



Camp in the forest, Easter 1931 (Rigby family collection)

2nd September 2022 is the 90th anniversary of the reservation of the Blue Gum Forest. Read the story on pages 4 and 5. Events on page 3.

State of the Environment Report 2016-2021 has been released

The new Federal Environment and Water Minister, Tanya Plibersek, released the long awaited five yearly *2016-2021 State of the Environment (SoE) Report* during a National Press Club address yesterday (July 19).

In the immediate response to the detailed 2000 page report, its findings have been variously described as "shocking", "dire", "devastating", "an alarming story", "a detailed and brutal picture of destruction and loss" etc. As we now get time to read the actual report, to take in the details, it is indeed bleak reading, extremely bleak reading.

In the Greater Blue Mountains we should be shocked but not surprised. The last five years have brought environmental havoc: unprecedented drought and heat, huge wildfires, floods, windstorms, cold snaps, on-going development, even cracking of our iconic pagoda rock formations. We have known that local species and ecosystems are declining as we watch, not just those considered rare but also those considered common, and within the World Heritage Area as well as outside.

Pulling together the many stories of environmental decline across Australia in the SoE report ensures that we cannot plead ignorance. We now wait to see if this damning report will make a difference: will there be an increased political will to act effectively for the environment?

We must consider how we in the community can make a difference, will there be an increased community will for real and lasting change? And as we do this, the decline continues. More species and ecosystems have been listed as threatened in the seven months following completion of this report. The pressures driving this decline have not abated, more likely increased.

Read the report (available online <https://soe.dcceew.gov.au/>) and draw your own conclusions.

--Judy Smith, Threatened Species Officer

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Gardens of Stone hangs in the balance

--Keith Muir

It is the wonderful and varied heritage values of the new Gardens of Stone SCA that will attract the predicted 200,000 visitors and tourists. But, if the reserve is not rehabilitated and restored to good health, the plans for tourism growth will fail. Visitors will see environmental degradation rather than a world-class environmental restoration program integrated with nature-focused visitor management. They will go away disappointed.

The recently exhibited draft management plans have an unprecedented tourism growth objective. Somehow this focus resulted in locating a proposed major adventure theme park where it degrades Lithgow's primary scenic attraction, the spectacular Lost City pagoda complex. Ruining this view, as well as making the reserve's gateway through a large ugly quarry on a two-wheel drive road that by-passes Lithgow, ensures that the reserve can deliver only a fraction of its potential benefit to Lithgow.

To secure the projected revenue and employment benefits, the adventure theme park must be relocated to State Mine Gully. An adventure theme park at State Mine Gully would ensure that the mining heritage museum located there becomes viable and ensures that visitors come via Lithgow and not by Clarence and the Old Bells Line of Road to the reserve. Vehicle access management can make Lithgow a gateway to the new reserve with an upgraded tourist loop road centred on the town that provides access to the Temple of Doom and Wolgan Falls lookout, Wolgan Gorge lookout and Maiyingu Marragu Aboriginal Place.

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

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Gardens of Stone hangs in the balance (continued from page 1)

Government commitments require NPWS to chip in to make sure the commercial adventure theme park and glamour accommodation happens. These commitments could greatly reduce the extent of rehabilitation, basic visitor facilities and Lithgow-centred access that can be delivered. Keeping a lid on costs is critical but the funding behind commercial lease deals for these facilities are secret and usually benefit the business, not the environment.



Image: May the Lost City not be truly lost. (Keith Muir)

A significant win for the environment

An environmental group has succeeded in its Federal Court bid to derail plans for a controversial tailings dam inside the takayna/ Tarkine rainforest in Tasmania's north-west. The Bob Brown Foundation argued former Environment minister Sussan Ley's decision to allow for work to commence at the site was not authorised under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act.

The Federal Court says the initial Morrison government approval for works on the MMG dam was invalid – that Ms Ley, through her delegate, did not properly consider the forest's status as the habitat of the rare Tasmanian masked owl.

"In my view, the delegate did not comply with the obligation to take account of the precautionary principle," Justice Moshinsky said. "To comply with this obligation, it is necessary for the minister, or in this case the delegate, to consider whether there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage. I am satisfied the delegate failed to do this."

Veteran environmental campaigner Bob Brown said the decision was "significant". "This is a huge decision for the environment," he said. "It means that wherever there isn't sufficient information to say that species aren't going to be driven closer to extinction by a project, that project should wait until that evidence is available."

Bob Brown says those who have been arrested during past protests are "heroes" who should be compensated.

Read more: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-07-25/bob-brown-foundation-court-win-mm-g-mine-tailings-dam-approval/101265998>

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Planning & Development Resource Kit

Do you want to take action on an environmental issue in your neighbourhood or the Blue Mountains more broadly? Do you want information about the laws and procedures relating to development and environmental protection?

Find out what **YOU** can do! Go to the Planning and Development Resource Kit www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml

Blue Gum Forest 90th Anniversary EVENTS

Weekend of 3-4 September: Campout in the Grose Valley. The agenda will include a ceremony at the forest on Saturday afternoon and a communal campfire in the evening. There will be interpretive ambles on Sunday morning, the topics including birds, plants and geology. This activity is being organised by volunteers with the support of NPWS. Suitable for experienced bushwalkers only. Numbers will be capped to 80 and registration is essential. Enquiries to Monica Nugent at monica.nugent@environment.nsw.gov.au

Friday 9 September, Wentworth Falls School of Arts, 6.30pm. "The Blue Gum Forest: a place, what does it mean to you?" Andy Macqueen and Wyn Jones.

