



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Darug and Gundungurra people, and pay respect to their elders past, present and emerging.

At last, some good news...

Angus Place mine extension proposal withdrawn

Madi Maclean

In a surprise decision, Centennial Coal withdrew its proposed Angus Place Mine extension near Lithgow last month.

The Gardens of Stone Alliance welcomed this decision and called on the NSW Government to finally make the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area a reality and implement the GOS Alliance's Destination Pagoda tourist management plan. This plan shows how the area could be transformed into a world class tourism destination.

The Angus Place mine extension would have destroyed nationally listed swamps and creeks and habitat for many rare and threatened species.

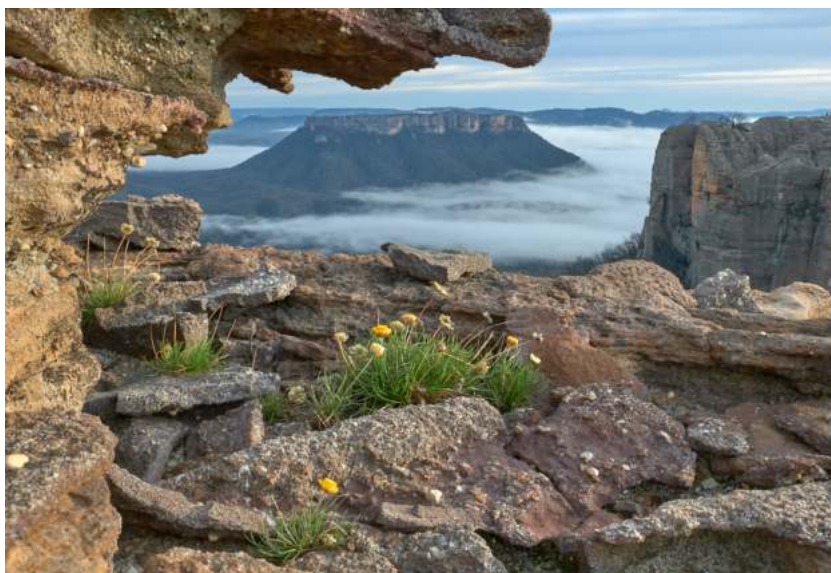
At the same time Centennial, which is owned by Thailand based company Banpu, announced they would submit a new, lower-impact proposal at Angus Place West. This would use the much less damaging board and pillar extraction method, remove less coal annually and only operate for eight years, not 30 years. It would supply Mount Piper Power Station when the Springvale Mine ceases.

The Society thanks all our supporters as we have campaigned for many years, with the Alliance, for the spectacular Gardens of Stone area to be protected.

The GOS Alliance media response featured in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Lithgow Mercury* and in the *Blue Mountains Gazette*.

<https://www.bluemountainsgazette.com.au/story/7369452/environmentalists-welcome-revised-plan-of-centennial-coal/>

Below: A view of Pantoneys Crown from Mount Jamison in the Gardens of Stone. Note the Pagoda Rock Daisies (Leucochrysum graminifolium) in the foreground. Photo. Ian Watson



Madi Maclean is the Senior Vice President of the Society and represents the Society in the Gardens of Stone Alliance.

Report on the Management Committee meeting of 21 August, 2021

The following is a summary of matters discussed or decisions made:

- The planning day has again been thwarted by the lockdown. Topics previously intended for discussion on the day will now be reviewed and recommendations made for later examination by the management committee.
- Options for the 60th anniversary celebration are being examined with the slim chance of an outdoor gathering or something at the Hut being considered. Hut News October will include articles, yet to be submitted, about the anniversary. There will also be an article submitted to the Gazette.
- An open letter to the Premier protesting about plans for Kosciusko National Park was published in the Sydney Morning Herald on Friday 20 August. The President, Tara Cameron was a signatory, on behalf of the Society.
- The questionnaire for candidates for the Council election has been prepared and will be circulated when candidates have been announced. The election will be held on December 4.
- The Bell Quarry rehabilitation program was discussed and Don Morison will be asked to represent the Society in this matter.
- A submission to Department of Planning, Industry and Environment about the proposed exploration for coal mining of Hawkins and Rumker areas near Rylstone was endorsed by the committee.
- Graham McLean of Blackheath will be appointed to the Investment Committee for a three year term.
- The Society will write to the Regional Manager of NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service supporting acquisition of 1-9 Phelps Road, Mount Wilson, allowing access to Wollongambe Canyon.

