

ECA



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CONSULTANTS



ASSOCIATION

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Newsletter of the Ecological Consultants Association of NSW Inc.

President's Message

The old chestnut, "For every change there is a loss", appears to be true when applied to the changes within those agencies involved with environmental management and assessment. The merging of agencies such as NSW Planning, NPWS, DLWC, EPA etc into two mega-departments (DEC and DIPNR) appears to have left a dearth of resources capable of dealing with the increasing complexities of impact assessment.

This is reflected in the lack of information and guidance coming from these agencies compared to that available in the past. Where are the species information handouts, the information circulars on threatened species management (my last information circular is dated 1998) and the upgrades to the excellent publication "Threatened Species of Western NSW" (this was last revised in 1999)?

This is not intended as a criticism of the Service, who are struggling more than most with declining resources (\$30 million taken from their budget this year), but of the

State government who have taken the principal of 'user-pays' to the extreme.

It is in this context that ecological consultants must operate. It is not that the output from consultants can decline concomitant with the lowered output from the agencies. Rather, our tasks have become harder, with an increasing number of threatened species and endangered communities being added to the schedules and a Threatened Species Conservation Act that should be produced as a loose-leaf folder so changes that seem to appear daily can be accommodated.

Added to this, are the latest instructions from DEC concerning our scientific licence and survey guidelines. Without consultation with licence holders, the conditions on our scientific licence have been changed and are to be enforced. There have been complaints from members that the provision of observational records is now compulsory. We have already protested about this imposition, and are currently drafting another letter to DEC. Apart from the time spent on providing this information (some members point out that it adds up to

several days unpaid work), there is the problem of what the licence is issued for. The NP&W Act states that a licence is needed if an animal is harmed or a plant is picked. It takes a fair stretch of imagination to relate 'harm' or 'pick' to observing an animal of plant. Is the DEC adding this condition as they feel that observing can be harmful, or because they just want to have as much data as possible provided for free? Either way, it does place an extra burden on consultants. The draft survey guidelines are now becoming increasingly complicated and it is approaching a time when it will take the entire staffs at the Australian Museum and Botanical Gardens to be able to satisfy the requirements set by DEC. There is more on this in an article in the newsletter.

A recent article in the Sydney Morning Herald points out that changes proposed will make the Threatened Species Act more 'developer-friendly'. This is already causing concern amongst conservationists and staff at the DEC, and should be of concern to ecological consultants for two reasons.

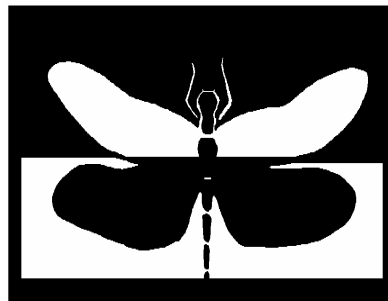
First, the watering down of this and other Acts could place greater pressure on our diminishing ecological resources by allowing projects that may have serious impacts upon the biota to proceed. If the regulatory framework associated with the TSC Act is weakened, then we, as ecological consultants, can still

retain our objectivity and integrity by honestly assessing any proposal on the basis of its potential impact on biodiversity. In the end, the objectivity of a consultant is an investment in the future. Once a consultant is known as a 'developer's friend', the likelihood of obtaining work from a range of clients is limited. The second reason for opposition to any weakening of the TSC Act is purely selfish. This Act drives the ecological consulting industry and if diminished, it could result in less work for us consultants.

The membership of the ECA is growing steadily and I welcome the new members. The ECA is having and will continue to have an influence on the industry and the larger the membership, the greater the influence.

Good fortune in 2004.

Martin Denny



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Ecological Consultants and Occupational Health & Safety

OH&S is not as exciting as seeing a Squirrel Glider emerge from its hollow; it is not in the same league as finally finding that elusive orchid that you've known only as a line drawing. But dealing with the consequences of ignoring OH&S is the kind of excitement that **no** business needs.

Legislative Landscape

Doing your job safely is no longer the prerogative of the careful or the lucky.

Legislation requires you to pay significant and formal attention to safe systems of work. You risk fines and lives by ignoring it.

Most of the transitional and savings arrangements for the introduction of the OH&S Act 2000 and the supporting OH&S Regulations 2001 no longer apply. Grace periods of between 12 and 24 months were in place for certain actions, depending on the size of your business. However, now **all** employers are expected to comply with **all** aspects of the legislation.