From the original indigenous custodians, then the colonial explorers, to the 1930s bushwalkers, to people today: how have people regarded and connected with Blue Gum Forest? Historian Andy Macqueen and ecologist Wyn Jones will explore these questions and ask, 90 years since the forest's reservation, "Does it matter?"

This is a free event hosted by Blue Mountains Conservation Society. All welcome. Registration is essential on Eventbrite (<https://bit.ly/3oiKfWG>) to help us plan. Enquiries - Andrew Solomon: events@bluemountains.org.au

Late August to late September - An annotated slide show about Blue Gum Forest will be running continuously in the thetrette at the **NPWS Heritage Centre**, Blue Mountains National Park, end of Govetts Leap Road, Blackheath, 9 am to 4pm daily.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS !! Green Gully Tree Planting Day

The Society's Native Plant Nursery has, for many years, been supplying National Parks and Wildlife Service with tube stock to revegetate the old Carlons Farm in the Megalong Valley (otherwise known as Green Gully).

The planting usually takes place one day a month, with volunteers from Galong Creek Bushcare Group. But, with all the wet weather leading to multiple cancellations, the nursery is now holding a backlog of plants that are in urgent need of getting into the ground.

NPWS is calling on Society members to help on the August planting day:

SATURDAY, 20TH AUGUST, 9.30 - 3PM

Monica Nugent from NPWS writes:

The extended periods of wet weather have delayed our planting schedule so we're reaching out for some extra assistance from BMCS members to assist with a planting day in August. It's imperative to get the plants from the nursery into the ground before they become too pot-bound!

We meet from 9:30 am – 3:00pm in Green Gully. NPWS provides equipment and morning tea refreshments. Bring your own lunch.

The site is on sloping and uneven terrain, so a good level of fitness is required, but we can always accommodate those needing light duties!

In order to participate you'll need to be registered as a NPWS volunteer. Please contact Monica Nugent for more details and assistance with registering: monica.nugent@environment.nsw.gov.au phone 0497 618 334

Campaigning with the Knitting Nannas

-- Robin Murray

I have been a part of the Sydney Knitting Nannas and Friends for many years and have enjoyed being part of such a dedicated group. There is much to admire in their determination to protect Australia's water and land from gas and coal mining and to act decisively on climate change.

We are involved in peaceful protests against politicians and corporations responsible for environmental destruction. We have recently been involved in the campaign to save Australia's koalas from extinction, especially Sydney's koalas. This work has been done for years by a group of incredible people and it is an honour to support them and be involved.

We have supported them by being present at rallies on the infamous Appin Road near Campbelltown and rallies outside Parliament House. Information can be such a powerful weapon against apathy. I am full of admiration for the people involved in the rescue of koala casualties -- I honestly don't know how they keep going.

We also have been involved in the campaign to stop waste to energy incinerators which seem to have made a reappearance.

Due to lockdowns we have only just restarted our meetings in Martin Place and it is good to be back. Find out more: <https://knittingnannas.org/sydney/>

The Message of the Lyrebird Wednesday 21st September, 6.50 pm United Cinemas The Edge, Katoomba

Lyrebirds hold the history of the forest in their song ... but are they now singing the sad story of human encroachment?

Come on a magical journey through Australia's native forests to understand the sophistication and complex artistry of the lyrebird, leading humanity to a deeper understanding of the natural world.

This screening is hosted by, and a fundraiser for, the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, courtesy of Balangara Films and Dr Anastasia Dalziel of the University of Wollongong and Lyrebird Lab. Dr Dalziel will introduce the film and take questions afterwards.

Bookings: <https://www.unitedcinemas.com.au/katoomba/movie/the-message-of-the-lyrebird>

THE SAVING OF BLUE GUM FOREST – Part 2

-- Andy Macqueen

It's ninety years since Blue Gum Forest, in the Grose Valley, was saved by bushwalkers. By today's standards the campaign was a modest affair. The "enemy" wasn't a mining company, wealthy developer or belligerent government authority: it was a pair of battling soldier-settlers from Mount Tomah named Clarrie Hungerford and Bert Pierce. Yet, the event's ramifications were huge.

Here is the story, in brief. In 1930 Hungerford and Pierce started taking cattle into the Grose via their Pierces Pass track. Hungerford took out a 40-acre lease on the Mount Banks side of the river, near the Govetts Creek junction. It was part of the extensive forest of *Eucalyptus deanei*, previously well-known to the Darug people but otherwise only to a few adventurous souls.

At Easter 1931 a group from the Sydney Bush Walkers and Mountain Trails clubs went to camp in the forest. They were led by Alan Rigby, a photographer, and they walked there from Govetts Leap. (There was a scrambling pass down from Perrys Lookdown, but the track was not built until 1946.)

In the forest they came across Hungerford and Pierce, with their horses. Hungerford told them he planned to clear the gum trees to plant walnuts. The bushwalkers were horrified. They went back to their clubs to see what could be done to stop him.

