

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Coal Mining and Power Generation in the Western Blue Mountains

Dr. Marshall Wilkinson will be the speaker at our January Monthly Meeting.

Dr. Wilkinson is a lecturer in the Graduate School of the Environment at Macquarie University and has taught at the University of Kentucky in the USA with Undergraduate Programs in Physical Geography and Geomorphology.

He will speak about Coal Mining and Power Generation in the Western Blue Mountains.

Dr. Wilkinson has been teaching a course that partly focuses on this and recently led a field trip with his postgraduate students into the area.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society and the Lithgow Environment Group have been very active in monitoring the impact of coal mining on the environment of the western Blue Mountains and reviewing development plans.

Dr. Wilkinson's talk will provide further insights and information.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Monthly Meeting

7:30pm, Friday, January 29, 2010

The Conservation Hut, far western end of
Fletcher St. Wentworth Falls

VISITORS ARE VERY WELCOME

From the President

Welcome to the final edition of Hut News for 2009. As the year comes to a close, I thought it timely to provide a brief update of some of our work.

I am very pleased to say that I bring no news of recreational hunting in National Parks! The State Government has not supported the Shooters Party's proposal to allow the hunting of feral and native animals in Parks and private game reserves. We will continue to work on protecting our beautiful parks from such activities and development pressures in the New Year.

The Gardens of Stone Stage 2 campaign has been ongoing and I have been talking to a number of people about the ecological and economic benefits of protecting Newnes Plateau and surrounding lands. We were pleased to take Catherine Cusack, the Shadow Minister for the Environment, to the area in late November.

Our legal case against Delta Electricity is continuing slowly. The case relates to alleged high levels of salinity and heavy metals in the Upper Cox's River. Although we were successful in gaining a 'Protective Costs Order' to run the case, Delta is appealing this decision. The Appeal will be heard in March 2010.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members for their support and work. The nursery volunteers have been working hard to grow plants that will certainly help my Christmas shopping. Buying friends and family a gift membership is an idea that I will be taking up.

Wishing you all the best for Christmas and the summer break.

Tara Cameron

Climate Change and Sustainability Officer

Welcome to Lis Bastion who has agreed to fill this important management committee position.



Photo (left to right): Brian Marshall, Ian Baird, Catherine Cusack, Elata Cameron, Lachlan Crawford, and Tara Cameron.

Tara Cameron.

"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
Web page: www.bluemountains.org.au

President: Tara Cameron
4751 1130 domtara@bigpond.com

Senior Vice President: Liz van Reyswoud
4757.2694, 0418206899
mcreysw@bigpond.net.au

Second Vice President: John Haydon
0403 797 585
jhaydonmc@optusnet.com.au

Treasurer: Bart Beech (h)4739 9947
(f)9688 1440 (w)9896 9512
bbeeche@invensys.com.au

Administration Officer: Rob Baigent
4759 3104 robbagent@iprimus.com.au

Bushcare/Threatened Species Officer:
Clive Heywood Barker 4782 3345
ozubundu@hotmail.com

CC/Sustainability Officer: Lis Bastion
4787 7533
ebastion@stoplaughing.com.au

Environmental Education Officer:
Chris Yates 4784 3407
christopher.yates@det.nsw.edu.au

Lithgow Regional Subcommittee
Coordinator: Chris Jonkers 6355 1179
chrisandjulie@active8.net.au

Meetings Secretary: Michael Maack
4751 3623 maack@ozemail.com.au

Membership Secretary: Lachlan Garland
4757 1929 lachlan@hermes.net.au

Monthly Meeting Convenor: David Brazil
4784 3496 david@dbrazil.com

National Parks Officer: Brian Marshall
4784.1148, maraben@optusnet.com.au

Plant Nursery Manager: Kevin Bell
ph/fax 4787.6436 kevinbell@eftel.net.au

Publicity Officer: David Hall 040 412 3001
david.hall275@bigpond.com

Website Officer: David Bowskill 4757 3416
webmaster@bluemountains.org.au

Project Officer-Gardens of Stone:
Karen McLaughlin 6355 2835
karen.mclaughlin@aussiebroadband.com.au

Bushfire Representative: Hugh Paterson
4751.2303, mob 0427 512 303
goodbush@pnc.com.au

Walks Convenor: Liz van Reyswoud
4757 2694
bushwalks@bluemountains.org.au

Landuse Officer: Sidney Ryrie
4751 4389 gaiagirl@bigpond.com

Newsletter Editor: Christine Davies
4787 7246
hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

HUT NEWS EDITORIALS

The deadline for the next issue of Hut News is **15 January 2010**

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Lachlan Garland, phone: 4757 1929
email: lachlan@hermes.net.au
PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

BUSHCARE GROUP

Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets second Saturday of each month, 9am till noon. Tools and gloves are available. Bring a drink, a snack and a hat. New members are always welcome. Phone Karen on 4757 1929.

Vale Joan and Ruth

Christine Davies

Living in the Blue Mountains, one meets the most interesting and inspiring people. Two such people passed away, at the age of 87, in November 2009. I hope that readers will overlook errors and omissions in the following paragraphs.

Joan Storey was a doctor and gynaecologist. After retirement she came to live in Blackheath where she had a lovely native garden. Joan was involved in many local community organisations. She worked for some years as a volunteer at the Society's nursery, propagating native plants. She worked for the Red Cross, baking cakes and making pickles etc and helping to sell them at street stalls; at the Rhododendron Gardens where she listed the native species and encouraged other volunteers not to weed them from the understorey.

Centenary Reserve in Cleopatra Street Blackheath is now a delightful native reserve after years of bush regeneration work done by a small but dedicated bushcare group which included Joan Storey and Joyce Brister and others.

Joan died suddenly while resting after attending a horticultural society meeting.

