

September 1992



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Environs

IN THIS ISSUE:- Wildcattle Ck. update, New EPA, Extinction warning, Cats, Quolls, Oysters, NSW Resource 'Management' Package.

the north coast environment magazine



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What's happening at Wildcattle Creek?

Wildcattle Creek State Forest due north of Dorrigo has a history of logging extending back to the days of the axe and cross saw. Stands of rainforest were trashed over during the seventies. Hoop Pine was highly sought, destined to become match sticks for Federal Matches.

Rainforest is no longer being felled there for obvious reasons, however rainforest emergents such as Brushbox that were left behind in the past are now highly sought after. Many species listed as rare or endangered occur in the forest and require safe undisturbed conditions - their survival depends on it.

In January 1992 the Bellingen Environment Centre Incorporated managed to halt logging procedures in Compartment 546 until a Fauna Survey had been carried out by the Forestry Commission and consultants for the Bellingen Environment Centre.

These surveys revealed the presence of Koalas, Southern Angle Headed Dragons, Spotted Tail Quolls, Peregrine Falcons, Diamond Pythons, Greater Gliders and many others. Also present is the beautiful Dorrigo Waratah and a stand of ancient Brushbox recognised as being the largest and possibly oldest Brushbox trees in Australia.

Local forester John Murray was determined to log this Compartment and took his original harvesting plan back to the drawing board to make amendments. The original harvesting plan had a log dump planned right

‘The outcome of the meeting was quite positive’

where the ancient trees were standing as they have done, long before the white man trod this piece of earth.

In June, the Bellingen Environment Centre met again with the Forestry Commission's John Murray and John Bruce to discuss the amended harvesting plan for compartment 546. The outcome of the meeting was quite positive with an eleven hectare reserve being granted to the ancient Brushbox and an eight metre wide wildlife corridor linking the adjoining compartments and providing safe migration from the creek to the neighbouring compartments.

The Bellingen Environment Centre expressed their concerns about the Commission's burning off practices and the Commission agreed to 'top disposal burning' only. Another

positive aspect of the meeting was the Bellingen Environment Centre's involvement in a sample area of the tree marking procedure which shall commence on the 27th August 1992.

The original ninety hectares that were proposed for logging have now been reduced to sixty hectares unfortunately we couldn't save the whole compartment although we do feel that we broke some ground with the Forestry Commission and were able to work together on this particular issue and have set a precedent for further negotiations within the Wildcattle Creek State Forest.

Whilst carrying out reconnaissance work recently we found a compartment of old growth forest in the Wildcattle Creek State Forest that appears to be the last stand of old growth forest there and we feel that this particular part needs protection and shall be meeting again with John Murray to discuss this in the near future.

by Cath Eaglesham
Bellingen Environment Centre Inc.
For background to this story see
Environs, March 92.

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New Environment Protection Authority Bureaucrats to the Rescue?



The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) was established in March 1992. This is a new organisation which brings together a range of previously existing government agencies and functions, such as the now defunct State Pollution Control Commission.

The EPA has an annual budget of \$60 million for its first year and will eventually have a staff of over 700 people. These are located in two major offices in Sydney and in several smaller offices throughout the State, including Grafton.

The EPA operates under the Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991, the objectives of which are:

1. To protect, restore and enhance the quality of the environment in New South Wales, having regard to the need to maintain ecologically sustainable development; and

2. to reduce the risks to human health and prevent the degradation of the environment, by the following means:

- ✦ Promoting pollution prevention;
- ✦ Adopting the principle of reducing to harmless levels the discharge

into the air, water or land of substances likely to cause harm to the environment;

- ✦ Minimising the creation of waste by the use of appropriate technology;

- ✦ Regulating the transportation, collection, treatment, storage and disposal of waste;

- ✦ Encouraging the reduction of the use of materials, encouraging the re-use and recycling of materials and encouraging material recovery;

- ✦ Adopting minimum environmental standards prescribed by complementary Commonwealth and State legislation and advising the Government to prescribe more stringent standards where appropriate;

- ✦ Setting mandatory targets for environmental improvement;

- ✦ Promoting community involvement in decisions about environmental matters;

- ✦ Ensuring the community has access to relevant information about hazardous substances arising from, or stored, or used or sold by, any industry or public authority;

- ✦ Conducting public education and awareness programs about environmental matters.

Well, that's quite a mouthful, and wouldn't it be nice if they did carry out all these objectives? We have already witnessed the granting of the so-called 'license to pollute' to the NSW Forestry Commission. Perhaps, as John Turbill from Coffs Harbour suggests, it is indeed another "toothless consuming monster".

by Alison Pope, NVCA

(NVCA has a copy of the Protection of the Environment Administration Act in it's Office at Bowraville)



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Blueprint for our Shire's Future

now is your chance to have your say

Remember the "Structure Plan"? The Nambucca Shire Council's proposed strategy for accommodating double the present population over the next twenty years? It forecast three new towns adjacent to each of Nambucca Heads, Macksville and Bowraville; urban extensions of Scotts Head and Valla, and the opening up of about 11,000 hectares to rural residential land use.

The Structure Plan is to go on public display again

and public comment is sought. There are some changes. The Department of Planning believed there was too much rural residential land so approved half to be released at a time; the lands closest to services and served by bitumen roads to be the first 10 years supply. Mr Greg Yeates of the Department said that usually only five years supply is approved at a time.

Some Councillors are unhappy that only half will be immediately available - available that is when the

plan is eventually passed. The 'syndrome' delaying it at the moment is the 'we want more than the Department of Planning will allow us to have' syndrome.

There are some other more minor changes. I urge all concerned residents to take an active interest in the 'Structure Plan' and 'Residential and Rural Residential Strategies' when they go on public display. It is the blueprint for the future of our Shire and now is your chance to have your

say about how and where our Shire develops.

Also on display with the Strategies and Maps will be more detailed maps of each area proposed for development based on soil, terrain, vegetation and other information provided from a study done by the Soil Conservation Service. These should be of interest too.

ENVIRONS will try to bring you more information as the Strategy process leading to land rezoning under the LEP progresses.

Lyn Orrego

D.I.Y. DISPOSAL Decentralised treatment of domestic sewage

Many local residents in suburban as well as rural locations are choosing to install their own water supply and sewage disposal systems. During an era of low inflation and low interest rates, it makes good economic sense to spend money up-front rather than agree to pay a government agency an uncertain amount per year into the future.

Decentralised treatment of domestic sewage involves not only substantially lower capital costs per person, but has the potential to radically reduce our collective plunder of nutrient and water resources. It opens up opportunities for turning one's backyard into a lush oasis due to the plant nutrients and

water being regularly provided. If we bring together the ideas and writings of Lloyd Smith author of several books on decentralised sewage disposal including *The Greenbelt System*, and Bill Mollison's permaculture principles, we have the model for doing away with centralised treatment of sewage in all but the most heavily urbanised suburbs of our big cities.

