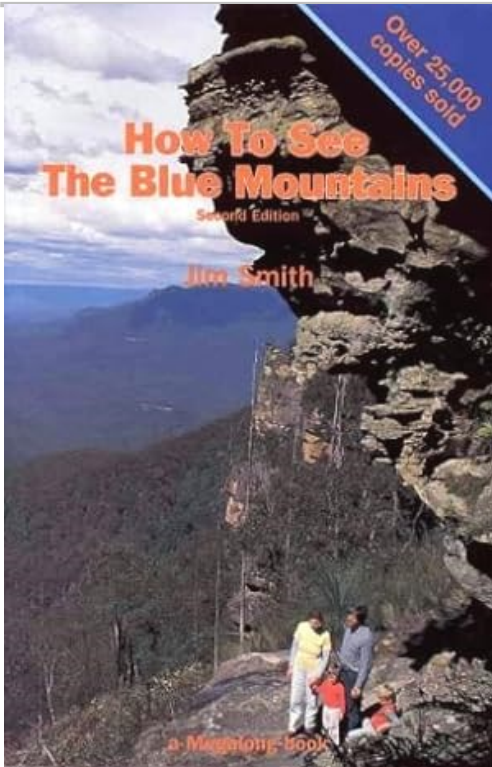




# HUT NEWS

Issue No. 423  
April 2024

*"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"*



## Tom Whitton ... bushwalker, bookseller, publisher, environmentalist ... 1951-2024

Tom Whitton, who has passed away at Yerranderie, has been an imposing figure for the Blue Mountains and for our Society for many decades.

Those who bushwalked in the mountains by the 1980s and 1990s often used the second edition of Jim Smith's "How To See The Blue Mountains" and will fondly remember the photograph of Tom and his family at Wentworth Falls, on the front cover. (See image on left.)

This was one of the many environmentally relevant publications that was published by the entity that Tom and his wife Wendy founded, *Second Back Row Press*. In 2021 they published "Blue Mountains Byways" which contains a collection of stories written by John Low for Hut News and other publications.

Tom and Wendy opened Megalong Books, in Leura Mall, in 1987 and ran the shop for thirty years. Upon retirement, they volunteered to help the Society by enveloping and distributing the hard copy of our monthly newsletter, "Hut News".

The beautiful remote "ghost town" of Yerranderie, on the southern fringes of Blue Mountains National Park, brought particular joy to Tom and Wendy.

We wish every comfort to Tom's family as we mourn the loss of a most valued member of the Conservation Society. -- **The Hut News Team**

### Blue Mountains Conservation Society NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

We will be at the Blackheath Growers Market **SUNDAY 14<sup>th</sup> APRIL**  
(8am to 12 noon)

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](mailto:plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com)

### Become a member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society

We are an incorporated voluntary organisation whose goal is to protect the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains. Find out more at our website [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au) You can join online at [www.bluemountains.org.au/joining.shtml](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/joining.shtml) or phone 0418 462 576. Members have the option of receiving our monthly newsletter, Hut News, by post or online.

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

### Petition to raise greenhouse gas emission reduction targets

According to the Climate Council, Australia's target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 43% below 2005 levels by 2030 is insufficient to prevent self-sustaining and irreversible climate change of catastrophic levels. Instead, they present a minimum 75% reduction as imperative.

- Support Dylan McCarthy's Climate Petition to our Labor government in Canberra.
- Help send it out around Australia and maybe, around the world.



Dylan is 16. He lives in the Blue Mountains, where there are many thousands of people who care about our children's future on this stunning planet. Australia-wide, there are millions of us. We must let the government know.

Dylan's plan is to get at least 10,000 signatures on paper by April 30. Then we'll have just 4 weeks for many thousands more people to sign online.

Here's Dylan at the launch on February 14 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKrEsWPTnqY>

On our new facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/597411152584622/> - you can download and print the petition and join the action. Get inspired and be inspiring! Further enquiries to [ccpetition@mail.com](mailto:ccpetition@mail.com) or text Shirley on 0412 502 267.

-- **Shirley Lewis** (Image: Dylan McCarthy, supplied by Dylan)

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is an incorporated voluntary organisation of more than 800 members. Our goal is to protect, conserve and advocate for the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains. Read more: [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)

## Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

**Post:** PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

**Phone:** 0490 419 779 (message)

**Email:** [bmcs@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:bmcs@bluemountains.org.au)

**Website:** [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)

**Facebook, Twitter and Instagram:** addresses can be found on website.

A new management committee was elected at our Annual General Meeting. These are all voluntary positions. Names and contact details can be found on the website and will be published in May Hut News.

If you have any enquiries, you can email [bmcs@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:bmcs@bluemountains.org.au) or leave a message at 0490 419 779 .

## From the President ...

As I write this, I am reminded that it has been almost a year since I became President of this wonderful organisation. When you read this, the AGM (held on 27 March) will be over and we will have a new Management Committee to guide the important work of the Society.

I am constantly proud of the work of this organization – invariably when I meet people at conservation oriented meetings, or workshops based around natural systems, they speak glowingly of the important work we do and the impact we have. This is acknowledged by many including Blue Mountains City Council, the Nature Conservation Council, conservation societies across Sydney and, of course, our local community and our members.

Our high level of standing results from the excellent work done by members of our subcommittees and the support of all our members in speaking up for nature. Thank you all for your commitment!

