

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Issue No. 413
May 2023



President's message to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society -- Annette Cam

It is a privilege and an honour to be elected as President of Blue Mountains Conservation Society for this next 12 months.

Thank you to the retiring President, Madi Maclean and the outgoing Management Committee (MC) for your exceptional dedication to the work of the society and to the Blue Mountains. Our MC is a talented, hard-working, and committed group who work diligently together to support the mission of the Society. This is true also of the members of your subcommittee teams, and the many other volunteers who assist us from time to time. Our strength is in a membership committed to the conservation of the Blue Mountains environment.

All my life, I have loved the natural world and have been dedicated to learning from it and conserving it. As a volunteer, I have worked for over 50 years in ornithology with the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme, NSW and SA National Parks and Wildlife Services and Bush Heritage and continue to do so.

In my working life, I am a public-school secondary science teacher who started her career in 1978. I finally retired in 2020, having been Principal at Windsor High School for seven years and then Wilcannia Central School for three years and six months. There are many joys in teaching, the greatest of which is working with inspirational young people, teachers and the community.

It is this sense of community and a sense of belonging – a sense of home -- which is so crucial to our work here at ConSoc. This place – the Blue Mountains – is our home, our place. We belong. When you belong to a place and a community you connect with it, you care for it – the place, the inhabitants and the people.

I want to hear from you about what you love and value, what we do well and what we need to do better and how we can grow our community and good work; how we can further our aims and advance our mission.

Thank you for your valuable contribution to our society and our work. I am excited to be working with you.

Native Plant Sale BMCS nursery volunteers will have a stall at Blackheath Growers' Market, SUNDAY 14 MAY

Don't miss the last opportunity to get your native plant tubestock before the winter break.

Autumn is an ideal time to plant. The soil is still warm and plants can settle in and develop a good root system, ready to burst into new growth come spring. We have a wide selection of well grown tubestock to choose from.

After the May market we will take a three month break. Orders can still be arranged by contacting the Nursery manager, Paul Irwin:

plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com

Warragamba Dam

Plans to raise the Warragamba Dam wall have been shelved.

- Read about the announcement on page 6
- Read letter from Wilderness Australia Chair, Bob Debus, on page 3.



Chiloglottis seminuda

Autumn in the Blue Mountains

You need sharp eyes to spot this tiny orchid, *Chiloglottis seminuda*. It has two leaves at the base and a single flower which is only 10-14 mm long. An internet search revealed the following information.

Orchids of the Australian genus *Chiloglottis* are pollinated through the sexual deception of male thynnine wasps. The orchids are remarkable for their mimicry of both the appearance and sex pheromones of wingless female thynnines. One of the most fascinating aspects of this interaction is that orchid species tend to attract only a single pollinator species. Read more: http://www.hermonslade.org.au/hsf_99_8/

Now, isn't nature amazing!

This orchid was spotted and photographed by Sue Nicol in April 2023 at Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park, Katoomba, during a Thursday Interpretive Nature Group bushwalk.

Scan the QR code at the top of this page to go to Blue Mountains Conservation Society website home page.

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

MARCH 2023 AGM: President's Report

In the annual President's report to the AGM, outgoing President Madi McLean noted the Society's continuing strength both financially and in terms of membership. She also noted the regular benefits afforded to members such as the bushwalking program, occasional expert talks and film nights and the Society's Nursery which continues to successfully propagate and sell native plants.

Madi detailed the Society's role in advocating and lobbying for the environment, in the first instance through the ongoing work of its two main subcommittees.

Advocacy of subcommittees

In the past 12 months these subcommittees – the long established Land Use Subcommittee and the more recently formed National Parks Subcommittee - developed 15 submissions as well as drafting media releases, letters to government ministers, and engaging in numerous meetings with politicians and bureaucrats at local, state and federal level.

Main areas of focus for the Land Use Subcommittee included:

- The proposed *croc park* and hotel development at Wentworth Falls and other "Zombie" developments;
- The downgrading of stormwater controls for medium density housing in the State's Environmental Planning Policy;
- Council's long-term planning including the Katoomba Masterplan, the Katoomba Golf Course Precinct Plan; and proposals to upgrade the Gordon Falls Precinct; and
- Council's Compliance and Enforcement Policy.

Main areas of focus for National Parks Subcommittee included:

- The Draft Master Plan and Draft Plan of Management for the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area including the potential impact of proposals for commercial leases for serviced accommodation units and a Lost City adventure activities precinct;
- Identifying more areas needing protection under Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and additional values;
- The need for an Environmental Impact Statement covering the entire length of the Katoomba-Lithgow Highway upgrade including the potential impacts on threatened swamps and aquifers and ground water from the proposed Blackheath-Hartley tunnels;
- Mining damage at Mt Airly and the proposed expansion of the Angus Place West coal mining proposal in the Gardens of Stone.

State Election Campaign and Lobbying

The Society also advocated for the environment by campaigning in both the Federal election of May 2022 and the more recent State election in April. It published the results of questionnaires on the environment provided to all candidates and staged candidate forums. In the case of the Federal election this was done in conjunction with the Nature Conservation Council of NSW and Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action. In the more recent state election a very successful public forum was held at Lawson.

Since the Federal election the Society has met with the new environment minister, Tanya Plibersek, and briefed her on the Society's concerns, including the need for additional areas and values for the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. It is encouraging that, soon after this meeting, the Australian Heritage Council recommenced the consultation process on this issue which had stalled for some years. The Society anticipates continuing to raise such issues with the new NSW government.