Now that "user-pays" is becoming the catch-cry, a few people already have reached the conclusion that if they don't use, they shouldn't pay. Do people in suburbia really have a choice though, or are we really dealing with a government monopoly here? Councils and especially State Government instrumentalities like

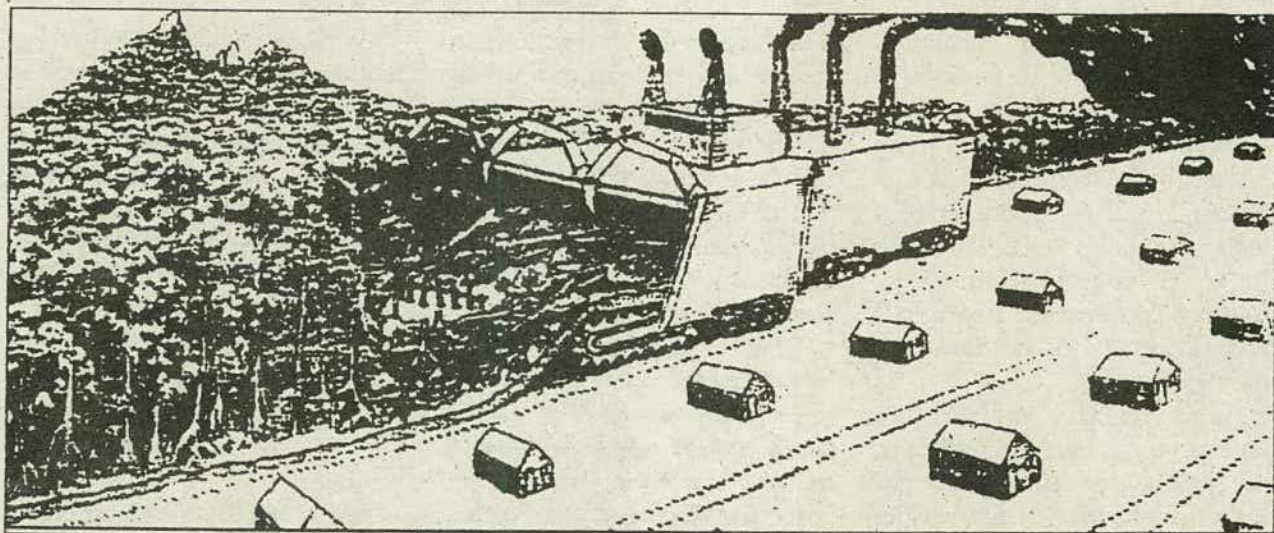
Public Works certainly have a reputation for discouraging people from going down the decentralised path. Examples are: the Health Department's attempts to discredit decentralised sewage treatment systems by examining exceptional cases, and Fisheries Dept okaying ocean outfalls despite mounting evidence of bioaccumulation of a range of chemicals in fish.

Of course, Local government is terrified that a wholesale desertion from centralised water and sewerage will erode their income, so will do all they can to impose their alternatives on the population.

Byron Environment Centre Collective.

WILDERNESS ALERT

“Opportunity to protect remaining wilderness fast disappearing”



Submissions are desperately needed in support of Wilderness in north east NSW. One hundred hand written submissions could push the balance in favour of Wilderness.

Submissions are now being collected for six areas in the north east of the State:

- Lost World (Border Ranges National Park)
 - Bindery (Mann and Nymboida Rivers Area)
- (Both close September 4 1992)

- Guy Fawkes River (North of Ebor, Chaelundi area)

- Macleay Gorges (Oxley, west of Port Macquarie)

- Washpool (west of Lismore) (submissions close 18 September 1992)

- Binghi (northern NSW near Tenterfield) (closes October 2 1992)

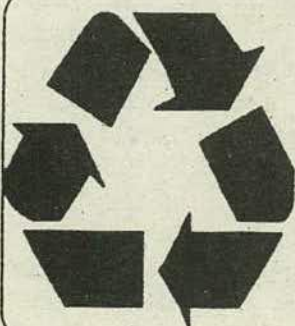
These areas need your protection So put pen to paper and send a submission NOW PLEASE.

One submission mentioning all these areas is acceptable.

Issues to mention include:

- Last stronghold of native plant & animal communities
- Protection of water catchment
- Unique opportunities for environmental education and research
- Too much wilderness already lost to leave any unprotected
- Increased pressures from development and population growth
- Opportunity to protect remaining wilderness fast disappearing

For more information contact NVCA, PO Box 123 Bowraville, phone (065) 647 808.



Recycling Centre for Nambucca Shire

Good news: Nambucca Shire Council has allocated \$46,000 (from the \$556,000 recently handed out by Keating for local employment projects) to begin building a recycling

centre at the tip. \$6,000 of the \$46,000 will go for bottle banks to collect glass from all the towns. Projects are expected to get underway quickly as they must commence by December 1, so ENVIRONS will

bring you updates on progress made over the coming months.

Editors Note: This is still subject to approval at the next Council Meeting.

EXTINCTION IS FOREVER



Nearly half of Australia's marsupials are in danger of extinction unless action is taken now. According to a new report released by the World Wide Fund for Nature, 27 species are endangered or vulnerable, with a further 33 animals in a "potentially vulnerable" category. Taken together, these species account for 49% of the continent's marsupial species.

In just over 200 years of European settlement, Australia has notched up the world's worst record in mammal extinction: this country accounts for about half the world's mammals that have become extinct in modern times.

Of the marsupials present 200 years ago, 10 (or 7% of the total) are known to have vanished. Others may have disappeared before their existence was recorded.

The urgency of the situation is illustrated by the plight of the mala, or rufous hare-wallaby. Between the first draft of the report and its launch on August 10, the last wild population was wiped out by fire and predation by introduced foxes. Once occupying 25% of continental Australia, the mala

is now confined to nature reserves on Bernier and Dorre Islands off the Western Australian coast.

The northern hairy-nosed wombat is probably worse off: habitat destruction and grazing competition with cattle, sheep and rabbits have reduced the species to just 65 individuals in central Queensland.

WWF senior project officer Michael Kennedy told Green Left in an interview on August 14 that the preservation of endangered species is crucial to this country's obligations under the biodiversity convention signed at the Earth Summit in Rio.

Australia is one of the 12 countries in the world considered "mega diverse" - countries which, between them, contain 60-70% of the world's species, and a large number of unique species. Australia is the only economically developed country among these and could, therefore, play a leading role in the preservation of the earth's biodiversity.

But for the moment, back at home, the fight to preserve endangered wildlife is still being waged - literally - "on the ground".

With patchy state and federal legislation and policy, and a debate in the mainstream media which still pits the long-footed potoroo against paying off the mortgage, skirmishes continue between developers and environmentalists over this or that bit of remnant habitat.

Some of these "punch-ups" could be avoided, says Kennedy, if the movement to save endangered species could secure adequate legislation and money for recovery and preservation programs.

