

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Bushfire Community Education Presentation

With the bushfire season almost upon us, it is timely that the next general meeting will include a presentation from Neil Jacobs, RFS Deputy Fire Control Officer – Community Safety. Neil will provide practical information about preparing your property and planning for the possible incidence of bushfire.

A representative from NSW Fire Brigade will then give a brief overview of Community Fire Units (CFU's). This overview will explain how CFU's can assist residents during a bushfire and why they have been established in certain areas of the Mountains.

If time allows, Hugh Paterson will provide landscaping and planting ideas, as a means of reducing the risk of bushfire to your home.

One of the RFS Community Education Trailers and a CFU will be available for inspection outside the Conservation Hut during the supper break. The presentation will allow time for questions and brief discussion.

The meeting will be held at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, on Friday 29 August. Visitors are welcome.

Balancing Bushfire Protection and Conservation

In a submission to the Inquiry into the recent Australian Bushfires, Blue Mountains City Council gave the following information on the history of bush fires in the Blue Mountains:

"The Blue Mountains has had an ongoing fire history which has impacted on the residents of the Blue Mountains since settlement. The Bush Fire Risk Management Plan highlights the following:

Between 2 and 40 wildfires have been recorded per year, with an average of around 14 wildfires per year. Around 88% of these fires have been less than 1,000 ha in size with 72% of fires less than 100 ha. About 9% of wildfires have been between 1,000 and 10,000 ha in size with 3% over 10,000 ha. Most large scale fires have occurred in November and December.

Since the 1900's, sections of the City of Blue Mountains have suffered severe fires in the seasons 1915/16, 1926/27, 1936/37, 1944/45, 1951/52, 1957/58, 1968/69, 1977/78, 1979/80, 1982/83, 1993/94 ...

... Since 1911, 580 houses have been destroyed by fire. On four occasions since 1951 a single fire has destroyed more than 50 properties – mainly houses, but including churches, a school and

several shops. Damage to urban areas has occurred on 19 blow-up days within 11 major fire seasons. Most properties destroyed were in vulnerable localities adjacent to northwest-oriented valleys. Fourteen deaths have occurred as a result of wildfires since 1945. (Blue Mountains Bushfire Management Committee, Bushfire Risk Management Plan p10 para 2.2.1)

Since the inception of this Plan, severe fire seasons have occurred in 2001, 2002 and 2003, predominantly as a result of the most severe drought in local history...."

After the fires of 2001/2002, Blue Mountains Conservation Society formed a subcommittee to investigate how land-owners and residents of the mountains can best prepare for future fires and at the same time maintain the natural environment to the greatest extent. The subcommittee made a submission on behalf of the Society to the Inquiry into the recent Australian Bushfires and addressed a public hearing in Katoomba.

The Society recognises the hardship that the bushfires have caused people and the difficulties faced by building in bushfire prone areas. One solution is restrictions on subdivisions and building approvals in areas which are at high risk of bushfire and a State or Federal Government buyback scheme for people who are unable to build on land they have bought. For homes which have already been built the Council or Government could give financial incentives for the installation of shutters, metal screens, water tanks and sprinkler systems. Further development along ridge lines away from the main centres should be prevented.

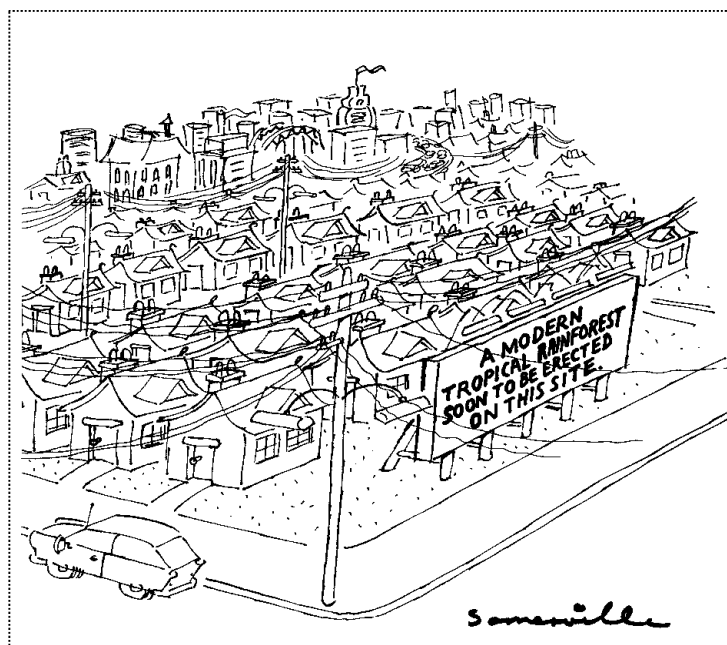
We also call for urgent moves by Federal and State Governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions which are contributing to global warming. Global warming can cause bushfires in several ways: the hot weather makes fire more likely, drought conditions cause stronger, larger fires and the increase in storms causes more lightning strikes to trigger bushfires. Storms are increased by global warming because of increased thermal

