

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



From the President . . .

This month sees the imminent release of a report we have commissioned about the recreation and tourism benefits that could be achieved through the adoption of the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 proposal. Our aim is to encourage the conservation of Newnes Plateau and surrounding areas by highlighting the potential for environmentally friendly recreation and its associated economic benefits. This will support the ecological arguments that we have already made for conservation.

The report will be presented to various politicians, Councils and at a monthly members meeting.

Our concern about the implications of the proposed Mount Victoria bypass continues. We are working with other groups to oppose increased B-double truck movements across the mountains. **A public meeting will be held at the Mid Mountains Community Centre in Lawson at 7:30pm, on Monday 11 May.**

Autumn is a beautiful time for walking and I have enjoyed wandering along the Grose River. I hope that you are all getting a chance to enjoy the bush around us.

Speak to you next month, Tara Cameron

Sustainable Living Competition

Management committee has for some time been developing a competition aimed at encouraging Blue Mountains resident to reduce energy and water consumption. We are now calling for entries.

Climate change as a result of increased greenhouse gas emissions is now widely accepted as already occurring and likely to produce much worse effects if no significant and rapid emission reductions are made.

The scale of likely problems is immense; global temperatures could rise by 6 to 7 degrees this century, sea level rises could overwhelm one to two billion people living in low-lying areas, four billion people could be at risk of water shortages, the polar ice caps could melt entirely and the Amazon Rainforest may die off.

This can seem so daunting that individuals may feel powerless to do anything. However this is not so, as demonstrated by the significant reduction in water consumption and the increase in recycling by Blue Mountains residents.

To provide an incentive for greater water and energy savings the Conservation Society and local businesses are providing a substantial prize (about \$6000 value) to the Blue Mountains household that can make the greatest per capita reduction in energy and water consumption during a twelve month period. Because coal-fired electricity production in NSW is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions the competition will give reductions in energy consumption a greater weighting than reduced water consumption.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society's contribution to the prize will be \$2000 from our Public Gift Fund, and it will go towards the winner's costs in purchasing and installing energy- and water-saving devices.

See the advertisement on page 3 of this newsletter for more prize details and how to enter. Rob Baigent.

Environmental volunteering in remote areas

Andy Macqueen will be the Guest Speaker at our May Monthly Meeting at the Conservation Hut.

Andy has been an enthusiastic bushwalker all his life and a keen environmental volunteer since becoming an inaugural member of the Friends of Blue Gum Forest in 1992.

He is also an inaugural member and office bearer of both the Friends of the Colo and Tasmania's Wildcare SPRATS while serving on the NPWS Regional Advisory Committee from 1996 to 2008. In 2008 he received the NSW Government's Heritage Volunteer Award.

Andy is also known for his three history books on the Blue Mountain: 'Blue Mountains to Bridgetown: the Life and Journeys of Barrallier'; 'Back from the Brink: Blue Gum Forest and the Grose Wilderness'; and 'Somewhat Perilous: the Journeys of Singleton, Parr, Howe, Myles and Blaxland in the Northern Blue Mountains'.



Andy will talk about his considerable experience with environmental volunteering in remote areas.

Photo: SPRATS members pulling up sea spurge on the southwest coast of Tasmania.

**Blue Mountains Conservation Society
Monthly Meeting**

7:30 pm, Friday, May 29, 2009

**Conservation Hut, far western end
of Fletcher St. Wentworth Falls.**

VISITORS ARE WELCOME.

*Hut News is printed on
recycled paper.*

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HUT NEWS EDITORIALS

The deadline for the next issue of Hut News is 20th May 2009

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Lachlan Garland, phone: 4787 5494
email: lachlan@hermes.net.au
PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

BUSHCARE GROUP

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

WRITE A LETTER Rudd Protects Coal, Not Climate

The Rudd Government launched the \$100 million Carbon Capture Institute on Thursday 16 April, the day after its 5-15% emissions reduction target in the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) was condemned as useless by leading climate scientists. "Three of CSIRO's most eminent scientists have told a Senate Inquiry that the Prime Minister's targets to cut greenhouse emissions will not achieve even a limited level of protection against climate change," (S.M.Herald 15.4.09).