It would be nice to be able to say that our work is done and our unique environment is securely protected for the future, that after some 62 years since the Katoomba and District Fauna and Flora Protection Society (the original name of the BMCS) was formed in 1961, there are no more battles to fight. But it seems that dream is some way off, and we are still here speaking out loudly for the protection of our beautiful Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and the other natural bushland that is such an important part of the City of Blue Mountains' villages.

After we submitted our lengthy and detailed submission on the EIS for the Western Sydney International (Nancy Bird-Walton) Airport, we then had to put pen to paper again to address the Government's proposed "one-size-fits-all" housing reforms planned for all of Greater Sydney from the Shoalhaven in the south, to Newcastle in the north and west to the Blue Mountains. Of course, we understand the current lack of affordable housing needs to be addressed. But it should not be done by overturning all the hard-fought environmental protections for our bushland that the Society, in negotiation with the BMCC, has seen implemented.

The Society's housing submission is on our webpage and I recommend that you read it so you know what the issues are and what we are recommending. We are planning a campaign over the next few months to ensure our voice is heard and we will need your ongoing support to be successful.

The recent Sunset Meeting at the Conservation Hut on 22 February 2024 was well-attended, informative, good food and good fun! AND we had a lovely, glowing sunset. Alan Page gave an update on the progress of the recovery of banksias after 2019-2020 bushfires, accompanied by lovely photos. Roy Tasker's talk on Biochar was very informative, discussing ways of sequestering carbon to help address the impact of increased carbon dioxide on climate change.

Being able to hold meetings at the Conservation Hut has allowed us to reinvigorate a regular meeting schedule and engage more effectively with our members. It has been lovely to chat to you and meet new people. Thank you all for your enthusiasm and support over the past year.

-- Annette Cam, President

## Hazelbrook Creek Crayfish Kill ...Origin Solved ... Fine Issued

The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has reported that an individual has been fined \$8,250 for allegedly causing the death of a large number of crayfish in a tributary of Hazelbrook Creek in the Blue Mountains last August.

The EPA has issued two penalty notices after its investigation found nearly 40 litres of the diluted pesticide Bifenthrin accidentally spilt on the driveway of a private property which eventually flowed into the stormwater system, causing a major crayfish kill along 600 metres of the creek.

The EPA Executive Director of Regulatory Operations, Jason Gordon said "The individual had the opportunity to clean up the spill to prevent further harm but failed to do so." Also he said "While we are pleased the person responsible came forward on their own accord, we are committed to holding individuals accountable for actions that endanger our precious ecosystems, the misuse and mishandling of pesticides can have devastating impacts on our waterways, which are home to animals like the Giant Spiny Crayfish."

Jason Gordon further said "All individuals and businesses are urged to handle chemicals carefully and to ensure that all measures are taken to prevent spills and contamination."

The two fines relate to breaching the Pesticides Act 1999 and the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 for harming a non-target animal and polluting waters.

Source: NSW Environment Protection Authority.

**THE DEADLINE FOR MAY HUT NEWS IS 12 APRIL**  
[hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au)  
**Enquiries: Christine 4787 7246**

## Banksias on Narrow Neck Plateau and Newnes Plateau



Heath Banksia seedling, March 2020. (Alan Page)

The Black Summer bushfires were severe on Narrow Neck Plateau. Most of the mature Banksias that don't survive fierce fire were lost. These included – Heath Banksia (*Banksia ericifolia*), Silver Banksia (*B. marginata*) and *B. cunninghamii*

A few months later a few seedlings of these three emerged, providing hope.

I was led to believe that it would be seven years before they would bear flowers. And, if another fire came through in the meantime, these species could really struggle to re-emerge in the area.

Four years later and some of these seedlings have grown to over 1200mm in height and are bearing flowers. When I saw them I was overcome with joy.

There aren't many in flower and they still need to be pollinated to have seed pods, but they are on their way. Just need to hope that graders and goats don't harm them. Yes, goats have been seen on Narrow Neck.

Meanwhile, the banksias that can survive fire are in flower – Old Man Banksia (*B. serrata*) and Hairpin Banksia (*B. spinulosa*). And their flowers from previous years have unopened seed pods – a positive sign that there are pollinators.



Heath Banksia, February 2024. (Alan Page)

While their seedlings are growing much slower than the other three species mentioned, this slower growth doesn't surprise me as I believe that eucalypts that don't survive fire – such as Blue Mountains Ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*) – grow quicker. They have to, to survive. Such plants are called “obligate seeder species”.

The Newnes Plateau Banksia (*B. penicillata*) also does not survive a fierce fire. After the Black Summer bushfires I was relieved to find hundreds of seedlings near the remains of three mature trees. Four years later, I am delighted to report to seeing many banksias - some 1500mm high. Plus there are a dozen or so flowers. These banksias are in the newly declared Gardens of Stone Conservation Area.

**Look, listen, enjoy!**

**--Alan Page.**

## A Day in Medlow with the Plant Study Group

-- Meredith Brownhill



Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March: Our largest group ever of 17 people, including some new members, started the day by spraying our shoes with 70% Methylated Spirit to kill *Phytophthora cinnamomi* fungal spores on our shoes.

It was a day of Eucalypt contrasts as we started by walking through the *Eucalyptus oreades* Open Forest in Medlow Bath. Spectacular tall white trunks inspired interest. It is only as very old trees that they form hollows for arboreal animals. They are cold climate trees so are very vulnerable to the

warming climate and did suffer, with some branches dying, during the 2019/20 summer. A small orchid, *Genoplesium simulans* was finishing flowering.

