

# HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



## Notice of Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting will be held at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, on Friday 25 March, starting at 7.30 pm. At the meeting members will elect a management committee to represent the Society for the next 12 months. All positions will fall vacant. Enclosed with this newsletter is a list of executive positions with details of what is required of office bearers. Contact one of this year's office bearers if you want to find out more about any of the positions or how to be nominated (contact details are on page 2).

Other normal business at the meeting will be to receive reports from office bearers, receive the annual accounts, and appoint an auditor. Members will also be asked to discuss and determine a rate for Corporate Membership of the Society. Our monthly meeting will follow at 8pm.

## BLACK LAND – RED BLOOD (our March guest speaker)

We have all heard of, and maybe sampled, some 'bush tucker', even if few of us have had to rely on it for long-term subsistence. But not many among us, even those who haunt the 'health food' shops for alternatives to prescription or chemist-shop drugs have had the knowledge and the courage to seek relief from our ills in Aboriginal bush medicine. All that is about to change!

At our Monthly Meeting on 25 March (which also includes our truly palatable Annual General Meeting) Graham Carney will be taking a long look at the science and success of the Aboriginal pharmacopoeia.

Graham has an immense current catalogue of native food and medicinal plants (researched, photographed and illustrated) and is about to publish the fruits of these endeavours.

Academically, he has a Bachelor of Science from Macquarie University, a Degree in Clinical Hypnotherapy, and a Masters Degree in Education. He has been involved for over 25 years in emergency services, pre-hospital care, and many types of wilderness expeditions across the world. Medically Graham holds qualifications and has significant experience in advanced cardiac life support, critical care, paramedic skills, remote area rescue, hyperbaric treatment, and helicopter fire rescue. He served on the medical team at Stadium Australia during the Sydney Olympics.

So here is your advance chance to bring along your headache, cough, fever, rheumatism, wound, bee sting, leech bite, sore eyes, sore ears, toothache and even your diarrhoea (if you dare) and check out Graham's recipe for a cheap side-effect-Medicare-card-free remedy.

His consultation starts at 8pm (after the Annual General Meeting)! Supper will follow, during which, sadly to report, the only stimulating beverages we will be serving are the relentlessly non-native *coffea Arabica*, or *Camellia sinensis* with Arnott's milk *Marantha arundinacea*!

## Grass identification workshop

**Presenter:** Botanist and professional bush regenerator Van Klaphake

**Date and time:** Sat/Sun 23/24 April (Anzac weekend), 9am to 4pm.

**Venue:** Emergency Services Centre, corner Valley Road and old GWH (near Shell corner); **Cost:** \$85 (\$60 concession/unemployed, \$75 part employed). Cost of the grass identification manual is \$15.

**BYO:** Lunch (tea and coffee supplied); grass specimens; magnifying lens (a magnifying lens can be purchased on the day—cost \$15)

For the last six years Van Klaphake has been holding grass and sedge workshops in Sydney and the Blue Mountains and has recently finishing writing a simplified 'easy to use' grass manual for the Blue Mountains which contains all but the rarest Mountain species. The system eliminates the slow process of working through text keys in traditional books, relying on a grouping system using coloured pages and information organised around illustrations.

**Bookings are essential.** Only 30 places are available. Confirm your place and pay on the day: [email hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au) or phone Christine 4787 7246 and leave a message with your name and contact phone number.

## Lessons from "Parklands"

by Alan Lane

The 84-dwelling development for the 11-hectare "Parklands" site in Govett's Leap Road Blackheath was finally rejected by Council on February 15.

The local community formed an action group to fight the "integrated housing and community title subdivision and tourist accommodation development", after a decision was deferred by Council on November 2, apparently to consider a document from the NSW Health website concerning on-site sewage disposal for multi-unit dwellings.

Since this document did not form part of the D.A., it was unclear why Councillors didn't simply reject the development in line with the advice of Council staff.

The sewer in Blackheath is at capacity, so after the proposed "Parklands" development disposed of its 12 kilolitre-per-day allocation to the sewer, the other 80% of the effluent would be trucked away in tankers all the way to Winnalee. It was because the development was "unable to be connected to and serviced by a reticulated sewerage system" that it breached clauses 10.8 (a), 10.8 (c) and 10.8 (f) of LEP 1991 and that Council staff found that "the projected movement of effluent road tankers will have an adverse impact on the existing and future amenity and well-being of the Blackheath Town Centre".

