

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



Blue Mountains' Birds

What are we doing to our local birds?

Well known local ornithologist Carol Proberts will be the guest speaker at our June meeting. Many will remember, with pleasure, Carol's April 1996 talk on bird sounds. This time Carol will be talking about bird habitats, with particular emphasis on the impact that development in the Blue Mountains has had on birds and their habitats.

The meeting will be held at 7.30 pm on Friday 25 June in the Conservation Hut, Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls. Visitors are very welcome.

Listing of Rare Community

The Mountain Bluegum Shalecap Forest Communities of the Lower Blue Mountains have been severely depleted and what is left, only remains as scattered communities which are subject to the many urban threats of weed invasion, urban development, storm-water influence, etc. If let go, this rare community could disappear forever.

To try and preserve what is left we have formed a sub-committee — Mountain Bluegum Shalecap Forest Committee (MBSFC) — to carry out a study into the possible listing of this Shalecap Community on the threatened & endangered list.

Are you interested in joining this Committee? Ph. Mike Purtell 4751.2143 (or email mike.purtell@mis.net.au).

World Heritage Nomination

We have learned that the World Heritage assessment team who visited the Blue Mountains in February this year have submitted an unfavourable report.

The team are concerned about the threats to the area arising from existing and proposed developments. They particularly mention the proposed airport at Badgerys Creek.

They also consider that the proposed area does not fully cover the range of Eucalypt varieties. They have recommended that the nomination be deferred, and that a serial nomination be prepared, covering areas that contain a wider range of Eucalypt varieties.

We have it on good authority that the original nomination was of good quality, compared to many previously successful nominations, and that it deserves to succeed. The assessors' report is not the final word on the nomination. Their report is subject to review by an international

Badgerys Creek: Count-down is On!

The Badgerys Creek airport count-down is on. The EIS supplement will be out any time now. Essentially it will tell us that although there will be environmental impacts, they can be **managed**. The commonwealth's auditor SMEC, will then have a mere 10 days (!) to pick over it. Both supplement and audit will then go to Environment Minister Sen. Hill prior to cabinet's decision expected in July.

The decision will be strictly political, the EIS being merely to give the illusion that environmental and social factors have been accounted for.

Trying to read the Howard cabinet's mind isn't easy but here goes: Howard will go for Badgerys, labouring it seems under the sunk-cost fallacy: the human tendency to judge options according to the size of previous investments rather than the size of the expected return. For him to make a rational decision he'd have to renounce an idea which he and his kind on both sides of politics have held dogmatically since the early 80's and admit that it is now poison. Ditto for Transport Minister John Anderson who dutifully follows the script written for him by his departmental bureaucrats, die-hard Badgerys supporters.

Finance Minister John Fahey is against Badgerys, not only out of concern for his seat, but also because he's aware of Sydney's air quality problems, the economic downside of the proposal and the merits of the Very Fast Train concept. Treasurer Costello is reportedly unhappy with the economics of the proposal. The rest it appears can be swayed either way so long as their budget allocations aren't tampered with.

John Fahey once said that he'd never known cabinet to push ahead with a proposal if the Finance Minister disputed its figures. We can only hope that he'll do this and be proven right. Do however take out insurance by writing (**again**) to John Howard, John Anderson, Senator Hill, Senator Minchin, Senator Newman and John Moore (C/o Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2060). Remind them just how fickle the mountains can be. Also send copies to Kerry Bartlett (PO Box 376, Springwood 2777) and Jackie Kelly (PO Box 712, Penrith 2750). *From Colin Anderson, Mountains Against Badgerys Creek Airport (MABCA)*

committee in June, after a response is received from Australia.

We have written to Mr Howard, Senator Hill, Mr Debus and Mr Bartlett.

active bushcare groups in the Blue Mountains please contact Councils Bushcare Officer Chris Dewhurst (Ph 47 820623).

and have requested that the Government assign well qualified diplomats and scientific personnel to work on the response to the assessors' report. We are hopeful that a suitable response, together with supporting diplomatic effort, will retrieve the situation. We have also reiterated our opposition to Badgerys Creek Airport.

Volunteers Work 8,604 Hours

A recent Bushcare Report presented to Council revealed that the combined hours of volunteer bush regenerators working on public reserves was an extraordinary 8,604 hours for the past year. This represents a contribution towards bushland maintenance on Public Reserves of \$129,000.