The Blue Gum Forest Committee was formed, comprising volunteers from bushwalking clubs, the Scouts and the Wild Life Preservation Society. Its secretary was Myles Dunphy, founder of the Mountain Trails Club and campaigner for the creation of national parks. They tried to stop Hungerford by appealing to the authorities, but soon found that the only way to save the forest was to pay him off. On 15 November 1931 the committee sat down with him in the forest. Hungerford agreed to give up his lease for 130



Lunching in the forest, prior to negotiations. Roy Bennett, Albert Barnard, Alan Rigby (standing), Joe Turner and Clarrie Hungerford (far right) (Rigby family collection)

pounds—over \$20,000 in today's terms.

Hungerford possibly had no intention to clear the forest. He was shrewd, and may have concocted the walnut story to take advantage of the bushwalkers. True or not, it doesn't matter now: what matters is what followed. Funds were raised by way of donations, social events and publications. It was hard work, because the Great Depression was at its height. Luckily the committee was able to meet Hungerford's deadline when an interest-free loan was obtained from Jim Cleary, head of the NSW Railways and subsequently Chair of the ABC—and a bushwalker himself. The committee eventually raised the money to repay him.

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Two of Rigby's party crossing the river, followed by Hungerford and Pierce on horses (Rigby family collection)

The Saving of Blue Gum Forest--Part 2

(Continued from page 4)

Hungerford gave up the lease and, as arranged, the government proclaimed Reserve 63521 for public recreation on 2 September 1932. It was unofficially known as The Blue Gum Forest. Trustees were appointed to manage it, including some of the original activists. One of those was Dorothy Lawry, who wrote in 1934:

"The Blue Gum Forest is [the bushwalkers'] own, physically as well as spiritually, for it is through their efforts that the trees still live. And, like a tree, the effects of those efforts are still growing and spreading, for the Lands Department officials now know that the walkers recognise and love beauty in nature and are anxious to preserve it, and willing to work to attain their object. So any requests for the preservation of primitive areas that the walkers make now receive very sympathetic consideration, and already two further areas have been added to the State's reserves."

Lawry's remarks were more pertinent than she knew. Arguably, the forest was to be the cradle of today's NSW conservation movement. In 1961 the



Alan Rigby, c1935
(Rigby family collection)



Myles Dunphy (Rigby family collection)

reserve was swallowed by the fledgling Blue Mountains National Park. But how did that park, and all the others in our World Heritage Area, come into being? The story starts back in that Blue Gum Forest campaign and the associated events of the time.

It was no accident that the forest's reservation occurred in the same year as the formation of the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs (now Bushwalking NSW) and Dunphy's National Parks and Primitive Areas Council. Fired up by the success of their collective action, bushwalkers became the main players in the national parks movement. Subsequently they were active in the formation of other influential groups including the Nature Conservation Council, the National Parks Association and the Colong Foundation (now Wilderness Australia).

This year has seen the 90th anniversaries of the Harbour Bridge and the ABC. But the anniversaries that should count for NSW conservationists are those of Blue Gum Forest and Bushwalking NSW. While the saving of Blue Gum may seem trivial in the light of current challenges, we should never lose sight of our conservation heritage. In celebrating pivotal events of the past we are reminded of the values we seek to protect, and we are recharged for the campaigns of the present and future.

Are government policy failures DAMNING Western Sydney?

--OPINION by Don Morison

Policy Failure No. 1 – The water cycle: The balance between the regular flooding of the Hawkesbury-Nepean and the ability of the soil to absorb water while sustaining food production and other agriculture has worked well for centuries. But now, irresponsible overdevelopment in the catchments of South Creek, Cattai Creek, the Upper Nepean and the Warragamba (the only inflow that would be affected by the Warragamba dam wall height) is destroying that balance. Huge areas are being paved over, climate change is exacerbating weather extremes and water policy has become a war zone.

Policy Failure No 2 – The fantasy of three independent cities: State Government has spread a myth that jobs and housing, along with other human activities, could somehow coagulate into three independent urban zones based on the Nepean, Parramatta and the East. Instead, the meaningful jobs are concentrating more than ever in the East, while the other zones are increasingly dormitories for cheap casualised labour.

Government over-invests in the kind of transport that still depends on fossil fuels and the Western Sydney Basin is a worsening trap for air pollution and lethal summer heat.

Policy Failure No 3 – Not slowing down the building of Badgerys airport: International aviation faces an uncertain future. Yet more vegetation that supports native fauna is earmarked for destruction to prevent bird strikes on planes that might fly one day. This offsets the expensive efforts to plant more vegetation elsewhere. Most of the people who can afford to fly frequently live much closer to Mascot than Badgerys and that shows no signs of changing. Nearly all money invested in Badgerys and the so-called future urban centre of "Bradfield" remains public money, which has to be diverted away from environmentally responsible spending at a time of budget crisis.

