

# HUT NEWS

Issue No. 305  
July 2013



**"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"**



Tara Cameron and Peter Green talk to visitors to our stall at the Winter Magic Festival.

## Planning Reforms Update

Submissions in relation to the NSW Government's *Planning Reform White Paper* and the *Metropolitan Strategy* closed on 28 June. The Society made comprehensive submissions to the documents, both of which have huge impacts on planning and development in the Blue Mountains.

The deadline for submissions may have passed but you can still make your views known – write/email or phone your local member as well as the NSW Minister for Planning & Infrastructure.

You can keep up to date on what is happening in regard to these planning reforms by visiting the Society's website. Go to [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au) — click on Campaigns and look under NSW Planning System Reforms campaign page. The Society's submissions can be found there as well as other resources.

## BMCS general meetings

There will be no general meeting this month, but watch this space for details of our meeting at the Conservation Hut on Thursday, 29 August.

## Nursery closed for winter

Our nursery volunteers are on holiday but the plants continue to grow with minimum supervision. There will be a good range of native plants ready for planting when sales resume in August.

## Stirring the possum at Winter Magic

Susan Crick, Publicity Officer

Huddled on Leura station I waited in the biting wind as it whistled down the platform on the Saturday of the Winter Magic Festival. The train was now late and I cursed as the minutes ticked by.

A man in his sixties ambled past me and then stopped and asked when the next train was due and where he could buy a ticket. Eventually he came back after trying to buy a ticket from the 'Closed' machine. He sat beside me and we talked the usual stuff that strangers do – weather, late trains and 'Are you a local?' He had lived here in the Mountains most of his life.

I told him I was feeling impatient because I was overdue to help at one of the stalls.

"Oh yes, which one?" he asked politely.

"The Blue Mountains Conservation Society", I replied.

"And what does the Society do? I've never heard of it."

I was surprised but pointed to the view from the station, the eternal cliffs and the misty valleys. "Do you love that?" I asked him.

"Yes I do."

"Well we campaign to protect that and other natural aspects of our beautiful Mountains."

He wasn't the only person I met that day who was curious about the Society or keen to sign a petition against shooting in national parks or who wanted to hear about the proposed LEP or the Gardens of Stone proposal and more.

Although our many volunteers were all disappointed in the position of our stall at the quiet end of Studleigh Place off Katoomba Street we were never short of people to speak to. Peter Green and Rob Baigent even trooped through the crowds carrying a sign "No Shooting in National Parks" and asking people to sign the petition.

When I left I was convinced there are many many more people in the Mountains and beyond who care and are potential members. We just need to reach out and find them. Susan Crick

Our 'roving petitions' proved a worthwhile tactic given our very poor stall location. There was plenty of engaging conversation as well as directing people to the BMCS stall. We got a total of 406 valid petitions on Hunting in National Parks, including about 100 from the stall, and just under 100 petitions on the federal container deposit scheme also.

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**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT  
 ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS  
 21 JULY 2013**

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## LAUNCH 2-4 pm, SATURDAY 10 AUGUST COMMUNITY RENEWABLE ENERGY

Lawson Public School hall

Special Guest MC: Murray Wilcox AO QC  
 Blue Mountains Renewable Energy Co-op  
<http://bmrenew.org/>

### Lift-off for community-owned renewable energy

After 18 months in the planning stages Blue Mountains Renewable Energy Co-operative (BMRenew) is ready for its public launch on Saturday 10th August, 2pm to 4pm at Lawson Public School hall.

"It has taken much longer than expected, but we are now in the final stages of registration and are planning our official lift off in August", said spokesperson Erland Howden.

"Our aim is to generate renewable energy locally and share the economic and social benefits within the local community. We want to reduce our dependence on energy from the grid as we start the transition to being a carbon-neutral city."

Local resident Noni McDevitt said, "Success depends on community interest and involvement, as we move towards obtaining loans, grants and matching community funds. Our initial investigations pointed towards a potential partnership with Blue Mountains City Council on an energy-from-waste plant, but this is temporarily on hold while further feasibility analysis is done on a regional waste solution."

"In the meantime we believe that increasing solar PV on both home and commercial roofs is a very do-able option. We have started discussions with local solar installers and will soon be seeking expressions of interest from the community."

Information about the benefits of community-owned renewable energy and how Blue Mountains businesses and residents can get involved will be provided at the launch. Official MC will be retired Federal Court judge and local resident, Murray Wilcox AO QC, who has a longstanding interest in environmental and social justice issues. Afternoon tea will be provided. This event has been sponsored by financial assistance from the Katoomba and Upper Blue Mountains Community Bendigo Bank. To RSVP email [info@bmrenew.org](mailto:info@bmrenew.org) or phone 0408 255 583. For more information about BMRenew visit <http://bmrenew.org>.

### Blue Mountains Conservation Society's Planning and Development Resource Kit

- \* Worried about the illegal dumping of rubbish on bushland near you and don't know who to contact?
- \* Concerned about the clearing of native vegetation on the bush block next door, but don't know if it is being undertaken legally?

Find out what YOU can do!

Go to [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au) and look for the Society's new **Planning and Development Resource Kit**. You will find easy to understand material on where to go for information, what to ask, what agencies and authorities you should be talking to, and how to get a response. It is specifically tailored for the Blue Mountains - make it your first point of call in relation to all issues associated with local planning and development.



## **What Is Sustainability?** Ross Coster

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage defines sustainability as 'living within the limits of what the environment can provide'. I don't think this definition goes far enough.

We can extract uranium from 'the environment', but for how long?, and at what cost to 'the environment'? If an activity cannot be 'sustained', then it is not 'sustainable'.

My definition of sustainability would be 'do only those things that can be done forever'. So how long is forever?

