



In this newsletter ...

2nd September 2022 is the 90th anniversary of the reservation of the Blue Gum Forest.

A series of articles to mark the event, written by historian Andy Macqueen, begins on page 3 of this newsletter. In the next edition there will be details of how the 90th anniversary of the forest's reservation will be commemorated.

Image: The Royal Engineers camped in Blue Gum in 1859. Photo by Robert Hunt. (State Library NSW)

60 years at the Conservation Hut

The Conservation Hut is synonymous with the Blue Mountains Conservation Society. We've had a long, successful and ongoing relationship with "The Hut" for the past 60 years, though we are sadly unsure how much longer this will continue.

The Society took the Hut on as a derelict tea room soon after its formation in 1961 and renovated it. The restored building, subsequently known as the Conservation Hut, was officially reopened by the Minister for Conservation on 28 July 1963. For decades, the Society operated it as a tea-room, serving walkers and providing information about the area, as well as environmental education and talks, with it becoming the home-base for conservationists in the Blue Mountains. It has been the Society's headquarters ever since.

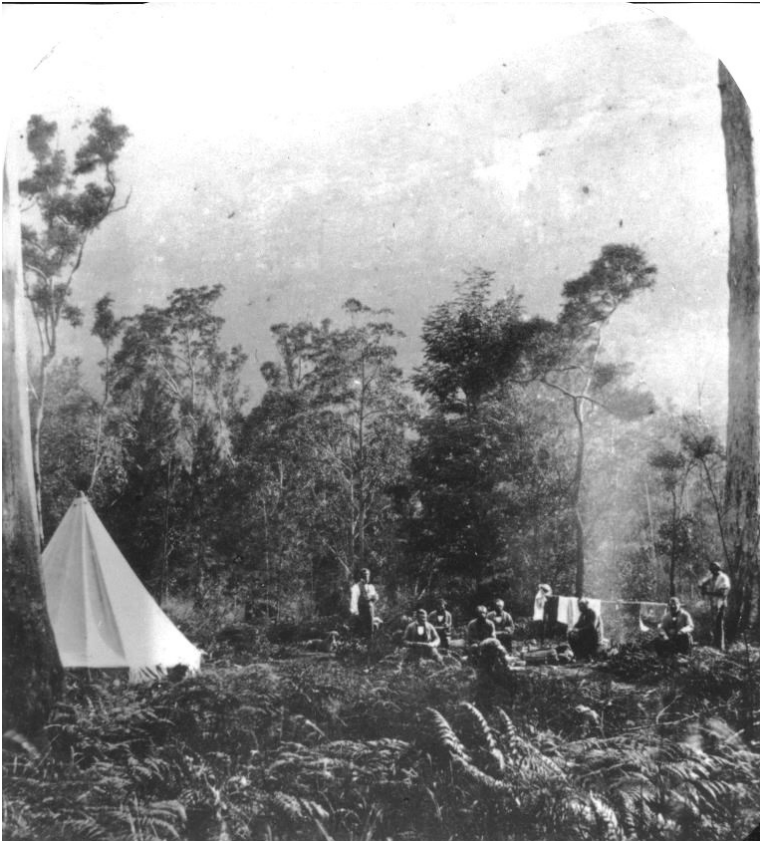
The Conservation Hut is a significant location for the development and successes of the conservation movement in the Blue Mountains.

In the 1980s, ownership transferred from the Council to the National Parks and Wildlife Service. In 1990, the old Conservation Hut was demolished and, reassuringly, the Government made a commitment to us for the continued use of the new Conservation Hut by the Society, and reaffirmed this again by signing an access agreement with us in 1997. National Parks even refers to us on their website, describing the Hut as *"a meeting place for the Blue Mountains Conservation Society and a valued rest stop for hikers."*

<https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/cafes-and-kiosks/conservation-hut>

The Society understands that National Parks and Wildlife Service will be seeking a new café operator. We are liaising with them for our continued access to the Conservation Hut.

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



TASMANIA – Still logging the Tarkine – Liz van Reyswoud

The Tarkine represents only 7% of Tasmania's landmass, but is also a rare gem. It contains the largest remnants of temperate rainforest in the world, and is home to a large numbers of species, including Tasmanian Devils, Wedge-tailed Eagles, White Goshawks, wombats and platypus and, lately, evidence of the rare and endangered Masked Owls.

It has also the cleanest air in the world as measured by the nearby UN measuring station. Old growth forests are a massive source of carbon storage. How many tonnes of carbon does one of these forest giants contain?

Yet they continue to be felled. It really makes you cry. And those wonderful young people who tie themselves up the highest tree deserve our applause, not condemnation and contempt from those who really don't care.

A critically important decision awaits the new Federal Environment Minister, Tanya Pilbersek. She urgently needs to reverse the permission for mining company MMG to smash 14km's of roads into the rainforest and drill 165 test pit sites. If they are successful – can we say goodbye to the Tarkine ??

Can you help ? You could **write to the Federal Minister for the Environment, Tanya Pilbersek**, the Premier of Tasmania Jeremy Rockliff and the Tasmanian environment minister Roger Jaensch. And the Bob Brown organization is always looking for donations to support their campaigns, (https://give.bobbrown.org.au/earth_defender)

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**THE DEADLINE FOR AUGUST
HUT NEWS IS 16 JULY**
hutnews@bluemountains.org.au
Enquire: Christine 4787 7246

Blue Mountains Conservation Society's phone number is
0490 419 779. Messages are checked once a day by our
Administration Officer, who will return your call.

Keeping cats safe at home and protecting our native species

Last month, RSPCA NSW launched a new project "Keeping Cats Safe at Home", with a \$2.5 million grant from the NSW Government through its Environmental Trust. The project aims to improve care for pet cats through responsible cat ownership and keep cats within the boundaries of their property. The RSPCA guide on keeping your cat safe and happy at home can help. Visit <https://safeandhappycats.com.au/>

Congratulations, Blue Mountains City Council for its participation in this project.