Happy 60th Anniversary

Next month we will be 60. Let's celebrate.

The October issue of Hut News will feature memories of events and experiences of the Society and its achievements over the years.

Please send your memories and reflections to
susan@bluemountains.org.au

The deadline is 20 September. The word limit is, as usual, 500 words and photographs would be especially welcome.

New members

We welcome the following new members to the Society:

Manda Kaye
Julie Paterson
Christine Riggs
Amanda Bonney
Mark MacDiarmid
Ella MacDiarmid
Aoife MacDiarmid

There are 921 members.

Please note, there will be no walks program this month

In this issue there is no walks program. Due to the lockdown no walks will be held. If you are at all in doubt or if circumstances change, you can see any proposed walks on our web page <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/bushwalking.shtml>

On our watch - Code Red for humanity.

Clare Power

How do we respond to the unequivocal conclusions and warnings of the [IPCC Sixth Assessment Report](#)? How do we bear witness to this report and maintain our gaze at the unfolding climate crisis, rather than turn away in grief, fear and feeling overwhelmed. The answers will vary for all of us according to our own personal contexts, but I suggest some possible responses here.

Many readers may be aware of Australian climate scientist, Dr Joelle Gergis, who gave the 2019 Mick Dark talk for the future in the Blue Mountains. Dr Gergis is a lead author on this IPCC *Sixth Assessment Report*. In a piece in *The Saturday Paper* on August 14th, she wrote:'If our latest report and the intensifying evidence now all around us doesn't persuade this generation of political leaders that we must stabilise Earth's climate immediately, nothing ever will. Let's hope the governments of the world are finally ready to listen'.

In commenting on what it will take for people in power to act, Greta Thunberg recently claimed: 'Well, it will take many things, but above all it will take massive pressure from media and massive pressure from the public.'

In Australia, where reluctance to shift from fossil fuels is a distressing pathology of the federal government, we need to apply such pressure. The range of forums from which you can choose to do this means that everyone can claim their agency and their voice. (See the links on the Society's climate change page to a number of different organisations <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/climate-change.shtml>).

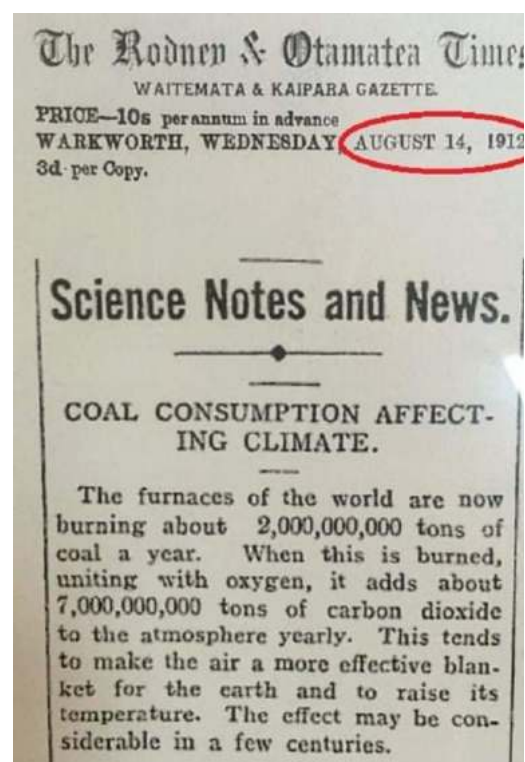
The number of fronts to which we can apply this pressure are shamefully far too many. For example, while Adani continues to be a threat, the NSW government is proposing new coal exploration in the Rylstone region (see article by Madi Maclean in this issue of Hut News).

There is no excuse for us not to act in whatever way we best can. To quote Greta Thunberg again; 'The

IPCC report doesn't tell us what to do. It is up to us to be brave and take decisions based on the scientific evidence provided in these reports'. She claims 'the worst consequences' of climate change can still be avoided, but only if we treat it for what it is - 'a crisis'

To find our courage we also need to support ourselves and each other through the strong emotions that arise in response to this planetary crisis. A comprehensive list of resources created specifically for navigating the emotional terrain of climate is worth exploring at <https://www.allwecansave.earth/emotions>. The list includes links to approaches such as climate conversations, emotional methodologies, experiential group work and somatic therapies.