I read an excellent e-book a few years ago entitled 'Sustainable Energy Without The Hot Air' in which the author uses 1,000 years as a proxy for 'forever'. He then goes on to prove that uranium reserves will last for 1,000 years, and that nuclear power is therefore sustainable!

Again, I believe that 1,000 years does not go far enough.

I hope and expect that Humans will be here on Earth for many thousands, perhaps many millions, of years.

So mining of all types is not sustainable, because eventually the ore bodies run out. Burning oil, or gas, or coal, or uranium is not sustainable because these are finite resources that will run out. Turning bauxite into aluminium using massive amounts of electricity, making a drink can out of it, then burying it once empty is not sustainable, as the bauxite and the landfill will run out one day.

So where will we get our materials and our energy?

The materials will have to come from very high levels of recycling, approaching 100%, with the losses made up by mined materials in tiny quantities, and from biological sources. The energy will have to be derived from the Sun, directly or indirectly, through solar, wind, wave, tide or hydro power, or from biological processes, all of which are driven by the Sun.

The Sun is not 'forever' but with a few billion years of fuel for fusion, it will do!

Agriculture will have to wean itself off mineral fertilisers like phosphorus and use only wastes as an input.

Can we build roads and bridges from recycled and biological materials? Can we make cars, and planes, and trains from recycled and biological materials? Not with current technologies, but humans are resourceful creatures, so we will find a way.

Biology is where I see the most promise. Spiders can make web that is stronger than steel. Plants can make their own food from sunlight, and their own structures from carbon dioxide in the air. Wood can be used as a fuel, a building material, a source of carbon, a source of biological oils. Tea tree contains oils suitable for conversion to a liquid transport fuel.

We will need to learn to use these ideas, and many more ideas from biology, if we are to live 'sustainably' on the Earth.

Ross Coster. (ross@coster.com.au)

## **Climate change – desperately looking for leadership** Don Morison

It is ironic that – days after US President Obama delivered his strongest ever speech in favour of climate change action – the position of Australia's greatly revamped Labor Government appears to be weakening.

President Obama said that "We do not have time to wait for a meeting of the Flat Earth Society". Quite so! We should realise that both major parties in the USA and Australia are peppered with politicians who are either flat earthers themselves or are too willing to pander to voters who hold flat earth opinions.

The American President's comments underline that there is no time to wait for heads of government to show real appreciation of the climate change threat and determination to introduce laws to combat that threat. No-one who is unwilling to do that should have put himself forward.

## **The Ocean of Life** Christine Davies

The most moving story I have heard, a story of hope and despair, the story of the world's oceans and how they are changing under our influence, told by Dr Callum Roberts of York University.

In this address, given at the University of Sydney in 2013, Dr Robert's enthusiasm for the subject is contagious and his manner positive but the news is all bad. He says the world's oceans have changed more in the past thirty years than during the whole of human history.

You can listen or read the transcript at <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/scienceshow/the-coming-crisis-for-the-oceans/4735314>

I recommend you listen, he is an inspiring speaker. His book is "The Ocean of Life".

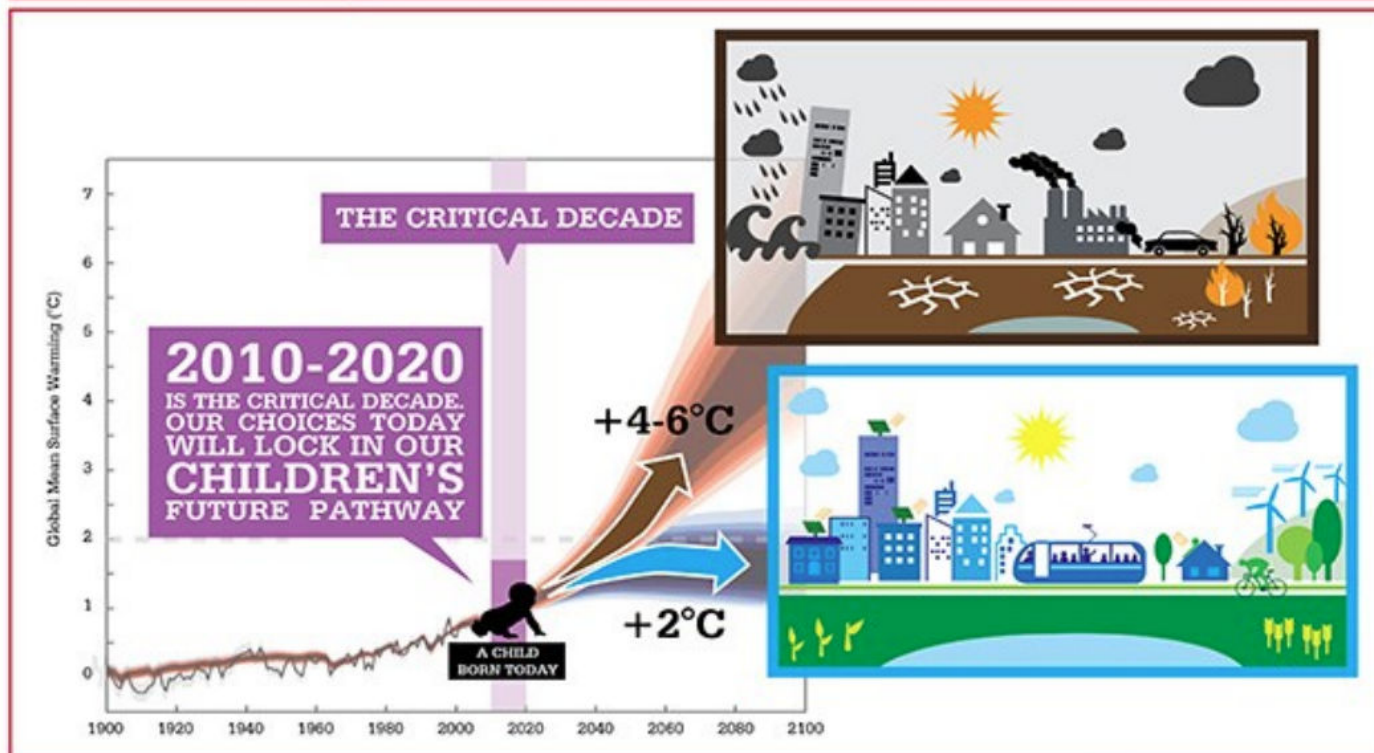
I'm usually able to put aside unpleasant news, but there comes a day when the sand is not deep enough. With an election coming up, we need to take action - for the sake of our children's children. We don't have time for a government which will not act to help the environment.

