



In July and August Hut News, Andy Macqueen told us the story of the Blue Gum Forest and how it came to be saved. You are invited to help celebrate the 90th anniversary:



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

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?"

NPWS representative, Glenn Meade (NPWS Manager, Hawkesbury Nattai area), will talk about future directions of the Blue Mountains Area.

This is a FREE event hosted by the Blue Mountains Conservation Society. Introduction by Society President, Madi Maclean. All welcome. **REGISTRATION IS ESSENTIAL** on Eventbrite (<https://bit.ly/3oiKfWG>) to help us plan.

Enquiries: Andrew Solomon events@bluemountains.org.au

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

(Image: Blue Gum Forest C1995, Andy Macqueen)

The Message of the Lyrebird
Wednesday 21 September 6.50pm
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, 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>

Blue Mountain Conservation Society
NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

We will be back at the Blackheath Growers Market on SUNDAY 11th SEPTEMBER and on the 2nd Sunday of every month.

We will have a good selection of tube stock:
Prostanthera (mint bush) for a splash of purple or mauve, *Crowea* and *Bauera* pretty in pink, *Acacia* for a bright gold, and many more.

For enquiries or to place an order, please contact :

Nursery Manager, Paul Irwin: plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com



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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**THE DEADLINE FOR SEPTEMBER
HUT NEWS IS 15 SEPTEMBER**
hutnews@bluemountains.org.au
Enquire: Christine 4787 7246



Green Gully tree planting day – 20 August 2022

An enthusiastic and energetic army of volunteers gathered at the site of the old Carlons farm. Galong Creek was alive with a frog chorus and the weather was fine but cold. The regular bushcare group numbers were boosted by the Society's nursery volunteers and other Society members. After a demonstration of the planting process, everyone got busy.

Each planting involves digging, fertilizing, pegging down a weed mat, driving in stakes for a sturdy mesh tree guard and, finally, watering - quite a workout on steep terrain. One group worked at constructing tree guards - very necessary in view of the appetite of the local fauna! We were all reenergised at morning tea with luscious cakes supplied by NPWS.

The first plantings took place 15 years ago, near Dunphys Campground. This is now a well grown forest. The planting now extends along Galong Creek on slopes either side of the track.

We were happy with a very productive day, with about 140 tubestock planted. But there are still plenty more at the nursery, waiting their turn!

-- Sue Nicol

Images:
1 Volunteers hard at work.
2. Red-necked Wallabies were resting nearby.
(Sue Nicol)





Our mountains are falling apart

Part 2: Landslides large and small

-- Ian Brown

One famous, visible and historic example of a big rockfall is Dog Face at Katoomba. Likely helped by undermining, quite literally, when underground coal extraction caused faster subsidence. The headland fell down in 1931 to great acclaim, leaving a square-faced bluff to nicely illustrate the role of joints. All the cliffines are marked with such square features, and the slopes of our great valleys like the Kedumba, Grose and Wolgan are littered with the debris of past collapses, being a key mechanism in valley expansion.

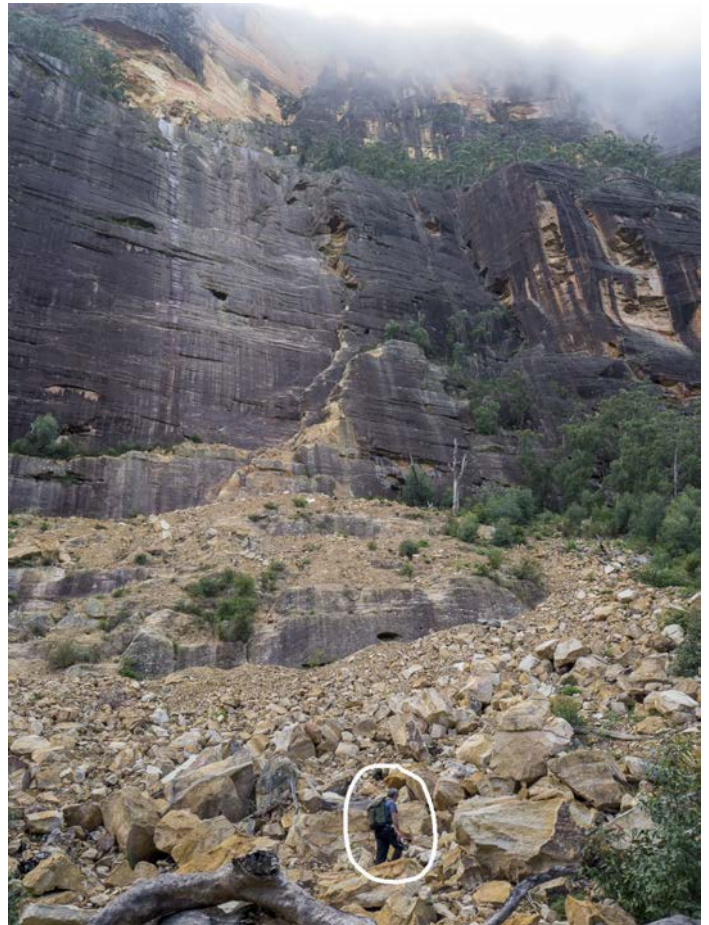
Some failures are enormous. The biggest known landslide in the Blue Mountains is a 13,000-year-old dump off the edge of Newnes Plateau. With a volume of about 30 million cubic metres (or fridges), it filled the valley and dammed Carne Creek below. In Fiordland, one of the world's biggest known slumps is of similar age and nearly 1000 times bigger at an incredible 27 cubic kilometres.

Smaller rockfalls involve a range of factors. Where just soil and dirt are involved, saturation can lead to slumping. This is the problem on the vertical swamp below Govetts Leap, where huge sods have fallen off and walloped the walking track many times. Sometimes the same factors that create big rockfalls can act at a smaller scale, where narrow bands of shale mixed with the sandstone can lead to breakages of only a few cubic metres. Small falls can be just as deadly, but where individual landslides will strike is impossible to predict. This is a conundrum for park management.