It is a campaign which appeals to both hearts and minds: the emotional appeal of "cute" endangered animals can, says Kennedy, be a "way in" to broader educational campaigns about the principles of biodiversity.

The WWF report, *Australasian Marsupials and Monotremes: An Action Plan for their Conservation*, was developed over three years by members of the Australasian Marsupial and Monotreme Specialist Group, a subgroup of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and compiled by Kennedy.

The plan provides a detailed guide to the 27 endangered and vulnerable species, indicating the conservation agency responsible, and estimating the cost of each species' recovery program. The plan estimates that all up, the program will cost \$24 million over 10 years, about \$90,000 per species per year.

"That average price tag will increase significantly unless we begin the process immediately", says Kennedy.

The 10 most endangered species in Australia:

(listed alphabetically)

Central Rock Rat

Eungella Gastric Brooding Frog

Gastric Brooding Frog

Leadbeater's Possum

Night Parrot

Norfolk/White Breasted Whiteeye

Northern Hairy Nosed Wombat

Regent Honeyeater

Tasmanian Tiger

Western Swamp Tortoise



What are the main threats to marsupials? While habitat destruction (logging, clear-felling for agriculture and urban settlement) has caused local extinction, the report notes that it was the interaction of three other (but related) factors which finished off the 10 marsupials known to have been lost.

These factors are changes to habitat caused by introduced herbivores, homogenisation of habitat following changed fire regimes and the spread of exotic predators.

- The introduced herbivores include rabbits, goats, cattle, sheep, donkeys, pigs and camels, which now range widely over the continent, competing with native animals for food and altering vegetation patterns and habitats. Competition for access to drought refuges - areas remaining rich in nutrients through dry spells - can be particularly devastating for native animals.

- Fire regimes have changed since European settlement, from small fires lit throughout the year, to infrequent, large, summer fires that wipe out much of the variety of vegetation. The report notes that the disappearance of mammals from the deserts of Western Australia, north-western South Australia and south-western Northern Territory coincided with the decline of Aboriginal population and the subsequent change in fire regime.

- Australian marsupials evolved for millennia without having to contend with a fox-sized predator. Today, marsupials are delicacies for the fox and feral cat.

The mammals most affected since European settlement have been the non-flying, medium-sized animals weighing between 35 grams and 5500 grams - the "critical weight range". Eight of the 10 extinct marsupials were in this range; of the 27 endangered or vulnerable marsupials, all but two lie in the critical weight range.

The greatest concentration of endangered and vulnerable marsupials -

coordinated long-term management programs backed up by legislation are introduced now.

The necessary legislation would apply to both private and public land with "no exemptions".

"We are trying to answer industry's cries for clear national guidelines, but you give them that and they still scream blue murder. You can't win. The legislation has to be strong enough to ensure that if you find a threatened species, you stop until it has been sorted out."

This would not stop all development in its tracks, said Kennedy.

Strong wildlife protection laws in the United States, for example, brought a great deal of consultation, but only a tiny proportion of projects were halted.

"Governments are not now obliged to recover species which are threat-

ened. They are protected, which means that you can't shoot, kill or step on them, but that doesn't mean you have to protect their habitats."

Threatened species legislation has been introduced, or is being drafted, in most states and in federal parliament. A far-reaching private member's bill has been introduced by Democrat Senator John Coulter, which, unlike Labor's proposed legislation, is not just restricted to activities on crown lands (1% of the continent!).

An example of legislation going in the wrong direction is that proposed by the NSW Liberal/National Party coalition.

"Their legislation would only recognise species agreed to be endangered at a national level. The most famous wallaby in this state, the yellow-footed rock wallaby, is endangered here. There are 200 left way out west near the borders of the three

6 this country accounts for about half the world's mammals that have become extinct in modern times.

16 species - is in the south-west of Western Australia and Shark Bay. Queensland, with 10 threatened marsupials, has the second highest concentration.

The WWF's action plan outlines a crisis management program for the "top 27" (including measures such as captive breeding programs and reintroduction to areas where animals are locally extinct), while urging recognition of the fact that the "potentially vulnerable" will move into the vulnerable category unless

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states. It's not endangered in Queensland or South Australia. At a national level, it fits the third category, potentially vulnerable.

"Under the coalition's proposal, the wallaby wouldn't get a look in in this state. You can imagine what would happen if every state took that view. The biodiversity that exists in these borders is ours to maintain. Whatever lives here, breeds here or just overnights here demands protection.

"You can't say: 'We've got four isolated populations left, we can knock off three and keep one'. That's biological nonsense. You have to conserve diversity. Genes may differ from one population to the next.

The aim is to conserve ecosystems in their variety, species in their variety, and genes in their variety."

Dr Roger Martin, research associate of the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Monash University, told Green Left that preserving more than just a representative population could be likened to an "insurance policy".

"If you have a population surviving in isolation, particularly if it is a small population, it is very vulnerable to chance events, be it disease, be it bushfire, be it drought. If you are investing everything in one remnant population, any chance event can wipe it out.

"You are really covering your potential losses by having a lot of small populations rather than one small population."

Preserving biodiversity, say scientists, is actually about preserving adaptability. Adaptations are based on the selection of "useful" genetic variations (or mutations) between individuals in a species. The process is clearly illustrated by the koala.

"Koalas extend from north Queensland, right around the south-eastern coast down to Kangaroo Island in South Australia. As you go from one extreme to the other, as you go from the cool, temperate regions up to the hot tropical regions, your koalas change."

In the south, the average adult male weighs about 13 kilos. In the northern regions they weigh about seven kilos and have much shorter fur - adaptations to suit the climate.

"Populations that are unable to respond to change go extinct", write Graeme George and Peter Brown of Deakin University in the WWF-spon-

debate in the mainstream media still pits the long-footed potoroo against paying off the mortgage

sored report. Accumulated genetic variability "needs to be preserved if a threatened species is to be conserved with some long-term evolutionary potential".

They explain that there are two components to genetic variability: variability across a species, and variability within an individual. The "fittest" individuals and species are those with the most variability.

Under "normal" conditions, a certain level of variability across the species is lost through a process called "genetic drift", or the randomness of inheritance. In a large breeding population, this loss is compensated, over time, by input from individuals outside the "home territory" of a group of animals.

Small populations don't benefit from this compensatory factor: they are more likely to feel the effects of genetic drift, and, as a result, lose the resilience necessary to cope with environmental challenges.

"With the loss of each isolate [isolated population]", write George and Brown, "the gene pool of the species is diminished, and each loss becomes a step toward the species' extinction".

Species preservation therefore rests on the preservation of as much genetic variation as possible. George and Brown recommend genetic management which includes increasing total population size; providing greater geographic spread in case of catastrophe; and exposing the gene pool to a greater range of selection pressures.

This management of endangered animals was needed "in addition to the more traditional environmentally oriented conservation measures - habitat protection and restoration, control of predators, legal protection, etc".