## **Questions for Roza ...**

Two men, armed with rifles, claimed they were on Newnes Plateau in the Wolllemi National Park near a popular canyoning area to hunt deer. (BMG 26 June 2013)

Responding in the same issue, Blue Mountains MP Roza Sage "strongly recommended" reporting these incidents to Blue Mountains NPWS, adding heavy penalties applied for illegal hunting activities.

We would like to pose the questions to Roza Sage as to how NPWS – already starved of resources by her government – can cope with the costs and stretching of staff entailed in accessing far-flung areas where people illegally using firearms may or may not be easily located ... and what does she advise an unarmed NPWS staff member to say to an offender in possession of a powerful weapon which he may have acquired through her government's negligence?



Source: Adapted from: Meinshausen et al. (2009)

Two years ago the Climate Commission warned that 2011-2020 is the 'Critical Decade' for tackling climate change. In particular, this is the Critical Decade for turning around rising emissions of greenhouse gases and putting us on the pathway to stabilising the climate system.

One quarter of the way through the Critical Decade, many consequences of climate change are already evident, and the risks of further climate change are better understood. It is clear that global society must virtually decarbonise in the next 30-35 years. This means that most of the fossil fuel reserves must stay in the ground.

Most nations of the world, including Australia, have agreed that the risks of a changing climate beyond 2°C are unacceptably high. The temperature rise is already approaching 1°C above pre-industrial, nearly halfway to the 2°C limit.

The best chance of staying below the 2°C requires global emissions to begin declining as soon as possible and by 2020 at the latest. Emissions need to be reduced to nearly zero by 2050.

The decisions we make from now to 2020 will largely determine the severity of climate change our children and grandchildren experience.

The burning of fossil fuels represents the most significant contributor to climate change. From today until 2050 we can emit no more than 600 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide to have a good chance of staying within the 2°C limit.

Based on estimates by the International Energy Agency, emissions from using all the world's fossil fuel reserves

would be around five times the budget. Burning all fossil fuels reserves would lead to unprecedented changes in climate so severe that they will challenge the existence of our society as we know it today.

Read more and find a link to the full report at: <http://climatecommission.gov.au/report/the-critical-decade-2013/>

Sarah Clarke reported on this story on AM with Tony Eastley, ABC Local Radio, 17 June 2013.

Admiral Chris Barrie, former head of the Australian Defence Force: The way I see this is really I put up a picture of my granddaughter who's four years of age, and to say this is her life we are talking about; these are the sorts of issues she's going to have to deal with, and I'm not sure we are doing enough, as The Critical Decade reports point out.

We only have this little period of 10 years in which to adjust human behaviour to give us a more acceptable outcome for the rest of the century.

#### BUSHCARE GROUP

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets on the second Saturday of each month, 9am till noon. Tools and gloves are available. Bring a drink, a snack and a sunhat. New members are always welcome. Phone Karen 4757 1929.



## New Threatened and Endangered Species page

The new revamped website has many new offerings, one being an interactive **Threatened and Endangered species page**.

This in-depth guide to Threatened and Endangered species of NSW and the Blue Mountains has everything you need to know regarding our locally endemic species of high conservation value. In detail are many of the threatening processes which place pressure on our natural environment and its wildlife, with brief introductions to endemic flora, fauna and ecological communities under threat within the Blue Mountains.

You can find this page by visiting our website [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au) - hover over the resources tab at the top of the page - scroll down and click on "Threatened Species" - and away you go! This page also includes tables linked to NSW Government's Environment and Heritage website.

Scroll to the bottom of the page and you will find four headings which will open into PDFs.

**Flora – Fauna - Ecological Communities.** When you open the PDF you will find every species of Flora and Fauna and Ecological Communities under threat within New South Wales including the Blue Mountains. You will be able to click onto individual species which will re direct you to the NSW Governments Environment and Heritage threatened species web page with photos, descriptions and distribution maps for these individual species to better identify if your backyard is home to any of these species or communities.

**Key Threatening Processes.** This PDF lists the key threatening processes which are placing pressures on these individuals and communities within the Blue Mountains. You are also able to follow the PDF links for Threatened Ecological Communities and the Key Threatening Processes involved with the loss of this biodiversity.

It was a pleasure to create this page and I hope that it will help you protect and identify many of the unique endemic Flora and Fauna species in our backyard - the World Heritage Blue Mountains National Park. Enjoy!

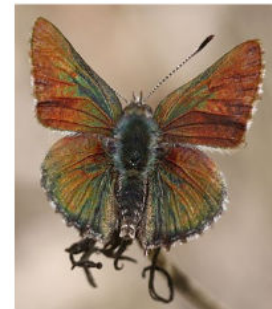
Nakia Belmer

(bayern11@tpg.com.au)

Photos:: (top) Tiger Quoll ( Nakia Belmer)

(centre) Leucopogon fletcheri ssp fletcheri (Robin Murray)

(bottom) Bathurst Copper Butterfly (Robin Murray)



### One step forward, two steps back Angela Langdon, Land Use.

Some significant developments occurred in relation to the development of the new consolidated Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan (LEP) at the Council Meeting of 25 June 2013.