In the National Park we found a diversity of other Eucalypts, with understory plants in the family Proteaceae. In another family, *Bossiaea heterophylla* was having its autumn flowering. At Point Pilcher the valley views over the Grose Valley were spectacular with the sheer cliffs and white patches of flowering Bloodwoods (*Corymbias*) on the valley slopes.

After lunch in the shade of the new picnic facilities we strolled through healthy shrubs to a small swamp that has recovered well from the summer 2019/20 bushfires. All in all, it was a big day out for Plant Study Group.



Images: Senthil spraying Jelena's boots at the start of the walk (Meredith Brownhill); Admiring the *Eucalyptus oreades* forest (Sue Nicol)

# Birds of the Blue Mountains: Leaden Flycatcher *Myiagra rubecula*

-- **Annette Cam**

The Leaden Flycatcher belongs to the family *Monarchidae*, also called Monarch Flycatchers. Worldwide, there are 100 species of Monarch Flycatchers belonging to 15 genera. The family occurs in parts of Asia, Africa and the islands north of Australia.

The Leaden Flycatcher occurs from the Victorian-S.A. border through south-eastern and eastern Australia up to Cape York Peninsula and across northern Australia to the FitzRoy River in the Kimberleys, WA. It is also found in New Guinea and nearby islands. This species inhabits coastal woodlands and eucalypt forests, paperbarks, riverside vegetation and mangroves.

About 15 cm in length and 13 g in weight, the males and females have different plumages (see photos). The male is glossy blue-grey above and on the upper breast with white underparts, cut off from the blue-grey by a sharp line. The female is a dull lead-grey above, throat pale orange-buff, paler on breast and off-white underparts. They have a small crest at the back of the head and a broad black-tipped blue bill surrounded by bristles.

The Leaden Flycatcher is very similar in colour to the Satin Flycatcher (*Myiagra cyanolueca*) which has a similar distribution. The Leaden Flycatcher is found in tall and medium open forests, mainly in coastal areas and prefers a drier habitat than does the Satin Flycatcher which prefers wetter habitats such as heavily forested gullies.

The diet of the Leaden Flycatcher consists of small insects and it catches these on the wing or by gleaning from vegetation in the mid-canopy. They are very active and agile birds, and in between darting about feeding, they sit on a twig flicking their tail and fanning their crests.

In Lawson near South Lawson Park, I usually have a pair turn up in spring to nest, staying around until late-February. They have a delightful call likened to a clear whistle repeated several times, and also some harsh, grating calls. (Check out their call on the Birdlife Australia's "Birds in Backyards" website <https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Myiagra-rubecula>.)



Left: Female Leaden Flycatcher (C)Kevin Bowring 2021 birdlifephotography.org.au

Right: Male Leaden Flycatcher (C)Hayley Alexander 2017 birdlifephotography.org.au

## This is My Land – or is it ?

Our planet Earth was created when a mass of dust and gas left over from the formation of the Sun was compressed 4,550 million years ago. My place on earth, in the Wolgan valley, is the result of erosion which wore down long gone mountains when Australia was part of the ancient supercontinent Gondwana. This process went on for a very long time until Gondwana broke up 180 million years ago and our continent went on its own way.

Humans first appeared 2 million years ago and indigenous Australians have lived here for 0.06 million years. These 'traditional owners' did not have a western concept of ownership but understood themselves as custodians of the land. Then, 0.0002 million years ago the land was 'stolen' from those custodians, and they didn't even understand that fact. The western system of landownership was imposed on their land and I am a beneficiary of that system today.

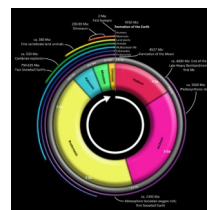
According to that system, I 'own' the ancient rocks that are on this land, the soil with its own universe of

micro biotic life and the Forest Redgum tree three times my age. This declared 'ownership' legally entitles me to exploit whatever exists on this land.

This land will go on long after I am gone and humans have disappeared after their short lived existence on planet Earth and the paper of my Title Deeds has turned into organic matter.

No, I really do not 'own' this land.

-- **Thomas Ebersoll**, [www.newneshotelcabins.com](http://www.newneshotelcabins.com)



Geologic time is shown in a diagram called a geological clock, showing the relative lengths of the eons of Earth's history and noting major events. Google: GEOLOGICAL CLOCK

## Hut News Trivia

How do leeches reproduce?

Answer on page 6.

## New sighting of endangered microbat

While spotlighting in Blue Gum Swamp Creek area with two friends, we discovered an endangered microbat, the large-eared pied bat (*Chalinolobus dwyeri*) roosting in a small cave.

*Chalinolobus dwyeri* (large-eared pied bat), which was previously listed as Vulnerable under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwth), was transferred to the Endangered category on 15 November 2023.

The identity was confirmed by one of our party, a field ecologist and Blue Mountains local, Graham Turner. In his three decades of field survey work he has not seen this species before. We also saw three Greater Gliders.

-- Ákos Lumnitzer, February 2024



Photo courtesy of <https://2madphotographers.com/>

## Housing Reform Rally at Parliament House

-- Elizabeth Howard

Members of the Society attended a rally at Parliament House, Sydney, on 12th March 2024, to protest against the NSW Government proposed Housing Reforms. The reforms will increase building heights and density in certain areas and will override Councils' current development controls, including environmental and heritage protections.