The resident action group found huge support from a local community outraged by the lack of consultation over a development of such size and impact. Other than notifying residents immediately adjacent to the site and along Govett's Leap Road and a small notice in the council section of the Gazette, no publicity, media release, public meeting or site inspections were offered to the community.

At the Public Forum organised by residents themselves on February 7, over 150 people attended and voted 134 to five for Council to reject the D.A. and to consult widely and transparently on any future D.A. for the site.

This experience highlights the urgent need for Council to improve its Community Consultation Policy and amend its Consultation Matrix 2004 to ensure proper community consultation on matters of significance.

If the sewer upgrade for Blackheath is allocated funding by Sydney Water in the near future, the action group expects the "Parklands" D.A. to be resubmitted. So Council will have the opportunity to practice wide and transparent community consultation this time.



On Jan 29, Kim Allen (centre) and Virginia King (behind centre) and six other members of the Blackheath community found high community concern about the lack of community consultation on the "Parklands" development.

"Hut News", the newsletter of  
Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.  
P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, 2782  
Phone 4757 1872 Fax 4757 1753  
Email: [bmcs@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:bmcs@bluemountains.org.au)  
Web page: [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)  
President: Kevin Bell  
4787.6436 (ph/fx), [khbell@pnc.com.au](mailto:khbell@pnc.com.au)  
Senior Vice President: Heather Hull  
4739.1493, [heatherhull40@hotmail.com](mailto:heatherhull40@hotmail.com)  
Second Vice President: Vacant  
Treasurer: Bart Beech  
4739.9947, [bbeech@invensys.com.au](mailto:bbeech@invensys.com.au)  
Administration Officer: Les Coyne  
4757.3327, 4757.2820(fax)  
[coyne@pnc.com.au](mailto:coyne@pnc.com.au)  
Membership: Elizabeth van Reyswoud  
4757.2694, 0418206899 (mobile)  
[mcreysw@bigpond.net.au](mailto:mcreysw@bigpond.net.au)  
Meetings Secretary: Rosemary Lathouris  
4757.2511, [lath@pnc.com.au](mailto:lath@pnc.com.au)  
Meetings Convenor: Jim Wallace  
4784.3305, [ozblu@optusnet.com.au](mailto:ozblu@optusnet.com.au)  
Education Officer: Vacant  
Plant Nursery Manager: David Coleby  
4784.1395 (ph/fax) [dcoleby@pnc.com.au](mailto:dcoleby@pnc.com.au)  
Land Use Officer: Lyndal Sullivan  
4782.1635 (ah), [lyndal@hermes.net.au](mailto:lyndal@hermes.net.au)  
Bushcare Officer: Clive Heywood-Barker  
4782.3345, [ozbundu@hotmail.com](mailto:ozbundu@hotmail.com)  
Publicity Officer: Ron Withington  
4757.3984, [ronwit@ozemail.com.au](mailto:ronwit@ozemail.com.au)  
Walks Convenor: Bob van Reyswoud  
4757.2694 (ph/fax)  
[mcreysw@bigpond.net.au](mailto:mcreysw@bigpond.net.au)  
Bushfire Officer: Hugh Paterson  
4751.2303, [goodbush@pnc.com.au](mailto:goodbush@pnc.com.au)  
National Parks Officer: Brian Marshall  
4784.1148, [Brian.Marshall@uts.edu.au](mailto:Brian.Marshall@uts.edu.au)  
Web Site Manager: Margaret Sleath  
4759.3350, [msleath@ozemail.com.au](mailto:msleath@ozemail.com.au)  
Threatened Species Officer: Ian Baird  
4782.6775, [ianbaird@mountains.net.au](mailto:ianbaird@mountains.net.au)  
World Heritage Officer, John Haydon  
0421.479.146,  
[jhaydonmc@optusnet.com.au](mailto:jhaydonmc@optusnet.com.au)  
Project Officer: Ann Fox  
4758.6096, [foxy@zip.com.au](mailto:foxy@zip.com.au)  
Newsletter Editor: Christine Davies  
4787.7246, [hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au)

## Autumn plant sale

The Society's Autumn plant sale will be held from 9 am to noon on Saturday 9 April outside the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls.

A large variety of native plants, suitable for all areas of the mountains, will be on sale. As well as the regular prices (small tubes, 4 for \$10, large tubes, 5 for \$20) there will be some outstanding half-price bargains.

Autumn is the best season for planting so come along, BYOB (bring your own box) and make your selections. We even offer free advice on what's best for where!