Australian taxpayers already provide some \$9 billion annually in energy and transport subsidies for mining, metals and energy industries. Additionally, Governments spend large one-off sums on infrastructure and projects to assist these sectors e.g. subsidising "clean coal", improving port and rail facilities.

If commercial-scale power stations are finally built with carbon capture and storage (CCS), they are likely to cost twice as much, use a third more coal to power the process and produce electricity that is twice as expensive.

Currently the coal industry's aim is to have one large "clean coal" power station installed by 2020. However, in spite of the coal industry's optimism about CCS, the US government abandoned its investment in Future-Gen, the world's largest "clean coal" project, in early 2008. With coal-fired power use projected to double over the next few decades, there is simply no prospect of CCS keeping up with this expansion.

"The scientifically unjustifiable CPRS will do little or nothing to reduce Australia's emissions before 2020. It is based on the vain hope that it might be possible to clean up coal instead of embracing renewable energy and energy efficiency," (Senator Christine Milne 16.4.09).

Many Australians are focusing on what they can do as individuals to reduce their carbon emissions, but individual change has to pressure more fundamental political change. When is the government going to listen to its most eminent climate scientists and set much higher carbon emissions targets, without which Australia is at high risk of permanent, major damage from climate change?

**Phone or send a short message to our local Federal MP Hon Bob Debus:
4782 4644, PO Box 997 Katoomba 2780, www.aph.gov.au/house/members/**

Here are some questions you might like to ask him:

How can the Rudd Government justify its obsession with guaranteeing a future for the coal industry which offers no protection from climate change to the rest of the Australian community?

The Government is already pouring hundreds of millions of taxpayers dollars into corporate welfare for coal. Why is there so little government support for renewable energy and energy efficiency alternatives when another \$100 million is being handed to the coal industry through the Carbon Capture Institute?

When is the government going to listen to its most eminent climate scientists and set much higher carbon emissions targets, without which Australia is at high risk of permanent, major damage from climate change?

Robin Mosman and Rosemary Lathouris.

BOOK REVIEW: "Sipping the Nectar" The 'Bird Notes' of Graham Alcorn

Graham Alcorn watched the birds and studied their habits. His passion and knowledge were willingly shared with members of the Conservation Society: at monthly meetings where he was a popular guest speaker; on bushwalks where he would find a well camouflaged nest; in his bird poetry (you will find one of Graham's poems in this newsletter); in newsletters where he wrote and described the habits and behaviour of the birds he had seen.

"Sipping the Nectar" is an anthology of Graham's bird writings, published to mark the 10th anniversary of his death. It includes articles written for the Blue Mountains Conservation Society and NSW Field Ornithologists Club (Birding NSW) newsletters. Delightful drawings by Fiona Lumsden capture the charm of the birds in the text.

Cost is \$18 (plus \$3 postage) and you can get a copy by phoning John 4782 3751, Jill 4758 7081 or Carol 4782 1831 or email oreadespress@bmbirding.com.au. All proceeds from the sale of the book will be donated to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society and Birds Australia to assist with conservation and research of birds and their habitats. *Christine Davies.*

Mount Victoria Bypass: the ongoing saga!

Brian Marshall

BMCS is extremely pleased that the RTA has now ruled out the Newnes Plateau Corridor. Pressure from the Central West Councils and 'Transport' lobby groups for a Newnes route as the first stage of a Bells Line of Road Expressway has seemingly failed. Congratulations to all who have consistently opposed the Corridor and the Expressway, whether by personal submission, participation in public meetings, or by supporting the Society's position.

The Society will, however, continue to interact with the RTA and be vigilant, for although Newnes Plateau is spared, the other four corridors (as now modified) remain problematical from environmental, cultural and social viewpoints. Additionally, there are ongoing concerns about the Central West Transport Needs Study and the NSW Grain Freight Review, both of which are looking at improved links between the Central West and the eastern seaboard.

All four corridors skirt around the

northeast part of Mt Victoria. They have unacceptable social consequences for those least affected by the existing Great Western Highway (GWH). This hardly constitutes the promised bypass! Furthermore, these corridors, which may require revocation of slivers of National Park, are environmentally unacceptable because siltation, chemical pollution and weed infestation will travel down watercourses well into the Park.