Overall, you must identify and manage risk, consult with your staff and put a system in place that is supported by documentation – policies, procedures and record-keeping.

If you are self-employed or a sole trader, you are not exempt from managing risk. Obviously you cannot consult with your staff, but you are an employer for all other purposes of the Act and Regulations.

OH&S responsibilities cannot be shifted up or down the supply chain. Principal contractors must ensure that their sub-contractors have appropriate systems and insurances in place.

Employees are required to act responsibly and comply with safe policies and procedures.

How to Comply

In summary, you must:

- identify hazards;
- assess risks associated with your work;
- eliminate or control those risks;
- consult with your staff;
- train your staff; and
- produce documentation to support your OH&S system.

In my experience, a good place to start is to break down your work into individual tasks and identify and prioritise their inherent risks.

For example, to produce an assessment of a development application, you must work both in the field and in the office. **Both** of these work environments pose serious risks; don't ignore the office. Typical office equipment (e.g. power boards, kettles) can kill

and so must be tested and tagged as safe. Repetitive strain injuries can be significant, but can be avoided by safe systems of work (adequate breaks, provision of ergonomic furniture).

The field environment is not just the site itself. You must consider things such as manual handling issues when packing the vehicle and travelling to the site as well as the hazards of the site itself.

Once you have broken down the work into its component parts, then you can begin to write Safe Work Instructions and Safe Work Method Statements for those tasks with risks high enough to warrant them.

This is the beginning of your OH&S Management System.

Sources of Information and Help

WorkCover is the best place to start. They will provide you with more booklets, guides, checklists, reports and summaries than you can jump over safely. Most of these are free and many are available from their website

(www.workcover.nsw.gov.au)

. If you want to talk to a real live public servant, call their information line on 13 10 50. WorkCover is also holding a series of free seminars for small business in May, June and July in regional and metropolitan centres. See their website or call 1800 624 097. While WorkCover will provide you with information,

they will not produce your system for you. There are other professionals in the marketplace that can help you through the maze and get your system in place. For a tax-deductible cost, they can analyse your work practices and draft your documentation for you. However, remember that the system is yours and you must participate in its genesis. After all, you have to work to it, maintain it and defend it if necessary.

Our work is inherently dangerous. We are exposed to risks common to a number of other acknowledged dangerous industries – agriculture, mining, construction, transport, zoo keeping – yet we have a remarkably good safety record.

This may be due to good luck. Legislation now requires that it is due to good management.

Elizabeth Ashby

OH & S Tick alert.

Ticks and leeches attack my staff and myself sporadically. One had a leech in the ear, from working in a hanging swamp. One had a tick on the eyeball, from working in a rainforest. Both attached and sucking – gross! Both had medical attention.

There has been a recent problem with tiny ticks, commonly called grass ticks I think. Some of my clients and

colleagues have large areas of the body covered with extremely irritating bites, which well into large lumps 3cm x 8cm x 1cm. Yes that's a lump! The bigger problem with ticks is that they carry a parasite which infects humans.

I have discovered, the hard way, that the following works for me.

Prevention: apply vast quantities of RID or other DEET repellent. Neck, forearms, shirt front, waist, legs.

Kill: Lyclear, from a chemist.

Relief: Local anaesthetic + infection prevention cream, such as Lanacane.

My OH & S policy and procedure manual (yes, everyone apparently must have one) tells my staff to:

- a. be aware
- b. make sure that they use the resources provided
- c. report incidents in the appropriate format and on time.

Now my wife insists that when anyone returns from the field that no potentially infected clothes come into the office.....my staff ask about me "What is the treatment for Fat and Ugly?"

Can anyone suggest what to do about the vehicles?

Now remember to have fun while you work, all right?

Danny Wotherspoon

Mapping the Genetics of Australia's Owls.

Have you ever wanted to be involved in scientific research?

Well, here is your chance to participate.....

Australian Geographic is sponsoring an exciting new project that will map and document the genetic diversity of all Australian owl species. The project, developed in association with Museum Victoria, is the first study of this scale undertaken anywhere in the world. It will provide valuable information for conservation as well as providing scientific insights into the origin of Australia's owls.

Any person can become involved in the project by collecting owl feathers that will be used for the DNA study. The special owl identification kits are available in all Australian Geographic Stores, or by telephoning 1300 555 176 with all proceeds being donated to the project.