Ruth Milton was a bookkeeper and office manager. After retirement Ruth lived in Wentworth Falls.

I first met Ruth in 1992 when the coordinator of the newly formed Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre asked me to organise bushwalks for older people. We started in October. Ruth came along but there was insufficient interest to keep going. Ruth contacted me in January the next year and suggested we restart the walks. Ruth found walkers from among her friends and acquaintances. The Monday Leisure walks were a great success, and are still going under the auspices of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

Ruth was a keen photographer and a member of the local camera club. I remember fondly that Ruth would often take extreme care and some time to compose a photo, and then decide not press the shutter because "the light was not good enough" or some other reason. Even in those pre-digital times the rest of us probably would have taken the photo anyway.

I spoke to Ruth's brother Geoff who told me that Ruth was a member of NPA, Bird Observers, Blue Mountains Conservation Society, National Trust,

and other organisations, and that he took the various newsletters to read to her in her last days at the nursing home. He said there were thousands of slide photographs, all meticulously catalogued. Unfortunately he has only kept those pertaining to the family.

Hut News distribution: by post or internet?

All members on our email list will be advised when the newsletter is ready to download from the web.

Unless otherwise requested you receive a hard copy by post as well. Some people (myself among them) prefer to read a printed paper copy at leisure. Nowadays, many prefer the internet.

If you **DON'T** want a hard copy of the newsletter posted to you, please contact the Membership Secretary, Lachlan Garland.

If you **DO** want a hard copy of the newsletter posted to you, and this is not being done at present, contact Lachlan and tell him. Contact details are:

Email: lachlan@hermes.net.au
Phone: (02) 4757 1929.

Hut News is put onto our website as soon as it is completed. At the same time a pdf file is sent to the printer who delivers the printed copies four days later. The newsletters are enveloped and posted and arrive in members' letterboxes one week after the newsletter is posted on the web.

Advantages of downloading Hut News from the internet are that you receive it sooner and the photographs are in colour. If you don't want a hard copy posted the Society saves the cost of a stamp and the use of up to three sheets of recycled A3 paper and a recycled paper envelope.

Being able to communicate with members via Hut News is important to the Society, whether it is received by internet or by post. Membership fees cover the cost of printing and distribution of the newsletter by mail.

Christine Davies.

Environmental Courses at Blue Mountains TAFE

Blue Mountains TAFE has just produced a combined brochure of their environmental courses for 2010.

The brochure can be found at <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/Conservation/2010EnvironmentAdvertBrochure.pdf>

Motions passed at the 2009 Nature Conservation Council (NCC) Conference

NCC is the umbrella organisation for 120 community based environmental groups in NSW. Tara Cameron and Michael Maack attended the annual Conference. The following motions relating to our work were passed by the delegates. The passing of these motions means that NCC is able to assist our efforts on these issues.

MOTION: Environmental Protection Licensing in NSW, proposed by Blue mountains Conservation Society

THAT NCC supports the Blue Mountains Conservation Society in addressing pollution of the upper Coxs River and pursuing reform of Environmental Protection Licensing in NSW. This reform specifically involves setting licence limits that reflect the sensitivity of the receiving environment and improved monitoring of licence conditions by DECCW.

The following motions were submitted jointly by Blue Mountains Conservation Society and Colong Foundation for Wilderness, and passed unanimously by the conference without amendment:

MOTION: Recognising the recreational potential of the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 areas

THAT the Nature Conservation Council of NSW support the accelerated reservation of the 40,000 hectare Gardens of Stone Stage 2 reserve proposal given:

- a) the ongoing and increasing threat to the area's heritage values from inappropriate use and poor management; and
- b) the significant benefits to the local community from reservation, including regional economic returns of between \$3 to \$4 million a year from an estimated 50,000 visits per year.

MOTION: Stop the mining damage in the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 region

THAT the Nature Conservation Council of NSW support adequate protection zones for the upland swamps, cliffs and pagodas within the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 reserve proposal, to prevent damage resulting from surface subsidence due to underground longwall coal mining.

Nursery News

Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager

Our hard-working nursery volunteers need an occasional break so our nurseries will close after trading on Tuesday 15th December at Blackheath and Wednesday 16th December at Lawson. Hurry in if you intend to do some planting over the Christmas period and please note that there will be no Magpie Markets during December and January.

We will re-open on Tuesday 12th January at Blackheath and Wednesday 13th January at Lawson. In the meantime our volunteers send Seasons Greetings to our many customers and we hope to see you all in the New Year when we will have some new species on offer.

And remember that if you are scratching your head about what to buy a friend or relative for Christmas why not a Gift Voucher for plants, available in denominations of \$10, \$20 and \$50? Any queries, contact Kevin Bell at 47876436 or kevin-bell@eftel.net.au.

RTA's Mount Victoria Bypass

Go to our website to read the latest BMCS feedback and opinions on the proposed Mount Victoria Bypass <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/Transport/transport-links.shtml>

The official date for comment on the most recent proposals has passed, but you can still register your opinion with RTA and our local politicians. Contact details are:

Mount Victoria to Lithgow Great Western Highway Upgrade, Roads and Traffic Authority, Reply Paid 334, Parkes, NSW 2870, western_projects@rtा.нsw.gov.au (Attn Chris Barnett)

Phil Koperberg MP, Member for Blue Mountains, 107 Macquarie Street, Springwood 2777, bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au 02 4751 3298.

Bob Debus MP, Member for Macquarie, PO Box 997, Katoomba 2780, Bob.Debus.MP@aph.gov.au 02 4782 4644.

The draft letter underneath which can be found on our website at www.bluemountains.org.au/Transport/transport-links.shtml reflects the Society's position.

