

a bushland focus

By Graham Quint

For just on thirty years the National Trust has operated a very successful program employing trained professionals to restore precious urban bushland on a consultancy basis for councils and other clients. That program is very diverse and includes revegetation, training, supervision of volunteer groups, habitat conservation, post fire regeneration, drainage works, management of the impacts of soil erosion and sedimentation, surveys and management plans.

But this bushland focus goes back to the Trust's very beginnings in 1944 when a resolution was adopted at a Forestry Conference to establish a 'National Trust along the lines of that of Great Britain'.

Those attending were a diverse but impressive range of bodies such as the Royal Zoological Society, the Gould League, Linnean Society, NRMA, the Bush Walking Clubs Federation, Master Builders' Association and Departments of Agriculture and Education. Of the 29 organisations present at the Conference, the motion was moved by the Tree Lovers' Civic League, Ku-ring-gai and it stated emphatically -

'That a body similar to that of the National Trust of England be set up by the Government to safeguard and govern the National State Parks, National Monuments and Reserves of the State.'

A third of the coastline of England is vested in their National Trust and in 1944 it was anticipated that the National Trust in NSW would carry out a similar role.

Our first property in 1953 was Montague Island on the South Coast off Narooma, an important flora and fauna reserve. In 1960 came the Swain Natural Reserve in Killara, a reserve in Bantry Bay with precious Aboriginal carvings (1961) and Ludovic Blackwood Memorial Sanctuary at Pennant Hills (also in 1961).



Guinea Flower. Photo: Kath Wade

Then came a lookout at Bilgola Head in 1962, Hawkesbury Reserve Brooklyn (1963), Burley Griffin Lodge at Avalon with its surrounding rare Spotted Gum forest (1964), a bushland reserve adjoining Everglades in Leura (1965), Wurrumbirra Sanctuary at Bargo (1965), Ahimsa at Cheltenham in 1971 and Mobbs Hill Reserve in 1973.

The Trust lobbied successfully for the establishment of the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service in 1967 and several of our bushland properties were handed across to the Service, which was better placed with funding and personnel to manage and present these areas to the public. Other bushland areas were given over to local councils.

National Trust 'gems'

But a number of gems remain with the Trust to the present day, protecting important flora and fauna, endangered plant communities and distinctive landscapes.

The bushland reserve adjoining Everglades at Leura contains at least three distinct native vegetation communities, one of which is an Endangered Ecological Community and there are at least two threatened fauna species in the reserve, the Blue Mountains Water Skink *Eulamprus leuraensis* and Giant Dragonfly *Petalura gigantea*. This bushland has even greater significance through its direct connection to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and the Blue Mountains National Park.

The property contains Blue Mountains Swamp vegetation, sandstone vegetation and a section of Gordon Creek that leads to Gordon Falls. The Blue Mountains Swamps form approximately 20% of the bushland



Native Fuschia. Photo: Kath Wade

area within the property. Riparian vegetation, containing *Leptospermum polygalifolium*, *L. lanigerum* and *L. juniperinum* occurs along the creek. The creek forms part of the headwaters of the Gordon Falls catchment.

The vegetation community, *Temperate Highland Peat Swamps on Sandstone* (includes Blue Mountains Swamps), has been listed as an endangered community under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Blue Mountains Swamps typically support a range of threatened species.

Due to its high conservation significance the bushland must be managed in accordance with the relevant recovery plans and threat abatement plans prepared by the Department of Environment and Conservation (formerly the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service) under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995.

Stella James House at Palm Beach has an adjoining bushland reserve of Spotted Gum which is an Endangered Ecological Community.

The Ludovic Blackwood Sanctuary at Beecroft is Blue Gum High Forest, another Endangered Ecological Community listed as critically endangered on the schedules of the *Threatened Species Conservation Act*.

The Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*) is listed as vulnerable on the schedules of the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act. It has been observed roosting in the hollow of a large Sydney Red Gum (*Angophora costata*) in Blackwood Sanctuary.

Wurrumbirra Sanctuary at Bargo has an extraordinarily diverse plant community including eight eucalyptus species, five different types of Tea-tree (*Leptospermum spp.*), eight different wattles (*Acacia spp.*), and a whole range of plants from the *Proteaceae* Family including Geebung, Hakeas, Grevilleas and of course the Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*).

