

HUT NEWS

Issue No. 316

July 2014



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

Blue Mountains Wild River ... The Wollangambe.



**On Sunday 17th August, 2pm
at the Wentworth Falls School of Arts**

**Blue Mountains Conservation Society will present
*Blue Mountains Wild River ... The Wollangambe.***

Andy Macqueen will talk about the river from an historical and geographical perspective. Dr Ian Wright and Nakia Belmer will provide a "state of health" of the river. And all of this will be accompanied by glorious images from Ian Brown and Society members.

The Wollangambe River is just to the north of Mt. Wilson and for most of its 57km length it is within the Blue Mountains and Wollemi National Parks. It rises near Clarence and flows east until it joins the Colo River, which empties into the Hawkesbury River near Lower Portland.

More information about this event in August Hut News. Visitors will be very welcome. (Photo by Ian Brown).

World Heritage Forever!

The United Nations World Heritage Committee has rejected the Federal Government's bid to delist more than 70,000 hectares of forest from Tasmania's World Heritage Area (WHA).

World Heritage experts and conservationists have welcomed the decision. Wilderness Society Tasmania Campaign Manager Vica Bayley said: "The Australian Government must now accept the World Heritage Committee's decision and get on with the job of protecting our spectacular forests and engage with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community to fund and rigorously complete the requested cultural heritage assessments".

The decision to reject the proposal was made in under ten minutes with reportedly no objections from any members of the Committee to retain the areas in World Heritage. Speaking from Doha, delegates from Portugal said "accepting this delisting would set an unacceptable precedent".

Tasmanian Aboriginal community representatives, who partnered with environment groups in Doha to oppose the proposal, shared celebrations of the outcome and the clear call on the Federal Government to work with them to study and document the Aboriginal heritage values in the World Heritage Area.

"We can return home in celebration and assure our Elders that Tasmanian Aboriginal Heritage and culture is important to the world," said pakana man and Aboriginal community elder Rocky Sainty. "As custodians, we have felt the weight of responsibility to protect the burial places of our ancestors, some of the oldest rock art in the world and our magnificent forests, from the Australian Government's irresponsible proposal."

"Winter Magic", June 2014.



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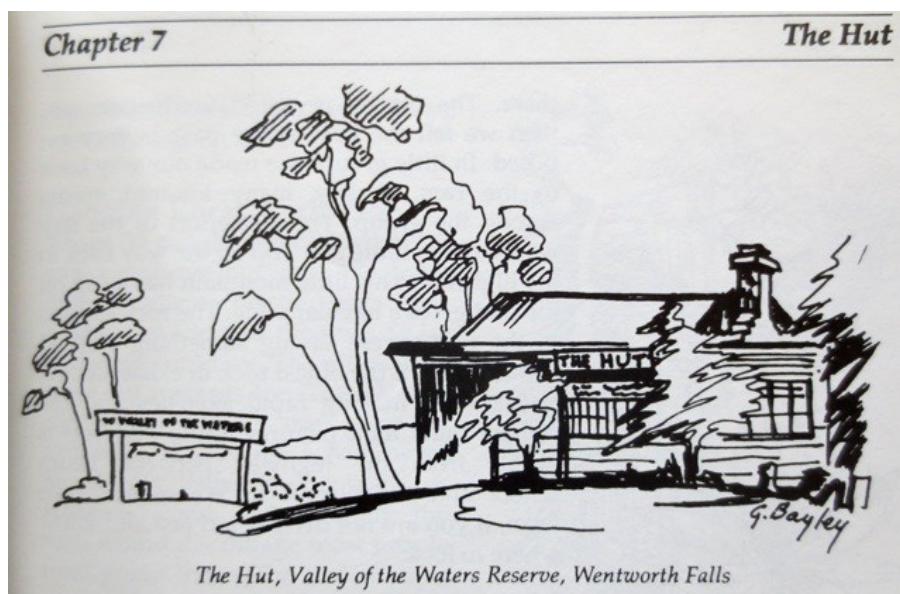
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Remembering Grace Bayley

Grace Bayley joined the Conservation Society in 1979 and was an active member until 1993. She edited the Society's newsletter for a time. Grace passed away peacefully on April 26th 2014, at the age of 93, at Gerringong.

Society member Ross Bridle writes:

Grace Bayley was a keen bushwalker and author of the book, "Take it Slowly". Her book is based on the personal diaries and experiences of walking in the Blue Mountains from her childhood in the 1920's to approximately 1993, including walks with the Society from 1979. The foreword to the book was written by Jim Smith. To quote from Jim's foreword:

"Grace reminds us that when we walk the old Blue Mountains tracks we travel in the footsteps of walkers before us. Sharing the same delights as them, we are linked to the communities of the past."

Grace was a talented illustrator and her book contains many drawings made on her bushwalks. Grace also wrote the "Jack Tracker Diary", which was not published, but a photocopy is held by the Blue Mountains Historical Society.

She concludes "Take it Slowly":

"How does one end a book such as this? Make headlines by collapsing on one walk too many, and being rescued by helicopter? Or by abseiling down Mount York on ones 72nd birthday? It would make a grand ending if I could go out in another glorious sunset on Mount Banks, but I'll just bow out while I'm still able to carry my pack and broom handle walking stick and slowly plod off along a gentle track."

By Ross Bridle, D.C.