I oppose the Orange corridor options as proposed by the RTA for the upgrade of the Great Western Highway between Mt Victoria and Lithgow. The money allocated to the RTA's proposed upgrade should ONLY be assigned to essential safety matters and the remaining funds be re-allocated to rail improvements.

Every dollar spent on excessive GWH and/or Bells Line of Road improvements is one less dollar for rail. Yet rail is the only transport initiative capable of dealing with 'peak oil' predictions and contributing to the essential reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. It is the answer now and for the longer term.

Each of the three proposed route options will encourage more trucks onto the Great Western Highway, and despite the statement by Mr Daley (the previous Minister for Roads) that 26m B-doubles will never be allowed across the Mountains, permit this to happen under the existing or future governments. Instead of spending more than \$600 million dollars on an upgrade that will only reduce travel-time by 5 to 8 minutes, the Australian and NSW governments should take a long term view and commit to rail-freight for the Central West-Sydney corridor.

Should the insanity persist and the proposed Mt Victoria-Lithgow upgrade be constructed, I believe that the current alignments should be retained at Forty Bends and Little Hartley, the northern alignment be followed at River Lett Hill, and the long tunnel bypass be used at Mt Victoria. I nevertheless re-emphasise my view that this extravagant approach should be canned and only essential safety measures be implemented. This would be in the best interests of those immediately affected in Hartley Valley and Mt Victoria, would allay the concerns of all those living between Blackheath and Glenbrook, would minimise impacts on tourism, heritage and the local environment, and in facilitating the development of rail infrastructure would benefit the greater environment. Yours sincerely, etc.

Dawning

Soft textured rolling hills
Shadowed gullies
Mist so still.
Rocking treetops
Grass in patches may be seen
Changing shades of brown and green.

Silent breezes kiss the morn
Birds rise on wing
The day is born.
Growing shadows
Sun's new light floods blue white haze
Traces of the night erase.

Warm the comfort of the sunrise.
Joyful is the birds' first song.
Pleasant is the dawning of a new day,
Comfort of our soul prolonged.

Reginald Reid
The Nature of Things

Observing Nature

Christine Davies

It seems a New Holland Honeyeater has a nest in my garden. During November I have heard its song shortly before the dawn, occasionally during the night.

The Banksia creature appears in December, through to as late as March. It is tiny, a triangular shape, and looking like a leaf node is well camouflaged on the old man Banksia stems. Unless disturbed, it doesn't move much during the day, perhaps is nocturnal. It can fly. If May Gibbs had noticed this bizarre little creature it might have played a role in *The adventures of Bib and Bub* along with the Old Man Banksia cone.



A species of inchworm arrives in my garden in November. It is very colourful. Its head, tail and hind legs are the prettiest blue, its body is striped lengthwise blue, yellow and black. The only things I've been able to find out about inchworms is that they are the larvae of a moth, to some they are "garden pests", and there is a song about them. There are more of them this year than other years. Also there appear to be many more Lady Beetles than usual.

My granddaughter Sylvia is staying with me and we have been watching the growth and maturing of a grass tree spike in the National Park. A grass tree (*Xanthorrhoea*) takes forever to grow, but a flower spike seems to shoot up overnight. At present (29 November) the spike is covered with white flowers, sweet with nectar.

Strobos

The September/October 2009 edition of Strobos is now on the web at:

<http://www.bluemountains.org.au/HutNews/0909strobos.pdf>

This is the 2nd birthday edition.

Congratulations to Katoomba High students who create, edit and publish this very readable environmental magazine for high school students..

Valley of the Waters Bushcare

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group was formed in October 1996. Prior to the establishment of the Bushcare Group, some Blue Mountains Conservation Society members had undertaken weeding in the area around the Conservation Hut and along the Nature Trail on an occasional basis. The Group is part of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, but closely liaises with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Blue Mountains City Council.



The Bushcare site is in the Valley of the Waters at Wentworth Falls, mostly within the Blue Mountains National Park. The site extends from the Conservation Hut around the rim of the valley to West Street. The Group also recently agreed to undertake maintenance work around the Wentworth Falls Picnic Area.

The Group works predominantly around urban areas, walking tracks, watercourse edges and drainage lines to contain and reduce the spread of weeds into bushland and hanging swamps. On occasions, some members also walk down into the valley to work along the creeklines. The Bushcare work involves a range of activities, including planting, some light erosion control works, but mostly weeding, using a variety of techniques.

Over time, the site has been provided with assistance from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Blue Mountains City Council, local TAFE students, local bush regenerator contractors and Green Corps.

The area has some stunning views over the valley and beyond, as well as a variety of vegetation communities, geological features, flora and fauna. The site is a popular tourist destination and contains many bushwalking tracks.

Members of the group are of varying ages and backgrounds. They enjoy the social interaction, as well as working together to improve the local bushland areas.

Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets on the second Saturday of each month from 9.00 am - 12.00 noon. Full training and tools are provided. New members are always welcome. For any enquiries, please contact Karen Hising on 4757 1929 or karenhising@bigpond.com.

Welcome to new members

Julie and Phil Jennings, Mosman
Merren and Andrew Dargan, Leura
John Davoren and Judith Malcolm, Oatley

Love of Wildness

Love of the Created By Richard Stiles

Richard has sent me his poem which, unfortunately, is too long for this newsletter. You can find it on our website:

www.bluemountains.org.au

Environmental Notes

David Hall

■ Americans who believe that there is solid evidence of rising temperatures has declined to 57% from 71% in April, 2008. The percentage blaming rising temperatures on human activities has fallen over the same time from 47% to 36%. A poll published in July by the European Union reported that the number of European Union residents who regarded climate change as the World's biggest problem had dropped to 50% from 62% in 2008. A poll in July by the Lowy Institute in Sydney reported that the percentage of Australians willing to accept 'significant costs' to deal with global warming had fallen to 48%, down from 60% in 2008 and 68% in 2006. --- Source - 'The Economist'

■ Water availability is likely to be as much of a problem as rising temperatures. It takes around one litre of water to produce one calorie from food crops. Meat requires ten times the water withdrawn compared to plants. The average daily diet of a meat eating Westerner requires some 6,000 litres of water in agriculture compared with around 3,000 litres in, say North Africa. As living standards rise around the world, more meat is eaten which adds to the problem -- Source - 'The Economist'.