At any given point of time, there are between 5.9 – 10.1 million cats spread across 99.9% of the Australian continent. Cats can also increase their population sizes faster than their native prey. That means, following periods of high rainfall, the country's feral cat population can quadruple. There are 1.4 – 5.6 million feral cats in the bush depending on rainfall conditions, 0.7 million feral cats in urban areas and 3.8 million pet cats.

Every day, on average, cats kill 2.92 million mammals, 1.67 million reptiles, 1.09 million birds, 0.26 million frogs and 2.97 million invertebrates.

We can do more to stop the carnage. The following is an appeal on behalf of the Invasive Species Council.

STOP CAT-DRIVEN EXTINCTIONS!

<https://invasives.org.au/stopcatdrivenextinctions/>

Help us launch a national campaign protecting our unique species from being driven into extinction by feral and roaming cats.

Please donate today and allow us to run Australia's first, continuous advocacy campaign to stop feral and free-roaming cats from driving native species to extinction.

Currently, there is no other national cat campaign — it's a huge gap that you can help us fill today. Our campaign will focus on:

- Tackling the insufficient and inconsistent funding for solutions and regulatory blocks to action that have delayed effective control of feral cats.
- Capitalising on the momentum of the new territory-wide cat containment law that came into effect in the ACT this year.
- Bringing together conservation land managers, Indigenous landholders, community members, sympathetic local governments and scientists to deliver a strategic, concerted nationwide campaign that successfully drives government action and inspires Australians to act to address one of the biggest threats to Australia's wildlife.

We have political engagement and a collaborative strategy backed by research. Science is on our side. This plan has a high chance of success.

Now, all we need is you. Please donate today.

—Invasive Species Council

Find out more about the work of the Invasive
Species Council at <https://invasives.org.au/>

THE SAVING OF BLUE GUM FOREST—Part 1

—Andy Macqueen

The idea of digging transport tunnels under the Blue Mountains isn't new. Way back in the 1850s there was a plan to put the railway all the way up the Grose River from Yarramundi and thence through a long tunnel under the Darling causeway, to emerge in Hartley Vale. The plan was abandoned in favour of the route over the top of the mountains. Apart from the difficulties of the tunnel, the line would have been hopelessly exposed to landslips, rockfalls, and floods as it passed up the valley. But imagine what the patch of *Eucalyptus Deanei* on the extensive flat in the heart of the valley—Blue Gum Forest—would be like today with a railway station and associated township.

Instead, there've been assaults of a different kind. In *Hut News* of August and September 2020 ecologist Wyn Jones told of the shock he experienced when he visited the place in the wake of the disastrous fire and floods of earlier that year. But at least it's still standing, thanks in part to the bushwalkers who famously saved it from the axe in 1932, ninety years ago.

In a way, we can also thank the original railway scheme for saving the forest—and indeed the whole valley. In surveying for the proposed railway, the Royal Engineers constructed a bridle track all the way from Yarramundi to the Darling Causeway. Before that, the valley could only be accessed by adventurous passes used by the Darug people. While only parts of the Engineers' Track can be traced today, for some years it provided easy access to the valley for a variety of interesting people. The photographer Robert Hunt visited while the Engineers were still at work, in 1859, thereby producing some of the first wilderness photos in the world.

The most significant visitors to use the track appeared in 1875. Conservationist Eccleston du Faur organised an expedition of artists and academics to spend several weeks in the valley. They followed the track down from the Darling Causeway and camped by Govetts Creek near its junction with the Grose River. Joseph Bischoff took several impressive photos, and William Pigenit produced dramatic sketches and paintings.

Convinced that the scenery of the Grose ranked with that of America, Du Faur was then instrumental in

having the state government reserve from sale the whole Grose Valley and its immediate surroundings. Officially the reason was to protect the catchment in case a dam were to be built in the valley. However, it was also to protect the “national spectacle” which the valley offered. There was no national park in Australia then—the first was the Royal, in 1879—but the Grose Valley reservation was, in effect, Australia's first broad-scale national park. It kept development out of the valley until the Blue Mountains National Park was created nearly 100 years later.

The reservation did not, however, stop people obtaining a lease, grazing cattle, cutting down trees and even mining. This shortcoming gave rise to the important Blue Gum Forest conservation campaign of 1931-32, which will be revisited in the next edition of *Hut News*. Also in the next edition will be some details of how the 90th anniversary of the forest's reservation, on 2 September, will be commemorated.

(For more about the above stories, see Andy Macqueen's book **Back from the Brink: Blue Gum Forest and the Grose Wilderness**.)



“In the Valley of the Grose”
by William
Pigenit
(State Library
NSW)



Joseph Bischoff's 1875 photo of the Grose River at Blue Gum. (State Library NSW)



Joseph Bischoff's photo of the 1875 camp by Govetts Creek. Lockley Pylon in the background. (Blue Mtns Historical Society)

Director of the Prague Zoo launches Mountain Pygmy Possum Breeding Facility at Lithgow —Chris Whiteman

The recent release of critically endangered Mountain Pygmy Possums from alpine areas in NSW and VIC to the edge of the Blue Mountains at Lithgow is a reminder of the 32 mammal species that have been lost since European colonisation in Australia. It is estimated that there are only 2000 Mountain Pygmy Possums remaining in the wild as numbers of the marsupial's main food source, the Bogong moth, are in decline in alpine areas. Habitat destruction due to ski resort development and feral animals has also contributed to the loss of this tiny animal. It was thought to be extinct until 1966 when a living individual was found at Mt Hotham in VIC. It is the only marsupial in the world known to store food and hibernate for extended periods.

Overseas countries are often more concerned about the loss of fauna and flora species in Australia than local Australians. This brings us to the launch of the Mountain Pygmy Possum breeding facility at Lithgow which has been financed by the Prague Zoo with over \$190,000 offered from a \$1 million fund raised by the Prague Zoo for native conservation projects in Australia. Czech representatives including the Director of the Prague Zoo, Miroslav Miroslav Bobek, and the Czech Republic Australian Ambassador, his Excellency Tomas Dub, officially launched the breeding facility at Secret Creek Sanctuary, Lithgow, last month with 14 Mountain Pygmy-possums released to their new home.

