



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

NSW State Election - 25 March 2023

The NSW State Election will be held on Saturday 25 March 2023. The Society's theme for this election is **"The Blue Mountains - Let It Be"**. Our election logo is on the right. The image is "Grose Valley at Dawn", photographed by Ian Brown.

The Blue Mountains that we know and love continues to be under threat. Our aim is to highlight these threats in an endeavour to protect and conserve the Blue Mountains.

We also propose to hold a public meeting in February to which candidates will be invited to speak.

Following a redistribution of electoral boundaries, the Blue Mountains electorate will include all of Blaxland, Glenbrook and Lapstone for this election. It now matches the Blue Mountains Local Government Area.

Our State Election webpage provides links for you to check your enrolment and to enrol or update your enrolment.

Our State Election webpage is:

bluemountains.org.au/elections/se23/

URGENT: Warragamba Dam wall raising: New NSW Government consultation Comments due by 12 December 2022

The NSW Government has released a revised Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for raising the Warragamba Dam wall and is asking the public to make submissions on the proposal BEFORE 12th DECEMBER

The revised EIS is known as a Preferred Infrastructure Report (PIR) and was required to address the inadequacies of the original EIS.

The new report has all but dismissed 2,500 submissions opposing the dam project and severely downplays effects of upstream inundation which would endanger countless plant and animal species and destroy Sydney's last wild river, the Kowmung.

Object again now! You can make your submission through the "Give a Dam" campaign website:

https://www.giveadam.org.au/make_a_submission

Blue Mountains Conservation Society NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

We will be at the Blackheath Growers Market
on **SUNDAY 11 DECEMBER**

(no market in January) AND, thereafter, on the 2nd
Sunday of every month until the winter break.

**For enquiries and to place an order, please contact Nursery
Manager, Paul Irwin:**

plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com

Material in this newsletter relating to the NSW State Election on 25th March 2023 is authorised by Madi Maclean, Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc. 92 Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls 2782.



The Blue Mountains - Let It Be

Funding delays for highway upgrade -- An unexpected opportunity?

The plans to commence work on the widening of the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Blackheath have been approved by the NSW State Government and proposed to start in early 2023. But the Federal Government has indicated that they will delay funding until further research has been carried out.

There may be an opportunity for an EIS for the whole of the proposed widening, instead of small sections as seen so far. The highway upgrade affects the whole of the mountains. We all need to have a say.

And the question remains - is it necessary to widen the highway at all?

-- Hut News Team



**Wildflowers
of the Blue
Mountains
(Sue Nicol)**

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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Wildlife Rescue on Rhodo Day



It was the day of the Blackheath Rhododendron Festival, Saturday 5th November 2022. Fellow Blackheathens and visitors were celebrating spring. But 2.5 kilometres from town, on the edge of the National Park, a drama was unfolding.

Three members of my family arrived, visiting from Sydney. As I greeted them on the deck we looked into the National Park and saw a young magpie dangling from a tree. It tried to fly but its right foot and left wingtip were entangled in string. We didn't have anything long enough to reach the branch. The magpie parents were nearby and they couldn't help either. It was heartbreaking to watch the magpie's struggles and listen to its cries. We made numerous phone calls.

A local WIRES volunteer responded to our call and said that NSW Fire and Rescue had been notified. She told us that if the magpie was able to survive it would be released back to its parents.

A fire engine from the Blackheath town brigade was backed down the lane. The crew assessed the situation and worked out how to reach and cut the branch and gently brought the bird and the branch to the ground. Our friend, who had driven up through the traffic from Leura to help, untangled some of the string to release the bird from the cut branch. The WIRES volunteer put the magpie into a basket and took it to the vet. The magpie parents perched together on a branch and watched it go.

On 18th November I was delighted to hear a juvenile magpie calling nearby. It seemed unlikely that another magpie family had moved into the territory. Then I saw it in the street with its parents - a healthy young magpie, walking with a bit of a limp.

Thank you to all the people who helped to save this young magpie. My family and I had a very different day to what we had planned and it will be one we remember.

-- **Christine Davies**



**THE DEADLINE FOR FEBRUARY
HUT NEWS IS 15 JANUARY**
hutnews@bluemountains.org.au
Enquiries: Christine 4787 7246

WIRES Wildlife Rescue is a non-profit organisation providing rescue and rehabilitation for native Australian fauna. All animal rescuers and carers are volunteers. To find out more, become a volunteer or donate to help an injured native animal, go to <https://www.wires.org.au/>

World Heritage values and Sydney's drinking water quality under threat

Over the past two La Niña summers, residents of the Blue Mountains have no doubt become more aware of stormwater and its impacts.