To quote this site: 'Whatever path you choose to engage with climate emotions — one of the above or something else entirely — remember that feeling our feelings is part of climate work. To have our eyes wide open to both destruction and possibility takes courage. May we be fuelled by ferocious love for all we can save.'



Use your electoral power

Clare Power



We are living in a climate emergency. A glance at the news shows that extreme weather events around the world are increasing and causing immense destruction. Meanwhile, Australia remains an international laggard in terms of climate policy and support for fossil fuel industries

The coming months provide the opportunity to use our electoral power to demand strong climate policies at the levels of local and federal government.

NSW local government elections are being held on 4th December, 2021. Local government is a powerful site for meaningful action on climate change. NSW

councils can contribute significantly to such action, including emission reductions and planning for climate adaption. This includes areas such as public infrastructure, local emergency responses, building regulation and planning, public health and environmental management. Councils are also more effective when they engage households and business in consultation, education and action. Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) has committed to a range of actions on climate change.

In electing our councillors we need to ensure that they pledge to supporting and extending this focus.

Which impacts of climate change in our local community are you particularly concerned about?

Consider contacting the candidates for your ward and asking them to outline how they will address your concerns in the particular context of the Blue Mountains. Let candidates know that regardless of their political affiliation, climate action needs to be at the forefront of their platform.

Future changes to our climate and how they affect us depend on the choices we make today.

New coal exploration areas considered near World Heritage Area

Madi Maclean

Our Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWhA) is facing huge impacts from climate warming, faunal extinctions, the 2019-20 catastrophic fire and floods. Now there is a new threat: the possibility of new coal mine operations on its north-western boundary.

The NSW government is currently assessing 32,755 hectares of Crown reserves and private land in the Central Tablelands just north of Rylstone for possible coal exploration licence applications. The Hawkins and Rumker (HR) strategic release areas are adjacent to the GBMWhA (Wollemi National Park) with a common boundary 33 km long. This area is located in an “intact landscape with very significant remnant vegetation” and contains threatened species and endangered ecological communities including nationally listed swamps.

The Society has made a submission to the assessment process, pointing out serious environmental issues particularly for the GBMWhA, if new coal exploration licences are allowed:

