



# *Eucryphia*

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*Robertson Environment Protection Society – to promote the protection and enhancement of the Robertson Environment*

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**Next REPS Meeting**  
**Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October at 7:30pm**  
**at the Robertson Community Centre**

**A talk by Dr Kevin Mills**  
**“The Galapagos Islands –**  
**Darwin's Living Laboratory”**

A talk will be given on the Galapagos Islands of South America by biologist, Dr Kevin Mills, on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2006 at 7.30pm in Robertson at the Robertson Community Centre, Caalong Street. Kevin recently visited these islands, famous for their wildlife, particularly giant tortoises, sea-swimming iguanas and seabirds. Charles Darwin's observations during his visit in 1835 became a cornerstone of his Theory of Evolution. This presentation will cover the wildlife of islands, as well as geological history, the current environment and the conservation of these unique islands, which are located 1,000 kilometres off the western coast of South America



***All are welcome – please bring friends and family. A light supper will be provided. Entry with a gold coin donation.***

## **Upcoming Events**

Fri. 13<sup>th</sup> October – Darwin's Living Laboratory talk, 7:30pm, Robertson Community Centre  
Sat. 21<sup>st</sup> October – Caalang Creek Planting Day, 9:00am, Meet at Robertson Community Centre  
Fri. 10<sup>th</sup> November – **REPS Annual General Meeting**  
Sun. 29<sup>th</sup> October – NPA Bushwalk Macquarie National Pass, contact Jim Foran 48851081

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## Shoalhaven Transfers Update

### by Leon Hall, REPS President

As you may be aware, The Sydney Catchment Authority (SCA) want to increase the amount of water being transferred from Tallowa Dam in the Shoalhaven catchment to supplement Sydney Waters supply to Sydney and the Illawarra.

An SCA Discussion paper has been released for public comment and involves three aspects;

- 1) Environmental Flows below Tallowa Dam
- 2) Tallowa Dam operations
- 3) Transfer options through the Southern Highlands

Although these three aspects are important to our region, the transfer options will most affect the Southern Highlands. The current rules say that when the overall dam levels drop to 60% then the Sydney Catchment Authority can start pumping from Tallowa Dam to augment Sydney Waters supply. This is done via the run of river routes down the Wingecarribee River to the Warragamba Dam, and down Glenquarry and Doudles Folly creeks and the Nepean River to the Nepean and Avon Dams.

Now the SCA want to change Tallowa Dam from being a drought water supply to a fully integrated part of greater Sydney's water supply system. This will involve pumping water up from the Shoalhaven (at great cost) and through the highlands most of the time. As the run of river cannot handle this they propose about six different options. These are mainly pipeline options which will again impact on our environment.

Some pipeline options only substitute part of the river run and then the water empties into the more pristine river run areas to continue to the dams. One pipeline option involves a 20 to 25 metre cleared corridor along Tourist Road through environmentally sensitive and protected areas to the Avon Dam, past the proposed borefields (a coincidence? I don't think so). This option would have very large environmental and scenic costs. The most expensive option is a deep tunnel from Burrawang pumping station to the Avon Dam. Pumping costs are reduced and environmental costs minimized but not eliminated. This tunnel would also have to be well sealed. This may be the best of a lot of bad options, or the pipe partly down the

Nepean River emptying into a fairly pristine area but already affected by water transfers. Both of the pipeline options to the Avon Dam also include another option which is a spur pipeline to supply the Illawarra.

I think the best option is what the Shoalhaven Transfers Community Reference Group recommended to the NSW Government which was, in essence, to progressively reduce water extractions from the Shoalhaven River by placing the greater Sydney region on a water sustainable basis through implementation of water recycling and stormwater harvesting strategies and improving demand management. This option is not in the discussion paper.

Visit [www.sca.nsw.gov.au](http://www.sca.nsw.gov.au) to download the discussion paper or to have your say. Supporting documents are also available on CD. All available documents can be viewed at Bowral Library.

Make comments by mail, phone, fax or email by 6th October.

