track at 80 kilometres per hour past walkers who are expected to share it. This track bears no resemblance to the walking tracks in other Parks. The mountain bike generated erosion and sidetracks make a mockery of the 'Meadows Nature Trail'. A bobsled run is encountered beyond the track used by the 'Cannonball Run', where a steel track is cut in the hillside. The golf course has swept away other tracts of alpine vegetation from the mainland's only glacial valley and a swimming pool completes the picture of a year round ski resort, as long as you don't look at the Snow Gums burnt off to protect this excrescence from last summer's fire.

*continued on page 10*



*Perisher resort expansion threatens this hillside and the valley below it.*

# Clarence Colliery revisits Wollangambe expansion plans

CENTENNIAL Coal has recently renewed its plans to expand the Clarence Colliery eastwards into the Wollangambe River catchment. The Sydney Catchment Authority and the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources halted the original proposal in 2000 when the company sought to expand the mine without addressing serious water pollution issues with the mine.

Environmental Resources Management Australia (ERM) was commissioned by Centennial to undertake a hydrogeological study into the possible ground water impacts of the proposal. The newsletter accompanying groundwater report states that "In a regional sense, there is no evidence that the natural surface water bodies (streams, swamps), and their associated groundwater ecosystems in the vicinity of the mine area have been significantly affected by dewatering activities within the mine."

The experts appear to be saying that they could not find any regional impacts to the surface waters or swamps of Newnes Plateau arising from pumping 14-18 megalitres of water a day from the mine. That is,

pumping the equivalent of 14 to 18 olympic swimming pools of polluted water a day into the Wollangambe River does not result in the 'regionally significant' death of hanging swamps or drying of creeks. When it rains, however, the Colong Foundation has been informed that about 4 megalitres a day more water is pumped from the mine. This means that the water in some of the creeks affected by mining does not flow downstream but into cracks that conduct these flows from the land surface into the coal mine. These lost storm flows are of course in addition to flows lost from near-surface groundwater that keep creeks flowing during dry periods.

The introduction to the Clarence Colliery Groundwater Investigation report states that 'Centennial has chosen the bord and pillar mining method to virtually eliminate subsidence from undermining. A significant benefit of eliminating subsidence is in maintaining the integrity of the overlying geological formations and hence controlling the risk of increasing vertical groundwater connectivity.'

The above assumption may operate within the proposed subsidence protection zones for the mining lease application area as indicated in the October 2000 EIS. But for the majority of the mining area outside subsidence protection zones subsidence is described in section 5.6 of the EIS as being up to '500 - 1000 mm for full extraction'. Further on the EIS states 'the extent of full extraction may be limited, because of water inflows'.

The assumption made in the expert groundwater report that subsidence is virtually eliminated by bord and pillar is contradicted for the majority of the mine proposal area by the EIS report. The Colong Foundation has asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, the Hon. Craig Knowles, that a new groundwater study examine the impacts of the full extraction mining operations proposed or that a precautionary approach be applied that limits all coal mining within the proposed extension area to partial extraction. Such mining would protect the Wollangambe Wilderness from further subsidence damage to its water supplies. ■

## *Summer Visit,* continued from 9

Further north, Mount Selwyn is clamouring for access to more water for snow making facilities. It is the lowest ski resort in the park.

Our party made a relaxing sojourn to Yarrangobilly Caves and thermal pool, which is available to the public at little cost. While there are some problems with visitor management, they were on a smaller scale and appeared manageable after the ski resort development madness of Thredbo and Perisher...

To end our trip, we headed to Oldfields Hut. Yet again, the children attempted various means of venturing into the Parks - sometimes walking, sometimes sharing the stroller and, when really bushed, being carried. With lots of encouragement and a bit of determination they too

were able to sense the wonder of being in our amazing wild places.

We camped beside the hut and enjoyed a thunderstorm rolling by, although our pleasure of nature's theatre was assaulted by the pungent smell of horse urine on the grass around the old hut. Our last day was topped off by two herds of feral horses, an abandoned foal wandering, starving and plainly suffering, on Tantangara Dam Road. Nearby, at a horse camp, a huge bonfire roared away in tall grass in 40 degree midday heat, reminding us just how vulnerable this park is to thoughtlessness.