Museum Victoria's Head of Science Les Christidis said the project will determine which owl populations are the most distinct and where conservation efforts should be focused. "This task is not easy with species such as owls that are cryptically coloured and nocturnal," Les said. "In these cases genetic information

provides better insights into patterns of variation.”

Australia has nine common species of owl. They fall into two genera, *Ninox* – hawk-owls and boobooks-and *Tyto* – barn owls and masked owls. Some are widely distributed with several subspecies but others are relatively restricted. “We know very little about the underlying genetic and biological diversity within the Australian owls,” Les said.

“Without an understanding of genetic diversity it is difficult to manage their conservation or anticipate and plan for the effects of habitat loss.”

Questions that the study will address include whether owls with similar geographical distributions have the same pattern of genetic diversity, whether geographical range is linked to genetic diversity and how geographically isolated populations differ from each other.

The genetic data will be gathered from three sources: frozen samples held in DNA tissue banks; museum specimens; and fresh feathers collected by researchers and members of the public. “Dead owls are often found on roadways and farms, and it is relatively easy to obtain DNA from feathers,” Les said. “By encouraging the collection of such material this research has the potential to become a great community project.”

The owl identification kit costs \$3.95 in Australian Geographic Stores or by

phoning 1300 555 176.

Containing information relevant to adults but presented to appeal to youngsters, the kits include general information on owls and the genetic research, illustrations of owl feathers so they can be distinguished from other birds, and the Australian Geographic Owl poster.

A Report (more like Reflections) on the 5th New Guinea Biological Conference. 23-25 August 2003 University of Goroka, Eastern Highland Province. Papua New Guinea.

Yes, you read correctly, University of Goroka. I’m not sure how I originally got notice of this conference but I have had a long time interest in Papua New Guinea, ever since my father worked there before independence. I was very young at the time and I was left with Grandparents in Australia but I remember the house being full of Bird of Paradise plumes and spears and other native artefacts when my parents returned. It took nearly thirty more years before I had a (tax deductible) opportunity to see the country for myself.

The conference theme was “Conservation through

Education and Research” So I offered to present a paper on “Conservation in Practise, the Role of the Practising Ecologist” which was accepted.

The conference is jointly organised by academics from Papua New Guinea and the Indonesian province of Papua. It alternates annually between the two countries. It is widely supported by many government and international non-govt organisations such as the NZAid, Wildlife Conservation Agency, WWF for Nature, The Nature Conservancy, the Embassy of the USA, Lihir Gol, Society for Conservation Biology. I noted any formal support from any Australian source was conspicuously absent.

The conference theme was loosely interpreted and some 80 oral and over a dozen poster presentations were made. The standard of papers from international and local sources, student and professional, varied enormously as one would have expected in a developing country but the overall standard of the conference was as good any I had attended in Australia.

This conference however had a quality that I had never before experienced. There was an atmosphere of excitement, a spirit of enthusiasm, an air of quiet achievement of doing good things and knowing it that I had not felt at any other conference.

Partly it came from the diversity of international researchers that are conducting programs in PNG. Dominated by research from USA sources there was also work being undertaken by German, British, and several other European countries. Their work ranged from cataloguing the enormously rich biodiversity of one of the worlds last big undescribed regions to managing these resources in an ecologically sustainable manner.

But mostly it came from the enthusiasm and sincerity of the student presentations. Under the eye of mostly American and European supervisors they displayed great talent and high levels of professionalism but my real admiration went to the Indonesian students and their supervisors. With the smallest of token official support and almost non-existent resourcing the dozen or so Indonesian students had to present their paper in English. For most this is at best a third language. Topics ranged from the cultural use of plants to threatened species studies. On more than one occasion my admiration for these students brought tears in my eyes. I was stunned after informal discussion with the Indonesian academics how little support they get from their administration. It made their modest achievements even more noteworthy. This conference was a difficult task for them, but at the same time it was also one of the few opportunities they have to

interact with the wider international community and gain from that exposure. I believe it was important for the international community to show the Indonesians the standards to which they should strive.

Without underrating the quality of the limited Australian presence at the conference my second strongest impression was the minimal size of the Australian contingent. Australia once had a strong scientific tradition in the PNG and Pacific region. If this conference is any indication then it seems as if we handed over the microscopes at independence and simply walked away from the place. The Australian papers were mostly for work done in Australia with material/ data sent from PNG. For most of the Australians it was their first visit to the country.