energy, like a saucepan of water will bubble when it is boiling.

At the public meeting Hugh Paterson, our bushfire representative, said "The three things that are most helpful in preventing damage from bushfires are good building standards, community education and asset protection zones. Asset protection zones are the areas around a house which provide space for embers to be put out before houses catch fire.

"Ember showers were the main cause of houses burning down in the recent Canberra bushfires. Past experience locally has been similar. Although firefighters do their best to put out the main fire front, a house can burn down up to five hours after the main fire front has passed. Many houses are saved by residents staying to put out embers. Mowing lawns, raking leaves, and removing some vegetation helps to lessen the bushfire risk in asset protection zones. The Rural Fires Act allows for people to apply to council to remove shrubs and some trees for hazard reduction maintenance around the house. Not all trees need to be removed from an asset protection zone. In fact some trees can slow wind and catch burning embers.

"Prepared and knowledgeable residents, houses with bushfire safety features, adequate asset protection zones and some planned burning within a kilometre of our villages will provide enough protection from bushfire risk for us to continue to live surrounded by a world heritage national park."



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Draft DCP35:

Community Consultation for Land Use Management

In our article "Bulldozers or Bush?" in June *Hut News* we pointed out what we thought were deficiencies in Draft Development Control Plan 35.

Council has assured us that the proposed amendments in the draft Plan do not in any way reduce or remove any of the current provisions to notify the community about Development Applications. While there are no statutory notification requirements for most development proposals in the Blue Mountains, Council chooses to notify the vast majority of development applications well beyond its statutory responsibilities in order to obtain the views of those property owners who may be affected by a proposed development.

The Society was hoping that this review of the DCP may be an opportunity to improve community consultation further. Council does advertise all applications currently on public exhibition on its website. However, a sign posted in front of all proposed development properties, as is done in many Council areas, would more readily inform community groups and all other interested parties.

Council has assured us it was not their intention to remove the rights of people to inspect and take copies of applications and supporting documents under Section 12 the Local Government Act, 1993. However, it is acknowledged that the wording of the draft DCP 35 is misleading and requires review. We are very pleased to hear that Council will make it known that residents can inspect all documents associated with a Development Application and can take copies (for a reasonable charge).

Firewood from Plantations

Would you or somebody you know be interested in buying plantation firewood if there is a ready supply in the Mountains?

Many people prefer their wood fire or find it is too expensive to change over to other sources of heating. People in rental accommodation cannot easily change. Visitors to the Mountains love the ambiance of a wood fire. We need firewood, but it can be grown in plantations.

Member Helen Gillam has contacted a number of Blue Mountains firewood suppliers to find out if any of them are sourcing their wood from plantations and if they are interested in doing so if there is enough interest from residents to make it viable.

At our June general meeting, the topic was Firewood Collection in the Western Woodlands. During the talk there were frequent interruptions from a lady representing one of the local firewood suppliers who believed that their livelihood was being threatened.

It is difficult to balance jobs and economics against the environment when the environment is not valued. The continuation of logging and firewood collection in the western woodlands will mean their eventual demise and an end to logging and firewood collection in the area – at enormous cost to the natural environment, including extinction of native animals. We don't have to wait that long.

The exploitation of whales in the form of whaling could only have continued until the whales were gone. Several species were in imminent danger of extinction. When whaling was stopped the whalers and people in subsidiary industries lost their jobs. Alternatives have been found for whale products and the presence of whales creates economic and job opportunities in tourism.