As rainwater runs across different surfaces – roofs, paved surfaces and saturated ground – it picks up various types of pollutants including oil and grease from driveways and roads, leaves and animal droppings that collect in gutters, weeds and chemicals from lawns and gardens, and sediment from washed out or exposed soil. But where does this pollution-laden stormwater go? One way or another it finds its way into waterways which flow into the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains National Park and, from the southern and western sides of the highway in the upper Blue Mountains, into Sydney's drinking water catchment.

Since 2005, Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) and Development Control Plans (DCPs) have required new developments to incorporate best practice stormwater controls. These controls are designed to avoid the adverse impacts of stormwater on the site, adjoining properties, bushland and waterways running into the national park. Best practice measures include water sensitive urban design, onsite detention of stormwater and natural stormwater purification systems. In areas within Sydney's drinking water catchment, new developments are required to also have a 'neutral or beneficial effect' on water quality (NorBE) under the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021*.

But with the recent introduction of the state-wide Low Rise Housing Diversity Code (the Low Rise Code), medium density housing developments built under this Code bypass Council approval and therefore do not have to comply with LEP development standards and stormwater controls. This is highly problematic, given that these more intensive developments – with their increased impervious areas (roofs, driveways, internal roads) – create a higher level of stormwater volume and velocity. There is no requirement for a certifier approving this kind of development to consider stormwater quality and quantity or LEP stormwater controls. And there is no requirement for development under the Code in the Sydney drinking water catchment to meet the 'NorBE' test. This compromised protection of the environment, Sydney's drinking water catchment and World Heritage values is clearly unacceptable.

The Blue Mountains City Council is currently attempting to mitigate the adverse impact of the Low Rise Code in the Blue Mountains through proposing amendments to the Code. These amendments would restore environmental protections by applying key LEP development standards and stormwater controls to development under the Code.

The Society supports Council's actions and is calling on the state government to accept these proposed amendments to the Code. The Society also calls for the provisions of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021* protecting Sydney's drinking water catchment to be applied to development under the Code.

-- Land Use Subcommittee



Trees - Steel'ed trunk, satin leaves
Random curtsies to restless winds
Ever reaching at realms above
Ever building on days behind
Silence. And industrious intensity.

© By Ross Bridle

National Parks Subcommittee

The Society's National Parks Subcommittee has been working on many issues, which include the Warragamba Dam wall raising, the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area submission, the Great Western Highway Upgrade, Conservation Hut access, as well as a number of other issues such as the horse-riding management plan for the south-east Wollemi National Park and the new Cycling in National Parks policy.

Currently the team has been very busy with the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area submission on consideration of additional values of the GBMWH and also the additional land areas encompassed by the GBMWH. Submissions closed on 16 November 2022. There are more details on the Society's website, <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/#AHCassess>

The Capertee National Park Draft Plan of Management is now open for public comment and submissions close on 13 January 2023. You can have your say – <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-management/community-engagement/capertee-national-park-draft-plan-of-management>

Best wishes to everyone for a wonderful Christmas with family and friends!

-- Annette Cam, National Parks Officer
heritage@bluemountains.org.au

Along the Snowy Valleys Way

-- Marilyn Kraus

Walkers with TING (the Thursday Interpretive Nature Group), led by Christine Davies and Don Morison, spent six days of October in and around the towns of New South Wales' Snowy Valleys Way. It was a week prior to the severe flooding of the Murrumbidgee River and its tributaries.

The Snowy Valleys Sculpture Trail is a 2022 creation. It is a permanent collection of world-class sculptures installed at seven locations in towns and wineries over the 100 kilometre span from Adelong to Tooma, all tailored to fit into the local environment.

The trail was funded by the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund. You can see areas with trees blackened in the 2019/20 fires which will never recover, other trees sprouting epicormic growth and ground covered with spring flowerings.

Currently there are 26 sculptures by Australian and international artists with 35 more to come by 2023. Artists conducted sculpture workshops at schools throughout the region this year.

We spent time with the sculptures at Adelong and Tumbarumba. At Adelong we explored the impressive Adelong Falls Gold Mill Ruins on the then flooding Adelong Creek, a state listed heritage industrial site.

The sculpture trail adds to a region already attractive for its mountainous backdrops and natural beauty.



The Snowy Valleys Sculpture Trail:

- **Gumnut Cap Trio**, by Tania Spencer.
- **The Elder**, by Ron Gomboc. Materials are marine grade aluminium and dimensions are 530 x 200 x 200cm. These sculptures are at Adelong. Photographed by Marilyn Kraus.