The Mayor outlined that some key environmental provisions Council was seeking to transfer into the new LEP, which already exist in the current LEPs, have been knocked back by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. The provisions that the Department did not support include:

- the inclusion in the new LEP of schedules of vegetation to address the issue of unmapped significant vegetation;
- the creation of a new zone to replace the Living Conservation Zone – instead Council will have to use an existing residential zone from the standard LEP template even though there is no zone that completely matches the Living Conservation Zone;
- the current high threshold test to prevent stormwater runoff – this is of particular concern given that stormwater poses significant risks to Sydney's

drinking water catchment and the World Heritage Area.

Council voted to continue to push for the inclusion of these provisions. However, this development is very disappointing and we hope this is not the flavour of what is to come as Council continues to negotiate the development of the new LEP with the Department.

The good news is that, at the same Council meeting, Councillors unanimously voted to approach the Department and ask for a three month public exhibition period for the new LEP. The Blue Mountains Conservation Society has been advocating for an extended public exhibition period and fully supports this move by Council.

For more information on the outcomes of the 25 June Council Meeting, refer to Councils website: <http://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/index.cfm>



## Climate Summit calls for urgent action

400 people including scientists, health professionals, politicians, representatives of environmental and climate groups across Australia and other concerned members of the public recently attended the Fifth Australian Climate Action Summit in Sydney.

Climate science is real. Urgent action needs to be taken now. The earth is already too hot and our carbon budget for a safe climate is zero. We need 100% renewable energy and all fossil fuels to stay in the ground.

The Summit resolved to take to the streets and educate the public on climate change:

- Take urgent action to get climate change back into the public/political discourse by connecting more with what people care about in order to gain support from State and Territory Governments, Federal election candidates and industry to make an emergency transition from dirty fossil fuels to clean renewable energy in order to minimise the extreme climate dangers facing the planet.
- Call upon the media to accurately report the climate science and the urgency of the situation.
- Campaign to ensure that voters are fully aware of the different shortcomings of political parties on climate change policy with one election campaign emphasis being to stop climate deniers controlling the parliament, especially the Senate.
- Work to 'connect the dots' between extreme weather, our growth economy and human induced climate change and build understanding of local and wider impacts of our changing climate.
- End the \$10-15 billion of Australian taxpayers' money used to subsidise the fossil fuel industry each year.
- Raise awareness of the severe impact of coal and coal seam gas industries on climate, health, land, water and air, and the benefits of moving to clean renewable energy.
- Lead strong community activism against the fossil fuel industry and against unsustainable growth and waste.

The cost of urgent action is small by comparison with the enormous cost of climate damage we face.

## At our June general meeting ...

25 stalwarts braved a wet and wintry night for a lively presentation by well-known local Darug artist, educator and tour guide Bundeluk. His topic was bush tucker and medicinal plants, well-illustrated by close-up pictures of many of the most common of these, especially from the Lawson area, although he stressed that they can all be found throughout the Blue Mountains.

He explained that Darug tradition and tribal lore stipulated that you may only take from the land what is necessary for survival, a philosophy that ensured there was food and resources for all. His people's careful use of fire actually promoted abundance but also helped prevent bushfires.

Some of us were keen to buy his latest dot-painting prints, which often feature bush flora. For those who missed the presentation, Bundeluk offers DVDs and guided bush tucker walks. Just google his name for more information.

Brendan Doyle.

## Watch this space ... from a safe distance

(Some bullet points for amateur hunters in NSW)  
Don Morison.

### Extracts from an ABC 4 Corners episode, June 2013

- Garry Vandenbrand: (about "rogue hunters" in Wonnagatta National Park, Victoria)  
"They see something move and they'll shoot at it. They think it's a deer rather than just making sure that it is an animal rather than a person as you could see by that plaque over there."
- Dick Gill (resident near Maragle State Forest):  
"My daughter and I went through to the kitchen to get a cup of tea and we heard a shot and the boyfriend said, did you hear the bullet hit the wall behind me?"
- Stephen Whitehead (neighbour of Jenolan Karst):  
"I heard the gunshots. And also hunting because they had pig dogs in the back so they were doing both and they were in a reserve. And they were shining their roo light around because they had a spotlight on the roof and hunting right here in the reserve."

### News from the Oberon District

- Councillor McMahon, the Mayor of Oberon told ABC News that irresponsible shooters are becoming a threat to tourism in the area. Councillor McMahon said that visitors to State Forests for the annual mushroom pick could be frightened by the shooters.
- Slightly intoxicated taxi passenger to taxi driver in Sydney:  
"So me and my mates often go up to my mate's house near Black Springs. And we shoot goats and pigs and sometimes deer. But we need to do something about the wombats as well. These really big wombats are burrowing in under and undermining the house." *(Have any readers heard of other wombats attacking houses and do the wombats always choose politically incorrect people to do it to?)*

## Welcome to new members

Rosemary Kenny, Blackheath  
Patrick Kenny, Blackheath  
Alan Lobb, Hazelbrook  
John Forster, Blackheath  
Jennifer Marr, Katoomba  
Colin Marr, Katoomba  
Richard Talbot, Lawson  
Wendy Thompson, Lawson  
Jarrah Turton, Wentworth Falls  
Megan Marsh, Wentworth Falls  
Chris Pavich, Mudgee  
Wendy Arnott, Mudgee  
Daniel Sirgiovanni, Faulconbridge  
Steve Tredinnick, East Blaxland  
Janet Mayer, Foxground



## Tassie forests added to World Heritage

An additional 170,000 ha of Tasmanian old-growth forest will be protected forever after being World Heritage listed on 24 June 2013.