The two corridors following the western side of the Darling Causeway will variously impact on endangered swamps, scenic values and the north-south wildlife corridor in areas scheduled for protection. In addition, they will have substantial and unacceptable impacts on the social amenity and cultural heritage of Hartley Vale.

Of the two remaining corridors, one cuts a new swathe through the Hartley valley, while the other predominantly follows the GWH. Each has its problems, but the Society continues to favour the corridor along the GWH as

being less damaging from environmental, social and heritage viewpoints. Although the modified 'GWH' corridor seemingly rejects the notion of a tunnel beneath Mt Victoria, the Society will continue to advocate this because it would solve the problems of skirting around Mt Victoria and revoking National Park.

The Society will concurrently raise with the RTA an alternative corridor that would bypass Mt Victoria by heading westward from Soldier's Pinch for about 1.5km, descending the escarpment and then running north-westward to meet the GWH at the bottom bend of Victoria Pass. This would minimise environmental, social and heritage impacts on Mt Victoria, the National Park, Darling Causeway and Hartley Vale by all other corridors; and it would be cheaper than a tunnel beneath Mt Victoria.

Community workshops to define routes within corridors will start on May 16 at Mt Victoria. For further information on corridor maps and community involvement phone 1800 035 733 (toll free) or go to

http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/constructionmaintenance/majorconstructionprojectsregional/greatwesternhighway/mt_victoria_lithgow/index.html

and follow the links.

The Australian Museum

In the Society's mail this month we received a flier from The Australian Museum in Sydney about their current exhibitions.

Climate Change Our Future Our Choice is on until 16 August 2009. Among other activities you can find out which parts of Sydney will flood first when the icecaps melt.

When Mammoths Roamed is on until 24 July 2009. Sounds fascinating. Exhibits are on loan from the National Museum of Natural History, Paris.

You can find out more about these exhibitions by phoning (02) 9320 6000, or check the website.

<http://www.austmus.gov.au>

This website is a wealth of information for those interested in natural history. Click on to **Features** and look at the different topics. There is also good stuff for kids. **Research and Collections** has information on all sorts of topics. There are fact sheets on various animals. I usually look on this website if I see something unusual in the bush or the garden. Christine Davies.



BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY SUSTAINABLE LIVING COMPETITION

The Prize is \$6000 (approx.)

Includes \$2000 from BMCS to be spent on energy- or water-saving devices,
PLUS a complete 1kW solar PV system from Aussie Solar,
AND free labour for installation of solar or water systems
from GoEnviro Plumbing.

The Conservation Society and local businesses are offering a substantial prize to the Blue Mountains household that can make the greatest per person reduction in energy and water consumption during a 12-month period.

There are many ways to reduce energy and water consumption, and lots of them will cost you nothing or even save money e.g.

- Turn off lights when not needed.
- Turn off appliances at the socket to stop the 'standby' power consumption.
- Reduce shower times.
- Only use the washing machine when you have a full load of clothes.
- Don't boil excess water when making hot drinks.
- Use a bucket to collect the initial cold water from the hot tap for use elsewhere.
- Reduce winter indoor temps (18-19 degrees is adequate) – put on more clothes.
- Increase summer indoor temp (27-28 is quite comfortable) – use ceiling fans.
- Keep windows, doors and curtains closed during the day in summer and open them at night when the outside temperature drops.
- Use cold water for clothes washing (use correct type of biodegradable detergent).
- Don't flush the toilet after every use.
- Discard any small refrigerators (bar-fridges) as these are generally very inefficient.
- Buy some ice if extra cooling is needed for a party.

Supported by Blue Mountains City Council

Entries close 30 June 2009. Competition ends 30 July 2010

To obtain an entry form and more information contact BMCS by
Phone 4757 1872, [email bmcs@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:bmcs@bluemountains.org.au) or write to
PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.

Nursery News Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager

Our new facility at Lawson will be open in May! On Saturday 28th March an enthusiastic group of 16 Society members assembled the framework of the new shade-house, installed a new toilet cistern, built a soil storage bay, replaced the lock on the storage room and cleaned around the site.