The rally was attended by people from all over Greater Sydney. The atmosphere was peaceful but determined, with chants of "Wrecking ball" and "Save our suburbs". Numerous placards were held up advocating for the saving of specific suburbs, trees, heritage, planning for communities, community consultation, and local Council control.

Issues raised included that the cost of renting or purchasing is at a record high, housing is only being built by the private sector, social housing needs to be built by Government, and developers are land banking. Speakers included: Sue Higginson MLC (Greens); Zoe Baker, Mayor of North Sydney; Dr Peter Gangemi, Mayor of Hills Shire Council; Mark Speakman, Member for Cronulla (Liberal); Warren Fahey, Potts Point Preservation Group; Judy Munday, widow of Jack Munday; Alister Henskens, Member for Wahroonga

(Liberal); Paul Fletcher, Federal Member for Bradfield (Liberal); and Shankar Sapkota (a young man renting in Gordon).

It was noted that people will accept change if given a voice and that our Councils are best placed to decide what development occurs where in their area, that they are willing to contribute with the right solution, and the community needs to be consulted.

Motions were put to attendees and a Resolution was passed:

"That the NSW Government:

- Immediately withdraws its proposed housing reforms including "Changes to create low and mid-rise housing" and "Transport Oriented Development Program".
- Ensures all NSW local councils retain their current planning, environmental and heritage powers.
- Investigates all alternative solutions to the housing crisis."

The Resolution has been distributed to: Every Member of the NSW Parliament; The Governor, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC.

Watch the video: <https://bit.ly/48W1dyX>



## The Intergenerational Transformations Series Public spaces in 30, 60 & 90 years' time Series coordinated by Don Morison.

Donna Edwards has worked in environmental education at Jenolan Caves, Bicentennial Park, Sydney Olympic Park, Blue Mountains City Council and Brisbane City Council. In the next articles of this series, Donna answers questions about how people of various ages relate to Australian native plants.

**Hut News:** What sort of reactions do you think different kinds of people have when they see Australian native plants while going about their day to day lives?

**Ms Edwards:** Some will be unaware whether the flora they see in public places are native or not, some are acutely aware of endemic native species that have been planted or occurring naturally, some simply appreciate the beauty of what they see, whether it's native or not.

For those who recognise and appreciate endemic native species, they are more likely to see the relationship between the flora, and the micro-and macro-fauna they support, the mycorrhizal fungal associations that create an unseen subterranean map of life-sustaining networks and the patterns of lichen and algae that create endless interest to the eye.

Some people will be prone to feeling awe and wonder, no matter their level of biological knowledge. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Despite a person's level of awareness of the trees and plants around them, they are subject to a full sensory experience which gives people a positive and grounding experience, to greater and lesser degrees. It's proven to boost mental health being in the dynamic natural environment.

**Hut News:** Can you please comment on reintroducing native plants to public spaces?

**Ms Edwards:** It can be done to replicate and restore previously degraded areas to provide shade, habitat, protection from erosion and soil degradation, and improve water quality in streams and creeks. It's important to know which fauna species need support when deciding on what and where to plant in addition to creating a multi-storey habitat that protects soils.

**Hut News:** Do you think people are too inclined to take the presence of native plants in their public spaces for granted?

**Ms Edwards:** Over the years I have worked in the land management space, I see greater awareness and appreciation growing over time. Land managers in local government have also shown a greater commitment to planting and protecting locally endemic species which, through visual saturation in public areas, creates familiarity and, for some, deep appreciation. Some may appear to take native plants for granted but, ultimately, I do believe we share a positive experience in areas that have native vegetation. I do think we are getting smarter over time.



Images: A small native beetle, about the size of a ladybeetle, methodically chewing a native leaf; a lovely pattern of mosses and lichens often found in a bushland setting. (Photos by Christine Davies).

## Flowering eucalypts

This year it has been hard to miss the mass flowering of Red Bloodwoods.

Currently the lightly scented flowers of the Red Bloodwoods (*Corymbia gummifera*) are covering rooftops, roads, pathways and verges courtesy of nectar loving birds, bats and flying foxes plucking, feeding and dropping clusters of them.

The Red Bloodwood is common along the eastern coast of Australia from Victoria to Queensland and the Blue Mountains has many of these medium to tall, grey-brown, fibrously barked trees. The Red Bloodwood is often overlooked in the bush, tending to blend in, except at times like these when falling blossoms cause us to look aloft. It is known for hardiness and as such is sometimes chosen as grafting stock for the man-made ornamental *Corymbia* hybrids loved by gardeners with their red and orange blossoms – the *Corymbia* Summer Red and *Corymbia* Summer Beauty. Like all *Corymbia* the blossoms mature into the familiar urn-shaped gumnut made famous by the May Gibbs Gumnut Babies.

The Blue Mountains is home to another Bloodwood, the Yellow Bloodwood (*Corymbia eximia*). This tree has a lesser distribution than the Red Bloodwood. It lives only on Hawkesbury Sandstone and flowers in Spring. The bark is a yellow-fawn, flaky and rough. The tree can grow to 20 metres.

I am reliably informed that when the Yellow Bloodwood puts on a flowering show, as it did last Spring, the Red Bloodwood will follow suit in late summer / early autumn, and so it is.