■ Are biofuels the answer? Consider. It takes up to 9,100 litres of water to grow the soy for one litre of biodiesel and up to 4,000 litres for the corn to be transformed into bioethanol. Source - 'The Economist.'

Drink Tap Water

Water machines at rail and bus stations to benefit commuters could cut use of plastics. (Extract from an article by Paul Gallagher, The Observer, Oct 2009.)

London may soon follow in the footsteps of Bundanoon, the Australian town that has banned bottled water and set up drinking fountains for thirsty locals.

Thames Water, Britain's largest privatized water company, with 13.6 million customers, has had talks with the Greater London Authority and Transport for London to install water machines in the capital. In the first trial, Hydrachills will be installed at Hammersmith bus station and at the Tower Bridge museum. The machines can fill bottles of up to 500 ml with chilled water for a 20p charge. All proceeds will be donated to Waste Watch, a charity working to change the way people use natural resources.

Should London's water stations prove a hit with the 400,000 visitors who

Dear Readers,

The Wentworth Pass follows a similar route to the National Pass, albeit along the valley floor. Access to the Wentworth Pass is via the Slack Stairs from the National Pass at the eastern end, Valley of the Waters/Vera Falls track at the western end. Graham and Wilson Alcorn were Rangers for Blue Mountains City Council in the 1970s, looking after the walking tracks, when the Slack Stairs collapsed. Christine.

Mountain Memories

by Wilson Alcorn

Slacks Stairs

The collapse of these near vertical stairs which went down a cleft a short way from the falls meant there was no access to the Wentworth Pass which ran below the National Pass. A contractor quoted such a large sum, Graham and I offered to repair it ourselves.

The rock steps were cut from the bottom up, meaning workmen had to come in from the other end and walk two and a half kilometres along the National Pass. There was no room to camp on the job. It did not seem logical to carry materials, food etc all that way and if one walks a short way from the falls on the overcliff walk we find the answer.

The ledge which is The National Pass lies under an overhang except for a spot near the falls where the cliff recedes. Turning off the overcliff track we find an overgrown lookout and in it a rusting crane with a jib that swings out. We replaced the rusting padlock on the mechanism with our own, greased everything and it was ready to go although it was probably built before the work started in 1908. The 200 odd feet of steel wire rope was in good condition but very heavy when all let out. Possibly a later replacement.

It was manually operated and needed a strong man or preferably

annually pass through the two sites, the scheme will be extended to underground, bus and railway stations across London and the south-east before the 2012 Olympics.

Photo: Tide turns: The Maternité drinking fountain in Royal Exchange. London is planning to install new fountains and is looking for funding to restore existing historic ones

two on the winding handle. No brakes. The lookout was silted up till the parapet was only one foot high. We dug it out back to the rock as we had six young men on work experience with us and if one tripped whilst skylarking, he'd finish up 200 feet down on rocks.

The stairway was pre-fabricated in the carpenter's shop and delivered to the ring road above the falls together with 21foot 1½ inch pipe for guardrails and 40 plus stair treads each one a four foot long, 4 x 2 inch piece of hardwood. It was very heavy for two men but no problem with six young men and it was all moved to the lookout.

The side walls and lengths of pipe had to be lowered in a vertical position to clear the cliff so it was as well we had a professional rigger in my brother Graham to handle the slings. Any slip would probably have killed the three men waiting below to stack the materials on the narrow ledge.

As one side was against the rock, we could not hammer a four inch nail into the stair treads in situ, we had to put it together first. A very heavy structure with 40 plus steps but we controlled it with two sets of pulley blocks.

After fitting the steps into their rebated channels, we had to edge the structure down a short ramp and swing it ninety degrees to lower it over the cliff. We moved the anchor points also. All went well and we bolted on the pipe posts and fitted the guard rail.

We had some fine young people on work experience schemes over the years. It was interesting to see them establishing their identify like a piece of virgin paper awaiting the writer's pen.

**Wilson Alcorn,
former Head Ranger,
at Blue Mountains City Council.**



Just Transition Campaign

The Society is running a grass roots advertising campaign to counter advertisements being produced by the Coal Association. We have run two advertisements in local papers, one of which is printed on this page.

Please help us keep these ads going. If you want to help get this positive message out, then donate now. Please indicate your donation is for the "Just Transition" campaign. Alternatively you may wish to make a tax deductible general donation to the Society - please indicate if this is the case.

Cheque or Money order payable to Blue Mountains Conservation Society to PO Box 29 Wentworth Falls 2782. Direct Deposit to BSB 082656, Acct No 282175764 Please email the details to Tara at domtara@bigpond.com

Coal communities deserve more than glossy corporate spin!



For decades coal companies have pocketed the big profits and governments have taken the royalties. Now as the climate crunch looms, and the age of coal necessarily draws to a close, it is time for companies and governments to invest in the future of communities. Communities, originally built on coal, must not be left out on a limb. Transition to a cleaner low emissions future, built around renewable energy jobs, needs to start today. The renewable energy industry can create thousands of jobs, and effectively rebuild communities. With only a quarter of Australia's population, Denmark has in just a few decades created near 30,000 new jobs in the wind industry alone. We have the same ability, and the next generation deserves such opportunities.

