



**"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"**



### Please sign the petition

The petition on page 11 of this newsletter is part of the Society's Hands Off our LEP campaign.

We have been advocating

that the local community should be adequately consulted on the new Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plans (LEP). This includes a three month public exhibition period for the new LEP, which would allow real community input. We need **your** help to make sure this happens.

The new LEP will be a complex document, will cover all of the Blue Mountains and will be in a completely new format than the existing LEPs. The community needs time to understand the new LEP and provide meaningful input. Three months should be the minimum public exhibition period.

Council voted to unanimously support seeking a three month exhibition period for the new LEP. Unfortunately, the decision is not just up to Council. Brad Hazzard, the Minister for Planning via the Department of Planning and Infrastructure will ultimately determine whether the new LEP will go on public exhibition for three months.

We need as many signatures on the petition as possible in order to send a clear message that the Blue Mountains community wants meaningful community consultation on the new LEP.

You can download copies of the petition at [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au) - go to the home page, click on Campaigns at the top of the page, click on Hands Off our LEP, then scroll to the end of the page.

Please sign the petition along with friends, family and neighbours and post it to the Society.

### Graphic Design Skills anyone?

Is there anyone with graphic design skills who is willing to volunteer their help to the Publicity Officer to put together a new small colour brochure about the Society?

It would not involve very much time, you would be acknowledged on the brochure and we would all be very grateful.

Call Susan Crick on 0409 829635.



### BMCS General Meeting

Thursday, 29 August, 2013

7.30 pm at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls

### "The Art of Seeing"

Photographer Joe Murdolo will be the guest speaker at Blue Mountains Conservation Society's general meeting at the Conservation Hut on Thursday 29 August.

Joe Murdolo has an artist's eye for the glorious creations of nature that lie at our doorstep. His up-close and intimate shots capture a standoff between a spider and a ladybird, a rainbow in a droplet on a gumleaf, the rippled surface of a pool in wind-worn sandstone.

The grandiose in not neglected either. Not afraid to take his camera out in bad weather, Joe captures the play of light on mist or the effects of an approaching thunderstorm on Narrowneck. Each photo comes with a story that lets the viewer share the photographer's unique experience at that precise moment.

Not to be missed!

Visitors are very welcome.

*Photo: Happiness is a game of chasings, Joe Murdolo*

### BMCS Planning and Development Resource Kit

Do you want to take action on an environmental issue in your neighbourhood or the Blue Mountains more broadly?

Do you want information about the laws and procedures relating to development and environmental protection?

Find out what YOU can do!

Go to the Planning and Development Resource Kit at <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml>

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## Nursery News

**Nursery Re-opening:** After closing over June and July the Lawson nursery is open for sales every Wednesday and Saturday morning until the end of the year. We will also be at the Blackheath Community Markets on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of every month as well as the Lawson Magpie Markets on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of every month. As usual, we will have a great variety of plants in forestry tubes and 70mm pots, still at \$2.50 each, and advanced specimens in 100, 125 or 140mm pots from \$3 - \$10. We have just updated our species list on our web-site so you can see what is on offer although all plants may not be available at all times. We are looking forward to seeing you!

**The Plant that gave Blackheath its Name:** At the northern entrance to Blackheath stands a village marker on the Great Western Highway in front of the World War 1 Memorial. A plaque on the marker states: "This locality, named *Hounslow* by Governor Macquarie on his way to the newly-discovered country to the westward of the Blue Mountains, was renamed by him *Black-heath* on May 15, 1815 during his return journey to Sydney. Municipality of Blackheath 1939".

Almost certainly the colour of the heath, deep-green but appearing almost black on a dull day or near dusk, was due to extensive stands of the Dwarf She-oak, *Allocasuarina nana*, which can still be seen on the heath to the west of the town overlooking Centennial Glen and Porters' Pass. We will probably never know what caused Macquarie to change his mind or did he simply forget that he had already named the site? Anyway, as a *Blackheathen* I much prefer the current name to that of a London suburb. *Allocasuarina nana* is a small, dioecious (meaning having male and female flowers on separate plants) shrub, rarely above 1m and is common in the Upper Mountains. The male flowers are deep-tan spikes at the ends of branchlets while the female flowers are a rich red and clustered on lower branches. Pollination is wind driven and when the male flowers are ripe a golden cloud of pollen can be seen floating from the plant. *A. nana* is hardy in most situations and good for foreground planting, for filling in under taller shrubs or as an informal hedge. No respectable garden in Blackheath should be without several to increase the chances of having both male and female plants. We have good stocks of well advanced plants in forestry tubes.

If you want larger She-oaks we also have *A. distyla* (2-3m), *A. littoralis* (7-10m) and *A. torulosa* (15-20m) in forestry tubes. All three make good screening plants and the dark-brown to black glossy seeds in the cones (fruits) of all four species are a valuable food source for cockatoos. The sound of wind blowing through the branches of these lovely plants is characteristic of the Australian bush. The genus *Allocasuarina* was separated from the *Casuarina* genus on the basis of small differences in the fruits and the colours of the seeds which are dull and much paler in the latter.

Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager ([kevinbell@eftel.net.au](mailto:kevinbell@eftel.net.au) 4787 6436)



Photo: fruit of  
*Allocasuarina nana*,  
Blackheath

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT  
ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS  
24 AUGUST 2013**

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47877246

### MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

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## Hunting in National Parks: NSW Government makes changes to amateur hunting in NSW

The NSW Game Council has been abolished and hunting in state forests has been temporarily suspended.

This follows an independent enquiry into the governance, management and performance of the Game Council, set up after an investigation found evidence of alleged illegal activity by a senior executive of the Game Council. The report concluded that:

*Allowing the Game Council to continue on its current path is not an option. To be brutally honest this is probably as close as we ever want to get in Australia to what has started to look increasingly like a private regulatory agency, i.e. a regulatory and compliance function, under the control of a small group of individuals, partially cloaked from mainstream government oversight.*

The O'Farrell Government's plan to allow unsupervised recreational hunting in 79 national parks has been dropped. And along with the demise of the Game Council have gone wild schemes such as the plan to allow youths as young as 12 to shoot rifles, bows and arrows, and muskets in our National Parks which clearly demonstrated that these "pest eradication programs" had nothing to do with pest control.

However there is a new scheme to allow recreational hunting (or 'volunteer' shooting as it is now being called) in 12 national parks under the supervision of National Parks and Wildlife staff.

While this is a better outcome than previously proposed, the Society believes that effective feral animal control must be the primary goal of the Parks Service. Recreational hunting as administered by the Game Council in state forests is scientifically shown to be ineffective – see "Is Hunting Conservation?" by Dr Carol Booth ([http://www.invasives.org.au/documents/file/reports/Critizue\\_IsHuntingConservation.pdf](http://www.invasives.org.au/documents/file/reports/Critizue_IsHuntingConservation.pdf))

If this program goes ahead we will be watching to determine if it assists Parks staff to improve feral animal control or serves as a distraction from conservation work.

We are aware that when hunting was initially introduced and trialled in 31 state forests, it expanded to 343 state forests within 9 months. We would vigorously oppose any such expansion in National Parks.

Thanks to all of our members who have rallied, written letters, signed petitions and campaigned against Hunting in National Parks. This is a step forward.

Tara Cameron and Christine Davies.

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

## The Road to Sustainability – saving what is left Ross Coster

We all want human society to be sustainable, to reduce the net impact on our environment to zero, so that we and the natural environment can co-exist forever on Earth.

Is this really possible? It just has to be! So where do we start?

What the Blue Mountains Conservation Society has been doing for 50 years is a great place to start.

Preserving large tracts of the natural world in as natural a state as possible achieves two things:

1. It gives the natural world a chance to operate as it has for millennia
2. It tells us humans that not all of the planet is ours to 'use'.

The second of these objectives is being heavily undermined at present, here and around the world, by the ridiculous push for 'multiple use' of National Parks, and in particular of Wilderness Areas.

These areas have been put aside for natural processes to continue unchanged. If we build roads and resorts, allow hunting, or horse riding, or logging in our National parks, we have compromised the very principles they exist for.

The people that call for these activities to be allowed in National Parks just don't get it. They think the whole planet belongs to us. They think that economic growth is all that matters.

I heard a Finance journalist say recently that 'Brazil is 100% arable land'. He actually thinks the whole of Brazil should be farmland!

What of the millions of plants and animals that evolved and live there?

Some people think that the Australian Marine Parks should allow fishing as it is our right to fish wherever we like.

What about the rights of marine creatures?

We conservationists must do our best to educate such people, to explain that it is not our planet, that we share it with billions of other species, that we have a moral duty to give these others species space to live and breed and evolve.

Imagine a world where every square metre is a farm, or a town, or a factory! Who would want to live there?

Experts tell me that we need to preserve 15% of each ecosystem, in large contiguous tracts, if we are to minimise loss of species.

In some cases there is less than 15% left of an ecosystem, in which case we need to rebuild the ecosystem from scraps.

This is the sort of work that Bush Heritage and The Nature Conservancy do, buying up degraded land, clearing out feral animals and plants, allowing the bush to regenerate, preserving the ecosystem.

It is also necessary for these large contiguous blocks of land to be connected by natural corridors, to allow animals and plants to migrate in safety between the larger areas.

Until we have achieved the 15% goal here in Australia, and in every ecosystem on Earth, we still have plenty of work to do.

Ross Coster (Ross@coster.com.au)



## Hands off our LEPs!

### Campaign Update Angela Langdon, Land Use

Our new Blue Mountains LEP (Local Environmental Plan) will determine where new developments occur, and how they are built, and contain provisions to help protect the environment, heritage and scenic values. For the community, our new LEP will determine the future character of our towns and villages, and play a major part in ensuring our bushland and World Heritage Areas are protected.

Under the NSW Government's new planning laws, our new LEP will be subject to various "higher order" plans including the proposed draft Metropolitan Strategy. The Metropolitan Strategy imposes targets for new housing as well as identifying the lower Blue Mountains as an urban growth area. The Society is deeply concerned about these developments, as we believe the Blue Mountains are not just another suburb of Sydney, to be developed into treeless "McMansion" suburbs. The Society has made a comprehensive submission to the Metropolitan Strategy which is available on the Society's website go to the home page, click on Campaigns at the top of the page, then click on NSW Planning Systems Reforms.