-- Jo Carroll

## Reducing the threat of leech bites:

It's hard to enjoy a walk when you are watching your feet the whole time. Before dressing, rub insect repellent onto your feet (including between the toes) and on the lower legs. Remember that leeches are an important part of forest and stream ecosystems because they act as both predators and prey in the life cycle of many animals.

## Hut News Trivia

Answer to the question on page 4:  
Leeches are mostly hermaphrodites

## Nature observations in 1802

-- Andy Macqueen

The following is a delightful piece concerning yellow-throated scrubwrens, deep in Gundungurra country.

*Many small trees and brushwood grow on its banks, creating a deep shade that shuts out the sun. The birds, which are here in great numbers, hang their nests, as if by a thread, to the branches of the trees. These nests are of a marvellous construction, having the shape of an ellipsis. The opening is in the centre, and the top part is so well covered that the heaviest rain cannot penetrate it. There are never more than two eggs in each nest, and I observed attentively that when the eggs are hatched the mother takes great care in keeping the nest very clean. Every time it enters to feed its little ones it comes out with its claws laden with excreta, which it never neglects to remove every time it enters the nest. This part abounds in various types of very dangerous reptiles.*

Who wrote it? The answer is Francis Barrallier, the French refugee who was tasked by Governor King with finding a way across the Blue Mountains. He made the observation on 27 November 1802, when he and his entourage of European and Aboriginal companions were embroiled in the deep and rugged gorge of Wheengee Whungee Creek, south-west of Kanangra Walls. The next morning he was confronted by a practically impassable waterfall. Short of rations and with footwear in tatters, they turned around.

Barrallier's original journal probably contained many more gems like that one, but unfortunately it is lost. Instead, we have the version he wrote several years later, but it still runs to about 21,000 words (in French) and makes sufficient observations about fauna, flora and geology to show that Barrallier had admirable curiosity and attention to detail when it came to the natural world. The amusing description of his encounter with brush-tailed rock-wallabies at Tonalli Peak is the first known recording of them, while his observations of the sparseness of the trees on the floor of the Burratorang Valley and the scrub in some other areas is of significance to our understanding of traditional land management.

Even more important, is that the journal says much about the many Dharawal and Gundungurra people who participated in the expedition, or whom he met during his "incursions" into their country. He named most of the individuals involved—while most of his European companions remained nameless. Moreover, he understood that the different peoples each had their own country, and there were protocols involved in travelling into other people's country. In such respects he was quite enlightened compared with some of his English colonial counterparts.

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Andy Macqueen has produced a new biography of Barrallier. It was launched recently at Burratorang Lookout by Trish Doyle MP, after a welcome to country by Gundungurra elder Auntie Sharyn Halls. Also launched was a revised transcription and translation of Barrallier's journal, undertaken by Milena Bellini-Sheppard and published online by Andy.

The book is entitled "The Frenchman: Francis Barrallier, life and journeys 1773-1853". It covers Barrallier's whole life, but has emphasis on his career in New South Wales, particularly his epic Blue Mountains expedition. It is a major overhaul of a small book Andy produced in 1993, with much new content and new perspectives.

"The Frenchman" can be obtained from Blue Mountains bookshops or from Andy at [www.andymacqueenauthor.com](http://www.andymacqueenauthor.com). The revised transcription and translation of Barrallier's journal may be accessed free of charge via the same website, or via the National Library catalogue.



Johnston Falls: the last straw for Barrallier.  
Photo: Andy Macqueen, 1992.

## How Many Insect Species Exist in Australia?

According to Taxonomy Australia, the current best estimate is that there are more than 200,000 species of insects in Australia. Only around 62,000 of these have been named so far. Many more are represented by specimens in insect collections, but have not yet been resolved and named. Many more still are collected for the first time in the field every year.

There are around 35 active insect taxonomists in Australia, working particularly on groups such as beetles, butterflies and moths, flies, true bugs, dragonflies, wasps and ants. In 2018, taxonomists described 500 new species of Australian insect.

Such is the advance of modern humans in Australia many insects may be extinct before they are found and described.

Reference: Taxonomy Australia

<https://www.taxonomyaustralia.org.au/insects>

## Mountain Mist

Oh mountain mist!

How I love to watch you from my window  
as you roll over the great escarpment.

You blanket our world of streets and houses  
Bringing a gentle start to the day.

Happy anticipation is a morning walk

Clad in your light coat

-- Myf Young, (March 1998)

# Adelina's Mailbag

## What did you see in the Blue Mountains during March 2024?

**BLAXLAND, 5th March 2024.** The butterfly and the moth caterpillar are both now in our garden. Each is pictured in a larval food plant, the Imperial Hairstreak in Sydney Golden Wattle *Acacia longifolia* and the Joseph's Coat Moth caterpillar in *Cayratia Cayratia clematidea*.

It is years since we have seen so many invertebrates in the garden as we do at the moment, a pity that the numbers and diversity of birds that we see is so low compared to before the Black Summer fires and associated drought and heatwaves, even though we live adjacent to bushland that has not been burnt since 2001-02.

-- Judy Smith.



Images: Imperial Hairstreak (butterfly)  
*Cayratia clematidea* (caterpillar)  
Photographs by Peter Smith



**LEURA, On 10th March 2024,** Sylvia Davies visited the Blue Mountains with a friend and photographed this snail in the vicinity of the Bridal Veil Falls at Leura. It is a pale yellow colour.