We need to demonstrate that enough people will buy firewood sourced from plantations so that it will be viable for a local supplier to provide it. Contact the

Society by leaving a message on 4757.1872, email bmcs@bluemountains.org.au or write to PO Box 29 Wentworth Falls 2782. For further information phone Helen Gillam on 0416 035 549.

Winter Wattles

Late July in Blackheath. Despite the winter cold and black snow clouds hovering over the Great Dividing Range the surrounding bushland is spectacular with a massed display of golden wattles. The Sunshine Wattle (*Acacia terminalis*) began to bloom in late May and is only now beginning to fade, just as the Sydney Golden Wattle (*A. longifolia*) comes into full flower.

ABC's Science website (www.abc.net.au/science) has a section entitled Scribbly Gum which tracks the passing seasons. In July Abbie Thomas investigated why some wattles bloom in winter. Below is a brief summary.

Up to a third of Australia's 960 species of wattle will flower in winter, even though there are fewer insects in the winter months. This is overcome by the wattles being opportunistic pollinators. Unlike many other plants, most wattles do not rely on a specific type of insect or bird for pollination. Pollinators are attracted to the pollen which is a rich source of protein. Some insects feed on the flowers; other insects prey on these insects; birds forage for the insects. All of these creatures carry pollen from one plant to another and become inadvertent pollinators. Early flowering leads to seeds maturing earlier. The young germinating plants have less competition from other seedlings and also benefit from any moisture remaining in the ground from the cooler weather.

Wattles are often blamed for triggering hay-fever, but it seems they may have been unfairly maligned: "A Canberra study found that pollen density from wattles ranges from three grains per cubic metre of air in July up to 17 in October. By contrast, pollen from grass can reach densities of up to 200 grains per cubic metre. Exotic trees such as elm, ash and oak also produce much larger amounts of pollen than wattle.

"Few people tested directly with pollen grains from wattles have a significant reaction. The grains are much larger than grass grains and tend to fall straight to the ground below the tree, rather than blow around in the wind and get up people's noses. The strong scent of some wattles, however, can create an illusion of an allergic reaction in some people sensitive to perfumes." (extract from "Winter Wattles" on <http://www.abc.net.au/science/scribblygum/july2003/default.htm>)

Threatened Species Day

National Threatened Species Day is held each year on 7 September. The date commemorates the death of the last Tasmanian Tiger in captivity in 1936 in Hobart. This year, to celebrate international Year of Freshwater, National Threatened Species Day will focus on species in freshwater habitats. Visit www.wwf.org.au/tsn and click on National Threatened Species Day.

Bernard O'Reilly Centenary

Bernard O'Reilly was born in a cabin at Long Swamp Creek in the Kanimbla Valley to the pioneer couple Peter and Jane (nee McAviney) on 3 September 1903. In the books 'Green Mountain', 'Cullenbenbong' and 'Over the Hills' Bernard describes family life in the Kanimbla Valley and later on the Lamington Plateau in Queensland where the family established O'Reilly's Guest House.

On Sunday 7 September, to celebrate the centenary of Bernard O'Reilly's birth, Jim Smith will host an event in the Kanimbla Valley. We will visit the slab cabin beside Long Swamp Creek which was the O'Reilly family home, walk along 'The Magic Road' (an easy walk across paddocks and along Long Swamp Creek which was Bernard's 'road to adventure and knowledge ... the way to school') and have a picnic lunch beside the ruins of the little schoolhouse.

Bring drinking water and a picnic lunch. Meet at Mount Victoria Station at 8.30 am to pool cars, or at the Kanimbla Valley Hall at 9.30 am. (You'll find it on the Hampton 8930-IV-S 1:25000 map, map reference KH362688, near the tennis court marked above Sandy Hook). Enquiries to Christine 4787.7246.

Bernard O'Reilly was a keen observer of nature. Below is an extract from 'Green Mountain' by Bernard O'Reilly.

"... The green twilight of the timber had deepened into blackness by the time water was found, and then from the moss banks and damp hillsides around the water there shone out thousands of points of green light, which were glow-worms and luminous fungi.

If you have ever looked down on Sydney at night from Lapstone Hill, or on Brisbane from Mount Coot-tha, and could you imagine these lights turned to pale-green, then you will have some idea of the illuminations of the fairy city which flanked my camp on the first night of the Stinson search.