What did I as a private industry ecologist bring to the conference.? As I said in my paper, I was not presenting a formula for them to copy. But I was presenting a model from which they could pick and chose those bits which were appropriate. Several of the students came up to me informally afterwards and asked many good questions. After seven years in our industry as a consulting ecologist what did I get from the conference.? That is an easy one to answer. Apart from some interest business opportunities, it was a sense of renewal. To see the

achievements of so many under such restrictive conditions took me back to my ideals. It removed a cynicism I had not realised I had developed.

The 2004 conference is in Indonesian Papua, I will not miss it for quids.

Ian Tait

Survey Guidelines and Ecological Consultants

In 2001 a draft set of survey guidelines were developed by NPWS and SMEC Australia. These were released on the NP website and a series of workshops discussing the guidelines were held around NSW. After their release they quietly disappeared and few consultants bothered to download the rather large documents at the time (the documents totalled hundreds of pages). The guidelines were just about identical to a set released by the Department and Land and Water Conservation in 1991 and were used by some agencies and individuals to prescribe the methodologies and amount of effort for an impact assessment survey.

These guidelines were largely put aside by many local governments who developed their own criteria for surveys.

Such guidelines have been used by many members over the years and many of the councils provide extensive documentation to be used by ecological consultants (e.g. LHCCREMS at enviro@huntercouncils.com.au).

However, the NP guidelines had not gone away, but had been quietly upgraded by NPWS and SMEC and released to selected agencies and individuals in March 2003 as "Threatened Species Survey & Assessment: Guidelines for Developments and Activities Working Draft". Copies of this document have been obtained by members of the ECA and it has been circulated electronically to all members.

Although similar to the earlier 2001 draft, there have been some revisions that will need additional resources to satisfy the new requirements. At present, NPWS (now DEC) has asked the ECA to provide input to a new revision of the survey guidelines that are due out this year, but not for the 2003 version.

Unfortunately, some agencies are using the 2003 guidelines to assess survey reports and to provide requirements for proposed impact assessment surveys. Consequently, it is important to know what is contained within the 2003 Working Draft.

Most of the methodology is similar to that recommended in the 2001 NP guidelines and the DLWC guidelines.

However, guidelines for diurnal and nocturnal bird surveys have been upgraded. Concerning diurnal birds there is considerable discussion on the best method to use to survey this group, with the use of either 20 minute or 60 minute searches being discussed. The final recommendation is to use a species-time curve approach where a survey season is stopped when no more new species are identified. This leaves the effort expended for these surveys as open-ended and it would be difficult to fit such an approach into a set cost quote.

The extent of effort to survey nocturnal birds has increased considerably. NP has adopted the results from studies of call broadcasting techniques to recommend from five to eight visits per site (on different nights) to ensure a 90% probability of finding a particular owl species. As many surveys are of relatively small areas involving a single site surveyed over a short time, this would mean that at least five nights would need to be costed to satisfy this requirement.

Another change is in the number of hair-tubes required at each site. The 2003 guidelines recommend 10 large and 10 small hair tubes on the ground at each site, plus another 30 hair tubes on habitat trees within each site i.e. a total of 50 hair tubes per site. This is a large number of hair-tubes to carry and set out at a single site.

The approach to stratification of a study area may also result in excessive sampling, as the guidelines recommend that an area should be ultimately stratified in terms of vegetation floristics i.e. vegetation communities. This means that each woodland community must be sampled individually, instead of sampling a general woodland habitat.

I haven't looked at the recommendations for vegetation surveys, and I hope that the botanically-skilled members will assess this part of the guidelines.

There are many other recommendations that could be considered excessive, and it is hoped that the members can bring these to the attention of the ECA. We need to put in some form of submission to the DEC as soon as possible. I have been chasing up the status of the 2003 guidelines and whether they can be used to assess current survey reports.

The problem with the survey guidelines is that they were developed from the surveys undertaken for the CRA process. This process allocated timbered land for forestry or conservation use and required a large expenditure of resources to assess the value of different areas. Personnel from State Forests and National Parks formed teams with consultants and volunteers to undertake flora and fauna surveys of

selected areas of land. Thus a team of 10 or more individuals could readily satisfy the requirements set out in the 2003 guidelines. However, a small team of consultants working on a tight budget may find it hard to satisfy such requirements.