If you are able to identify the snail, please tell Adelina:

[hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au)

### Resilient Thornbill: a Cumberland Land Conservancy (CLC) Restoration Project

Bushcare happens at Thornbill monthly – check out CLC Events Calendar at <https://www.cumberlandlc.org.au/clc-events-calendar/>

Thornbill is 2.2ha of high conservation bushland in Agnes Banks, held under conservation trust by CLC. Two thirds of the property is Critically Endangered Cooks River / Castlereagh Ironbark Forest and Alluvial Woodland, represented by broad-leaved Ironbark eucalypt. The front third was, until eight years ago, a monoculture of dense African Lovegrass, with little if any shrub understorey, almost no groundcovers and a canopy of Cabbage Gum, Ironbark and Grey Box Eucalypt.

On acquisition, CLC embarked on a plan to protect and enhance Thornbill's Forest and to remove the African Lovegrass, thereby helping nature return to its former glory. Eight years later, an incredible transformation resulting from the Lovegrass removal is witnessed. Over time, with maintenance from a small army of volunteers, the seedbank has come to life, bringing surprise and delight. Successive waves of new and now established native groundcovers, grasses, shrubs and trees present themselves.

Flashes of white, purple, pink, blue, violet, yellow, orange and red, paint a picture of resilience and diversity, unlocked by those dedicated to allowing nature to do its job. Racemes of flowering Hardenbergia throughout the ground layer and climbing through the

Bursaria, sickle wattle, Ozothamnus, and Parramatta wattle provide flushes of purple, while displays of white papery heads from the Ozothamnus and cloaks of cream from Bursaria, burst on the scene.

Deep blues of Commelina poke their heads through stands of yellow Goodenia that create thick patches across the area. The annual appearance of Golden Weather Grass creates a vision of yellow stars, along with wisps of Vernonia, and purple Murdannia. Clusters of Barbed Wire and Kangaroo Grass watch over this transformation, whilst Microlaena carpets shaded areas. Native lovegrasses have now colonised the area along with stands of Hedgehog, Rat's Tail, Panicum and Aristida grasses.

Trails of Pratia (now Lobelia), Glycine; and Basket Grass pervade the area. And above all this is the juvenile future canopy creating mottled shade for successions of groundcovers.

New discoveries delight: a Purple Bearded Orchid, a Blue Trumpet, and the Native Bluebell make all the hard work worthwhile.

To think that this was a mass of African Lovegrass eight years ago. We have come a long way, nurturing nature back to diversity.

Join us, at regular bushcare days, to share in this experience.

-- Jo Carroll

*Follow CLC on Facebook.*



**Browsing through our newsletter archives ...**The Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society had four newsletters a year and programmed two bushwalks a month, on the first Sunday and the third Thursday. Walk descriptions were included in every newsletter. In February 1986 newsletter there were three walks described. I found this one amusing. (Editor)

## **ATTACK OF THE BLOOD-SUCKERS**

**Wentworth Pass, 2 February, 1986**

A hot day, and a cool rainforest walk – the perfect ingredients for a leech attack. But our thoughts were carefree (and leech-free) as we made our way to the top of Wentworth Falls, down the stone steps, and on to the Slacks Stairs turn-off. How could we know, as we eagerly inspected the *Microstrobos fitzgeraldii* that grows in the spray of the falls, that down below THEY were waiting, unfed for possibly SEVEN YEARS?!

There were about 30 of us and, as we slowly negotiated the minor horror of Slacks Stairs, we were sufficiently alert to note some very fine *Angophoras*. At the bottom, we rested by the pool which takes the water from Wentworth Falls and sends it down into the Jamison Valley, where it eventually meets the Cox's River on its way to Warragamba. The water was not as clear as it was in earlier times, but the place is still very peaceful and some of us were brave enough to cool our feet. And then we were off again, winding through the cool forest towards the Valley of the Waters, and ... THEM!

We were attacked without warning, as is always the case – one strangled cry of "Leech!" was not enough to avoid the massacre that lay ahead. Thirty well-nourished people, prime for the sucking – we didn't stand a chance. But lest you think we all went down, bloodily lost in the remote jungles of the Wentworth Pass, it must be recorded that the courage of the bitten was great indeed. We ALL survived, even though, by the end of the walk, there was scarcely a dry sock in the place.

And, as for the leeches, they won't need a feed for months, even years!

## **Counting the seasons**

**-- Christine Davies**

Australia's weather year is typically divided into four seasons, based on the European model. Summer is the warmest three months (December, January and February), winter is the coolest three months (June, July and August), and spring and autumn are the months in between.

I live in the upper Blue Mountains where, often, we have three seasons in a day and, sometimes, snow in November and December. I don't think there is a tool to predict Blackheath's weather. If you don't like the weather – just wait a while – and, like the girl scout, "be prepared". But there are others who need to be able to predict the weather to go about their normal activities.

In Australia's northern tropics, there is only the wet and the dry. The wet season (October to April) has the heaviest rainfall and the dry season (May to September) has less rain. When the heavy rains arrive varies by year and location, so the Bureau of Meteorology has developed the Northern Rainfall Onset tool to better predict the weather.

Could there be three, five or six seasons?

For thousands of years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have maintained local calendars that divide each year into seasons based on prevailing weather patterns and phenology (the annual phenomena of animal and plant life). Some examples can be found at the Bureau of Meteorology's **Indigenous Weather Knowledge website** - <http://www.bom.gov.au/iwkw/>

Would a better understanding of the seasons help us to protect our natural environment?