It was an eventful and inspirational trip. There is so much to do to stop the damage to our wonderful national parks and so little time to do it. So now we find ourselves enthusiastically desk bound once more - for the wilderness. ■

## **"Progress" at the expense of the environment**

In "Towards Environmental Sustainability," the first section of the NSW State of the Environment Council's 2003 report, the Council quotes the Australian Bureau of Statistics' report on Australia's progress towards sustainability, which concluded that "Australia's ongoing social and economic success appeared to be occurring at the expense of the natural environment." In the Wentworth Group of Scientist's report Blueprint for a Living Continent, two of the key changes members believed should be adopted were "ending broadscale clearing of remnant native vegetation" and "paying farmers for the environmental services they maintain on the land where these exceed agreed definitions of duty of care." These authoritative recommendations are entirely in accord with Colong's aim of preserving and restoring the natural environment.

## 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 2004  
(NB Membership application covers Bulletin subscription)
- ☐ Colong Bulletin Subscription (\$11) to 31 December 2004 (non members only)
- ☐ Membership renewal to 31 December 2004 (\$25)      ☐ Life Membership (\$550)
- ☐ Tax deductible donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Colong Wilderness Fund
- ☐ PLUS \$\_\_\_\_\_ being for publications as indicated on the reverse side of this form.
- NAME (Mr, Ms, Mrs, Miss) .....
- ADDRESS .....
- .....P/CODE .....DATE .....
- SIGNED .....AMOUNT .....
- 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."



### ABOUT THE COLONG FOUNDATION

The Colong Foundation, the successor to Myles Dunphy's National Parks and Primitive Areas Council, is Australia's longest-serving community advocate for wilderness. Its proposal for a *Wilderness Act* was accepted in 1989. To supplement this legislation, our Red Index, audits NSW wilderness areas, identifies threats and formulates site specific protection remedies. There are now 1,836,000 ha of protected wilderness in NSW. However, many beautiful and environmentally highly significant wilderness areas are not protected, such as the 13,000 ha Green Gully in the Macleay Gorges, Pilliga and Goonoo on the north west slopes, Yengo in the Blue Mountains, the Deua Valley on the South Coast and the Tabletop and Main Range in the Snowy Mountains.

The Colong Foundation for Wilderness has had a long and successful history. From its foundation in 1968 until 1975 it was the fighting force that prevented limestone mining and the destruction of native forest for pine plantations in the southern Blue Mountains. The Foundation not only played a leading role in realising Myles Dunphy's plan for a Greater Blue Mountains National Park, it pushed for its World Heritage listing, as well as the reservation of a Border Ranges National Park and Kakadu National Park. It has initiated successful campaigns for the protection of over a million hectares of wilderness in NSW.

The realisation of Myles Dunphy's vision of a comprehensive system of national parks with protected wilderness areas remains the primary objective of the Colong Foundation.

Now, more than ever, the Foundation needs your support. Well financed and powerful rural interests, miners, loggers, resort developers, as well as four wheel drive enthusiasts, horse riders and others, have greatly increased the threats facing Australia's wild places.

Only with your help, through continued membership and donations, can the Foundation continue its campaigns for the preservation of the natural environment and effective nature-based national park management, and by concentrating on wilderness, these rare areas can be kept safe from development and misuse.



# THE COLONG FOUNDATION

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

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## 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 ☐

### BLUE MOUNTAINS FOR WORLD HERITAGE 17.60 ☐

Geoff Mosley provides a comprehensive explanation of the wealth of heritage values in the Blue Mountains (135pp)

### HOW THE RAINFOREST WAS SAVED (59pp) 9.00 ☐

### PARK OR PINES - The Battle for the Boyd (42pp) 9.00 ☐

### THE BATTLE FOR THE BUSH 27.50 ☐

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

### MYLES DUNPHY (SELECTED WRITINGS) 43.95 ☐

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by Dorothy Butler, Australian Geographic award winner. A story of a lifetime of adventure in wilderness and high mountains (292pp)

### CLASSIC BUSHWALKING MAPS by Myles Dunphy

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### WILDERNESS RED INDEX - complete \$110 ☐

The Index describes the land ownership, values, history and threats to NSW wild places

- Summary brochures 2.20 ☐

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### THE COLONG STORY (42pp) 9.00 ☐

LIVING WITH THE DINGO (107pp) 19.00 ☐  
by Adam O'Neill