Fossil evidence found by UNSW palaeontology Professor Mike Archer and his associates suggest that the possum's biological ancestors going back millions of years would have preferred a more temperate, less extreme environment than the alpine areas of NSW and VIC which they have been brought from. By breeding in Lithgow, the hope is that the possums will acclimatise to this more hospitable location. Mountain pygmy-possums can fit into the palm of a hand. They have a body 11 cm long and a longer 14 cm tail.

Reintroducing Madi Maclean, Society President



I grew up in Sydney but with two lots of relatives in the upper mountains I visited the mountains often. A trip into the Grose valley as a teenager with a cousin made a big impression on me. I've lived in the mountains now for 25 years.

I have worked in advocacy, project delivery and policy areas in state and local government as well as regional manager for NSW Public Work in Riverina and Western NSW and executive director in land titles, topographical mapping and imagery. There have been various environmental issues. However, in particular, I was heavily involved in

the negotiations for and creation of new national parks and wilderness areas by the NSW government in mid 1990s.

When I stopped working for money I looked around for the best way to contribute to environmental and climate change issues here in the Blue Mountains. After doing a bit of research I decided to get active with BMCS (which I was a member of). It seemed to be well organised with a record of wins for the environment. However, I was particularly attracted by the campaign to protect the Gardens of Stone area from mining.

After attending just one meeting of the Gardens of Stone (GOS) subcommittee, I was writing a submission for the Coalpac open cut mine public hearing at Cullen Bullen for the Society. I became GOS Officer in 2015 and President in 2017 to 2019. The creation of the state conservation area last year was a very big moment!

I volunteered to be President again when Susan Crick had to step away from the role for health reasons. During my term as President our state election campaign will be an important initiative until end March 2023. Other known challenges will be getting the best environmental outcomes for the exciting new Gardens of Stone SCA, reviewing an amended plan for the Blue Mountains National Park when on public exhibition plus having some Society events from Spring.

I also want to increase our subcommittee members so we can take on the unexpected issues that come up. You can contact a committee member on our Office Bearers' list to find out more.

Locally, I am also involved with Bushcare, the annual honeyeater migration count run by Blue Mountains Bird Observers and have volunteered with Science for Wildlife. **Madi Maclean**

National Parks and Heritage report

—Annette Cam (heritage@bluemountains.org.au)

The National Parks and Heritage Subcommittee has been very busy working on the following issues:

Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area: The Draft Plan of Management and Draft Master Plan have been publicly available; with submissions due by 5 July.

Conservation Hut: We have been also liaising with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to keep our access to the Conservation Hut when it is re-leased. As you know the Blue Mountains Conservation Society has a long, valuable and productive relationship to the Hut and we want to maintain this. There is information on this matter elsewhere in Hut News.

Great Western Highway Upgrade: The Society's position on the highway is that a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) should be completed for the entire upgrade of the Highway rather than separate Review of Environmental Factors for each section. A single EIS will give a more complete overview of the impact of the entire project.

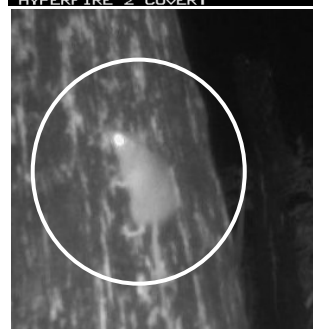
Katoomba Airfield: No further progress has been made on the inclusion of this area into the National Park but we continue to push for this to happen.

Post-fire regeneration in Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve

—Judy Smith, Threatened Species Officer

The 2019-20 Black Summer fires whipped along the Six Foot Track, between Jenolan Caves Cottages and Caves House, around New Year 2020. The bushland, rare grassy wet sclerophyll forest, was severely burnt. Ground layer vegetation was consumed, the tree canopy consumed or scorched, and many old trees were weakened and fell. The intensity of the fire was surprising. Such wet, high altitude forest would once have slowed the progress of a fire. Months after the fire, the area was eerily quiet, no leaves to rustle. Trying to relocate the Greater Gliders that we had been monitoring here before the fire, there was no tree canopy to search, instead a beautiful open starry sky.

Two and a half years post-fire, we still cannot find the Greater Gliders. The remaining standing trees include some trees that are dead or with nothing but scattered tufts of epicormic growth. Other trees have thick epicormic growth on their lower half but a canopy of bare branches above, while others sport an all over shaggy carpet cover of epicormic growth. The snowy photo welcomes the winter and was taken around 7 am on June 1 2022, on a wildlife camera set adjacent to the Six Foot Track. The snow had started between 4 and 5 am and settled on the leaves of the understorey of dense, 2-4 m high, eucalypt saplings that has replaced the pre-fire open understorey. In this dense understorey we are now recording native Common Dunnarts *Sminthopsis murina* which are known to colonise early post-fire regeneration. The wildlife camera is triggered by the movement of objects that are hotter or colder than the ambient temperature. It was set to take infra-red photos at night (no flash to disturb animals) and colour photos during the day.



Photos: Taken by RECONYX HyperFire 2 digital camera. Post-fire regeneration (colour) and Common Dunnart to right of bait on tree trunk (infra-red).

From my Dinner Table

—Robin Murray

This year we all had Covid Lockdown projects to keep us functioning. Many of us worked hard in the garden. Some of us painted or embroidered. Some of us finished projects around the house that they had been meaning to do for ages. My project was to raise and record an Orchid Swallowtail butterfly (*Papilio aegeus*) from the egg to the pupa.

While I was in my garden on 30th January I saw a female laying an egg on my small *Zieria smithii*. I normally associate the breeding of Orchard Swallowtails as breeding on Citrus sp. but on further reading one of the native species they breed on is *Zieria* sp.

On investigation I found 1 egg. Knowing how large and voracious the caterpillars (lava) are, and fearing for my little *Zieria*, I removed the branch and egg putting it in a vase on the dining room table from where I could observe it.

On 5th February a larva of between 1-2 mm. emerged and happily relocated onto the Citrus leaves I had included in the vase.