THINGS TO DO IN THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS

National Parks and Wildlife Centre HERITAGE CENTRE

(end of Govetts Leap Road, Blackheath)

Open 9am to 4.30pm daily (not Christmas Day)

Events for children – January

- * **Aboriginal games for kids:** Blackheath
- * **Bush alive:** The buzz on bees
- * **Junior ranger:** Navigation adventure at Blackheath
- * **Leaping lizards:** Blackheath

Find out more at the Heritage Centre or <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/visitor-centres/blue-mountains-heritage-centre>

Bushwalks

Govetts Leap lookout and carpark being upgraded and are closed. Park your car at the Heritage Centre and walk down the Fairfax Track. Clifftop walks remain open.

Enquire at the Heritage Centre for advice about other bushwalks in the Blue Mountains.

Blue Mountains Cultural Centre

30 Parke Street, Katoomba

Activities to suit all ages and interests. Exhibitions, art classes, talks, school holiday programs for kids.

Katoomba Urban Art Tour:

- Join a volunteer guide from the Cultural Centre on an urban art trail around the township of Katoomba. (Saturdays, 10.30-11.30am).
- Ask for a brochure for a self-guided tour.

PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION - FREE



Elemental

Earth...air...fire...water...

these ancient divisions of the physical world still hold meaning today. This exhibition explores the elemental power of nature and how we experience such forces. Images from the Blue Mountains and other wild places capture patterned rocks, storms, ice and shimmering water, atmospherics, flames and their impact, and the wonderful ways these elements can unite or change through time.

Ian Brown photography

Request for help with termite study

Termites are often not loved. However, some termites, particularly *Coptotermes* and *Schedorhinotermes* species, play an important role in the formation of hollows in eucalypts. Michael Graham, a keen birder who has worked in termite control for over 20 years, has extensive knowledge of termites and appreciates the importance of hollows to wildlife.

The 2019-20 fires burnt an unprecedented area of forest vegetation and their impacts on populations of the termite species associated with hollow formation are unknown. Michael has undertaken a preliminary post-fire assessment of termite populations in bushland from Batemans Bay and the Southern Highlands to the Blue Mountains. The impact of the fires on forest termites appears to have been severe, with extensive loss of termite colonies.

Michael is now planning to test the impact of the fires more thoroughly. With permission from Blue Mountains City Council, he is planning an expanded study to be undertaken in burnt and unburnt Council bushland reserves. Blue Mountains Conservation Society is supporting the study through help with aspects of the project such as study design, data analysis and writing up the results for publication in the scientific literature.

Termites feed on dead (rather than live) wood but it is unknown to what extent they eat burnt dead wood. As a separate part of the study, Michael plans to test the palatability to termites of burnt versus unburnt dead wood. This will be done by setting out some in-ground "Exterra" termite bait stations containing both unburnt and burnt dead wood to see which type of wood they favour. The stations will be placed near active termite colonies and left out for up to six months before collection.



Exterra in-ground
termite bait station

Michael would like to place the stations on private land, at least 60 m from any dwelling, to ensure that they are not disturbed. He would very much appreciate hearing from anyone with a large block of land who may be able to help by "hosting" such a termite station.

For further information about hosting, please contact Michael, email:

mickdg007@yahoo.com.au

Climate Solutions: Hope and Change

The **Mick Dark Talk for the Future** is an annual address, co-presented by **Varuna the National Writers' House** and the **Blue Mountains Conservation Society** and held to honour the late Mick Dark.

Mick was a life-long conservationist and former president and life member of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society. He donated his family home, Varuna, to the future of Australian writing.

This year's talk, **Climate Solutions: Hope and Change**, was given by Costa Georgiadis, host of ABC TV's "Gardening Australia". Costa spoke about our planet's future from his perspective. He asked each and every one of us to take some action to avoid destruction by mankind of the whole planet. No matter how small or insignificant it seems to you, every positive counteracts something negative.

After the talk, Costa signed copies of his book, "Costa's World - Gardening for the Soil, the Soul and the Suburbs".

A few words for the Koel

-- Christine Davies

Do you have a favourite or least favourite bird? Sometimes the male Koel fits into the latter category.

You wake up at dawn one day - in Blackheath it's around 2nd October - and you hear that familiar call. The Koel perches high up in the tree next to your bedroom window and calls all day and all night and all day and all night. He deserves full marks for persistency.

In order to be able to breed, the Koel has flown here from Indonesia or thereabouts. He needs to find a mate, who has made the same long flight, and they need to find another bird to raise their offspring.