It was also revealed that for every \$1 put into the Bushcare Program that \$2. was returned in the form of grants and volunteer hours. The Council Budget for Bushcare is a valuable investment indeed and by this account should be increased!

If you are interested in becoming involved as a

volunteer in one of over thirty

please contact Councils Bushcare Officer Chris Dewhurst (Ph 47 820623).

"Hut News", the newsletter of Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

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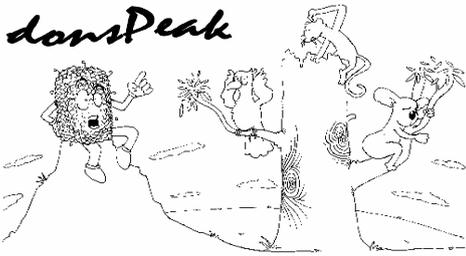
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THE DEADLINE
FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS
WEDNESDAY 16 JUNE



City Rail Sends the Wrong Message

City Rail generates social benefits, mainly through reductions in car use .. without a rail network, the people of Sydney would be subjected to higher levels of .. road congestion .. road accidents.. air pollution .. noise pollution'

Illogically, the above is part of a State Rail Authority submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, calling for an average 15% rail fare rise. Surely that excerpt demonstrates why rail needs greater subsidy, especially with the environment of the Sydney basin under pressure from the Olympics.

It's too late to send your own submission to IPART, but you can protest directly to the Premier, the Minister for Transport and local members Bob Debus, Faye LoPo and Gerard Martin at Parliament House, Sydney 2000.

Free Publicity Works Wonders

'Existing Plantations can already supply all our timber needs'. So says the 'Forest Friendly Building Timbers' book, edited by Alan T Gray and Ann Hall for Earth Garden Books with an introduction by Alec Marr of the Wilderness Society.

Like thousands of other buyers, I had not heard of this book until the media publicised attempts by the National Association of Forest Industries to have it suppressed. Now it is in National Top 10 best-seller lists. Clever move, NAFI!

Parliamentarian in the Driving Seat

Mr Malcolm Jones, MLC, recently telephoned a public servant, who happens to be a member of BMCS. Mr Jones was elected with just over 7000 primary votes and a load of preference votes on the Outdoor Recreation Party ticket. He has publicly stated that his only political interests are getting off-road vehicles and horses access to Wilderness and other prohibited areas.

The MLC asked the public servant a series of questions, largely outside the area of the public servant's work description. Perhaps Mr Jones should be more inquisitive about the affiliations of those from whom he trawls information.

The Good Oil

ACF President Peter Garrett gave an excellent speech to a forum organised by young people from the Maitland area on May 12. Myself, the students from Springwood High and a teacher from Lawson Public School who attended greatly enjoyed the day.

Budget Backhander

Speaking of ACF, the Federal Budget cut Environment spending by \$10million in spite of a \$5billion-plus surplus. This may have more to do with silencing organisations who criticise the Howard

Government than with a lack of money. — Don Morison.

Using the Technology

Blue Mountains Conservation Society now makes extensive use of technology to help 'spread the word'.

We have a comprehensive Web Site at www.pnc.com.au/~bmcs, containing information about the Society, contact information, a Membership form, and the latest on our various campaigns. We have also published the complete contents of 'Living Near The Bush' on the Web.

The Web Site has links to other related organisations, and they have links to us.

10 of the current Committee of 18 have email, and we use it extensively for keeping each other up to date, and for keeping our paper consumption down!

Recently we have established an email mailing list, which we use to keep the membership up to date in between Newsletters.

Do you have an email address? Would you like to receive the latest information from the Society electronically? Send us an email at bmcs@pnc.com.au and we will include you on the distribution list.

The more we network the more we achieve! *Ross Coster, Membership Secretary*

Grose Wilderness Forum

Fifty four members attended this forum chaired by Senior Vice-president, Heather Coster, at The Hut on Thursday 20th May. In the first half of the programme four speakers (Geoff Luscombe, NPWS; Andy Macqueen, Confederation of Bushwalkers; Jim Smith; Walking Track Heritage Study; Keith Muir, Colong Foundation) presented a range of views on the meaning and value of wilderness and on the boundaries of the gazetted proposal.

