

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve
1936-1970

Following representations by the Royal Society of Australia in 1935 an area of 2,000 acres in the southern end of Tidbinbilla Valley was set aside as a National Park and Fauna Reserve on 17 March 1936 by the then Minister for the Interior, Mr. T. Paterson. Early proposals by the Society included the establishment of a biological station in the Reserve. This was to be housed in an old farm homestead or in a new two roomed hut. The Department agreed to provide a trafficable road to the entrance of the Reserve. The outbreak of World War II was the apparent reason for the lack of further development at that stage.

In 1947 the Royal Society of New South Wales made further representations to the Minister. Approval was given for the formation of two advisory committees - one from the Royal Society consisting of Sydney members and one composed of three prominent Canberra scientists and two departmental representatives. Several well known conservationists of the day were members of these committees.

Committee members were:-

Mr. Daniel Clyne M.L.A. (Chairman)

Mr. E.J.Hallstrom -
Vice Chairman of Taronga Park Trust and Vice
President Royal Society

Mr. E. L. Troughton
C.M.Z.S., F.R.Z.S., member of the Council of the
Royal Society

Mr. A. S. LeSoeuf
Member of the Council of the Royal Society

Mr. C.F. Asprey
Member of the Society (Secretary)

Canberra Committee

Dr. A. J. Nicholson
Chief of Entomology Division C.S.I.R.O.

Dr. F. W. Clements,
Director Australian Institute of Anatomy

Mr. R. N. Wardle
Director Veterinary Hygiene Department of Health

Mr. J.E.Morrow
Superintendent Agriculture & Stock

Mr. L.D.Pryor
Superintendent Parks and Gardens

These two committees were to submit in detail a plan for the development of Tidbinbilla as well as examining the proposal to develop a zoo in the site which now borders Lake Burley Griffin near the Yarralumla nursery. Some meetings were held but no real action resulted from their deliberations.

Further representations were made by the Royal Society of Canberra in 1959. The Society submitted a report giving details of a proposed "pocket size" Kruger National Park. While several of the proposals in the report were not agreed to, they were followed by the appointment of an expert committee to report on the following matters:

- (i) Provision of suitable road access.
- (ii) Appropriate development of the area for use by visitors (parking and picnic areas, pedestrian tracks etc.).
- (iii) Protection of existing wild life in the area and, if necessary, the introduction of other animals.
- (iv) Extent and nature of management and supervision necessary to prevent damage to fauna or flora in the area as well as to facilities provided for tourists and visitors.
- (v) Fire protection in the area.
- (vi) Financial implications of provision of access roads, initial development of the area, cost of providing supervision, maintenance and subsequent

development during say the first five years the reserve is open to the public, and the extent to which these costs may be offset by revenue from admission charges etc.

- (vii) The relation of forestry development in the area to the proposed reserve.

The Committee members were as follows:-

Department of the Interior

Lands and Survey Branch Mr. E.S. Keehn,
Assistant Secretary (Chairman)

Forestry and Timber
Bureau Mr. R. Green,
Supervising Forestry Officer

National Capital Development Commission Mr. L.W. Engledow,
Director, Development Section

C.S.I.R.O. Dr. H.J. Frith,
Officer-in-Charge Wildlife
Survey Section

Dr. A. B. Costin,
Division of Plant Industry

Royal Society of
Canberra Dr. R. Carrick

L.D. Lonergan Department of the Interior
(Secretary)

Sub committees of this general committee reported on various aspects of development and management and recommended that the additional lands sought by the Royal Society be acquired and added to the Reserve Area.