Grace's sketch of the old Conservation Hut is reproduced from "Take it Slowly".

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 www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml

The Gardens of Stone—a photographic journey with Hugh Speirs



Looking north over the valley of Coco Creek. Photo by Hugh Speirs.

GBMWhA Nomination, by Alan Page – Part 1

I imagine that many people would believe that the Greater Blue Mountains was nominated for World Heritage due to its natural beauty. Certainly the millions of visitors to the Greater Blue Mountains would think that.

In fact one of the four criteria used in the nomination was for its “*exceptional natural beauty*”. We mountain folk have the joy and privilege of seeing that every day.

There were four criteria used in the nomination –

...be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals...

...contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation...

...contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance...

...be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.

The first two could be called “biodiversity”; the third “natural beauty” and the fourth “cultural associations”.

In November 2000, the Greater Blue Mountains was inscribed on the World Heritage list – due to its biodiversity.

Its biodiversity reads like a manifest from Noah’s Ark. Its species include

- over 1,500 flora species
- 52 mammals
- 63 reptiles
- over 30 frogs
- a third (265 species) of Australia’s bird species,
- 120 butterfly and 4,000 moth species.

However, it’s the 90 Eucalypt species that have pride of place made possible by the “*wide and balanced representation of eucalypt habitats including wet and dry sclerophyll forests and mallee heathlands, as well as localised swamps, wetlands and grassland.*”

See the UNESCO website for a fuller description - <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/917>

As for its “*exceptional natural beauty*”? Maybe beauty is only skin deep, and those assessing the nomination saw beyond that. Interesting! It’s great that they did see the outstanding and significant biodiversity, but there is more beyond that again.

Have you ever been out in the Park and sensed the welcome and energy; the life all around you. A feeling of belonging. It’s intangible – but it is there. A connection.

You have to adjust your senses – dulled by our urban lifestyle – and take time to see, hear, touch and smell. Once you have adjusted your senses, you will find the sensory input deafening. Then adjust again. It’s alive on many levels.

At a recent World Heritage Day, Joan Domicelj said that she remains very disappointed that the 4th criteria (*cultural associations*) was overlooked. She wished that there had been more time to prepare the nomination – but the window of opportunity was narrow, and they did what they could do.

And we have an immense debt of gratitude to Joan and the many others that worked for years to achieve World Heritage status.

We now have the ongoing challenge to conserve our world heritage area – and this doesn’t begin at the boundary of the national parks – as many of the threats know no bounds.

In Part 2, we will explore the “*cultural associations*”.

Alan Page, President.

Note: *The Greater Blue Mountains - World Heritage Nomination* document can be found on our website’s Research webpage.



The food chain Christine Davies

Recently we walked near Bilpin, along Brown's Ridge fire trail. This is beautiful Hawkesbury sandstone woodland with a great variety of tree species and understorey plants.

The trunk of the slender Red Bloodwood (*Corymbia gummifera*) had been home and food for a large wood grub. And the grub had recently been food for a Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo - you can see the result in the photograph on the left. The tree was alive.

A significant proportion of the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo's diet is made up of wood-boring grubs. Birds place their ear against the surface of trees to listen for the sound of grubs beneath. If a grub is detected the bird will use its powerful bill to tear chunks from the tree to reach the grub.

The hairy caterpillar, feeding on the leaves of *Banksia serrata*, doesn't have to hide to avoid becoming bird food. The hairs on some hairy caterpillars, if not all, can cause irritation and this protects them. Predators would look elsewhere for a meal.

This was a flat easy walk on a nice autumn day, and included sparkling wine and birthday cake for our morning tea.

Senator Milne's thoughtful speech

Senator Christine Milne, leader of the Australian Greens, has given a very considered explanation of her party's position on fuel excise indexation. In announcing their opposition to PM Abbott's policy, Senator Milne referred back to the original pro-environment policies that launched her party.

The Australian Greens want to see more public transport use, they want to see more fuel efficient vehicles, and they want to see all tax revenue available to spend on these options, not just on roads. However, the Greens will not support a package that penalises people left with no alternative to cars.

Senator Milne's comments on the politics of carbon are a breath of fresh air, contrasting with the point scoring and inconsistency shown by some other parties' spokespeople.

Don Morison.

DLEP 2013 village 'snapshots' MID-MOUNTAINS SUBMISSIONS Carolyn Williams

As part of our analysis of DLEP 2013 the Landuse Committee is compiling 'snapshots' of submissions from residents or landholders in each village. The first of these snapshots come from mid-mountains villages. Snapshots from upper mountains villages will be in August Hut News.

Linden – 7 submissions, all from individual residents or landholders. 5 of these submissions were on the BMCS form letter and another one incorporated BMCS material. 1 submission was from a property owner objecting to the zoning applied to their block because it limited development potential.

Woodford – 20 submissions. 11 of these submissions were on the BMCS form letter or prepared email. Another submission incorporated BMCS material. Some of these submissions also called for more environmental protection provisions and greater limits placed on subdivision of large lot properties adjoining the national park. Most of the objections to the DLEP related to the E4 Environmental Living zone applied to existing businesses on the Great Western Highway (the café/bike shop, old post office etc). Those business owners and their supporters sought a rezoning to B1 Neighbourhood Centre in order to permanently enshrine existing use rights. Other objections related to zoning issues on individual blocks.