## Management committee duties and responsibilities

Enclosed with this newsletter is a list of management committee positions and details of duties and responsibilities. At our Annual General Meeting on Friday 25 March all positions will fall vacant.

Please consider nominating for a position. No experience is necessary—

## GROUNDWATER

### Article 6: Groundwater management (A)

By Brian Marshall

The whole concept of groundwater management is wrong! Groundwater and surface water are too interdependent to be treated separately [R Young, NCC Newsletter, Autumn 2004]. Nevertheless, because the division is commonly recognised by 'government', the practice is followed here, despite its limitations.

The State's goal is: "*To manage the State's groundwater resources so that they can sustain environmental, social and economic uses for the people of NSW*" [Sinclair Knight Merz, *Groundwater sustainability, A Management Plan for the Blue Mountains/Richmond Region*, Land and Water Conservation, April 1999].

This sounds impressive, but what does it really mean? You will appreciate from the previous articles that environmental sustainability is best achieved by not messing with the dynamic balance between natural recharge and discharge; in other words, leave things alone! But realistically, we live in cities, value gardens, golf courses and sports grounds, and have an industry-based economy; and who under 30(?) could possibly forego bottled water? In effect, as with most government activities, the goal necessitates compromise in order to assuage society's competing demands. The nature of these compromises is embodied in the notion that a Groundwater Management Plan (GMP) should ensure "...an adequate supply of groundwater is available for environmental, social and economic uses without overuse or degradation of its quality" [op. cit.]. Fine words, but emphasis on social and economic extraction is why governments like to separate groundwater from surface water. Let's find out why!

Precipitation (less evaporation) partly infiltrates and enters the saturated zone (below the watertable), and partly forms surface run-off, which finds its way into creeks and rivers. Water in the saturated zone discharges as springs, swamps and effluent portions of creeks, ponds and lakes, and thereby adds to the surface water. The component of creeks and rivers ascribed to groundwater is termed the *surface base flow* (SBF). Following heavy rain, the watertable rises and increased discharge causes an increase in the SBF; under dry conditions, the watertable falls, discharge decreases and

the SBF decreases or stops altogether. SBF must impact on the amount of water flowing down creeks and rivers and into water supply dams. The extent of this impact for the Blue Mountains can be gauged from 'guesstimates' that more than 75% of the annual recharge contributes to SBF [op. cit.]. So how sustainable are the demands of the environment, flows to dams, and the extraction of groundwater for social and economic purposes?

*Sustainable yield* for groundwater is defined as "...that proportion of the long term average annual recharge which can be extracted each year without causing unacceptable impact on the environment or ground water users" [op. cit.]. The implication is that natural recharge is balanced against natural and engineered discharge. However, you should appreciate that the devil lies in 'unacceptable impact on the environment'. What is unacceptable? How many swamps dry out before extraction is deemed unacceptable? Indeed, how can environmental needs and the linked contribution of SBF to Sydney's water supply fit with unfettered social and economic extraction? Surely they cannot! Could it be that 'government' expediently creates the false impression that our dams solely impound surface water, rather than face the stringent curtailment of social and economic groundwater extraction?

A key belief of the modern environmental movement is that human activities must be sustainable; that is, we should only do those things that can be done 'indefinitely'. Climate change, a growing population and Warragamba Dam at less than 50% capacity are telling us that inadequately controlled groundwater extraction is not sustainable. Unfortunately, when confronted with competing demands, 'government' tends to misuse 'sustainable'. In the case of groundwater extraction, it tries to find a balance between a sustainable 'hands-off' approach and the unsustainable practice of ill-conceived social and economic exploitation. The overriding lesson is that 'sustainable' does not mean striking a deal between competing practices, when some are sustainable and other are not. This is mismanagement. It should never be substituted for soundly based ground- and surface-water management.

just a commitment to serve the environment and a determination to "make a difference". Some of our present committee members will not be standing for re-election. Some positions from last year remained unfilled. We need your help. For more information or to nominate contact Kevin Bell on 4787.6436, or any other member of this year's management committee (full contact details are on this page.

## Save Radiata Plateau

On the reverse side of the list of MC positions is a petition addressed to Mr Carr. A copy of the petition can be found on the Society's website.

### MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Elizabeth van Reyswoud  
Phone 4757.2694  
Email: [mcreysw@bigpond.net.au](mailto:mcreysw@bigpond.net.au)  
Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

## **BLAXLAND WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITY EXTENSION** by Brian Marshall

The Development Application and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Blaxland landfill extension was open to public comment until 18/02/05. The Society's submission includes concerns a deficiency of the existing landfill, the current composition of the Blue Mountains' waste stream, aspects of the extension proposal, and possible waste of a window of opportunity.