"The little glow-worms are worthy of mention. They shine their green headlights on a sticky web so that tiny insects, attracted by the light, are easily trapped. There are many forms of luminous fungi. The largest is a fan-shaped variety, which grows tier upon tier on rotting tree trunks like a phosphorescent staircase. A newspaper can easily be read by their light. Then we have a

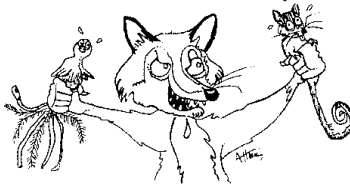
Black Cockatoos

Each certain kind of weather or of light has its own creatures. Somewhere else they wait as though they but inhabited heat or cold, twilight or dawn, and knew no other state. Then at their time they come, timid or bold.

So when the long drought-winds, sandpaper-harsh, were still, and the air changed, and the clouds came,

and other birds were quiet in prayer or fear, these knew their hour. Before the first far flash lit up, or the first thunder spoke its name, in heavy flight they came, till I could hear the wild black cockatoos, tossed on the crest of their high trees, crying the world's unrest.

Judith Wright
Collected Poems 1942-1970



Foxy Business

Our May workshop on Urban Fox Control was led by Chris Banffy from NPWS assisted by Andrew Dillion of the Central Tablelands Rural Lands Protection Board and Frank Garafallow and Soren Mortensen of BMCC.

The impact of these foreign interlopers on wildlife is well documented but methods for their control in urban environments are more difficult to establish. Restrictions on how far 1080 bait can be laid from dwellings limits its use, shooting would be regarded as unacceptably dangerous and trapping is largely ineffectual. Chris emphasised that the most useful measure is to limit access of foxes to food sources and suggested ways in which the community can help:

- If you feed your cat or dog outside ensure that no food remains when they are finished. Foxes will regularly do the rounds of houses where they know food is available.
- Don't put meat scraps in your compost and preferably use a closed bin.
- Don't add more rubbish with food scraps to a nearly full Council street bin. You may be wary of walking around the central business district of our villages and towns late at night but foxes are not.
- Under **no** circumstances consider them pets and deliberately feed them. Yes, they are appealing looking animals but they are killers of our much more appealing native creatures.
- Report any sightings of fox dens to Council or the Parks Service. Young are gassed painlessly with carbon dioxide.

Our state member, Bob Debus, has pledged \$30 000 in the next financial year to establish a program for urban fox control and Chris indicated that this money will be utilised to employ an experienced person to develop a protocol specifically for the Blue Mountains. This will be based on a successful program used over several Council boundaries in the Northern Beaches area of Sydney.

Fears that driving foxes out of the urban area into the adjacent National Park will have even more impact on wildlife are unfounded as the food sources are much less accessible and the fox numbers will diminish quickly. Let's all help! *Kevin Bell.*

tiny toadstool kind, its little umbrella, smaller than a threepenny piece, and showing quite a brilliant green light.

There is also a luminous thread fungus, which eats its way through fallen logs, leaves and twigs on the ground, and gives patches of brilliance like scattered nebulae from the Milky Way. At the height of the rainy season, the whole jungle floor may be lit with this irregular light. On thundery summer nights myriads of twinkling fireflies add a final touch to this fairyland...."

Capertee Valley Tree Planting

Volunteers needed: 16-17 August

It's that time of year again when volunteers are needed in the beautiful Capertee Valley to restore habitat for the endangered Regent Honeyeater and other declining woodland species. During the weekend of 16-17 August another 3000 trees and shrubs will be planted with the aid of a Threatened Species Network grant. This will bring the total number planted by volunteers in the valley since 1994 to over 50,000!

The August planting sites are on two properties along the Capertee-Glen Davis road, one of them immediately adjacent to an area where Regent Honeyeaters spent a lot of time foraging last summer. New recruits are most welcome and on the spot training is provided. Extra help is also needed to lay out plants on Friday 15 August and for follow-up maintenance on 20-21 September.

Accommodation ranges from free camping at Glen Davis to staying in a cottage for around \$25 per night. The Saturday night

dinner provided by the Glen Alice P & C is always a great social event, but you need to book. You cater for other meals.

To register, contact National Regent Honeyeater Recovery Coordinator, David Geering (freecall) 1800 521 056, email david.geering@npws.nsw.gov.au.