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The need for thorough research is obvious. The March 1992 National Environment Report, a newsletter produced by the Democrats, recounts an attempt at reintroduction that went badly wrong.

After 17 years of careful planning, selective breeding and intensive scientific studies, parma wallabies were returned to mainland Australia from a population found on an island off New Zealand.

Forty-seven of the tiny marsupials were let out in an inaccessible gully in the Illawarra catchment area of NSW. Within eight weeks, every one of them was dead: snapped up by foxes.

"For six months...poison baits [had been laid] and the fox problem had been dramatically reduced. But for the foxes that were left, the parma were such a delicacy that they completely ignored the baits until every wallaby had been stalked and killed."

While millions of dollars have been spent on researching the problems of marsupials - particularly diseases of koalas - Dr Roger Martin suggests that the money could now be better directed.

"We know a lot about the biology of koalas ... there's probably not too many marsupials that we know more about, in both the general ecological situation and in the very detailed biology." Other marsupials, like the northern hairy nosed wombat, could do with some research money.

"I think overall the status of knowledge [about koalas] is good, except for some exceptional cases, such as the remnant koala population of the south-east. We know the problem.

The problem is habitat loss. I think we have just got to tackle the tough politics of trying to reverse the trend in habitat loss." Tough politics, or what Michael Kennedy calls a "punch-up" is being played out over the NSW south-east forests right now. In July, about 200 activists converged in the forest near Eden to try to save from logging the old-growth trees and the habitat they provide for koalas, yellow-bellied gliders and southern brown bandicoots.

"Because of the very nature of our progress, all wildlife is threatened", says Kennedy. "Unless we get some

those things that caused the demise of species are still there.

"Marsupial decline started in the arid zones. Now it is moving south, east and west, so those forces are going to take hold of the temperate zones in the next 20 years and give them a good shake.

"We haven't seen extinctions on the east coast yet, in the forests, but we've seen decline and we've seen fragmentation. Once they get to a certain level, they can't cope, and there's an almighty crash, and that's going to happen to those species soon.

"So you've got to move now.

That means taking account not just of the species themselves but of the systems that they are a part of, making sure their processes are still connected and working, still producing new genes, new species, to ensure that evolution continues."

Of the marsupials present 200 years ago, 10 (or 7% of the total) are known to have vanished. Others may have disappeared before their existence was recorded.

good policies and programs, then in the first part of next century there'll be a second wave of extinctions.

"The causes of the extinctions of the last 200 years are still there. Cattle and sheep, rabbits, foxes, feral cats, habitat pollution and destruction: all

by Tracy Sorensen
this article was first published in
Green Left Weekly and obtained via
the Pegasus conference
'greenleft.news'



CONFERENCE Local Government's role in Threatened Species Protection

Local Government participation is important at various levels of Threatened Species Protection, ranging from involvement in Federal and State legislation, action plans, strategies and recovery plans; to the development of their own Threatened Species policies.

The Threatened Species Network has assembled a variety of speakers who will address the various elements in "Threatened Species at the Local Government level", a conference to be held at the Maiden Theatre, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, on Friday October 2.

Contact the Total Environment Centre 18 Argyle Street, Sydney for registration and details or Phone Kim on (02) 241 1438

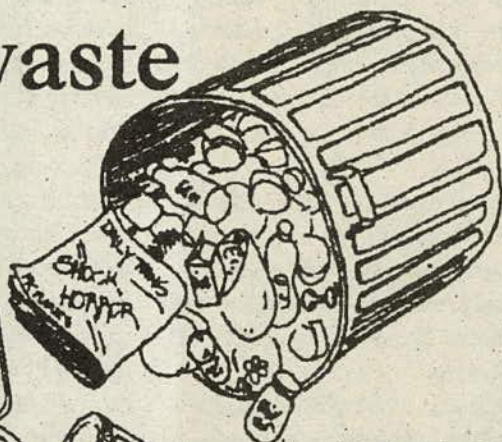
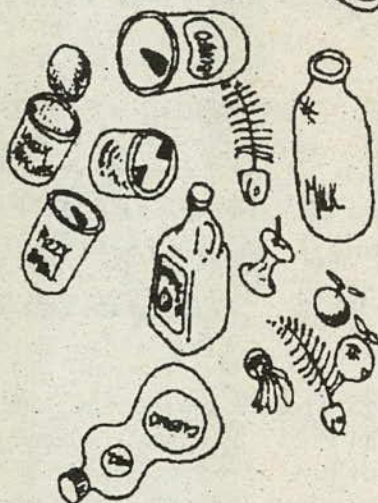
An alternative waste management strategy...

The problem of waste management and minimisation has been discussed over many years by government bureaucracies, and a council of Environment Ministers some ten years ago threatened to introduce deposit container legislation if industry failed to act to increase re-use and recycling rate.

To date both industry and governments have failed to act. It has been left to the community through voluntary organisations to clean up the litter and contribute to recycling. Only in South Australia has any real progress been made and that in face of strong industry opposition.

As a first step in a waste minimisation program all Governments should immediately introduce deposit legislation on a large range of containers and at the same time introduce a tax on other containers based on their value for recycling. Such a tax should be large enough to discourage the use of throw away containers though leaving the choice with the consumer. If properly tuned such legislation and tax would provide the protection for small town industry to move back into the market place and provide some employment for those areas. Tax raised from these sources should be directed to research for helping the establishment of small industries in regional towns based on re-use and recycling.

If there is a cash penalty/incentive the container then has value to someone. It moves the onus from the public to the industry and the consumer to deal with the packaging and, as the



large companies involved in the production of pulp, paper, glass, plastics and those involved in the use of these raw materials in packaging products are not about to advise the government how to cut down on waste by minimising packaging. To think otherwise is to admit that there is no wish to really solve the waste problem.

We feel that a better way to deal with each new industry is to ensure that an EIS is prepared setting out the way that this new product will improve living standards; the source of the raw materials used in the production process and possible alternate resources together with the environmental costs associated with the production of these raw materials; the waste that may be generated once the product has left the factory as well as how the waste will be dealt with in the manufacturing process. An example of a new approach:

Cardboard containers are used for many fruits and vegetables. They are rarely re-used but we assume there is some recycling. This is an area where plastic containers could be used and re-used simply by insisting that there is a deposit on the container to ensure its return; that the whole industry changes over at the one time so wholesalers cannot buy only those products which are in the, to them, more convenient package. The return transport of such re-usable containers to the farming areas should not prove a prob-

industry consider that packaging so necessary, this is where the responsibility should lie.

The fact is that the global economy is built upon the inefficient use of materials and energy to satisfy human needs. Therefore, instead of attempting to solve the problems of dealing with the wastes generated by society we should be examining ways to satisfy the human needs in a more efficient and less wasteful way.

