FoSBR

Friends of Sandy Bay Rivulet Inc.

Newsletter 10 — Nov/Dec 2008

Next Meeting : Rivulet Visit – Now & Then

A joint meeting in conjunction with the Sandy Bay Historical Society on Sunday 23rd November 2008. The meeting will commence at 12.30 with a sausage sizzle. Venue is Waterworks Reserve Site 1. As usual bring your own food, drinks, etc. Photos of various aspects of the rivulet will be on display.

Commencing about 1.30pm, after the sausage sizzle, we will visit various sites along the rivulet. Jim Bowler & Penny Parrish will lead the discussion and commentary but other input will be welcomed. It is intended to cover some of the fascinating history and natural history of the rivulet. In case the Tasmanian weather is its normal variable self we aim to travel between key points along the rivulet by car.

Editorial

The Executive lodged a representation concerning the proposed development at 9 –11 Lincoln St. The work proposed included the demolition of an old two flat building and the construction of two new flats and a vehicle turning circle.

Our action was taken with reluctance as some aspects of the proposal were laudable and we also prefer to foster a good working relationship with landowners. Our concern was the impact of the development on the riparian zone and the rivulet.

Riparian zones are not necessary just for recreational purposes, but to establish and maintain the rivulet as a aquatic and terrestrial habitat , as a wildlife corridor and as a means of controlling the volume and quality of surface and sub surface run off. The zone is also important in reducing bank erosion and stream sedimentation. The issue is extremely complex.

The 10m width in the Planning Scheme was adopted by the HCC on the basis of minimum national recommendations. Unfortunately in the Planning Scheme there are discretionary clauses which are often applied without understanding the real issues involved in modern water sensitive urban design nor the role or function of riparian zones. Sadly in assessing the proposal a majority of the members of the City Council clearly demonstrated its lack of understanding of the scientific issues involved.

One has to ask why we have these provisions if they are not to be applied? The answer can only be a lack of appreciation of the factors involved. There is obviously a need to improve the understanding of the professionals involved in the analysis and the Aldermen who make the final decisions.

As a result we intend, in the future, featuring specialist articles on the rivulet and about the current status of water sensitive urban design and riparian zone practice. Hopefully this, coupled with a wider distribution, will help get the message across so the decision makers can start making informed and reasoned decisions.

OFFICE BEARERS:

President	James Bowler
Secretary	Julia Greenhill
Treasurer	Beth Harnett
Committee	Patsy Jones
	Deb Maeder
	Penny Parrish
Public Officer	Julia Greenhill

Fauna Watch -

"Scats, Tracks and a Bird or Ten"

On Sunday 12th October at the Waterworks a select group met to learn something about fauna watch. Leading the group's endeavors were Dr Obendorf, Don Knowler and Sonya Stallbaum (HCC)

The meeting was aimed at encouraging a wider knowledge of the fauna of our area, and included some bird identification.

It is hoped that in the long term we will have a better and more substantive record of fauna in the rivulet riparian zone and surrounds.

This will help both in the protection of our native species and in our capacity to make better decisions on land use.

Thanks to all who participated

We acknowledge and thank the following organisations for their support:

SHIPPIES
Shipwrights Arms Hotel
29 Trumpeter St, Battery Point

HOBART CITY COUNCIL
Town Hall, Hobart

We also acknowledge the assistance provided by the Office of Senator Eric Abetz in the production of this Newsletter

COMMENTS ON THE SANDY BAY RIVULET

By Dr Peter Davies

(*A document prepared in relation to the proposed development at 9—11 Lincoln St)*

Background

This document is a commentary on the recent Hobart City Council decision to approve a development application at 9-11 Lincoln Street, Sandy Bay, Hobart. The nature of the comments relates to the need for a 10 m setback and the aquatic environmental values of the adjacent stream, Sandy Bay Rivulet.

I have been a professional aquatic scientist for 28 years, working in Tasmania and throughout Australia. I am a Research Fellow at the University of Tasmania, member of the Forest Practices Authority Board, and Chair of the Murray Darling Basin's Sustainable Rivers Audit.

The stream

I have been monitoring the status of the aquatic fauna of Sandy Bay Rivulet for over a decade. This has consisted of periodic surveys of fish, aquatic invertebrates, and observations of aquatic habitat. I have also been involved in the installation of structures to restore fish passage in three of the main in stream culverts in the Rivulet.