Future Developments: *Part-time paid position proposal*

In concluding, the outgoing President noted a proposal for a part-time paid position to help ensure the continuation of the Society's advocacy role. This had been accepted in principle by the outgoing Management Committee and will need to be taken up and developed by the newly elected Committee.

-- Reviewed by Paddy Cavanagh for Hut News Team.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

Phone: 0490 419 779 (leave message)

Email: bmcs@bluemountains.org.au

Website: www.bluemountains.org.au

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram:

addresses can be found on website.

President: Annette Cam 0450 215 125

president@bluemountains.org.au

Senior Vice President: Tara Cameron

taracameron4@gmail.com

2nd Vice President: Alan Page

alanpage7@bigpond.com

Administration Officer:

Jeanette Robertson

sao@bluemountains.org.au

Bushcare Officer: Paul Vale 0429 014 454

bushcare@bluemountains.org.au

Environmental Education Officer:

Alan Page alanpage7@bigpond.com

Events Coordinator: Andrew Solomon

0408 267 078 events@bluemountains.org.au

Gardens of Stone Project Officer:

Vacant natpks@bluemountains.org.au

Land Use Officer: Angela Langdon

landuse@bluemountains.org.au

Meetings Secretary: Heather Hull

0456 618 948 hhull001@bigpond.net.au

Membership Secretary: Ross Coster

0418 462 576

membership@bluemountains.org.au

National Parks & World Heritage Officer:

Madi Maclean

natpks@bluemountains.org.au

Newsletter Editor: Christine Davies

hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

Nursery Manager: Paul Irwin

plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com

Publicity Officer: Hayley Poynton

publicity@bluemountains.org.au

Sustainability & Climate Change Officer:

Nathalie Verellen

sustain@bluemountains.org.au

Threatened Species Officer: Adam Curry

0425 326 842 adscur@gmail.com

Treasurer and Public Officer:

Elizabeth Howard 0414 090 251

eh.mistover@bigpond.com

Website Officer: Andrew Solomon

0408 267 078

webmaster@bluemountains.org.au

Bushwalking Convenor: Doug Nicholls

0455 850 753 doug nicholls@bigpond.com

Bushfire Representative:

Hugh Paterson 0427 512 303

fmatter@bigpond.net.au

THE DEADLINE FOR JUNE HUT NEWS IS 15 MAY

hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

Enquiries: Christine 4787 7246

EVENT: Nest Boxes for Wildlife Saturday 27th May 2023, 10AM Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson Speaker: Peter Ridgeway, wildlife ecologist

Australia has the most hollow-dependent wildlife in the world. Possums, microbats, and many species of birds including kookaburras, parrots, galahs, owls and cockatoos use tree hollows for nesting and shelter.

It takes over 80 years for trees to start forming hollows and 300 years for a hollow large enough for a brushtail possum or a cockatoo to use. But old trees are becoming harder to find. Urban development and bushfires have seen the loss of large old habitat trees.

If you want to attract wildlife to your garden, you could put up a nest box – but not just any nest box. Native animals require hollows of different sizes, each species has different requirements. The size and orientation of your nesting box and the opening will depend on the species you want to appeal to.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is holding an event at Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson, on Saturday 27th May 2023, 10am, where you can learn about nest boxes and other information on how you can attract native birds to your garden. Speaker will be Peter Ridgeway, wildlife ecologist.

We will have 30 nest boxes to give away. One of these can be yours for a donation.

Andrew Solomon
Events Organiser
events@bluemountains.org.au
0408 267 078

Good News for Gardens of Stone?

In April Hut News we reported that Bushwalking NSW was considering a legal challenge to protect the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area from inappropriate over-development. Since that was written there has been a change of Government.

Update from Bushwalking NSW Inc.

In response to our lawyers letters, the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage confirmed to us just prior to the election caretaker mode that they would not be signing leases in the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area. The new environment minister is sympathetic to our views so we look forward to the changes that Penny Sharpe will make.

Today (on 3rd April), we met with Blue Mountains National Park management to learn about the walking and cycling tracks, and camping and accommodation plans that they currently have for the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area. NPWS were very generous with their time and offered to continue to meet with us.

What does the NSW election mean for Warragamba Dam?

It is with a sense of cautious excitement that we are now entering what may be the final stretch of the Warragamba Dam campaign.

The big news is that there is now little doubt: the dam raising will not go ahead in this term of government.

Penny Sharpe, the new Minister for the Environment, has over many years consistently spoken against the raising of the Dam. The incoming Premier, Chris Minns, has recently stated that the Labor Party is against the Dam raising. The unremitting pressure to raise the dam, which has been a dark cloud hovering over the Blue Mountains for the past seven years, is lifting.

Your support was essential to achieving this outcome, and enabling us to stave off the constant threat of raising the dam from pro-development political interests in Western Sydney. Thank you. Now we must seize this opportunity.

There is much work still to be done to close off the dam proposal for good. And we will need your ongoing support to achieve it. If we fail to do this work, the project could be resurrected as soon as there is a change of Government. So in the coming year, we plan to systematically work our way through every step that is required to ensure the project is dead and will never be revived.

- Legislation that prevents national parks from being flooded was repealed in order to enable the dam raising to go ahead. This legislation could now be reinstated as a matter of urgency.
- The NSW Government can deliver its promise to put in place environmentally sustainable alternatives for managing flooding and flood plain development in Western Sydney.
- The NSW Government should seek to reform Water NSW, the main driver of the widely condemned dam raising efforts and the bungled EIS process.
- Both the NSW and Federal Governments must quickly enact a comprehensive recovery plan for the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area following the 2019-20 bushfires, which burnt almost the entirety of the Greater Blue Mountains. This will undoubtedly demonstrate how important areas that were to be flooded are for the recovery of wildlife and habitat.
- The World Heritage Committee must be asked to both welcome the decision not to raise the dam wall, and to firmly oppose any future proposal to raise the dam - given the inevitable harm to the 'Outstanding Universal Values' of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

Thank you for all your support and efforts. We can be proud of what we've achieved and can now move with invigorated energy into the next phase of the campaign.