Of these plants the Bargo Geebung (*Persoonia bargoensis*) is a plant of restricted distribution and Wurrumbirra is the only area managed for nature conservation in which this plant occurs.

Pomaderris brunnea was originally recorded by Dr Thistle Stead in 1965 in the Wurrumbirra creeklines. This species is very restricted in its distribution and is vulnerable. Wurrumbirra is the only area that provides a secure basis for its protection.

While the National Trust has passed on many key areas to local councils and the National Parks & Wildlife Service there are still a number of highly significant bushland areas within Trust properties and these will need to be managed and conserved in accordance with the various threatened species legislation and the highest level of skill and care.

Caring for Blackwood Sanctuary – we need you

We suspect many Sydney-based members and supporters, if your activities take you past the intersection of Pennant Hills and Beecroft Roads in the Pennant Hills area, have wondered at the miracle of the bushland block surrounded by a high fence. This bushland, called Ludovic Blackwood Sanctuary, was acquired by the National Trust in 1961 with funds donated by the Blackwood family and subsequently named after their father who had been a prominent local resident. A sign installed by the Trust inside the Beecroft Road frontage gives a very brief introduction to the site.

How can you get to explore this site close up instead of just peering through the fence? One way is to join our dedicated volunteer Bushcare group which was set up in early 2004 and currently meets two mornings a month. The group is playing a vital role in helping conserve the Blackwood bushland. No experience is necessary: a qualified supervisor gives instruction and tools are provided. Morning tea is on the Trust.

Why is Blackwood a National Trust property?

The site is significant for several diverse reasons. It has high ecological value as one of the few surviving remnants of Blue Gum High Forest, which is listed under both NSW and federal legislation as an endangered ecological community. The Sanctuary contains 1.2 hectares of Blue Gum High Forest, and has high biodiversity with 144 indigenous plant species identified on site. Its connectivity to bushland in the adjoining Mount St Benedict College and to Devlins Creek means it has important habitat value. The Powerful Owl, recognised as a threatened species, has been reported as foraging in the area. Other birds frequent the site and a Short-beaked Echidna has taken up residence.

Blackwood has cultural significance as one of the first sites where bush regeneration techniques were employed and developed. A pilot scheme was instigated by the National Trust in 1976, along with Joan Bradley, one of two sisters (Joan and Eileen) credited with pioneering Sydney's bush regeneration schemes. A bushland restoration program has been ongoing since this time. Recent grant funding is enabling us to intensify our weed control work in preparation for an ecological burn through part of the site. The burn will stimulate regeneration of native species which may otherwise become extinct from the site.

Finally, Blackwood also has historical value. A plaque outside the fence commemorates the 1830s convict-built New North Road which once passed through the site. Some visible signs of earlier settlement activities are still present in Blackwood, notably an embankment and stone culvert which formed part of the road, and a small concrete dam wall. Sawpits, relics from early timber milling, used to exist and have been documented.

To find out more about the Bushcare group, please contact the National Trust Bushland Management Department on 9258 0176.



Blackwood Sanctuary

1793
Bonhams
& GOODMAN



NATIONAL TRUST



Fund Raiser

Entries invited now

Bonhams & Goodman and the National Trust of Australia are seeking entries for forthcoming auctions. Bonhams & Goodman will donate the seller's commission for any valuable consigned by a member of the National Trust of Australia. Members may also donate the proceeds of the sale in total or part and receive a tax deduction.

To learn how you can support the National Trust, please telephone (02) 9327 9900

Bonhams & Goodman
Official Valuers to the
National Trust of Australia (NSW)
Sydney • Melbourne • Adelaide • Perth
www.bonhamsandgoodman.com.au

Bonhams & Goodman's senior specialists are available to provide members of the National Trust (NSW) with a special free valuation service. Your valuables will be appraised anywhere in the state without charge when you quote your membership number. If you decide to sell at auction, Bonhams & Goodman will help with shipping and insurance. You also help the National Trust. The seller's commission for any valuable consigned for sale by a member of the Trust will be donated to the Trust. Members may also choose to donate the proceeds of the sale or part thereof to the Trust, receiving a very handy tax deduction. For more information please call Bonhams & Goodman on 02 9327 7311 or see www.bonhamsandgoodman.com.au