Many hours of research and millions of dollars are expended on waste technology, but less on efficiency. The waste industry is a growth industry and the companies involved in it are not going to advise governments on methods to diminish the wastes generated. Similarly the

less as many of the trucks both road and rail do not return with full loads and such containers can be designed to nest.

General Comment:

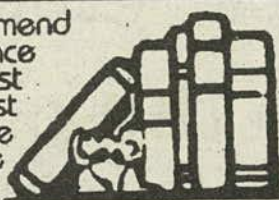
There is too much reliance on accepting the arguments of the industry which has a market to protect. There is a need for wider research into the claims that industry make about the costs of producing, recycling and re-using. There is also a need to better assess the public commitment to minimising waste and not take business claims at face value. As quoted in the World Watch paper 101 the essayist Wendell Berry argues that misplaced values are at the root of our waste problems: "Our economy is such that we 'cannot afford' to take care of things: labour is expensive, time is expensive money is expensive, but materials - the stuff of creation - are so cheap that we cannot afford to take care of them. This can be seen in the example of the use of woodchips, and in the fact that petroleum prices should be increasing for each litre extracted from the ground so that as the reserves run down so the value goes up.

EXCERPTS FROM:

A National Waste Minimisation and Recycling Strategy Submission by North Coast Environment Council Inc.

(Note: in June issue of ENVIRONS that the NCEC are preparing policies for all aspects of ecologically sustainable living on the North Coast)

inquire	consider	recommend
analyse	deduce	influence
study	decide	suggest
explore	reflect	request
question	judge	criticise
examine	conclude	advise
research	resolve	lobby



**What's
New
in the
library**

New Publications available at the NVCA Office:

National Waste Minimisation and Recycling Strategy. A 33 page booklet put out by the Federal Government; its Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories (DASET) - presently headed by Ros Kelly.

Quite interesting if you are into recycling, but quite useless in achieving anything but a lot more paperwork and (possibly) office jobs because, as it says "the Commonwealth has little if any responsibility for waste management, this rests with State and Local Governments ...our role is to develop an accessible, centralised "collection of information on wastes."

It contains a decision to establish legally enforceable national air and water quality standards through a National EPA (NEPA).

It also notes: "This strategy will only work with the co-operation of all interested parties. That is why the Commonwealth Environment

Protection Agency (CEPA) will establish "formal consultative mechanisms" with industry, unions, community & environment groups...."

It gives facts in its Background section such as:

"Each year more than 14 million tonnes of solid waste are disposed of in Australian landfills.

"The total solid waste generated in Australia each year by industry and individuals is equivalent to about one tonne per person.

"Australia's waste per head is one of the highest in the world and the trend is to increasing per capita waste quantities. The average quantity, by weight, has increased at each survey.

"Household and private garden waste and other wastes collected by Councils make up about half the total waste stream. Industrial & Commercial wastes 35-40%, and building and demolition wastes 15%. (These last two increase by approx 18% pa in Sydney!)



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NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PACKAGE

Stop the package Save the environment

The NSW Government wants to change the way we make decisions about the use of land, including high conservation value forests, the coast, crown lands and waterways. It has proposed five new laws which will override existing legislation - that which currently protects the environment and allows public participation.

Called the 'Natural Resources Management Package', it is due to be considered by a Parliamentary Legislation Committee by October 30, and thence debated in Parliament.

6 the term *endangered* is redefined so as to remove 150 species from the current NSW endangered list

It has been described as the most savage attack on the state's environmental laws ever seen. It attempts to remove some of the best environmental laws in the world, built up over decades of community and parliamentary effort.

What the new laws will do:

Replace the process of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EPA Act).

A new Resources Management Council will produce regional reviews recommending how public land (including National Parks) can be used.

WORRIED ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT?

Then you should be worried about the NSW Coalition's Natural Resources Package. The worst legislative attack on the environment, ever. Removing 20 years of hard-won environment protection and

public participation laws, in one blow.

Help campaign to stop the package:

- ask your friends to write letters to the Premier and Opposition Leader
- visit your local MP

• come to the special Briefing Session for environment groups on 3 October in Sydney (NVCA has details)

• Join other concerned people at the Big Rally on 22 November in Sydney.

ALTERNATIVE PACKAGE

Seven key environmental groups have joined forces and are preparing an Alternative Package that contains a detailed critique of the government's plans and positive legislative reforms that will improve environmental protection and public participation in decision making.

During a decade that is revealing dramatic and imminent changes to our climate, rapidly depleting natural resources, enormous pollution and over-population problems and

continuing ozone depletion, it is astounding that such a negative, short-sighted and environmentally destructive package of new Bills could even be contemplated, let alone introduced into Parliament. The time is now long overdue for Australia to recognise that environmental protection is no longer a luxury but a necessity, upon which the future of the planet, and possibly humanity itself, depends. With your help there is every chance that the package can be defeated.

Enclosed is a sample letter to your parliamentarian, PLEASE USE IT, also copy it and post it to the other people on the list below:

Mr J. Hatton, (on behalf of the Independents) Parliament House Macquarie Street Sydney 2000

Mr John Fahey, Premier of NSW Parliament House....

Mr R Carr, Leader of the Opposition Parliament House,.....

Rev Fred Nile, MLC Parliament House.....

Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear

I am writing to you to express my very grave concern, and total opposition to the NSW Government's Natural Resources Management Package.

The legislative amendments proposed by the Package will effectively remove some of the best environmental laws in the world, and will threaten the survival of most of our endangered species and our remaining old growth and other high conservation value forests, and the health of our coasts and waterways.

To introduce laws that override existing legislation that currently protects the environment and provides for public participation is not only inconsistent with Australia's formal position on global environmental policies, but is also terribly divisive and confrontational towards the people of Australia.

You are no doubt aware of the Alternative Package that has been prepared, which proposes positive legislative reforms that will improve environmental protection and public participation, while providing for re-training and re-employment for workers displaced by conservation based decisions.

I sincerely request that you adopt the Alternative Package that enhances the process of public participation in decision-making on environmental issues, rather than disempowering Australians in favour of selfish vested interests.

I also strongly urge you to abandon the Natural Resources Management Package in the interests of the Australian people and of our environment.

Yours sincerely,



The new Council will be dominated by developer interests thus skewing decisions towards exploitation interests, it will not have the balanced set of objectives of the former EPA Act.

The so-called 'Endangered and Other Threatened Species Bill', repeals the Endangered Fauna Act and the licensing powers given to the National Parks Service. It sacks the current independent scientific committee and replaces it with one stacked with government appointees.

The term 'endangered' is redefined so as to remove 150 species off the current NSW endangered list.

Forests can be handed over to the timber industry in long term contracts with hefty compensation claims liable if a forest is withdrawn.

The Heritage Act will no longer apply to the natural environment and Aboriginal sites.

WHY BUY AUSTRALIAN?