These lands comprised:-

(a) Land reserved in 1936 for a National Park	2,000 acres
(b) Unleased Commonwealth land on the western side of the valley	2,695 "
(c) Leased land (to be withdrawn)	326 "
(d) Freehold land (to be acquired)	3,965 "
Total ...	<u>8,987 acres</u>

In a Cabinet Submission dated 21 November 1962, the Minister quoted the Royal Society's opinions in these terms:-

"The Society pointed out that the development of Australia has destroyed large areas of bushland, forests, marshes and other haunts essential for the continued existence of our native animals, birds and plants, causing the extinction of some species and threatening the existence of others. State Governments have reserved some tracts of country in a more or less primitive state, generally because of scenic attractions, or the abundance and beauty of wild flowers. Such reserves have become sanctuaries for local animals and birds, but in few of them has any attempt been made to make these readily visible to the public. Consequently the establishment by the Commonwealth in the Australian Capital Territory of a properly managed fauna reserve in which native animals and birds could live under near-natural conditions and yet be accessible to the public would be of great scientific and educational value and would set an example that could lead to a greater appreciation throughout the Commonwealth of our native animals, birds and plants, and the need to protect them. Whilst this would be a most important purpose behind the establishment of a National Park and Fauna Reserve, such a reserve would also be a major and unique attraction to tourists from all parts of Australia and overseas, and a worthwhile addition to the amenities of the National Capital.

The submission was approved by Cabinet decision No.558 of 29 November 1962 and the approval included the addition to the Reserve of the 6,987 acres of freehold and crown lands as recommended by the Advisory Committee.

The freehold lands were gazetted on 2 July 1964. A ranger was appointed to act as caretaker and to commence

the work of cleaning up the area. He lived in the old Flint homestead which stood on the site of the present feeding area, for wild birds. The public were allowed to enter the Reserve from that time. As a result the ranger's patrolling duties increased and another ranger was appointed in 1965.

Early development and maintenance work in the Reserve was designed to restore and rehabilitate as far as possible the natural environments and habitats which existed in the Valley prior to settlement. This work was undertaken to mitigate the effects of three generations of farming and grazing activities and forestry logging operations.

A vigorous programme of noxious weed and animal control was commenced. Old farm fences were removed. Delapidated farm buildings were demolished. Access tracks for bush-fire fighting were constructed. Rabbit harbour, fallen timber stumps and logs have been cleared from the open areas of the Valley. In fact today there is little evidence of the previous occupation.

Mr. Murray Elliott, biologist, took up duty in October 1964. Through the manager, Mr. D. Kerr, who took up duty in 1966 and a technical assistant, Mr. Elliott has played an important role in the development of the animal and bird population at the Reserve. The role of the biologist will continue in a similar vein. Suitable fauna will be introduced as time and development permit. The needs of the various introduced species are discussed with accredited scientists in this particular field. For example, our advisers in the introduction and habitat requirements of water fowl are Dr. Frith and Mr. Braithwaite of C.S.I.R.O. Recent introductions to the water fowl area are Cape Barren Geese and Chestnut Teal ducks.

An Advisory Panel consisting of the following representatives was appointed by the Minister in 1965. The

original members of this panel were:-

Mr. T.P.Taylor	Director, Agriculture (Chairman)
Mr.D.W.Shoobridge	Director, Parks and Gardens
Dr. H.J.Frith	Chief of the Division of Wildlife Research, C.S.I.R.O.
Mr. L.T.Carran	President of the Royal Society of Canberra
Dr. R. Story	Past President of the National Parks Association of the A.C.T. Dr. Nancy Eurbidge replaced Dr.Story in 1969.

In welcoming this Committee, Mr. Anthony said, "It is my earnest desire that Tidbinbilla should give a lead and set a high standard in fauna conservation."

Basic Policy

The objects of management may be summarised as (i) Public Education, (ii) Public Recreation, (iii) Preservation of Fauna and Flora, (iv) Serious Study.

This policy was prepared by Dr. Frith after the matter had been discussed by the Panel and was approved by them as suitable for the development and management of the Reserve. It may be said also that these four policy points were conceived after the Reserve had been occupied and managed for a few years. Similar ideas had been projected by the Manager and the Biologist.

In 1967, Mr. Samuel P. Weems, an officer of the U.S. National Parks Service who had been seconded to the N.S.W. Government to reorganise that State's National Parks and Wildlife Service, visited the A.C.T. at the Department's invitation. He visited the Reserve and recommended -

- the preservation of the natural features and environment of the Valley
- the development of car-parking areas and public

amenities in a public recreation portion of the Reserve

- the development of one loop road within the Reserve
- the restriction of vehicular access within the area
- the promotion of walking access only to the natural habitat and
- the preparation of a master plan for the development of the Reserve.