Policy Failure No 4 – Disregard for the bond between First Australians and the Nepean catchment:

Many different interest groups have tried to shed light on the traditional roles of indigenous people in relatively unspoiled parts of Western Sydney. There is a wealth of

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Kazan Brown and the Burragorang Valley

-- Diana Levy

If you've had a cup of tea this morning and you live below Faulconbridge, chances are the water from your tap comes from the drowned Burragorang Valley. At the end of April, I went to Burragorang Lookout to meet with Gundungurra knowledge holder Kazan Brown. The constant rain over the last two years had scotched plans to walk together on country. We looked down over Warragamba dam catchment as best we could through the clouds and mist. Her forebears, the Rileys, had fought a long and hard battle to retain their connection with their ancestral Burragorang Valley, which was below us and beneath the waters. Kazan's grandfather, John Joseph Riley ("Johnny"), and his wife Lily May lived near the waterhole "Gungarlook", one of the important places in the Gurangatch Mirragan songline (see www.wildernessaustralia.org.au/spotlight_on_the_nattai). She pointed up to what was the Wollondilly River to the location, but it was hidden in mist.

Looking down, we saw a huge slick of some indefinable substance on top of the water. I looked towards the landslide above the Nattai coal mines - these are visible from various places in the Blue Mountains. In this vicinity, coal washing has replaced coal mining. Kazan and others had gone to visit an important site near a creek that ran between two defunct coal mines.

She said, *Water is life, that water is orange-coloured, syrupy. There's no insects - no birds - no waterlife, no life in the bush nearby.* I asked, *Did it smell?* She said, *No. We were there on a rainy day, we could smell the bush. Horrible - it runs into the water supply for Sydney.*

We talked at length about her ancestors. Her grandfather Johnny was devastated when the family had to leave the valley to make way for the dam. But he was determined by hook or by crook to visit his valley and he would come back to fish. One of his skills was to make nets to catch eels. In simple terms the creator spirit Gurangatch is a rainbow serpent/ eel. Kazan said, *Do you know about our eels? ... You can tell when it's going to flood because they all gather at the gate -- they're huge.*

Kazan has had a lot of access to the valley over the years. *We get down there whenever we can. We haven't been down there for quite a while because the road isn't passable.* This is a source of grief. *Country needs people - our sites are not maintained - traditionally we would go down and touch things up. Just your presence means there are no weeds and that sort of thing. Things are getting destroyed by bushfires because we're not there to maintain it.*

This point of view, that country needs people, is the inverse of mainstream thinking. We tend to think about how people need country - for our sustenance.

Access is also getting harder because of the bureaucratic hurdles she must surmount. The dam is under the control of Water NSW. Kazan said, *The last time I applied they told me my daughter (Taylor Clarke) didn't need to be on country to learn her culture - Water NSW told her that.*

I applied before the last flood (and) we were told we didn't need to be on country to learn our culture, we could do that anywhere, that culture isn't a good enough reason for access. If they put the dam up they're going to give us a whole two days a year access - but what are we gonna see? What are they gonna destroy? There'll be nothing left.

Needless to say, Kazan is fighting the raising of Warragamba dam wall. Her profile picture says, *I tried to keep quiet but my ancestors wouldn't let me.*

(This is an abridged version of a chapter of my forthcoming book of walks in Gundungurra country)

**the geologist
points to ripples in stone -
an old riverbed**

Yellow Rock

Diana Levy

My Bush Regeneration

Journey: Part 1

--Alan Crooks

In 2013 we purchased a 4 acre bush block in Faulconbridge on the southern side of the highway with a street frontage of about 120 metres. By 2016 we had built and moved into our straw bale house.

Up until 2011 the road past our block had been a dirt track but at some stage in 2012 the road was paved and serious landscaping and construction work was carried out. This included the construction of small embankments designed to level the road surface and improve drainage.

And with the road came weeds! By the time we purchased the block the verge on both sides of the street was a weed infested jungle with large patches of African Love Grass, Coreopsis, Crofton weed and Blackberry among many others including dandelions and flat weeds.

At this point in our lives we were both working full time in our own business but our children had all grown up and left home so we were able to spend many of our weekends progressively dealing with the weeds in a structured and progressive manner.

On principle we decided to greatly limit the use of chemicals. The approach has been to attack a particular area of limited size (4-6 square metres) and hand weed it - completely removing any clumping weeds and other exotics such as Coreopsis and flatweed.

When weeding we are careful to keep any native plants that might have been able to survive the onslaught of the weeds - these include *Epacris*, *Kunzea ambigua*, various local acacias, especially the spiky wattles which have fantastic flowers and very spiky leaves, and many others.

After weeding we covered the area with a few sheets of newspaper or even cardboard boxes, of which we had a ready supply from our business, making sure to leave the natives uncovered, wet the newspaper/ cardboard down and cover the whole lot with a few inches of mulch.

The newspaper/ cardboard is essential to suppress the weeds and allow the natives to thrive. Even where weeds do break through they are much easier to remove as they are usually not so well rooted in the ground.

To be continued in September Hut News ...

Gang-gang Cockatoo, Greater Glider, Koala, Littlejohn's Frog, Pilotbird and Yellow-bellied Glider – all declining

--Judy Smith, Threatened Species Officer

Each of the above animals lives in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWH) but none are restricted to the WHA. They share the dubious honour of being threatened at national level.

