

HUT NEWS

Issue No. 410
February 2023



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

New Threats to Gardens of Stone

In November 2021, after a 20 year campaign involving a great number of people, we celebrated when the NSW Government at last announced the creation of a new Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area (SCA).

The decision transferred this spectacular area of pagoda landscapes, cliffs, waterfalls, woodlands and flowering swamps into the national park estate. The new SCA is made up of most of three state forests (Newnes, Ben Bullen and Wolgan) plus Crown reserve land near Mount Piper. There were also small additions to the adjoining Gardens of Stone and Wollemi National Parks. The whole area is a combined total of 31,500 hectares. The existing Gardens of Stone National Park is immediately north. Coal mining will still be permitted beneath the SCA.

The package included \$50 million in eco-tourism and adventure destination funding. We believed that the nearby City of Lithgow would benefit from tourism to help Lithgow transition from coal, but this was not in the Government's plans.

The new battleground over the Gardens of Stone deals with hastily awarded exclusive leases to private tourism operators and private amusement park operators. **Read: Gardens of Stone Conservation Reserve at Risk - Public Hearings Sought, by Keith Muir, on page 3.**



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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Twilight Gathering:

Thursday 16 February, 6.30 pm
Wentworth Falls School of Arts,
See page 5.

State Election Public Meeting

Saturday, 25 February, 2PM
Mid Mountains Community Centre
See page 2.

The Message of the Lyrebird

Wednesday, 8th March, 7PM
Glenbrook Cinema. Page 1.

Annual General Meeting,

followed by **General Meeting**
Friday, 31st March, 6.45PM,
Wentworth Falls School of Arts
Speaker: Andrew Cox, Invasive
Species Council. Page 1.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Members and friends are invited to come to our AGM on **Friday 31st March 2023 (6.45 pm for a 7pm start) at Wentworth Falls School of Arts**. This is a free event. To help with catering, please book with Eventbrite if you can - <https://bit.ly/BMCSAGM2023>

At the AGM, members will elect a new management committee for the year to 31st March 2024. All positions fall vacant.

GUEST SPEAKER: After the close of business, there will be a short break for supper and then we will hear from our guest speaker, Andrew Cox, CEO of the Invasive Species Council. (More information in March Hut News.)

This year is the 61st anniversary of the Society. We are probably the largest regional environmental group in NSW and enjoy respect from the community and the agencies with which we deal. Our origins were two groups of residents (in the upper and lower Blue Mountains) who met to determine the action that they could take to help protect the Blue Mountains natural environment. At present we have over 850 members.

Over the years we have helped to achieve wonderful results for the environment, but still the challenges come. A great number of our members support our campaigns with letters and submission writing, work on subcommittees, help at the nursery, lead bushwalks.

More volunteers are needed. If you are interested in nominating for a Management Committee position or helping in any other voluntary capacity, please find out more by contacting:

Ross Coster 0418 462576 membership@bluemountains.org.au or
Angela Langdon 0417 004722; angela.langdon@bigpond.com

The Message of the Lyrebird 7pm, Wednesday 8th March Glenbrook Cinema

A joint fundraiser for Blue Mountains Bird Observers (BMBO) and Blue Mountains Conservation Society (BMCS).

Carol Proberts from BMBO will introduce the film and, with Dr Anastasia Dalziel, take questions afterwards. Both Carol and Ana feature in the film. Don't miss out. The first screening by BMCS, in September 2022, sold out in a couple of weeks!

No other bird on the planet can do what the lyrebird can do. This is a film about the relationship between people and the lyrebirds, set in a natural wonderland where an exquisite forest faery has been performing his astonishing song and dance routines for millions of years. More information and to watch a trailer:

www.themessageofthelyrebird.com

Reservations: Glenbrook Cinema, phone 4739 0003 or book online at <https://www.glenbrookcinema.com.au/sessions/>

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**THE DEADLINE FOR MARCH HUT
NEWS IS 15 FEBRUARY**

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The Blue Mountains - Let It Be

State Election Public Meeting

Saturday 25 February 2pm

Mid Mountains Community Centre, New St, Lawson

The Blue Mountains - Let It Be

The Blue Mountains that we know and love continues to be under threat. Threats include -

- Raising the Warragamba Dam wall
- Invasive Species (cats)
- Commercial Activity in National Parks
- Climate Change - Gas Phase Out
- Stormwater impacts.

We will be detailing these threats at this public meeting. Candidates will be invited to attend and will be given the opportunity to address the meeting.

bluemountains.org.au/elections/se23/

A wonderful start to the year

The Plant Study Group's first walk of the year was to Ikara Ridge, Mount Victoria. We were lucky to have a beautiful, clear blue day after a week of gloomy wet weather.

We found five different orchids in the woodland on the first part of the walk, notably *Cryptostylis subulata* (Large Tongue Orchid). Then we came to a veritable wildflower meadow of white flannel flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*) and *Platysace lanceolata* which delighted us all. The vibrant pink tufts of *Stylidium lineare*, growing on almost bare rock surfaces, really caught the eye and were voted "plant of the day" along with the deep blue *Thelionema caespitosum*, a new plant for some.