While landslides and rockfalls have always been happening, their frequency and risk have been low. That equation has changed with the pile-on of flood rains over the past two years, the number of landslides, and even fatalities. This is similar to the changing situation with lowland flooding.

No doubt NPWS and Council are seeking the best advice from geotechnical and risk management experts. They may take a probability and landscape approach, and map the level of risk across different areas. Some tracks and areas might be closed permanently, or at least in response to heavy rain.

We have to consider the possibility that recent events are not a temporary aberration and there might be big changes to the bushland access we have all come to enjoy. That would be yet another climate change tragedy. Are humans now changing geological processes? Quite possibly.



Images:

1. The ancient Carne Creek landslide, with boulders protruding from the debris pile and obvious vertical joints in the cliff beyond.
 2. A view of a 2012 rockfall in the Capertee River Gorge.
- Photos by Ian Brown.

How to 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 the 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. The newsletters are printed on recycled paper.

TO BEE OR NOT TO BEE - Bees of Australia - Part 1

- Chris Whiteman

To be or not to be may be the question, as without bees we may find as humans it is difficult to exist. Ancient cultures all revered bees. The Indians, Greeks, Romans and Mayans all had Gods and Goddess's of bees. There is even a philosophical treatise from India called Advaita Makaranda which is based on the life of bees. Native bees have had a cultural significance to indigenous Australians for thousands of years. Sugarbag bee honey from native Australian bees is a popular form of food and native beeswax is traditionally used in the sealing of tools as well as the formation of mouthpieces for didgeridoos.

Bees have been around for a long time; much longer than human beings. The process of how honey bees have evolved began somewhere between 80 and 150 million years ago, after the first flowers evolved in the Cretaceous period. They descended from predatory wasps, which had already been around for millions of years and unlike wasps which survive on paralysing other insects and spiders for food along with collecting some nectar, bees are primarily vegetarian surviving on pollen and nectar.

Many bees are specialists which focus on only a few plant species, but generalists such as the European honey bee feed on many host plants.

To sort out the confusion around bees in Australia the following notes may help. Some brief notes for a huge subject. This is to be a four part series in the Hut News covering Australian native bees and invasive bee species including the European honey bee and the Varroa mite pest.

Australian Native Bees

There are around 20,000 known bee species in the world with large numbers of species on each continent. For example, 4,000 are native to the United States; 800 are native to the South Asian countries to our north. It is estimated that there are 1,800 species in Australia. Most pollinate specific plants and are solitary, unlike European honey bees which work in colonies. There may be other species of native bees yet to be discovered, although native bees around the world are in decline and some species appear to be lost. This is mainly due to lost

habitat, urban development, increased frequency of fires, climate change and pesticides.

Eleven species of Australian native bees are small 3 to 4mm long, black stingless bees which live in nests inside hollow trees and make a strong tasting aromatic honey called Sugarbag, due to the bag like honey comb structures it is held in. In recent years they are being kept by beekeepers in small box hives but only make small amounts of honey compared with European honey bees. They have a queen, workers (female) and drones (male), similar to the European honey bees.

The native bees that sting are mostly too small to deliver an effective sting to humans and Australian native bees are not aggressive including the largest species, the Great Carpenter Bee which is up to 24 mm long.

Native bees have an important role in pollinating Australian native flora. Recent research has found that native bees, including stingless bees and blue banded bees, can be effective pollinators of many Australian agricultural crops including greenhouse grown tomatoes and capsicum. Field crops such as watermelons, macadamias, mangoes, blueberries and lychees may also be pollinated.

Fortunately, research has shown that Varroa mites do not attack Australian native bees due to the different biological features of European honey bees which make them host specific for Varroa mites.



Blue-banded bee
(*Amegilla cingulata*)

References:

Houston, Terry (2018) *A guide to Native Bees of Australia*, CSIRO Publishing.

<https://www.aussiebee.com.au/index.html>

Sunday, 23rd October 2022, 4.30–5.30 pm, Katoomba The Mick Dark Talk for the Future

The Mick Dark Talk for the Future honours the extraordinary generosity and legacy of Mick Dark, a past president of Blue Mountains Conservation Society and patron of Varuna.

The talk aims to inspire community discussion of environmental issues of local and global significance.

Speaker, Costa Georgiadis, is a landscape architect, environmental educator and television presenter. He has an all-consuming passion for plants and people.

The event is co-sponsored by Blue Mountains Conservation Society and by Varuna, the National Writers' House. It is supported by Megalong Books, the Blue Mountains Food Co-op and the Blue Mountains Edible Garden Trail.

Tickets on sale from 15th September <https://bit.ly/MickDark2022>

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY: Saturday 19th November 2022, 9am-5pm at NSW Teachers Federation Conference Centre, Surrey Hills.

"Tourism Development in Protected Areas -- are we on the right track?"

Explore this controversial topic. Hear different viewpoints and help formulate a position statement on this topic in collaboration with other interested parties. Hosted by Bushwalking NSW Inc.

More information will be available on <https://www.bushwalkingnsw.org.au/> and in October Hut News.

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



The Dead Tree Detective

Yes, there really is a Dead Tree Detective! Prof. Belinda Medlyn is researching the causes of tree death and ill health.

The research project is being conducted at UWS, Hawkesbury campus. The aim of the project is to collect data about dead and dying trees around Australia and to evaluate the causes. Are they climate related or natural, or are there other causes? It is a citizen science project.

You can help by taking photos, of any sick or dying trees. Do they have dead branches or browning leaves? Are possums, koalas, Bell Birds or insects living in the tree? Just enter the photos and details into the Dead Tree Detective website. To make it easy, there is a Google map which

can be enlarged to help pinpoint the location.

Enter your information on this link: <https://biocollect.ala.org.au/acsaproject/index/77285a13-e231-49e8-b212-660c66c74bac>

Image: *Eucalyptus oreades*, North Katoomba.