A problem with the Blaxland landfill relates to leachate entering the Cripple Creek diversion pipe. The Society is concerned that proposed remediation is indirectly contingent upon the extension Development Application and will be deferred accordingly. Ongoing deferral without explanation to those downstream from the landfill is unacceptable. Has the tender for the remedial work (independent of the extension DA) yet been called?

About 60% of the Blue Mountains' waste stream is compostable. Voluntary bin-size reduction will help, but there is no provision for enforcing minimisation of organic waste. Similarly unacceptable is the proportion of non-recyclable plastic waste (including plastic bags!). The Blue Mountains must either become plastic-bag free or plastic bags must incur a charge (successfully applied elsewhere!). Council encourages waste reduction at source, but whereas some respond to educational methods, 'hip pocket' enforcement helps others to comply. Council needs such adjuncts.

The Blaxland and Katoomba landfills have operating lives of ~12 months and less than 4 years, so additional capacity is essential. The Society accepts that Council's 'barely-in-time' proposal to extend Blaxland and transfer 'Katoomba' waste is the only option that is currently available, economically acceptable, and can be implemented in time! Nevertheless, aspects of the EIS require clarification and/or cause concern.

Disposal of much untreated leachate by injection irrigation (pumping it back into the landfill) should not influence surface water quality but, under dry conditions, could have a cumulative impact on leachate chemistry; the potential impact of this should perhaps be monitored. Leachate not injected will be treated and discharged to sewer. Should the capacities of the leachate dam and treatment plant be inadequate for extreme precipitation conditions, raw leachate could conceivably overflow to sewer or Cripple Creek.

The EIS provides for landfill gas to be flared off (wasted!), despite recognising that an energy recovery plant could potentially generate electricity. Exploitation of this potentially valuable bi-product should be a provisional part of the development application. To maximise the potential return, Council should expedite investigation of the resource and, if justified, submit a supplementary development application.

Queries regarding the ecological assessment include whether knowledgeable and independent 'locals' were consulted, and whether a longer fauna and flora investigation would have reduced levels of uncertainty. These limitations do not seem to conform with the Precautionary Principle and the conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity.

Alternative waste technology (AWT) may be a longer-term necessity, but imminent landfill closures leave insufficient time for it to be investigated, selected and implemented. Because 'investigating, selecting and implementing' could take at least 5 years, the window of opportunity provided by Blaxland extension is short. The Society therefore believes that Council should urgently analyse the City's waste processing needs and recommend an appropriate AWT.

The EIS refers to a possible sub-regional treatment facility servicing BMCC, Bathurst, Evans, Lithgow, Mudgee and Rylstone. The Society is concerned that this possibility, in the context of differing councils' agendas, will delay serious consideration and implementation of AWT.

Overall, the Society sees the proposed development as a short-term solution to limited waste capacities remaining at Blaxland and Katoomba. The EIS is reasonably comprehensive and has measures that ameliorate identified problems, but deficiencies exist and should be addressed. The solution gives Council an opportunity to determine and implement a long-term waste management solution. The Society has asked Council to respond to the submission and to inform it of actions taken as a consequence.

The full submission is on the Society's website.

### **Environmental levy**

Residents have received a leaflet from Council arguing the case for the introduction of an Environmental Levy. Council is to be congratulated for this initiative. A special place like ours needs more funding for the environment. This suggestion for a levy has been discussed at Society meetings over the years, and we have the experience of an environmental levy with other councils and with Sydney Water.

We have been assured that all existing funding for environmental works will continue and that the levy will add to existing programs where there has been inadequate funding to solve all the problems.

This is good news, but we need to ensure that this continues. Will levy funds always be additional to current spending? Will the funding from Council's general budget get whittled away over the years without the community knowing or being able to do anything about it? We could end up with **less** money going to the environment.

Council's budgets and annual reports

contain only very broad headings. There is no way of knowing from these how much funding goes to any particular environmental project or type of service. We need more information.

The Society is currently asking council for detailed information prior to the introduction of the levy. We ask that:

- the amount of funding for each environmental program over the past three years is made public in order to establish existing core funding levels and that the breakdown between on-site and management costs is provided for each item. (i.e. detailed budgets)
- a definition is provided for each funding program, specifying the activities included

We are also suggesting that if the environmental levy is introduced:

- an agreed list of works be developed by and with the community and endorsed by council resolution,
- that programs whose main objective is social or recreational be excluded from the list of 'environmental works'
- the proposed levy distribution plus core funding on all environmental projects is made public each year, giving individual program details and costs.