The Society is planning a protest rally in the Lower Mountains on the Sunday August 18<sup>th</sup> at Faulconbridge or Springwood (location to be determined – look out for email updates from the Society shortly). The rally will include an update on the development of the new LEP and a "banner drop". All are welcome.



Photo: Children from Springwood PS enjoying a stroll through the lovely sun-dappled forest as they contribute to the BushTrackers guide for Fairy Dell.

### Company cars - bad for the environment

Don Morison

There are many aspects of recent environmental announcements by Prime Minister Rudd that will draw comment. There has been a widespread reaction to his crackdown on loopholes that favour private use of company cars.

The tax and subsidy arrangements that have helped Australian car manufacturing to remain afloat – albeit barely – have a long history. Unfortunately even the current level of car sales leads to serious traffic congestion in major cities with vehicle exhausts boosting greenhouse gases and other pollutants.

Why wouldn't a responsible government crackdown on company cars? Easy access to use of company cars means more private trips that, in some cases, might not be made at all. In other cases it means encouraging a choice of car travel instead of public transport, walking or cycling.

Many of those who qualify for private use of company cars live in areas that have relatively good public transport and/or high quality pedestrian and bicycle networks.

It is time to measure the environmental sacrifices that those who are lobbying to keep the company car loopholes expect all Australian communities to make. The crackdown on the company car loopholes probably should have happened sooner.

### BushTrackers now online and stepping out again Gary Humble

The wonderful BushTrackers guides to local walks by kids for kids are now available online at the exciting new BushTrackers website. By clicking on at [www.bushtrackers.com.au](http://www.bushtrackers.com.au) you'll be able to read and download all seven of the guides published so far. It's a great opportunity to explore bits of our local area you may not have thought to discover yet.

As it warms up, you might go paddling with the kids down at Duck Hole at Glenbrook, Horseshoe Falls at Hazelbrook or have a dip in the old pool on the Charles Darwin Walk at Wentworth Falls. Wander off with some visitors to listen to the birdcalls and the splash and burble of creeks at Fairy Dell in Springwood or Fern Bower at Leura Cascades. Explore a bit of our history at The Gully at Katoomba or Mt York & Cox's Road at Mt Victoria.

The website also explains the benefits of the program in getting kids from local schools out exploring their neighbouring bushland. By engaging with nature and expressing themselves in drawing, writing and photography, they're developing lifelong habits and values. Their contributions to the kids' guides for kids' walks gives them a great sense of pride and responsibility for their local environment.

Grants have been approved for four more Mountains schools to partake in BushTrackers this year, so stay tuned for more exciting new guides to appear. The Society continues to assist with contributions towards BushTrackers, but the scheme depends on ongoing funding, so contact NPWS, schools and local MPs to support keeping this valuable asset to our children and environment running.

## Comment on hunting on public lands – events during July 2013 Don Morison

Environmentalists should welcome the abolition of the NSW Game Council announced by the NSW Government as well as the suspension of amateur hunting in state forests and the restriction to 12 of the number of national parks to be initially trialled for amateur hunting. However, there remain a series of principles to which the NSW Government does not appear adequately committed.

Government employees or any persons acting with the approval of Government employees need to be accountable for the way they treat animals – whether or not the animals are deemed to be feral animals or pests.

The unsatisfactory situation leading to the events of July 2013 arose partly because some individuals do not think they should be accountable to a government representing all NSW citizens regarding the way they treat animals. The two Shooters and Fishers Party MPs provided an example when they initially refused to talk to media outlets such as the ABC and the Fairfax press about the abolition of the Game Council. Later, one of them said that they were ending a “gentlemen’s agreement” to support the government of the day’s legislation.

On 18 July 2013, the current Minister for Primary Industries appeared to be trying to divide rural and urban citizens when she addressed the NSW Farmers Association conference. According to news reports, she likened the actions of some animal rights groups to terrorist actions and implied they drew their support from the misguided beliefs of urban NSW residents. This is significant because the O’Farrell Government plans that this Minister will take over supervision of state forest amateur shooting – if and when that resumes.

What environmentalists should be seeking from the NSW Government:

- The option that culling of feral animals on public land be carried out exclusively by professionals should be kept open.
- The option of postponing any trial of amateur shooting in national parks beyond October 2013 should be kept open.
- If a trial in any national parks does proceed, the NSW Government should first spell out in far greater detail the criteria on which the trial is to be evaluated.
- In particular, the NSW Government should clarify its scientific and economic models for evaluating whether culling on public land by amateurs is effective for conservation and whether better results could be achieved for the same outlays by using exclusively professionals.
- If amateur shooting resumes in state forests, it should be administered by a minister who is committed to considering the views of both urban and rural residents and not by a minister who is embroiled in rhetoric critical of organisations supported by many people within the state.

## King Coal: the beginning of the end?

Recent world events ...