**-- Bob Debus
Chair,
Wilderness Australia**

Environmental offsets funding for the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area

The March edition of Hut News contained an article titled *Privatisation of our National Parks*. In relation to environmental offsets funding for the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area referred to in that article, National Parks and Wildlife Service has provided the following clarification:

To compensate for mining related impacts, Springvale Coal developed a multi-layered swamp offset strategy to satisfy the specific requirements of State and Commonwealth approvals. The swamp offset strategy included:

- support for securing of the Newnes, Wolgan and Ben Bullen State Forests into the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area (SCA) to protect Newnes Plateau Shrub and Hanging Swamps (NPSS and NPHS).
- a significant financial contribution to support the establishment and management of the new SCA.

NPWS will utilise the offset strategy funds to undertake establishment, conservation and management programs in the SCA including:

- feral animal and weed control
- swamp restoration
- pine plantation rehabilitation
- threatened species management
- fire management
- remediation and restoration of disturbed areas
- compliance programs
- access rationalisation and restoration
- research, monitoring and education
- cultural heritage protection and management.

Autumn in the Blue Mountains



Spotted Brown Butterfly

Photographer: Sue Nicol,
Blackheath, March 2023

Letter to the Editor

The use of Society bequests

It is with great concern that I have decided to voice my opinion through Hut News about what the Management Committee is intending to do with money that has been bequeathed to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

I attended the AGM on Friday 31st March 2023. I was interested to see the election of our new Management Committee, but I was mostly there to hear what the Management Committee had to say about this proposal for employment of a part-time person.

Understanding that money that has been granted to the Society was a great windfall, I was very unimpressed by the answer to my question: "How much of this wonderful donation was to be used for this person's employment?" The answer given was that it would be up to the new committee. With other people's questions it was always answered that it would be up to the new committee.

Given that from my understanding the new committee is largely made up of the same people as the old committee, I do not understand why the people answering our questions were not able to give straightforward answers to our questions, and if this was to avoid confrontation at the AGM. So to this discussion I would strongly oppose the idea of employment of a part-time person.

I feel that the committee could use this wonderful windfall in so many better ways. The guest speaker himself said how impressive the Society, which has been run by volunteers for all of its years dating back to 1960's, stands in the field of Conservation. Why now does the Management Committee think we need an employee?

If Management cannot keep up with the workload, I am sure there are many members who, if asked to help, would step up - as they have for the many years that I have been involved.

Other ideas that have come to my mind are ways that the money could be used to fund some environmentally good ideas for the Blue Mountains. Maybe invest the money and use the proceeds of the investment for a Scholarship.

I look forward to hearing what the Management Committee decides to do, but I hope that they will also listen to what the membership has to say.

Members, you may be in support of this proposal or, like me, worried that the gift that the wonderful people who chose us to be lucky enough to be remembered in their wills may be wasted. But please take the time to raise any questions or concerns to the Management Committee that you may have on this matter.

-- Phoebe Coster

ECO TIPS FROM THE TWO ELDERLY GREENIES

Chicken can contain Salmonella bacteria. These are killed during cooking, but cooked chicken can be re-contaminated if knives or cutting boards used for cutting raw chicken are reused for cooked chicken.

Scrub your chopping boards and knives that have been used for cutting up raw chicken.

Development in natural areas: a historical perspective

by Andy Macqueen

What did bushwalkers of the past think about development within natural areas? It's a valid question, given that those bushwalkers really founded the nature conservation movement as we know it. (See "Hut News", August 2022.) I addressed the question at a symposium last year, and the following is an edited version of my speech.*

To put it simply, the early bushwalkers mostly pursued a minimal impact philosophy. Myles Dunphy's own motto was: **"Preserve our bushland environment: leave as much as possible as natural as possible."**

The bushwalking magazines of the thirties and forties are replete with stories and poetry emphasising the wonder of camping out on the ground under the stars or a simple shelter, of sharing a campfire, of enjoying a simple life away from the trappings and worries of the city. Of connecting with the bush. The possibility of fancy accommodation never entered the mind. What's more, they usually travelled to their bushwalk by train. All in all, their activity wasn't responsible for much in the way of greenhouse emissions.

Dot Butler, famous for walking the Grose River in a day - in bare feet - wrote this: **"You will discover that simplicity is the keynote to happiness. The bushwalkers' wants are few – food and warmth and shelter they carry on their backs."**

It wasn't a new philosophy. Years beforehand, the rambler John le Gay Brereton reflected on the "dear dreamy earth" where he'd just slept under the stars, in a beautiful poem titled "Swags Up!".

One might note, too, that traditional Aboriginal people had a supreme connection to their country without the benefit of serviced accommodation and the like.

The bushwalkers' endeavours had a strong human-centred element: they wanted to save natural areas for bushwalking. Ideas about conservation were undeveloped. Nevertheless, a "nature comes first" philosophy soon crept in. In 1945 the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs even argued that the proposed Kosciuszko primitive area, of nearly 300 square kilometres, should not be open to recreation at all. It should be a people-free wilderness, where nature came first.