Following Mr. Weems' visit the Department gave a consultant's brief to S.R.Margules and Associates in 1967 for the preparation of a plan of development for Tiddbinbilla Nature Reserve as a prestige Commonwealth project for the preservation and display of Australian flora and wildlife. The four policy points which were prepared by Dr. Frith, were submitted to the consultants as a basis for the preparation of their report.

The consultants' report -

- outlined the objects of management
- made an assessment of the natural resources and
- stated that "the area is ideally suited for displaying Australian fauna and flora and does not have any serious competition for the development of any other resource."

A plan based mainly on topography, natural resources and vegetation for the use of the Reserve was prepared, together with a plan for the development of the area for public education, public recreation, preservation of flora and fauna and serious study.

- A programme was also prepared for resource development, staff requirements, a plan of fire protection and a suggested 10-year budget of some \$2,182,000 for development and maintenance of the Reserve as a prestige project.

The report also enlarged on and developed the four major basic policy points as follows:

Public education and recreation overlap and cannot be clearly defined. Education is used in the broadest sense and implies that contact with flora and fauna either in formal or natural settings, contributes to education in conservation. Such education enhances visitor enjoyment of the area, and contributes towards an enlightened public sympathetic to the needs of nature conservation.

Recreation includes all those activities which are in keeping with the other purposes of the Reserve, and which help to recreate the mind or the body by allowing the visitor to enjoy close contact with the natural world.

Education and recreation will aim:-

to display Australian fauna -

- . in its natural environment, as truly wild animals;
- . as closely as possible in its natural environment contained only in ranging limits;
- . in a semi and fully controlled environment to demonstrate the breadth of the Australian mammal fauna, its beauty, adaptation to this continent and its general uniqueness;

and also:-

- . to provide biological and geological displays of various aspects of the Australian environment;
- . to provide an extension service for nature enquiries and identification and reference library;
- . to provide an auditorium for films, lectures and other group instruction;
- . to provide for those forms of recreation compatible with the major object of the display of Australian fauna in its various stages of control.

The preservation of fauna and flora may be expressed as the management of natural resources of the Reserve, so as to maintain optimum animal populations according to the zoned land

use. This necessitates the conservation of the natural resources of water, air, soil, rocks, fauna and flora. It also implies that management will deliberately control some of these resources on some of the areas to meet the objects of management.

Serious study is to be provided for through the provisions of a specific area for this purpose, and by the encouragement of studies to be undertaken over the whole area, particularly ecological and assessment studies. The development proposals are designed to make the maximum use of the natural resources of the Reserve. Restrictions on visitor use are only included where necessary in the best interests of conservation and the achievement of these aims.

The objects of management require the following administrative action:-

1. Cessation of past land use, including the closure of public roads and easements and grazing of domestic stock.
2. Legislation to allow management to -
 - prohibit or control entry of animals, both domestic and wild;
 - prohibit interference with or removal of any plant material, animals or birds;
 - prohibit the lighting of fires;
 - prohibit the use of and the carrying of fire arms;
 - prohibit camping generally and specifically without written permission of the management;
 - permit the closure of all or any part of the area to the public at any time;
 - this may be covered by the "Nature Conservation Ordinance" presently being drafted.

In the meantime, following the opening of the Reserve to the public, funds had been made available for the construction of a Ranger's residence, a water supply, public toilets and three barbecues near the then entrance at a cost of \$45,000

to the Reserve. This cottage was occupied by the Manager when he was appointed in 1966 and arrangements had been made to provide accommodation for Rangers in the Rock Valley, which was renovated for the purpose.

In July 1966 Cabinet agreed to capital expenditure to the extent of \$50,000 annually for three years to commence in the year 1967/68.

In 1967/68 an Information Administration Centre was constructed at a cost of \$36,000 together with landscaping and carpark costing \$10,000.