Invest in clean renewable technologies, and jobs will be renewable forever!

Authorised by: Blue Mountains Conservation Society

BOOK REVIEWS

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY WITHOUT THE HOT AIR

David J C McKay

This book (only available as a downloaded PDF file) is an absolutely brilliant explanation of Global Warming and Sustainable Energy.

The book is written in the UK, and for a UK audience, but the numbers and the message are universal (or should I say global).

McKay details how much energy is used by each person in the UK, in what forms, and for what purposes.

He then goes on to describe in detail every currently recognised form of Sustainable Energy, how much can be generated, and again in what form.

He insists throughout the book that 'we need a plan that adds up', and he is right!

The book is easy to read, full of great figures, graphs, illustrations and quotes, and well worth the effort of downloading and reading.

The whole book is a 50 megabyte download, totalling 383 pages, but if you are feeling lazy (or you have dial-up internet!), there is a 10 page synopsis at 1.58 megabytes.

I cannot recommend this book highly enough.

If you believe in Climate Change, or if you don't, or if you don't care, you still need to read this book.

<http://withouthotair.com/download.html>

Ross Coster.

THE WATER DREAMERS - Michael Cathcart

The Water Dreamers is a fascinating and insightful book that shows how generations of white settlers have dreamt about water on this arid continent. The author, Michael Cathcart presents the argument that it is time to stop dreaming and to start valuing the water and waterways that we have.

The early chapters reveal the story of the Cadigal stream - Sydney's Tank Stream, and of its loss as well as, the story of Sydney's large swamps and their loss.

Cathcart suggests that conflict between white settlers and Aboriginal owners was a battle for resources and states that, *the battle for land was also a battle for water*.

Stories of Sturt's exploration are retold as the author demystifies early ideas of 'an inland sea'.

The discovery and exploitation of the sub-artesian basin with the sinking of bores and the introduction of irrigation in the Murray-Darling Basin make interesting reading.

The author links the belief it was necessary to populate Australia to the need to use civil engineering solutions of building pipelines, dams and sinking bores to ensure water supplies for population growth, with devastating consequences.

The explanation of modern day water trading is easy to understand and Cathcart concludes -

The commodification of our rivers replicates white Australia's oldest folly: it treats water as if it can be separated from the environment, as if it can be trucked around the country regardless of the logic of the land.

Thoroughly researched, this book is a topical 2009 publication and concludes on a note of hope.

Meredith Brownhill.

WOMEN OF FLOWERS, Botanical Art in Australia from the 1830's to the 1960's

This is a most beautiful book with images of Australian Flora.

Biographies of the women artists reveal how they taught themselves both botany and art, continuing throughout their lives to contribute significantly to both fields.

One artist mentioned is Louisa Atkinson (1834-1872) who lived at Kurrajong for a time and discovered several local plant species, which are now named after her e.g., *Atkinsonia ligustrina* and *Doodia atkinsonii* – her paintings of Kurrajong ferns are superb.

The art work of Harriet and Helena Scott is represented as well, with exquisitely detailed images of butterflies.

It is an inspiring and lovely book. The author Leonie Norton is a well known botanical artist. Published by the National Library of Australia 2009.

Meredith Brownhill.

Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

Just a few metres from my window is a Red Wattlebird incubating two eggs in its bowl-shaped nest. The nest is placed amongst the fine branches of a climbing rose and in it sits the female parent quietly with her head and bill pointing upwards. This creates an effective camouflage: instead of seeing the shape of a bird's head you see something resembling a twig, and it breaks up the outline of the nest. It's not unlike the cryptic pose of a Tawny Frogmouth, that master of disguise so good at impersonating a dead branch - but more on him in a moment.

It's possible one of the eggs the wattlebird is incubating is that of an Eastern Koel. Koels choose wattlebirds as hosts and the unsuspecting host parent raises the young koel as if it were its own. Day and night for weeks on end, the shiny black male koel has been calling: "Coo-eee... coo-eee...!" No wonder it's dubbed the "brain-fever bird".

Thirty-three years ago, Graham Alcorn wrote (in Blue Mountains Conservation Society newsletters) that Tawny Frogmouths nested each year at Leura Cascades picnic area. It's heartening to see that they still nest there, though in a different place to where Graham used to watch them. In the past three springs I've found the frogmouth sitting on a nest in a large pine tree in the western picnic area. The nest is a flimsy saucer of twigs which seems too small for the bird, placed on a horizontal or sloping fork of a tree, and into which 2 or 3 eggs are laid. This year however, I wasn't able to find the nest, but on 21st November, two big fluffy chicks were sitting together in the same tree, peering down at us, with their parents either side. Obviously the nest had been somewhere close by.

Tawny Frogmouths are one of the most charismatic of birds. Although nocturnal, they are not an owl but related to the nightjars and can sometimes be seen during the day asleep on a shady branch. But more often they are not noticed as they elongate their body, flatten their mottled grey feathers and narrow their eyes to a slit, becoming merely a part of the branch.

Some readers might have noticed an article in the Sydney Morning Herald on 2nd November about the invasion of the Brush-turkey. This large, unruly native bird with a colourful red neck and yellow wattle, is not only moving into Sydney, but the Blue Mountains as well. Ten years ago they were virtually never seen here except for the occasional sighting in the northern part of the area (around Mt Wilson, Mt Irvine and Bowen's Creek). Early last year they moved south of the Bells Line of Road becoming established at Mt Tomah Botanic Gardens, and now we're hearing of birds in the lower Blue Mountains around Blaxland and Springwood. In recent weeks have even been seen as far west as Lawson. Let me know if they have moved into your area.