- The World Bank has announced it will no longer fund coal-fired power stations in poor countries, agreeing to a new energy strategy which will limit the financing of coal generation except in rare circumstances.

In its latest climate change report, released in June, the World Bank president Jim Yong Kim said a two degrees Celsius rise in average temperatures would leave millions of people trapped in poverty.

“The good news is that there are things we can do right now. Things that we are working on at bank are one, sustainable energy for all, we think that we can provide funding and technical expertise so that every country in the world can have the energy they need to grow but grow in a sustainable fashion.” (Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-07-17/world-bank-to-stop-funding-coal-fired-power-stations-in-develop/4826928>)

- The European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Union’s main lending arm, has announced that it would stop financing most coal-fired power stations to help the 28-nation bloc reduce pollution and meet its climate targets. New and refurbished coal-fired power plants will not be eligible for funding unless they emit less than 550 grams of carbon dioxide per kilowatt-hour (gCO<sub>2</sub>/kW).
- The EU lender said it could tighten the emissions standard in the future to ensure its lending criteria are consistent with EU climate policy and create jobs across Europe. (Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2013/jul/24/eu-coal-power-plants-carbon-emissions-climate>)
- In Australia, sixty community leaders started an open letter to Australia’s ‘big four’ banks, calling on them to stop investing in dirty fossil fuels for the sake of the climate. The letter, appearing as advertisements in Australian media on 29 June, the Global Day of Action to end the age of coal (<http://www.endtheageofcoal.org/>), is directed to the CEOs of each of the banks which, over the past five years, have loaned \$6.5 billion to coal and gas export ports along Australia’s eastern seaboard. <http://openletter.marketforces.org.au>



(Photo: A coal-burning plant in China’s Inner Mongolia region)

## Bowerbird Blues Gary Humble

That bottle of milk you just opened could kill a young bloke on the make. It's a bad case of the bowerbird blues.

Spring is here and throughout the Blue Mountains, male Satin Bowerbirds are flat out trying to attract a spunky chick. It's an exhausting and dangerous job. To do it right, he's collecting, building, painting and decorating, guarding against theft and most importantly, entertaining members of the opposite sex!

In the bird-world version of *The Block*, the bower boys have a month or so to knock up a fetching bower and decorate it with all the right adornments to catch a chick's eye. Aqua, cobalt, navy, turquoise, indigo, aquamarine, sky, azure - it doesn't matter what colour it is, as long as it's blue.

A bower, for those who haven't had the luck to see one, consists of a layer of sticks on the ground onto which are built two walls of upright twigs and grass-stems, arched over to form an avenue resembling a tunnel without a roof. In front of this avenue, usually on the northern side, the bird arranges his collection of treasures to tempt his admirers. The intense blues favoured by the Satin Bowerbird are colours that echo the glorious sheen on the mature male's plumage.

Blue objects are fairly unusual in nature, but today's prevalence of plastics has changed that. The modern bower is usually decorated with an impressive array of blue plastic - drinking straws, clothes pegs, bottle tops, etc; items that are much more durable than the flowers and berries that would have been chosen previously. The blue wing feathers of rosellas are also often used.

And that's where the bowerbird blues strike up an ominous chord. The security rings around the tops of water and milk bottles, etc. which detach on opening, are irresistible to bower boys in search of bits of blue bling. However, unless the ring is broken or cut, it can form a deadly bridle. If a bird picks up the ring, it can flip over his head getting caught around the neck and prevent him closing his beak and eating or drinking.

The miserable bowerbird in the photo landed on Gary Humble's verandah in Leura. Gary and his wife realised from the bird's futile attempts to eat and drink, that a plastic ring was jamming its beak open. The way the ring was caught under the feathers behind its head was a death sentence and they watched helplessly in dismay as the unfortunate bird vainly tried to rid itself of the lethal choker. They attempted to catch it to remove the ring, but the distressed bird took flight and wasn't seen again.

The other photo shows a bower in Katoomba with a typical collection of blue detritus from the modern world complete with a range of plastic rings from bottles. Carol Proberts has documented many similar potential death-traps.

Manufacturers have known of this and similar problems for many years but have failed to act properly to solve this needless and distressing problem by designing the rings to break on opening.

Lovelace, the penguin entangled in the plastic rings from a six-pack in the movie "Happy Feet" was a victim of a similar fate. Countless marine



creatures are entangled and suffer in cruel snares of plastic flotsam.

Next time you open a water or milk bottle with a ring around the neck, do the right thing. Cutting or breaking the rings before disposing of them responsibly could save many animals' lives and stop the bowerbird blues.



### Burning to replace woodchipping

North Coast conservationists are fearful that a NSW Government proposal to allow burning of wood from native forests for electricity generation will result in extensive degradation of north-east NSW's public and private forests if successful.

The EPA announced yesterday that the Government proposes to amend the Protection of the Environment Operations (General) Regulation 2009 so that logging residues, sawmill residues, and "trees that might otherwise be made into pulp" can be used for electricity generation. The EPA will shortly be putting the draft regulation on public exhibition. <http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/epamedia/EPAMedia13071101.htm>

Spokesperson for NEFA, Dailan Pugh, said that it was only last month that the export of woodchips from north-east NSW finally ended after 30 years. "Now the NSW Government wants to burn our forests to generate electricity.

