

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



Guest speaker 30 August Friday
 Eugene Stockton 4759.1818
 Past environments of the Blue Mountains as a living habitat of the Aboriginal people.

Swamp Dance

Don't miss the swamp dance on Saturday 17 August, 6.30 to 9.30 pm at the Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson. There are more details below.

It's great way to help raise awareness of the importance of our Blue Mountains swamps, perhaps raise a little money to help the campaign to protect them, and at the same time HAVE FUN.

If you would like to help out on the night, phone Jenny Hill, 4782.1303.

Bushfire Policy Workshop

Last summer's bushfires set us all thinking, and drew our attention to the need for the Society to have a policy covering all aspects from prevention to rehabilitation of all of us—people, wildlife, bush, property, and so on.

The sub-committee that was formed has discussed, reviewed, written and

rewritten ideas for this policy, and we're now ready to put it to the members of the Society at a Policy Workshop.

The workshop will be held at Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson, on Saturday 10 August, 2pm to 5 pm. If you would like to know more details about what we'll be discussing, please contact Ann Fox (phone 4758.6096 or email foxy@zip.com.au).

Environmental Conference

BMCS is one of the conference sponsors at the Sydney Environmental Education Network's Annual Conference to be held at Katoomba, Friday 11 to Sunday 13 October.

If you are interested in coming to the conference and can volunteer some of your time please keep the dates free and contact Jenny Hill 4782.1303.

Volunteers will be given free admission and asked to help in a variety of ways — field trips, greeting people as they arrive, helping with morning and afternoon teas, etc.

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Help to keep the conservation wheels oiled

All Blue Mountains Conservation Society workers are volunteers, and there is always work for more helpers. Our secretary needs some help.

If you would like to use your office skills or develop new ones, we are looking for volunteers willing to do minutes, filing, photocopying, and other clerical work for the Society. It's a great opportunity to work with like-minded people to help with the important work the Society is involved in.

If you can spare some time, contact Joy McDonald 4757.2725.

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Swamp Dance

BUSH DANCE with the GANG GANGS

Saturday, 17 August
 6.30pm, to 9.30pm.

Mid Mountains Community Centre
 Lawson

Adults \$7 Children Free

★ Swamp Displays prepared by Blue Mountains Conservation Society

★ Door Prizes

★ Floor Prizes

★ Food and Drink Available

(Any money raised goes to protecting our Blue Mountains swamps.)

Enquiries Jenny Hill 4782.1303

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

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Who are the Greenies?

You may have missed the drama unfolding in the pages of the Blue Mountains Gazette.

On Page 2 of the 10 July 2002 issue, "Mountain Murmurs" has a story about slabs cut from a River Red Gum killed in a bushfire. The story starts "The greenies can breathe easy..." They must be a worrying lot.

In a letter to the editor on Page 6, the author gives a few people a rub. They like trees. (They must be "greenies"). They are referred to as "garden fairies", possibly could "live in a tree", and need to "get a life" or a "real job". (And I thought these people were OK!)

But wait On Page 21 there is a story "Greens Double Membership". It mentions the terrific growth in the organization and membership of the Greens around Australia. There's more of them!

Then on Page 27, there's an advertisement for green power, "Turn Green with Confidence". Here's a Government agency, the Sustainable Development Authority, trying to encourage even more people to become "greenies".

No wonder our former councillor Dick Harris is worried. In his latest tirade against the draft Vegetation

Management Order on Page 23 (as usual on this subject Dick doesn't let the facts spoil a good story), there's a classic quote, worthy of a nomination for the SSS Award (the Silliest Saying of the Season). Wait for it! "... *Gardeners, we must stop this madness. If the greenies get away with this one, who knows what's next?...*"

Well, what can I add. The "greenies" are organizing! War in the Blue Mountains! Battle of the Composters! Arm your garden gnomes! —*Christine Davies.*

Welcome to New Members

Phillipa Stott, Warrimoo

Charles Grech, Earlwood

John and Di Ayers, Leura

Phil and Jan Foster, Blackheath

Ineka Smith, Springwood

Nick and Anne Henderson, Valley Hts.