Carol Proberts (origma@westnet.com.au)

I have been so keen a walker; filled my lungs
So deeply with the fragrance of the gums,
Their tang, their scent, their aromatic breath,
Their life invigorating, and pungent death.
These are mere words! They lack the power, the strength,
To lift the head, each step give added length,
As do the mighty trees in vibrant life,
Yet, ere the City's grim and noisy strife
Drowns all, I would shut out the noise a while
So peace can be remembered with a smile

Yet, by the walker's road, I can escape,
And change, and almost take another shape,
And so keep sanity still, and come to peace,
Wide-spread, serene, where jealousies cease,
And simple things give pleasure; wants are few ~

Membership Application Form

(Use capitals please—even for email address)

Name(s) 1.
2.
3.

Address:
.....PC

Phone(s)

Email

MEMBERSHIP FEES (please circle one item)

Single \$25 Concession (Senior/Student)\$15
Household \$30 Concession (Senior/Student)\$20
Corporate (open to negotiation) \$100

Bushwalkers only.:
(\$20 per walker per annum) \$.....

Donation (tax-deductible) \$.....

TOTAL AMOUNT INCLUDED \$.....

Note: All fees include GST at the relevant rate.

Would you like to be involved in any of the following activities or working groups? (Please underline): Land use/development issues; Environmental Education; Threatened species issues; Web or database management; Plant nursery assistance; Bushcare; Publicity/photography; Water quality/sourcing studies; Society administration.

I/We agree to support the aims and objectives of the Society as set out on reverse side of this membership application:

Please sign if named above.

Signature(s) 1.
2.
3.

ENQUIRIES: Phone (02 4757 1872
Email: membership@bluemountains.org.au

Please cut out and forward this form with your cheque or money order to:

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls NSW 2782

And trees themselves, that sway to every breeze,
Standing straight and stately, friended or alone,
Then, the fine friendliness of birds, full-grown,
Knowing not man; and the liquid notes
Of lyre-birds; butcher-birds; a song that floats,
Joyous and free, through sundrenched air; the calm
Serenity that is the mountain's charm

These verses are extracts from "The Bush Walker" by Dorothy Lawry. I came across them in the 1947 edition of **The Bushwalker**, published (then) annually by the NSW Federation of Bushwalking Clubs. It was their tenth year of publication and the magazine cost one shilling and sixpence.

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community organisation working to achieve the preservation and regeneration of the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

The Society believes that World Heritage status provides an opportunity for local community members to become custodians of the unique biodiversity and scenery of the Blue Mountains.

The Mission of the Society is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains.

The Aims and Objectives of the Society are to:

- **Disseminate and foster an understanding of the ideals of Conservation.**
- **Promote the need for ecological sustainability.**
- **Protect the natural environment—flora, fauna, habitat, water, land and air.**
- **Actively oppose those human activities which degrade or destroy the natural environment.**
- **Repair the adverse effects of human activities upon the environment.**
- **Encourage the love of the natural environment by conducting a regular program of bushwalks.**
- **Increase the pool of expert knowledge about the natural environment, through meetings, excursions, research and other activities.**
- **Provide information to the public on matters of Conservation, especially through the Conservation Hut at the Valley of the Waters, Wentworth Falls.**
- **Maintain close and friendly relations with like-minded groups.**

Understanding Vegetation Communities

Have you ever wondered why some plant species grow together in groups in various areas of the Mountains? Would you like to know more about some of those plant groups or vegetation communities? Would you like to help protect some special areas by making sure they have been mapped correctly?

Two Workshops are being organised by the Bushcare Program of Blue Mountains City Council to assist Bushcare volunteers and other local environmental volunteers better understand vegetation communities. It will include both a theory component and field visits. The next workshop will be in the Springwood area and will focus on the **Lower Mountains**.

Date: Saturday 12 December Time: 8.30 am to 1pm.

Peter and Judy Smith, local and highly-respected ecological consultants, will be conducting the workshops.

Numbers are limited and bookings are essential. These are introductory workshops designed for people who have not undertaken TAFE studies.

For further details and bookings, contact Karen Hising on 4780 5623 or khising@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

October Monthly Meeting

'WATER'

Report by David Hall

Paul Freeman, General Manager, Asset Management with Sydney Water was the November Monthly Meeting Speaker. Paul is responsible for the planning, operations and maintenance of Sydney Water's \$13 Billion of assets. He spoke about Sydney Water's programs to provide a safe drinking and industrial use water supply to meet the needs of a growing population.

This requires state of the art technology together with water use efficiency programs that involve Business Operations and households.

Sydney Water's Business Program has 400 business partners. Paul asked those attending what they thought the percentage of total water use was withdrawn by households might be. The response was around 30%. The true figure is 70%. Business withdraws only 30% so the most scope for water use efficiencies is with household use. Paul responded to questions about the use of rainwater tanks by pointing out that there is a public health consideration in having tanks cleaned regularly to avoid the build up of toxins. Paul also responded to a question about recycling storm water by advising that Sydney Water does not have the facilities to do so. This would require a massive investment.

The common sense water use efficiencies such as having all hoses fitted with trigger nozzles, watering only before 10AM and after 4PM and not hosing hard surfaces is helping but the significant efficiencies are expected to come from the Water4Life Program which involves dams +recycling+desalination+ water use efficiencies. These are designed to provide 24% of the water supply.

Are Sydney Water's commercial interests served by providing as much water as possible to users? Apparently not. The legislation that established Sydney Water obliges them to reduce water use by 35% from 1994 levels by 2011. Its pricing is controlled by a Regulator.

Indigenous fire scheme cuts CO₂ emissions

Source: ABC Science, Alister Doyle, Reuters, 30 November 2009

An Australian project tapping Aborigines' knowledge to avert devastating fires that stoke climate change is the world's best example of linking indigenous peoples to carbon markets, says a new report.