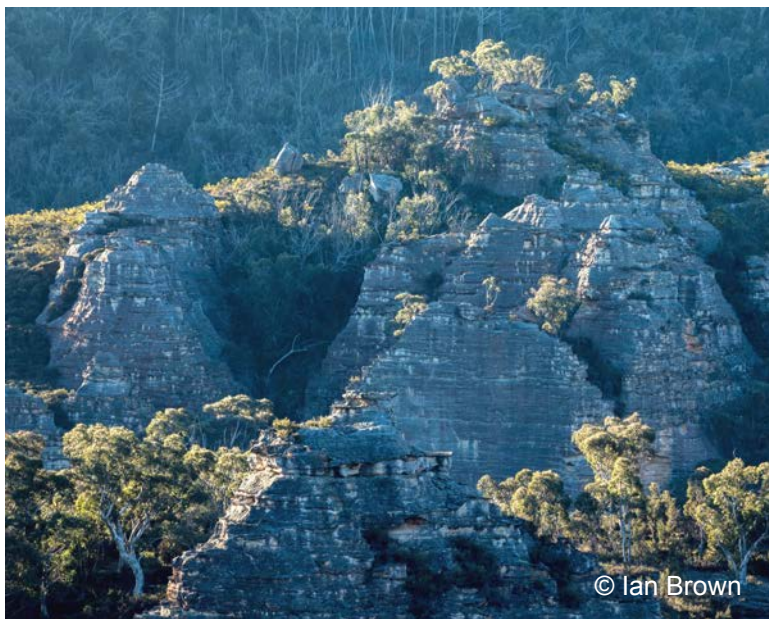
<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/psg/index.shtml>



Plant Study Group at Ikara Ridge (Sue Nicol)

Gardens of Stone Conservation Reserve at Risk: Public Hearings Sought!

-- Keith Muir



bridges, via ferrata climbs and possibly a food outlet that will cause visual blight over Lithgow's most scenic pagoda landscape. As a result, it denies the local community a chance to establish a scenic lookout as good as Echo Point, Katoomba. The Lost City location also may put visitors at risk as Marrangaroo Military Base that uses live ammunition and ordinance is only 400 metres away.

The Lost City theme park location means most visitors to the adventure park won't go to Lithgow but enter the reserve from Clarence via the Old Bells Line of Road. Again, the local community would gain little benefit from the proposed development.

All the above issues arise from replacing open and transparent park management processes with media release announcements and backroom deals. There are better tourism solutions for the reserve and the community, rejecting monopolies. Alternatives could put reserve management for nature conservation first, as explained by conservation groups in *Destination Pagoda*. You will find a link to *Destination Pagoda* on Gardens of Stone website - www.gardensofstone.org.au

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society has called for the Minister for the Environment to convene a public hearing on both proposed leases. A public hearing can remedy the serious defects in this secret lease issuing process. A public hearing process should expose details on what is proposed at the resort sites and the adventure park.

Protection of heritage values when any leases are granted requires contributions based on adequate disclosure of the details of proposed developments. What a hearing can't do is fix the plan of management or its tourism strategy. That will require political will from the next NSW Government after March 25.

Image: Pagodas in Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, Ian Brown.

When the NSW Government announced the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, back in November 2021, it also announced accommodation associated with a Great Walk and an adventure park at Lost City. The package included \$50 million in eco-tourism and adventure destination funding. Then, just before Christmas, Deputy Premier Paul Toole announced \$3.5 million for 25km of mountain bike and walking trails starting from the State Mine Heritage Park. Management by media release was just the start of the park development headaches this summer.

The first surprise is that off road enthusiasts have negotiated vehicle access directly with the NPWS, rather than through the open and transparent Plan of Management process. At the time of writing, conservation groups are yet to be told the details of this closed-door deal.

Next, on December 21, a Christmas special was delivered. Public consultation was advertised in the *Herald* for two leases in the reserve. I discovered that Experience Co is the parent company behind both proposals, the same company that plans to develop high-end accommodation in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. What first appeared to be a thought bubble mention of a "Wollemi Great Walk" in the ineffectual Gardens of Stone Master Plan is another thing to worry about.

By the time you read this, it'll be too late to object to the commercial leases. You haven't missed much, as the consultation was a sham with no specific details available on the proposed four resorts and the theme park that are the subject of these leases. The leasing process is a developer's dream. Experience Co gets exclusive possession of development sites before its development proposals are determined, pre-empting any planning process. If/when the developments are approved, the NSW Government's multi-million dollar infrastructure subsidies begin to flow.

The impacts on the natural and cultural heritage of the reserve by the four proposed resorts will be large, as only intact, remote and scenic parts of the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area are flagged for development. The resort monopoly would siphon off the highest paying tourists who might have otherwise spent their money in the local community.