Hazelbrook – 19 submissions. 11 of these submissions were on the BMCS form letter or prepared email. Another submission incorporated BMCS material. Other submissions objected to the E4 Environmental Living zone applied to existing businesses close to the village centres with those business owners seeking a rezoning to B1 Neighbourhood Centre (as in the case of Woodford). There were also general objections to the

DLEP and objections from landholders seeking greater development potential on their block. The main issue emerging from the Hazelbrook submissions is the limit the DLEP places on higher density residential development near the village centre. These objections are consistent with submissions from the business and developer sector across the mountains.

Lawson – 39 submissions. 10 of these submissions were on the BMCS form letter or prepared email. Another 2 submissions incorporated BMCS material. The major issue emerging from the Lawson submissions is residential development around the town centre on both north and south sides of the highway. Objectors to the DLEP include several land owners and their supporters who are looking to subdivide and/or develop a range of higher density housing options near the town centre. These are precluded in DLEP 2013 because much of the area is designated Period Housing Area, has Heritage restrictions, or is zoned R2 Low Density Residential or R6 Residential Character Conservation, and has other restrictions applied e.g. minimum subdivision lot size and environmental constraints. Most of these landholders requested that these constraints to development be lifted and the area rezoned to R3 Medium Density Residential.

Bullaburra – 8 submissions, all from individual residents or landholders. 2 of these were on the BMCS form letter or prepared email. Another 2 submissions incorporated BMCS material, one also requesting greater protection of Red Gum Park swamp. Objections to the DLEP came from landholders who were concerned about the limits placed on subdivision of their blocks by zoning and other provisions.

Easy to ask, but less easy to answer succinctly. A few members will say yes, whereas others will say no; and that would seem to disclose my bias! I will attempt a more objective approach.

The question implies that, whereas the Society was once less political, politicisation has increased and/or become more overt. This is a matter of individual perceptions and these reflect the perceiver's political persuasions. It is also influenced by the perceiver's time-frame, the intensity of political debate and public awareness over the time-frame (say the last 18 months, 3-5 years, or 10 years plus), and the evolving forms of communication (say email, electronic petitions, Facebook and dedicated websites). As e-communication becomes less formal and in some cases less respectful, the flow of ideas and resentment may seem more political.

The Society's Mission² involves conserving and increasing the awareness of the natural environment, particularly within the Greater Blue Mountains region. Management Committee pursues the Mission on behalf of and with the assistance of the Society's membership. So, irrespective of whether your political persuasions are 'blue', 'red', 'green', 'black' or 'khaki', if you identify with this broad Mission, you are a welcome member of the Society. I emphasise that the Society has no party-political affiliation, does not contribute financially to any political party, and provides no blanket endorsement of any party's policies; to this extent the Society is apolitical.

As the Society has a catholic (small 'c') membership, strategies aimed at achieving its Mission may not always fit comfortably with a member's political 'colour' and/or sensitivity. This **should** not be a problem provided that the environmental *raison d'être* is paramount. Concern **should** only arise, were the Society to attack the person rather than the policy expounded or response provided about an environmental issue. Concern **may** also arise when, in dealings with government organizations, the Society supports much of a publicised outcome. It should be recognised, however, that the Society has had extensive input³ and achieved an acceptable environmental result without totally embracing the plan, policy or position statement.

Before the Times (UK) became a Murdoch paper, its editorial position was marginally 'agin' the government of the day. It reasoned that the government controls the agenda, makes the decisions and must therefore argue its case and be held accountable. The Society is similarly 'agin' governments in relation to their economic imbalance versus environmental objectives. This involves strongly engaging with governments and holding them to account; if that means mounting protests, running petitions and openly criticising bad policy in media releases, so be it! But this is not political campaigning in terms of advocating a change of government or replacing the 'responsible' minister; **it is campaigning for better environmental outcomes.**

Since joining the Society in 2003, campaigns such as 'Stealth' (2004), Radiata Plateau (2004-5), Sand-Kaolin mining at Newnes Junction (2004-2007), the Emirates proposal (2005-2007), heli-flights over Capertee Valley (2005-2007), the Coalpac Consolidation proposal (2010-2013), and Gardens of Stone Stage 2 Proposal (2005-

ongoing), have spanned Labor and Coalition Governments at State and Federal levels and involved a spectrum of environmental and planning ministers. Despite the intensity of such campaigns, the Society has consistently focused on the environmental objectives and worked with the ministers of the day, whilst also maintaining contact with their shadow counterparts.

Similarly, in the lead-up to State and Federal elections, questionnaires covering environmental issues of particular importance have gone to all candidates and their responses (or lack of them) have been faithfully reported. The approach has been even-handed and no recommendation on how to vote has been made. Whether members use or disregard the information is entirely up to them.

When governments refuse to accept and/or act upon the science of climate change, systematically unwind environmental successes of the past 10 years, modify the established legislation such that 'green tape' is reduced and resource-extraction is favoured, cut funds for organizations such as the EDO (Environmental Defenders Office), and compromise the effectiveness and independence of organizations such as CSIRO, ARENA (Australian Renewable Energy Agency) and CEFC (Clean Energy Finance Corporation), they select short-term gain over environmental sustainability. In effect, there appears to be a well-orchestrated program to undermine the whole fabric of the environmental movement; it creates a sloping playing field which benefits the mining and extractive industries to the detriment of the environment and renewable resources.