The caterpillar (larva) then undergo 5 instars

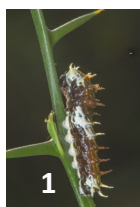
(Instars being the stages of growth between moults). By 18th February it was 1.5 cm in length and by 19th February it had reached 2 cm. On 21st February another instar had begun and by 24th February the larvae had reached 3.2cm. (Image 1 and 2)

I had been amazed at the increase in growth so far but wasn't prepared for the growth and appetite that occurred in the final instar. From 24th to 26th February the larva remained motionless on the leaf preparing for the last instar and emerged from its old skin, which it then ate, on 27th February. (Image 3)

The larva proceeded to amaze me with both the quantity of leaves it ate and the growth that it put on. It ate day and night, devouring up to two large Citrus leaves a day, and reached 3.5 cm by the end of 27th February and 4.5 cm by 3rd March.

On the 9th March it hooked itself up on the stem to form the pupa and had reached 5.2 cm. The larva shed its skin to reveal the pupa on 11th March. It had grown from 1-2 mm to 5.2 cm in 25 days and I thought this was well worth sharing. (Image 4)

Swallowtails go into diapause and wait until the right conditions to occur before they emerge as the adult butterfly and I am very much looking forward to that.



Letters to the Editor

FERAL FISH: June Hut News had an article about feral fish being introduced into Wentworth Falls Lake. I just happened to pick up a brochure "Welcome to Wentworth Falls " and I quote "Swim, fish or canoe at Wentworth Falls Lake Park ... It is the home to freshwater crayfish and is regularly stocked with sports-fishing species such as trout and bass."

Many years ago I was privileged to visit the Galapagos Islands - definitely my favorite place. But the "guides" there were very strict, you were not allowed to stray from the defined pathways, and the population was limited. It is a "catch-22" situation. By making places "tourist friendly" we are actually destroying the very things which people want to come and see.

—Liz van Reyswoud

BEES ON SIX FOOT TRACK: I was pleased to see mention of the wild hive of bees under a boulder on the Six Foot Track (Megalong Valley to Coss River, June 2022). Back in 2014 when I was walking the track as part of the Dunphy Kowmung Adventure we too saw what I believe to be the same bee hive in a rock overhang. I wonder how long the hive has been there? It's close to the track so would be noticed by many walkers over the years. Are there Hut News readers who have also noticed it in years past?

—Alex Allchin

REMEMBERING DENIS KEVANS: How nice it was to see a poem by Denis Kevans, and a short tribute, in June Hut News. He was such a descriptive poet. I routinely remember him if I drive past his park in Wentworth Falls. His talent with the pen must not be forgotten!

—Katriona Herborn

GARDENS OF STONE: Tourism, if unregulated, is not good for the environment, but can be of benefit to nature if people see it and want to preserve nature for its intrinsic self.

National Parks are for the express purpose to conserve nature and this should be the first goal and adhered to at all costs. Tourism can be encouraged only under conditions of the lightest footprint and the genuine purpose of being in nature. Any structures to be built only in disturbed areas so that the Gardens of Stone remains a World Class Reserve and not just another Theme Park.

—Frances Scarano

Your feedback is very welcome. Write a letter to the editor. Keep it short (100-150 words), simple and relevant. Please add your suburb and contact number - not for publication. hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

90 years ago, a group of bushwalkers raised money to preserve a forest of Blue Gums in the Grose Valley and started a movement which led to the protection of 1 million hectares of national park and wilderness which, in 2000, was declared the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

Today's bushwalkers still have a job to do ...

A CALL OUT TO BUSHWALKERS

Have you considered becoming a member of an observation group? In some respects the Blue Mountains Conservation Society is an observation group. It has been said that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, but well may we say that eternal vigilance is the price of having a Blue Mountains World Heritage area. With the increased threats to the flora and fauna of the Blue Mountains, vigilance has never been so important.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has the conservation outlook for the Blue Mountains assessed as of "significant concern". This is just one step below the highest rating of concern which is "Critical".

With the new international airport being built next to the Blue Mountains, increased urbanisation and the continual increase in tourists, major biosecurity threats to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage area will occur.

Deadly ants like the Red Imported Fire ant and Yellow Crazy ants are now on the border of NSW and QLD and moving south. We already have diseases like Myrtle Rust and *Phytophthora cinnamomi* destroying plants including the Wollombee pine. Chlamydia has been confirmed in Eastern Rosella and King Parrots in the Blue Mountains and chytrid fungus in frogs. There are potential threats such as *Xylella fastidiosa*, a bacterial disease which has the potential to infect numerous native plant species.

We all need to be vigilant. This is where bushwalking groups can become the protective eyes for the area. If you notice anything unusual, whether it is an increase in feral animals, strange looking plant diseases, unusual insects /ants, sick animals, polluted streams ... make a note, take a photo, send a report with photos to the Hut News Team if you can.

Suspected exotic pests and diseases can be reported to the NSW DPI Biosecurity helpline -

1800 680 244

Lithgow's Gardens of Stone backyard is as diverse and unique as it is beautiful

Protected in a wonderful 28,332ha State Conservation Area, its pagoda landscapes support a vast array of rare plant and animal life. The new reserve protects the core of the Gardens of Stone and more than doubles the protected area in the Gardens of Stone region.

The next step is formal planning for the reserve, including siting recreation facilities to enable families to get close to nature. The National Parks and Wildlife Service has put the reserve's management plans on public exhibition for comment, and access roads are being upgraded.

Once completed, this reserve will be a must-see destination that reveals the enduring benefits of nature conservation. Thousands will then be spellbound by this true natural wonderland that need no fancy facilities.

Visit the Gardens of Stone gallery - <https://www.gardensofstone.org.au/photos/gardens-stone-focus> - to see a hint of what's in store. Once restored, with access repaired and basic facilities, this reserve can become one of the best in NSW!

NATIONAL PARKS: Victims of Neo Liberalism and Bucket Lists

A Review of: Eden Gillespie, *Taming the Wild: is the rise in 'eco- accommodation a threat to Australia's National Parks?* Guardian Australia, 19th June, 2022).