Proposals for the Lost City Adventure Precinct include ziplines, toilets, carparks, elevated walkways/suspension

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

Contact these people to express your concerns about the proposed leases in the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area:

James Griffin Minister for the Environment and Heritage - <https://www.nsw.gov.au/nsw-government/ministers/minister-environment-heritage>

Penny Sharpe MLC Shadow Minister for the Environment and Heritage

- <https://www.pennysharpe.com/contact>

Trish Doyle MP Blue Mountains

- <https://www.trishdoylemp.com.au/contact/>

Stay up-to-date with the progress of this campaign through Hut News, the BMCS website - www.bluemountains.org.au - and the Gardens of Stone Alliance website - <http://www.gardensofstone.org.au/>

BOOK REVIEW: Native Orchids of the Blue Mountains and Surrounding Areas', revised and expanded edition, 2022, by Sabine Hanisch and Ben Jasiak

-- Jim Smith.

I can still remember vividly the first time I saw a native orchid in the Blue Mountains. It was in the mid-1970s, and I was walking along the Ruined Castle track. I saw, highlighted in a shaft of sunlight, what I later came to know as *Diuris sulphurea*. I was awed by the intense luminescent yellow of the petals, the striking contrast of the chocolate-brown spots and the quirky feature of the crossed sepals. I knelt for some time, literally worshipping this wonder of nature.



Later I learnt a lot about orchids from my visits to Isobel Bowden, who explained so much about the relationship between orchid species and their habitats, especially soil types. She recognised many subspecies or varieties of orchids which professional botanists lumped together into one species, explaining that it was very important to record variations within a species, as they were examples of evolution in action. Later, I did a walk along the Nature Trail with Jill Dark. I had done this walk maybe 50 or 60 times previously, but walking with Jill opened my eyes to how much I had been missing at ground level, particularly orchids.

Now we have a wonderful gift from Sabine Hanisch and Ben Jasiak, the result of four years' intense exploration, covering many thousands of kilometres on foot. Sabine and Ben feel great admiration for Isobel Bowden and regard themselves as carrying on her work. Sabine told me that she often feels that Isobel is guiding her. So many bushwalkers, including myself in the old days, fail to look closely at the ground when they are walking in the bush. Sabine started looking down when she became interested in animal tracks, learning to distinguish many species, including some possibly not known to science.

The book is produced in a generous A4 size format and each species is illustrated with numerous photos. If you have ever tried to identify orchids using most field guides you will have felt frustration at the small size of the illustrations. The detail in the photos by Sabine and Ben is absolutely extraordinary. Each photo is a beautiful work of art. The multiple illustrations for each species show each flower from different angles and some of the variation in morphology and colours. Quite a few show the pollinating insects in action.

As I said, this book is a gift. When you are browsing it in the bookstore, think of the incredible amount of time and dedication that has gone into producing the book. As a publisher myself, I have had to deal with a very rapid rise in printing costs for my books, and I understand that a book of such quality could not be produced for less than the modest asking price. Even if you don't get out into the bush that often, you will enjoy the book just for the beauty of the amazing pictures. Please support these brave and passionate self-publishers (and your local bookstore) by purchasing this book.

Image: *Diuris sulphurea*, photographed by Sue Nicol.

Warragamba Dam: Government seeks to offset project

The Society is appalled by the idea that the NSW Government is considering using management programs of the National Parks Estate to offset environmental damage that would be caused by the raising of the dam wall.¹

The concept itself reiterates the State Government's lack of regard for the significant environmental value of the World Heritage area and the devastating impact the inundation would have on the areas plant and animal species and Sydney's last wild river, the Kowmung.

The World Heritage area is recognised globally for its unique and irreplaceable values, which cannot be offset². Offsets are simply not appropriate for World Heritage or national parks, as they are holistic and shouldn't be subject to reductionist dissection. To carve off a piece of a national park or world heritage area and then attempt to protect something different somewhere else, as compensation, is an invalid approach that does not correct the impact on the integrity of the protected area.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has already stated that the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the World Heritage Area cannot be offset and therefore the concept of compensation plots for the planned loss of OUV is not appropriate³. Yet still the Government persists in exploring it.

Australia remains a laggard in its approach to flood management with countries such as Holland recognising the valuable natural feature of floodplains. They are learning to work with their rivers to create nature-focused mitigation strategies that include demolishing housing on the flood prone areas, relocating residents to higher ground and regenerating the floodplains.⁴

Offsetting such a project is incomprehensible. The NSW Government has allowed the problem of housing on the floodplain to occur yet is in the ideal situation to learn from solutions that other countries have adopted, enabling them to work with nature to find alternative solutions, rather than against it.

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/dec/28/nsw-government-seeks-to-use-national-park-management-to-offset-warragamba-dam-wall-project>

² World Heritage Convention, 2022, Greater Blue Mountains Area, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, viewed 13 January 2023, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/3994/>.