Everyone concerned for the environment should support Australian owned companies, if we don't then Australia's mounting foreign debt will have the World Bank/IMF step in and say: "Chip the forests, mine National Parks, take polluting industries", says Harry Wallace spokesperson of the Australian Owned Companies Association.

"If every Australian averaged \$50 per week buying Australian made products AND buying from Australian owned companies instead of spending the same amount buying imported products from foreign owned companies, then Australia would:

- Save \$20 billion a year on foreign debt
- Create 500,000 new jobs
- No longer have a recession

"Australia will never generate enough capital to be a modern industrialised country if the best businesses for generating capital are owned by foreigners. Most foreign companies are not free to make decision in Australia's best interests - their decisions will be in the interests of Japan, USA,

Europe, or where the parent is based. Australians will be the 'serfs' of the 21st century, working for overlords but owning nothing!"

"More than 70% of items sold in supermarkets are foreign and they usually get best places on shelves. You can help Australia and yourself by changing your buying:

- shop at an Australian owned Store
- make sure that 80% of your purchases are Australian owned and Australian made.

For Australia to have a future your choice must be - buy Australian owned!"

This article is taken from: The **AUSBUY GUIDE NO2** by Harry Wallace, President of Australian Owned Companies Association, PO Box 440 Rydalmere NSW 2116. Phone (02) 898 0309

A copy of their publication "AUSBUY GUIDE No2" contains lists of Australian made products and owned companies and is available by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to them or asking at an AMPOL service station.

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The Problem

The cat is designed to be a hunter. One of the most efficient hunters we have - its teeth are designed to capture, hold down and break up flesh to eat it; its paws are designed to enable it to be stealthy, quick, accurate in its pounces and an excellent climber.

Shortly after European settlement in Australia domestic cats became established in the wild. They found ample food and faced little competition from native predators. Feral cats are now established throughout Australia from the Great Sandy Desert to sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island.

Feral animals are those animals, or their progeny, which were domesticated but have escaped and survived in the wild. Many animals become feral because they are dumped in the bush or released from enclosures when they are no longer wanted. This happens with cats.

The population was given a boost in the 1880s with the introduction of the New South Wales Rabbit Nuisance Bill (1883), which advocated using cats to control the exploding rabbit population. Thousands of cats were released onto rural properties, particularly in the Riverina, in an attempt to control rabbits, rats and mice. They proved ineffective in curbing the expansion of rabbit populations

and seem to have little effect on the frequent rodent plagues in rural areas.

Feral cats are opportunistic scavengers and hunters and will prey on the most available and easily caught species - which are often those Australian natives that have few defences against them. Cats eat a variety of small animals, including birds, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals and insects. Near towns and farm buildings they will scrounge garbage scraps and they will also eat carrion.



Studies of their food habits in the eastern highlands show that in these

searches both feral and domestic cats, did a survey three years ago, covering 3,000 households with a questionnaire recording what animals cats were catching and bringing back to their homes. "A lot more than half the cats are out there hunting and fighting other animals despite being well fed", said Dr Paton. Average rates were worked out including cats which do not kill (about one third) and are: 8 reptiles, 16 mammals and 8 birds per year. "Now that doesn't sound like many, but when you start thinking about how many cats there are, it becomes phenomenal".

There are roughly 3 million owned and semi-domesticated cats in Australia. By Dr Paton's reckoning that would mean 90 million vertebrates a year - most simply

killed, but left uneaten as a result of the hunting instinct, but this could be a conservative estimate as only 50% are brought back home. "Figures may be twice as bad as that", said Dr Paton.

Yvonne Cowling, who runs a native animal shelter sees the casualties caused by cats. Once getting seven Ring-tailed possums in one day. Sugar gliders, Feather-tailed Gliders, Crimson Rosellas and Eastern Spinebills are frequent victims. Each year, wildlife shelters receive large numbers of wildlife injured by domestic pets. In 1989, one shelter recorded 312 possums from 7 species. Of these, 199

 **The choice is: do we want cats everywhere or do we want all our marsupials, little placental mammals, frogs and birds?** 

areas feral cats rely heavily on marsupial mice, native rats and possums. The effects of predation by feral cats on these species is unknown. The once common eastern native quoll, *Dasyurus viverrinus*, is now either rare or extinct over much of its former range and the feral cat has been at least partly responsible for the animal's decline.

Feral cats are not the only threat to wildlife. Even the most lovable of our house cats can prey upon wildlife if allowed to roam bushland areas. Doctor David Paton, from the Zoology Dept at Adelaide University, who re-

With Cats...



died or required euthanasia as a direct result of injuries inflicted by cats.

Feral cats kill to feed themselves and their young so leave no evidence. There are estimated to be much higher kill rates for feral cats. Usually their weight is 4kg, in some areas it averages 8kg and there are reports of some being well over 20kg, but that is an exception. They are calculated to need 300gm of flesh per day. If this 300gm was taken only from birds it would be 10 medium/small birds per day which gives 70 per week and 3,600 per year. Or you can substitute native mammals, reptiles or invertebrates.

60% of the 300gm can consist of rabbits in rabbit infested areas. "Given a 200 hectare home range for one feral

cat; 3,600 in that area is a massive amount of native animals being taken per hectare per year" said Dr Paton.

People's lack of responsibility is a major cause of the feral cat problem. People dump surplus kittens. Humans cause ferals by letting domestic cats roam far and become strays. Cats have an efficient reproductive rate, quadrupling their population each year. Females have 2 litters of 4 kittens per year - up to 4 litters in peak conditions. Once the feral cat population is established they too are producing offspring which are continuing to add to and maintain the numbers in our natural environment. These numbers are extremely difficult to put a

reliable figure on, Dr David Paton uses a figure of one feral cat per 200 hectares.

In Victoria, for example, this gives 120,000 feral cats which kill 100 million reptiles, 100 million birds AND 100 million mammals EACH YEAR.

Feral cats are also known to have introduced diseases such as sarcoptic mange and toxoplasmosis into native animal populations. The latter is a disease which can be transmitted to humans and can cause spontaneous abortion, ulcerations and blindness.

often frequent inaccessible areas. The feral cat problem must be tackled on two fronts. Feral cats living in natural and agricultural areas must be eradicated and the release of more domestic cats into bushland areas must be prevented.

Under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974 anyone who releases or dumps a domestic cat into the bush is liable to a fine of up to \$1000. Unwanted cats or kittens should be humanely killed.

While sterilisation of existing feral cat populations is not feasible,

sterilisation of domestic cats will reduce the number of unwanted kittens which could be dumped and ensures that any cats which do escape



A lot more than half the cats are out there hunting and fighting other animals despite being well fed



There are reports of feral cats bringing down fully grown kangaroos. Yvonne Cowling was a witness to an attack on a Black-tailed Wallaby which she was raising in her animal shelter. "The cat, which I owned at the time, was hiding in the bushes and it leapt out and pounced onto the back of the wallaby, in the five seconds it took me to launch myself to get the cat off, there were something like 91 puncture marks that needed suturing. Unfortunately she later died from the shock of treatment and probably internal bleeding."