Council is planning to run community workshops to discuss this proposal, and we would encourage members to attend on Wed 16<sup>th</sup>, Thurs 17 or Saturday 19<sup>th</sup>. Check the Gazette or council for details. If you want further information contact Heather Hull on 4739 1493 (after 5 pm).

### **Photos of Govetts Creek**

Does anyone have photos of what the junction of Govetts Creek and Katoomba Creek used to look like? Do you have a photo of the once deep swimming hole from even 6 months ago?

There is now a huge deposit of sand. How recently did it arrive there? If you can help with a photo or just a verbal account please ring Lyndal Sullivan on 4782 1635 (ah). The Society recommends to members to email council at [envirolevy@bmcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:envirolevy@bmcc.nsw.gov.au) to show your support for the levy.

### **Walk Against Want**

Each year Oxfam-Community Aid Abroad holds a Walk Against Want to raise funds for disadvantaged communities around the world.

**Our Walk will begin at 9am on Sunday 13 March at the Wentworth Falls picnic area** where it will proceed along the Overcliff track past the spectacular lookings. It will take approx 1 – 1.5 hours. We have some masseurs who will be giving complimentary massages at the end of the walk as well as offering a guided walk.

We are inviting walkers, marshals and sponsors to join us in increasing awareness in the Blue Mountains for disadvantaged communities around the world. Contact Simone on 4751 3549 for further details. *Simone Windon.*

## Welcome to new members

Heather Macey, Croydon  
Christine & Neil Cramer, Leura  
Dr Barbara Jackson, Blaxland  
Brian Coates, Hartley  
Glenn Humphreys, Katoomba

## Great Grose weed walk

Bushwalkers! So often we delight in the beautiful bushland of the Grose Valley and enjoy walks in the valley and its environs! Now is our chance to do something in return.

Help protect the Blue Gum Forest from broom, a highly invasive weed. Explore a relatively unknown area amongst stunning sandstone cliffs. Thousands of broom seedlings have germinated after the Dec 2002 bushfires. They need to be treated urgently - before they invade the Blue Gum Forest and the Grose River. Bushwalkers are needed to help local volunteers work in the more difficult locations.

**Saturday, 19 March: Combined Bushwalking Clubs day, Katoomba Creek, 8am to 4pm.** Contact Mary Flynn (4787 6918) for meeting details and to register.

People do not need to be part of a bushwalking club to register for the following activity:

**Wednesday, 23 March: Henson Glen—Mt Hay, 9am to 5pm.** Easy half hour walk to a beautiful creek. Walk along Govett's Creek looking for broom seedlings that have emerged since last year. Contact Vanessa Richardson, NPWS, 4787 3112.

You can also contact Vanessa to find out about other Great Grose Weed Walk activities during March.

## Visit the Tarkine

by Eric Dunkley

Joan and I have recently returned from Tasmania. We flew to Hobart (\$29 + tax), rented a car (\$28 per day) and toured the Northwest. Stopping at a lookout over magnificent mountain scenery, we met a couple who had just walked into Philosopher Falls. After telling them that I was a member of BMCS I was given a brochure 'Tarkine - Your free Self-drive Tour' produced by the Tarkine National Coalition in association with the Tasmanian Conservation Trust and the Wilderness Society.

If you would like a copy, sent a donation to: Tarkine National Coalition, PO Box 218, Burnie, Tasmania 7320. For a guided Tarkine wilderness holiday contact Tiger Trails Ecoadventure on 03 6234 3931, Hollow Bones Wild Life Experience on (03) 6432 7632 and/or Kings run Tours on (03) 6457 1191.

## In my garden

by Christine Davies

Autumn is on the way. There's a different feeling in the air and the occasional cool autumn nip. Flocks of

## BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING GROUP

Our bushwalking group provides a range of activities. Membership of the bushwalking group is available to members of the Society. For further information contact the Activity Coordinator (listed) or Bushwalks Convenor Bob van Reyswoud. For membership enquiries contact Membership Secretary Liz van Reyswoud. **Cost of insurance and affiliation fees for bushwalkers of \$15 per member is payable with your membership renewal.**

**Monday Leisure Walks:** Usually 'Short Day' walks of 3-5 hours suitable for walkers of average fitness. Graded Medium, i.e. can include some short rock scrambles or some short section off track. Bring morning tea and lunch, plus carry at least 1 litre of water, 2 litres on warmer days.