³ Water NSW, 2022, Submissions Report: Warragamba Dam Raising - Application Number SSI-8441; EPBC ID Number 2017/794, pp. 546, viewed 13 January 2023, <https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSI-8441%2120221118T052410.778%20GMT>

⁴ Dutch Water Sector, 2019, Room for the River Programme, viewed 14 January 2023, <https://www.dutchwatersector.com/news/room-for-the-river-programme>

LOVE CATS, LOVE WILDLIFE? YOU CAN DO BOTH

-- Candice Bartlett, Invasive Species Council

Sugar gliders are a tiny Australian marsupial that could fit inside your palm. They spend most of their time up in the trees, where they nest inside tree hollows. I didn't realise they lived in my backyard, until the neighbours' fat black cat (whose athletic ability I had seriously underestimated), caught and delivered one to me, dying on our doorstep. This was ten years ago now; I've always loved cats, and animals generally, but I wasn't aware that the two shouldn't mix.

There are over 4.9 million pet cats in Australia, and this number is increasing. This is not surprising – given their unique personalities and their playful, loveable, and sometimes mischievous antics. With this increased number comes a great concern for our native animals. Cats have a killer combination of skills that make them the purr-fect predator – including the capacity to jump up to six times their height.

Despite this, research suggests that the majority of cat owners (70%) allow their cats to freely roam outside, all or part of the day. This is problematic – for both the cats themselves, as well as our local wildlife. According to RSPCA NSW, cats can live up to ten years longer if kept safely at home due to decreased risk of injury and disease. Unfortunately, we also know that when allowed to roam, most cats will hunt, regardless of whether they've been fed or not; it's their natural instincts.

Across Australia, free-roaming pet cats kill an estimated 241 million native animals annually. This equates to an average of 110 native animals killed each year, per free-roaming, hunting pet cat. Although we can't change the nature of pet cats, we can support better choices by cat owners.

The best solution is for owners (like myself) to keep pet cats indoors and only provide controlled access to the outdoors. This might look like a cat run, cat-proof fencing, walking cats on a harness and leash, or similar. This ensures the cat's safety, while preventing them from preying on native animals.

As we all know, the Blue Mountains is a hub for wildlife — with over 172 threatened species found in the greater area and at least 26 threatened animals found in our townships. Blue Mountains City Council have started educating owners through a program called 'Keeping Cats Safe at Home', but to create a strong culture around keeping cats at home, we also need good laws.

Currently, councils in NSW have no powers to enforce a cat curfew, let alone a 24-hour 'cats at home' policy. A minor amendment to the NSW *Companion Animal Act* 1998 to allow councils to set and enforce local policies to keep cats at home, in line with communities' needs, would be a step in the right direction. These powers already exist in states like Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia – NSW is really behind.

We all love animals. You can help protect and create a safe environment for cats and wildlife by writing to your local representatives this election and asking them to:

- ◆ Amend the *Companion Animals Act* to allow local governments to enforce cat containment at a local level.
- ◆ Provide additional funding to local governments to enforce responsible pet ownership legislation.
- ◆ Increase investment in education and subsidy programs that support the responsible cat ownership measures of: containment, desexing, identification and registration.

TWILIGHT GATHERING

Thursday 16th February
(6.30 PM)

Wentworth Falls School of Arts
217-219 GWH, Wentworth Falls

Members, friends and supporters are invited to join us to meet like-minded people and find out more about the Blue Mountains Conservation Society's recent activities and achievements. With our AGM coming up at the end of March, you might want to find out how you are able to help. Some members of our management committee will be there to answer your questions.

If you are a new member, you can meet other members of the Society. If you are a long-term member you might meet old friends and acquaintances you have not seen for a long time due to Covid lockdowns.

With the Conservation Hut currently out of action, we've had to relocate this event which has formerly been the annual "Sunset Gathering". We've changed the name because we may not actually see the sunset.

Tea, coffee and light refreshments will be provided.

This is a free event. To help with catering, please book with Eventbrite if you can: <https://bit.ly/twilightgathering> Enquiries to Andrew Solomon andrews@unswalumni.com



There are many ways to create a safe space for your cat, including home-made enclosures fashioned out of recycled materials. My friend created this removable window box and a verandah box for their rental to give their two Russian Blue cats safe access to the outdoors. They love lazing in the sun!

Plans for GWH tunnel forging ahead EIS on display - submissions due

Plans for the Great Western Highway tunnel are forging ahead despite the announcement in October that work would be delayed by two years.

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) has just released the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed 11km tunnel from Blackheath to Little Hartley, although Federal funding is currently withheld. Submissions are open until **Wednesday 1st March**.

The Society is concerned about impacts the tunnel and its construction might have on the World Heritage Area. There is a significant risk that construction for the tunnel could negatively impact aquifers supplying groundwater to groundwater-dependent ecosystems and their dependent species along both sides of the proposed tunnel corridor, including within the World Heritage Area.

Of particular concern is the risk of reduced groundwater inputs to the Commonwealth-listed Temperate Highland Peat Swamps on Sandstone Endangered Ecological Community (THPSS EEC), and to populations of *Petalura gigantea* (Giant Dragonfly) and *Eulamprus leuraensis* (Blue Mountains Water Skink), both endangered and obligately groundwater dependent species recorded in the peat swamps between Medlow Bath and Mt Victoria. These include swamps in the Greaves Creek, Govett's Leap, Popes Glen, Porters Pass, Centennial Glen, Hat Hill Creek, Victoria Creek, upper Grose River, and Kerosene Vale catchments.