After a bountiful supper, the meeting was thrown open to members for comments and questions directed to the speakers. An hour of lively discussion followed before the following motions were adopted by the meeting: "that this meeting supports the concept of a Grose wilderness"; "that this meeting endorses the closing of the Mount Hay road to vehicles in the vicinity of the Lockley Pylon track-head"; "that specific provisions for the preservation of walking tracks and the interests of cyclists be declared at the time of the wilderness gazettal". An amendment to the first motion "that the area upstream of the Blue Gum forest be excluded from the wilderness area" was defeated.

These motions, taken as representative of members views, have been incorporated into the Society's submission. Members are encouraged to lodge individual submissions. The closing date is 11 June 1999. *Kevin Bell*

Forests Future in Debus's Hands

300,000 hectares of high conservation forest may be added to the

NSW National Parks system. These forests are crucial to the survival of many species which don't have enough habitat currently protected to ensure survival.

Bob Debus is also about to sign off on new logging protocols. These protocols specify the level of protection given to rare, threatened and vulnerable species living in forests being logged. With the current lack of habitat in National Parks, adequate protection for species in logging areas is crucial.

We are in a unique position to effect these two crucial decisions as Bob Debus is our local member and Minister for the Environment. I believe he honestly wants to do the right thing but will be unable to do so unless he can show the pro-logging Labor Right that the community is outraged by the prospect of mass extinctions in NSW's forests.

Use the points below to write a short letter (or a long one if you get inspired). You don't have to be convincing, just express your concern. 10 minutes of your time will be taken to represent 100 votes, so make them start counting!

Address letters to: The Hon. Bob Debus, Minister of the Environment, or The Hon. Andrew Refshauge, Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Parliament House, Macquarie St, Sydney, 2000

Points you may like to include are:

- I am concerned that the existing reserve system will not prevent the extinction of many of our native plants and animals;
- The 300,000 hectares identified as possible additions to the reserve system must become National Park to help address this problem.;
- I understand that these additions can be made with little or no effect on the timber industry;
- Protecting these species in areas being logged is crucial. Please implement the expert recommendations from the August CRA workshop to protect threatened species in logging areas;
- All old growth logging must cease and a protocol prohibiting the cutting of trees over 60cm in diameter introduced, as has been in place in some areas previously;

I support conversation groups in the North East, Southern, Eden and Western in their struggle to prevent species extinction in NSW. *Daniel Beaver, Forests Sub-Committee*

Welcome to New Members

Christine Judd, Springwood
Geoffrey Allan, Carlingford
Scott Dalgliesh, Glenbrook
John and Margaret Marsh, Blackheath
Miguel Crespo, Mt Victoria
Rosemary Friend, Katoomba
Carol and Greg Gaul, Lawson
Peter Kardashinsky, Clovelly
Ron Pendred, Leura
Gould-Fensom Family, Springwood
Ken McPhie, Linden
Wendy and Leo Lisle, Wentworth Falls
Maggie and Peter Schaefer, Katoomba
Mark Radovich, Faulconbridge
Terry McCann, Faulconbridge
Gordon Fleet, Leura
Rod and Madhi Ravenswood, Leura
Clare Borchers & Ross Parkes, Bullaburra
Bill and Lyn Tocher, Hazelbrook

Looking Back ...

(Newsletter No 12, March 1973)

The Mistletoe Bird

The Mistletoe Bird is an avian gem not often seen in the upper mountains, at least not in my experience. In six years I have seen only four — two single birds and a pair — and each time where the parasitic mistletoe grows, lake Medlow, Leura Park and Minna-Ha-Ha gorge.

They are very small birds. The male is dark blue above, bright red chin, breast and under tail. The female is dark grey above, pale below, red under tail. They are difficult to observe, as they flit with great rapidity from one mistletoe clump to another, and the clumps, in this area are generally well up the tallest gum trees.

They announce their presence with their high clear, double call, repeated at intervals. Then there is much frustrating focusing of field glasses and craning of necks.