SCA Head Office  
Sydney Catchment Authority:  
Level 2, 311 High Street,  
Penrith NSW 2750  
PO Box 323, Penrith NSW 2751  
Phone: 1300 SCA GOV (1300 722 468)  
Fax: (02) 4732 3666

Email: [info@sca.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@sca.nsw.gov.au)

For any queries on this subject please contact me, Leon Hall on 48882222.

#### **HAVE YOUR SAY:**

The SCA has set up a website where you can make an on-line response to their proposal. It is easy to follow the instructions, write a few words in the boxes provided, and have your say.

It may be found at: <http://www.sca.nsw.gov.au>

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**Letter to Sydney Catchment Authority  
from Andy Kennard (REPS Member)**

Dear Sirs,

I have been away and only now have learned about the proposal to remove water from the water table. I wish my comments to be included in the discussions.

I wish to make comment on the proposal to extract water from the Groundwater, in particular from Kangaloon.

I have a farm of some 290 hectares on the eastern side of Robertson, called Yarrawa Native Forest. We employ 4 people on the farm.

The main activity is a re-forestation programme - both for commercial timber harvesting in the long term, and for native rainforest protection and enhancement. We also breed cattle.

We have many natural springs on the place and are dependent on these for our water. While we have normally good rainfall, we have had, in the 12 years I have owned it, 3 major dry periods. During these dries we experienced a severe reduction in spring run off, most running dry, resulting in our dams being almost depleted of water.

We also have a bore on the property which we have had to move within the 12 years (at enormous expense) due to the water table drying up. The current bore water table is also dropping. Any removal of huge amounts of water from the local water table MUST have consequences for the flows from the underground water supply for the area.

I am very concerned at the concept of removing water from this, or any, water table. It has the potential to reduce or even eliminate the flows from both the springs and the bore on my property.

I cannot understand why you would aim to seriously impact the lives and livelihood of many people who have been independent of the Sydney water supply problem all their lives.

Why should they be affected? It is a water storage problem for the Sydney community (of which I am one) and to take water from a source with unknown consequences is management madness.

I sincerely hope you do not proceed with this

programme, now, in the immediate future or the long term future.

Yours, concerned and worried,

Andy Kennard

Yarrawa Native Forest

Please respond and acknowledge my concerns.

**Editor's Note:**

Prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> September, Andy informs me that he had not even received acknowledgement to this letter, let alone a formal reply.

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**REPS Submission to  
Sydney Catchment Authority  
Sent on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

**RE: UPPER NEPEAN BOREFIELD  
PROPOSAL**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Kangaloon borefields proposal.

Our society would like to make the following comments.

1) The proposal to severely deplete this sustaining groundwater, which now discharges to the Nepean Dam and the associated protected environment which also feeds the Nepean Dam, does not appear to take into account the damage to this highly valued and pristine environment that has been preserved by successive state governments and the previous land managers that protected and respected this land.

Ground water levels are very high in this area and

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sustain highly valued wetlands of national significance as well as large tracts of Endangered Ecological Communities, Endangered flora and fauna and species not even known to us e.g. the frog species that was unidentifiable by experts and is currently being DNA analysed by the museum.

How can the Sydney Catchment Authority and the State Government risk destroying this unique landscape to flush Sydneysiders' toilets etc? Also this is not accessing deep aquifers in this area as the ground water level will drop from near the surface to at least 60 metres below and not be seen near the surface to sustain this national treasure for about 10 years (your estimate only) or maybe longer. The ecology, which is more valuable than any surrounding national parks, due to its unique structure and inaccessibility, will be unable to tap this groundwater. This is unacceptable and unsustainable.

2) Your definition of sustainable is misleading and infers that the aquifer will not run dry. This is a narrow engineering viewpoint that does not take into account the total catchment management viewpoint of environmental sustainability.

3) The potential and real damage to this environment must be considered against other alternatives. For example, is this an equitable project for the people of the Southern Highlands, the Sydney Water water-users and for this pristine environment? No.