There is also the potential for tunnelling to negatively impact aquifers supplying moist cliff-face communities, including populations of the endangered, locally endemic shrub, *Epacris hamiltonii*, a groundwater dependent species restricted to moist rock overhangs along Greaves, Katoomba, and upper Govett's creeks.

We believe it's imperative that a detailed hydrogeological study is undertaken along the tunnel corridor to characterise the aquifers which tunnel construction could potentially impact, and their relationships with the identified groundwater dependent swamp and moist cliff-face ecological communities."

The Society will continue to call on the Federal Minister for a full EIS for the whole Great Western Highway project upgrade, to ensure that matters of national environmental significance are addressed.

We can't let the environment be ignored. Find out how to view the EIS and make submission: <https://caportal.com.au/tfnsw/great-western-highway/central>

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).

TO A WARATAH IN JANUARY

© Don Morison 2023

O last Waratah of the season
There upright and bright by the track
There framed by the gum trunks' charred
blackness

From wildfires a few summers back

Why linger you long past the solstice?
Your siblings all wither and droop
What is it makes your bloom the proudest
Why do you not blanch, fade or stoop?

You've not been disfigured to save you
Or souvenired by some dull fool?
Or pulped by a road-wideners' dozer?
Or scorched by some arsonist ghoul?

I come from a species of dreamers
That each generation's bequest
Endures through next year's fertile
springtime
The one who survives is the best.

Do you care about Charles Darwin's riddle?
In your tangle of finery and vines
Erect in your sole scarlet splendour
Surrounded by perfect green lines

Are you there to make me feel guilty?
That I stay when others are gone
But some must tell Camelot's stories
Of seasons on which all stars shone

Be still in your mid-summer moment
The future's harsh door just ajar
I thrill to this fleeting emotion
My love for you, last Waratah.



A Waratah can only continue to reproduce if its blooms are not snapped from its stems by flower pickers. In some National Parks, rangers have painted the stems of many waratahs blue to discourage this vandalism.

From my Dinner Table

I wrote in the July 2022 Hut News about my COVID Lockdown project. In this article I described how I raised an Orchard Swallowtail (*Papilio aegerus*) from an egg to a caterpillar (larva) and in March 2022 it formed a pupa (chrysalis).

I have been waiting for the butterfly to emerge since March.

To my great excitement I saw the pupae had changed colour and a beautiful male Orchard Swallowtail butterfly emerged at 2pm on New Years Eve

There are no fireworks that could match this. Happy New Year to everyone.

--Robin Murray



Larva of this butterfly
(Hut News, July 2022)

2023 CHALLENGE

-- Liz van Reyswoud

"The Big Switch: Australia's electric future" by Saul Griffith was first published in 2022. I would recommend it to anyone wanting to reduce their carbon footprint by electrifying their home.

I offer you a challenge. Completely electrify your home during 2023 and show your neighbours and friends that, as well as dramatically reducing the amount of energy you use and the pollution you generate, you are better off financially. Completely electrifying all the houses in your street, though, poses a lot of difficult questions. What do you do with all the holiday homes in your street? That and the rentals make it a difficult task. The author uses potentially difficult graphs but he offers some exciting ideas.

An electric house would have rooftop solar and a heat pump water heater. It would have reverse cycle air-conditioning, electric stovetop, an electric car and a home backup battery. Mr Griffith tells us that we can reduce the amount of energy the average household in Australia uses from 102kWh per day to just 37kWh. And we would no longer create waste energy which is currently generated making electricity with coal or gas.

How can our governments help to make this happen?

Remembering Rosemary Lewis Blue Mountains poet

Birds

Birds are rushing
through my trees
having some sort
of tiff
yelling at each other
behaving like humans

This Morning

A friendly huntsman
joined me in the bathroom
as I stepped
from the shower
watch the routine
of cream and powder
made no comment
I don't think he liked
what he saw ...
he's gone again

A Day in the Life of a Magpie

This morning we'd laugh
at her
cavorting with
the hose
enjoying the spray
in my bush garden
It was later
I found her body
on the road
I buried here
in the garden
under a Banksia bush
but near the hose
so her spirit can dance
with the spray
on a warm summer day

(From *The Blue Mountains Folkbook*)

Currently new residential properties need to meet a thermal energy status of 5.5 stars.

Let's make dark roofs "out". Dark roofs absorb solar energy and radiate it to the local community, causing local heat islands. This is exacerbated by removing all the trees when building new housing communities.

Make solar panels mandatory for all new houses. In "up-market" streets in Lane Cove recently, I noticed that new larger (wall to wall) houses have been built to replace the older small houses. Virtually none of these had solar panels on their roofs. Front yards reduced in size and vegetation removed, replaced with lots of concrete and gravel (which looks neat), and the mandatory cordyline or other strappy plant in a large pot on the front porch. Huge double garages and almost all two storey, replacing the old 1930's single level bungalow.