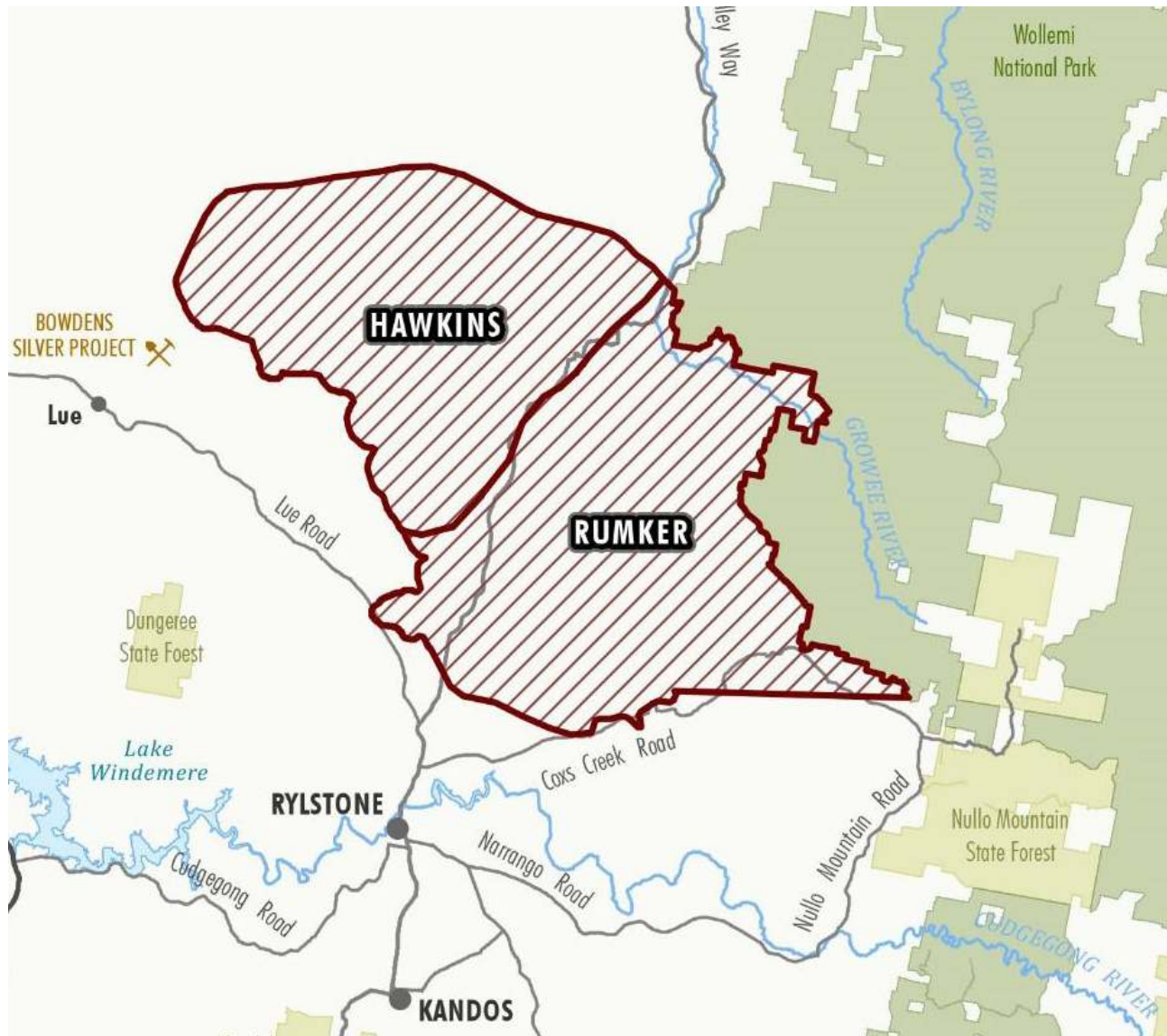
- There are potential impacts on the adjacent GBMWhA, which is already at great risk from prolonged drought, global warming and climate change-induced extreme fire in 2019-20
- The impacts of coal mining on the GBMWhA are inadequately controlled through state and federal environmental legislation. This was demonstrated, for instance, by Clarence Colliery’s toxic saline discharge into the GBMWhA via the Wollangambe River and the recent weakening of water quality standards in Sydney’s drinking water catchment for existing mine operations;

- There is already international concern about the impacts of coal mining near the GBMWhA. In 2019 the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) requested Australia undertake an assessment of potential cumulative impacts of all existing and planned mining projects in the vicinity. So far, Australia has failed to deliver this study despite it being due by the end of 2020. The study would be very relevant to the current assessment process.
- If mining leases were subsequently granted in the area, there could be impacts on water quality and availability depending on the extraction method used. For instance, open cut mining in the HR area would draw groundwater from the surrounding area, potentially including GBMWhA.
- In order to help address the serious and growing impacts of global warming on Australia and the world, the NSW and Federal governments must not approve any new mining areas. The IPCC’s latest report has said that all greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced as much and as fast as possible. This rules out any new coal mining developments.

You can read the Society’s submission here: <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/submissions/2021/bs210807-hawkins-rumker-coal-licence.pdf>

Submissions have closed for the assessment. You can still write to Ministers for Planning, Resources and Environment asking them to stop assessment of the HR lands and to rule out considering the Ganguddy area immediately below and adjacent to GBMWhA. It also includes a popular camping area.

The map below shows the area of the proposed Hawkins Rumker coal exploration area. Map courtesy of NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment".



Are you concerned about environmental damage or a development activity in your neighbourhood but don't know who to contact?

The Society's Planning & Development Resource Kit may help you.

<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml>

Gardens of Stone Visitors Map

The Visitors Map is full of suggested walks and trips. It is in full colour, 60 by 85 cm in size, and covers the entire Gardens of Stone region at a 1:100,000 scale, making it ideal for planning your next trip to the area. You can buy a map on the society's website at <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/sales-map.shtml>

www.bluemountains.org.au/sales-map.shtml

Katoomba Airfield: Let's keep our peace

Bridget Jackson

The NSW Government is well aware of the community opposition to Katoomba Airfield. Over the past year hundreds of letters have been written, over 40 prominent community representatives have signed an open letter in the Sydney Morning Herald and a petition with over 800 signatures has been presented to NSW Parliament. Undeniably our community voice has been heard.