In an excellent recent article in the Guardian, Eden Gillespie explored the pros and cons of commercial accommodation in the wilderness areas of national parks. Among the developments in NSW she cited are recent proposals for a zip-line and eco accommodation at the Gardens of Stone near Lithgow and similar proposals or existing developments along the Light to Light Walk near Eden and the Great Southern Walk near Sydney.

Gillespie also cited similar developments in Queensland's Mowbray National Park; Macalister Range National Park; Great Sandy National Park; and Paluma Range National Park as well as at Mount Buffalo in the Victorian Alps and Kangaroo Island in SA. There are at least 30 such developments in national parks in Tasmania and, in WA, the McGowan government recently announced \$6.5 million to support the development of 'shovel ready' accommodation sites to boost tourism in its national parks.

Now many of us will have enjoyed wonderful experiences in basic huts or at simple camp sites provided and serviced by the NPWS. But these developments are different for they are typically proposed as public-private partnerships with commercial tourism companies leasing NPWS land.

Both governments and private tourism operators are quick and slick in promoting the benefits of this strategy. Typically they talk up both the potential economic benefits to the local community and the *transformative impact* on those using this accommodation as a result of their enhanced appreciation of nature and awareness of conservation issues.

But any objective analysis reveals the main motive is company profit --- often boosted at public expense.

However, many of the details of these public-private ventures are treated as commercial-in-confidence and proposals are often flagged through with little genuine community consultation — including with indigenous communities. Moreover, despite bright and breezy prospectus claims, the net benefits to the public, are difficult to define.

The cost to the taxpayer of developing infrastructure, maintaining walking trails and other facilities and even providing free, incidental advertising are rarely accounted for. And the State's costs have a tendency to blow out. Yet the profits reaped by the operators of these ventures seem scandalous. Gillespie, for instance, cites the case of a Tasmanian eco-tourism proposal that would see the entrepreneur paying \$6,000 annual rent to the state government while charging each of its customers \$4,500 for the experience.

The cost to the environment can be much greater for, as many cited by Gillespie indicate, these developments compromise the wilderness values of parks which can be the last refuge for some endangered species. Among their substantial ecological impacts are the fragmentation of forest canopy and the opening of access corridors for weed seeds, fungal spores and feral animals.

Moreover, while these developments are increasingly common in Australia, they are being discredited elsewhere in the world. In our own region both China and Thailand are demolishing resorts in

forests and national parks. Sonya Underdahl, one of those cited by Gillespie, suggests that this is a global trend and that this sort of eco-tourism accommodation is now "*generally found only in developing nations (where) they're using it for poverty alleviation and poaching.*"

So who is responsible for this particular assault on the environment?

As well as greedy tourism operators and cynical politicians there is a need to also look at ourselves — particularly we senior folk who like to think our golden years are a time to tick off items on our bucket lists. Thus some of the most telling data cited by Gillespie noted that the market for this on-site eco-accommodation was primarily middle-aged to older walkers, the "average" being 53-years old and female.

Sounds to me like the average Blue Mountains Conservation Society member. So should each of us monitor our own bucket lists and their impact on the environment?

But we must all be aware also of the politics of the environment for the impact of eco-tourism is another example of the madness of Neo-Liberalism.

Gillespie's article suggests that these developments derive from the 2009 National Long Term Tourism Strategy Steering Committee and its recommendations on ways to exploit the *latent tourism potential* of national parks. But really they should be traced back to the Thatcher-Regan era and the embracing of Neo Liberalism by western governments --- the ideas that there is no such thing as society, that government intervention should be minimal, that everyone has a customer and everyone is a customer; and that everything, including the environment, is up for sale.

Unfortunately, the countering of such ideas is difficult and we have a long road ahead of us. The challenge is highlighted by recalling that, in 2009, it was the Rudd-Gillard Government that accepted and began the implementation of the nation's long-term tourism strategy.

Taming the wild: is the rise in 'eco-accommodation' a threat to Australia's national parks? Eden Gillespie, The Guardian, 19/6/22. [https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jun/19/taming-the-wild-is-the-rise-in-eco-accommodation-a-threat-to-australias-national-parks?](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jun/19/taming-the-wild-is-the-rise-in-eco-accommodation-a-threat-to-australias-national-parks?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

Reviewed by **Paddy Cavanagh**.



Bushwalkers in the Kosciuszko summit area up to the 1970s may remember the original Lake Albina hut. Its removal in 1983 was a contribution to a great National Park that needs protection from inappropriate human activity. Image: Kosciuszko Huts Association.

A good news story from the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area

— Geoffrey Luscombe

Good news stories of environmental protection keep us all motivated. A volunteer program working on Tasmania's most remote wilderness coastline is achieving amazing results eradicating invasive beach weeds.

Tasmania is home to 62% and 30% of our national populations of Eastern Hooded Plover and Pied Oyster Catcher. Importance of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area as a stronghold for these and other shorebird species will grow as the spectrum of threats increase across most of Australia.

Sea Spurge and Marram grass are invasive coastal weeds that transform geomorphic process to the detriment of shorebird habitats and Aboriginal cultural sites. In the first decade of this century, new infestations in the World Heritage Area were doubling every 4 years and the number of plants was escalating exponentially. The threat was becoming intractable.

In 2007 a new community group, Sea sPurge Remote Area TeamS (aka Wildcare SPRATS) partnered with the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service. SPRATS was modelled on successful Blue Mountains adventure volunteering groups, notably Friends of Colo. Since then, 14 million weeds or 99%+ of the infestation have been removed.

High quality citizen science has gone into mapping, monitoring, and various weed control trials to enable good plans for volunteer efforts and credible reporting. Small teams of experienced wilderness bushwalkers are deployed using helicopters and light planes for 12 to 24 days at a time to walk the full 800km of southwest and southern coastlines. Volunteers work hard and have fun with many coming back for several seasons.