Griffith tells us that cars outweigh wild animals by about 30 (yes, 30) to one. These cars need roads to travel on and, after all the recent rain and the potholes, we know how much they cost to build. But we don't think how many animals we destroy in the process of building roads - not only in road kill, but also by destroying and dividing their habitat.

Take the challenge and write to Hut News about what you have achieved in your home and in your street.



Colo

Now I remember,
Wild river flowing
Mother of waters,
Cliffs of light rising.
This is my home ...
Canyons and chasms
Jungle and plateau,
And architect's mountains
Stone wizard's wielding.
The land of the Lyrebird
Harp song calling,
Soft breeze blowing,
Dreamtime falling
To blanket the eyes.
Never forgotten
Waters murmur,
I will return
In due time singing
To the land of my childhood,
River of memories,
Hearth of my heart.
-- Haydn Washington

Farewell to Haydn Washington (1955-December 2022)

In late 1973, four 18-year olds walked down the Capertee River from Glen Davis to supposedly meet up with the walk leader group walking down Wollemi Creek from Putty. Except they didn't turn up due to rough terrain, so Haydn and friends continued on down the river to Colo Heights, walking through the largest wilderness in NSW in the wondrous Colo River gorge.

It was at dawn, while camped on the Capertee/Wollemi junction that something remarkable happened – a close encounter with a Lyrebird – and Haydn realised that the Lyrebird, the world's greatest mimic, had no human voice to speak for his home.

Shortly after, he walked into the Total Environment Centre and asked: 'What can I do?'. Milo Dunphy replied: 'We are starting up a Colo Committee tonight' and so Haydn became the Secretary of the group that night. The Colo Committee went on to run the major campaign from 1974 to 1979 to create Wollemi National Park. Many other campaigns followed including the Franklin, Daintree and Gardens of Stone.

Haydn was an inaugural member of the Greater Blue Mountains Area World Heritage Advisory Committee from September 2006 to November 2013. Over the years he was a director of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW and the Colong Foundation for Wilderness (now Wilderness Australia), a lecturer in environmental science at UNSW, and wrote books on environmental issues and poetry. The environment has lost a true champion.

Biographical information from Blue Mountains Nature--<https://bmnature.info/conservation-people-haydn-washington.shtml>

Image: Haydn Washington at the Society's Threatened Species Day event in 2018 (Alan Page)

Blue Mountains Conservation Society NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

We will be at the Blackheath Growers Market
on **SUNDAY 12 FEBRUARY**

AND 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

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Planning and 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



Eco Hint of the Month **SMELLY SOCKS**

In summer, your sport socks can get really smelly. Add some lemon juice to your washing water, and it will leave both your socks and underwear sparkling clean, and with a lovely fresh smell.

--TWO ELDERLY GREENIES

Understanding Haydn Washington

By Don Morison

On the day in 1979 that I first met Haydn Washington, I'd been invited by a friend to join a group of walkers that Haydn was going to lead, near the Putty Road. My friend and I had already explored Newnes Plateau but Haydn's knowledge of the wilderness from the upper Hawkesbury catchment to the Hunter River catchment was already in excellent repute. Haydn led us along Culoul Ridge and then south and west in a steep trackless descent to a place called Canoe Creek, a tributary of the Colo River.

The easy pace that Haydn adopted allowed time to take in the magnificence of the weathered sandstone cliffs, the snaking brown river and the tall eucalypts. After immersing our bodies in the Colo's waters and lying on the idyllic white sands along its meanders, we were in an ideal mood to hear Haydn's quietly expressed invitation to help save the northern Blue Mountains wilderness.

Everything I later learned about Haydn meshed with what he said and the way he said it on that day. I found out that the confluence of the Colo River and Canoe Creek was one of his favourite places.

During the time the Wran Government considered the future of this region and after it declared the Wollemi National Park "to the centre of the earth"¹, it became clear that Haydn's patient insistent advocacy was crucial to the outcome.

Clearly, Haydn never gave up his spiritual relationship with wild places nor his willingness to use his intellect to expand scientific knowledge of nature and respect for its processes.

The Wollemi National Park was declared to be protected "to the centre of the earth", meaning that the ground under it could never be interfered with in any way.

Learning about native bees

-- Christine Davies

When the feral European Honey bees were scarce one summer, a few years ago, there were lots of little native bees hovering around the flowers in our gardens. But we know so little about native bees that one Blackheath woman told me that she had been spraying them because she thought they were flies and would damage her flowers.

Of course, Australia's native plants were being pollinated long before non-native bees started to arrive here, the first of them brought to Australia a mere 210 years ago. Australia has about 2000 species of native bee, thousands of species of native fly, beetles and many other insects which evolved along with our native plants and help to pollinate them. There are also a number of plants which rely on birds.

It was interesting to read Chris Whiteman's articles, "To Bee or Not to Bee", in recent issues of Hut News to learn about invasive bee species. After reading Chris's articles, two coincidental things happened to increase my knowledge of native bees.