Leonay is another groundwater site you are interested in and this proposal does not affect a pristine environment and does not empty the water into nearby valuable creek environments to a reservoir where evaporation will create losses. Leonay's water will be transferred by pipe to a nearby treatment plant. Most importantly it will supply water to western Sydney which Leonay is part of (surely more equitable).

Recently the Botany aquifer has been considered a great source of water for Sydney by the University of Technology, Sydney. The recharge also could be quick using the now wasted storm water of Sydney. Water from Sydney for Sydney, where all the rain is, is far better than transporting it from hundreds of kilometres away though old leaking infrastructure at great monetary and environmental cost.

Large scale recycled water use must be priority

number one as this will stop the pillage of the countryside's water which ends up wasted and will bring Sydney in line with other capital cities around the world. Also storm water collection and even the desalination plant are far better proposals than this one at Kangaloon.

4) You are moving too fast with this project to understand the implications of your actions. If SCA and the state government decide to continue here then a five year moratorium on test pumping would be appropriate so that the SCA can get adequate baseline data on all aspects of this environment. A recent example being that REPS got the NPWS to GPS three locations along Tourist Road which had groups of the Mittagong Geebung (*Persoonia glaucescens*) which is an endangered species. Since then the SCA has slashed along the roadside and now there are only 2 locations of this endangered species. The first principle of a management plan is to see and record what is there and only then can you appropriately manage the area in regard to its value.

5) Tourist Road is one of the most scenic roads in our shire and your proposal will severely degrade this area e.g. infrastructure and pumping effect on the terrestrial environment.

To the south of Tourist road is highly productive farming land and this may also be affected especially due to the envisaged drawdown effect. Tourist Road also has been the location of many koala sightings, including a mother with baby, and any tree removal, or death associated with pumping will degrade their habitat as well.

In summary, the cost is too high for the small amount of short term water supply and the Robertson Environment Protection Society strongly opposes this proposal.

With respect, we hope that you, the SCA and the State Government will stop their investigations in this area on environmental, socioeconomic, visual and equity issues.

Yours Sincerely,  
Robertson Environment Protection Society Inc.

Leon Hall – President

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## The Bassian Thrush - easily overlooked.

Contribution by Denis Wilson

This bird has been known as the Ground (or Mountain) Thrush. More recently it has been a victim of the internationalisation of bird names, originally as White's Thrush, and now as the Bassian Thrush (*Zoothera lunulata*). I mention all of these names, in case you wish to refer to any older Bird Books that you might have.

I have seen this bird in the Robertson Nature Reserve, usually late in the afternoon, which is a time of day when it seems to be quite active. The first time I saw it, two years ago, it walked ahead of me, along one of the paths.

Just recently I observed two of these birds at the Robertson Cemetery, in the heavy brush, just at the end of the road leading to the Cemetery. They are a bird of the heavy cover. They search for worms and ground-dwelling insects, under the leaves on the ground. Consequently, it is likely that, as with the Whipbird, you will hear the bird searching through the leaves on the ground, looking for its food, before you will see it appear under some vines or other low growing plants.



**Photo: The Bassian Thrush (*Zoothera lunulata*)**

To observe these birds, I found it necessary to sit perfectly still, underneath a bush. I tried to photograph them, with little success, as they are quite shy. But more importantly, they are extremely well camouflaged. It is for this reason that I

mentioned in the title that this bird is easily overlooked. It is not a common bird, but it is not regarded as rare. From my experience, you could expect to find this bird in any local patch of heavy rainforest around Robertson. I have also heard it calling, just on dusk, in the dense scrub along the Belmore Falls Road, but I have not actually seen it there.

In its general behaviour it is very similar to the introduced "Common Blackbird" - to which it is related. The call of the Bassian Thrush is a thin whistle, not unlike the more familiar call of the Blackbird. It is known to call at night, and very early in the morning, and at dusk.