"The end to export woodchipping provided the NSW Government with an opportunity to decrease logging quotas and the intensity of logging that is trashing the State Forests. Instead, they have chosen to opt for an even more destructive industry that won't pass the sustainability test of time. The future demands innovation and clean forms of energy. This move belongs to the past," she said.

Source: <http://nefa.org.au/>

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CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc**  
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## NSW Government's new Biodiversity fund is bad policy Keith Muir, The Colong Foundation for Wilderness, 23/7/13

Last Saturday Environment Minister Robyn Parker issued a media release about a new fund to compensate losses to threatened species habitat caused by development. Apparently accreditation is to be sought for this offsetting process under the Federal environmental laws.

The Minister's media release explains that the new fund will make *'it easier for the construction industry to get on with the job'*, and that the fund will *'reduce red tape'* for business but the details are yet to be worked out.

The mining industry got what it wanted. The new fund can be used for *'rehabilitating degraded land'*. Miners will be able to reduce the offset compensation when clearing endangered species habitat by planting trees and bushes into rock waste they leave behind. Allowing such offsets will not save threatened wildlife.

The new fund might as well issue shares to threatened wildlife stating:  
The NSW Government owes you a habitat, redeemable at the nearest coal mine in thirty years (if it grows back – in small print).

More puzzling still is that offset funding calculations for wildlife are to be *'discounted where significant social and economic benefits accrue to NSW'*. Social welfare and saving endangered wildlife are not exchangeable commodities. This arrangement just duds threatened wildlife.

The fund will allow biological capital to be 'sold' to fund wildlife management expenses. Selling assets may be fine where you have lots of capital, but threatened species are at risk of becoming extinct and need all the capital (i.e. habitat) they have left. Funding day to day wildlife management from clearing a limited pool of quality habitat is a strategy for extinction.

Some individual 'demonstration' projects could benefit from this fund. Few land managers, however, will feel good about taking blood money from the mining and property development industries.

The NSW Government must do a lot more work on the policy behind this biodiversity fund announcement if it is to secure a future for our threatened wildlife.

### 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.

### The Gardens of Stone Visitors Map

\$7.50 plus \$1.50 postage.  
Buy the map online  
([www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au))

## A sea change Sue Nicol

Perched on a high headland, wind in my face, sun on my back, and waves crashing beneath - scanning the horizon and the white caps for that tell-tale puff of fine spray. Yes! There it is! And another beside it and two more over there! There they go again and I watch the blows hang in the air and then be carried away on the wind like the albatrosses I can see skimming over the troughs and crests without the need to beat their wings. This is what the spirit needs – the South Coast of NSW in winter – wind, waves, whales and birds.

Then a huge eruption of white water catches my eye. My feelings of exhilaration go sky high and I let out a whoop as a whale breaches. With binoculars trained on the spot I count fifteen more breaches from two individuals. The energy involved in launching such a huge creature into the air! There's no one else around to see it or me counting out loud and cheering. This was only my first afternoon of a five day holiday. It was hard to drag myself away but I decided to return to the headland each morning and afternoon of my stay.

The next morning it was much calmer and the whales' backs and dorsal fins were easily seen as they surfaced, travelling calmly north.

In the afternoon more breaching, two or three times as well as tail slaps – as many as six in succession. Is this an afternoon thing? Why do whales breach? I've heard several reasons: ridding themselves of parasites, part of courtship or aggression to other males. Surely it's just jumping for joy and good fun!

The following morning more than eight whales were passing the headland, two so close we could almost hear them as they blew. Then, on the last afternoon, not a single sign nor any the next morning. Had we seen the last stragglers on their way up north to enjoy the warm Queensland waters? I wish them a safe journey and I'll be back next year for another sea change.



Local whale watchers on the south coast say that there seem to be more Humpback Whales passing up the coast this season than in previous years. (Photo taken at Harvey Bay 2006 by Christine Davies)

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

## THE CONCRETE CONTINENT

Hidden on the northern side of Lawson in what was once part of a marshy gully known as 'Frog Hollow', resumed and transformed in the early 1930s into the small oasis of Wilson Park, is a curious and unusual relic – a large concrete relief map of Australia. Now showing all the signs of public neglect, cracked concrete and faded colours, it once drew visitors in numbers but today rates little, if any, mention in the tourist literature. Come upon it unprepared and it might take you some moments to work out what it is!

It was a different story at the time of its unveiling on Friday 12 May 1932 when, in the presence of local dignitaries and over 100 school children, the Shire President, Percy Wilson, declared the occasion "a children's day". The concrete continent was, reported the *Katoomba Daily*, "on a scale of 75 miles to 1 foot" and "shows all mountains, ranges, rivers, and capital cities and is coloured to correspond with the regulation colours of school atlases".

Located in a creek sourced from a small waterfall at the edge of the park, the map was surrounded by "clear running water" in which children were invited, like Matthew Flinders, "to sail boats around Australia". In the ensuing years the map excited considerable interest and became a Lawson landmark. For many, both local and visiting, it is still a fondly recalled childhood memory.