Read also: The next wave of *Eucalyptus oreades* loss - Page 8.

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

LACHLAN'S LEGACY MEMORIAL GATHERING AND JAMISON CREEK CATCHMENT EVENT

Saturday, 12 November 2022

From 10.00 am

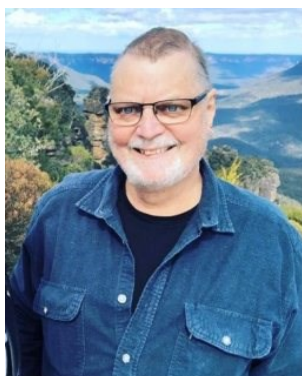
Wilson Park, Wentworth Falls

We will honour the life and voluntary work of Lachlan Garland by gathering together. There is also the option of easy planting to improve the Jamison Creek Catchment.

Food and drink will be provided, but a plate to share would be appreciated. If seating is required, please bring your own chair. We hope you can join us!

Enquiries and RSVP (for catering purposes):

Karen Hising – khising@bmcc.nsw.gov.au or 0420 502 763



Not the time for complacency -- Clare Power, Sustainability and Climate Change Officer

A new government's escape from climate wars that have resulted in climate inaction and regression is now our hope. 43% below 2005 levels by 2030 will be the best legislated target we have ever had. Some action at last is happening, but it doesn't mean that public pressure can ease.

Often I am reminded of scenes from Al Gore's 2006 film, *An Inconvenient Truth* which warned us to act immediately. Climate-related catastrophes around the world, the suffering of those affected, and the devastation to animal and plant life and ecosystems reveal the cost of complacency.

Climate activists, environmentalists, the Greens and concerned citizens decry new coal and gas projects. Analyses of the Scarborough-Pluto gas project in Western Australia alone project it will emit almost 1.4 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases over its lifetime. Professor Bill Hare writing in 'The Conversation' claims there are up to 114 fossil fuel projects in the pipeline.

An approach to preventing new coal or gas projects was recently initiated by the Environment Council of Central Queensland (ECoCeQ), with help from Environmental Justice Australia (EJA). They have requested Federal Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek reconsider the earlier approval of 19 coal and gas projects due to their effect in worsening climate change, impacting all of Australia's protected species and places.

According to the Climate Council, this is a major action which requires the Minister to either re-confirm the decisions made by her predecessors to approve coal and gas projects under the Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act), or revoke them.

This act was designed to protect nationally significant places, ecosystems and wildlife but climate change is not included as a factor within the legislation. The action taken by ECoCeQ demands that the EPBC Act must include an examination of the impact of climate change from new coal and gas projects. Watch that space!

Joelle Gergis, Australian climate scientist and IPCC author, has a new book coming out called *Humanity's Moment: A Climate Scientists Case for Hope*. The promotional blurb quotes her: '*Acknowledging that the world as we know it is coming apart is an act of courage. If I live to look back at this troubled time, I want to say that I did all that I could, that I was on the right side of history. The question is, do you want to be part of the legacy that restores our faith in humanity?*'

SPRINGTIME IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

SPRING TIMELINE – a diary of natural events

In Australia, the first day of September is considered the first day of Spring. But, in many European countries, the Equinoxes and both Winter and Summer Solstices are considered the change of season. Nature has her own ideas. What appears to be the beginning of spring in Cairns or Blackheath can be a totally different time. So how do we know when it's Spring?

We notice deciduous trees bursting into bud - we find the coconut fibre liners in our hanging baskets have been pulled apart by birds using the material to build their nests in order to lay their eggs. Plants, which hung around forever, suddenly start to grow and all sorts of flowers start to bloom.

20 years ago, Jim Smith produced a "Timeline for the Upper Blue Mountains". How much of that is true today? His lists are on the Society's website. I challenge you to see how many of these events still happen in the Upper Blue Mountains during spring, now that the climate has made a significant change. You might also notice species and significant natural events that occur now that are not mentioned in the 2002 Timeline and may not have occurred then.

Please send your lists to Hut News and we will compare notes in early December when summer is supposed to be upon us.

-- **Liz van Reyswoud and The Hut News Team**

hutnews@bluemountains.org.au



Boronia rigens, Blackheath, mid August 2022. Photographer Sue Nicol.

UPPER BLUE MOUNTAINS TIMELINE

In 2002, Jim Smith compiled a Timeline for the Upper Blue Mountains for Mountain Plateau areas 900 to 1200 metres (Wentworth Falls to Hassans Walls, Lithgow).

You can find it on Blue Mountains Conservation Society's website at <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/timeline/index.shtml>. It is beautifully illustrated with photographs.

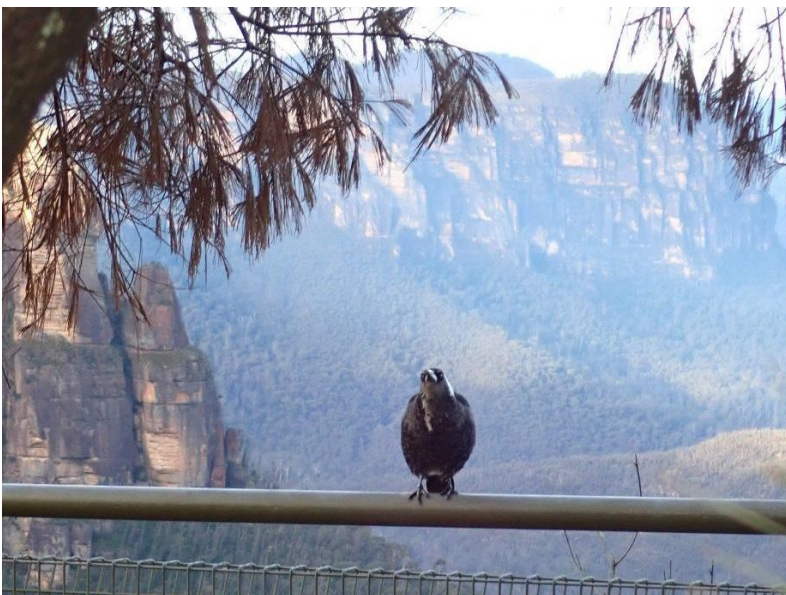
Seasonal observations are listed:- Mammals; Reptiles and Frogs; Aquatic; Insects; Birds; Plants. September is the driest month. Equinox on 22 September.