Faced with this seemingly unprecedented situation⁴, the Society and linked environmental groups **could** overtly attack the philosophies of current governments in the lead-up to the next elections. But this would be a mistake and, at least in the Society's case, a betrayal of its Mission. It would particularly be a mistake because: the current governments might be returned and such overt political action might overshadow further environmental advocacy; and the incoming 'favoured' governments might have other allegiances and leave environmental groups out on a limb with nowhere to turn! As always, the Society **should** highlight the environmental issues for the benefit of its membership and let those who share its concerns make their individual decisions.

My conclusion: despite the negative environmental policies of the current governments, the Society has maintained and should continue to maintain its campaigns for positive environmental outcomes without overtly advocating changes of government. Of course, when the facts are on the board and **you** decide that they are over-riding, then the ball is in your court!

¹ This article is a personal view which may not necessarily reflect the formal position of Management Committee.

² http://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/aboutus/bmcs_mission_statement.pdf

³ Along with and in the face of input from diverse other organizations and individuals, many of whom have very different values and objectives!

⁴ At least to my knowledge!

A week at Leard Forest Blockade Robin Mosman

We didn't really know what to expect when we went to the Leard Forest Blockade. We just went, because of a combination of total frustration at the lack of any meaningful action by the Federal or NSW State governments on climate change, and because we were outraged at the NSW Environment Minister's action in allowing winter clearing of the Leard State Forest to facilitate yet another coal mine.

Sadly we didn't get to see the forest. It's now completely blocked from the public by police.

We arrived at the gate of Cliff Wallace's property Wando after passing a police road block at the end of the road. Cliff is a local farmer, and a member of the Maules Creek Community Council which formed in 2010 because of concerns with the mining, and launched the legal action to stop the winter clearing. Cliff volunteered his property as a home for the blockade after it was forced out of the forest by police last November.

The gate was opened for us by Col Ryan and his 92 year old father Bill. Bill, a veteran of the Kokoda Trail and now legally blind, has been arrested 5 times while attempting to slow Whitehaven's bulldozers. He said that he'd put his life on the line for his country during the war, now he was putting his body on the line for his grandchildren and all the other children.

People from all the Leard Forest Alliance groups and many other concerned individuals have been coming to the camp in increasing numbers. Some have been there on and off for months. During the week we were there, a number of local farmers came out to show their support and gratitude. Coal seam gas mining is threatening farms from Narrabri to Gunnedah. The Maules Creek mine, Whitehaven admit, will drop the water table by a staggering 7 metres.

The camp is run on Non Violent Direct Action principles, and all decisions are consensus –based. Every morning starts with a meeting at which both practical and action issues are discussed. Tasks are committed to on a voluntary basis, and every job, whether toilet cleaning or cooking, had no trouble getting someone to sign up for it.

Although most of us looked somewhat scruffy – hey, it was mid-winter camping and we had to keep warm! – I found as I talked to the folks there how well educated most of them were. A number of the most dedicated were environmental science graduates. What they all had in common was their commitment to take action, to slow down the clearing of the forest and the construction of the mine.

I had gone up prepared to be arrested if it would help, and they told me it would, because I was old and looked respectable – well, they didn't say it quite like that, but that was what they meant! But first we had to get past the roadblock where police were searching every car that left the camp. Then, two hundred police suddenly converged on Narrabri. Five police paddy wagons drove up and down past the camp all day, and the police presence around all the mine facilities increased. So I had to leave unarrested, in spite of being fitted for a chain and well rehearsed in the art of going floppy so I'd be harder to lift into a paddy wagon.

By this time, the news had come that Whitehaven, in



response to court action, had agreed to stop the winter clearing, so some of the urgency had temporarily eased. Still, as Clive Barker, a field biologist from the Mountains and an old member of the Society who was also there said, it's only a stay of execution for the forest and its fauna. If the company resumes clearing in the summer, the loss of habitat and lives will be as great. Stopping the winter clearing will buy a little time, that's all, unless other ways, legal and political, can be found to stop or limit Whitehaven. Given the strength of government support for the development, this will be a huge task.

That night the camp was visited by four gentle and dignified Gomeroi women. In gratitude for the work of the blockaders in slowing the forest clearing and attempting to protect their sacred sites, they invited us all to a special corroboree the next week.

At 73 I was hoping to be able to take life a bit easy, . But it has often seemed to me that folk of my generation have had the very best years of life in Australia, with free education, economic prosperity and no great wars. So we're signing up to do whatever we can about this environmental threat. I'm still hoping to get arrested before I die!

Leard State Forest and surrounding farmlands, near Narrabri, are threatened by proposals for three new or expanded open-cut coal mines. Together they will form a mega mine-complex that will clear at least 5,000ha of land and produce 23 million tonnes of coal each year. It is estimated that the mines will collectively result in 18,000 tonnes of dust landing on adjoining farmland. The mines represent an enormous threat to the critically endangered forest, the health of the local community, and the future of our climate. Help us save this unique and beautiful area from destruction.