On subsequent Wednesday mornings, Lawson nursery volunteers have installed an irrigation system and when the shade-cloth and weed-matting are in place, we will be open again for business.

We are just around the corner from our former site on the corner of Park and Cascade Streets in the Lawson industrial estate.

It will be a somewhat nostalgic day when the last of the plants are removed from behind Mt. Hay Technology where we conducted sales on Wednesday mornings and stored thousands of plants for contract work over many years. The site was generously offered by Ross and Heather Coster and the Society owes them a great debt of gratitude as the

space allowed storage for the big RTA and Council contracts, the revenue from which has put the Society in such a sound financial state.

Our opening again at Lawson coincides with the best time of the year for planting so come along to the new facility on Wednesday mornings or re-visit Blackheath on Tuesday mornings or the Lawson Magpie Markets on the 3rd Sunday of every month to make your selection. We offer a big variety of tubestock to members for just \$2 each.

Work is well underway for the big RTA contract for re-vegetation after road-widening of the Great Western Highway at Lawson and Bullaburra.

There is plenty of work for everybody so, if you would like to join the group of enthusiastic volunteers, give me a call on 47876436 and you will be most welcome. No experience in plant propagation is needed, just care, patience, a willingness to learn, and a happy disposition are the only requirements. *Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager.*

The Transport Lobby David Hall

The Transport Lobby is so good at what they do that most people have never heard of them. The various Environmental Groups are better known because they have to appeal to public opinion to have any chance of succeeding. The Transport Industry picks up or delivers for just about everyone at some time and provides work for people in just about every community. This emboldens the Lobby to simply announce their intentions on the basis that what is good for them is so obviously good for the Country.

Brian Marshall, in his NSW Grain Freight Review submission for the Society revealed that road transport emits 89% of all greenhouse gas emissions by the Transport Sector. Rail emits only 6%. One intermodal freight train can take the place of 150 trucks and save 45,000 litres of fuel and 44 tonnes of greenhouse emissions over an 800 km trip. Whenever cost benefit comparisons are made between rail and road transport, the test is usually between the cost of transporting a container or a passenger against the costs of the entire Rail Network. The Transport Lobby, the Politicians and their advisors know this but why let the facts get in the way of a story that works for them. The Transport Lobby is also smart enough to promote their schemes using various Orwellian labels that include the word 'forum'.

Forums are usually inclusive but that has not been the experience of Environment Groups working with the so-called Public Consultation Process leading to the NSW Planning Legislation or Commercial Tourism in National Parks.

How good is the Transport Lobby? Consider the recent case of the Rail Operator using four, 1,000 tonne trains a week to transport logs from Bairnsdale to Geelong in Victoria that announced a rate increase of 65%. Would an Operator keen to retain the business seriously ask for a 65% increase? The outcome, of course was that the Rail Operator lost the business and now more than 100 B-doubles transport the logs by road.

The Lobby Strategy seems to have been to get the Planning Legislation to expedite Development Approvals, then to have commercial facilities inside National Parks for the exclusive use of their tourists followed by transporting them to private beaches, rivers and lakefronts. The private beaches will not include Bondi or Manly, of course but places where the high roller tourists can enjoy themselves in exclusive facilities. All part of a comprehensive transport strategy that includes hotels, warehouses, resorts and nature facilities that allows the Transport Industry to charge for where goods are stored, tourists are accommodated and how they are transported and entertained.

Environmental Notes

David Hall

Farmers use around 70% of the world's water. Industry uses around 20% and domestic/municipal users around 10%.

It takes around 1,000 litres of water to grow a kilo of wheat and 15,000 litres to produce a kilo of beef. In general, the 'water intensity' in food increases as people climb out of poverty. The increased meat consumption in China since 1985, for example has required increased water use equal to almost the entire water use of Europe.

The water needs of the additional two billion people who to be added to the world's population between now and 2030 will require additional water supplies equal to the water currently used for all purposes in the world outside Asia.

There is some light at the end of the tunnel provided by more sensible international farming co-operation. For example, Mexico imports cereals from the USA which uses 7 billion cubic metres of water to grow. If Mexico grew these cereals themselves, it would need 16 billion cubic metres of water to do so. Wheat growing in India and Brazil use twice as much water for the same crop as in the USA or China. They would do better to import their wheat and plant crops better suited to their environment. Australia has no business using scarce water in an attempt to have an Australian Rice Industry when we could import our needs from Thailand, the world's major rice exporter with the water to have a sustainable industry.