The Koel is unpopular with other birds and they frequently attack him. In autumn he flies all the way back to Indonesia or thereabouts. (Maybe the birds there don't like him either.) Next year he flies here again. He deserves high marks for stamina and even more for navigation skills.

But why don't Koels just build a nest, like normal birds? Surely that would be easier. But they don't know how. Koels are cuckoos and cuckoos don't build nests. No marks for nest building skills.

And think about the young Koel. How does the chick learn to be a Koel, when its parents are Red Wattle Birds? Most species learn from their parents, what to eat and how to find it, how to survive. How does the young Koel know when to migrate and where to go and how to get there?

If you think about it for a while, you might start to admire the Koel and learn to welcome his arrival and enjoy hearing his call.



Wildflowers
of the Blue
Mountains
(Sue Nicol)

Letters

Hi , I wish to draw the attention of BMCS members to two rather overlooked bits of information.

The first is a recent conference of the Australian Plant Society of NSW, where Dr David Lindernmeyer discussed east coast eucalypt forest management as measured by 35 years of on site measurement of biodiversity outcomes from a wide range of clearing practices and fire regimes. He provides a wide range of insights into how various forms of forestry practice affect biodiversity and how it affects the future 'burnability' of Eucalypt forest. The big takeaway message is, with climate change and increased fire frequencies, there is really no place for Eastern Eucalypt forest burning, including cultural burning, except possibly close to assets/ dwellings for asset protection.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sVMcTWCKek>

The second is regarding some of the 'ecological identified inaccuracies' in the Bill Gammage book 'The Greatest Estate on Earth'. The critique is written by Andy Macqueen, Blue mountains historian and ecologist, and was published in HERITAGE, newsletter of BM Assn of Cultural Heritage Organisations, July- August 2013.

Some of these inaccuracies, I suggest, have been carried over into the 'Dark Emu' book, particularly in his chapter on 'Fire'. In short, evidence of increased plant biodiversity outcomes from burning in Western Australian, territorial and/or arid and semi arid grasslands and/or open woodland areas should not equate to similar expected outcomes in Eastern states Eucalypt forests.

<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/hutnews/hutnew-2212-biggest-estate-by-gammage-critique.pdf>

At some point in time, hopefully soon, the very complex issue of 'Cultural Burning' (who does it and where and when), in this 'climate compromised' world, needs to be addressed.

Our native habitat has never been under so much pressure. Both these information sources are most important for a better understanding of what to do and NOT DO in terms of maintaining biodiversity assets.

---John C Hill

Dear Editor,

Greens Road public access. The report in the November issue of Hut News on the efforts of the Land Use Subcommittee in lobbying to preserve public access to the lookout at the end of Greens Road Warrimoo (*Crown Road Reserve Purchase Threatens Public Access*) highlights the invaluable though often unacknowledged work of the Society on behalf of the wider community. Reading it made me realise yet again why I happily pay my dues to the Society.

The natural beauty of the mountains, and the ease of access that we have to it, is one of the main reasons most of us have chosen to live here. Yet for the most part we take this wonderful benefit for granted and are blissfully unaware of small but incremental developments like that described in this report that gradually debase that beauty and erode our access to it.

The report quite rightly highlighted the need for public vigilance of all such developments (no matter how small they may seem) and of how these developments are rarely well publicized by Crown Lands and other authorities.

With the State election due in March next year it was also a timely reminder of the important role the Society has in lobbying politicians of all persuasions on their attitudes to and policies about the environment.

I hope you can publish this letter to show my personal appreciation to the Subcommittee for their work.

-- Dr. Patrick Cavanagh, Katoomba



Back to Newnes

Authors Michael Keats OAM, Brian Fox and Yuri Bolotin, along with owners/caretakers of the Newnes Hotel, Thomas Ebersol and Helen Druery, invited those with family connections or just admiration for the village to Newnes on a November weekend.

The gathering shared music and poetry and memories before enjoying a guided walk where we learned more about the history and environment of this Wollemi National Park frontier hamlet. (Photo by Christine Davies)

TO BEE OR NOT TO BEE - Bees of Australia - Part 4

This is the final part of this series on bees in Australia.

-- Chris Whiteman

European Bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*)



The European Bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*) is not present on the mainland of Australia, but in 1992 it was illegally introduced into Tasmania and has established there, most likely coming from New Zealand where they are present. This species is a reportable

biosecurity threat to mainland Australia. Whilst Bumblebees can be resistant to Varroa mites they can be susceptible to deformed wing virus (DWV) and other diseases spread from Varroa mite infected European Honeybees.

