THE ILLAWARRA STATE RECREATION AREA

At the June meeting of the Society the speaker was Mr. R. V. Brannon, whose subject was "The Illawarra State Recreation Area." Mr. Brannon has kindly supplied the following notes of his address:

The creation of a public park embracing the Illawarra Escarpment has been the subject of discussion for many years by interested groups and individuals within the Illawarra region.

In 1969, negotiations were commenced between Australian Iron & Steel Pty. Ltd. and the Department of Lands regarding the donation of part of the Company's land along the face of the escarpment for "Illawarra Park." These negotiations culminated in the Minister and the Managing Director of BHP making a joint public statement on 11 February, 1971, that the Company had agreed to donate part of its land on the escarpment for "Illawarra Park."

Following the resolution of a number of technical difficulties relating to the donation, the Minister for Planning & Environment, Mr. E. Bedford, gave notification in the Government Gazette of the 4th July, 1980, that an area of land comprising approximately 1,152 hectares had been permanently reserved as the Illawarra State Recreation Area for the purpose of public recreation and enjoyment.

As a condition of the donation, the Company retained the rights to continue coal mining and related activities within the donated lands. The Agreement also provides for the continued occupation by the Boy Scouts Association, Girl Guides Association and the Rhododendron Society of the areas they presently occupy within the Area.

The Illawarra State Recreation Area, which comprises five (5) separate areas between Bulli and Wongawilli, has been classified as a "Specific Interest Area" by the National Parks & Wildlife Service because of the many special features it contains. Particular features include the presence of unique pockets of rainforest, native flora and fauna, areas of scientific value and the provision of a picturesque and scenic backdrop for the City of Wollongong.

The Bulli Pass Scenic Reserve, Mt. Keira Summit Park, the Mt. Kembla Lookout and the pit top facilities of Bulli, Corrimal, Kemira, Nebo, Old Port Kembla No. 2 and Wongawilli Collieries are excluded from the Area.

There are a number of matters which the Trust considers require immediate attention, and these include:-

1. — The appointment of a Ranger/Manager.
2. — The cleaning up of the Area (that is, the removal of car bodies, rubbish, etc., which have been deposited on the land over many years).
3. — The preparation of a Management-Concept Plan.
5. — The preparation of By-Laws for the control of the ISRA.

As mentioned earlier, the ISRA presently comprises five (5) separate areas and it is the Trust's intention, if possible, to consolidate the two largest of these areas; that is, Mt. Keira and Mt.
Kembla, by the acquisition of the land separating them. Approaches have already been made to the National Parks & Wildlife Service in this regard.

It is intended that the ISRA will be developed to provide a wide variety of recreational facilities in an outdoor environment to meet the needs of our predominantly urban society; however, the development will be undertaken so as to ensure that the uniqueness and natural assets of the Illawarra Escarpment are not detrimentally affected.

The Trust envisages that the development of the ISRA will include the provision of scenic lookouts, picnic grounds, walking trails, horse riding trails, caravan parks, museums, scenic roads, rock climbing areas and educational camps. Long term planning includes the provision of a visitors' reception centre; however, the type of facilities provided will largely be dictated by demand from within the community, and the rate at which they are developed by the availability of funds allocated by the State Government.

It is hoped that the Concept Plan will be commenced this coming year and the Trust will be seeking submissions from the public for assistance in its preparation.