## **Leeches at Dorrigo**

The Australian Land Leech is featured in these huge sculptures at the entrance of the skywalk in Dorrigo National Park. The sculptures also double as seats for visitors.

The Park Rangers saw it as a fun way to acknowledge that leeches are part of the damp rainforest environment and not something we have to be afraid of. (Photo: Christine Davies)

## **Planning & Development Resource Kit**

Do you want to take action on an environmental issue in your neighbourhood or the Blue Mountains more broadly? Do you want information about the laws and procedures relating to development and environmental protection? Find out what **YOU** can do! Go to the Planning and Development Resource Kit:

[www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml)

## **Blue Mountains Conservation Society**

[www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)  
0490 419 779

## **ODE TO NANCY BIRD WALTON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (With apologies to Johnny Cash)**

By Nick Franklin

I hear that plane a comin'  
A roarin' through the sky

I hear the wildlife runnin'  
A wondrin' if they'll die

I hear the pollies hummin'  
A wondrin' if they'll lie

I fear they'll do my head in  
Long before I fry



## Thought-provoking New Zealand (8) Breeding grounds of the gannet

It was a special experience to go on a tour by 4WD bus to an Australasian Gannet colony at Cape Kidnappers in the North Island of New Zealand. The 20 passengers were from many countries including Holland and we were the three Australians.

The excursion was on a private property where a concerted effort has been made to eliminate introduced predators such as cats, foxes, rats, ferrets, stoats and weasels and other pests, including brushtail possums. During the drive our driver and guide, Jan, gave us a history of the property and spoke about many other things of interest.

The bus climbed a hill, turned a corner and stopped beside the gannet colony. A low chain “fence” was designed to remind us to keep out, not keep the gannets in. They were not afraid of us.

Most gannetries are situated off New Zealand’s North Island. Cape Kidnappers is the largest mainland gannetry, with around 5,000 breeding pairs. The breeding season extends from July, when birds first return to the gannetries, to fledging in March-April. A single egg is laid. Numbers are probably regulated by the availability of suitable prey within easy flying distance of the colony. Southern black-backed gulls take some eggs and young nestlings.

We were there in late February and the fledglings were preparing for flight, exercising by stretching and flapping their wings. When a fledgling takes its first flight it leaves the gannetry, flying low over the ocean until it reaches southern Australia. It will return to its home colony, to breed, in its third year.

Australasian gannets often breed with the same partner over consecutive seasons. Some birds retain the same mate for the rest of their lives.

-- **Christine Davies**



Images: The gannets nest on small mounds which are very close together. The fledgling is stretching its wings to prepare for the long flight. Black-backed gulls are looking for scraps. A second group of gannets are nesting on the flat area at the base of the cliff. (Christine Davies)

## BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Society is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains and to increase awareness of the natural environment in general. The Aims and Objectives of the Society are to:

- Foster increased awareness of conservation issues in the community
- Promote ecological sustainability as the basis for all human activities
- Preserve the natural environment: flora, fauna, habitat, water, land and air
- Actively oppose those human activities which degrade or destroy the natural environment
- Repair the adverse effects of human activities upon the environment
- Increase the pool of expert knowledge about the natural environment.

[https://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/aboutus/bmcs\\_mission\\_statement.pdf](https://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/aboutus/bmcs_mission_statement.pdf)



## 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](mailto:dougnicholls@bigpond.com), phone 0455 850 753.

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 detailed walks program and program changes.**

**MONDAY LEISURE WALKS:** Short day walks 3-5 hours. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. Coordinator: Melanie Lawson 0431 214 687. [melanielawson@outlook.com.au](mailto:melanielawson@outlook.com.au).

Apr 8 **Hat Hill to Bald Head and return.** ~6km. Car pool. Kathy 0422 209 812

Apr 15 **Castle Head, Katoomba** 4km Grade 2. Ros/Melanie 0431 214 687

Apr 22 **Medlow Bath tracks.** Leader Melanie 0431 214 687

Apr 29 **Bowtells Bridge** 13km Grade 3. Lyn 0432 352 850

**Check website for updates and full details of walks.**

**TUESDAY FITNESS WALKS:** 'Medium Day' walks suitable for walkers of average fitness, 3-5 hours. Bring morning tea/lunch/adequate water. Coordinator: Phill Cox (0415 449 174 [mrpacox@hotmail.com](mailto:mrpacox@hotmail.com))

Apr 2 **Kings Tableland & Kings Tableland Aboriginal Place** G1/6K, Rob 0429708393.

Apr 9 **Jack Evans Track** G2/3K, 190 m ↓ ↑ Maurice 0402402783.

Apr 16 **Blaxland to Warrimoo via Cripple Creek fire trail** G1-2/7.5K, Lynne/Roger 0407498397/ 0449902774.

Apr 23 **Tarban Creek – Gladesville Bridge – Abbotsford wharf** G1-2/6K, Anna/Imma 0403711457/ 0422313828.

Apr 30 **Berrima World War 1 Internment Camp** G1/4K, Maurice 0402402783.

May 7 **Birdwood Gully – Madoline Glen – Lomatia Park** G2/4K, Peter 0247513870.

May 14 **Long Angle Creek and Fitzgerald Creek** G2/6K (100 m ↓, 90 m ↑), Doug 0455850753.