Source: UN World Water Development Report as reported in 'The Economist' on April 11th.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Clare Gall, Katoomba
Kristina McColl, Emu Plains
McKay Family, Glenbrook
Shane Hale, Faulconbridge
Maria Mera-Pratley, Wentworth Falls
Di England, Wentworth Falls
Fiona Scroff, Wentworth Falls
Anthony Hodge, Wentworth Falls
Alastair Stevens, Wentworth Falls
Ron Aubrey, Leura

Watching the Birds

by Graham Alcorn, from his book
"The Bird Baths of Umbigumbi"

Over the road is the bush where I go walking,
watching the birds.

Along dry ridges scratched by xerophilous bushes,
across swamp gullies torn by tangles of teatree,
through a young forest, mountain ash saplings
after some bushfire sprouted in great profusion,
slim trunks white fingers reaching for the light;
out to a hanging swamp above Lake Medlow
where orange banksia candles glow in winter,
dripping not wax but nectar,
bringing the birds,
(once saw a Blood Bird there, a sight to remember,
so slight, so scarlet, rare at this altitude);
on to a flat where eight species nested
last spring: Varied Sitella high in a tree,
Flame Robin lower; in a forked trunk, Grey Thrush;
Yellow Faced Honeyeater in a low bush,
Grey Fantail also; Red Browed Firetail higher up
And sited almost on the ground
Variegated Wren, Brown Thornbill.

Is there, perhaps advantage in proximity?
A multitude of eyes to watch for raiders,
of ears to listen, throats to sound a warning?
There's much so don't yet know about the birds.

Over the road is the bush where I go dreaming
into the birds' world;
into the bustle of morning, stillness of noon,
various matters to be attended to
in the afternoon, calling at evening
and in the dusk settling to roost.
Here there is order and a niche for each,
instinctive urges, conflict but not chaos,
a balance of days and seasons and fulfilment,
and sometimes a gleam as if there is an answer.

Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

Around 250 species of birds have been recorded in the Blue Mountains. For anyone who cultivates the habit of looking and listening, this diversity enriches our experience of living in such a special place. To be able to watch different birds coming and going with the seasons, the excitement of seeing a new bird in the garden or going for a walk and finding yourself in the midst of a mixed flock of several species of small birds, is indeed a thrill. Every bird is an integral part of a rich ecosystem; they act as pollinators, seed dispersers, pest controllers, predators and prey. Like the canary in the coal-mine, they are also indicators of the health of our environment. It is now more important than ever to pay attention to them.

The birds found in the Blue Mountains (for the full list see www.bmbirding.com.au/lists.html) include 'sedentary' species which remain in one area year-round; migrants, which undertake regular journeys to spend part of the year in other places; and nomads, which move around less predictably in response to conditions such as rainfall or flowering events.

For example, at the moment, water is flowing through Queensland's Channel Country into Lake Eyre, drawing many ducks and other waterbirds away from coastal areas towards the resultant explosion of life in the interior. How they know to initiate such movement is one of the great mysteries of nature.

Closer to home, the Red Bloodwoods and Grey Gums in the lower Blue Mountains have just had a great flowering season, attracting four species of lorikeets: Little, Musk, Scaly-breasted (the latter two normally quite rare in the mountains) and the ever-present Rainbow.

During the next few weeks we'll see many of the banksias in flower and as winter kicks in, the upper mountains heathlands (e.g. on Narrow Neck and Shipley Plateau) may come alive with up to a dozen species of honeyeater feasting on their nectar. Meanwhile, many thousands of Yellow-faced and White-naped Honeyeaters are currently moving through the mountains on their annual autumn migration, heading to winter feeding areas somewhere north of here.