We may be locked down but we're not taking our foot off the pedal, as the threat posed by the

proposed airfield use is very real. While we maintain the pressure, now is also the time to look after ourselves, to step out and enjoy the wonders on our doorstep. Take time to breathe and absorb the changing seasons. We have the most incredible national park. Let's soak up the peace and be nourished.

For more information about the campaign please visit: www.bluemountains.org.au/airfield



Bridget Jackson is the project officer working on the Katoomba Airfield campaign for the Society.

Photo: On the Braeside track, Blackheath. Bridget Jackson

Ramblings

Alan Page

Loudly sing cuckoo

For several years now we have a pair of Eastern Koels (*Eudynamys orientalis*) visit us on their summer holidays. They certainly ruffle the feathers of the local peewees (Magpie-larks) and larger honeyeaters. I wonder if they know that they may have an unplanned arrival in their nest.

They arrive in October or November and stay until February or March. This year I will note the arrival and departure dates. The dates will be realised by the presence and later the absence of their incessant, but not unpleasant, call from first light. Thank goodness for daylight saving as without it sunrise in December would be at 4.30am.

The pair have a permanent reservation in our neighbour's mulberry tree.

The male and female are different in appearance – as Niel's photos show. They're about the size of a Satin Bowerbird.

Known to many as "oreades"

No tree can symbolise the beauty and vitality of the Upper Blue Mountains better than the Blue Mountains Ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*).

Encountering these giants on a bushwalk fills me with awe and joy. Whether it's on Ngula Bulgarabang (one giant there has a girth of 4.3m), Gordon Falls Lookout or in Megalong Street, Katoomba where lonely Atlas stands.

However oreades has a secret. Unlike most of its fellow "eucs", it is killed by intense fire. That is, it has neither lignotubers nor epicormic buds. The species survives only by seed. These species are known as "obligate seeders".

But Mother Nature compensates by giving them the ability to grow quickly. Some seedlings at Mount Wilson could now be called saplings. These saplings need our protection to grow to maturity so they can shed seeds in preparation for the next bushfire.

Additions to GBMWH reserves

The eight reserves that comprise the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWH) are the Blue Mountains, Gardens of Stone,



Top photo: Male eastern koel. Lower photo: Female eastern koel. Photos by Niel Carey.

Kanangra-Boyd, Nattai, Thirlmere Lakes, Wollemi and Yengo National Parks and the Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve – totalling just over one million hectares. Since its listing in 2000, additions to these eight reserves aren't part of the GBMWH. What? That's correct.

In the last 21 years the NSW Government has gazetted over 55 additions to these reserves totalling almost 40,000ha. To have these additions added to the GBMWH requires their acceptance by UNESCO.

The process is believed to be cumbersome and is yet to be made. But wouldn't it be great if such a submission was prepared and it also addressed cultural heritage and natural beauty? These criteria (Criteria vi and vii in conditions for listing as a world heritage area) are described as –

- vi. *to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance*
- vii. *to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance*

They were included in the 1998 nomination and many remain saddened that they were not accepted.

A stand of Eucalyptus oreades in Katoomba. Photo: Helen Yoxall



Just in case you missed this on page 2...

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Anniversary

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The deadline is 20 September. The word limit is, as usual, 500 words and photographs would be especially welcome.

Native Plant Nursery



Our nursery offers the home gardener, landscaper or large contractor a big variety of quality local native plants at economical prices.

We sell tube stock at just \$3.50 each, native ferns at \$4 each and a few advanced plants in larger pots from just \$5. We attempt to keep our prices as low as possible to encourage the purchase of local native plants. Bulk orders and large contracts attract further discounts.

Contact our **Nursery Manager, Paul Irwin** if you would like to buy plants or become a nursery volunteer.

Carrion birds

Rosemary Butler

Birds that eat dead creatures have had rather bad press historically, largely because of their association with battlefields, particularly crows and ravens. I have always felt this to be somewhat unfair. They did not kill the dead lying on the battlefields but were merely following their instincts to find food and in effect, were recycling.

Scavengers are very necessary in nature. They clean up. Humans eat dead animals, they also raise them and then slaughter them for food, we hope in a humane manner. Apart from the English upper crust, we probably eat them mostly before they turn into carrion. Are we really so superior? Now we are over that hurdle, I will tell you about my ravens.