Who was responsible for this unusual piece of park sculpture? Notably, the Shire President singled out several people at the dedication: John Garlick of the Main Roads Board who "first suggested" the idea; B. A. Heffernan, the Shire Engineer, who "set out" the map and supervised its construction; Bob Medcalf, the "expert concrete worker" who carried out the work and Prof. J. McDonald Holmes of the Geography Department at the University of Sydney who "advised and assisted" on its educative value and accuracy. All pretty straight forward, but is it?

Mysteriously, as sometimes happens, a contrary local tradition exists that gives the plaudits to another, a young



Lawson man who rates no mention in the *Daily's* 'official' account. This alternate version of events, well entrenched in local lore and publication, records how love of country and a desire to pass this on to the next generation led Arthur Higgenson to design and construct the map in the new park. The fact that a decade later he died in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp only adds poignancy to the story.

Can we reconcile the two accounts? Though inquiries suggest that 'Arthur Higgenson' was, in fact, Frank Higgison (who did indeed die in Sandakan) and a photograph exists of him with a relief model (his work) of Australia, perhaps confirming his association with the project, beyond this I don't know. What is certain, however, is that this unusual piece of sculpture, reportedly the only one of its kind in Australia, badly needs attention if it is not to become another vanished piece of old Lawson.

*(Sincere thanks to Liz Benson, who lives on the former Higgison property, for her keen assistance.)*

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

Photo: Blue Mountains City Library, Local Studies Collection

### Giant Dragonfly PhD thesis available online

For anyone interested in the Giant Dragonfly (*Petalura gigantea*) and its peat-swamp habitats across the Greater Blue Mountains region, the PhD thesis on the subject by local biologist Ian Baird is available to download as a series of PDFs from the University of Western Sydney library's website at: <http://handle.uws.edu.au:8081/1959.7/509925>

The thesis citation is:

Baird, I.R.C. (2012) The wetland habitats, biogeography and population dynamics of *Petalura gigantea* (Odonata: Petaluridae) in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales. PhD thesis, University of Western Sydney

### Welcome to new members

Noel Robson, Blackheath  
Peter Drinkall, Wallerawang  
Dorothea May Melbourne, Wallerawang  
Suzanne Rix, Wentworth Falls  
Christine Smith, Leura  
Margaret Wilson, Penrith  
Leonie Corbett, Kings Langley  
Greg Vance, Winmalee

## Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

Winter in the Blue Mountains bushland is a bit like the fabled pie which, when opened, contained four-and-twenty singing blackbirds. You might not expect it to be full of life. The morning frost lies thick in the hollows and encrusts the foliage of ferns; fingers and noses go numb. Birdwatching visitors imagine that, like in their northern hemisphere homelands, most of the birds will have departed and winter will bring a relative silence to the forests. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Winter here is one of the most vibrant and rewarding times to be out in nature. I've previously written in this column about the incredible concentrations of honeyeaters which come to feast on the winter-flowering banksias. This year we've seen surprisingly large numbers of Crescent Honeyeaters, normally quite an elusive species. These are most likely birds which have migrated from further south to spend winter here.

This is also the time the valleys echo with the extraordinary song of the Superb Lyrebird as the males strut and dance and display their magnificent tails, all in the hope of impressing the females enough to achieve a mating or three. And as you read this, many a solitary female will be incubating her single egg in the nest she has built herself. The mature males will now be moulting their tail feathers, and younger males, less than 6-7 years of age, take over the mounds and the spotlight for a few weeks.

Recently on Kings Tableland I watched a procession of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos emerge from over a ridge, two or three at a time, eventually flying right past my head as a loose flock. I counted 90. A flock that size is breathtaking visually and aurally, though it's relatively small for a winter flock. In some years I've counted 150! Hearteningly, this year's flock contained many young. It's a common belief that flocks of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos signal rain, though I see them in all weather conditions. Large flocks are a normal feature of winter as they gather at rich feeding areas - in this case the heathland where they find banksia and hakea seeds. Large numbers also gather in the pine forests near Jenolan and on Newnes Plateau.

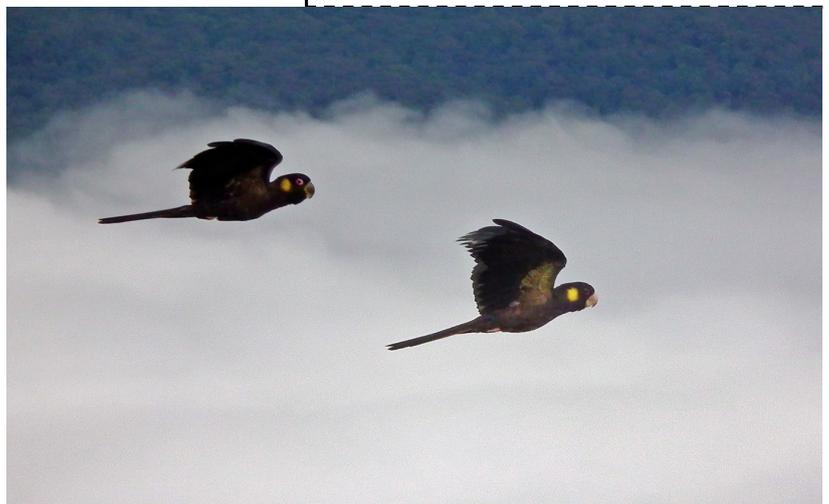
Other species which congregate in winter flocks include Pied Currawongs (who doesn't love the sound they make when calling together on a cold windy day?) and Satin Bowerbirds, most of which are green immatures.