Gillian Bartley, Wentworth Falls

Ben Graham, Hazelbrook

Jackie Janosi, Katoomba

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Congratulations to BMCC

In response to concerns raised by many members, the Society wrote to Blue Mountains City Council in May to protest about the excessive clearing of vegetation on road edges under their new verge mowing regime. Our concerns were that clearing of vegetation, in some cases back to bare earth, would cause erosion and increase runoff velocities. We pointed out that creek-bank erosion and sedimentation of creek-lines `d o w n s l o p e` was a major issue which many of Council's environmental management programs are seeking to minimise. We urged them to review their work methods to avoid these unwanted outcomes.

The Society has received a reply from Council which acknowledges that the verge mowing scheme, while still at a trial stage, has highlighted the necessity for a locally developed Environmental Code of Practice for maintenance workers, which will outline procedures for roadworks to be conducted in a manner that will minimise impacts on roadside vegetation.

We congratulate Council on its responsive and flexible approach to this issue. It increases our confidence in the environmental risk and improved environmental performance review which their May newsletter tells us is being applied to all Council activities. Our reply will also request the involvement of community conservation organisations such as our own in the development of such Codes of Practice.

Imagine what great things could be achieved if such a model of shared knowledge could be adopted!

Membership Enquiries

Contact Elizabeth van Reyswoud
Phone 4757.2694

Email: ereyswoud@hermes.net.au
Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

Blue Mountains Swamp Dwellers

Bush Rat, *Rattus fuscipes*.

Swamp Rat, *Rattus lutreolus*.

Over several years Jim Smith conducted fauna studies at Wentworth Falls with TAFE students. This included setting Elliott traps at various locations in the hanging swamps which line Jamison Creek.

Four mammal species were commonly trapped, studied, and then released where they had been trapped — *Antechinus stuartii*, *Antechinus swainsonii*, *Rattus fuscipes*, *Rattus lutreolus*.

Jim commented on the extraordinary density and abundance of these small mammals in Blue Mountains hanging swamps — a 90% trap success rate at Jamison Creek also reported in other hanging swamps in the Blue Mountains — the highest recorded trap success rate. This indicates an extremely rich food supply in Blue Mountains hanging swamps, possibly the richest habitat for small mammals.

There will be more about the *Antechinus* species next month. This month we will feature the two native rats, the Bush Rat and Swamp Rat.

Our native rats are shy creatures and avoid humans. Their introduced cousin *Rattus Rattus* who have given rats such a bad name can be readily identified by the length of its tail. The native rats have tails shorter than the body, while *Rattus Rattus* has a tail which is longer than its body.

Bush Rat, *Rattus fuscipes*. Grey-brown in colour. Head and body: 170mm. Tail: 160mm.

The Bush Rat is common throughout the Blue Mountains. It occurs in a variety of vegetation types, favouring areas of friable soil with a dense undergrowth of shrubs or ferns. It shelters during the day in a burrow

beneath the undergrowth or in a hollow log. Females stay within a limited home range but males tend to roam more widely. They live for one or two years and, breeding in all but the coldest months, populations can build up rapidly. The nest chamber at the end of the burrow is lined with leaves.

The Bush Rat feeds on vegetable matter, fungi, insects and occasionally small vertebrates. Of all the native rats, the Bush Rat is the most insectivorous, but it has such a varied diet that it can survive through a period of acute food shortage following a bushfire by eating the fungi that rapidly emerge.

Swamp Rat, *Rattus lutreolus*.

Similar in appearance to the Bush Rat but darker and stockier. The dark feet are the best characteristic for identification. Head and body: 160mm. Tail: 110mm.

The Swamp Rat is found in swamps and other moist sites with a dense layer of grasses and sedges. It builds an extensive network of runways through the dense swamp vegetation by biting away and eating the obstructing plants. It usually constructs nests in burrows up to 1 metre deep but, where the ground is waterlogged, it makes nests above ground in tussock grass.

Tending to be more active in the daytime than the Bush Rat, the Swamp Rat feeds on grass and sedge stems, other vegetable matter, and insects. Like the Bush Rat, females are sedentary while males roam more widely. Dependence upon dense cover makes it vulnerable to clearing, grazing and fire — up to five years of regrowth after such disturbance is required before the habitat can again support a breeding population.

(References: "Fauna of the Blue Mountains", Judy and Peter Smith; Australian Museum's "The Mammals of Australia")

Don's Peak

It's All Territorial Behaviour

Don Morison.