For instance, here are some observations of bird activity listed for September:

Migrants return: Rufous Whistlers from Qld, Sacred Kingfishers from Qld, NG; Southwards honeyeater migration peaks; Satin Bowerbirds display, mate, lay eggs; Rose Robins return to gullies; Kookaburra calls increase; Many juvenile New Holland Honeyeaters dispersing; Channel-billed Cuckoos arrive.

And, some early spring flowers: *Grevilleas* (*G. phyllicoides*, *G. mucronulata*) Epacridaceae (*Woolsia*, *Epacris microphylla*, *E. pulchella*); *Leucopogon* flowers perfume the air from September/October; Pea flowers (e.g. *Bossiaea rhombifolia*); Orchids (Sun Orchids, *Caladenia*).

What is happening now, 20 years later? Open a new diary and start recording your nature observations. Your observations will be invaluable twenty years and more further down the track.



A magpie's serenade at Govetts Leap. But an early morning melting of the snow is a reminder that spring is not here yet. (Christine Davies)

Invitation to join new working group on feral deer in the Blue Mountains

Feral deer are moving into the Blue Mountains. They could cause major impacts to its rainforests, wetlands, forests and woodlands and many of the area's World Heritage values. They are likely to damage threatened ecological communities such as our precious upland swamps.

It's important we act soon before this large and destructive new herbivore becomes entrenched in the mountains.

The Invasive Species Council is seeking members to join a new working group to address the growing deer threat to the Greater Blue Mountains. The group is particularly interested in keeping the Grose Valley, Upper Blue Mountains escarpments and large parts of the Wollemi wilderness deer free.

Working group members need to be willing to attend monthly meetings and undertake volunteer activities to assist with building awareness and seeking government action.

Please email bmdeer@invasives.org.au if you would like to join the Blue Mountains Feral Deer Working Group.

Camden White Gum – proposed for uplisting from Vulnerable to Endangered in NSW

Camden White Gum *Eucalyptus benthamii* grows to 40 m tall. Leaves are dull green, the trunk smooth and white with a stocking of rough bark at the base. It flowers in late summer and fruits form in clusters of seven. It has a restricted distribution, growing only on sandy creek flats of the Kedumba, Nattai and lower Nepean Rivers. Numbers are low and most (88%) of the extant population is within the Kedumba Valley in Blue Mountains National Park (within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area) (GBMWA).

The species is currently listed as threatened (Vulnerable) under both NSW and Commonwealth threatened species legislation. The NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee (the Committee) has recently made a Preliminary Determination to uplist the conservation status of this species to Endangered. The Committee cites major threats to Camden White Gum as habitat loss (land clearing, urban development, proposed raising of the Warragamba Dam wall and construction of other smaller dams), changed hydrology (flood mitigation and proposed raising of the Warragamba Dam wall), weed invasion and inappropriate fire regimes.

The Society has made a submission (can be read on our website) to the Committee supporting the uplisting of the species. We have suggested that Anthropogenic Climate Change should also be listed as a major threat. The unprecedented severity and extent of the 2019-20 Black Summer wildfires and subsequent floods are clearly a consequence of Anthropogenic Climate Change. Such events threaten Camden White Gum, an important part of the internationally significant biodiversity of the GBMWA, and place it at risk of extinction.

The Society recommends that further analysis be carried out on past loss of habitat and population reduction; that estimates should be quantified for the future percentage loss likely in the Kedumba Valley population if Warragamba Dam wall is raised; and that ongoing monitoring of the remaining Camden White Gums be undertaken. Such studies would determine if a future reassessment of the species is warranted.

If you are unable to access local trees, it is possible to see and admire Camden White Gums at the National Arboretum (Forest 30, planted 2007-2008) in Canberra. Submissions to the Committee close on 1 October 2022 if you would like to make your own submissions.

If you would like to help with future submissions in regard to threatened species please contact Judy.

--Judy Smith, Threatened Species Officer
Email: smitheco2@gmail.com



Sambar deer stag covered in mud in
Manningham, Victoria
– Invasive Species Council

A Dilemma

The urgent need to fast track the development of renewable energy is causing a dilemma for environmentalists. On one side the need for the development of new infrastructure to reduce CO2 emissions (eg. powerlines, solar farms, wind farms, pumped hydro and new hydro dams) is acknowledged but "not in my backyard" and "not when it affects the environment". So, in short, impossible ?

I was born into this world without my doing. From the first breath I take in oxygen and breath out carbon dioxide. I take resources and discard them in an increasing cycle of consumption from the first nappy to my needs for transport, food, shelter and the never-ending requirements of being a modern 'consumer' until I blow my final bit of CO2 through the chimney of the crematorium.

There is no escaping from the negative influence my human existence has on the natural environment. The only way nature - as we know it - can survive is by getting rid of us. The history of the Easter Islanders shows us clearly where we are at.

However, in the short term, we need to find a balance of gain and loss. Is there a gain when we try and save a habitat when it will burn in the next fire due to climate change? But who can know and assess that? Can we develop a system that values the gains and losses realistically? And in case we come up with such a frame work, how will we ever all agree on it? It seems so utterly hopeless.

Jane Goodall has said 'We're in a great, big, dark tunnel and there's all these obstacles and pitfalls and things which seem impossible to surmount or to cross. But right at the end of that tunnel is a little pinprick of light. And that's the hope that we are working to reach.'