As we move into August, the days get longer and we start to hear more birdsong. The species which don't migrate can get a head start on breeding and many are building nests or incubating eggs now. Magpies, thornbills, fairy-wrens and wattlebirds, for example, are already underway. And every morning before sunrise the song of the Common Blackbird rings out from gardens across the mountains showing us how its English forebears inspired a nursery rhyme.

But introduced species aside, who would imagine that one of Australia's most renowned cool-climate regions could be so full of life in its winter months!

Carol Proberts  
origma@westnet.com.au  
Twitter: @carolproberts

A pair of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos fly high above cloud in the Jamison Valley (male left, female right). Photographed from Kings Tableland by Carol Proberts, July 2013.



## Membership Application Form

(Use capitals please—even for email address)

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

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

Phone(s) .....

Email .....

**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. ....

MEMBERSHIP FEES (please circle one item)

Single \$30 Concession (Senior/Student) \$20

Household \$35 Household Concession \$25

Corporate (negotiable)

Membership (circled above) \$ .....

Donation (tax deductible) \$ .....

Bushwalkers: please add

\$20 per walker per annum. \$ .....

TOTAL AMOUNT \$ .....

Note: All fees include GST at the relevant rate.

Send my copy of Hut News by

Please tick box  mail  internet only

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.

ENQUIRIES: Phone (02 4757 1872

Email: 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)**

## **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.**

### **On a Dead Robin**

**by Wilson Alcorn**

Small, yellow-breasted one whose watchful eye followed the turning earth beneath our spade for luckless grub or hapless worm, companion of the lonely track, joining us when the billy boiled for crumbs and company - small, friendly, fearless one, farewell.

(July 1974)

Some random pieces from the book "Sipping the Nectar", the 'bird notes' of Graham Alcorn, extracted from the Newsletters of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society and the NSW Field Ornithologists Club 1970-1999. The book was compiled by John Low, Jill Dark and Carol Proberts and published in 2008, with beautiful illustrations by Fiona Lumsden.

### **Bell Birds in the Blue Mountains**

Apparently a colony of Bell Birds has moved into the Jamison Valley. If one stands at the lookout at Sublime Point, Leura, one can hear them calling from down the valley, slightly to the left and near the fire trail. (March 1971)

### **Casualty in the snow**

Early in August the nest of a Brown Thornbill was discovered in course of construction—a beautiful little domed nest with side entrance—suspended among leaves of a Broad-leaved Geebung, about 18 inches above ground. By the end of August the nest held three tiny eggs. On later inspection the small bill and shining eyes of a sitting parent bird were seen through the entrance. By end of first week of September the eggs were stone-cold, the nest deserted. In that week a foot of snow had fallen which would certainly have buried the nest. Two more nests of the same species have since been discovered nearby. (September 1970)

### **Field Outing Report: Glen Davis on 6/7/91**

"I hear you're keen on birds", the lady queried.

"What is the bird that fascinates you most?"

Now that's a question difficult to answer.

I thought a bit and then, "All birds", I said.

But thinking in more detail on the matter I said, "The one of which I know the least.

On Friday, say, a Regent Honeyeater, but yesterday I saw a score of them, the Flying Coachmen there in all their splendour of black and gold and chequered livery, sipping the nectar of a White Box tree on this field outing of the Ornithologists' Club.

"Or perhaps I might have said a Turquoise Parrot, having seen only three before this day, but suddenly we saw a flock of fifty wheeling and flashing gold and sparkling blue a perching in a tree for our inspection then to the ground again to search for seeds.

"So now I'd say the Black-chinned Honeyeater, a modest bird compared to these two beauties, but one that so far has eluded me with glimpses of olive green among the leaves.

I've yet to see the soft blue wattle above its eye, to learn its habits, the trees it frequents. Where does it build its nest? Its song, the books record, is rich and tuneful, its nest a delicate, suspended cup.

"That's my reply, dear lady, to your question. With birds the fascination's never done."

### **Falcons**

A pair of Peregrine Falcons have an eyrie in the cliffs above the National Pass, Wentworth Falls Reserve and seem to breed successfully there each spring. They can often be seen along the cliffs and it is a wonderful sight to watch their mastery of the air. (August 1979)

(more on page 12)

## Hands off our LEPs Campaign

### Please sign the petition

The Petition referred to on page 1 was published on page 11 of the hard copy of this newsletter.

#### What you can do:

Download and print the [Petition](#) to Minister Brad Hazzard and the Mayor asking for a three month consultation period for the draft Blue Mountains LEP – get as many signatures as you can and return to the Society.

If you cannot access the petition by clicking on the above link, go to the **Hands Off our LEP** webpage accessed via the Campaigns menu. Then scroll to the end of the page.