The Quiet One

Modest grey bird, the quiet one, sitting inside the bushes, silently, avoiding, or avoided by, his own kind, ostracized youngster, seeking small companions - thornbills, scrub wrens, fantails, robins, red and yellow. In winter, find a mixed flock feeding; midst all the chirpings and the flutterings, the hoppings and the dartings here and there, goes the grey quiet one, unobtrusively. Does he know in springtime he will blaze like wattle? Shining, yellow-gold bright singer, Golden Whistler.

Graham Alcorn
"The Bird Baths of Umbigumbi."

The Six Foot Track

We have four or so starters already for a three-day walk along the Six Foot Track in September or October 2002. Phone Bill on 4758.8545 and we can decide dates as a group. At the moment the thought is to start at Jenolan and walk Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

Crossing the Blue Mountains of NSW

Jim Percy's walk along the historic trail continued with a discovery at the outset for some of us. A little way along the Transit of Venus track we crossed a small bridge donated by our very own Conservation Society in 1991.

This led us to a former swimming hole, established on one of the small creeks by the Fairfax Family of Woodford Academy history, now in disrepair after many years of no use.

On down the waterfall track, lunch on the grass at Hazelbrook and further to Empire Pass, finishing at Dante's Glen.

Day 3, coming up on 3 August, has had a lot of interest because of the "Bruce's Walk" factor and this carries through to the 4th walk in September with points of interest including Katoomba Creek, Minne Ha Ha Falls and on to Point Pilcher, the Grand Canyon and Nellie's Glen.

Because of the "off the track bushwalking" in part, covered arms, legs and a pair of gloves may be advisable, as is extra water.

Very Easy Walks on Thursday

Our very easy walks are gaining popularity. They are two hour walks, and are now followed by a barbeque lunch for those so inclined. The program is in "Dates for your Diary."

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Aug 10 (Sat) Bushfire Policy Workshop. (See page 1.)

Aug 17 (Sat) Swamp Dance. (See page 1.)

Aug 24 (Sat) Management Meeting, 9am, Mid Mtns Community Centre, Lawson.

Aug 30 (Fri) General Meeting at The Hut, 7.30 pm. (See page 1.)

QUOLL CLUB (Activities for 12 and under - contact Jessica 4788.1200).

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

Aug 10 (Sat) Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group. (9 am, 2nd Saturday of every month) Tools provided. Bring morning tea, gloves and drinking water. Contact Karen on 4757.1929 for the meeting place.

BUSHWALKS:

Monday Leisure Walks: *Usually half day walk unless noted, leisurely pace.*

Aug 05 Turpentine Walk to Murphy's Glen. Meet Woodford Station 9am. ☎ Jock 4758.6346. BBQ after.

Aug 12 Bus Trip to Taronga Zoo. Book with Kees 4759.1958. Departing 8.30 from Katoomba Council depot.

Aug 19 Leura Forest to Scenic Railway. Meet carpark, cnr Leura Mall and GWH 9am. ☎ Kees 4759.1958. BBQ after at Katoomba.

Aug 26 Lapstone Historic Zig-Zag Circuit. Meet Glenbrook Station carpark 9am. ☎ Allan 4739.2767. Café lunch at Glenbrook.

Sept 02 Wonderland Track. Meet Medlow Bath Station 9am. ☎ Jock 4758.6346. Lunch at café.

Sept 09 Prince Henry Walk, Leura to Katoomba. Meet carpark cnr Leura Mall and GWH 9am. ☎ Norm 4784.1554. BBQ at Katoomba.

Very Easy Walks on Thursdays. These walks are conducted at a slow pace to suit the walkers on the day and are usually 2 hours starting at 10am. Lunch follows for those so inclined. Contact Bill 4759.1692 for any enquiries about the program.

Aug 08 Cox's River. Meet carpool at Blackheath Station carpark (over railway crossing) or arrange pickup with Bill 4759.1692.

Aug 15 Rhubarbs Falls. Meet St Georges Terrace, Faulconbridge, near GWH.

Aug 22 Echo Bluff, Lawson. Meet Lawson Pharmacy, Honour Avenue. Bring lunch/BBQ.

Aug 29 Aeroplane Hills. Meet Wentworth Falls Station. Bring lunch/BBQ.