A dilemma is by definition when the two choices we have are equally undesirable. However, I believe in our situation doing nothing is not an option and therefore, despite the dilemma, we must go forward into the dark tunnel using as best we can the knowledge and skills and humanity we have and try to aim for that pinprick of light.

-- Thomas Ebersoll, Newnes

Snakes and Cakes

For some, the thought of bushland
Brings thoughts of spiders - and those
snakes!

So the lure of the Mountains,
Is more the coffee, scones and cakes!

Our lives today are hectic -
Phones in hands and minds away.
The land we walk gets little thought,
And Nature's mysteries hold no sway.

But, respite from all our turmoil
Is near at any season.
Our bushland waits with open arms
To calm our fears,
And give voice to reason.

-- Ross Bridle 2022

Our Changing World: Stories about science and nature from out in the field and inside the labs across Aotearoa New Zealand.

This prize winning podcast has recently been broadcast by ABC Radio National. I heard an episode about The Battling Beetle.

The Stag Beetle spends its day in the moist soil and at night climbs a favourite tree to eat sap. This beetle is an important part of the rainforest ecosystem. But it is threatened by habitat destruction and predation by introduced rats.

Like many stories about the environment, this is not a cheerful subject. But I was impressed when I heard the scientists speak so fondly and with such passion about these little beetles and what they are doing to try and save them.

In this changing world, so many species are under threat. But we rarely hear mention of insects and other small creatures. Google "Our Changing World Radio NZ" to find a link to this podcast and other stories.

-- Christine Davies

The next wave of *Eucalyptus oreades* loss

-- Meredith Brownhill

Blue Mountains Ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*) with their tall white trunks used to grow all over the Katoomba – Leura ridgetop in the Upper Mountains.

It was my neighbour, Tom McLaughlin (1909 – 2001), who told me that Blue Mountains Ash used to grow all over the ridgetop. Tom worked as a council blacksmith until horses were replaced by motor vehicles, so he knew when vehicles replaced horses and told me he saw the *Eucalyptus oreades* cut down to make way for the hospital (built in 1927) housing and highway.

I listened to Tom's stories, and now believe the land clearing of the early 20th century was the first wave of Mountain Ash tree loss on the ridgetop. Now, in the early 21st century the health of these trees is deteriorating rapidly. As I watch these lovely trees deteriorate I ask, are we witnessing the second wave of tree loss?

After the drought and catastrophic summer 2019/2020 their slow decline hastened. "Too much heat for *oreades*" was what I heard from plant people. Then as the months of rain continued, browning leaves and dead branches became visible – I heard it said, "The climate extremes are too much".

The trees in great trouble are in gardens, backyards, footpaths and median strips. Others in trouble are beside the railway and G. W. Highway to Medlow Bath. Will they recover? Seedlings are unlikely to survive in these places and it is likely that within ten years most of them will be gone from urban areas on the Katoomba – Leura ridgetop.

Nature reserves such as Bureau Park, The Gully and Bonnie Doon Wildlife Protection Area do have healthy *E. oreades* as well as unhealthy. There is hope for seedlings to survive in nature reserves. Should we collect seed from healthy trees for propagation and planting?

Are we looking at urban impacts or climate change? I contacted the Dead Tree Detective, who is doing a survey about dead and dying trees (1). It seems that old dead branches are a response to drought, and browning leaves on the lower branches are water stress.



Healthy *Eucalyptus oreades* forest, Bonnie Doon, Katoomba

Deprivation of sunlight from all the cloud cover is another factor to consider.

Is climate warming a cause of their rapid decline? In a *Sunburnt Country*, Joelle Gergis states that *Australia's land and ocean temperatures have warmed 1 degree since 1910, with much of this warming occurring since 1970* (2).

Blue Mountains Ash live at altitudes over 950 metres where it is cooler. They hold carbon. They are habitat for birds, possums, gliders and micro-bats that need dense canopies for foraging. They give us shade, cool and clear air and beautiful surrounds.

We speak about the heartwood of trees as being the supportive pillar that will not lose strength (3). Blue Mountains Ash do indeed have heart (wood), so let's get busy and plant more.

References

1. The Dead Tree Detective <https://biocollect.ala.org.au/acsa/project/index/77285a13-e231-49e8-b212-660c66c74bac>
2. *A Sunburnt Country*, 2018, page 113, Joelle Gergis.
3. *The Arbor Day Foundation* <https://www.arborday.org/trees/ringstreenatomy.cfm>

Can we have our cake and eat it too?

-- Paddy Cavanagh

Many among that declining band who still read newspapers take delight in the folksy way in which Ross Gittins explains economics in his regular Sydney Morning Herald columns.

In a recent article (*A wounded environment leads to an unliveable economy*, SMH, 3/8/22) he used the recently released State of the Environment Report to highlight the idea attributed to Karl Marx that, in the economy, *everything is connected to everything else*.

Listing numerous examples, he demonstrates the environmental damage that is being done as we supposedly *grow* the economy and become more *prosperous*: the scarring of the environment; the loss of habitat and species; polluted air, soil and water. All accentuated by the rapidly accelerating climate change increasingly evident in more frequent and intense heatwaves, droughts, floods, storms and bushfires.

Continuing to reference the Report, Gittins links this environmental damage and climate change to current economic woes: a lot of our recent complaints about the cost of living; the high cost of meat and vegetables and the mythical \$10 iceberg lettuce; come from the delayed effect of the drought and the recent effect of the floods.

Even our mental health and wellbeing are affected. Indeed, though Gittins does not mention it, the extent of depression and apocalyptic despair among today's youth must surely be linked in some way to the environment destruction and climate crisis they wake to each morning.

But though Gittins explains the problem, he does not really offer a solution or indeed get to the crux of it. For this we must go to the first Key Finding of the Report itself:

In a rapidly changing climate, with unsustainable development and use of resources, the general outlook for environment is deteriorating.