Watching birds inevitably raises more questions than answers. In this column I look forward to sharing some observations, discussing in more detail some of the fascinating birds to be found in our area and especially looking at the seasonal changes as they happen. *Carol Proberts.*

Autumn in Blackheath

I love the Autumn with its warm days and cool nights, the deciduous trees in the streets and parks vibrant with colour, the changes in Nature that the season brings. Visitors to my bush garden include lots of little birds. The breeding season has finished, they have raised their young, and different species travel together in mixed flocks. The Superb Blue Wren family and the little flock of Red-browed Finches are often together.

Eastern Spinebills feed on the nectar of Correas and Grevilleas and chase one another around the garden. Crimson Rosellas demolish the seed capsules on the tea tree. A Willy Wagtail was here for a day, flitting around on the ground searching for insects. Another day a Grey Fantail stayed for a while, performing his aerial acrobatics while catching insects on the wing.

It is the season for fungi and the rain has added a lushness to the bush. Mountain devils and banksias are flowering. Sunshine Wattle is in bud. The Bridal Veil Falls is full of water and in the early morning one can hear the sound of water in the valley.

Govett's Leap is a short distance from my home and I frequently walk there in the early morning. Last Tuesday morning was very special. As the Grose Valley came into view, the colours were fading from a glorious sunrise and the sun was hidden behind a band of low cloud. I was alone at the lookout. A river of white cloud wound its way through the

valley of the Grose, flowing into an ocean of cloud which stretched to the distant horizon. One is so often awed and humbled by the beauty and grandeur of the Blue Mountains.

Christine Davies, Blackheath, April 2009



Photo: A river of cloud wound its way through the Grose Valley

April Monthly Meeting: Report by David Hall

Rosalie Chapple, Executive Director of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute was the speaker at our April monthly meeting.

Rosalie co-founded the Institute in 2004 to broker and facilitate research and community engagement that supports collaboration in the conservation and management of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. The Heritage Area comprises eight National Parks, protects more than 100 species of eucalyptus, 150 native-to-the-area plant species and more than 400 animal species.

The members of the Institute include the Australian Museum, BMCC, Botanic Gardens Trust, DECC, Sydney Catchment Authority, Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Authority and the Universities of NSW, Sydney, UWS and UTS. The Institute is not-for-profit and receives its funding from membership contributions, project grants, sponsorship and benefactions.

National and Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development are the two areas of research interest. National and Cultural Heritage topics include Biodiversity Conservation, Bushfire Ecology and Management, Impacts of Introduced Species and Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Cultural Heritage. Sustainable Development topics include Urban and Agri-industrial Impacts and Sustainability, Tourism and Integrated Catchment Management. Current research projects include--

Natural & Cultural Heritage Projects:

- Managing Ecosystem change
- Mapping Country
- Sub-program Bushfire Policy and Management

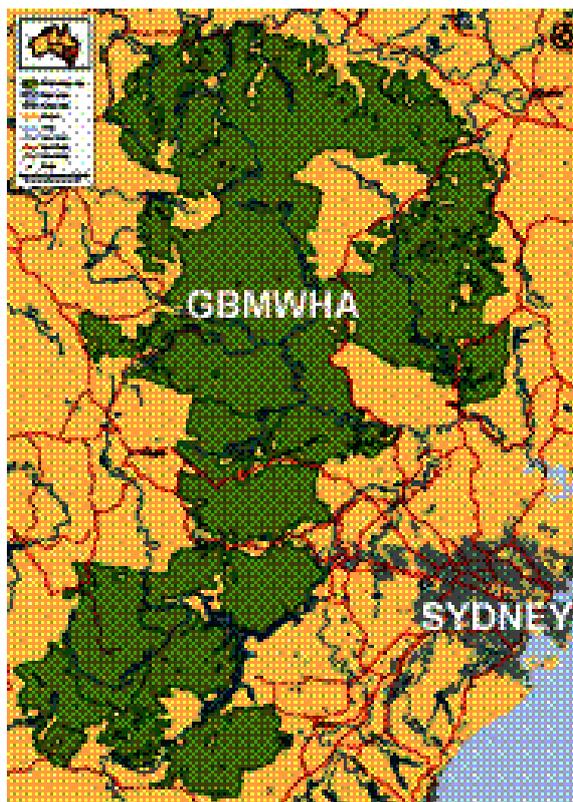
Sustainable Development Projects

- Lawson Development Alternatives
- Sustainable Agri-Industries
- Mid-Mountains Collaborative Framework
- Western Edge Native Forestry
- Community Engagement Projects
- Earth Journeys
- Indigenous Education Resources Package

The Institute does not take advocacy positions with issues but endeavours to identify knowledge gaps and apply for funding to mount research projects to obtain the information that will assist the various Land Managers working to conserve and manage the Heritage Area.