On the other hand, around the same time the Federation supported on-park private leases for skier accommodation. Of course, there weren't many skiers and skiing was done on wooden planks. No-one had any idea what it would lead to. A lesson about thin edges of wedges.

Eventually the Federation started to develop formal policies. A 1977 policy decreed that no huts should be built in national parks. The historic value of some huts was acknowledged, but if they burnt down they should not be rebuilt.

The next year a policy on major walking tracks was developed. It supported the idea of long-distance tracks, providing construction work was limited to places where safety was an issue, and wilderness was avoided if possible.

But the world changed. The walking community grew and started to become more ethnically diverse. Foreign tourists started arriving, some fond of walking and adventure. People became more mobile and more affluent.



"Simplicity is the keynote to happiness." A 1938 sketch by Roderick "Rory" Lofts of the Rover Ramblers Club.

People didn't have to join a bushwalking club to find out about walks. In the eighties and nineties they got ideas from guidebooks or magazines. Now they consult the net and social media. They might also be attracted by a commercial offering. The bush has become accessible to people who would never appreciate Dot Butler's "keynote to happiness", and others prepared to pay to be guided on an extreme adventure.

And bushwalking conservationists have got older. Our bones are creaking. We are conflicted. Do we take our high moral ground and leave the wild places to the young and fit? Or do we avail ourselves of supported experiences, and alternatives to sleeping on the ground? A glamping pod perhaps? Cabins with hot and cold everything? A resort? With luxuries ferried in by helicopter. (Did I mention carbon emissions?) A long way from the simple, grounded experience of nature.

Meanwhile the bush has been invaded by technology. GPSs, PLBs, smartphones etc. Seduced by the technology, people make phone calls and do social media while they're out there. Many are more connected to their devices than to the nature around them. Nature becomes only virtual, and wild places get shrunk. This renders people more vulnerable to seduction by other unnatural phenomena: built infrastructure, serviced accommodation and the like.

And of course, all this time national parks have come to be regarded not only as environmental and cultural assets, but also as economic ones.

Late in his life Myles Dunphy wrote this: **"When bushwalkers have ceased to exist as active social entities, the tangible results of their long-sighted planning will everywhere remind people that these undesecrated parklands were secured by clear-headed idealists who had both feet on the ground [and who] went to no end of trouble to preserve it for the people of the future."**

Dunphy could not foresee the challenges that his "undesecrated parklands" have since faced. Invasions of weeds and animals. Extreme fires. Recreationists...

But also, invasion by inappropriate and desecrating development.

* *"Tourism Development in Protected Areas", Bushwalking NSW, 19 November 2022. The entire proceedings can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNC6VsQY9Og>*

40 years on, environmentalists carry forward 1983's promise

Opinion by Don Morison

1983 was one of the most influential years in the history of campaigning for nature conservation in Australia. On 5th March, a Labor Government led by Bob Hawke replaced the Malcolm Fraser-led Coalition. In his victory speech, Mr Hawke vowed to implement his election promise to stop the Gordon-Below-Franklin hydro-electric dam proposal in Tasmania. On 1st July, by a 4-3 majority, the Justices of the High Court of Australia upheld the Federal Government's right to override the Tasmanian Government's intentions to proceed with the dam. One vote meant everything!

Environmental Law Australia has described this as the most famous and influential environmental law case in Australian history. It provided a foundation for the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. This was because it confirmed a Federal external affairs power to make promises through international treaties to protect parts of the Australian environment and then override State governments that objected. It affirmed the Australian population as custodians of a continent and surrounding islands.

The 1983 campaign brought to national attention the medical practitioner and activist, Dr Bob Brown, who could be described as a consistent idealist, in contrast to the many pragmatists that the environmental movement has needed to deliver the increments of change. Bob Brown spent 19 days in jail in 1983, after being one

of the anti-dam leaders arrested in a protest and he filled a casual vacancy in the Lower House of Tasmania's parliament as soon as he was released.

In 1996, Bob Brown became a Federal senator and, subsequently, Federal Leader of the Greens. In 2009, he said that Kevin Rudd's proposal for a "cap and trade" emissions trading scheme had been hijacked by big polluters after the Greens combined with the Coalition to defeat Rudd's legislation in the Senate. In October 2011, he said that a carbon price his party had negotiated with Julia Gillard's government was "so much better" than Kevin Rudd's intended scheme.

Bob Brown resigned from the Senate in April 2012. In 2017, he delivered a brilliant Mick Dark Talk for the Future address at Springwood Hub. Earlier this year, Bob Brown clashed with the more pragmatic Adam Bandt over the arrangements that the current eleven Greens senators made to allow Anthony Albanese's emissions reduction law to pass the Senate.

Despite 40 years of steady progress, we currently face massive challenges to conservation. There are effectively no limits to the lengths our opponents will go to in their culture war against the natural environment. On the positive side, large sections of the business community and the wider public are now much more sympathetic to meaningful steps to address issues like climate change and the extinction of species.

Both idealists and pragmatists have played their part to move us forward since those protesters paddled their inflatables along the Gordon River in 1983. At every level of environmental campaigning from parliaments down to community environmental organisations such as the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, it is worth remembering that united movements have more hope of succeeding than those who allow their divisions to worsen.



The photograph *Morning Mist, Rock Island Bend, Franklin River*, by Peter Dombrovskis was used by the Tasmanian Wilderness Society in advertising against the dam's construction.

Plans to raise the Warragamba Dam wall have been shelved

Newly elected NSW government shelves the plan to raise the Warragamba Dam wall, a post-election update.