Maules Creek Community Council, <http://www.maulescreek.org/>

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONVOY TO LAIRD

Robin Mosman would like to take a convoy of Blue Mountains folk to Narrabri for five days in mid-August.. The plan is to stay in cabins at a caravan park, perhaps do a non-arrestable action, and visit the folk at the Leard Forest Blockade for a day. A visit to Mt Kaputar with its stunning rock formations could be included. For more information contact Robin 4757 1354, email rwmosman@bigpond.com

IAN "BUNDELUK" WATSON Judith Dyer

Along with hundreds of others, I was fortunate to attend the funeral of Bundeluk at Rouse Hill. Family and friends talked of the 'wild child', the indigenous artist, the passionate Darug man. Most of us met him when he was selling his art in Springwood and Leura. A friendly and opinionated man with a great smile!

No one provided details of his connection with Bidjigal Reserve yet he saw it as one of his proudest achievements - and rightly so! I didn't feel confident enough to stand up in front of so many to talk on the subject, so I'm doing it now.

Bidjigal Reserve is described as "An oasis of natural habitat in the middle of urban Sydney". It covers over 300 hectares and is surrounded by Baulkham Hills, Castle Hill, West Pennant Hills and North Rocks. There is a wide and amazing variety of native plants, animals and birds and it is a great place to walk.

It was used for thousands of years by Aboriginal hunter-gatherers. With the arrival of Europeans it was used to provide timber and stone to build Parramatta and land to graze cattle. It deteriorated further as the land was cleared for such things as housing, a rifle range and sports fields. The water became polluted, weeds infested the bush and many native animals, including the platypus, became extinct.

By the 1970's people's attitudes had changed - a bushcare group was formed to help clear the weeds and various acts were passed to help protect it. However by the 1990's a flood retarding basin had to be built in the area to protect Parramatta, and further areas of bushland were destroyed to form the M2 motorway.

In 1994 Bundeluk lodged the first Native Title claim to land in Metropolitan Sydney. It was known as the M2 Land Claim and included Excelsior Reserve at Baulkham Hills, Darling Mills and Cumberland State Forests. He successfully had it renamed Bidjigal Reserve after the clan that lived in the area. The final agreement was signed in 2003 and the area is now managed by a board which includes representatives of Darug descendants, Baulkham Hills Council and Conservation Committee and the local community.

(Information obtained from various sources, including Baulkham Hills Council Website and direct from Bundeluk.)

An Inconvenient Twosome Don Morison

The independent member for Fairfax, Clive Palmer, is still a long way from proving that he is the world climate's solution to Tony Abbott's contrariness. This is in spite of Mr Palmer's pairing with the inconvenient Al Gore at a news conference.

What Mr Palmer needs to do is bind Mr Abbott inescapably to a policy that adequately resources the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and actions to meet a 20% reduction in greenhouse emissions. It would also be most helpful to take funds from the untested Green Corps and give them back to landcare projects staffed by volunteers.

Since Mr Palmer is now enjoying the image of himself as a climate saviour, it would be unkind to leave him mining his coal with no carbon price, no active emissions trading scheme, no "direct action", gimmick schemes and no other properly resourced initiatives.

A Winter's Moon by Don Morison

Climbing above
Mount Hay's furred dome
A winter's moon
Is ready to conquer
The valley of the Grose.

A few wispy clouds
Are tiptoeing past
The base of Mount Banks
The steps below Perry's
They gleam in its spotlight.

The glow from the city
Once clear behind Flat Top
Is drowned in full moonlight
Which rules ... is remembered ... returns
Rules ... is remembered ... returns.

"Hide, Govett's Creek
Hide, Govett's Creek
Take your trappings of humankind
Rubbish and coliforms
Hide from a winter's moon.

"Hide in your gorge rocks
Hide in your overhangs
Hide in your silted depths
Hide beneath fern fronds
Hide from a winter's moon."

But each spray of lichen
Each crest of cascade foam
Each tiny quartz crystal
Worships the moon tonight
Lit by a winter's moon.

Till this shining white stencil
Sprawls in the valley
Lightning fork frozen
Brighter than noonday sun
Cleansed by a winter's moon.

Gone but remembered
Gone but returning
Unlike those species
Carelessness dooms
To be singed ... and then
crisped ... and then fried.

Gone but returning
Older than oceans
Sharper than ice flakes
Purer than harp tones
Light of a winter's moon.

**The Greater Blue Mountains
World Heritage Experience**
www.worldheritage.org.au

Thursday Interpretive bushwalking group, five day trip to the Australian Capital Territory and Yass NSW, May 2014. Christine Davies.

Our second day was spent mainly in Namadgi National Park, in rugged foothill country of the snowy mountains. Namadgi takes up about half of the Australian Capital Territory. In parts of it, the grass of former sheep runs is much appreciated by mobs of Eastern Grey Kangaroos.

We had a picnic breakfast at Gibraltar Falls. The Falls have a 50 metre drop and are striking as they tumble over impressive granite boulders. Lichens growing on the granite beside the waterfall are also impressive. We wondered about their age when they have grown into more than dinner plate sized circles.

Much of the day was spent in the Orroral Valley. There were good interpretive signs at the site of the tracking station which operated from 1965 to 1984, contributing to USA's manned space missions. All the buildings have been demolished and some installations recycled into the Mount Pleasant Observatory in Tasmania. Leaves from deciduous trees, planted when the tracking station was operational, blew across the concrete slabs and Eastern Grey Kangaroos grazed on the surrounding revegetating grasslands.