The European bumblebee ranges in size from 12–22 mm. They have a black abdomen and one orange band across the thorax and another across the abdomen with a distinguishable white patch at the end of the abdomen. They are covered with dense hair over the whole body and are larger and fatter than the European honey bee.

If European bumblebees were to enter the Australian mainland, they would compete with native species for pollination and nesting sites. They can damage flowers making them unusable to other pollinators. It appears to have a negative impact on some local Tasmanian native bee species.

Two of our native bee species, the Giant yellow and black Carpenter Bee of QLD and NSW and the Golden-brown furry Teddy Bear Bee are often mistaken for Bumblebees.

In 2006 the Australian Hydroponic and Greenhouse Association applied to import European Bumblebees to the Australian mainland for greenhouse tomato pollination. Their application was rejected by the Federal Government because of the harm these exotic bees could do to our Australian environment.

Some good news!

A battle against a plan to truck spoil from Westconnex and Badgerys Creek airport to fill an old quarry near Bell has ended with a win for the environment.

Problems created in Sydney were to be dumped on an idyllic part of the Blue Mountains. This gigantic garbage disposal scheme, with a constant stream of trucks going back and forth, would harm the environment and impact on residents in all the villages along the Great Western Highway and in the quiet residential streets of Bell.

Lithgow Council's Development Manager opposed the proposal and it was rejected. A year later the applicant appealed to the Land and Environment Court. Lithgow Council readied to defend its position. Blue Mountains City Council joined the proceedings to argue against the appeal. After 18 months of legal wrangling, the applicant has discontinued the case and exhausted appeal rights for that development application.

All those who have been active in spreading the word, writing submissions and supporting the Lithgow and Blue Mountains City Councils played a role in this victory.

-- Hut News Team

African Metallic - Emerald Furrow Bee (*Halictus hotoni*)

An African bee discovered in the Hunter Valley, NSW, in 2004 it has now spread to Sydney and Tamworth areas. A metallic green, small bee at 6 to 8 mm long can be confused with native bees. It is abundant in some areas but little is known about future impacts. It has the potential to transmit parasites and pathogens to native plants and animals. Disrupting native plant pollination is another issue. This bee introduction seems to be ignored by biosecurity authorities.

South African Carder Bee (*Afranthidium repetitum*)

First discovered in 2000 near Brisbane, QLD. It has now spread as far as Victoria, South and Western Australia. Often found to have made nests in cavities in electrical meter boxes and window frames. The Carder Bee is only 7 mm long but identified by its wide, mostly black body with distinctive thin white bands across the abdomen.

The Carder bee collects fluffy fibres from plant leaves and makes a nest that resembles yellowish lumps of cotton wool. Its name is derived from the carding process of combing wool fibres before they are spun.

This is another bee species that seems to be ignored by biosecurity authorities. Ecologists are concerned that the introduction of non-native bee species is a major driver of ecosystem change resulting in the spread of non-native weeds, alterations to plant-pollinator interactions and competition with native species for food and nesting resources. A lack of ecological information for non-native organisms hinders our ability to understand their impact.

References:

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

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/plant/bees-and-wasps/european-bumblebee>



Wildflowers
of the Blue
Mountains
(Sue Nicol)

Binnaway Creek - A Seasonal Creek

-- Jim Low

There has always been talk about water in Australia. At the moment there is unfortunately too much of it, resulting in the devastating floods around the state. Not so long ago we were lamenting the lack of water, desperate for rain. In May 2019 I returned to the country town of Binnaway. On its eastern approach is Binnaway Creek. I have crossed this seasonal creek many times over the last fifty years but never stopped to explore its course. My first years teaching were in this little town on the Castlereagh River. The area was in flood at the start of my second year there so I have seen Binnaway Creek in action.

My 2019 visit witnessed this area battling a long period of drought. Binnaway Creek, despite a flash flood one night a few months before, was completely dry. I began walking along in its bed, heading to where it meets the Castlereagh River.

I stopped occasionally to listen to the sounds resulting from an early afternoon breeze. Its gentle shaking of the leaves of the gum trees tottering high above me was interspersed with raucous bird calls. Becoming aware of the growing depth of the eroded banks that closely surrounded me, I realised that I was standing where a very forceful body of water had ravaged its way countless times.

You can see a video of the creek on You tube: <https://youtu.be/KWa1urcyt88>



Binnaway
Creek

Flow on, old creek

A seasonal creek
You sometimes flow
Playing hide and seek
Now, where did you go?