Newnes Junction Sand Mine

A huge sand mine is proposed to be established by Newnes Kaolin P/L at Newnes Junction. An Environmental Impact Statement for the proposal will go on display at Lithgow Council and Lithgow Library in August.

The mine will extract kaolin and up to 1.4 million tonnes of sand. It is on Crown land sharing its north-eastern boundary with the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Large-scale sand mining in such a sensitive area adjoining National Park threatens wilderness values and also the Colo and Wollangambe Rivers. The Colong Foundation has campaigned for the area to be included in the National Park.

The mining proposal is of State significance as the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning will decide (not Lithgow Council). This will be the State Government's first real test on threats to the much vaunted World Heritage listing.

For further information contact Margaret Simons (Newnes Junction Action Group) 6355 2789, Email MargaretSimons@msn.com.au

Membership Enquiries

Contact Elizabeth van Reyswoud
Phone 4757.2694

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

Granite Forests, Rainforests and World Heritage

Glen Innes: 22-26/27 September 2003

See ecological diversity, spring wildflowers, fire regeneration and how NSW's other largest World Heritage Area is managed.

Mon 22 Sep: Arrive Glen Innes

Tue 23 Sep: *Washpool NP (8km circuit walk: sclerophyll, rainforest, waterfalls)

Wed 23 Sep: *Gibraltar Range NP (2 half-day walks: granite geology, wildflowers)

Thur 25 Sep: Kings Plains NP (Riparian environment)

Fri 26 Sept (optional): Drive Glen Innes to Armidale—photo stops at Dalmorton Road tunnel, Chaelundi State Forest, Ebor Falls, Wollomumbi Falls, 1½ hr walk at Point Lookout, *New England NP.

Sat 27 Sept: Drive Armidale to home (optional stop at Burning Mountain walk).

Accommodation in ensuite cabins with single or double berths, Craigieburn Tourist Park, Glen Innes township—full kitchen, microwaves, barbecues. Cost maximum \$29 per night (probably less, depending on number of people booked). Accommodation in Armidale (26 Sept) will be discussed after arrival at Glen Innes. Car pool can be arranged.

How to book: Send your name, telephone number, postal address, email address plus any special requirements with \$40 deposit (Australia Post money order preferred) to Don Morison, PO Box 170, Katoomba 2780 by 13 August.

*denotes World Heritage NP.

Coach Trip to the Grampians

The Springwood Fitness Walkers would like to invite members of the Conservation Society to join them on a holiday to the Grampians in Victoria.

Day 1: Depart Springwood by coach on Mon 13 Oct, one night in Albury. Day 2 to 5 (14,15,16,17 Oct) Halls Gap—day walks. Day 6: Depart Halls Gap, overnight in West Wyalong. Day 7: Return to Springwood.

Accommodation: Twin share in motel accommodation. Breakfast and dinner included. Packed lunches for walk days. Cost, all included, \$700.00. Bookings/deposit \$50.00 to Jan Thorpe 9634 7509 asap OR contact Marie Standen 4751.2120.

Welcome to New Members

Peter & Bev McNeill, Leura
Dallas & Lauren Curry, Faulconbridge
Elizabeth Connor, Katoomba
Catherine & Lew Hird, Wentworth Falls
Graham & Margaret Coleman, Valley Hts
Joan Hannan, Clovelly
Rosalind King, Penrith
Brian Shearer, Springwood
Peter Wright, Blaxland
Bronwyn Pepper, Katoomba
Liz Riley & Neale Towart, Blackheath.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Aug 23 (Sat) Management Meeting, 9am, Mid Mtns Community Centre, Lawson.

Aug 29 (Fri) General Meeting at the Conservation Hut, 7.30 pm. See Page 1.

Sept 07 (Sun) Bernard O'Reilly Centenary. (See page 3)

BUSHCARE (Tools provided — bring morning tea, gloves and drinking water)

Aug 09 (Sat) Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group. (9 am, 2nd Saturday of every month) Contact Karen 4757.1929.

QUOLL CLUB: Activities for 12 and under. ☎ Jessica 4757.3686 for more info.

Aug 24 (Sun) Birdwatch and walk to Pool of Siloam. Meet 9am, southern end of Gladstone Street just after The Links Road Leura.

BUSHWALKS:

Pre-School Walks, for parent/grandparent/carer with children under 6 years.