Our next stop was at an old sheep run in the Orroral Valley. A mob of kangaroos bounded from the grassy hillside and across a shallow creek toward me – they came through a narrow gap in the vegetation, stopped dead and stood and stared, beautifully camouflaged among the Eucalypts and granite rocks. Several walkers sampled part of the nursery swamp track which ascends over a thickly wooded granitic soiled ridge, then into a "fen" wetland, one of a number of types of wetland found in Namadgi. A small wallaby and various birds were seen in the woodland.

At Namadgi Visitors centre, we met Marilyn the Diamond Python and enjoyed the outlook to Mount Tennant which can be distinguished from other surrounding hills by a vertical scar, caused by a rockslide.

The weather changed suddenly and it was cold and began to rain. Most of us were looking forward to a hot shower and dinner, but **somebody** insisted we visit Lanyon, which is a most imposing sheep station homestead on the east bank of the Murrumbidgee, just downstream from Tharwa. I would recommend a visit, but ours was very brief. As we returned to our Tuggeranong accommodation it was getting dark. Eastern Grey Kangaroos were everywhere and driving was treacherous.

On day 3 we visited Canberra's Black Mountain and Botanic Gardens and then drove to Yass. I'll tell you about some of the highlights next month. Christine.



Photos: Site of Orroral tracking station; large fungi on regenerating sheep run in Orroral Valley.

GYMNORHINA TIBICEN 38-44 cm

When first arriving Down Under, almost fifty years ago, a limited knowledge of our "feathered friends" meant a bird, was a bird, was a bird. The only one that really attracted me was a young Australian girl who I met in London and married.

Still, whatever corner of the globe you come from, most people would be familiar with the Laughing Kookaburra from Australia.

Looking back to 1966, in a caravan park at Caloundra, I'm almost certain it was the lovely, rolling, chortling sound of the Australian Magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) that captured my imagination.

The Indian Myna and Satin Bowerbird strut and hop around, the former rather ungainly. Both will fly off if you go anywhere near them. Not the Australian Magpie, mind you. His is a rather regal, superior strut, and he is quite happy to let you get up close and personal. Glossy black with white nape, the red brown eye just watching as if to say, "do you mind, I haven't finished yet". I usually say "G'day" to them.

Over the years I have been "dive-bombed" around three times, and sort of understand why, but it's not fair – the magpies are one of my favourite birds and certainly have character.

Wherever you travel around the country it's pretty certain that, however small the town, one of the local football teams will be called "Magpies", even in Gulargambone!! There are nowhere near as many sides called "Kookaburras".

On my morning walk, the Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were making their usual raucous screeches and squawks. Maybe that is why people walk around listening to music, talk or whatever, with earplugs on. Shame really, eyes straight ahead, they wouldn't see the Australian Magpie with its regal strut or hear its lovely chortling song. I'll bet they wouldn't hear that "fraction of a second" dive-bomber sound just before it flicks the top of the head from behind.

Ron Hyslop, Springwood.

Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

I've recently returned home after spending a couple of weeks in northern NSW. One morning as I was having breakfast in a caravan park on the mid-north coast, an unusual magpie caught my eye. We all know that Australian Magpies are black and white. This one was a pale fawn colour where the black normally is - as if it had been heavily bleached by the sun. A very striking bird.

It appeared healthy and, judging by the 2-tone white and black bill, was an adult bird. As one of the park residents threw it some scraps, she told me that it had been around since last year.

Immature magpies can be very grey, and appear especially pale after their first moult at a few months of age. But clearly this was something different - most likely a genetic abnormality such as leucism.

"Leucistic" is the term used for birds which lack the cells that make melanins or other pigments in some or all of their feathers. In other words, the plumage is at least partially white, or pale, where it would normally be dark. If the feathers appear washed out instead of white, it's sometimes termed "diluted" plumage (like the magpie). Both of these differ from albinos by having normal eyes, beak and leg colour. In contrast, albinism is the complete absence of pigmentation, resulting in white feathers, light bill and skin and pink eyes (the colour of the blood vessels showing through).

While true albinos are rare in the wild - most die soon after fledging as a result of poor eyesight - leucistic birds are seen from time to time. The first I ever saw was a white New Holland Honeyeater at Boronia Point, Mt Victoria in the mid 1980s. That bird had normal yellow wings and tail, and a faint smudge of grey on the head shadowing the usual black markings. Its mostly white plumage made it stand out like a beacon against the heathland shrubs. Obviously such a bird is more likely to be taken by predators. In addition, the lack of pigment can cause the feathers to weaken, eventually compromising heat retaining properties and flight ability, putting such birds at a distinct disadvantage for survival.

Years ago I was told about a leucistic Red Wattlebird at Blackheath - all white except for the normal yellow belly (and no doubt, red facial wattles). In the literature are reports of white kookaburras, fairy-wrens and white Blackbirds, among other species.

Seeing an albino or leucistic bird in the wild is thrilling but can be a test of identification skills. Its shape, behaviour and calls are the best clues. Also, what species is it associating with? The pale magpie at the caravan park seemed to have paired up with a normal adult male. No discrimination shown by him! If they breed, it would be interesting to find out what their offspring is like. Sometimes nature can be rich in unexpected ways.

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



Photo: Leucistic adult
Australian Magpie,
photo by Carol Proberts.