Since 1st January 2022, an increasing risk of extinction faced by each of these six species has been recognised through changes to their status as listed in the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 2000* (EPBC Act). Such changes to status are determined by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee and are not made on a whim or because an animal is particularly well liked. The Committee must pull together existing published and unpublished information and consider set criteria before making an informed decision. For threatened species, the EPBC Act provides a hierarchy of threat level based on likelihood of extinction. From “best” to “worst”: Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically Endangered and Extinct.

The Gang-gang (Endangered), Yellow-bellied Glider (south-eastern) (Vulnerable) and Pilotbird (Vulnerable) were listed for the first time at national level. The jump from unlisted straight to Endangered for the Gang-gang is a big step. The Koala (combined populations of Qld, NSW and the ACT), Littlejohn's Frog and Greater Glider (southern and central) were uplisted from Vulnerable to Endangered. A step in the wrong direction for each.

Of these six nationally threatened species, all but the Pilotbird and Greater Glider are also considered threatened under NSW legislation. It beggars belief that the Greater Glider, nationally threatened since 2016 and now uplisted to Endangered, is still not listed at all under state legislation.

Further species in the GBMWH, including plants, are currently under consideration for potential threatened species listing under the EPBC Act.



Greater Glider - image by Peter Smith

The above changes have occurred since the five yearly national State of the Environment (SoE) report was completed in December 2021. At the time of writing, the SoE is yet, but likely soon, to be released.

The schedules of listed EPBC Act threatened species show that, last year (2021), 13 fauna species were added to the national list of Extinct (gone forever) species: Christmas Island Forest Skink, Desert Bettong, Nullarbor Dwarf Bettong, Capricorn Rabbit-rat, Broad-cheeked Hopping-Mouse, Lord Howe Long-eared Bat, Western Bandicoot, South-eastern Striped Bandicoot, Butterfly Bandicoot, Christmas Island Pipistrelle, Long-eared Mouse, Blue-grey Mouse, Percy Island Flying-fox. These species are now spoken of in the past tense, “was” rather than “is”, but not forgotten.

Maybe to acknowledge such loss, and no doubt other declines in the environment, was not considered a good look by the previous federal government prior to the 21st May 2022 election, hence the decision not to release the report pre-election.

Are government policy failures DAMNING Western Sydney? (Continued from page 5)

information in the submissions about the proposed raising of the Warragamba dam wall, highlighting the sacrifices such a project would involve. Non-fiction writers like Grace Karskens (*People of the River: Lost Worlds of Early Australia*) and fiction writers like Kate Grenville (*The Secret River*) have highlighted both the conflict and cooperation between First Peoples and invaders that has defined the Western Sydney contribution to modern Australian history. Yet, governments have pursued policies that ignore and seek to obliterate the physical reminders of this heritage.

Policy Failure No 5 – Disruption of productive rural communities: The role of outer Western Sydney as a food bowl and a contributor of other valuable produce has functioned well. The dangers of urban sprawl alienating worthwhile land use and creating waste that can't be disposed of in its own region are greater than ever in the era of climate change.

Policy failures of this magnitude are damning, both to government budget repair and to public confidence in the future. The interests of those of us who already live in Greater Western Sydney and the interests of the region's contributions to the nation would be best served by reversing these failed government policies.

Our mountains are falling apart

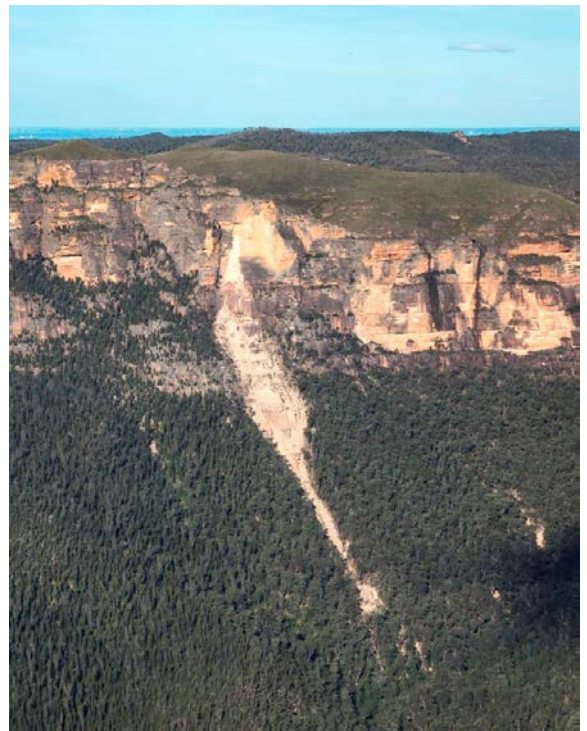
Part 1: Rock weaknesses

-- Ian Brown

The Grose Gorge as seen from many popular lookouts is 600 metres deep. Many cubic kilometres of rock have been shunted out to sea. Yet that has all happened in just 10 million years, since the last major uplift of the Blue Mountains. The lava that caps Mt Banks and Mt Hay on either side of the gorge originally flowed down valleys in an older landscape, about 15 million years ago. The scale of that history puts into some perspective our recent travails with landslides, marked by the tragically unlucky April landslip at Wentworth Falls.