Sept 05 Woodford History Walk. Meet Bull's Camp 10am or Woodford Station 9.45am. Bring lunch/BBQ.

Sept 12 Walls Lookdown. Meet Mt Victoria Station. Lunch/BBQ at Mt Vic Park.

Weekend Bushwalks: *Bushwalkers are requested to phone the contact before 8 pm the day before the walk. The walk may be cancelled if fewer than 4 walkers register, or if other circumstances make conditions unsafe.*

Aug 03 (Sat) Crossing the Blue Mountains of NSW: Lawson to Wentworth Falls (Includes Bruce's Walk). Meet Lawson Railway Station, north side, 9.08am. ☎ Jim 4758.6009. A long day walk, hard in parts. Bring lunch and extra water.

Aug 11 (Sun) Dante's Glen, Empire Pass. Meet Lawson rail carpark, north side of station, 9.42am. ☎ Bill 4758.8545. Medium. Bring lunch.

Aug 17 (Sat) Gooch's Crater. Meet Mt Victoria Station 9.50am. ☎ Bill 4758.8545. Medium. Car pool. Bring lunch.

Aug 24 (Sat) Long Swamp, Lawson. Meet Lawson Rail carpark, north side of station, 9.42 am. ☎ Liz 4754.4966. Medium. Bring lunch.

Aug 31 (Sat) Darwin's Walk, Undercliff Nature Trail. Wentworth Falls Bowling Club, cnr. Falls Road and GWH, 9.40am. ☎ Kees 4759.1958. Medium/hard. Some climbing. Bring lunch.

Sept 07 (Sat) Crossing the Blue Mountains of NSW: Wentworth Falls to Blackheath, "Bruce's Walk". Meet Wentworth Falls Rail carpark 9.17am. ☎ Jim 4758.6009. A long day walk, hard with rough bush in part. Cover up, with gloves. Bring lunch and extra water.

Sept 14 (Sat) Cox's Cave, Mount Piddington. Meet Mt Victoria Station 9.50am. ☎ Mary/Terry 4787.6918. Medium. Bring lunch.

Walks are generally Easy to Medium Grade, unless otherwise noted. **Easy:** Mostly good surfaces, but some rough or steep sections. Suited to people of average fitness. **Medium:** Includes rough or steep sections, some of which may require clambering over natural obstacles. Suited to people of better than average fitness, but discuss with the contact if in doubt. **Hard:** We occasionally arrange a walk considered most suited to experienced and very fit walkers but it is conducted at a moderate pace. Always discuss with the contact if the walk you would like to do is Medium/hard or Hard, before attending. **If this is your first walk,** or in doubt, discuss with the contact or Bushwalks Convener Bill Toccher 4758.8545.

No, it is ok. But it would be good to get more people to letterbox drop. I have a new one from Warrimoo who is starting this month, but my Blackheath one will finish up in a few months. I think Joy was going to ask you to put in a bit asking for help with tidying up the storeroom and archiving some of the stuff in the office,- has she done so ?.Please contact her if she hasn't. Maybe that will be enough this month.

Office helpers needed

'Help to keep the conservation wheels oiled'

If you would like to use your office skills or develop new ones, we are looking for volunteers willing to do minutes, filing, photocopying, and clerical work for the Society. It's a great opportunity to work with like-minded people to help with the important work the Society is involved in. If you can spare some time, contact Joy McDonald 4757 2725. All BMCS workers are volunteers.

The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD: I am suggesting quite simply that the utopian approach of "every species has a right to survive" is a serious impediment to modernisation and to cultivation, most particularly of the land, and in that sense the ability of the world as a unit to even feed people. One of the most threatened species in this country is farmers. To suggest that we should just get out of the way for some toad-redheaded or whatever it might be-or some plants, is, as far as I am concerned, just completely illogical and unsustainable.
One Nation, Threatened Species Conservation Amendment Bill 19/06/02.

There really is some stiff competition for the dumbest thing said at parliament last week...

The Hon. Malcolm Jones: "Commissioner, has the Rural Fire Service considered commissioning what the Americans referred to as terror torches, which enable hazard reduction burns throughout the year as they can set fire to and ignite moisture-laden undergrowth?"

Mr Koperburg: "We really try to avoid the use of Nepalms wherever we can! There is quite a strong community reaction against that!..."