"We know raising the wall would flood the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area; inundating 1200 Aboriginal sites and artefacts, destroying habitat for critically endangered species and [risking] Blue Mountain's World Heritage listing." - NSW Water Minister Rose Jackson

"With my environment minister hat on, as a World Heritage Area it should be given the highest level of protection. I am pleased that will be saved. I am happy in relation to habitat for endangered species." - NSW Environment Minister Penny Sharpe.

Read more: https://www.wildernessaustralia.org.au/warragamba_dam_update

More to do: Read letter from Wilderness Australia Chair, Bob Debus, on page 3 of this newsletter.

Post-bushfire events at Blackheath

On 19th April, Allendale Landcare Reserve, hosted the first of a post bushfire bird survey. A 3.2 Ha private sanctuary at the headwaters of Popes Glen, this Allendale Landcare event focussed on how fire has impacted local bird and mammal populations, how the site has recovered post-bushfire and what we can do to improve resilience.

Our own Paul Vale provided a guided bird survey while David Jones, Project Manager, Wild Futures, Conservation Volunteers Australia, guided the group in inspecting 33 nest boxes for Feathertail Gliders and Antechinus.

This wildlife haven was the site of the final battle to stop the Grose Valley fire from entering the Blackheath village on 22 Dec 2019; however the rare and endangered bushland, which had not seen fire for 120 years, was not so fortunate.

Three years on and recovery has been incredible; helped by a massive community effort, especially from Allendale Landcare volunteers, neighbours, Greater Sydney Landcare, Blue Mountains City Council, local nurseries and Conservation Volunteers Australia.

The event was a thoroughly enjoyable experience and has added to the important recovery bird data post bushfires.

This Restore bushland and Enrich Local Leadership project is jointly funded by the Australian and the NSW Government under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

Another follow-up event is planned for 24th June 2023. If you would like further information and to register for future monitoring events, please contact David Jones, djones@cva.org.au.

-- Eva Johnstone, Allendale Landcare



Bird survey at Allendale Landcare Reserve

The Australian Government's Safeguard Mechanism Amendment Bill 2023

What is the "Safeguard Mechanism Amendment Bill 2023" and will it get Australia to its climate goals? The short answer is no, but it's a start!

After months of intense negotiations, the Bill has been passed through Parliament and will come into effect on the 1st of July.

The Bill is Australia's biggest step forward to real climate action and emission reduction goals in a decade. This is good news, but we have a long way to go. Australia has a long standing addiction to fossil fuels and it is a habit that is hard to break. Governments have been influenced by fossil fuel companies and lobby groups for decades, with policies reflecting these relationships.

What will the Safeguard Mechanism do to help Australia move forward to align itself with other more environmentally-friendly countries and jump onto the "renewable energy train"?

Under the new Safeguard Mechanism, Australia's biggest polluters (safeguard entities) will be given a baseline on the amount of net emissions they are allowed to emit. This will be legislated, forcing these entities to physically cut their emissions by approximately 5% per year and force them to invest in cleaner energy to decarbonise their industry.

Around 215 facilities will be affected; together they are responsible for around 30% of Australia's emissions. At the moment around 116 fossil fuel projects are tabled, a lot of projects may not be able to proceed due to this new legislation.

Some of the things the Safeguard Mechanism does:

- Enables a pollution trigger - companies are assessed for their pollution and the impact this has on the climate
- Entities will be held accountable for their emissions
- Ensures companies invest in cleaner technologies
- Makes it more difficult for fossil fuel companies to comply with emission limits, making some projects unviable and stopping them from happening
- Makes gas projects accountable for their on-site emissions

And doesn't do:

- Doesn't put a ban on new or expanding fossil fuel projects
- Doesn't stop companies from using Carbon Capture to reduce their emissions, which is inefficient
- Won't stop fossil fuel companies from using offsets to reduce emissions, however there will be regulations and limitations

Whilst the Bill is a good step forward, it's not enough to ensure Australia reaches its goal of net-zero by 2050. On a good note, this Bill is just the beginning, a way forward for better policy and legislation.

-- Nathalie Verellen

Sustainability and Climate Change Officer

Please go to www.cleanerenergyregulator.gov.au for updates and details on the Safeguard Mechanism Amendment Bill 2023.

Sources:

<https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/safeguard-mechanism-decision-explainer/>
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/mar/27/labor-agrees-to-absolute-cap-on-emissions-to-secure-greens-backing-for-safeguard-mechanism-climate-bill>
<https://greens.org.au/news/media-release/greens-secure-hit-coal-and-gas-safeguard-deal>

This letter to the editor was first published in August 2012 Hut News. Elizabeth Buki was a life member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society and passed away in December 2022 at the age of 102. An obituary to her appeared in April 2023 Hut News.

16th July 2012

I have been a member of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society since it began, and do so love receiving copies of Hut News. It brings back many happy memories, and I do wish you all much success with all your wonderful conservation ventures. My late husband, John Buki, was a founding father!

The reason I am writing is because I read the lovely story about the feathertail gliders in the July (2012) issue, and I felt I must tell you a story about my experience with these beautiful creatures.

In 1968 we were living in Rappville (where my husband was principal of the school and a very keen conservationist) when some timber cutters brought us a matchbox containing 4 tiny baby feathertail gliders which they had found when felling trees.

I raised the little things for nearly 6 months - the local chemist made up some special baby formula for me with which I used to feed them by eyedropper every few hours (had to get up all night as well for a long time); the little things thrived and I went on to feed them all varieties of things which seemed to work. As they got "bigger" they used to run all over the walls and

ceiling, and clung to our shoulders and legs - it all began to get a little smelly as they were not suited to nappies!