What do you think? Look at the guidelines, if you still have them on your computer, and see if you have the resources to satisfy the requirements.

Martin Denny

New Membership Categories

At the 2003 AGM, the ECA Council passed a motion to broaden the membership categories offered. The aim being to widen the membership base so that interested and relevant students, Council staff and agency staff can join more readily. Also a country membership category was adopted to take into account the costs incurred by members travelling to Sydney for our meetings and conferences.

The membership categories are:

- **Practising Member (\$160)**
(Practising Ecological Consultants - voting rights, signs the Code of Ethics).
- **Country Member (\$95)**
[Practising Ecological Consultants living outside a 200km radius of Sydney](voting rights, signs the Code of Ethics).

- **Non-practising Member (\$60)**
(no voting rights, does not sign the Code of Ethics.) This fee is substantially reduced (from \$160). It is aimed at Council and Agency staff.
- **Associate Member (\$60)**
for 2 years upon graduation (no voting rights, signs the Code of Ethics).
- **Student Member (\$30)**
(no voting rights, does not sign the Code of Ethics).

Please disseminate this information to anyone you think may be interested in joining the ECA. With a larger and wider membership the ECA will be a more representative and effective group.



Regent Honeyeater sightings.

At the best of times working on threatened species can be frustrating – if they are easy to find, chances are they aren't threatened! This is the main frustration that I, as national coordinator of the Regent Honeyeater Recovery Program, face. Simply speaking, most of the time we have no idea where more than a handful of these magnificent

birds are. This is despite the Recovery Program having a very high public profile and large numbers of birdwatchers out searching for them on a regular basis.

Locating these birds has been even more difficult over the past two years because of the cumulative impact of drought - Regent Honeyeaters have not had a successful breeding season for three years.

We do have a good general knowledge of the requirements of this species during the breeding season, as they tend to concentrate back into one of the three remaining core breeding areas. However, only with a sound base of sightings can we start to appreciate movement patterns and habitat requirements of this species outside the breeding season.

I would like to encourage consultants to report sightings of Regent Honeyeaters directly to me, as soon as possible after the sighting. I appreciate that consultants are required to submit records to the NPWS Atlas but by sending this information directly to me I can follow up the sighting and get a lot more information on habitat use, and the possible presence of colour-banded individuals, than we would normally obtain.

Because of the wide distribution of Regent Honeyeaters they often come up as potentially occurring on sites where you may be working. Please look upon the national Regent Honeyeater Recovery Program as a resource. I oversee the most comprehensive database of

Regent Honeyeater sightings in existence and have extensive experience and knowledge of these birds and am happy to discuss the potential impacts that developments may have on the species.

David Geering
National Regent Honeyeater
Recovery Coordinator
P.O. Box 2111
Dubbo NSW 2830.

New identification guide to the bat calls of New South Wales

Pennay, M., Law, B., Reinhold, L. (2004). *Bat calls of New South Wales: Region based guide to the echolocation calls of Microchiropteran bats*. NSW Department of Environment and Conservation, Hurstville. <http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/batcalls>

Bat Calls of New South Wales is a free region based identification guide to the search phase calls of insectivorous bats from NSW using the Anabat system. A collaborative effort between NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (now Dept. Environment and Conservation) and State Forests of NSW, *Bat Calls of NSW* is the first reference guide to bat calls for the entire state. The publication is based on a library of more than 1 200 reference calls collected from 31 species throughout NSW

over the last four years by the authors and individual contributors.

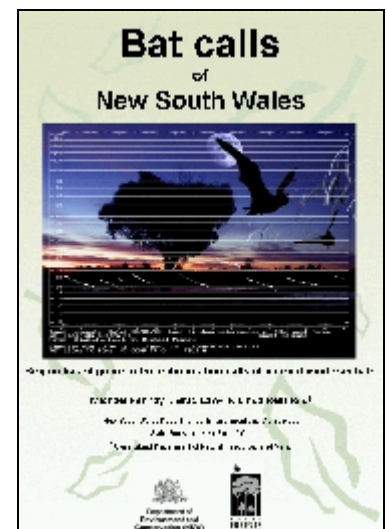
Topics include the collection of reference calls, selection of good calls for analysis, identifying call characteristics and features, and ways bats vary their calls that could lead to errors in identification. For each species there is a description of the known call characteristics including call shape, characteristic frequency, regional notes, similar species that may be confused on call, ways to distinguish between similar species, and instances where species cannot be separated on call.