Bill Clinton was far more Neo-Liberal than Marxist. But despite his dubious ethics the Democrat President was on the money when he said:

It's all about the economy, stupid!

It is encouraging to note that the neo-liberal economic paradigm that both major political parties have imposed on us over the past 40 years is increasingly being challenged in public debate.

For, no matter how many EV cars we put on our roads or how many solar panels on our rooves, we will not stop climate change nor save the environment unless we overturn that insidious paradigm.

We cannot have our cake and eat it too. Marie Antoinette discovered that.

References:

Australia. State of the Environment 2021, Australian Government, Canberra. <https://soe.dcceew.gov.au/>

Ross Gittins, *A wounded environment leads to an unliveable economy*. Sydney Morning Herald. 3/8/22.

<https://www.smh.com.au/business/the-economy/a-wounded-environment-leads-to-an-unlivable-economy-20220802-p5b6jn.html>



Eco Hint of the Month, by the *Two Elderly Greenies*

Recycle an old plastic or glass spray container by mixing one part vanilla to 8 or 10 parts of water for an effective fridge or bathroom spray ...

New helicopter facility approved for Penrith Lake

The State Government via the Independent Planning Commission recently approved development of a commercial helicopter facility called Nepean Aerospace Park by Heliport Developers Pty Ltd at Penrith Lakes, Castlereagh. The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is extremely disappointed with the approval and raised concerns during the public submission process.

The approval will allow flights to operate from 7:00am to 10:00pm daily. The maximum number of flights per calendar year will be 750, with maximum number of 23 daily. Up to five helicopters will operate at the new facility. Only helicopters operated by the helipad operator may take off or land at the site, except in emergencies.

The Society made a submission raising negative impacts on the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. The operator offers scenic flights to a number of rural and regional locations from its current place of operations at Granville. The new location could increase joy and scenic flights over the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, affecting native fauna, visitor experience and enjoyment.

The approval emphasises the existence of Federal regulations to control aircraft movements, including voluntary fly neighbourly agreements to manage low flying aircraft over environmentally sensitive areas. It is the Society's experience that these type of voluntary agreements are woefully inadequate and ineffective in regulating inappropriate low flying joy or scenic flights over areas such as national parks.

A possible precedent has been set by the Department of Planning to characterise intensive commercial helicopter operations, with a high number of daily flights, as "helipads" and not as "heliports". Helipads were previously defined as lower scale less intensive private helicopter operations and are therefore a permissible development in a much wider range of areas than bigger and more intensive commercial heliport operations. The Society is concerned that due to the precedent set by this decision we could see proposals to ramp up existing low key helipads to more large scale intensive commercial heliports.

Blue Mountains City Council also lodged a submission raising concerns with this development. The Mayor, Mark Greenhill, has publicly stated that Council is reviewing its options going forward.

---Land Use Subcommittee



Lookouts and escarpment walks

Part 1: An era of transformation

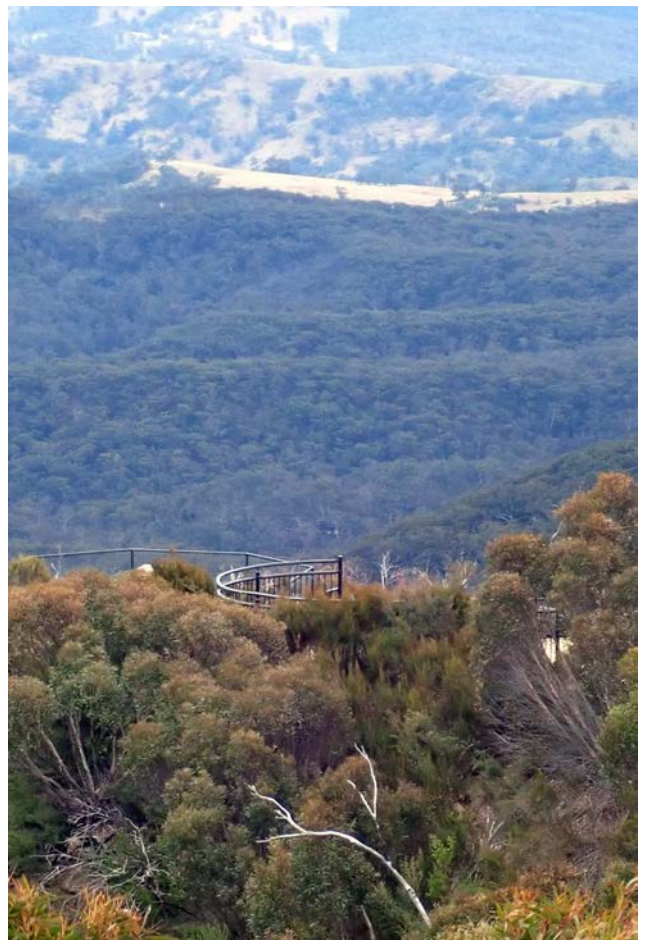
Opinion by Don Morison

After years of neglect, we are now seeing a period of renewal for many popular locations on the Blue Mountains track and lookout network. Both Blue Mountains City Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service have been able to allocate funds to improve the condition of key sections on tracks and at lookouts.

The Blue Mountains contains one of the most extensive and cohesive works of landscape architecture in Australia, as represented by its walking tracks, and there are still numerous sites where further work is under consideration. Complicating things, there is very challenging topography in some areas highly attractive for walking. Much construction from the 1860s to recently took place in ignorance of what we now know about geotechnical issues and climate trends.

Shipley Plateau now bristles with private property signs and obstructions to formerly permissible walks, but Mount Blackheath and Hargraves Lookouts are much more visitor-friendly. Bulls Camp, Woodford, has a footpath towards the beginning of the Blue Pool track. Works at Govetts Leap and Evans Lookout are underway. Major plans are in train for the Glenbrook area.