Finally we decided we should return them to the wild, and took them out to the rainforest in the shoebox (filled with cotton wool) which had been their home all along. My husband carefully lifted them out and put them onto a tree trunk, and in a flash they were back clinging to his trousers and just as quickly jumping back into their box. After several attempts we realised we could not leave them there, and so returned home.

Eventually we called Taronga Zoo in Sydney and told them of our little orphans. They were absolutely delighted, and agreed that we should send them to the Zoo for housing, particularly as the Zoo had never had any in captivity; they organised transport - and we took the box to Casino airport where they were safely boarded and were collected by keepers at the Sydney end.

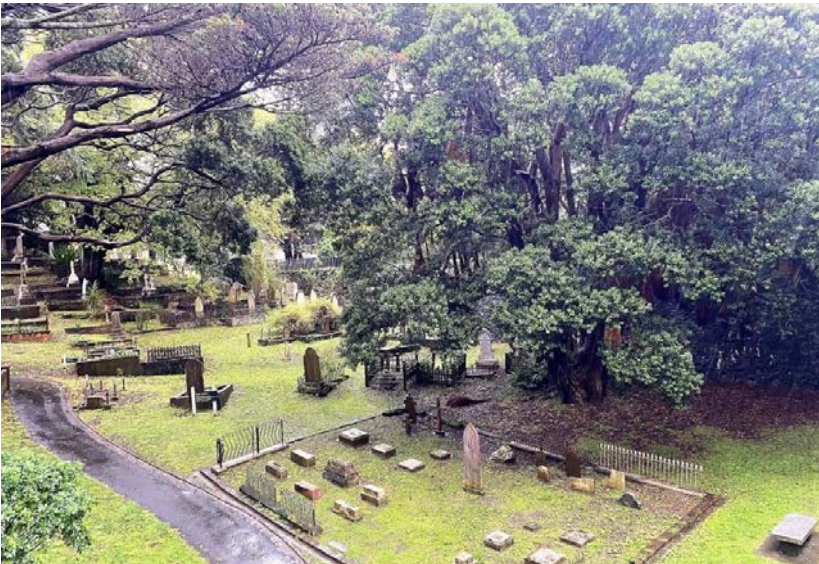
For many years I received an annual letter from the then President of Taronga, giving us updates on their progress; the Zoo even built a special nocturnal house for them. Eventually, on change of staff, this faded out, but I did often wonder about the breeding colony which now exists at Taronga, and what part my four little foundlings played in that.

Best wishes to everyone at the Society, and thank you for the always interesting Hut News.

Kind regards,

Elizabeth Buki

Thought-provoking New Zealand 2: A capital city conservation site's long fight-back against traffic



The New Zealand city of Wellington is a series of suburbs clinging to steep hills and ridges clustered around one of the North Island's most spectacular harbours. On a hillside five minutes' walk from where the beehive-shaped parliament building now stands, a large burial area was set aside in 1840 and thousands of burials, including that of the city's planner, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, took place, mainly over the following seven decades.

In the car-obsessed 1960s, authorities became very concerned about traffic between the northern and southern ends of the city clogging the narrow streets which occupied the constrained foothold between the harbour shore and the range of hills to the west. Despite the formation of the "Friends of Bolton Street cemetery" and the fact that, together with Wellington Botanic

Gardens, the site provides a magnificent greenbelt stretching from the parliamentary precinct to the high ridgetop, the government would not back down from its bypass plan.

3,700 sets of remains were exhumed and reburied out of the path of the bypass. By 1978, multiple lanes of traffic were travelling through the bisected cemetery. Today, a footbridge allows those interested in conservation to visit both surviving sections of the Cemetery.

Despite its chequered history, this place remains one of the most interesting and relaxing walks in New Zealand's capital. There are numerous heritage trees and shrubs, fascinating rock formations and over 1,000 heritage headstones and memorials as well as interpretive plaques relating the site to Wellington's history. The group originally formed to stop the bypass remains active in spruiking the conservation values of the locality.

Text by Christine Davies.

Image: A section of the lower cemetery, showing the rectangular area (edged with bricks) which marks the mass grave where the 3,700 human remains disturbed by the motorway were re-interred. Image supplied by Kate Fortune, Friends of Bolton Street Cemetery.



A Breed Apart (Snippets of a trip description and a sketch by the late Lloyd Jones)

Bird watchers are a breed quite distinct from all other mortals. Orderly rational behavior waived aside, bodily comforts ignored, whenever a tweet or flutter is registered by their specialized receptor mechanisms.

Such were my thoughts as, wedded to my sketch block, I watched my companions troop out from a comfortable shore-side bungalow at Wyangala Dam, despite the violent squalls of rain obscuring the distant shore and the towering cumulonimbus clouds bearing down on us. An hour later, a wet bedraggled party sloshed in from the liquid darkness. 'Something' had been seen.

Such was the pattern of progress for the remaining week. We headed south-west through the bird deserts of the shaved agricultural districts. Through Cowra and on to Pulletop Reserve, where the mallee scrubs suddenly appear, north west of Griffith. Here, under the guidance of a ranger from the National Parks service, we threaded our way through the bush and were lucky enough to sight a mallee fowl leaving its mound.

Next day it was out to the northern end of Cocoparra Range to a campsite among the inland gum types growing on Homestead Flat. And on to Mt Hope Mallee Reserve. From a high knoll we could see a full 360 degrees of mallee wilderness blanketing the plains. To the east, however, we could see neat rectangles of freshly sprung wheat paddocks penetrating westward. In this marginal country one wonders if the farmers' democratic right to make an economic gamble is fair to the nation, in their effect on the land's stability.