Like today as I wander
Your dry, dusty course
The slant of some plants
Shows a recent flood's force.

And I've seen you in flood
When your swift waters rise.
To cross the causeways
A real enterprise.

Gums high above
Sway to and fro
Their balance precarious
One push, down they'll go!

Below ground, not buried
I follow your way
Deep where you've ravaged
To the old Castlereagh.

Jim Low

Jim Low is a singer, songwriter, poet, author. He has a deep love of the Australian countryside and Australian history. His songs, poetry, articles, podcasts can be found at: <http://jimlow.net/> and <https://www.simplyaustralia.net/>

Blue Mountains Byways by John Low

The most luxurious of shower baths

For the family of geologist, Prof. T.W. Edgeworth David (1858-1934), summer in late nineteenth century Woodford meant a short walk from their holiday cottage through heat-scented bush to the pool at Mabel Falls. The children learnt to swim in its deep, clean water and hunted crayfish on its sandy bottom. The Professor's daughter, Mary, wrote in later life of family picnics there and the exotic eleven year old "Fijian princess" who came with them to the Mountains one summer in the 1890s. "Elenoa seemed to be just as comfortable under water as above it, and was an expert fisherwoman ... She would emerge with one crayfish in her teeth and another in her hand. I can well recall her beaming smile as she shook the water from her fuzzy dark hair."

It is probable that tracks into this area date back into Aboriginal time and that access to the waterfall by Europeans followed soon after the construction of an inn on the nearby Western Road in the early 1830s. Known originally as the Woodman and later as the King's Arms,

this inn was a popular stopping place for travellers until the construction of the Western Railway in 1867. Following the inn's closure, businessman and amateur astronomer, Alfred Fairfax (1824-1901), purchased the property and converted it into a private residence he called Woodford House. It was Fairfax who more formally developed the walking track to the falls (and beyond) and created the pool, lined with dressed stone blocks, he named for his youngest daughter Angelina Mabel (1866-1964).

In the 1880s, when Woodford House was operating as a guesthouse, the "safe bathing place for ladies and children" at Mabel Falls found a key place in its advertising. In an issue of Sydney's *Freeman's Journal* in January 1887 a visitor wrote in glowing terms of the beauty, size and cleanliness of the pool and the abundance of crayfish. "The spray from the falls", he said, "affords the most luxurious of shower baths ..." Later, when the property was taken over by the Woodford Academy in 1907, the schoolboys were encouraged to run down to the pool (and back) for an early pre-breakfast swim.

(Continued on page 9)

Plants before people ...

"People before plants", so announced the NSW Premier when speaking about raising the Warragamba dam wall in what will be a futile attempt to stop the Hawkesbury River flooding. Even if our weather patterns stabilise, "droughts and flooding rains" will continue to follow one another.

But, should it be "plants before people"? Plants covered the earth's surface eons before the rise of Homo sapiens. What will we eat and drink if there are no plants? Every living thing relies directly or indirectly on plants. Water won't sustain us for more than a week.

While many people have suffered loss and hardship from the recent rains, there is good news for some parts of the environment.

The water flow to the mouth of the River Murray has been contentious for many years. Farmers upstream have depleted the water supply and many plants have died from lack of fresh water. It is now regenerating. The waters have spread to as much as a kilometre across the flood plains and, in so doing, have released the plankton, which feed the insects, which feed the fish, and so on up the food chain.

The fast flowing water has flushed out "duckweed" which is washed down to the Gulf where it will fertilise sea grasses and other aquatic plants. It will flush out the salt and reduce the salinity of the river.

A recent trip there showed that lots of black swans had at least three cygnets each floating after them. Bar-tailed Godwits, Fairy Terns and other migratory shore birds were in great abundance. Our boat captain told us that last year there were only six Bar-tailed Godwits but this year they were too numerous to count.

-- Liz van Reyswoud

The most luxurious of shower baths

(continued from page 8)

Today Mabel Falls is the first of several waterfalls (including another bearing the name of Fairfax's eldest daughter Edith) on the 'Transit of Venus' walking track, the result of a restoration project carried out in the early 1990s and named for the astronomical station Fairfax allowed on his property to observe the Transit in 1874. Though the Mabel Falls pool is now silted and degraded and the stone blocks scattered, it is still worth a visit, a cool fern-filled place away from the sun's heat and full of memories. (John Low)

Blue Mountains Byways was published in 2021. Most of the stories in this book were originally written for *Hut News*, the newsletter of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society. During his time as Local Studies Librarian in the Blue Mountains City Library, John discovered how rich in stories our region is.