You can become a member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society

- **Post** this Application Form with your cheque or money order to: Blue Mountains Conservation Society, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls, NSW 2782, **OR**
- **Join online** at: www.bluemountains.org.au

(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 \$

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; Website and social media; Plant nursery assistance; Bushcare; Publicity/photography; Water quality/sourcing studies; Administration;

ENQUIRIES: Phone 02 4757 1872

Email: membership@bluemountains.org.au

Down the Wallaby Track: a backward glance, with John Low will be back again next month, and in future will be published bi-monthly.

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.

A BEQUEST

Please remember us in your Will.

The Law Society of NSW recommends the following wording: "I bequeath the sum of \$... to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc. for its general purposes and declare that the receipt of the treasurer for the time being of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society shall be complete discharge to my executors in respect of any sum paid to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society".

Report on first Extraordinary Council meeting on DLEP 2013 Carolyn Williams, Landuse Committee

Blue Mountains City Council met on 19 June to consider issues raised in submissions on Parts 1, 2, 3 and 7, all Schedules and the Dictionary of DLEP 2013 and Council planning staff's responses and recommendations.

BMCS Landuse Committee members attended the meeting and spoke in support of the environmental protection provisions in DLEP 2013, including a Schedule of Significant Vegetation. However, our requested amendments to this Schedule and the Dictionary were not accepted by Council. We also spoke in support of the proposed R6 Residential Character Conservation zone, though our request that the zone objectives be amended to include a provision to protect adjacent native bushland from invasive weeds was again not accepted, as were our recommendations on other provisions.

The Society's submission recommended that the definition of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) from LEP 2005 should be included in the new LEP. Draft LEP 2013 does not contain a definition of ESD and instead refers to the definition found in NSW state government Acts. At the Council meeting we reiterated our concern that, while this current definition of ESD in the Acts is acceptable (though not as comprehensive as the definition in our LEP 2005), the NSW government's proposed new planning regime replaces the definition of ESD in the current Acts with a highly watered down and meaningless definition of 'sustainable development'. This means that, should the state government ultimately succeed in getting its new planning regime into place, planning and development approval in the Blue Mountains (as in every local government area in the state) will be tied to this watered down definition of 'sustainable development'. But the Society's argument was not accepted and Councillors voted for the Council planning staff's recommendation to leave a definition of ESD out of the new LEP for the sake of state-wide consistency.

Another important item was 'exempt and complying' development (development which does not require any assessment and/or consent e.g. a garden shed). Our concern was that some environmentally sensitive areas — such as land zoned Environmental Conservation (E2), the 'protected areas' identified in the DLEP 2013 maps and significant vegetation communities — were not included in the list of areas excluded from 'exempt and complying' development. The Society's submission and speaker requested that these areas be added to the list. There is some legal uncertainty about this Clause in the DLEP and the Councillors voted for a deferral of this matter, as recommended by Council planning staff. This means that the legalities of the Society's request will be looked into further before a final determination is made.

Councillors voted unanimously in support of Council planning staff's recommendations and made it clear that they would not vote for any major changes to the exhibited DLEP 2013. The next Extraordinary Council meeting will consider the remaining provisions of DLEP 2013, and the meeting after that will consider site-specific issues. Landuse Committee members will be attending these meetings.

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc

'Like' us on Facebook:
Blue Mountains Conservation Society
Follow us on Twitter: bmcnsnw

JOIN Blue Mountains Conservation Society,
or renew your membership online.

www.bluemountains.org.au

JOIN BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is an incorporated voluntary group of about nine hundred members.

Our mission is to help conserve the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains and to increase awareness of the natural environment in general.

We are governed by a management committee which is responsible for the overall running of the organisation with the "nuts and bolts" of our work done by our sub-committees.

We always welcome new members, or people wanting to come along and find out more! Contact details for our President and other members of the management committee can be found on page 2.

You can find a membership application form on page 9, or you can join online at our website:

<http://www.bluemountains.org.au>

OUR HISTORY

The Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society (the original name of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society) was formed in 1961, when a group of concerned residents met to determine the action that they could take to help protect the Blue Mountains environment.

The Society rented a derelict tea room at the Valley of the Waters picnic area at Wentworth Falls. The building, privately erected in 1930, but then owned by the Blue Mountains City Council, was renovated by Society members. The restored building, subsequently known as the Conservation Hut, was officially re-opened by the Minister for Conservation on 28 July 1963.

The Society operated tea rooms at the Hut during school holidays and at weekends until the Hut was demolished in 1990. As well as being a venue for light refreshments, the old Hut was used as an information and education centre. Displays were presented on aspects of the Blue Mountains ecology and local conservation issues. The Hut took on a museum type atmosphere with its varied displays.

The Hut was the headquarters for the planning and execution of the environmental protection campaigns waged by the Society in the first three decades of its existence. Monthly public meetings were held in the Hut, where conservation matters were discussed, and members were addressed by a guest speaker.

Members grew native plants and had regular sales at the Hut. Funds raised by plant sales and from other activities at the old Hut were accumulated, with a view to buying environmentally sensitive land and returning it to public ownership. As a result of this activity, a 25 hectare landholding in the Kanangra Boyd National Park was acquired in 1995, and incorporated in the National Park. The society contributed \$40,000 toward the purchase of the land.