Now SPRATS are looking to expand their efforts by helping to spread a newly developed spurge bio control fungus around the rest of Tasmania's coastline. Adapting the SPRATS model to local conditions could transform NSW spurge control from containment to eradication. For more information, see <https://wildcarea.org.au/branches/wildcare-sprats/>

Photo credits: Geoffrey Luscombe

1. SPRATS relax under a west coast sunset.
2 and 3. SPRATS volunteers work in some of the most beautiful coastal landscape in the world.



Geoff Luscombe's experiences as long-term Blue Mountains District Manager for NPWS and an international long distance bushwalking enthusiast have helped him appreciate the importance of conservation volunteering.

Image source: Outdoor Australia, "Meet the Volunteers Keeping Tassie Wild", David Cauldwell.



The Blue Mountains

Exploring landscapes shaped by the underlying rocks, uplift and erosion

Peter Hatherly & Ian Brown, Windy Cliff Press, 2022*

Using Hatherly and Brown's new geology book in trip planning

In the concluding remarks of their book "The Blue Mountains – exploring landscapes shaped by the underlying rocks uplift and erosion", Peter Hatherly and Ian Brown state that "it is our hope that we have given readers the opportunity to get a sense about how the Earth works and that they will venture to the Blue Mountains and look at the landscape with a new sense of understanding".

This is a reasonable expectation, given the way the book balances its earlier overview sections of our grand region's natural history with part 3 of the book which divides the subject area into seven geographical sections that come to terms with geological explanations of the features a visitor would observe.

A large part of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area is covered. As you would expect, there is emphasis on the most accessible sections including the lower Blue Mountains and the valleys on either side of the Blue Mountains range between Wentworth Falls and Bell. Attention is given to the best vantage points.

The reader should first engage with parts 1 and 2 to gain familiarity with the macro forces that have shaped the landforms and ecosystems that make up the multiple panoramas observable from various lookout points. Part 3 gives a very readable clarification of how the elements seen from any specific site acquired their individuality.

Whether a visitor is planning a day walk from a mountains railway station or travelling by four-wheel-drive to remote trails in the Yerranderie or Newnes Plateau areas, this book can cast new light on what the visitor will see.

In the section of the lower Blue Mountains bounded by the Great Western Highway, Nepean River, Erskine-Bedford Creeks and Kings Tableland (also known as the northern Blue Labyrinth), it is possible to observe the results of many of the most important geological processes that shaped our region.



Brown and Hatherly refer particularly to lookouts in the vicinity of lower Glenbrook Creek and gorge. Such lookouts include Chalmers Lookout and Bluff Lookout, near Darks Common. When the Glenbrook causeway is open, Tunnel View and Mount Portal lookouts are also easily accessible by two-wheel drive unsealed roads.

On a June 23 walk, inspired by Hatherly and Brown's book, we walked along the lip of Glenbrook Creek Gorge. We discussed how, during the uplift that formed a line of hills known as the Lapstone Structural Complex, the already existing Glenbrook Creek cut its gorge through the new higher ground, enabling it to continue to empty into the Nepean River. This gorge is familiar to all Blue Mountains rail travellers (see picture, image by Bob van Reyswoud).

The two authors also describe geological features of nearly all the high profile tourist-attracting landforms of the Mountains including those within the Kedumba River and Grose River catchments.

--Thursday Interpretive Nature Group (TING)

*Available now from all good bookshops in the Blue Mountains or online at <https://ianbrownphotography.com.au/publications>

Blue Mountains Walking Track Availability

Many people have been concerned about the large number of closed walking tracks in Council and National Park areas since the rain events earlier this year. These tracks are highly significant to our understanding and connection with the Blue Mountains environment.

At time of publication, various sections of the Clifftop Walking Tracks from Wentworth Falls to Katoomba are open, while other sections remain closed. It is also possible to view lower altitude ecosystems by descending the Federal Pass via Fern Bower at Leura or the Furber Steps from the old Katoomba Falls kiosk on Cliff Drive. Most mountain towns have some of their walking tracks open.

Our Hut News Team hopes that the percentage of tracks open will soon increase. In the meantime, track sections may be opened or closed at short notice and those planning walks should check with National Parks and Wildlife Service or Blue Mountains City Council as appropriate.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

Volunteers return to work in August after the winter break. New recruits are welcome. All enquiries to the Nursery

Manager, Paul Irwin

plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com

Childrens' environmental education activities for Hut News

The Hut News Team is looking for a volunteer who can help prepare a page or half page of environmental education activities for children for Hut News (a regular page 12 feature). If you have any ideas can you please contact the team at hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

EXPLORING GRAFFITI

-- John Low

While graffiti is generally not viewed positively today, disparaged as socially and environmentally unacceptable, most readers familiar with the Blue Mountains will have encountered many fascinating old inscriptions along walking tracks and at popular picnic spots. For many of these, age has given them a degree of respectability as worthy subjects of historical interest.

Graffiti can take the form of words, initials and images and though sometimes offering clues to the story behind its creation, much of it remains cryptic, just a witness to an anonymous presence, its meaning largely closed to us.



Inscriptions 'in memoriam' are common. At the end of Mount Hay Road, for example, beneath a simple cross carved into a rock over-looking the Grose Valley, the name of 'S. Groves 62-97' has been carved. Was

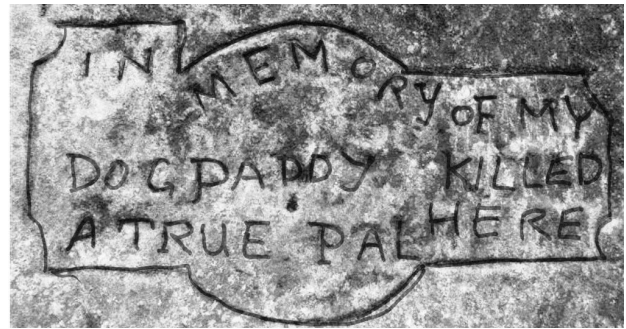
this 34 year-old Stephen Robert Groves of Faulconbridge who died in September 1997? Did he die by accident here (I could find no press report) or was this a place that held special meaning for him?