In December, while walking through the Picton Botanic Gardens, I noticed some large structures suspended in the canopy of Casuarina forest, and wondered what they were. And then we came upon the explanatory signs. The structures are "Bee Bells" and were the result of a local environmental education project which I will describe on page 11 of Hut News.

In January, my granddaughter sent me a photo of a Blue Banded Bee she had taken in her garden. Lillian had been more observant than me and has a good knowledge of native bees. This encouraged me to go to the internet to learn about Blue Banded Bees. One of the most rewarding thing about studying nature is that there is always more to learn.

Blue Banded *Amegilla* Bee

Blue Banded bees are amongst our most beautiful Australian native bees. They are solitary bees. Each female bee mates and then builds a solitary nest by herself. She builds her nest in a shallow burrow in clay soil or sometimes in mudbricks. Many Blue Banded Bees may build their nest burrows in the same spot, close to one another, like neighbouring houses in a village.

Blue Banded Bees can perform a special type of pollination called 'buzz pollination'. Some flowers hide their pollen inside tiny capsules. A Blue Banded Bee can grasp a flower of this type and shiver her flight muscles, causing the pollen to shoot out of the capsule. She can then collect the pollen for her nest and carry it from flower to flower, pollinating the flowers. Quite a few of our native Australian flowers require buzz pollination eg *Hibbertia*, *Senna*.

Tomato flowers are also pollinated better when visited by a buzz pollinating bee. Researchers at the University of Adelaide made substantial progress in developing native Blue Banded Bees for greenhouse tomato pollination. (Info from Aussie Bees website)



Blue Banded *Amegilla*
Photographed by Lillian O'Rourke

Lookouts and escarpment walks Part 5: The Old and New of Evans Lookout Opinion by Don Morison

The recently completed upgrade of Evans Lookout, Blackheath, has been particularly noticeable during a period of increasing visitor numbers to the upper mountains and proposals at numerous sites to accommodate them. The NPWS work at the site has been largely successful in balancing its role as a gateway to the Grose Wilderness with mobility restricted visitors' needs, the entry to the Clifftop Walk to Govetts Leap and a major photo and toilet stop on the iconic Grand Canyon circuit walk. It could also become the beginning of the descent from Blackheath to Junction Rock and the Blue Gum Forest if geotechnical issues with the 1924 "Horse Track" can be resolved – this is something the National Parks and Wildlife Service has informed Hut News they are actively considering.

There has been some discussion over the new arrangements creating a long walk from the car park to the main lookout for people using walking aids. The design was a response to Glossy Black Cockatoo habitat and other environmentally sensitive areas on the old route.

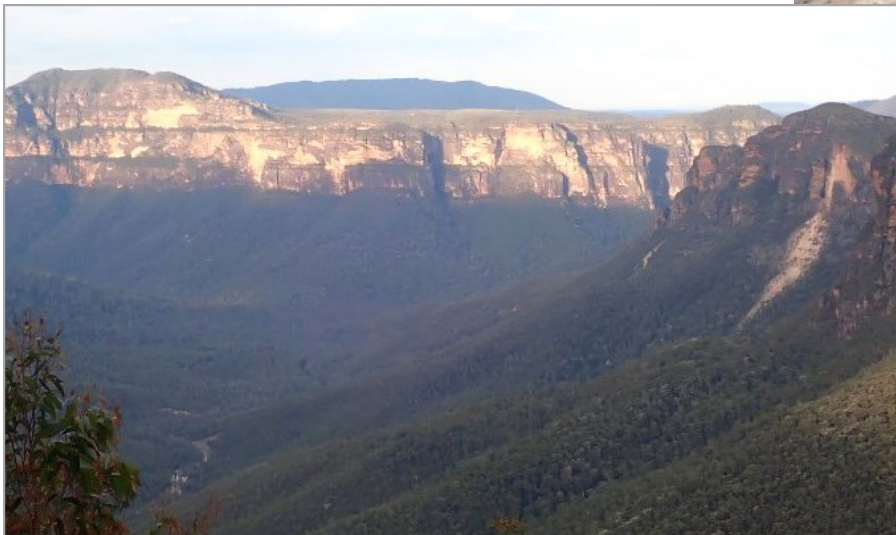
From Evans Lookout, you can see evidence of recent rock slips and bushfires as well as a spectacular valley whose outline has been much the same for tens of millions of years. Now a larger number of visitors to this viewpoint will experience the contrasts that epitomise the Blue Mountains.



A tree-screened view of new railing at the main lookout.



Long-established rock picnic shelter with a new lookout seat and the fence protecting the revegetation area that also contains favoured Casuarinas for the Glossy Black Cockatoos.



The Grose Valley. Eroded cliff-faces of Banks Wall reflect gold in the late afternoon sun. A recent landslip has left a seahorse-like shape on the cliffs near Lockleys Pylon.

Images by Christine Davies.