In a statement announcing the listing, Federal environment minister Tony Burke said: "If you look at the Styx in particular, there are trees that are the length of a football field straight up. This decision means those extraordinary giants of the forest are added to the World Heritage list." You can read more at [www.australiangeographic.com.au/journal/tassie-forests-granted-heritage-protection-htm](http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/journal/tassie-forests-granted-heritage-protection-htm)

To coincide with the announcement, filmmaker Heidi Lee Douglas has launched a trailer for a new documentary that goes behind the scenes into the 'Gunns20' lawsuit and controversial pulp mill proposal in the Tamar Valley.

Heidi went to Tasmania to make a doco about the forestry protest movement but ended becoming one of the people known as the Gunns 20 – a group of protesters sued by the company.

The Gunns20 litigation started a wave of fear of speaking against Gunns as they pushed through plans for a controversial pulp mill. Over the next decade Gunns fell victim to its own hubris and a massive community backlash. Today Gunns is in receivership and large swathes of the forests at the centre of this conflict have been protected.

To find out more about the documentary go to [www.defendant5.com](http://www.defendant5.com)

### "If they don't give me a bag, what am I going to do?"

Los Angeles has become the newest and by far the largest city to back a ban on plastic grocery bags, approving an ordinance that applies not just to food stores and mini-marts but also big retail chains with their own groceries, such as Target and Wal-Mart.

The ordinance, which has been in the works for years, will go into effect gradually, reaching large stores Jan. 1 and smaller ones July 1, 2014. Customers will either have to bring their own reusable bags or pay a 10-cent fee for each paper one, according to the ordinance.

Some shoppers were taken aback by how far-reaching the law will be.

"If they don't give me a bag, what am I going to do?" an incredulous William Macary asked as he entered Wal-Mart in the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza. "If I pay money, I want a bag."

(Los Angeles Times, 28 June 2013.)

If we stop using plastic bags and wrappings, as we should – as we must – what are we going to do? Do you remember or can you imagine a time when everything we bought was not wrapped in plastic? How did we manage to put the rubbish in the bin? Do you remember meat from the butcher wrapped in butcher's paper? Fish and chips wrapped in newspaper?

Christine Davies, [hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au) or write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.

Sometimes reading and writing about all the bad environmental news makes life seem a bit bleak, but then I look out the window at the garden. In June the Crimson Rosellas have been perching on the tea trees and giving them a tip pruning, feeding on the immature seeds. The Grey Thrush hops around the deck, comes to the doors and windows, and finds spiders to eat. The Yellow Robins are hardy little birds, bathing in the bird bath even on the coldest day (one likes the water so much that he/she does laps). And the Eastern Spinebills sometimes try to hover as they feed on the Grevillea flowers. Theirs is the only beak long enough to reach the nectar in the flowers of the Correa, though I have seen the Crimson Rosellas picking the flowers, probably when the seeds are starting to form. And, as I write, a Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo has just landed with a scream and is breaking off the seeds of the Hakea, just 4 metres away from where I am sitting!!! There's always so much going on in Nature. Here's a story about a small creature we don't usually see but who is very busy at this time of year—the Antechinus. Christine.

### Live fast, die young

In mid-winter, Australia's little Antechinus, commonly known as marsupial mice, are getting ready to breed.

The length of the day changing is the signal, and all females come into heat at the same time. The males, now 11 months old, enter a breeding frenzy of extreme proportions. They will mate with many different partners. It takes up a lot of energy and causes a lot of stress. All the males die two weeks after mating. Females can live longer, some live to raise a second litter, but in the smaller species most of the females die after raising their first litter.

About a month later, 70% of all the antechinus females will give birth to their young on the same day, averaging about 8 to 10 babies. An antechinus doesn't have a pouch, but instead her babies cling on to her for dear life. By the time they are ready to be weaned at about 100 days old, the litter can weigh as much as four times the weight of their mother. This exhausts her and she loses a lot of weight trying to feed her growing young.

Australia is home to ten species of antechinus. There are two species in the Blue Mountains: Antechinus stuartii and Antechinus swainsonii (Dusky Antechinus).

You can tell an antechinus from a mouse because they mainly eat spiders, cockroaches, and other insects, though some will also eat fruit and flowers. Some species will even eat frogs and lizards. The introduced house mouse eats only plant material.

If you are not sure whether you're looking at a native mammal or an introduced Black Rat or House Mouse, you can read an article from the Australian Museum's website called "Is it a rat?" <http://australianmuseum.net.au/Is-it-a-Rat/>

If you think you might have an antechinus in the house, you can use non-lethal traps to catch it and release it outside. Block up all the entry points to your house, and you and the antechinus will both be happy.

You can read about Australia's antechinus on ABC Science <http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2011/07/07/3262428.htm#.UdDiLx--pq>

Sources:

Backyard Buddies ([www.backyardbuddies.net.au](http://www.backyardbuddies.net.au)), ABC Science ([www.abc.net.au/science](http://www.abc.net.au/science))

## Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

The heathland resounded with the calls of a myriad of honeyeaters, but none were visible. They were all sheltering deep within the banksia shrubs as a cold wind blew across the ridge. The only bird to be seen on that bleak July afternoon was a Wedge-tailed Eagle, flying high above the cliffs in a most spectacular aerial display. I watched it fold its wings and drop vertically for 20 metres or so, then rise steeply and effortlessly, stalling for a moment in a completely upright pose with wings outstretched, before dropping into another dive. It repeated this diving and climbing about a dozen times in a graceful rollercoaster ride, maintaining absolute control in the rough and wintry conditions.