**Mar 07 Nature Track & Lillian's Bridge, Wentworth Falls.** Stream walk. Meet 9.30 Wentworth Falls station car park. ☎ Mary 4787 7649.

**Mar 14 Bellbird Hill, Megalong Valley.** A new walk. Meet 9.15 Blackheath station commuter car park. ☎ Jock 4758 6346.

**Mar 21 Walls Ledge, Blackheath.** Heathland and forest. Meet Blackheath station commuter car park. ☎ Norah 4757 4058.

**Mar 28 Bus trip Noble Canyon, Wollangambe.** An unusual dry canyon. Meet 8.30 Council Depot, North Katoomba. ☎ David 4757 3416.

**Apr 4 Dark's Cave, Leura.** The Dark family's weekender. Meet 9 am Leura station commuter car park. ☎ Laurel 4784 1554.

**Thursday Pleasure Walks:** These easy to medium grade walks are conducted to suit the walkers on the day. Times given are approximate. Slower walkers are catered for and on longer walks there is an option of a slower group to complete a section of the walk. Phone the contact for any enquiries about the program, starting times and transport issues.

**Mar 10 Sun Valley and Fitzgeralds Creek.** Extent of walk to be determined on the day. Meet 10am in car park north side of GWH off The Valley Road, Valley Heights. ☎ Marie 4787 1257.

**Mar 17 Echo Point to Katoomba Cascades.** Level easy walk along cliff top with great views. Meet 10am Gearins Hotel Katoomba. ☎ Joan 4782 2218.

**Mar 24 Radiata Plateau, Katoomba.** Walk in this beautiful cliff top area and hear from the campaigners why it should be added to the existing reserves. Meet 10am Gearins Hotel Katoomba. ☎ Joan 4782 2218.

**Mar 31 Mt Piddington to Fairy Bower.** Delightful walk through rainforest gullies. Steps descending, car shuffle to return. Meet 10am Mt Vic Station. ☎ Terry 4787 6918.

**Apr 07 Conservation Hut to Nature Trail, Wentworth Falls.** Classic mountain walk past Lillian's Bridge in Valley of the Waters. Many steps down and up. Car shuffle. Meet 10am Wentworth Falls car park near the clock. ☎ John 4757 1558.

### ADVANCE NOTICE

**Apr 4-6 Overnight camp at Newnes.** Exploratory walks, Newnes ruins and bushcraft. Meet 9.30am April 4 at Mt Vic Station. Tel David 4757 3416 if attending.

**Apr 28 Bus trip to Dunns Swamp, near Rylstone.** Bookings open for bus trip to NPWS picnic area with bushwalks past rock pagodas and beside the dam. Cost \$10. This year's special! Go on 2 bus trips and get the 3rd free!! ☎ Simone 4757 3416

**Weekend Bushwalks:** Always discuss with the contact if the walk you would like to do is medium/hard or hard, before attending. If this is your first walk, or you are in any doubt, discuss with the contact or Bushwalks Convenor Bob van Reyswoud, 4757 2694, email [mcreysw@bigpond.net.au](mailto:mcreysw@bigpond.net.au)

**Sat. Mar 5 Bedford Creek.** Meet Woodford Station 9am. Medium. ☎ Ron 4757 1526.

**Sat Mar 12 Crayfish Pool.** Medium. Meet Glenbrook Station carpark 8.45am. ☎ Liz 4754 4966

**Sat Mar 19 Great Grose Gorse Walk (targeting weeds in the Blue Mts).** ☎ Mary 4787 6918. (See more information on this page.)

**Sat Mar 26 Porter's Pass.** Medium. Meet Blackheath Station commuter car park 9.45 am. ☎ Don 4787 6447.

**Sat Apr 2 Florabella Pass.** Medium. Meet Warrimoo Station 9.30am. ☎ June 4787 7312.

little birds have been visiting the garden. Some of the deciduous trees in the Blackheath streets have started to change colour.

The garden is very much alive with spiders and all sorts of creatures. Peter found a Blind Snake on the path. It was shiny black and only six inches long. We identified it as *Ramphotyphlops nigrescens*. These burrowing snakes are harmless and rarely seen—possibly washed out by the rain.

The little creature on the right was found crawling along the track in the National Park behind us. It is beautifully

camouflaged with leaves and flakes of tea tree bark.

Does anybody know what it is?