A Government-endorsed strategy to reconcile tourism and local accessibility is the Grand Clifftop Walk plan from Wentworth Falls to Katoomba. Numerous sections of it have been damaged in various rain events over the past three years. Even so, the parts of it that have been reconstructed



are inspiring to walk on and encourage families and mobility-restricted walkers to seek access.

Blue Mountains Council organised consultations are underway for various precincts along the Grand Clifftop Walk under the umbrella of the Southern Scenic Escarpment Plan. An onsite consultation session for the Gordon Falls Leura precinct took place on 13 August.

(The next instalment will discuss conservation challenges posed by some upgrading techniques.)

Images: New work superimposed on ancient lichen-covered sandstone at Hargraves Lookout, overlooking Kanimbla Valley; Cahills Lookout railing peeps above the heathland overlooking Megalong Valley. (Photographs by Christine Davies)

Effie's Seat on Darwins Walk

Do you have a photo of the plaque at the base of Effie's Seat on Darwins Walk?

I deal with Publications in the Blue Mountains Historical Society. One of the things we do is publish a series of A5 sized books known as the "Buff Books", of which I am editor. There are currently ten of these books, each of which deals with a particular historical topic. We have now produced one on the subject of Darwin's Walk in Wentworth Falls. Its title will be **DARWIN'S WALK: The European history & visits in 2017 & 2022**.

John Low's online Dictionary of Sydney article mentions Effie, https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/darwins_walk_wentworth_falls but I would be very interested in any additional information. Such information and photos would of course be acknowledged in our book.

-- Erik Halbert, 04058 28556 erik.halbert@gmail.com

Bob Brown Foundation takayna Trek 2023

Trek takayna with the Bob Brown Foundation and help save one of the world's most ancient landscapes from imminent destruction.

<https://inspiredadventures.com.au/event/bobbrownfoundation-takayna-2023/>



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 3-5 hours. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. Coordinator: Keith Dorrian 04111 62345. keithdor53@hotmail.com

Sep 12 **Empire Pass Lawson. Walk to Frederica Falls** and along creek to Dante's Glen, Fairy Falls, Echo Bluff and return to Lawson Station. ~8km/Gr2. Lyn Bevington 04323 53850.
Sep 19 **Blue Gum Swamp and Bees Nest Hill, Winmalee.** ~13km, 270m ascent/descent. Angela Berry 04271 33327.
Sep 26 **Fairy Bower, Cows Cave, Grotto, Fairy Bower, Mount Victoria Circuit.** Gr2 ~5km. Pat Whitehead 04290 03639.
Oct 3 **Norman Lindsay Gallery to Springwood Creek and Birdwood Gully.** 5.5 km, steep descent/ascent. Colin Ford 04215 02954.

TUESDAY FITNESS WALKS: Coordinator: Susan Nicholls (4754 1516 suerosn@bigpond.net.au).
Sep 6 **Fortress Ridge (Leura)** G1-2/8K, Robyn 04091 27012
Sep 13 **Panther Track & Hassans Walls (Lithgow)** G2/12K Judith 04197 80640.
Sep 20 **Fagan Park (Galston).** G1/5K Marilyn 0409924663.
Sep 27 **Mount Blackheath (Blackheath)** G1/6K Maurice 4739 4942.

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)

Sep 15 **Lockyer Track Head, Mount Victoria.** Gr2. Tracy 0434 362 611.
Sep 22 **Jackson Park and Surrounds, Faulconbridge.** Gr2. Ros 04172 61465.
Sep 29 **Mystery Walk, Springwood.** Gr2. Colin 04215 02954.
Oct 6 **Chester Road to Rocket Point, Wentworth Falls.** Gr2. Beverley 4757 2076.
Oct 13 **"Deidre's Walk", Bullaburra.** Gr2. Beverley 4757 2076.

SATURDAY WALKS: Usually a full day, longer walk at a faster pace. Coordinator Harold Thompson (04090 10736, Harold.thompson@bigpond.com).

Sep 10 **Ikara, Girraween Ladies Rock, Thor.** 10km. Gr 3-4. Freda - fmoxom@gmail.com
Sep 17 **Dalpura to Birrabang.** 11km, Map Mt Wilson. Gr 3-4. Harold 04090 10737.
Sep 24 **Urella Lockdown via Lawson Ridge.** 10km. Map Katoomba. Gr3. Harold 04090 10737.
Oct 1 **Gouchs Crater.** 8km. Map Wollangambe. Gr3. Harold 04090 10737.

My Bush Regeneration Journey: Part 2

--Alan Crooks

In Part 1, I explained how we built our house on a large bush block with roadside verges that had become weed infested and what we did about it, including using newspaper or cardboard under mulch as a weed suppressant.

Fortunately we have a friend who is a tree lopper and so were able to get loads of mulch from time to time and have never had to purchase any. Tree loppers are always looking for ways to get rid of their mulch otherwise they have to pay to dump it.

Progressively over the years the roadside verge in front of our block has become by now essentially weed free and it is a delight to see the native plants reclaim their birthright and thrive in a supported and loving environment, especially the *Kunzea ambigua* which are spectacular when in flower in Spring.

When I say "essentially weed free" I mean that the price of liberty from weeds is eternal vigilance as they are very highly evolved to establish themselves – relentless incrementalism is our motto and there are few things more rewarding and fun than giving our fabulous native plants a chance to re-establish themselves.

With our verge now under control I have extended around the corner to look after the verge of two

neighbouring uninhabited blocks and have extended some 300 metres down the road.

Unfortunately there are only so many hours in the day and our block also needs care and attention and I have now reached my capacity to properly maintain the weed management to the extent I'm happy with. I am also now volunteering on a local Bushcare group working in a nearby park.