Feral cats are extremely difficult to control because they are shy, generally wary of traps and baits and

into the bush will not be able to reproduce.

Perhaps the most important approach to be taken in attempting to solve the feral cat problem is to educate the community about the dangers to wildlife and health of domestic stock of releasing domestic cats in the bush. Community support is needed to make this work.

The Shire of Sherbrooke is the only community trying seriously to do something about the problem of domestic cats. They have introduced a nightly curfew, where cats must be kept inside, thus helping reduce predation on nocturnal animals; they have

The problem with cats...



put positive identification tags (by using a microchip) on each person's cat and introduced compulsory registration with cheaper rates for desexed cats. This initiative is to be commended and hopefully used in other shires in the future.

Only a few, uncoordinated attempts to control feral cats have been made. Shooting and poisoning are highly selective but are labour intensive. Trapping is difficult, but if successful the animal should be taken to a veterinarian or the RSPCA to be destroyed.

Feral cat eradication must be addressed as a National problem. Social and community attitudes to domestic cats need to change. Substitutes for cats as companion animals are available - for example, parrots, budgerigars, guinea pigs or other non-predatory animals. The need or

perceived need for cats must be addressed.

"If you got rid of cats from everyone who didn't really want them (like those given a kitten) then we may get rid of 80% of all domestic cats! If you have a rat or mouse problem get a trap, ideally a "live catch" one, check the species caught and ensure it is not a native, then kill it or release it as appropriate" said Greg Clancy, ecologist.

The choice is: do we want cats everywhere or do we want all our marsupials, little placental mammals, frogs and birds?

Compiled by Carol Margolis from various sources including: National Parks and Wildlife Service ABC Radio's "Green and Practical" program.

(The NVCA has information on the Sherbrooke example at their office)

Have you ever wondered if recycling paper ever ends??

Paper cannot, of course, be recycled for ever, as is the case with metals, because the fibres will gradually break down in the repeated pulping process. Perhaps four times is as much as can be expected with current technology. So it will always be necessary to introduce virgin fibre, and rather than pursuing a goal of 100% recycled fibre in a maximum number of products, the greatest scope is in introducing the highest possible proportion of recovered material in any product type.

Technical progress extends to the classification of the millions of fibres that flow from the re-pulping process, and recycling could develop to a point where fibres at an early stage of their use cycle are employed in paper that will be recycled again - as with newsprint - while fibres nearing the end of the scope for reclamation are used in a non-recoverable product like toilet tissue.

Trees

It is estimated that between 10 and 17 trees are needed to produce a tonne of paper - enough for around 7000 copies of a national newspaper. *from The Warmer Bulletin*

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THE SYDNEY ROCK OYSTER

Another Australian native threatened by invasion of exotic species.

Nambucca Shire Council has resolved to go to bat for the Shire's oyster growers in their battle to overturn the decision of the Minister for Natural Resources, Mr Ian Causley, to allow the importation of oysters into the Nambucca River, which have come from areas infested with the Pacific (or Geigus) Oyster.

The Council will also approach Ulmarra, Bellingen, Macleay and Hastings Councils to seek their support for a combined approach to the Minister.

The decision follows a meeting with Nambucca Oyster Growers representatives who outlined the problems of Pacific Oysters. Mr Mick Starr said that the Pacific Oyster was Japanese in origin and then bred in New Zealand. The Australian native, the Sydney Rock Oyster, is the species on which the Nambucca's industry is based.

"The Pacific oyster was brought into Port Stephens and exploded like a blackberry. They take over the native oyster and are even bad for all the beaches as they can catch onto beaches by their columns toppling over and continuing to grow. They've taken over beaches in New Zealand," he said.

"The Pacific oyster grows in 12 to 18 months whereas the Sydney Rock oyster takes 3 to 3 1/2 years to mature. The Pacific oyster also spawns at four times the volume of the Rock oyster, but is an inferior oyster in taste and doesn't bring as high a price. It also

all oyster growers in the clean areas were 100% in agreement that they didn't want shipments allowed in from areas infested with Pacific oysters.

has to be processed faster, before it goes off." Mr Starr said.

"The Rock oysters are a gourmet product and in high demand, unlike the Pacific variety," he said.

Mr Starr said that the Nambucca is the best area on the coast at the moment for Sydney Rock oysters and that only from the Camden Haven (excluding Hastings River) north to Wooli remains clear of Pacific oyster infestation. He said that all oyster growers in the clean areas were 100% in agreement that they didn't want shipments allowed in from areas infested with Pacific oysters.

Ms Alex Tranindzic, a Macksville oyster grower, stressed that the Rock oyster was the native Australian species and that it was "extremely difficult to pick a Pacific from a rock in a pile of oysters." She also expressed concern at the sewage outlet into the Nambucca River opposite the oysters at Macksville. She said: "the Health Department considers it the biggest problem in the Nambucca River. Ideally, if water quality is good enough, oysters don't have to be washed". She is having tests done to see the quality of the water.

Meanwhile in the Macleay, oyster growers are outraged at finding their

first Pacific oysters. Mr Glen Mark of the Hastings River Oysters Cooperative said that it shows the impossibility of moving oysters without bringing in Pacifics. "The Minister should admit he has made a major mistake now that there's proof". He called the situation an "amazing tragedy" and called on the Minister to reverse his decision.

Conservation groups and concerned individuals from the areas where the rivers are clear are urged to support the oyster growers by writing to Mr Causley (Parliament House, Sydney) asking him to ban movement of oysters from Pacific infested areas into clean areas to protect this native Australian species.

Lyn Orrego



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Is the Quoll there?

likelihood that a remnant population could still exist



The Eastern Quoll (*Dasyurus viverrinus*) has been considered extinct on the Australian mainland since 1965. Recent reliable sightings at the Carrai and Petroi plateaux near Kempsey, by staff from the CSIRO and NPWS and the Forestry Commission point to the likelihood that a remnant population could still exist there.

Current logging operations on the Carrai plateau were halted on August 3, when a NEFA blockade crew captured a bulldozer and established pipe and tripod barricades in the area. NEFA's action followed several requests to the NPWS to revoke the Licence to kill endangered fauna under which the logging operations were continuing.

The Carrai plateau is within the nominated Werrikimbe wilderness area, and was being logged under the NSW Government's Timber Industry legislation which had dispensed with the need for an EIS prior to logging.

Also, the Eastern Quoll would lose all protection when the State Government brings in its proposed Natural Resources Management Package (see other article in this issue of *ENVIRONS*). Wherein any endangered species which has viable populations in other states would be unprotected. The only other state which has populations of the Eastern Quoll is Tasmania.