Short, easy walks, approx 1 hour, 1st Wednesday of every month, starting at 10.30am. Bring a snack and a drink. Contact Megan 4782.5898 or Kathy 4759.3669 for more information or if the weather is doubtful.

Aug 06 Horseshoe Falls, Hazelbrook. Meet end of Alexander Ave Hazelbrook, opposite Camp Fletcher.

Sept 03 Minnehaha Falls, Katoomba. Meet at car park at end of Seventh Ave.

Oct 01 Rhododendron Gardens, Blackheath. Meet at car park there.

Monday Leisure Walks: Usually 'Short Day' walks of 3-4 hours suitable for walkers of average fitness. Graded Medium, i.e. can include some short rock scrambles or some short sections off-track. Bring morning tea and lunch, plus carry at least 1 litre of WATER, 2 litres on warmer days.

Aug 11 Dr Dark's Cave. A mountain "weekender". ☎ Jock 4758 6346. Meet Leura Railway Stn Car Park Cnr GWH 9.00am

Aug 18 Glastonbell Circuit. A prelude to Allan's wildflower walk in this area in October. Contact Allan 4739 2767 Meet Mt. Victoria Station 9.15 am.

Aug 25 Bus Trip to Glow-worm Tunnel. Bring a Torch and explore the tunnel on the disused rail line to Newnes Circuit walk to return to bus. Cost \$10. Prior booking for bus trip is essential, and non-refundable fee must be paid at least two weeks prior to trip. We regret booking will be cancelled if fee is not paid on time and seat allocated to next person on waiting list. Meet Katoomba Council Depot South St 8.30am. Contact Laurel/Norm 4784 1554 to book.

Sept 01 Porters Pass. Walk through heathland and down through narrow gully to light open forest.

Easy Walks on Thursdays:

These walks are conducted at a slow pace to suit the walkers on the day and are usually 2-3 hours. Lunch follows for those so inclined. Phone the contact for any enquiries about the program, starting times and transport issues.

Aug 07 John's Seat, Woodford. Walk on fire trail along ridge to site of ruined cottage. Early wildflowers also possible. Meet corner of Great Western Highway and Woodford Avenue 10am. ☎ Bill 4759.1692.

Aug 14 Ikara Head, Mt Vic. Mainly level walk on ridge. Length determined by walkers on the day. Bring lunch. Meet Mt Vic Station 10am. ☎ Marie 4787 1257.

Aug 21 Wentworth Falls Lake. Easy walk from village around lake via bush paths (some swampy) to Darwin Ave. Bring lunch/BBQ to Bowskills. Walk back to village, car shuffle if required. Meet Wentworth Falls Stn carpark 10am. ☎ Simone 4757 3416

Aug 28 McMahon's Lookout Wentworth Falls. Drive to lookout along fire trail (23 km). Spectacular views and short walks. Bring lunch/BBQ. Meet Wentworth Falls Station carpark 10am. ☎ Bill 4759 1692.

Sept 04 Nepean River Walk Penrith. Very easy walk along east river bank. Bring lunch/BBQ. Meet at junction of Mulgoa Road and Factory Road on SOUTH side of M4 10.30am. Tel Simone 4757 3416 day before if attending.

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. 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 you are in any doubt, discuss with the contact or Bushwalks Convener Bill Tocher 4758.8545.

Aug 09/10, 30/31 No walks these two weekends.

Aug 16 (Sat) Crossing the Blue Mountains of NSW: Woodford to Blaxland.

We are determined to finish this series of walks. This section was postponed due to bushfires. Meet 9.01 am Woodford Station south side. ☎ Jim 4758.6009. Hard grade, long walk, some steep. Bring 2 litres of water, and gloves to protect hands from scratches.

Aug 23 (Sat) Furber Steps to the Landslide. Meet Katoomba Station carpark near Gearin's Hotel 9.30 am. ☎ Mary/Terry 4787.6918. Medium/hard, many steps. Finish 4pm.

Sept 06 (Sat) Valley of the Waters/Jamison Creek. Darwin's walk, Overcliff, Nature Trail. Meet Wentworth Falls Railway station 9.30 am. ☎ Meredith 4782.4823. Medium.

NOTE: All bushwalkers need to carry water, 1 litre minimum, a snack for morning tea and lunch for all day walks.