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## Robertson Sewerage Update

by David Tranter

The Wingecarribee Swamp Steering Committee, which has been meeting for the past 8 years since the Swamp collapsed, was updated today (Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September) on the status of the Robertson Sewerage Scheme by Alan Benson, Sydney Catchment Authority Program Manager, Operations & Major Projects Division. The issues addressed included: gravity or pressure reticulation; treatment plant (intermittent aeration or membrane bio-reactor); effluent purity, transport and re-use; environmental impact; timing; cost; and agency contributions.

The following is a summary of his address and the questions and answers that followed:

- The system will be run by Council, with Sydney Catchment Authority (SCA) assistance.
  - SCA contributions come from their Healthy Catchment Town & Water Scheme which is run by the Department of Energy and Utilities.
  - There is a set funding subsidy for each scheme of which there are many, usually 25-40% of the total cost.
  - In the case of Robertson, SCA will fund half the total cost, currently estimated to be \$17 Million.
  - Their aim is to see Robertson properly sewered for the next 20 years, withstanding 1 in 20 years floods.
  - It is designed to cater for 2000 people (whose wastes are roughly equivalent to that of an average dairy farm) and assumes that that each person will require 230 litres of water per day.
  - Three alternative reticulation schemes have been considered: gravity (laying pipes along the contours), pressure (initial treatment at each house) and a hybrid of the two.
  - The advantages of the pressure system are that it is less vulnerable to contamination (e.g. by animal wastes or stormwater) and is cheaper than the gravity system.
  - The treatment plant will be state-of-the art, fully enclosed to limit external odours, and either intermittently aerated to stop anaerobic fermentation (the IDEA system) or involving a Membrane Bio-reactor. In either case the effluent will be finally sterilised with UV light.
  - The consequent products will be pure water and dry compost (the by-product) which will be removed from the site every 3 months or so and sold for agriculture.
  - The treated effluent will be reticulated in polyethylene pipes parallel to the railway line, which generally follows the edge of Wingecarribee Swamp, a wetland of international significance with several endangered species.
  - This tertiary-treated effluent will be available to downstream farmers to water their pastures in times of drought, thus reducing their groundwater demands.
  - Effluent not required for agriculture will be discharged into the Wingecarribee River downstream of Sheepwash Road, where it will become available for Berrima, and ultimately Sydney.
  - This will have a neutral or beneficial effect on the river, that is, it will not degrade the ambient river quality and could even improve it.
  - The purpose of locating the treatment plant close to Robertson is to aerate the sewage at its source and protect the ecological integrity of the swamp, which is managed by SCA according to a (statutory) Management Plan which is available for public comment and eventually adopted by Government.
  - Approval for the Robertson Sewerage Scheme is subject to an Environmental Impact Study (EIS), which will begin in September.
  - It is expected that the resultant EIS will be on public exhibition in November 2006 and approved, with or without amendments by February 2007.
  - The current aim is to construct the system in 2007/8 and have it operating by mid 2008, however changes occasioned by the EIS could possibly cause delays.
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## Poetry Corner

Edited by Jonathan Persse

On 21<sup>st</sup> July 1950, Douglas Stewart, who was then literary editor of The Bulletin, wrote to David Campbell, who regularly sent him contributions,

*“Not for months, not for years have I read a poem that gives me such delight as ‘Ariel’, a poem that is itself so full of delight. The music’s lovely – the clear lyrical melody ringing in the clear air of frost; the picture is lovely, of the cheeky gay little wagtail riding the head of the ram; and the image is lovely and crystal clear – the bird of delight singing spring into the huge old ram of the world. Truly, it’s one of those rare things that come up glittering and perfect”.*

### Ariel

Frost and snow, frost and snow:  
The old ram scratches with a frozen toe  
At silver tussocks in the payable mist  
And stuffs his belly like a treasure chest.

His tracks run green up the mountainside  
Where he throws a shadow like a storm-cloud’s hide;  
He has tossed the sun in a fire of thorns,  
And a little bird whistles between his horns.

“Sweet-pretty-creature!” sings the matchstick bird,  
And on height and in chasm his voice is heard:  
Like a bell of ice or the crack of the frost  
It rings in the ears of his grazing host.