This territorial display of the Wedge-tailed Eagle is sometimes called "pot-hooking" or the "undulating display". Sometimes a pair will display together, their movements perfectly co-ordinated. Breeding begins around the winter months with egg-laying usually in July in this part of the country. The nest is a huge platform of sticks in a prominent tree with a view of the surrounding countryside; they only rarely nest on cliffs. The same nest can be re-used for many years.

With a wingspan reaching more than two metres, the Wedge-tailed Eagle is the largest bird of prey in Australia. Like all raptors, females are larger than males. "Wedgies" can be easily recognised in flight by their wedge-shaped tail - dish-shaped when seen from behind or diamond-shaped from below. The broad wings have distinct "fingertips" and are held upswept in a V-shaped dihedral which is obvious even at a great distance. You'll most often see them soaring high in the middle of the day.

Throughout much of Australia they feed largely on rabbits and roadkill, food sources which have become abundant as a result of human activity. They will co-operatively hunt in pairs or groups to overcome larger prey such as kangaroos, while in forested environments they sometimes take prey from the tree canopy. I once saw one rising from the trees with a Ring-tail Possum in its talons. They do occasionally take domestic livestock such as lambs which unfortunately makes them prone to illegal shooting and poisoning. However various studies have shown this to be a very small part of their diet with up to 92% of prey items being rabbits.

Of all Australian birds, Wedge-tailed Eagles are one of the most admired and loved. Their ability to soar for an hour or more, maintaining utmost control with barely a wing movement, inspires wonder and awe. They lift our imagination to dizzying heights and cause us to dream of being masters of the air, just like them.

### Carol Proberts

*origma@westnet.com.au*

Twitter: @carolproberts

Photo by Trevor  
Quisted



## Membership Application Form

(Use capitals please—even for email address)

Name(s) 1. ....  
2. ....  
3. ....

Address: .....  
.....PC .....

Phone(s) .....

Email .....

MEMBERSHIP FEES (please circle one item)

Single \$30 Concession (Senior/Student)\$20  
Household \$35 Concession (Senior/Student)\$25  
Corporate (open to negotiation) \$100

Bushwalkers only.:  
(\$20 per walker per annum) \$.....  
Donation (tax-deductible) \$.....

Send my copy of Hut News by  
Please tick box ☐mail ☐internet only

TOTAL AMOUNT INCLUDED \$.....

Note: All fees include GST at the relevant rate.

Would you like to be involved in any of the following activities or working groups? (Please underline): Land use/development issues; Environmental Education; Threatened species issues; Web or database management; Plant nursery assistance; Bushcare; Publicity/photography; Water quality/sourcing studies; Society administration.

**I/We agree to support the aims and objectives of the Society as set out on reverse side of this membership application:**

Please sign if named above.

Signature(s) 1. ....  
2. ....  
3. ....

ENQUIRIES: Phone (02 4757 1872  
Email: [membership@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:membership@bluemountains.org.au)

Please cut out and forward this form  
with your cheque or money order to:

**Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.**  
**PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls NSW 2782**  
**or pay online at [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)**

JOIN Blue Mountains  
Conservation Society,  
or renew your membership  
online.  
[www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)



## BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community organisation working to achieve the preservation and regeneration of the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

The Society believes that World Heritage status provides an opportunity for local community members to become custodians of the unique biodiversity and scenery of the Blue Mountains.

The Mission of the Society is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains.

The Aims and Objectives of the Society are to:

- Disseminate and foster an understanding of the ideals of Conservation.
- Promote the need for ecological sustainability.
- Protect 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.
- Encourage the love of the natural environment by conducting a regular program of bushwalks.
- Increase the pool of expert knowledge about the natural environment, through meetings, excursions, research and other activities.
- Provide information to the public on matters of Conservation, especially through the Conservation Hut at the Valley of the Waters, Wentworth Falls.
- Maintain close and friendly relations with like-minded groups.

Down the Wallaby Track: a backward glance, with John Low

## A BIT OF LITERARY SPECULATION

*"But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!"*

A striking image of a beautiful woman and one that was likely in the minds of those who, many years ago, gave the name 'Juliet's Balcony' to one of the lookouts overlooking Katoomba Falls! While this lookout had been accessible for many years, its association with Shakespeare's heroine only began to appear in guidebooks in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What were the circumstances of its naming at this particular time?

Having a weakness for such questions, I went looking for clues and it wasn't long before I came across, in Jim Smith's fascinating history of the Federal Pass, a notable speech given at the Pass's opening on November 3, 1900. With the birth of the Australian Commonwealth imminent, the event drew probably the largest number of politicians ever to assemble in Katoomba at the one time and among them was an Irish-born Member of the NSW Legislative Assembly, one Daniel O'Connor.

With white beard, silk hat, frock coat and a gift for the blarney, O'Connor cut a colourful figure during the day's proceedings. He was, said the *Lithgow Mercury*, "the orator *par excellence* of the day, and provided most of the amusement as well", his toast to the ladies at the evening banquet described as "a gem of classical and historical lore". In full florid flight O'Connor extolled the virtues and beauty of women, rendering the other speeches dull by comparison as he introduced, among others, Homer, Euripides, Shakespeare and Tennyson in support of his argument. That the balcony scene in *Romeo & Juliet* was not conjured up is hard to believe and, if I'm right, perhaps triggered something in the imagination of the local reserves trustees. Who knows!

If not O'Connor in 1900, could it have been a contemporary performance of the play that provided the catalyst? While *Romeo and Juliet* was performed in Sydney on only three occasions during the 1890s, in April 1902 a new "sound and attractive interpretation" was presented in a short season at the Theatre Royal. It was well received by the critics and the *Sydney Morning Herald* singled out the balcony scene as particularly "charming". It noted how warmly Juliet, played by the now forgotten actress Miss Janet Waldorf, was applauded by the audience. Is it coincidence that the earliest published reference to Juliet's Balcony of which I'm aware appeared in an issue of the *Mountaineer* later that same year?