**Check website for updates and full details of walks.**

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

Apr 18 **Hornes Point, Mount Victoria. Some road walking and steep hills.** Ros 0417 261 465. Grade 2.

Apr 25 **Anzac Day. No walk.**

May 2 **Glenbrook Circuit, Lookouts and Lagoon.** Ros 0417 261 465. Grade 2

May 9 **Wentworth Falls, Rocket Point, Lincoln's Rock and Return.** Libby 4759 2969. Grade 2

**Check website for updates and full details of walks**

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

Apr 6 **Goochs Crater.** Harold 0409010737. Grade 3, 10km. Map Wollangambe.

Apr 13 **Waratah Ridge walk.** Harold 0409010737. Grade 3, 10km. Map Wollangambe

Apr 20 **Glenbrook, Redhands Cave, Duck Hole Circuit.** Harold 0409010737. Grade 3, 10km. Map Springwood.

Apr 27 **Oronge Ridge to Wongarra Ridge.** Harold 0409010737. Grade 3, 10km. Map Mt Wilson.

May 4 **Lions Head to Kedumba Valley.** Harold 0409010737, Grade 3, 12km. Map Jamison.

May 11 **Fortress Ridge to Fortress Canyon.** Harold 0409010737, Grade 3, 10km. Map Katoomba

**Check website for updates and full details of walks.**

[www.facebook.com/bmcslongerbushwalks?fref=nf](https://www.facebook.com/bmcslongerbushwalks?fref=nf)

## Increased Sightings of Regent Honeyeaters in the Blue Mountains

It has been estimated that there are less than 300 Regent Honeyeaters remaining in the wild.

Early Twentieth Century reports mention that Regent Honeyeaters were seen in flocks of hundreds flying across south-eastern Australia. It is now a critically endangered bird.

Recent sightings in the lower Blue Mountains indicate that a breeding program at Taronga Zoo has been successful with numbers of female birds, which were released around Blue Mountains and Hunter Valley areas, producing offspring.

Bird watchers have descended on some reported areas in the lower Blue Mountains with cameras at hand. **Source: BM Gazette)**

## Walkabout with Graham: A lesson from Birds

The breeding season being over for most birds, they have left their breeding territories and are foraging around in flocks, mixed, old and young birds and very often mixed species. For instance in a grove of casuarinas near Leura Kiosk on Feb 26th, the writer saw: Striated Thornbills (several), Spinebills (several), Silvereyes (several), White browed Scrub Wrens (2), Grey Shrike Thrushes (1), Yellow Robin (1), Rufous Fantail, adult feeding young—seven species, very active, chirping and feeding.

It was most interesting to watch their feeding habits, the Thornbills and Silvereyes picking minute insects from the small branches of trees and shrubs. Spinebills with brush tongues and long curved beaks getting nectar from *Banksia Serrata* and Mountain Devil flowers. Scrub Wrens turning over leaves on the ground for insects. Yellow Robins perching sideways on two poles watching to pounce on any insect that moves on the forest floor. Rufous Fantail catching insects in the air and Shrike Thrush eating insects too large for other birds.

Why do they feed together? Perhaps they like company, perhaps one species disturbs insects for another and vice versa? Only the Thornbills and Silvereyes appear to compete for food and it would probably be found that they eat different sorts of insects. Each species has its niche and lives harmoniously together in the one environment. Only modern Man, "lord of Creation" is unable to do this.

**Source: Graham Alcorn, March 1971, Katoomba & District Wildlife Conservation Society)**

*A page for keen nature observers of all ages ...*  
**What to look for in April in the Blue Mountains**

### **The Honeyeater Migration:**

Here in the Blue Mountains we regularly witness one of the most spectacular autumn bird migrations in Australia:- streams of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters flying northward in their thousands.

These small birds can be easily recognised by their flight call, a brisk “dep dep”. They make their way up the coast and tablelands, heading towards areas rich in winter-flowering plants, especially on the northern NSW coast and into Queensland.

Volunteers from Blue Mountains Bird Observers have been counting them each year as they pass through the mountains. Autumn 2016 was the biggest migration seen in many years. Birds flew over one site at rates of up to 12,000 birds per hour.

The best time to see them is on a morning when the weather is fine. Good places to watch them include Kings Tableland, Narrow Neck and Shipley Road, before the Megalong turnoff.

### **Silvereyes Migrating**

For their small size, just 13 centimetres long, these birds undertake an incredibly lengthy migration; some arrive from as far away as Tasmania - flying across Bass Strait and sometimes as far north as Queensland. In the Blue Mountains they can temporarily displace the local population. You might see them flying in small flocks, occasionally stopping to forage on insects in the Eucalypt canopies.



### **A beautiful little orchid**

This little orchid is very hard to spot. It hides in the leaf litter and its main colour is green. Often the two green leaves at its base will be the first thing you will notice. Look closely at the flower. It is sooooo beautiful. It's name is *Chiloglottis seminuda*

-- *Adelina*

Images: Yellow-faced Honeyeater (John French);  
Tasmanian Silvereye (Wikipedia-Fir0002/  
Flagstaffotos); Orchid (Sue Nicol).



**? What did you see in the Blue Mountains - in your garden or during your favourite bushwalk - during April? Was it something that wasn't there last month? Please tell Hut News!**

Write a short story ... draw a picture ... take a photo. Please add your name, age (if you are under 18), where and when you made your observation and how to contact you. (Your surname and contact details will not be published.) → Send your observations to Adelina at [hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au) or post to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.