“Sweet-pretty-creature!” While all is as still  
As the bird on the ram on the frozen hill,  
O the wagtail warms to his tiny art  
And glaciers move through the great beast’s heart.

– David Campbell

On the 13<sup>th</sup> February 1954, David Campbell wrote to Douglas Stewart,

*“I picked up The Bulletin in town while posting my last letter and only had time for a glance at your “Snowgum”, which must be read in silence to give all its beauty; and it is indeed a tree; with the harmony of forces in the last stanza. It sends the double chill of winter and poetry up the spine”.*

### The Snow-Gum

It is the snow-gum silently,  
In noon’s blue and the silvery  
Flowering of light on snow,  
Performing its slow miracle  
Where upon drift and icicle  
Perfect lies in its shadow.

Leaf upon leaf’s fidelity,  
The creamy trunk’s solidity,  
The full-grown curve of the crown,  
It is the tree’s perfection  
Now shown in clear reflection  
Like flakes of soft grey stone.

Out of the granite’s eternity,  
Out of the winter’s long enmity,  
Something is done on the snow;  
And the silver light like ecstasy  
Flows where the green tree  
perfectly  
Curves to its perfect shadow.

– Douglas Stewart

About 220 letters between David Campbell and Douglas Stewart, from 1946 to 1979, and 27 poems, are printed in Letters Lifted into Poetry, selected and edited by Jonathan Persse and published in August by the National Library of Australia.

Please send a poem on some aspect of the environment to Jonathan Persse, Sallyhill, Burrawang 2577

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**Caalang Creek Working Bee  
Planting Day – all hands on deck  
from 9:00am onwards  
Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October**

On this day we will be planting the last of the plants (grasses and sedges) we received from the SCA grant some time ago. With the woody weeds being treated by a bush regeneration firm, the area should be starting to look great.

Planting will commence at 9:00am subject to the weather. If in any doubt, or for more details, please contact Sandy Morse on 4885 1905. Note that this working bee is not being held on the usual last Saturday of the month.

Please come along – we really need your help. Here is your chance to contribute to one of our fantastic on-going projects. Don't forget to bring a hat, gloves, shovels, watering cans and any other tree planting gear.

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**REPS Christmas Party 2006  
Friday 8<sup>th</sup> December  
Community Hall, Caalang St., Robertson**

**Time:**

6:00pm: Meet at the Community Hall for a ramble along creek to admire all the hard work done throughout the year.

7.30pm: Christmas Party

**Food and Entertainment:**

Those attending are asked to bring a plate (with food on it – therein lies a story) plus any alcoholic beverages they are likely to need.

This food will be augmented by hot dishes from local take-aways. Tea, coffee and soft drinks will be provided.

At this stage it is envisaged that entertainment will be provided by members, i.e. party games probably involving singing, recitations, etc. Ideas and suggestions are invited and can be conveyed to Geoff or Robin Tassell at the next REPS meeting.

**New Editor needed for REPS**

We are currently looking for any body interested in taking on the job of Editor for REPS' Eucryphia newsletter.

This is a great way to make your contribution to the environment.

Usually six newsletters are published and posted each year. These are currently being created using Microsoft Word.

Anybody interested in helping, please contact Leon Hall on 4888 2222.

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**NPA Bushwalk  
Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October**

Waterfalls in Macquarie National Pass.

Exploratory, medium hard off track day walk.

Walk down Macquarie Rivulet and waterfalls.

Steep wet, slimy, muddy, leechy, thorny and not to be missed! Map Robertson.

Contact: Jim Foran 48851081 or 0428851081

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**Contact REPS**

All those who are interested in supporting our aim - are welcome to join REPS. Our aim is to promote the preservation and enhancement of the Robertson environment. We welcome contact with individuals and other community groups.

Please contact The Secretary – Jill Keft

PO Box 45, Robertson NSW 2577

or President – Leon Hall on 4888 2222

or Editor – Lyndon Stanley on 4885 1322

Email: [lyndon@hinet.net.au](mailto:lyndon@hinet.net.au)

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