Erosive forces are working away at our mountains, all mountains, constantly. They are all falling down. Its about gravity. And weather. And entropy. Most of the time the process is invisible, at least to how humans perceive the world. But erosion works in fits and starts, much of it driven by big weather events like floods. At these times catastrophic collapses mark the landscape. New landslides are everywhere just now. Roads and railways have fallen down. Many favourite tracks are closed. Some may never re-open. Rockfalls scar the cliffs. These are normal events, accelerated and bunched together by extreme rainfall.

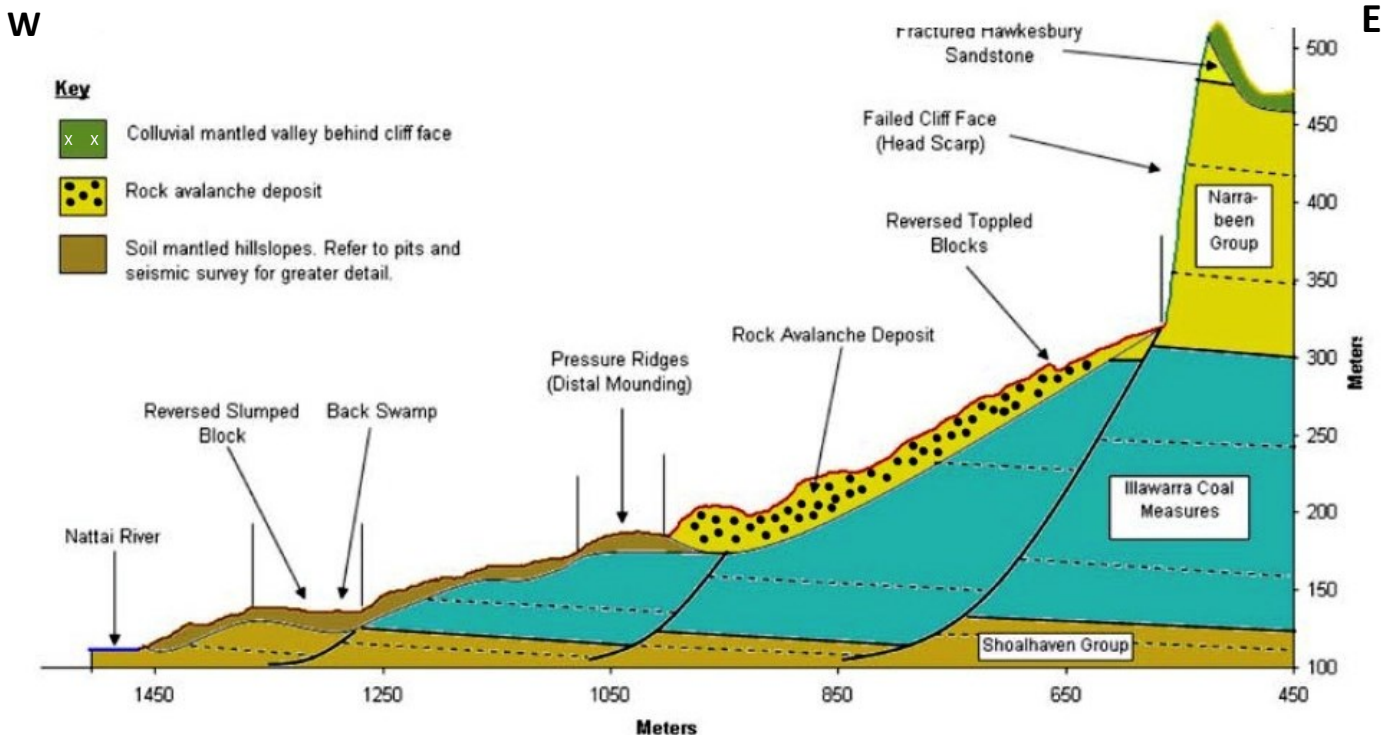
Landslides and rockfalls in the Blue Mountains can be understood in terms of the soft and hard layers that make up the local rock sandwich we see in the main valleys. Under the hard and brittle sandstone 'shell' are deep layers of softer rocks like shale. These rocks are more malleable, especially if waterlogging makes them softer, heavier and more lubricated. They can erode faster, squash, bend and slump, and then they can't carry the sandstone above. Sandstone is tough stuff, but has one major weakness: joints. The thick layers are criss-crossed with vertical cracks in a grid pattern. So when the sandstone layers fail from lack of support, they fall in pieces defined by joints. This can happen at all scales, from a cubic metre or less to whole hillsides.



The 'seahorse' rockfall on Lockley Pylon, seen from across Govett Gorge, Grose Valley. It began in 2021 but has enlarged in recent rains. (Ian Brown)

NEXT MONTH

Part 2: Landslides large and small



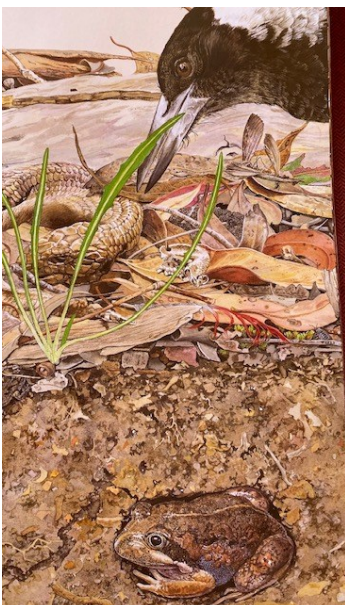
Cross-section of Tumbledown landslide (Nattai River) showing the rockfall from the sandstone cliff and the concept of rotational slumping in the Permian bedrock beneath. This pattern occurs in many other valleys of the Blue Mountains. (From Tomkins, Humphreys & Taylor, 2016, Sydney Catchment Authority Technical Report 3: Triggers of extreme erosion-sedimentation events on hillslopes in the Nattai catchment).