Rosalie is also Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Environmental Studies at the University of NSW and came along with two post graduate students working on thesis topics of vital interest to the World Heritage Institute. One, Melisa Head is looking at the creation of Nature Reserves to determine

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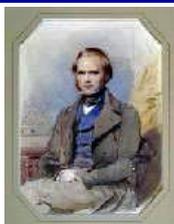
case studies based on scientific factors would have recommended different outcomes in terms of size and land management techniques. The other, Alex Gold is examining the interaction of science and policy using the pest management of lantana as a case study to determine the most effective policy process in devising pest management techniques to combat weed infestation.

A possible way the Society could assist the work of the Institute was identified during questions whereby the Society could identify a knowledge gap and support the Institute in applying for funding to mount a targeted research project.

"What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is its universal application. World Heritage sites belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located". (UNESCO 1992-2007)

CHARLES DARWIN

VOYAGES and IDEAS that SHOOK the WORLD



EXHIBITION

at the

Australian National Maritime Museum

Darling Harbour, Sydney

20 March to 23 August 2009

ENTRY TO THE EXHIBITION IS FREE

Celebrating Darwin's 200th Birthday

Charles Darwin visited Australia in 1836 and travelled across the mountains to Bathurst on horseback. He stayed at the Weatherboard Inn on a hot day in January 1836 and went for a walk "following down a little valley and its tiny rill of water" to where that "tiny rill" plunged spectacularly into the vastness of the Jamison Valley. This "magnificent" scene greatly impressed him: "... one stands on the brink of a vast precipice, and below is the grand bay or gulf (for I know not what other name to give it), thickly covered with forest."

On 12th February 2009 the Thursday interpretive walkers celebrated the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin with a walk from the site of the Weatherboard Inn, along Darwin's Walk beside Jamison Creek to the waterfall, and thought about what it was like when Charles Darwin walked there in 1836. The surrounds of Jamison Creek which are clad in swamp vegetation display a pretty mosaic of greens; the "magnificent" scene at the end is impressive; Grevillea acanthifolia shrubs were flowering, pretty pink toothbrush flowers. We saw Welcome Swallows and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos and heard New Holland Honeyeaters and an Eastern Spinebill. Christine Davies.

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

THE RAVEN THAT ALMOST MADE IT

When the railway was extended across the Blue Mountains in the 1860s the limited budget didn't allow for tunnels. A zigzag formation, incorporating a magnificent stone viaduct, lifted the rail line up the eastern escarpment at Lapstone. However, when the zigzag failed to cope with the increasing traffic, work began in 1891 on a new deviation that included a tunnel. This too was eventually replaced (1913) by the present route around Glenbrook Gorge.

Part of the first railway deviation, including the tunnel, survives in Tunnel Gully Reserve, Lapstone. It was here in late 1891 that the young Arthur Streeton sketched and painted the tunnel's construction and its impact on the landscape. The result was one of Australia's great paintings, *Fire's On*, depicting the death of a workman amid the heat and intense colours of a blazing summer landscape.

But something was missing from the finished work!

In a letter to his friend, Frederick McCubbin, describing the scene he was trying to depict, Streeton wrote: "There is a cutting through the vast hill of bright sandstone – the walls of rock run high up and are crowned by gums bronze green and they look quite small being so high up and behind is the deep blue azure heaven, where a crow sails along like a dot with its melancholy hopeless cry – long drawn, like the breath of a dying sheep."

The crow (most likely an Australian Raven) did make it into at least one water-colour version of *Fire's On*. Nevertheless, it failed to appear in the major oil painting, purchased in 1893 by the Art Gallery of NSW. When I look at this painting I feel the bird's absence. I find myself searching the sky, 'listening' for the raven's voice in the aftermath of the blast and the urgent progress of the rescue. Perhaps Streeton considered that, given the bird's folkloric associations with death, the already powerful resonance of the painting's subject would be overstated. I'm not convinced. *John Low*.