In 1968/69 a contract for the construction of the access road from the Paddy's River Tharwa Road to the Information Centre was approved at a cost of \$62,000. This work is now complete.

Cabinet rejected a 10 year programme of expenditure to the extent of \$2,180,000 as detailed in the Margules plan but on 24 July 1969 a proposal to spend \$305,000 in a three year programme commencing in 1969-70 was noted by the Cabinet. This programme actually commenced in the last year of a previously approved three year programme. A two mile section of the major ring road system as envisaged in the Margules plan is under construction at present. These works will cost \$80,000.

Maintenance Funds

The average expenditure on Wages and Maintenance over the six year period since the establishment of the Reserve is approximately \$26,000. However, the major ex-

penditure of the Reserve to date has been in the acquisition of freehold lands. Details of the ownership, costs and acreages of each property acquired are summarised in Appendix 1.

Since 1964 the following basic tasks have been undertaken as part of the maintenance and management programme -

Construction of 3 large compounds 25-40 acres for emus, kangaroos and waterfowl

Erection of suitable notices

Construction of walking trails, fire trails and access tracks

Bird feeding tables established.

Large numbers of birds are present in the cooler months of the year. (These include Crimson and Eastern Rosellas, Bower Birds, White Cockatoo etc.)

In 1969 ten new barbeques were constructed in Zone 2 of the Reserve near the entrance which is reserved for this and similar purposes. It is not proposed to construct this type of facilities in other Zones.

Dr. Frith remarked at one Panel meeting that there is only one comprehensive display of Australian animals anywhere in the World. This is at Los Angeles in the U.S.A. He hoped that a similar display would be established at Tidbinbilla. However, it was generally agreed that with present staff facilities it would be best to proceed with development on a broad acre basis until funds are available to develop a more intensive display system on a small area of the Reserve.

APPENDIX 1AGRICULTURE BRANCHTidbinbilla Nature ReserveProvision of LandArea of Reserve Approximately11,512 Acres (1967)

Unleased Commonwealth Land (Old Block 8 Paddy's River Land west of Block 60 to Cotter Catchment Boundary)	4,695 acres
Lease Lands withdrawn 1963 (Blocks 25, 48, 52 and 59 Paddy's River)	326 acres
Freehold Acquired 1964 (Flint, Driver, Pumpurs)	3,966 acres
Unleases Commonwealth Land 1964 (Northward between pine plantings to Cotter Catchment Boundary)	1,000 acres
Freehold Acquired 1966-67 (Newland, Boyden, Grimes, Green, Morton, Maxwell)	989 acres
Lease lands withdrawn 1967 (Block 20, part of 10 & 5)	536 acres
<u>TOTAL AREA</u>	<u>11,512 acres</u>

1936

2000 acres of Commonwealth Land set aside.

Acquisitions July 1964

Estate A.M. Flint	-	<u>1827</u> acres
Price: \$22,300	=	\$12 per acre
A.A. Driver	-	<u>1483</u> acres
Price: \$26,000	=	\$17 per acre

O. Pumpurs - 656 acres
Price: \$8,000

Lease Lands Withdrawn 1964

A.M. Flint - 99 acres
M. Tong - 116 acres
E. Green - 111 acres

326 acres

Acquisitions 1966-1967

	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Price Per Acre</u>
Mrs S. Newlands	137	\$32,250	\$233
Mr S. Boyden	360	\$64,000	\$177
Mr A.L. Maxwell	287	\$15,000	\$ 52
H.L. & P.P. Morton	171	\$29,000	\$170
Mr S. Grimes	6	\$ 5,100	\$850
Mr E. Green	28	\$ 6,300	\$225
	<hr/> 989	<hr/> \$151,650	

Average Price per Acre: Approx. \$152

Lease Land Withdrawn

A.L. Maxwell Block 5 53 acres
Dr. A. Costin Block 10 374 acres
H.L. & P.P. Morton Block 20 109 acres

536 acres

TIDBINBILLA FAUNA RESERVE