As we slithered our way eastward, back to the Lachlan at Euabalong through Lake Cargelligo, we entered the heart of the wheat belt where life's values are measured in bags per acre. The paddocks are clear of any competing trees or the lucky survivors are on their last legs through sheer age. Livestock sees to it that there are no descendants.

Lake Brewster was our next goal. Sturdy specimens of Red Gum grew along the water margins and hosts of water fowl enticed the party to study them despite a very cold southerly drifting over the plains.

-- Lloyd Jones

Fear and Wonder is a new podcast about climate change and the scientists fighting it. The podcast is published by The Conversation and sponsored by the Climate Council.

Episode 4: How climate change is affecting rainfall, droughts and floods

(published 20 April 2023, The Conversation)

"The wet gets wetter and the dry gets drier".

That's one of the key messages from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report on how climate change is impacting the Earth's water cycle.

It's the topic of the latest episode of Fear and Wonder, a new podcast from The Conversation taking you inside that era-defining IPCC report via the hearts and minds of the scientists who wrote it.

To listen to the free podcast, please go to the following link: <https://bit.ly/climateaffect> Follow the instructions at **LISTEN AND SUBSCRIBE**. This will take you to this podcast and other available episodes in the series.

Members!

We want to hear from you. Please consider contributing content for Hut News. The deadline for June Hut News is 15th May.

hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

Enquiries: Christine 4787 7246

ECO TIPS FROM THE TWO ELDERLY GREENIES

An old lampshade frame (pick up from op shop) enameled in a bright colour with the narrow end planted firmly in a flowerpot makes an excellent trainer for

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. Join online at 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).

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

The Mating Game

Some years ago, the Interpretive Bushwalking group walked to Lockleys Pylon on a warm spring day. The Pylon, a rocky outcrop on a little heath-covered hill at the edge of the Grose Valley, was crowded with insects – in particular several species of butterfly and one species of another large flying insect, all flying around the top of the hill. It was party time! They took no notice of our presence and flew around us.

They were “hilltopping” and had come to this high point to find a mate. An uninvited guest was a Mountain Dragon who was perched on the rocks, snatching insects out of the air and eating them.

This year has been a particularly good year for plant growth and the insects that feed on them. A species of Stick Insect in my garden has found its own “hilltop” – a glass door on the deck. The scene is not as crowded and frantic as it was on the little hilltop above the Grose. Stick Insects don’t move much during the day, but they are very patient.

The female stick insect is much larger than the male. Stick insects are phasmids and resemble leaves or sticks and, even in the open, their camouflage seems to work and protect them from hungry birds.

-- Text and image by Christine Davies



Narrow Neck book from Bush Explorers

The new book, **Narrow Neck: Walks, Passes, People, Places**, has just been released and is available to purchase via the Bushexplorers website:

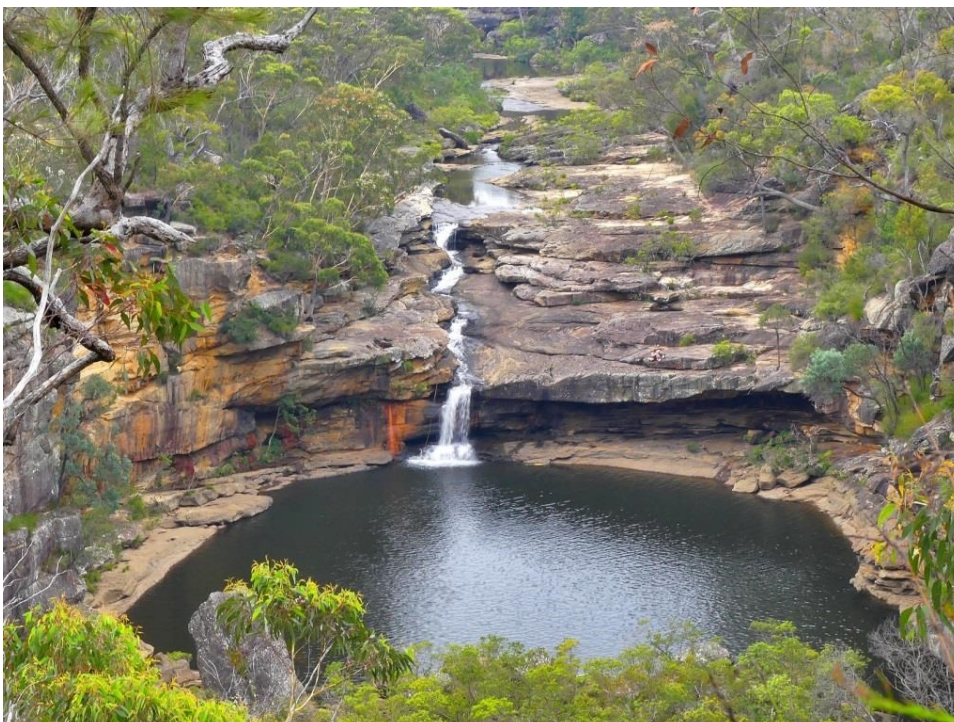
www.bushexplorers.com.au

Narrow Neck is a spectacular landform, easily accessible from Katoomba, and the gateway to a great variety of Blue Mountains bushwalks. This book is a definitive and comprehensive story of the region, expanding the sold-out 2008 version. It provides a deeper insight into Narrow Neck’s fascinating past, its scenic beauty, negotiating its many passes, and the pivotal role of the area in the development of bushwalking in NSW.

This volume is for the lovers of the Blue Mountains, a tool to learn the early history of the region and an essential aid in the planning of any walks in and around the Narrow Neck.