The UN University (UNU) report says other parts of the world, especially Africa, could also tap centuries-old local practices to help slow deforestation that releases heat-trapping carbon dioxide. In return, local peoples could get jobs and cash from carbon markets.

The project in northern Australia has cut carbon dioxide emissions by an estimated 488,000 tonnes during its three years and generated 200 jobs by helping avert wildfires, it says.

Under the scheme, Aborigine rangers fight fire with fire - setting small blazes early in the dry season to create fire breaks and a patchwork of burnt and unburnt savannah.

That helps avoid far more damaging wildfires when vegetation gets tinder dry at the height of the dry season. Results can be monitored by satellites. It also protects wildlife by enabling animals, from snakes to kangaroos, to escape the small blazes.

"This experience is the best example in the world of indigenous and local communities using the emerging carbon market to develop culturally appropriate livelihoods," says UNU Rector Professor Konrad Osterwalder.

"The lessons learnt from this experience are invaluable, especially now that there are billions of dollars available to local communities worldwide to help them take climate change mitigation and adaptation measures."

Read more at <http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2009/11/30/2757366.htm>

Protect native animals: Put cats in the Act

Meredith Brownhill

Are you tired of having native wild-life killed in your garden by roaming cats? Well, the truth is that, there is not very much you can do about it. You can always complain to Council and this is a good thing to do, but they will only act upon your complaint if you know who the owner of the cat is and have witnessed the cat's nuisance acts.

Did you know that cats are legally free to roam throughout your property, local streets, town parks, urban bushland and most of NSW?

Currently in NSW, cats are only legally prohibited within 10 metres of food production areas and in Wildlife Protection Areas. We will have Wildlife Protection Areas here in the mountains by 2011. Other Councils already have Wildlife Protection Areas, e.g., Gosford, Warringah.

Cats are prohibited from National Parks under other legislation, so NPWS are responsible for cats in the Parks. However domestic and stray cats are regulated by local councils, and councils have only limited authority to manage cats, hence their inability to deal with attacks on wildlife effectively.

Cats and dogs are not treated equally under the Companion Animals Act. Dog ownership is strictly regulated and owners are required to keep their dogs on their property, or on a leash in other circumstances. Ownership responsibilities for cats need to be named and regulated.

Managing domestic cats to prevent the continuum of domestic stray/feral cats is the starting point in the eradication of Feral Cats, according to the *Threat Abatement Plan for predation by Feral Cats (2008 Dept. Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts)*.

What are other States doing? Well, Tasmania is drafting legislation to control cats. In S.A. and Vic., local councils have by-laws requiring cats to be contained either on the owner's property or indoors at night, and W.A. is debating the benefits of compulsory desexing.

It is time for the NSW Government to update the Companion Animals Act. Wildlife survival will be improved by changing the Act to:

- Require cat and dog management to be in response to the needs, vulnerability and habitat requirements of native wildlife.
- Have cats and cat owners treated

Down the Wallaby Track — a backward glance, with John Low

DEATH IN THE AEROPLANE HILLS

War is a broad canvas composed of many tragedies, some large and some small and obscure. Though Wirraway Ridge and Aeroplane Hills may be simply names on a map today, the story they carry is embedded in the memory of the central Mountains.

On the morning of Thursday 1st August 1940, two Wirraways, RAAF training aircraft, took off from Richmond air base and headed up into the Blue Mountains. About 10.30am, residents in the central Mountains heard the sound of their engines but could see nothing in the heavy cloud and mist. Suddenly one of the planes appeared briefly above Hazelbrook Railway Station, flying low toward the south. Within minutes there was an explosion and flames and black smoke were seen on the far side of the valley above Bedford Creek.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that: "The plane tore through trees for about 400 yards, tearing off branches and limbs as if they had been lopped." It had failed by metres to clear the ridge. When rescuers arrived the body of the pilot was still in the burning wreckage, while that of his observer was recovered some 20 metres away, "almost over the top of the ridge".

In 2007 I visited the site with a friend keen to find the wing section he had seen some years earlier. I had just finished reading a terrific book by the American writer John Elder* who, in the hills near his home in Vermont, had also sought the wreck of a WWII fighter plane. Like Elder, I was excited by the prospect of witnessing the "trees reaching through those broken wings, shuffling history back into the forest's fluttering deck."

A small, roughly constructed cairn of stones at the edge of the fire trail provided evidence of earlier pilgrims, while a series of yellow plastic strips pointed a route up the side of the ridge. When the rescuers arrived at the crash site in 1940 they found parts of the plane scattered over a wide area. Despite a broad search, however, crisscrossing the area, the Wirraway eluded us.

Disappointed, we rested for lunch looking back across the valley toward the Great Western Highway and the visible southern fringes of Hazelbrook and Lawson. The rock shelf on which we sat was warm in the sun and the deep gorge below green and peaceful. It was hard to imagine the grey drama and violence of that morning so many years ago. We talked and ate our sandwiches in the sparse shade of a crooked little eucalypt and in my mind's eye I tried to trace the plane's last flight across the valley.

John Elder found the wreck of his plane on his second attempt. It would seem that souvenir hunters had conspired with time and nature to prevent us doing the same. History had "shuffled" into memory and the "forest's fluttering deck" was all we found.

John Low (johnlow@iprimus.com.au)

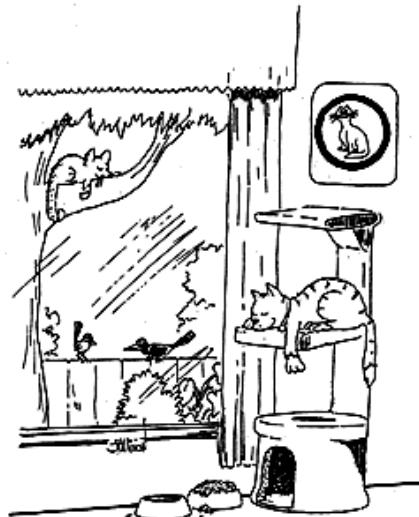
* John Elder, *Reading the Mountains of Home*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998.

equally to dogs and dog owners under The Act, i.e. cats contained on the owner's properties, in safe housing, as the basis of regulation.