In the 1980s, the Hut and its surrounding land was transferred to National Parks and Wildlife Service. In 1990, the old Hut was demolished by NPWS. The replacement building, owned by NPWS, is leased to a private operator who runs a restaurant.

In the 1970s, the wider name of Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc. was adopted. The Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc. was formed in 1970 with similar aims.

In 1996 the two societies merged to become the present body, the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc. The Conservation Hut remains the Society's headquarters and the Black Cockatoos its logo.

An important goal of the enlarged Society (then comprising 500 members) was to obtain World Heritage status for the Greater Blue Mountains area of 1.03 million hectares, since it is an outstanding example of universal natural values, particularly its rugged scenery, biological diversity and vast expanses of wilderness. This status was achieved in 2000.

Find out more about Blue Mountains Conservation Society and our past and present campaigns at

<http://www.bluemountains.org.au>



The Conservation Hut in the 1960s, photo courtesy of Blue Mountains Historical Society.

The Conservation Hut today, photo taken by Alan Page.

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 or can be posted on request. For more information call Maurice Kerkham 4739 4942 email 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 contact the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Jim Percy—phone 4758 6009, email jp34@tpg.com.au Check 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 Saturday Walks page for details)

Jul 12 **Noble Canyon**-An interesting canyon with marvellous views into the Wolgan Valley at the end. Leader Harold. Meet at Wentworth Falls Stockade Carpark at 8.00am. 5Km Gr 3. Map Cullen Bullen.

July 19 **Victory Track and more** Leader Eddie 4784 2691 Meet at Faulconbridge Stn Carpark 8.30am 8Km Gr 3 Map Springwood

July 26 **Megalong Crossing To Coxs River Swing Bridge (Bowtells Bridge)** Leader Warren 4787 5403 Meet at Blackheath Stn Carpark 8.15am 14Km Gr 3 Map Hampton

July 26 **Gardens of Stone.** A short, slow walk, Gr. 3/4 exploratory. 4WDs necessary. Leader Hugh 0423309854 After 7.00pm. Bookings open 14 July

Aug 2 - **Govetts Leap to Medlow Bath Clifftop Walk to Evans Lookout, Grand Canyon to Old Pt Pilcher, Foy's Stagecoach Road to the Aerodrome then to finish at Medlow Bath-** Leader Chris 4784 2385-Meet at Blackheath Stn Carpark-8.15am-10Km Gr 3 Map Katoomba

Aug 9 **Gardens of Stone.** A short, slow walk, Gr. 3/4 exploratory. 4WDs necessary. Leader Hugh 0423309854 After 7.00pm Bookings open 28 July

Weekend Aug 8/9/10 -Bundanoon Adventure: Saturday Christmas Creek - 12 Km - Sunday Natai Incline 10Km Leader-Bart 4739 9947- Meet at Bundanoon Hotel-Friday evening-Map TBA. For more details Contact Bart 4739 9947 (Check with the leader first, then the BMCS website (www.bluemountains.org.au) for updates)

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 Keith Dorrian, 4736 1010, keithdor53@hotmail.com

Jul 14 **Christmas in July.** Grand View, Wentworth Falls. \$40 pp. Judith 4758 6310 or Maurice 4739 4942.

Jul 21 **Hen and Chicken Bay.** Interesting city walk. Train, bus, ferry. Meet top of escalators Central Station 9.30 am. Judith 4758 6310. Grade 2.

Jul 28 **Elizabeth Lookout to Lapstone Lookout.** Meet Glenbrook rail station, eastern car park 9.30am. Heather Hull 4739 1493. Grade 2.

Aug 4 **BUS TRIP \$12** Wolgan Valley - Old Coach Road then along the Pagoda Track which linked the railway formation with the Old Coach Road and return The walk begins at the Wolgan River causeway so it is necessary to walk through the water, suggest bringing a small towel. Distance: 8kms Ascent: 180m. Bring Torch for glow worm tunnel Map: Ben Bullen. Book and pay Tony 9625 3985. Leader Chris Smith 4784 2385. Grade 3.

Aug 11 **Red Ledge, Narrow Neck, Katoomba.** Meet Katoomba rail station (north side) 8.30 am. Car pool fare \$5. Mary Read 4739 0786. 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

July 10 **Redgum Park Bullaburra.** Take lunch. Meet Bullaburra Station south side 9.30am. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 2

July 17 **Stonehaven Pass Wentworth Falls.** A new walk recently renovated by Jim Smith and friends. Car pool. Take lunch. Meet Wentworth Falls Stockyard Car Park 10.30am. Leader Phil 4787 5560. Grade 2

July 24 **Christmas in July Alexandra Hotel Leura \$45 for three course meal.** Book and pay Beverley 4757 2076 Meet at the hotel at 12.30pm

July 31 **Berghoffer's Pass Mount Victoria.** Constructed between 1907-1912 as an easier grade than Victoria Pass. Car pool. BBQ lunch at Doreen's. Bring some meat and a plate to share. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Doreen 6355 2371. Grade 2

Aug 7 **Asgard Swamp to Thor Headland Mount Victoria.** Take lunch. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Grade 2/3

Aug 14 **Watsons Bay to South Head and Gap.** Buy fish and chips at Watsons Bay for lunch. Meet top of escalators Central Station 9.30am. Leader Chris 4721 4309. Grade 1

VALLEY OF THE WATERS 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 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) or

write to BMCS, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782 with your cheque or money order.