Reintroducing Rebecca Knight - BMCS Publicity Officer

Rebecca Knight is passionate about the Blue Mountains and has previously volunteered for the Conservation Society. She was actively involved in the past, promoting campaigns for protecting swamps and waterways. More recently she has worked on publicity and event management for campaigns including the screening of *The Weather Diaries* at Mount Vic Flicks which raised awareness about climate change. The Frog ID project and the 2022 Federal Election were among her other activities.

Rebecca has worked in marketing communications for over 20 years. She has lived in the lower Blue Mountains and at Katoomba. She has led her own start-up digital agency and served as a member of the board of directors for numerous innovative start-ups in tech as well as holding senior marketing and digital roles for several global corporate organisations and a number of not-for-profits. (Read Rebecca's profile at <http://au.linkedin.com/in/rjknight>)

Our publicity officer keeps busy with three young school-aged children at home. In her spare time, she enjoys bushwalking and weekends away with the family. She is also a singer/songwriter with performances at venues and festivals across Sydney and the Blue Mountains. Twice she has walked the Six Foot Track and has other favourite Mountain walks.



Above: View from the "Grotto" at Bureau Park

Left: Illustration from Rachel Tonkin's book

Exploring a hidden world

--Cathy Cavanagh

If you visit Bureau Park next to Katoomba North Public School you will get an idea of **'Leaf Litter: Exploring the Mysteries of a Hidden World'**. This is the title of Rachel Tonkin's book describing the world of nature at our feet.

Bureau Park is a much wetter habitat than the one Rachel describes. It is dominated by the magnificent *Eucalyptus oreades*, known as Blue Mountains Ash, with its great strips of peeling bark which provide a dense, impenetrable and secret shelter for the endless cycle of life.

Rachel's dramatic illustrations, with peep lift up panels, are suitable for adults and children alike to begin to explore and look closely at our world. She describes the changes of the seasons and the life and death cycles of plants, insects, birds and lizards in a refreshingly unsentimental and vivid style.

At the back of the book are detailed outlines of each season which are useful for parents and teachers alike. Published in 2003 and still available, this valuable book is worth either a revisit or a new purchase. And buy a magnifying glasses as well to explore the extraordinary details of the illustrations!

Then visit Bureau Park, a near pristine patch in an urban setting with adjacent swings, toilets and indestructible shelters in the shape of the distinct architecture of Blue Mountains recreation parks, the Grottoes.

Armed with your magnifying glass, keep to the unofficial tracks as you wander among the trees and their precious leaf litter.

Blue Mountain Conservation Society NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

We will be back at the
Blackheath Growers
Market on the second
Sunday in SEPTEMBER.

All enquiries to Nursery
Manager, Paul Irwin: plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com



Can Gardeners Save the Planet??

Probably not, but we can go a long way to mitigate the changes.

Trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals – even the tiniest backyard has a greater biodiversity of species, other than that of wilderness, than any other landholder. Think of fruit orchards, cotton and wheat farms, cattle stations and planted pine forests. They are monocultures and, as such, they destroy biodiversity.

Please, gardeners, plant as many trees as you can fit in your backyard. In general, 50% of the weight of a tree above ground is stored carbon. Even a mature lemon tree has an above ground weight of 300 kg and so it stores 150 kg of carbon.

Unfortunately the modern trend of landscaping contains many hard surfaces, stone or cement retaining walls, pergolas, decks and large pots of plants. Existing gardens are scraped clean, with all the mature trees, plant material, old rocks and paving stones put into a skip and taken off to landfill. Instead we should be using what is already there. Mulch and use on site any shrubs that are past their best. Use gravel or other permeable paths which allow the water to seep through, unlike concrete paths which create run-off. Maintain as much vegetation cover as possible. Some tests were carried out on different surfaces on a very hot day in an Australian city. The thermometer registered 4.5 degrees higher than the surrounds above bitumen paving, whilst it was 14.5 degrees lower above lawns and garden beds.

It is urgent that those people who are privileged enough to own a garden must do their best to mitigate catastrophic climate change.

-- Liz van Reyswoud.



Wild! A Greater Blue Mountains Alphabet

On the back page of this newsletter you will find the first instalment of artwork donated to the Society by Ingrid Hess. Children are invited to “Follow the alphabet and learn about the many interesting creatures that make the Greater Blue Mountains their home”.

You can download a black and white “outline” version of the artwork at <https://bluemountains.org.au/documents/hutnews/archive/2208-hutnews-wild-image.pdf>. Collect the pages as they appear in Hut News.

Ingrid Hess is a cut-paper artist and a professor of graphic design at the University of Massachusetts Lowell in the United States. In 2022, she spent a month in Australia at the BigCi artist residency. While there, she created a series of banners and a game that celebrate the diverse flora and fauna of the Greater Blue Mountains.