Editor’s Note: The Lookouts and Escarpments series will continue soon in another issue of Hut News.

Correction: April 2023 Hut News, page 9 “Thought-provoking New Zealand”. Muller Lookout was mentioned twice, should have been Mueller Lookout. Missing caption: Text and images by Christine Davies. Images show scenes of the mountainside and swing bridge above and below the Hooker Valley track and text on the NZ National Parks interpretive sign at Mueller Lookout.



Robert’s Ranges

The Bargo River spills into the Boanbee Pool in Tahmoor Gorge, also known as the Mermaid Pool.

Tahmoor Gorge is one of the most delightful bushwalking areas in the Greater Sydney sandstone basin, but it has yet to receive any significant environmental protection status.

Photo: Geoff Dernee

This series celebrates favourite places of the long-term publisher of bushwalking maps Robert Sloss.



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

May 8 **Blue Gum Swamp & Grose Head Lookout**, Springwood Station CP(Nth Side) 9.10. Carpool, Angela Berry 0427 133 327
May 15 **Fairy Bower Circuit 5km**, Mt Victoria Stn 9.50, Gr 2, Pat Whitehead 0429 003 639.

May 22 **Adelina and Junction Falls**, with Golf Area, Meet top of Honour Ave Lawson 8.40, Keith 0411 162 345

May 29 **Sassafras Gully loop track**: 10.3km, moderate grade, Springwood Westpac Carpark, 9am, Melanie 0431 214 687

June 5 **Mt Victoria Falls Rd, Ikara Head, Girraween Cave**, Mt Victoria Station 8.50, Wayne Read 0429 021 296

June 12 **Monarch's Birthday, No walk**

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

May 9 **Popes Glen & Braeside** (Blackheath) G2/9K, Robby 47515376.

May 16 **Berrima WW1 Internment Camp** G1/4K, Maurice 0402402783.

May 23 **Parramatta Ferry Terminal to Olympic Park Terminal** G1/8K, Marilyn 0409924663.

May 30 **Den Fenella & Rocket Point** (Wentworth Falls) G3/7K, Sharon 0404622515.

June 6 **Rail to River** (Chatswood) G2/7K, Judith 0419780640.

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

May 11 **Asgard Swamp, Mt Victoria**. Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Take lunch. Carpool. Tracy 0434 362 611. Grade 2

May 25 **Cranebrook Waterways with morning tea at Café Whitewater**. Glenbrook Station Car Park (east) 9.30am. Take lunch. Carpool. Maurice 0402 402 783. Grade 1

June 1 **Warrimoo Lookouts**. Warrimoo Station CP 9.15am. Take lunch. Carpool. Ros 0417 261 465. Grade 2

June 8 **Greens Fire-trail Lookout Warrimoo**. Warrimoo Station south side (foot of pedestrian bridge) 9.15am. Take lunch. Carpool. Maurice 0402 402 783. Grade 2

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

May 13 **Jack Evans Track & Erskine Ck**. Harold 0409010737, Glenbrook. Stn.CP. 8.30am. Gr 3. 6km. Map Penrith

May 20 **Banks Ridge & Two Arrows Point**. Harold 0409 010737. Mt VicStn.CP 8.30am. Gr3/12km. Map Mt Wilson.

May 27 **Hat Hill Ridge, Bald Head & Anvil Rock**. Harold 0409010737, Blackheath.Stn.CP.8.30am. Gr3/7km. Map Mt. Wilson.

Jun 3 **Blue Gum Swamp, Shaws Ridge, St Columba's Track**. Alice 0425738766, Springwood. Stn.CP. 8.30am. Gr 3, 15km. Map Springwood.

Visit the Saturday walks facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/bmcslongerbushwalks?fref=nf>

Remember Rex Gilroy

Rex Gilroy, who passed away in April 2023 at the age of 79, filmed the opening of the original Conservation Hut when he was 18 years old. He enjoyed the media spotlight and is best remembered as a crypto-zoologist, someone who studied biological rarities and myths.

Rex liked to discuss Thylacines in the Blue Mountains, the Lithgow Panther, or his alleged meeting with a Yowie on the Devils Hole track at Katoomba. According to Jim Smith's lectures in Outdoor Guiding (Blue Mountains TAFE, 1990), Rex and Yowie allegedly contemplated each other for a few seconds across a clearing and then the Yowie screamed.

Rex Gilroy may have left it to others to deeply ponder over the boundaries between truth and fantasy. But his was a life of generating media stories around Australia and beyond about creatures, both real and generated in the human mind.

I met Rex Gilroy at the Society's 40th anniversary celebration at the Conservation Hut in 2001. He had moved from the mountains by then, but he came to show his film about the Conservation Hut. I liked him - he had a twinkle in his eye. He was a showman rather than an educator.

Some believe that the fauna and flora of the Blue Mountains is interesting enough without a discussion about organisms that may never have existed. Rex was clearly not one of those.

-- Christine Davies



A cartoon from June 2001 "Hut News" showed Rex Gilroy hypothetically directing a performance by some of his favourite animals at the Three Sisters.

HEATHLANDS are home to 5,000 species of invertebrates. These include many types of grasshoppers, beetles, moths, ants, and spiders.



More than 25% of our medicines come from plants from **RAINFORESTS**.



WETLANDS, like kidneys, clean the water that flows through them. They also provide a habitat for many plants and animals.



HABITAT

Copyright Ingrid Hess 2022
Supported by bigci.org



Published by Blue Mountains
Conservation Society in "Hut News"

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-H.pdf>