Specialised for Diet

The birds live mainly on ripe mistletoe berries, which they dexterously squeeze from their outer casing and swallow whole. The Mistletoe Bird's stomach has become adapted to a mere tube, enabling large numbers of berries to pass directly to the intestine and thence quickly through the body — in 25 to 60 minutes experiments have shown. When excreted, the sticky seeds often adhere to the tree branches where some would germinate and thus spread the mistletoe.

The nest is considered by many to be the daintiest of all Australian bird nests. Formed of closely felted plant-down bound with cobweb and decorated with brown caterpillar castings or dried wattle blossom, it is hung from a thin horizontal twig. With its side entrance and woven look, it resembles a baby's bootie hanging by the heel.

Widespread Habitat

The habitat of the Mistletoe Bird could be described as throughout Australia, where mistletoe grows. In Tasmania there is no mistletoe and no Mistletoe Birds.

My own sightings illustrate their wide range. I saw my first in Western Australia, near Perth; then below Burrinjuck Dam; then in the main street of Hillston, on the Lachlan River, three beautiful male birds feeding on the red berries of the introduced pepper-trees.

In North Queensland they are common. In Port Douglas I saw my first Sunbird (imagine a Spinebill with brilliant yellow under-parts and a jewelled blue throat). Beside it, on the same flowering shrub, was a male Mistletoe Bird! Even the shrub on its own was a sight to behold!

In the bush beside the road near Townsville was a spectacular Grevillea, an extra large golden-yellow flower-raceme protruded above the pine-like foliage. As the flower was 12 feet or so up, I focused the field glasses upon it for a closer look. As I did so a Mistletoe Bird, brilliant scarlet and dark, gleaming blue, landed on the orange flower and stayed for some seconds.

An interest in nature provides some exhilarating sights and most pleasant memories. *Graham Alcorn*

'Phenology'

During a recent trip to Frankonia, Germany I met some interesting people who, on different levels, are involved in natural sciences.

One of these people is a retired horticulturist. His love for plants and the environment has led him to a very curious subject called phenology, an unfamiliar term until I read about it in a local newspaper.

A practical introduction into the subject, which is seen as an important basis for state-wide agricultural meteorology, followed.

On a voluntary basis a network of suitably trained nature lovers and other interested people collect data from specific plants in their local area at certain development stages over each year's growth period.

Reports on these various ecological factors are sent to the weather bureau for assessment of weather pattern and trends, long-term pollen forecasts and possibly disease control. The information can be assessed for various purposes by all interested parties.

I would be interested to hear from anybody who knows about phenology in Australia. *Helga, 4787.7690.*



Weeds!

Weed of the Month in the Upper Mountains is the dreaded **Holly**, now bearing red berries which are carried into bushland by birds.

In the Lower Mountains, **Privet**, another berry-bearing plant, wins the prize. If you have either of these in your gardens **please** remove them and replace with other bird-attracting plants.

Bushcare Group of the Month

Fairy Dell Restoration Committee

Fairy Dell is a narrow reserve, just a stone's throw from Springwood's town centre. The reserve approximately follows the Magdala Creek valley and has been heavily overgrown from privet, honeysuckle, blackberry and other weeds, and the section closest to the town had been used for several generations as an informal garbage dump.

A long-term Springwood resident, Christine Dawson, recognised the potential and history of this reserve and valley after the bushfires of 1979 had exposed old sandstone steps leading down into the valley. After an unsuccessful attempt to interest Council in taking on the restoration of the reserve as a bicentennial project, Christine found a group of interested local residents who held their first meeting on the site in November 1989.

At the first work session vast amounts of rubbish, including old water tanks which needed to be cut into sections to allow removal from the creek were removed. The old track beside the creek was cleared and reopened with newly built steps and bridges across water courses.

The committee then began to tackle the huge privets and other

Lyre-bird

The track, from winding, turns steeply down, defines its way through tall tree-ferns, myrtles and turpentines.

A cold green gloom receives the way where, all around, dark and crowding leaves screen the water's sound.

From a piercing cold clear source, a showering spray of notes is flung to hold me, frozen, in the way.

Silence, held as stone, I strain with sight to guess that voice. Water alone speaks from its dark recess.

Comes, from a chuckling throat, a low "Chirr-chirr". The black leaves glint. A drawn out note ends in a shattering "Crack".

Then all the glinting crowd of leaves, the rocks, the throng of trees, are filled and loud with storms of staunchless song.