All speculation, of course, but it does offer an historical context in which to experience the lookout. Stories and a bit of imagination, I think, make for interesting walking and I like to imagine the possibility that the reserve trustees and other Katoomba notables (and even Dan O'Connor himself) might have climbed those worn steps on to Juliet's rocky eminence in the early 1900s and together paid homage to her beauty and spirit.

John Low ([grizzlybear3au@yahoo.com](mailto:grizzlybear3au@yahoo.com))

Photo: John Low and Thursday Interpretive bushwalkers on Juliet's Balcony on 20 June 2013. After John had finished talking about the history of the area, he was surprised to see a tablecloth being spread on a rock and a birthday cake and two bottles of bubbly wine produced from backpacks for a birthday toast for one of the bushwalkers.





## A break in the clouds Christine Davies

Rain, rain, and more rain! We decided to drive down to the Megalong tearoom for lunch. The Blue Mountains are beautiful in any weather.

A narrow winding road through lush rainforest with glimpses of the swollen creek; white trunks of mighty Mountain Ash, lovely in any light; patterned trunks of Grey Gums, their bark newly shed.

In the valley there was minor flooding in the paddocks. At the tearoom, bedraggled White-winged Choughs, unimpressed by the weather and absence of people eating outdoors, were huddled in shelters and on the crossbars beneath a picnic table.

The rain stopped and there was a glow somewhere in the sky. Clouds were draped around the shoulders of Shipley Plateau at Hargraves Lookout. A substantial waterfall plummeted off Elphinstone Plateau from a watercourse called Back Creek. A kangaroo grazed and, in a flooded area, we saw a large bird which was identified as a Pacific or White-necked Heron.

Meandering slowly up the winding road, we stopped to admire a waterfall splashing down from an overhanging ledge. By the time we reached Blackheath the sun was shining through the clouds.

There were few ducks at the Duck Pond, there being no people around to feed them the past few days. An unusual sight was a large number of black birds (Currawongs and Magpies) spaced out over the lawn of the Memorial Park — feeding on creatures forced to the surface of the sodden soil in this former swamp.

We didn't stay long at Govett's Leap Lookout. The updraft from the valley was cold. Bridal Veil Falls were spectacular, blown sideways by the wind. We could see other waterfalls, not normally visible from the lookout, falling from cliffs surrounding the valley. We counted 5, but there are others hidden in the mist.

While we stopped to watch a lyrebird scratching by the side of the road we noticed raindrops falling again on the windscreen. Christine Davies.



Photo: White-winged Choughs shelter from the rain.

**The Greater Blue Mountains  
World Heritage Experience**  
[www.worldheritage.org.au](http://www.worldheritage.org.au)

## Opposition keen to stop marine parks, but will fishers benefit?

Timothy Langlois, Research Fellow, UWA Oceans Institute at University of Western Australia. 5 June 2013

Last night the Commonwealth Marine Reserve Network survived a vote in the House of Representatives. The Opposition had hoped to disallow the motions setting up the network, but was narrowly defeated. Presumably they will reopen their attack on the network should they take office in September.

Tony Burke announced a new network of marine parks in June this year. The proposal has since been attacked by recreational and commercial fishers.

As a marine science academic I have been perplexed by protests from the Coalition and some recreational and commercial fishing groups.

The Coalition has claimed that because of the Commonwealth Marine Reserve Network "local recreational fishers have been locked out on their back door" and that "local families are locked out from sitting in the tinny and being able to stop, sit back and actually catch a fish".

This is quite simply not the case: maps show that proposed no-take areas are as far away from the vast majority of fishing activity as possible. Proposed no-take areas comprise less than 16% of Commonwealth waters. Of this, 96% is more than 100km from shore.

Tony Burke estimated that less than 2% of commercial fisheries' catches will be affected by the introduction of these protected areas. Some deep-sea recreational fishers may be affected but very few people fishing from tinnies will be within several hundred kilometres of the nearest Commonwealth no-take area.

This is arguably something the Coalition should be protesting about: there is a large amount of evidence internationally that fishermen perceive a benefit from fishing next to adequately sized no-take areas. This is likely due to the delayed capture, and increased size, of fish living within no-take areas. The "net" effect of no-take areas on fishing seems to be bigger fish, and the bigger the reserve the bigger the fish!

Personally I would like to take my family fishing in a tinny and catch a big fish or three. I argue that my government should provide a selection of large no-take areas within easy access of my local boat ramp.

My considered scientific opinion is that objectives for no-take areas should not be about maintaining fish stocks, as this is done by fisheries management. Instead they should recognise biodiversity conservation and opportunities for education and science, as well as providing an insurance policy against unexpected population failures in our fisheries. As a fisher, I would be happy to know that there are places nearby with big fish doing their thing.

<http://theconversation.com/opposition-keen-to-stop-marine-parks-but-will-fishers-benefit-14955>



## BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc: BUSHWALKING ACTIVITIES

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. The BMCS Bushwalking Guide which explains the numbered grades can be found on the Society's website [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au) or can be posted on request. For more information call Maurice Kerkham 4739 4942 email [mauricekerkham@hotmail.com](mailto:mauricekerkham@hotmail.com) or write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782. **Late changes to the program will be published on the website.**

**SATURDAY WALKS:** Usually a full day longer walk at a faster pace. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. If you are a new walker to Saturday walks, before attending ring the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Emanuel Conomos phone 4757 1090, mobile 041 977 3906, email [emanuelanddi@yahoo.com.au](mailto:emanuelanddi@yahoo.com.au) Check [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au) for updates.