She worked with Yuri Bolotin, bushwalker and environmentalist, and Rae Bolotin, Director of the BigCi Artist Residency, to make sure the work has accurately reflected the Greater Blue Mountains.

This work has been donated by Hess, so that children and their parents can learn more about this region and how to be better caretakers of the environment. If we all do our part, we can make a difference in climate change and preserve the Greater Blue Mountains for generations to come.

Image:
Ingrid
Hess,
Wollemi
National
Park.



Join the Society

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.

Membership includes our monthly newsletter, Hut News, by post or e-mail.

Letters to the Editor

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



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

Aug 8 **Lockyers Track Head and Mt York 10km**, Mt Victoria Station 9.50, Grade 3, Carpool, Tracy 0434 362 611

Aug 15 **Red Hands Cave Track- Incl. Link Track-Exit Track and Euroka Clearing**, Glenbrook Station Car park 9-10, Gr 3, Wayne Read 0429 021 296, **Bring National Parks Pass.**

Aug 22 **Valhalla Head**, Mt Victoria Station 9.50, Carpool, Grade 2, Tracy 0434 362 611

Aug 29 **No set walk at this stage** - check Website

Sep 5 **No set walk at this stage** - check Website

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

Aug 9 **Taronga Zoo to Balmoral G1-2/7K**, Roger 0449902774..

Aug 16 **Euroka, Camp Fire Creek, Causeway** (Glenbrook) G2-3/8K, Robyn 0409127012.

Aug 23 **Dangar Island G1/4K**, Doug 0455850753.

Aug 30 **Crear Hill, Oran Park, Mt Annan Botanic Garden G1-2/4K** Margaret 0416849506.

Sep 6 **Fortress Ridge** (Leura) G1-2 8K, Robyn 0409127012.

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

Aug11 **Valhalla Head**. Mount Vic Stn 9.50am. Carpool \$7. Tracy 0434 362 611. Gr2. Take lunch.

Aug 18 **Mermaids Cave & Coachwood Glen, Megalong Valley**. Meet Blackheath N/hood Centre 9.45am. Carpool. Take lunch. Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2

(Thursday Walks, continued)

Aug 25 **Part of Six-Foot Track, Megalong Valley**. Meet Blackheath N/hood Centre 9.45am. Carpool. Take lunch.

Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Grade 2

Sept1 **Perrys Lookdown, Blackheath**. Meet Blackheath N/hood Centre 9.35am. Carpool. Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2

Sept 8 **Popes Glen, Blackheath**. Meet Blackheath N/hood Centre 9.45am. Carpool. Take lunch. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Grade 2

Sept 15 **Lockyer Track Head, Mount Victoria**. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Carpool Take lunch. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Grade 2

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

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

Aug 13 **Yellow Rock to Nepean River, up Winmalee Ridge**.

7km Map.Springwood. Leader Diana 0432619305 Meet Springwood Stn 8.30 am. Gr 3.

Aug 20 **Mt Banks 10km**. Map, Mt Wilson. Leader Harold 0409010737 Meet Mt Vic. Stn CP 8.30 am. Gr 3.

Aug 27 **Redhands Cave & Kanuka Brook**. 12km Map, Penrith. Leader Geoff 0497638083. Meet Glenbrook Stn. 8.30am. Gr3

Sep 3 **Jinki Ridge Spurs and Gullies**. 7km Map Mt Wilson Leader Freda fmoxom@gmail.com Meet Mt Vic. Stn. CP. 8.30am Gr 3-4.

Visit the Saturday walks facebook -

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

Monday walkers at Evans Crown

On 27th June, the Monday bushwalking group was very ably led by Melanie Lawson to Evans Crown, above Tarana, in perfect winter weather -- sunshine, blue skies and a fresh breeze. There were 16, with Melanie leading us up into the amazing boulder-strewn hills where we had far-reaching vistas across rolling green farming country, bathed in gentle sunlight.

We sat in the sun to enjoy our snacks and drinks after a lot of rock-hopping and climbing, gazing up at the immense boulders, some of which look as if they could fall at any time, so precariously balanced on top of other larger boulders, all weathered smooth by eons of wind and rain and showing various types of lichen and moss. Some fungi were spotted too, one very woody and the size of a small dinner plate. We saw plenty of evidence of wombats and other animals and were pleased that the Reserve offers shelter and habitat for many different species of wildlife.

On driving away at the end of the walk, we came across an age-old rural scene; a herd of Aberdeen Angus cattle being slowly driven along the road ahead of us, their owner on a quad bike behind them until we were able, in our four cars, to creep past quietly and get on our way.

It was a most enjoyable day out - such a friendly group and another look at some beautiful country.

-- Mave Roberts



WILD!

A Greater Blue Mountains Alphabet

The Greater Blue Mountains is unique. It is one of the most beautiful and most unusual places in the entire world. It is made up of seven national parks. Follow the alphabet and learn about the many interesting creatures that make the Greater Blue Mountains their home.



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COLOUR ME IN ...

Part 1 of an alphabetical journey through the Blue Mountains. Collect the pages. Download a black and white "outline" version of the artwork and add your colours. <https://bluemountains.org.au/documents/hutnews/archive/2208-hutnews-wild-image.pdf>