Sandy Bay Rivulet contains an unusually abundant native fish fauna for a suburban stream. This fauna is dominated by four native fish species: the Jollytail (*Galaxias maculatus*), the mountain galaxias (*Galaxias truttaceus*), the freshwater flathead or sandy (*Pseudaphritis urvillii*) and the shortfin eel (*Anguilla australis*). Only one exotic species, brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), has been recorded and is present in several pools. The majority of the population of both Jollytail and freshwater flathead is found between Regent Street and Sandy Bay Road, while the upper reaches are dominated by mountain galaxias and eels.

The size and diversity of this fish community is unique in the greater Hobart municipal area. Hobart Rivulet contains brown trout but no resident native fish, and native fish are present only occasionally, and as only one or to species in very low abundance, in neighbouring streams to the south. The only streams which approach the aquatic ecological state of Sandy Bay Rivulet are Browns River and New Town Rivulet on the western shore of the greater Hobart-Glenorchy-Kingborough area, and the lowest reaches of Risdon Brook on the urban western shore of the Derwent estuary.

Along with fish populations, there is an abundant and diverse freshwater invertebrate fauna in Sandy Bay Rivulet, and observations of resident platypus and native water rats.

While the stream catchment is urbanised in its middle and lower reaches, and it suffers from water abstraction, urban runoff and in stream structures (that partially impede fish movement), the stream has a high level of aquatic biodiversity. A chief reason for this is the predominance of vegetation along its banks and the absence of significant chronic and/or acute water pollution.

Sandy Bay Rivulet, in my professional opinion, is a stream which warrants ongoing management with the aim of protecting and sustaining its natural values. It has the opportunity to be a centrepiece of environmental rehabilitation and protection in the Hobart municipality.

Stream management

Clause D.6.1 of the Planning Scheme requires a setback for any development of 10 metres from the top of the bank of any open watercourse. This has the potential to achieve several aims relating to protection of assets from flood damage, coupled with opportunities for protection and improvement of riparian (bank side) land and vegetation, and hence aquatic biodiversity values.

Riparian zones provide key roles for stream ecosystems, including shading, bank stabilisation; habitat for platypus, water rats, adult aquatic insects, and birds; control of surface sediment inputs to streams. In addition the vegetation provides a key food resource for the stream biota – leaf and other litter. This forms the basis of the food chain which also supports fish and platypus.

If the aim of the Hobart City Council is to protect, maintain and perhaps restore aspects of its urban streams, both in amenity and intrinsic ecosystems, then implementation of the 10 m setback, coupled with requirements for active management/improvement (weed control, stabilisation, vegetation planting etc) should be a minimum requirement

The Proposed Development

I am particularly concerned that new developments are allowed to encroach within the 10 m setback from streams required under Clause D.6.1 of the Planning Scheme. Clause D.6.2 gives discretion to vary the setback where it can be demonstrated that:

a) there will be minimum adverse impact upon the environment;

b) no compromising of recreational opportunities;

c) there will be no increased risk of any hazard such as flooding, erosion or land instability level; and

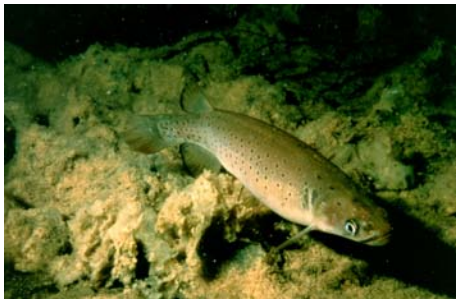
d) there will be no constraint on access to a Council or other utility service.

The proposed development has a 5 metre setback which is encroached upon in part by decks.

This reach of the Sandy Bay Rivulet between Regent Street and Sandy Bay Road contains the majority of the population of both the jollytail and freshwater flathead. For this reason alone, I would be concerned if any new developments do not demonstrably protect and/or improve the habitat values of the stream by:

- Incorporating a true 10 m setback for the entire length of the proposed development along the stream;
- Including appropriate plantings, weed control, bank stabilisation in the setback within the development proposal.
- Ensuring no new or ongoing disruption or disturbance to the riparian area and/or the area of the stream channel (e.g. through surface runoff, inappropriate access or structures).

Galaxias maculatus (Jollytail) Graham Edgar



Galaxias truttaceus (Mountain) Graham Edgar