

## LCC SW, District 2 – comment on draft recommendations

### HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB.

#### Submission to the Land Conservation Council

#### Public Land at the Dundas Ranges, Glendinning, Southern Rocklands, and along the Wannon River.

##### Introduction:

A detailed description and discussion of the Wannon River reserves and frontages between the Wannon Falls and Cavendish have been given in a previous Submission to the L.C.C. (June, 1979).

The public land to the south of Rocklands Reservoir - partly Forest Commission controlled - includes valuable areas of woodland where Yellow Gum and Yellow Box are prominent. Blocks near Mooralla (Fergusons Road and Anderson's Creek) are particularly diverse, with Brown Stringybark and heath interspersed among the open woodland timber. These contain a large population of kangaroos, emus and other birds. Desert Banksia is found on sandy soils on the south edge of Rocklands Reservoir - probably the most southerly occurrence in the region, if not in Victoria too.

Public land at Glendinning and on the western edge of Rocklands extending as far north as the spillway is similar to that described above. It is important to retain woodland areas like these since they are all that are left of the once extensive woodlands.

The Dundas Ranges were given surprisingly little mention in the L.C.C. Report. Basically they contain stringybark forest (E. baxteri and E. obliqua) with Red gums and Swamp Gums on the outwash slopes and flats. About 300 species of native plants have been recorded here. The sandier sections contain a heath understory of varying composition, depending partly on the previous fire history of the area. The understory vegetation is only dominated by bracken in very small areas (eg. along parts of the track on the north-eastern side of the range). Usually it is far more diverse, with a range of species including Correa reflexa, Banksia marginata, bracken, Leucopogon spp, silky tea tree and flame heath. Parts of the stringybark forest are obviously quite old and haven't been affected by fire recently, whereas other areas have. One recently burnt section on the northern end of the range has an understory dominated almost exclusively by Pink Beard Heath (Leucopogon ericoides), displaying a beautiful carpet of white at this time of the year (early July). Other interesting and attractive species present include Smokebush (Conospermum mitchelli), Dwarf Bush-pea (Pultenea humilis), Hairy Correa (Correa aemula) and Twiggy Daisy-bush (Olearia ramulosa).

The bird population of the Dundas Range is fairly extensive - around 70 species have been recorded there to date, with the Speckled Warbler being at the western limit of its distribution. A list of fauna observed is attached.

Other fauna observed include the grey kangaroo, red-necked wallaby, echidna, brush-tailed possum, ring-tailed possum and the yellow-footed phascogale (Antechinus flavipes). The last two records are significant in that the yellow-footed phascogale is uncommon in the study area, and the ring-tailed possum seems much more common in the area than the brush-tailed possum. In one spotlighting trip along 3 miles of track on the NW side of the range recently 21 ring-tails were seen compared with 7 brush-tails.

As the L.C.C. report does point out, the ranges have considerable scenic values. Any one of the many small and larger peaks in the Range command a marvellous view of the surrounding countryside, and the rocky ledges of the peaks have a wide range of attractive lichens and mosses.

#### Present Condition and Management.

Parts of the Dundas Forest have been burnt rather too often, with increasing bracken dominance in some of these.

A clay pigeon shooting range exists on the northern tip of the Dundas Range - facilities there include barbeque fires, tables and pit toilets. The Coleraine Field and Game Association have largely provided these. An iron shed has recently been erected here. The Lands Department is responsible for the area.

Permanent tracks exist along most boundaries of the Range. Timber has been extracted from the forest, and rubbish is dumped in some areas. A fire look-out tower and TV transmitter exist on Mt. Dundas - these are untidy elements, but conveniently placed.

In the Rocklands - Glendinning areas there has been considerable timber cutting over the years. There is evidence that grazing rights once existed over most of the land and that some, at least, of the timber has grown within the last 30 years. Fishermen, duck-shooters, and gem fossickers use the area as well as naturalists and casual visitors. Some areas are very isolated and probably do not receive any visitors at all. Except perhaps for the Glendinning Reserve, which has picnic facilities, there does not seem to be any regular management of the area.

#### Recommendations.

- (1) That these Crown Lands be individually classified as either Flora or Flora and Fauna Reserves, and that they be collectively managed by the National Parks Service. It would be possible for the NPS to provide a ranger - perhaps centered at Cavendish - to service all of these areas. Visitor pressure is greater at Wannon and Nigretta Falls Reserve and these areas would require more frequent supervision than the remaining areas. Provision of some facilities is desirable in the Dundas Range area.
- (2) We would also recommend that small sections of freehold land in the Dundas Range be acquired to maintain the unbroken chain of forest. Currently the freehold land separating the northern chain is uncleared.
- (3) If the shooting range stays - and it has created a good deal of mess and damage to rocks and trees - we suggest that the area in which this activity takes place be strictly limited.