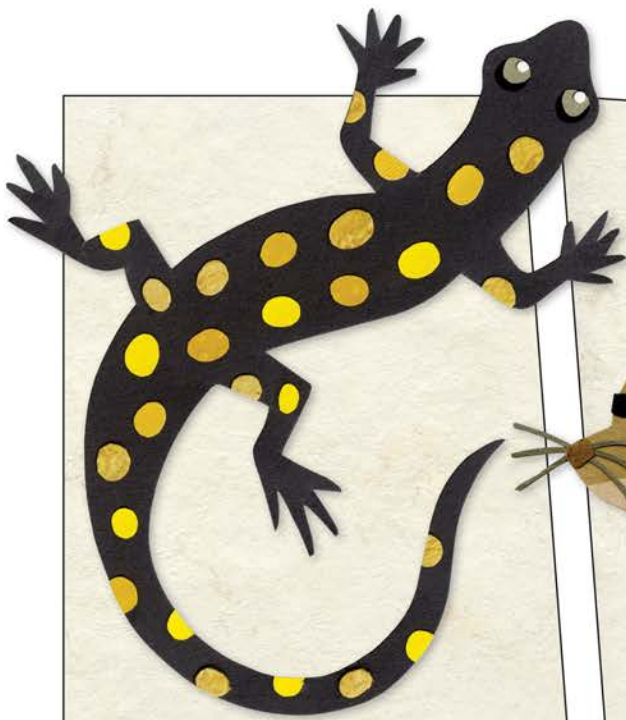
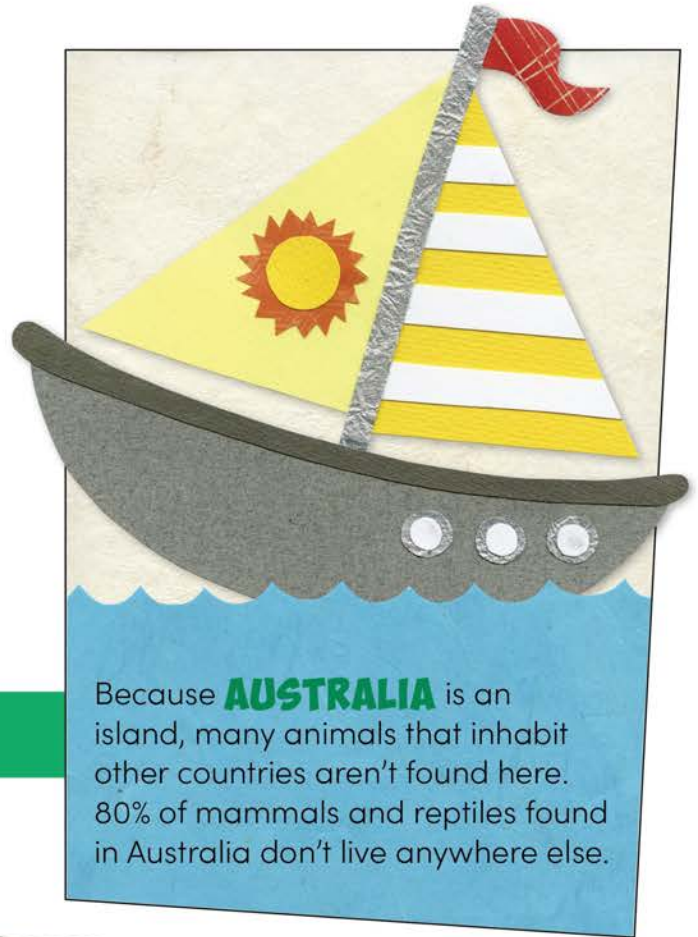
I plan to contact our neighbours, who all have large blocks, to see if they would be interested in just looking after the verge in front of their place to improve the overall look and feel of the neighbourhood. Unfortunately for over 400 metres the road into our estate borders the railway line and this embankment is terribly weed infested and never actively managed by the railways.

One of the disincentives for weeding one's local area is that it costs money to dispose of the weeds at the Blaxland tip – about \$45 a trailer load. It would be great if Council could arrange for a skip to be left nearby so that I and my neighbours could all put our weeds in it to be taken away on a regular basis, say quarterly.

Hopefully you have found these articles interesting.

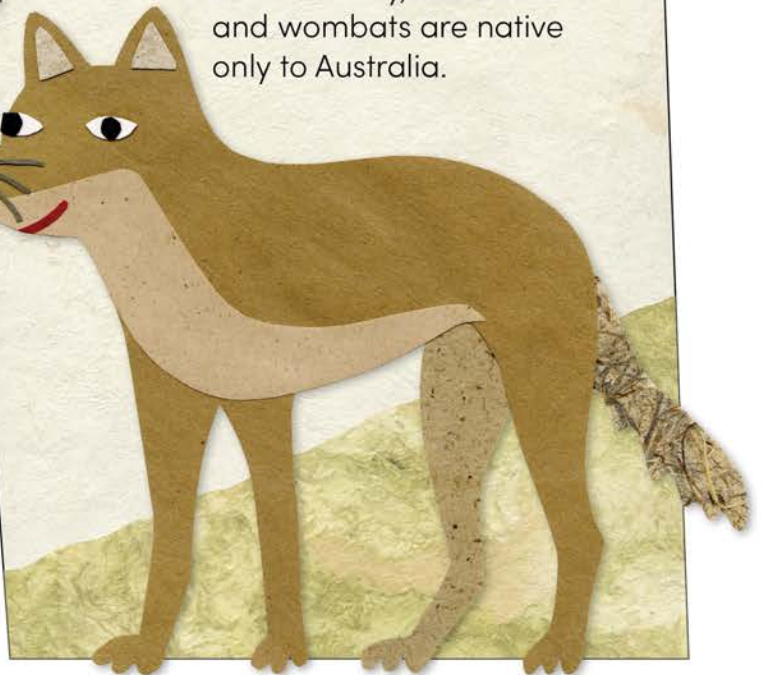
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AUSTRALIA



Australia has no native **SALAMANDERS**. Squirrels, porcupines, and beavers are also not native to Australia.

DINGOS and echidnas can each be found in one other country, but koalas and wombats are native only to Australia.



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