We had a dust storm here in Little Hartley in September 2011. A few days later I noticed two birds hanging about and I thought correctly that they were Australian ravens, but young birds. The eyes are dark brown until the second moult, when they become very pale blue, almost white.

I know that many people do not approve of feeding wild birds, but there is another side to that. A lot of people also are involved in raising abandoned baby birds and animals. I was feeding two young birds somehow separated from their parents. They stayed around for two or three months, then one day they were gone.

About two years later the choughs were here pestering me as they do, wanting to dig up my garden. I noticed two adult ravens who seemed at home here. They had been going into my hen house stealing eggs so I had to develop a strategy to outwit them. So came about our relationship, right or wrong.

From about mid July on, only one bird comes for food. It must be Dad. This goes on for about six weeks and while she is sitting on eggs, Mum is totally dependent on Dad. After the eggs are hatched, Mum comes occasionally. I think the birds must leave the nest early September and usually appear here around late October. By that time they are fully fledged and the parents cannot escape any

more, so they have to put up with this constant begging and squeaking. Most years they raise three. All has gone well since about 2012 or 13, and seems OK this time. I don't know what the female would do if the male was injured or killed but it hasn't yet happened here. I think this is brood eight. There is normally only one brood per year, but last year they had two and have used the same nest all that time.

The parents teach the young ones to have baths in my pond and to feed themselves.

They are always wary of me and have never become tame. They just peck the lounge window to announce their presence, then retreat while I put out food. They are quite capable of finding real bird food, but they have obviously sussed me out. I am a soft touch.

Photos: Rosemary Butler



Captioning virtual bushwalk photos

Christine Davies and Don Morison

As long as lockdown rules allow, bushwalking in pairs in your own local government area and sharing photos should remain a popular pastime.

It's fun to have a scout and a camera holder to maximise the chances of getting interesting shots and to collaborate over the words that accompany the shared photos and, of course, the cropping and manipulation.



The Thursday Interpretive Nature Group (TING) includes some of the most geographically scattered members of BMCS. Christine Davies' snap of the Eastern Grey Kangaroo on Mount Blackheath Road and Geoff Dernee's shot of a rainbow lorikeet feeding near a Wollongong beach capture the attention, even without words accompanying them.

Even so, we like to take time to share emotional reactions to these scenes. Both photos show native species and introduced species. The Mount Blackheath Road area contains substantial, partly cleared properties and long-established conifers. The presence of non-endemic grasses has probably helped the Eastern Grey species to multiply at the expense of smaller

wallabies. The hybridised grevillea on the south coast plot comes from a special grevillea garden run by volunteers and known as "the Bulli Beauty". Older readers may reflect on recent decades' multiplication by rainbow lorikeets.

It can, however, be more interesting to talk about our feelings as environmentalists when we see these images. When the Blue Mountains Gazette depicted the pink flannel flower display on Narrow Neck, Katoomba, earlier this year, they obtained the species name from a source outside BMCS and got it wrong. Maybe the species provenance is not the most interesting thing about such sights.

We do like to try to get inside the heads of native creatures. What is focusing the attention of the kangaroo or the lorikeet? Are they even a tiny bit as interested in our presence as we are in theirs? Are they blissfully unaware of the threats that human mismanagement poses to their kind?



About us

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society (BMCS) is an incorporated voluntary group of more than 900 members helping to conserve the World Heritage Blue Mountains region. It was originally the Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society in 1961.

We are governed by a management committee and much of our conservation work is undertaken by sub-committees and campaigns. We also have a native plant nursery, several bushwalking groups and a Bushcare group.

Contact us

- Call the Membership Secretary, Ross Coster on 02 4739 2987
- By mail at PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls, NSW 2782
- By phone at 02 4757 1872 (leave a message)
- By emailing bmcs@bluemountains.org.au

Visit us

www.bluemountains.org.au
 Facebook: Blue Mountains Conservation Society
 Twitter: bmcsnsw
 Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/blue_mts_conservation_society/

Become a member

You can become a member by

- Contacting our Membership Secretary, Ross Coster on 02 4739 2987

Emailing Ross at membership@bluemountains.org.au

- <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/joining.shtml> or scan this with your mobile:



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