**Saturday Walks driver reimbursement:** *In an effort to ensure that car drivers are adequately compensated for the use of their vehicles a driver reimbursement policy applies* (Check [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au) Saturday Walks page for details)

Jul 13- **A Crossing of the Blue Mountains of NSW 2013 Day 2** Blaxland to Woodford via St Helena Crater and Western Ck (if possible)-Leader Jim 4758 6009-Meet at Blaxland Shops at bottom of steps from station-08.40-16Km-Gr3/4-Maps Springwood/ Penrith/ Katoomba.

Jul 20 **Glenbrook - Kanuka Brook, Red Hand Cave.** Leader Karen 4751 9695. Meet Glenbrook Stn C/P 9.00am. 9 Km, Gr 3, Map Penrith.

Jul 27 **Celestial Chamber, Wollemi Wilderness.** Leader Emanuel 4757 1090. (After 7pm. For further details). Limit of 8. Km 5, Gr 3, Map Cullen Bullen.

Aug 3 **Gardens of Stone-Pagoda walk.** Leader Hugh 0423309854. For details. Limit of 8-Get in early. 5KM. Gr 3. Map Cullen Bullen.

Aug 10 **Blue Mountains Crossing Woodford to Lawson.** Leader Jim 47586009. Meet Woodford Stn C/P 9.00am. 7km, Gr 3 Map Katoomba.

**Saturday walkers Crossing of the Blue Mountains of NSW 2013** – For the full program, click on the following link if reading Hut News on line. Or copy <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/bm-crossing-2013.pdf> into your browser

**FORWARD NOTICE: Proposed Program for Week (Monday to Friday) at Wombeyan Caves in September**

**Monday** – after arrival and lunch – walk around the area at your own pace Grade 2. **Tuesday** – am Self guided cave inspection Cost? - Grade 2/3 - pm walk in the area. **Wednesday** – am guided cave inspection Cost? Grade 2/3 - pm walk in the area. **Thursday** – am guided cave inspection Cost? Grade 2/3 - pm walk in the area. **Friday** – 10.00am departure – drive home. **Cave Inspections** probably cost around \$10 but they did have a three for the price of two deal some years ago.

**Please let me have expressions of interest** by end July so that I can make further enquiries regarding accommodation and costs. Please let me know – a) preferred dates in September – b) Number in your party and c) preferred accommodation - As the accommodation types are spread out over a quite large area it may be preferable to all be in the one type of accommodation although the camping area is near cabins. Accommodation types were detailed in last month's Hut News, or see the website. Jim.

**MONDAY LEISURE WALKS:** Short Day walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of an average fitness. Bring morning tea and lunch and adequate water. The Group Co-ordinator is Maurice Kerkham, 4739 4942, [mauricekerkham@hotmail.com](mailto:mauricekerkham@hotmail.com)

Jul 15 **Glastonbell, Bell.** Long walk includes The Cathedral & Split Rock. Some scrambling. Meet Mt. Victoria Rail Station 9-45am. Car pool; Fare \$5.00 Phil 4787 5560. Grade 3.

Jul 22 **Christmas in July Lunch.** Katoomba RSL, Lurline Street. 12 noon for 12-30 start. Cost \$22-00 includes entertainment. Orders & payment to Judith (4758 6310 or 0419 780 640) no later than Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July.

Jul 29 **Spit to Manly.** Great harbour walk. Meet top of escalators central Station 9-30am. Ken 0423 450 200. Grade 2/3.

Aug 5 **Red Hands Cave, Glenbrook.** Circuit walk includes Campfire Creek. Meet Glenbrook Station Commuter Car Park 9.30am. Car pool. Tony 9625 3985. Grade 2.

Aug 12 **Nature Trail.** Meet Wentworth Falls Rail Commuter Car Park 9-30am. Kate 4759 1943. Grade 2.

**THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS:** Walks 2-3 hours conducted at a leisurely pace to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, adequate water and lunch if noted. Group Co-ordinator is Beverley Thompson, 4757 2076, [roybev12@bigpond.net.au](mailto:roybev12@bigpond.net.au)

Jul 18 **Christmas in July Comet Inn Hartley Vale \$35.** Book and pay Beverley 47572076 by July 4. Meet at the Comet Inn at 12.30pm.

Jul 25 **Nature Trail, Wentworth Falls.** Four kilometre circuit with birds, rainforest, views and waterfalls. Car pool. Take lunch. Meet Wentworth Falls Stockyard Car Park 9.30am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2

Aug 1 **Two Creeks Walk Lindfield.** Lovely Middle Harbour views. Take lunch. Meet top of escalators Central at 9.30am. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 2

Aug 8 **"BP Track"** Bells Line of Road to views of Rigby Hill and Grose Valley along bush track with Aboriginal grinding grooves on rocky outcrop. Car pool \$5. Take lunch. Meet Mt Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2

Aug 15 **Terrace Falls Hazelbrook.** Start and finish on fire trail but in between rainforest walk on degraded track. Ferns, fungi and coachwoods. Car pool. Take lunch. Meet Hazelbrook shops car park 10am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076 Grade 3

### Green or red ... It's all in the punctuation

Published in our bushwalks program, May 2012: "**Jul 6-Sunnyside Ridge Firetrail No6 Some off track 4WDs Required - Spectacular pagodas and gullies and clifflines get in quick-Bob** 4757 2694-Meet at Wentworth Falls Stockade Carpark - 8.00am-6Km-Gr3-Map **Cullen Bullen.**" Lachlan Garland has pointed out that this implies the use of off track 4WDs.

What was meant was that there would be some off track walking and you need 4WDs to get there on eroded fire trails.

Bushwalkers have seen the damage done by four-wheel drive vehicles and trail bikes going off-track on the fragile sandstone soils of the Newnes Plateau and elsewhere. Our bushwalks program does not include driving off track in 4WD vehicles. We need a **FULL STOP** to this activity. My apologies for not picking up the error. Christine.