Burning to see and know, I move, I step upon dead brush. The source, the flow is cut, the spirit gone.

Roland Robinson.

weeds, and assist regeneration with planting of native species. Several grants received from the EPA and other sources helped in reducing erosion of the access road, landscaping, creekline regeneration and other trouble spots.

The group has also been working on raising public awareness of environmental issues. This has been done with weed information stalls at local markets, holding the first World Environment Day celebrations in the Blue Mountains in the Dell in 1994, lobbying Council to acquire the neighbouring site known as 'Lot 2', lobbying to have that site's stormwater problems addressed, assisting numerous students and classes with their studies and many other activities.

One of our current concerns is that although the stormwater remediation works, funded by the NSW Government's Urban Runoff Control Program, are in progress on the neighbouring 'Lot 2', the site is still classified by Council as 'Operational'.

The Fairy Dell Restoration Committee works on the third Sunday of the month, starting from about 9 am. Volunteers are welcome to join us for whatever time they have available. *Enquiries Gisela Chorley 4739.1427.*

Membership Enquiries

Contact Ross Coster

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(Fax) 02 4759.1095

(Email) haytech@pnc.com.au

(Post) PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

Cross Country Walk

13-17 September 1999

Contact Don Morison 4759.2471

PO Box 170, Katoomba 2780

This is a long but not overly fast walk to experience what a Cross-Mountain Track would be like and to see a large variety of Blue Mountains ecosystems in the one week. Walking will start some time between 5 am and 7 am each day, depending on the weather.

Anybody thinking of participating, please let Don know ASAP. Numbers will be limited.

Mon 13 Sept: Nepean River, Euroka, Ironbarks, Campfire Creek, Red Hands, Kanuka Brook, Duckhole. Overnight camp: St Helena Crater.

Tue 14 Sept: The Circles, Bedford Creek, Murphys Glen. Overnight camp: Ingar.

Wed 15 Sept: Ingar Access Trail, Kings Tableland, Rocket Point, Undercliff, Overcliff, Valley of the Waters, Lilians Bridge. Overnight: Fairmont Resort or billets.

Thu 16 Sept: Jamison Creek Clifftops, Katoomba streets, Bruces Walk, Old Point Pilcher, Grand Canyon, Neates Glen. Overnight: Jemby Ringbah Lodge or billets.

Fri 17 Sept: Braeside, Govetts Leap, Heritage Centre, Boyds Beach, Popes Glen, Blackheath streets, Kanimbla Escarpment. Finish: Mount Victoria Railway Station.

Digger Cooper Reserve

The Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group now works on the third Wednesday of every month.

Visitors are welcome to come along to see the Reserve and what work the group is doing. Contact Ross Coster 4759.1247.

Budthingeroo and Kanangra

A group of 11 adults and 2 children braved the "rain" which had been dreamed up by the weather forecasters and spent a lovely day at Kanangra.

First, morning tea at Budthingeroo, the 25 acre farm which the Society helped NPWS purchase to become part of the National Park. Many of the tiny Snow Gums which were propagated at the Society's nursery and planted by nursery volunteers are doing well.

Next, a leisurely lunch at the Kanangra Lookout. Who could imagine such a fantastic landscape, with its rugged twisted hills, deep gullies, and the sheer golden cliffs of Kanangra Walls. Such wild, beautiful mountainous country, with Narrowneck far in the distance.

Then, a walk, still very leisurely, to the dance cave and out along the plateau.

June Bushwalks

During June, as well as some lovely walks in the upper mountains, we are organising walks in the Lower Mountains.

Blue Gum Swamp Area (Sun 20 June). An unusual and fascinating walk in this beautiful area near Winnalee.

The Lost World (Sat 26 June). It's not really lost, but what an interesting name! When you stand at Martin's

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
JUNE						6 Bushwalk
7 LeisWalk						13 KidsClub 13 Bushwalk
	15Bushcare	16 Bushcare			19 MCMeet	20 Bushwalk
21 LeisWalk				25 GenMeet	26 Bushwalk	
28 BusTrip						
JULY					3 Bushwalk	
5 LeisWalk					10Bushwalk	
12 LeisWalk						18Bushwalk
19 LeisWalk	20Bushcare	21 Bushcare			24MCMeet	25Bushwalk
26 LeisWalk				30 GenMeet		

JUNE

19 (Sat)

25 (Fri)

Management Committee Meeting

General Meeting. Guest speaker, well-known Blue Mountains ornithologist, **Carol Proberts.** (See page 1)

JULY

30 (Fri)

General Meeting. Guest speakers from Department Land and Water Conservation will talk about groundwater and salinity.