Littlejohn's Tree Frog – a threatened species at increasing risk Judy Smith, Threatened Species Officer

Littlejohn's Tree Frog *Litoria littlejohni* is a rare resident of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWH). In 2020, following a taxonomic review, it was split into two species. In the northern part of its range, from the Watagan Mountains to just north of Kangaroo Valley and including the Greater Blue Mountains, it remains Littlejohn's Frog. Further south it is now a different species, Watson's Tree Frog, *L. watsoni*.

Littlejohn's Tree Frog tadpoles develop in long lasting pools of water, usually in smaller streams with little or no flow. Streams associated with upland hanging swamps may provide breeding habitat. The ecology of the species is poorly known but it is thought to be forest dependent. Individuals can move widely and the non-breeding habitat is uncertain.

Threats to the species are many. Climate change, particularly the associated increased severity and frequency of heatwaves and change to precipitation

patterns as well as increased intensity and frequency of bushfires, threatens the species across its range. As a non-burrowing species, it is susceptible to heat and desiccation. Bushfires can cause localised extinction and the impacts on this species of the 2019-20 megafires, which have not been quantified, are likely to have been substantial. The chytrid fungus also threatens the species and is most severe in the coldest, highest elevation parts of its range in the Blue Mountains. Within conservation reserves, increased tourism, such as "off-road" trail bikes, 4x4 vehicles and horseriders, can cause stream erosion and hence tadpole mortality.

Given these and other threats, including vegetation clearing, alteration to groundwater hydrology, predation and invasive species, it is not surprising that the level of threat to this GBMWH species was increased from 'vulnerable' to 'endangered' at national level in February 2022 and at state level in November 2022.



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

Feb 6 **Minnehaha Falls carpark to Sandstone Quarry and Bruce's Crossing, 5Km Circuit.** Gr2. Eddie Roberts 4784 2691.

Feb 13 **Red Hands Cave Glenbrook, 9kms Circuit,,300M ascent/ descent.** Angela Berry 0427 133 327

Feb 20 **Braeside walk to Evans Lookout.** Tracy 0434 362 611

Feb 27 **Lockyers Track Head.** Tracy. 0434 362 611

Mar 6 **Lockleys Pylon, 8Km return,160M ascent/descent.** Angela Berry 0427 133 327

Mar 13 **Grand Canyon.** Pat Whitehead. 0429 003 639

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

Feb 7 **The Nature Track** (Wentworth Falls) G3/Med 8K, Sharon 0404622515.

Feb 14 **Greens Fire Trail Lookout** (Warrimoo) G2/Med 5K, Robyn 0409127012.

Feb 21 **Bicentennial Park Wetlands** (Concord West) G1/Easy 8K, Judith 0419780640.

Feb 28 **Horne Point-Witches Glen-Pulpit Rock** (Mt Victoria) G2/Med 7K, Doug 0455850753. Mar 7 **Rileys Mountain** (Mulgoa) G2/Med 5K, Roger 0449902774.

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

Feb 16 **Lockyers Track Head, Mount Victoria.** Tracy 0434 362 611. Grade 2

Feb 23 **Peggys Pool, Faulconbridge.** Ros 0417 261 465. Gr 2.

Mar 2 **Braeside Walk, Blackheath.** Tracy 0434 362 611. Gr2.

Mar 9 **Darks Common to Bluff and return.** Ros 0417 261 465. Grade 2.

Mar 16 **Moya Point, Leura.** Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2/

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

Feb 4 to Mar 4 **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>



Do you want to participate in an Exciting Environmental Project and learn about native bees?

When you walk through Picton Botanic Gardens, look up to see three amazing structures created in a community project to increase awareness of the vital role that native solitary bees perform in the environment. The "Bee Bells" were launched as a part of Pollinator Week 2016.

The "Bee Aware" project is unique in that it combined environmental education with hands-on art making. Three ceramic and copper Bee Bells each provide a different type of habitat for Australian solitary bees that are found in the Wollondilly Shire.

Two members of the Hut News Team saw these structures in December 2022 and suggested that "we can do something like this in the Blue Mountains".

The Blue Mountains is rich in talented people who could help. Entomology Megan Halcroft of "Bees Business" is willing to give advice. We need artists, someone to apply for grants if we need them, workshop participants, and somewhere to display our work.

Hut News Team volunteer Marilyn Kraus has agreed to help coordinate the project. Please contact the Hut News team on 02 4787 7246 or email hutnews@bluemountains.org.au if you are interested in participating in a project to promote community awareness of our native bees. Let us have your ideas.

You can find out more about the "Bee Aware" project by googling "native bee bells at Picton Botanic Gardens".

Photo by Geoff Dernee.

E

ENDANGERED

In 1992, the **ROCK WALLABY** was almost extinct. Only seven remained. Thanks to preservation efforts, the population is now growing.



REGENT HONEYEATERS are classified as critically endangered. 85% of the habitat of regent honeyeaters has been destroyed.



BANDICOOTS have a shorter pregnancy than all other mammals. They are pregnant for only 12 days.

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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/wild-image-LETTER-E.pdf>