We need as many signatures on the petition as possible in order to send a clear message that the Blue Mountains community wants meaningful community consultation on the new LEP.

## 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 Jim Percy— phone 4758 6009, email [jp34@tpg.com.au](mailto:jp34@tpg.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)

- Aug 10 **Blue Mountains Crossing Woodford to Lawson.** Leader Jim 47586009. Meet Woodford Stn C/P 9.00am. 7km, Gr 3 Map Katoomba.
- Aug 17 **Narrow Neck to the fire tower and beyond (Good views).** Leader Eddie 4784 2691. Meet at Katoomba Stn Car park 08.15. 22km. Gr 3. Maps **Katoomba/Jamison.**
- Aug 24 **Mt Hay and Boorong Crags.** Leader Warwick 4757 1354. Meet (contact leader). 9 km. Grade 3/4. Maps **Katoomba/ Mt Wilson**
- Aug 31 **Lockley Pylon.** An old favourite with some Harold variations Leader **Harold** 9600 8005. **Meet at** Leura School Mt Hay Road 08.30. 8 km. Grade 3. Maps **Katoomba/ Mt Wilson.**
- Sep 7 **A Crossing of the Blue Mountains of NSW 2013. Day 4—Lawson to Wentworth Falls** (Bruces Walk Pt 1). Leader **Jim** 4758 6009. **Meet at** Lawson Stn CP 09.10. 7 KM. Gr 3. Map **Katoomba.**
- Sep 14 **Kings Tableland—Erskine Range and area. Fantastic views into the Burragorang Valley.** Leader **Diana** 4751 3935. **Meet at** Wentworth Falls Stockade Carpark 8.00am. 17 KM. Gr 3. Map **Jamison/Bimlow.**
- 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 Trip to Wombeyan Caves in September**

Refer June or July Hut News or the Website ([www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au))

**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)

- Aug 19 **Florabella & Pippa's Pass.** Meet Warrimoo Rail Station, southern side 8-45am. Robyn 4739 3923. Grade 2.
- Aug 26 **Pope's Glen & Braeside Track Circuit.** Waterfalls, creeks & Grose Valley views. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9-45am. Ros 47 333 880. Grade 2/3.
- Sep 2 **Bank's Wall & Mt. Banks.** Meet Mt. Victoria Rail Station 9-50am. Car Pool—fare \$6.00. Eddie 4784 2691. Grade 3.
- Sep 9 **BUS TRIP. Rydal Daffodil Festival.** Fare \$12-00. Book & pay Keith 4736 1010. Bus departs Springwood 8am from car park rear of Westpac Springwood. Contact Judith 4758 6310. Further details to be advised.
- Sep 16 **Castle Head.** Different view of Solitary. Meet Katoomba Rail Station north side. Car Pool—fare \$6. Maurice 4739 4942. 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)

- 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.
- Aug 22 **Nepean River Walk, Emu Plains.** Easy walk along the river. Lunch at O'Donohue's Pub. Meet Emu Plains Station south side 9.45am. Chris 4721 4309. Grade 1
- Aug 29 **Silver Cascade and Victoria Falls, Mount Victoria.** Car pool. Take lunch. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Tracy 0434 362 611. Grade 2/3.
- Sep 5 **Frederica Falls, Lawson.** Commence on pleasant bush track, then steep descent on fire trail to falls. Return on slightly overgrown bush track. Interesting rock formations. Meet Lawson Bowling Club Car Park 10.00am. Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2.
- Sep 12 **River Cat from Parramatta to Quay, ferry to Neutral Bay and May Gibbs House.** Bring lunch or buy fish and chips at Quay. Meet Parramatta Station north side 9.30am. Narelle 4751 2467. Grade 1.

## From "Sipping the Nectar", the 'Bird Notes' of Graham Alcorn

### Sap-Sucking Gliders (Graham Alcorn's response)

Jill Dark asks (September issue) about gliders making gashes in tree trunks. Recently I was in the magnificent Carnarvon Gorge National Park in Queensland. There were many gliders there, feeding on the blossoms of the flowering Grey Gums.

A few of these Grey Gums were marked with gashes, which were V shaped, the bark chewed from the centre so they looked like triangles. One tree in the camp had a 20-foot length of its trunk marked with these triangles, all pointing downwards.

We did not see any gliders feeding here, they were all on the blossom, but were informed that the perpetrators were Yellow-bellied Gliders (*Petaurus australis*). With a powerful torch we

saw several of these. They have a high pitched scream and one did a spectacular glide of 43 paces. We also saw a beautiful Greater Glider with soft, white under-parts.

The Grey Gum marked was *Eucalyptus propinqua*, no doubt a close relative of the *E. punctata* mentioned by Jill as being gashed on the Putty Road.

Once, at a lecture on possums I attended at the WA Naturalists' Club, a spectacular slide was shown of a large, circular wound, about the size of a dinner plate or bigger, on the trunk of a eucalypt tree. Arranged around the wound like the petals of a daisy were 22 Sugar Gliders and one Brush-tailed Phascagale, licking the sap! (December 1985)