Government backdown in koala wars

NSW government forced to pull divisive 'koala wars' bill (SMH 14/11/22) The NSW government has been forced into a humiliating backdown in the latest koala wars after Christian Democrat MP Fred Nile refused to back its native forestry bill, guaranteeing it would have failed on the floor of parliament.

(Email from the Nature Conservation Council, 15/11/22)

We won! Last night, the NSW Coalition was forced to withdraw its bill that would have fast-tracked logging in native forests.

In the 72 hours leading up to this, 1200 NCC supporters sent emails to their member of parliament, calling on them to scrap the bill. We combined this with direct phone calls and meetings with MPs, and it worked.

MPs from almost every party confirmed they wouldn't vote for the bill, including Fred Nile and two government MPs. This victory shows we can win for koalas and our magnificent forests. It proves beyond a doubt that people are demanding urgent action to save koala habitat.

But this bill is just the tip of the iceberg. It would have fast-tracked native forest logging. But right now koala habitat is being logged, cleared and developed at alarming rates across NSW. And almost 99% of koala habitat on private land is still unprotected.

We have an ambitious plan to use this election to ramp up commitments for koalas, nature and climate. Together we can make a difference.

We have spent the last few months developing the policies we need to unite our movement leading up to the 2023 NSW Election in March. This document is called "Our Environment, Our Future" and will form the basis of our ambitious election campaign to build a bigger movement than ever before and secure the wins we need for nature.

Read the document: <https://bit.ly/NCCSEP23>

Nature Conservation Council: <https://www.nature.org.au/>



**Wildflowers
of the Blue
Mountains**

More photos
on pages 1, 5
and 7.



Spring flowers in Kanangra-Boyd NP, November 2022, photographed by Sue Nicol during a Plant Study Group excursion.

Lookouts and escarpment walks

Part 4: A new era for Narrow Neck?

Opinion by Don Morison

In recent weeks, a new access for pedestrians and cyclists, using an old “miner’s track”, has been created between Cliff Drive and the fire trail that traverses the long plateau from Katoomba to Clear Hill – access at the Katoomba end had been prohibited since a section of fire trail collapsed in a landslide in early 2022.

National Parks & Wildlife Service informed Hut News that the funds for this very worthwhile infrastructure were provided as part of a Commonwealth-funded Disaster Recovery Program.

Walking or carrying a bicycle down 180 steps, and later up again, is not for absolutely everyone. But, if you can make the effort, the experience of the sections of walk from Katoomba to the overlook of Lake Burragorang and the Castle Head lookout is genuinely inspiring. It is entirely the equal of the track sections from Wentworth Falls to Scenic World, which are set to be promoted under the banner “Grand Clifftop Walk”. (See November Hut News.) In fact, the Grand Clifftop Walk and the Narrow Neck walk could be comfortably connected if the carriageway of Cliff Drive were reorganised to make it pedestrian-friendly.

The northern section of Narrow Neck Plateau has been the scene of a changing drama of environmental experiences. It was one of the most accessible venues for the explosion of pink flannel flowers following the fires in 2020. That same year the Glossy Black Cockatoos became more noticeable as they pursued the unburnt stands of Casuarina.

The opportunities for a moderately fit person to pursue a half day or full day walk on northern Narrow Neck are now manifold. You can begin by following the steps down from the Narrow Neck Lookout on Cliff Drive and deviating to the west through the locked gate onto O’Sullivan’s Folly Road, so named because a New South Wales Public Works Minister supervised an unsuccessful attempt to take a road over the cliff between Katoomba and Megalong Valley in 1901. This will afford you a number of views towards the pagoda-



like rock formations around Boars Head that you never would have seen in travelling on Narrow Neck by car.

Back on the main track, you scale the steep hill to the main locked gate and continue on to the sharp steep curves where, on a clear day, you can see the waters of Lake Burragorang lapping against the Wild Dog Mountains. Retracing a short distance, there is a side-track to Castle Head, with unsurpassed views of Ruined Castle, Mount Solitary and Cedar Valley.

Once back at the junction of the Golden Stairs trail, you can return to Cliff Drive the way you came or descend the Golden Stairs and turn left onto the Federal Pass track. If you reach the bottom station of the Scenic Railway by 4.50 pm you have a choice of catching the railway or rejoining Cliff Drive by climbing the Furber Steps.

There are no plans to put helicopter-serviced toilets on the main Narrow Neck Plateau at this stage.

One day, private cars may return to part of Narrow Neck, one would hope in a more closely managed way than in the past. In the meantime it is, more than ever, a superlative attraction for pedestrians and cyclists.