- Have mandatory prohibition of cats & dogs from Wildlife Protection Areas.
- Provide better financial and regulatory support for Councils, their rangers and pounds in administering the Act.
- Reintroduce the Community Grants Scheme to assist councils with community education.

To protect wildlife, help put cats in the Act! Talk to local Councillors and our local member Phil Koperberg MP.

Illustration from www.dse.vic.gov.au



(Meredith will speak briefly about this topic at our January monthly meeting.)

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING ACTIVITIES

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. The BMCS Bushwalking Guide which explains the numbered grades can be found on the Society's website www.bluemountains.org.au or can be posted on request. For more information call Liz van Reyswoud on 4757 2694, email bushwalks@bluemountains.org.au or write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782. Late changes to the program will be published on the website.

SATURDAY WALKS: Usually a full day longer walk at a faster pace. Before attending ring the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Jim Percy 4758 6009 or email jp34@tpg.com.au

Date	Details	Contact	Meet at	(km)	Grade	Map
Dec 12	Lunch at Wentworth Falls Country Club Deposit \$10. Bookings essential to Bob or Jim. Followed by a walk down to Wentworth Creek via Evans Street. \$30 per head. Drinks on sale at the premises. No BYO.	Bob 4757 2694	Wentworth Falls Country Club, Blaxland Road, Wentworth Falls. 12.30 pm.	short	2	
Dec 19	Hazelbrook and Lawson Waterfalls (south side)	Bob 4757 2694	Lawson War Memorial 8.30 am	10.5	2	Katoomba
Jan 2	National Pass - one of the Blue Mountains oldest and most popular walking tracks.	Meredith 4782 4823	Wentworth Falls Stn CP 8.30 am	2/3	2/3	Katoomba
Jan 9	Wentworth Pass . Steps and a ladder.	Ros 4733 3880	Wentworth Falls Stn CP 8.30 AM	2/3	2/3	Katoomba
Jan 16	Leura Forest . Peaceful, quiet and cool.	Liz 4754 4966	Leura Station Carpark 8.30 am	2/3	2/3	Katoomba
Jan 23	Surprise walk - weather dependent. Early start.	Hugh 0423 309 854	Contact leader on Thursday 21..	?	?	?
Jan 30	Federal Pass, Leura end. Completed 1900 to connect Katoomba Falls to Leura Falls.	Jim 4758 6009	Leura Station carpark 8.30 am	2/3	2/3	Katoomba
Feb 6	Federal Pass, Katoomba end. Completed 1900 to connect Katoomba Falls and Leura	Jim 4758 6009	Gearins Hotel, Katoomba CP, 8.30am	2/3	2/3	Katoomba

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS: Short Day walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of an average fitness. Bring morning tea and lunch and adequate water. The Group Co-ordinator is Maurice Kerkham, 4739 4942, email mauricekerkham@hotmail.com

Date	Details	Grade	Contact	Meet
Dec 7	Kanuka Brook and Crayfish Pool, Glenbrook	2	Ros 4733 3880	Glenbrook Station CP 9.30 am
Dec 14	Dee Why to Manly. Seaside walk. Great ocean views.	1	Maurice 4739 4942	Central Station, top of escalators, 9.30 am.
Dec 21	Christmas Party, Jemby Rinjah Eco Lodge, 336 Evans Lookout Road, Blackheath	1	Maurice 0402 402 783	Meet at Jemby Rinjah, 12 noon.
Jan 11	Hanging Rock. Spectacular rock formation.	2	Mary 4757 4569	Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre, 9am.
Jan 18	Nature Trail, Wentworth Falls. Classic walk includes Asmosdeus Pool.	2	Maurice 4739 4942	Wentworth Falls commuter carpark 9am. (car pool)
Jan 25	BUS TRIP. Six Foot Track, Nellies Glen to Megalong Crossing.	2	Tera 4751 3303	BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL. Book and pay Birgitta 4784 3191. Cost \$10.

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS: Walks of 2-3 hours conducted at a leisurely pace to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, adequate water and lunch if noted. Group Co-ordinator is Simone Bowskill, 4757 3416, email simbow@tpg.com.au

Dec 10	Picnic Christmas Party at Hartley. Phone Simone to advise what food you are bringing.	1	Simone 4757 3416	Mt Victoria Station 11 am for a pre lunch walk.
Dec 17	Morning tea at Hargreaves Lookout. Enjoy a cuppa with a beautiful view.		Simone 4757 3416	9.45 am, Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre
Jan 14	Walks resume with a picnic at Wentworth Falls Lake.	1	Simone 4757 3416	11.30 am, Wentworth Falls commuter car park, near the clock.
Jan 21	Waterfall walk at Mt Wilson. Cool walk in rainforest.	2	David 4757 3416	9.45 am, Mt Vic Station.
Jan 28	Leura Cascades picnic	1	Simone 4757 3416	11.30 am. Corner of Leura Mall and Megalong Street, Leura.
Feb 4	Coachwood Glen and Mermaid's Cave. Cool walk in rainforest.	2	Marie 4787 1257	9.45 am, Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre.
Feb 11	Katoomba Cascades. Easy cliff top walk. NOTE NEW MEETING PLACE.	2	Joan c/o 4782 5966	9.30 am, area opposite the BM Council Chambers, Katoomba.