Animal memorials, too, contribute their stories to the landscape. Three emu rock engravings at Ticehurst Park, Springwood, depict what is possibly a successful emu hunt (one lies prone). Not only do these remind us that inscribing a connection to place is an ancient practice, they also depict the significance of the emu to the local indigenous people.

Dogs and humans have also had a long relationship. Some years ago I wrote about "Paddy, a true [canine] pal", whose memory is preserved in several rock-engravings, also in the Springwood area (*Hut News*, Feb. 2014).

Then, there are the romances that are memorialised. In particular, I recall two I was tempted to investigate, young lovers who visited Leura on the eve of war and left their names engraved on rock for posterity. From the scant surviving record of their later lives two contrasting stories emerged (*Hut News*, Sept. 2012).

Perhaps, however, the most striking piece of rock graffiti I've seen in my time in the Mountains is the well-known '23rd Psalm', beautifully engraved into a rock face overlooking Glenbrook Creek below Martins



Lookout at Springwood. I haven't visited it for years but will always remember my first encounter when my wife (who grew up in Springwood) took me down to see it. It must have taken a skilled hand many hours to complete but, sadly, I have never been able to identify that person or when it was created. The only hint I've found of a possible theory derives from a brief report in the *Katoomba Times* (5 April 1890) of a lost and disorientated "excursionist" (a devout Methodist other evidence suggests) who spent a rough night in the bush at Springwood until the "singing [of] psalms at the camp of the Blue Mountain artist" drew him to safety. Such are the scraps the imagination feeds upon.

Recently I had an email from a lady whose interest had been aroused by a 'smiley face' image carved into a rock on a track at Leura. As best she could, she described its location as follows: "... it is halfway up the only track from the base of Bridal Veil Falls, on the left-hand side, to the Cascades in Leura and can be clearly seen on a tall, vertical mossy-covered rock just before the track turns RIGHT to tackle the metal ladders."

I remembered this face from my own time living in Leura – it's a happy image to encounter - though I had never been able to find anything specific about its origin or creator. Perhaps it's time to ask again. Even if nothing new emerges, the image might still be of interest to readers and encourage some to pay it (and others) a visit and, as the late American nature-writer Barry Lopez once wrote, "to sense one's own visit against other years, other seasons".



Images:

"S. Groves" (John Low),
Dog Paddy (BM Library's
Local Studies Collection),
Smiley Face (Margaret
Murdoch)

JOHN LOW was a long-standing Local Studies Librarian for Blue Mountains City Council and is the author of pictorial essays and many other publications. The stories in his most recent book, "Blue Mountains Byways", were originally written for *Hut News* and other local newsletters. .

Parramatta River

The Councillor spoke with conviction,
Like a preacher from a Hollywood missionate,
"The Parramatta River isn't dirty,
The problem is all these dead fish in it."

--**Denis Kevans**

A short poem written at a time when the Parramatta River was more polluted than it is today.



BUSHWALKING:

Enjoy the bush, learn about the Blue Mountains natural environment and find out why bushwalking has been a popular pastime in the Blue Mountains for more than 100 years. Our bushwalking convenor is Doug Nicholls dougnicholls@bigpond.com, phone 0455 850 735.

Walks are graded and generally suitable for walkers of average fitness but may vary in degree of difficulty. Participants need to be aware of their own capabilities and can discuss with the bushwalking convenor, group coordinator or leader.

Underneath is a brief summary of walks and leaders for this month. **Check our website <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/bushwalking.shtml> for a detailed walks program and program changes.**

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS: Short day walks. The group coordinator is Keith Dorrian 0411 162 445, keithdor53@hotmail.com

Jul 4 **Lockyers Track Head & Mt York** 10km, Gr3, Carpool, Mt Victoria St 9.50 Tracy 0434 362 611.

Jul 11 **Blackheath Round walk from Blackheath N/hood Centre to Fort Rock and some of Porters Pass**, Gr2, BlackheathNC 9.45am, Pat Whitehead 0429 003 639.

Jul18 **Lost World (Springwood 9am)** Gr3, Carpool, Lyn Bevington 0432 352 850.

Jul25 **Govetts Leap to Evans L/O and return** approx 6km. Gr3, Blackheath N/hood Centre 9.40, car pool, Barbara Crighton 0428 962 460.

Aug1 **Murphys Glen** (Woodford 9am) Gr2, Carpool, Keith 0411 162 345.

TUESDAY FITNESS WALKS: Group Coordinator: Susan Nicholls (4754 1516 suerosn@bigpond.net.au).

Jul5 **Wedding Cake Rock (Bundeena)** G2/9K, Doug 0455850753.

Jul12 **Water Nymph's Dell & Wentworth Falls Lake** G2-3, Sharon 0404622515.

Jul20 (WEDNESDAY) **Tuesday Walkers Yulefest Lunch**, Helen 0402818168.

Jul26 **Central to Centennial Park** G1/8K, Marek 0412347478.

Aug2 **Shaw's Ridge & Blue Gum Swamp** (Winmalee) G2/10K, Rob 0400672336.

Visit the Saturday walks facebook -

<https://www.facebook.com/bmcslongerbushwalks?fref=nf>

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS are 2-3 hours and are conducted at a leisurely pace. Coordinator: Beverley Thompson (4757 2076 denfenella12@bigpond.com)

Jul14 **Euroka Clearing and Portal Waterhole**, Glenbrook.

NPWS pass or entrance fee. Meet Glenbrook Stn Car Park 9.15am. Carpool. Take lunch. Leader Ros 0417 262 465. Gr2.

Jul21 **Christmas in July**. Red Poppy Brasserie, Katoomba RSL \$35. Book with Beverley 4757 2076. Meet at club at noon.

Jul28 **Nepean River Walk**, Emu Plains. Lunch at O'Donoghue's or bring your own. Meet Emu Plains Stn 9.30am. Leader Keith 0411 162 345 Gr1.

Aug4 **Fern Fire Trail Circuit**, Hazelbrook. Meet Hazelbrook shops carpark 9am. Take lunch. Leader Ros 0417261465. Gr2.