At an arranged meeting between NEFA coordinators and Forestry Commission officials, postponement

of logging was negotiated whilst a survey to investigate the presence or otherwise of the Eastern Quoll was carried out. This is expected to be completed by September 27. The NEFA representatives tried to negotiate for a two week warning if logging was to resume. This was refused by

Forestry. NEFA then tried to get an extra week after the survey was completed, in order to study the report. This was also refused.

So the fate of this last stand of old growth forest on the Carrai plateau rests with the outcome of the Quoll survey.

Preserving proportional voting

Letters needed

The Minister for Local Government, the Hon GB Peacocke MP, has recommended to parliament that the proposed introduction of 'equal value voting' be taken out of the new Local Government Act. Equal value voting in local government elections would see the majority determine all elected councillors. The present system of proportional voting sees councillors elected in proportion to the mix of views represented in the community.

Mr Peacocke will be recommending that the method of voting will be up to the residents of each Local Government Authority. One problem: this decision, if made by the majority is likely to favour the 'majority takes all' system of equal value voting.

That is 51% of the community could have all the power.

Your letters of support for retaining the proportional voting system at present in place in the Local Government Act are urgently needed. (Write to Mr Peacocke, Minister for Local Government, c/- Parliament House, Sydney).

The Hare-Clarke system in Tasmania is a proportional system (State) and it has ensured the Greens (as a minority group) get minority representation in proportion to their numbers, unlike the NSW State system which is preferential and favours the majority beyond their numbers in the community. It is extremely important that we preserve proportional voting at the local government level.

Cr Lyn Orrego

Sanctuaries from Feral Animals

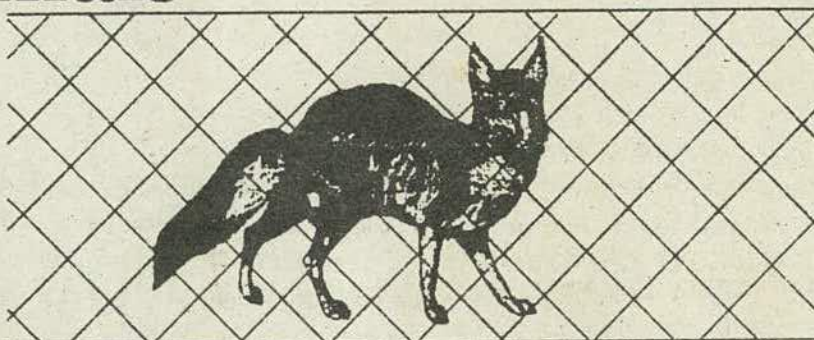
Rare and endangered animals can roam in a 20 hectare cat and fox free environment in Warrawong Sanctuary just outside Adelaide. It was set up by Dr John Wamsley in 1969. It was opened up to tourists in 1985 and has since won a number of major tourism and business awards. The profits from Warrawong Sanctuary are now invested in further endangered species projects.

In John Wamsley's home State of South Australia, more than 60 per cent of the native mammals are either extinct or under threat of extinction. Of an original 105 species of mammals, 28 are extinct and another 39 are endangered, rare or vulnerable.

Dr Wamsley's plan is based on the observation that feral animals, particularly the cat, fox and rabbit are primary causes of the extinction of our medium sized native mammals.

Using the quite large profits from Warrawong, and shares from private investors, John Wamsley has bought a 1000 hectare property, two hours drive from Adelaide.

The property comprises a very rare stand of original mallee habitat. No introduced hoofed animals such as sheep, cattle or goats have ever grazed that land and destroyed the very fragile thin layer of lichens that cover the ancient soil protecting it from erosion. Unlike the evolution of animals and other continents, native animals in Australia have evolved with soft, padded feet which do not destroy our delicate topsoils.



“In John Wamsley's home State of South Australia, more than 60 per cent of the native mammals are either extinct or under threat of extinction.”

In late 1990, a \$500,000 fox, cat, rabbit, dog, goat and pig proof fence was erected around the entire 14.5 kilometre perimeter. The last gate was closed in December 1990, by Sir Mark Oliphant, former Governor of South Australia. Then, last year, an extensive program of feral animal eradication took place and was completed when the last rabbit was destroyed.

Of the 26 original mammal inhabitants of the mallee, Dr Wamsley hopes to introduce at least 23 from other populations across the continent and from offshore islands. He would introduce four others - the Crescent Nailtail Wallaby, the White-footed Rabbit-rat, the Lesser Stick-nest Rat, and the Eastern Hare-wallaby, except that they are now extinct. Native bird species such as the Southern Stone Curlew, the Mallee Fowl and the Bustard will also be introduced.

In May 1991 the first animals, very small native rodents called *Pseudomys australis*, were released

in the presence of the Australian Director of the World Wide Fund for Nature, Don Henry. Dr Wamsley has since released Western Brush-tailed Bettongs, Mallee Fowl, Stone Curlews, and Stick-nest Rats. He plans to release Burrowing Bettongs, Numbats, Western Barred Bandicoots, Western Quoll, and Bilbies next year.

Dr Wamsley's company, Earth Sanctuaries, spent over \$1 million on conservation projects last year and at a healthy profit to shareholders. You can become part of this most exciting, hands-on effort to save our unique and beautiful mammals: you can become a member of the Yookamurra Society; and you can help this "ethical investment" by purchasing shares in Earth Sanctuaries Pty Ltd.

from: National Environment Report, Edition 2 March 1992

If you would like to know more, contact Dr John Wamsley at PO Box 35, Stirling, SA 5152.

environs, the north coast environment magazine

Superb Blue Wren - *Malurus cyaneus*

Unfortunately the pair of these beautiful little birds that chose to nest in our garden several weeks ago didn't reach the stage of our cover wrens. We watched them gather grass, bark, feathers (from the fowl-house) and wisps of perennial cotton, growing close to their nesting site. Finally the nest was complete and eggs were laid, but disaster struck!...the next time we checked the nest it had been disturbed - mother wren was missing though her eggs were still there - we suspect a carpet snake, seen in the same part of the garden a day later. These beautiful birds, that do such a good job of pest control in our garden, have a lot to contend with. As well as natural predators such as snakes, goannas & butcher birds etc., many are the victims of domestic & feral cats and still more lose their nests & young because of ill-timed slashing & burning - they tend to nest in long grass & bracken fern and may start breeding early in August if the weather is warm. Many other small birds & mammals are also nesting by early August - surely another good reason not to burn off at this time of high fire danger!

Julie.

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Environs is published every month on a voluntary basis to bring together reports from a large number of environmental organisations. Many groups are affiliated with Environs, including the Bellingen Environment Centre, and the Nambucca Valley Conservation Association.

Editorial contributions are welcomed. They should include the authors name and phone number and should be sent to: Environs, PO Box 123, Bowraville 2449. Subscriptions are \$12 for 12 issues. Advertisements may be lodged with Julie Mozsny by phoning (065) 695 360. Editorial for Environs is by Carol Margolis and the Environs team. Layout and typesetting is by Mike Holland. Cover artwork is by Julie Mozsny.

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