It is hoped the guide will reduce the much of the subjectivity, inaccuracy and lack of transparency that has clouded the reliability of the technique. Providing access to high quality information should assist consultants and researchers improve their identifications by supporting privately collected reference libraries and data. It is also aimed at improving accountability by raising user expectations, assisting people who hire consultants to undertake ultrasonic identification to understand and monitor results provided to them, without requiring an extensive knowledge of how Anabat works.

The online nature of the guide will make it simple for further editions to be updated, as new data becomes available. Feedback from bat researchers who have collected reference

calls that contradict or add to species descriptions is invited.

Both the guide and reference library will be available free from early June 2004 at; <http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/batcalls>, or by contacting Michael Pennay at the Department of Environment and Conservation. Phone: (02) 6841 9203 or Email: michael.pennay@npws.nsw.gov.au.



Newsletter contributions.

Thank you to those members who contributed articles to this issue of the Newsletter. The next issue is due out in August (not that far away) so please, if you have an issue to raise, a point to make, an interesting or unusual observation, take the time to put it together and send it in, now.

Unusual/casual observations.

More on Feeding Preferences of Glossy Black-Cockatoos.

In the February 2004 edition of the Newsletter, Paul Burcher mentioned that Glossy Black-Cockatoos (GBCs) have been recorded feeding on the seeds of *Allocasuarinas* and sunflowers, the fruits of East Coast Banksias (*Banksia integrifolia*) and *Angophoras*, Macadamia nuts and wood-boring grubs.

While the *Allocasuarina* seeds are the principal food source of GBCs, Higgins (1999) provides a more comprehensive list of alternative food plant sources, i.e. seeds of *Callitris* (Cupressaceae), *Pinus endlicheri* and *P. radiata* (Pinaceae), *Helianthus annuus* (Asteraceae), *Casuarina cristata* and *C. glauca* (Casuarinaceae), *Acacia* spp. (Mimosaceae), *Angophora* and *Eucalyptus* spp. (Mimosaceae), and *Hakea* spp. (Proteaceae).

Although bird species tend to have preferred diets, it's been my experience that most species can be more generalistic in their choice of foods when their preferred food sources are in short supply. Perhaps the GBCs that Paul observed at Port Stephens had been feeding on Coast Banksias because *Allocasuarinas* were not seeding in great abundance as

a result of the prolonged drought conditions.

Development may further stress fauna populations that are already significantly stressed during drought conditions. Therefore, in assessing the potential impacts of a development, it is important to consider the importance of drought refuges of fauna populations, including the local availability of alternative food sources. Otherwise, removal of these resources may hinder, or even prevent some fauna populations from surviving or recovering from current and/or subsequent drought periods. This consideration has been one of the most frequent oversights by authors of impact assessment reports that I have reviewed, particularly in relation to habitat clearance issues in rural areas that are being heard in the NSW Land & Environment Court.

Reference:

Higgins, P.J. (1999) (ed). *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Vol 4: Parrots to Dollarbirds* (Oxford University Press, Melbourne).

Stephen Ambrose

Large Footed Myotis

Whilst holidaying at Yamba during Easter 2003 I was fishing from underneath a concrete bridge traversing Micalo Channel, part of the Clarence River estuary. Looking up into a crevice between the pylon and another vertical slab, I noticed four Large-footed Myotis (*Myotis adversus*) clinging to the bare concrete. One of the threats to this species is perceived to be the removal of old wooden bridges (see the Action Plan For Australian Bats). A commonplace ameliorative measure for replacement of wooden bridges with concrete ones is the reattachment of wooden pieces to allow roosting to continue after construction. This annoys the RTA as it involves more maintenance and insurance risk. This observation indicates that the species may be more adaptive to the loss of old wooden bridges than previously thought.