Images: Recently installed signage at Cliff Drive; Northern Narrow Neck Plateau, photographed from near Cahills Lookout; (Christine Davies)



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/prdk-welcome.shtml



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

Dec 5 **Rigby Hill & Walls Lookout.** 4kms. Grade 2. Maurice 0402 402 783

Dec 12 **Lockleys Pylon**, 8Km return, 160M ascent/decent, Angela Berry 0427 133 327

Dec 19 **Mt Victoria - Victoria falls Rd, Asgard Swamp, Asgard Head, Old Coal mine and Thor Head.** Wayne 0429 021 296

Dec 26 / Jan 2 **No walk**

Jan 9 **Fortress Rock/Dr Darks Cave**, 6km. Melanie 0431214687

Jan 16 **Murphy's Glen Woodford.** Grade 2. Keith 0411 162 345

Jan 23 **Valhala Head Mt Victoria.** Tracy 0434 362 611

Jan 30 **Medlow Bath Station to Pt. Pilcher Lookout, 12Km.**

Tracy 0434 362 611

Feb 6 **No Walk**

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

Dec 6 **Dangar Island G1/4K**, Doug 0455850753.

Dec 13 **Peggys Pool** (Faulconbridge), G2/4K, Ken 0417514534.

Jan 3 **Cronulla Beach to Gunnamatta Bay G1/6K**, Marilyn 0409924663.

Jan 10 **Ngula Bulgarabang (Katoomba) G2/6K**, Bronwyn 47822402.

Jan 17 **Grand Canyon (Blackheath) G3/6K**, Rob 0400672336.

Jan 24 **Minnehaha Falls & Katoomba Cascades G2/3K**, Ken 0417514534.

Jan 31 **Jan Frenchs Forest to Manly Dam G2/7K**, Doug 0455850753.

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

Dec 15 **Christmas Party at park opposite Lawson Swimming Pool.** Meet 12 noon.

Dec 22 and 29 **No walk.**

Jan 5 **Ngula Bulgarabang, Katoomba.** Keith 0411 162 345. Grade 2

Jan 12 **Pool of Siloam, Leura.** Ros 0417 261 465. Grade 2

Jan 19 **Cronulla Walk with chance of swim.**

Tracy 0434 362 611. Grade 1

Jan 26 **No walk, Australia Day.**

Feb 2 **Cahills Lookout to Peckmans Plateau, Katoomba.**

Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 1

Feb 9 **Willoughby Road to Sublime Point, Leura.** Beverley 4757 2076 Grade 1

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

Dec 3 **Watertrough Hill & Two Ridges.** 8km. Map Mt Wilson. Harold 0409010737. Grade 3

Dec 10 **Christmas Lunch**, Lawson. Alice 0425 738 766

Dec 17 **Fortress Ridge**, 9km. Harold 0409 010 737, map Katoomba.

Dec 24 **No walk**

Jan 3 to Feb 25 **Summer program – walk and leader decided on the day.** Ring contacts: Harold 0409 010 737,

Alice 0425 738 766

Visit the Saturday walks facebook -

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



Eco Hint of the Month

NATURAL PEST CONTROL

2L water, 5ml dishwashing liquid, 2 finely chopped onions, 1 crushed garlic clove, 2 hot chillies chopped. Cover other ingredients with 1L of the water (warmed); cover and let stand overnight. Strain off the solid ingredients, add second litre of water. To protect your veggie seedlings, spray plant stems and tops of undersides of leaves. --TWO ELDERLY GREENIES

The Message of the Lyrebird

Blue Mountains Conservation Society and the Blue Mountains Bird Observers will hold a fundraising screening of the acclaimed documentary film "The Message of the Lyrebird" at Glenbrook Cinema in early March 2023. Date and time will be advised in the new year.

This multi-award winning documentary film about Australia's magical lyrebirds was shown to a sell-out crowd at The Edge Cinema, Katoomba, in September 2022. h

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

<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/joining.shtml>

or phone 0490 419 779.

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

63 **REPTILE** and more than 30 **FROG** species make the Greater Blue Mountains Area their home.



66 types of **MAMMALS** make the Greater Blue Mountains Area their home.



265 types of **BIRDS** make the Greater Blue Mountains Area their home.

D

DIVERSITY

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Ingrid Hess is a cut-paper artist. Download Ingrid's finished artwork (published in the online version of Hut News) and one to colour (published in the printed version of Hut News).

Collect the pages as they appear in Hut News.

<https://bluemountains.org.au/documents/hutnews/archive/2212-hutnews-wild-image.pdf>