Aug11 **Evans Crown**. Lunch at Tarana Pub or bring your own. Mount Vic Stn 9.50am. Carpool \$7. Tracy 0434 362 611. Gr2.

SATURDAY WALKS: Usually a full day, longer walk at a faster pace. Coordinator Harold Thompson (0409 010 736, Harold.thompson@bigpond.com).

Jul 9 **Red Hands Cave & Kanuka Brook**. 12km Map Penrith. Leader Geoff 0497688033. Glenbrook Stn CP 8.30am. Gr3.

Jul16 **Watertrough Hill to Bell Ck via Two Ridges** 9km. Map Mt Wilson. Harold 0409010737. Mt Vic Stn CP 8.30am. Gr3.

Jul23 **Hat Hill Circuit, Bald Head & Anvil Rock**. 8km Map Mt Wilson. Harold 0409010737. Gardiner Cr Blackheath 8.30. Gr3.

Jul 30 **Liversidge Hill**. 8km Map Mt Wilson Leader Alice 0425738766. Meet Wentworth Falls Stn. CP 8.30am. Gr3.

Aug6 **Kamarah Ridge, canyon & Koombanda Ridge** 9km Map Mt Wilson Harold 0409010737. Mt Vic Stn CP 8.30am Gr3.

Will the Wandering Trad be no Longer Wandering?

—Chris Whiteman

With the recent wet weather over the last few months, the weed called Wandering Trad (previously known as Wandering Jew) (*Tradescantia fluminensis*) has spread significantly in the Blue Mountains. A native of South America, it is almost impossible to eradicate without the constant use of dangerous herbicides. It can be removed by hand weeding but the smallest piece which may be missed will easily take root and grow. It can significantly reduce the diversity and health of native vegetation.

Those finding large patches of the weed may now find that the plant is suffering from a fungal disease with light-green-yellowish spots on the upper leaf surfaces and white-woolly patches on the lower leaf surfaces where spores are produced.

In conjunction with biosecurity scientists at the C'th Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, and the CSRIO, after extensive testing this fungus has been released as a biological agent to kill Wandering Trad. When the plant is infected with the fungus known as *Kordyana brasiliensis*, leaves develop

lesions that eventually cause the leaf to decline and die.

The fungus is host specific to Wandering Trad (*Tradescantia fluminensis*). No lesions have been found on other related plants when tested by the CSRIO.

References: <https://www.awe.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/risk-analysis/biological-control-agents/risk-analyses/completed-risk-analyses/ra-release-kordyana-brasiliensis> <https://www.awe.gov.au/sites/default/files/sitecollectiondocuments/biosecurity/risk-analysis/kordyana-brasiliensis-application-form.pdf>



DRAW A SUGAR GLIDER ...



MEET THE SUGAR GLIDER:

Like many Australian native mammals, the Sugar Glider is nocturnal. They're named after their taste for sweet foods such as tree sap and nectar, and their ability to drift silently through the air using their gliding membrane (called a patagium).

Sugar gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*) are the base jumpers of the bush. Sugar gliders are very social animals. They live in family groups with multiple adults, plus the young from that season. Read more: <https://www.wilderness.org.au/sugar-gliders>



Sugar Glider (Wilderness Society)

Baby Sugar Glider: A Society member, Rosemary Butler, sent this photo from the Kanimbla Valley, a orphaned Sugar Glider small enough to be held in a woman's hand, holding on to her finger. The overnight carer, Anna, is a WIRES volunteer and specialises in raising orphaned wombats. This baby will be raised with other orphaned Sugar Gliders by another carer.

To find out more about Wildlife Rescue, go to <https://www.wires.org.au/>

In my winter garden

--Christine Davies

All the little birds seem to have left my garden and moved to warmer climes. A family of White-browed Scrub Wrens usually keeps the spider population on the outside of the house under control, but now there are lots of little webs.

Sometimes a plump young magpie walks along the path to the deck and stands at the kitchen door, waiting for the door to open and food to appear.

The magpie continues to be disappointed, but Red-wattle Birds, Satin Bower Birds and Crimson Rosellas find food in winter flowering plants.

Red-wattle Birds are honeyeaters and are equipped with a curved beak and a brush-tipped tongue. They can reach into the flowers of the *Banksia cunninhamii* and eat the nectar. In the process they pollinate the flowers, making seed for the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos which come frequently during the year. Satin Bowerbirds seem to have found a way to reach the nectar by biting the flowers off the flower spikes. But it's always a joy to see the beautiful mature male Satin Bowerbird.

Correa reflexa is another bird-pollinated plant, mainly by the Eastern Spinebill, but the little spinebill is off on winter vacation. Crimson Rosellas are equipped to eat mainly seed, but they use their strong beaks and flexible claws to cut, hold and dissect the flowers, eating the nectar and discarding the remainder of the flower. This year the Correa again has a wonderful crop of winter flowers and the Crimson Rosellas are enjoying the bounty.

My Covid isolation time is finished, but I still don't feel inclined to venture further than my winter garden. When the weather begins to warm, the little birds will return.

On the night of the winter solstice, ABC Television presented:

THE SOUTHERN OCEAN LIVE

"A journey into Australia's Southern Ocean, a wild and dramatic place; full of charismatic creatures and the perfect place for a natural history adventure."

"Hosts are Hamish MacDonald and Dr Ann Jones, located at Penguin Parade, on Phillip Island in Victoria. During this extraordinary night of broadcast, we will witness stories about whales, great white sharks, cuttlefish, albatross along our Great Southern coastline."

The whole 90 minute program was amazing! The scenes unforgettable! The passion of the presenters and the scientists, some witnessing scenes they had never seen before, very moving!

You can see it at:

<https://iview.abc.net.au/show/southern-ocean-live>
until 10.02 pm on 21st July 2022.

BECOME A MEMBER ...

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is an incorporated voluntary organisation of more than 900 members. Our goal is to protect, conserve, and advocate for, the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains. You can become a member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Join online at www.bluemountains.org.au or phone 0490 419 779.