Paul Burcher



Innovations & Compliance in Wetland Catchments. Tuesday 21st September 2004.
CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS

Overview

The Wetlands Centre Australia is launching its first forum in an annual series on wetland innovations and legislation. Titled *Innovations and Compliance in Wetland Catchments* the forum will be held on **Tuesday 21st September 2004** and will focus on:

- A. Providing access to the most cutting edge/innovative approaches to managing activities in wetland catchments.
- B. Interpretation and update of all significant legislation and reforms affecting wetlands in NSW (e.g. EPBC Act, TSC Act, Native Veg. Act, EPA Act, POEO Act, NSW Wetland Management Policy).
- C. Economic implications and incentives for managing activities in wetland catchments.

The forum is designed to **challenge current thinking and practice**. It will provide direct access to new and fresh knowledge, tools and technology, and contact with specialists from across Australia.

Up to nine exemplary projects/techniques/tools/research will be selected for presentation at the forum. Each would have a ½hr time slot with an additional 10minutes question time. These would fit within one of three categories addressing management of activities in wetland catchments:

- *Ground-breaking solutions in wetland rehabilitation, management or maintenance from research;*
- *Innovative incentives and tools tested in the field;*
- *Innovative approaches to urban design and planning.*

A unique opportunity

The forum provides a unique opportunity to promote and deliver innovations to a valuable market – local and State government officers, land managers and land developers.

As such the event has secured arrangements for promotion through professional associations and networks including:

- Local Government & Shires Association (LGSA)
- Urban Development Industry of Australia (UDIA)
- Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ)
- Property Council of Australia (PCA)
- Planning Institute of Australia (PIA)
- Australian Water Association (AWA)
- Australian Wetlands Information Network (AWIN)
- Australian Society for Limnology (ASL)
- NSW Ramsar Managers Network (RMN)

Preliminary outline

Keynote speaker

- Raising the profile of wetlands and their significance as a landscape unit.
- Qualifying the need for improved wetland management.
- Challenging current approaches.

Staying abreast of legislative reforms

- Spectrum of legal obligations and responsibilities for activities in wetland catchments.
- Update and brief explanation of reforms and provisions of all environmental planning instruments affecting wetlands.
- Innovative and cost-effective solutions to address legal obligations.

Innovative solutions and tools for managing activities in wetland catchments

- Suite of the most cutting edge/innovative approaches for managing activities in wetland catchments across Australia.
- Direct contact with leading wetland researchers and practitioners to help tailor new innovations to individual needs/interests.

Wetland wise use in action: interpretation of Hunter Estuary Wetlands Ramsar site (optional field component)

- Opportunities and practicalities of managing and listing a wetland under the Ramsar Convention.

Background to the site & organisation

The Wetlands Centre Australia is host to the Hunter Estuary Wetlands, an area listed as internationally significant under the Ramsar Convention. This wetland area includes the Shortland Wetlands and Kooragang Nature Reserve and covers almost 3000 hectares, the largest single estuarine reserve in NSW.

This site provides an ideal learning environment for the principles of wise use of wetlands and wetland functions and values. The Wetlands Centre Australia has also developed a strong reputation in wetland education across schools, government, community and industry. As such, it is well placed to act as a repository for research, products and best practice in wetland management and conservation and to work in partnerships to promote innovations in this field.

A national call for leading initiatives

You are invited to submit a proposal for presentation at the inaugural wetland forum.

To be considered for inclusion in the forum the project/technique/tool/research must:

1. Be of direct relevance to the target audience: individuals or organisations that manage or potentially impact upon wetlands. This includes local, State and Federal government officers (e.g. compliance officers, planners, engineers, ecologists), land developers and/or wetland specialists.
2. Offer innovative and cost-effective solutions (tools, techniques, information) that advance the field of wetland management and fall within one of the three categories listed (i.e. solutions from research; tools and incentives; urban design and planning).
3. Be transferable to other locations or situations.
4. Enhance the capacity to manage wetlands sustainably.

Proposals should be presented as a one-page overview addressing each of the following:

1. Name and brief description of the project/technique/tool/research.
2. What was the catalyst/issue that drove this development?
3. How does the project/technique/tool/ research link with each of the four criteria listed above:
 - (i) Relevance to the target audience;
 - (ii) Be an innovative and cost-effective solution;
 - (iii) Offer transferability; and
 - (iv) Represent a form of capacity-building.

All proposals must be received by **Wednesday 30th June 2004** and sent to:

Hunter Ramsar Project Officer
The Wetlands Centre
PO Box 292
Wallsend NSW 2287
OR

Emailed to ramsar@wetlands.org.au

For further information contact Kylie Yeend on (02) 49516466.