KIDS' CLUB (Parents are welcome to come along.)

JUNE

13 (Sun)

Bushwalk with Nature Games — Look/Listen/Find. Meet at Wilson Park, Cnr. Highway and Falls Road, Wentworth Falls, 10 am. Bring morning tea. Contact Jessica 4757.2783.

(Kids' Club Newsletter No 2 will be sent to Kids' Club members in July. Please phone Ross Coster 4759.1247 if you want a copy.)

BUSHCARE (Tools provided — bring morning tea and gloves.)

JUNE

15 (Tues)

Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group. Meet 9 am Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. Contact Jessica 4757.2783. (following Tuesday if wet).

16 (Wed)

Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group. Meet 9 am at the Reserve (GWH, West of Sorenson Bridge). Contact Ross Coster 4759.1247.

BUSHWALKS (Usually day walks — bring lunch and **minimum 1 litre water.**) Walks have been graded: E-easy; M-medium; H-hard If coming by train or in need of transport, contact the leader. If you would like to lead a walk or organise an excursion, contact Jim Wallace 4784.3305.

JUNE

06 (Sun)

Ikara Head, superb views of the Upper Grose Valley. Meet Mount Victoria Station at 9 am. Contact 4787.8342. Grade M.

13 (Sun)

Six-Foot-Track, Megalong Valley Road to Cox's River. Meet Blackheath Commuter Carpark at 8.30. Contact Ron Wheeler 4757.1526. Grade M.

20 (Sun)

Blue Gum Swamp Area. Meet Springwood Railway Station carpark, 9.30 am. Contact Mike Purtell 4751.2143. Grade E/M.

26 (Sat)

The Lost World. Meet Springwood Railway Station carpark 9.30 am. Contact Liz Stark 4754.4966. Grade M.

JULY

03 (Sat)

The Duck Hole/St. Helena. Meet Glenbrook Railway Station carpark 9.30 am. Contact John Hill 4751.5569. Grade H.

10 (Sat)

The Ruined Castle (via Golden Stairs). Meet Leura Railway carpark 9 am. Contact Imre Gahl 4784.3286. Grade E/M. (Two steep climbs, slow walking.. Will be rescheduled if raining.)

18 (Sun)

Jack Evans Track. Meet Glenbrook Railway carpark 9.30. Contact Karen Roberts 4739.5425. Grade E/M.

25 (Sun)

Old Point Pilcher/Grand Canyon. Meet Medlow Bath Railway Station, (northern side), 9 am. Contact Terry and Mary Flynn 4787.6918. Grade M/H.

LEISURE WALKS (Usually morning walks — bring a drink and morning tea.)

JUNE

07 (Mon)

Darwin's Walk. Meet Stockyard Carpark, Wentworth Falls, 9.30. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.

21 (Mon)

Undercliff/Overcliff Walk. Meet at the Conservation Hut, 9.30. Contact Lee Tredennick 4757.4030.

28 (Mon)

Bus Trip to Dunn's Swamp. (fully booked).

JULY

05 (Mon)

Minna Ha Ha Falls. Meet Gearins Hotel, 9.30. Contact Fay Arnold 4758.9917.

12 (Mon)

Berghofer's Pass. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.30. Contact Patricia Mindt 4787.1663. BBQ afterwards (BYO).

19 (Mon)

Lawson North Side. Meet Lawson Bowling Club carpark 9.30. Contact Marion 4757.2575.

26 (Mon)

Glenbrook NP. Euroka Clearing. Meet Glenbrook Station 9.30. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958. BBQ afterwards (BYO).

Lookout (Springwood) and look across Glenbrook Creek, you are looking at the "Lost World".

During the walk there may be a slight detour along Glenbrook Creek to see the

words of the 23rd Psalm, carved long ago onto a rock beside the creek. The words of this beautiful psalm are appropriate for this place.