Interpretive Bushwalks

The Thursday morning Interpretive Bushwalks program is not advertised in Hut News because the participants are regular walkers and numbers are limited. But at present we do have a few vacancies and would welcome new bushwalking members who are interested in observing and appreciating Nature and the Blue Mountains natural environment.

We walk every Thursday during school terms, rain or shine. Duration of walks is usually around three hours, with lunch in a café afterwards, but sometimes longer. Distance of the walk can be anything from 2 km to 7 km, and usually grade 2. Walks are at a leisurely pace. We also have the occasional trip away. The most recent was three days in the Hunter Valley in March.

We have expert guests on some of the walks. Other walks are led by me or by other members of the group. Walks this term include Lapstone Zig Zag with John Low, a Lyrebird walk at Mt Victoria with Carol Proberts, a Mount Wilson walk and lunch at Sefton Cottage, an all-day walk in Sydney.

If you are interested in being a regular walker with the Interpretive Bushwalkers phone Christine 4787 7246 or email hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

An Easter Saturday walk on Newnes Plateau Bob van Reyswoud, Easter 2009

On Easter Saturday, 15 brave bushwalkers assembled for a walk to Noble Canyon and the Glow-worm tunnel. We set off from Mt Victoria station in four cars, with drivers, Dudley, Hugh, Lottie and I, for a very rough drive.

At Clarence there was a long line of cars waiting to go to the Glow-worm tunnel. As we approached Bungleboori, there were hundreds of campers and many more scattered all over the State forest. The road was dreadful, with potholes full of water everywhere. We saw and heard lots of trail bikes, many of them old ones with no registration.

After 90 minutes we finally arrived at Noble Canyon parking. After a quick 'circle' we set off on the walk. The bush looked very healthy, the vegetation lush and the rocks bright green with moss. I put down a rope and everyone climbed into the canyon. To my amazement we met another party in the Canyon, we had a chat and they showed us another way out. (harder).

The Canyon looked even better than usual; many pictures were taken, before morning tea at the end of the Canyon, where one of our party managed to attract a leech. We left our bags and walked onto the lookout rock; most of us

got up to the top and we had a magnificent view of Donkey Mountain and the Wolgan Valley and Emirates resort.

The short drive to the Glow-worm tunnel was hazardous because of traffic on a single lane road. On arrival it was hard to find a place to park.

We set off walking again and stopped at the former bridge-site to have lunch. There were so many kids around, screaming and howling; I didn't like our chances of seeing any glow-worms. A few of the group had forgotten to bring torches, my fault, I didn't advertised the fact, but luckily I had a spare torch.

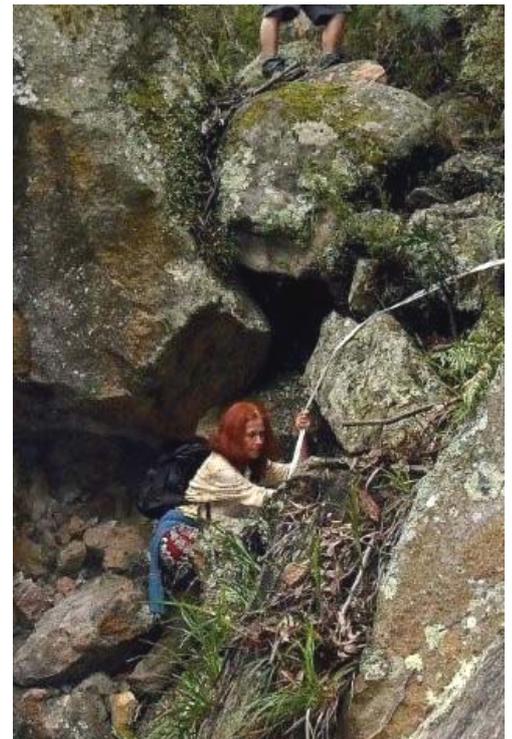
In the tunnel, to our surprise, there were hundreds of glow-worms, it was spectacular.

Once through the tunnel it was decided to follow the railway course for a bit longer. It was certainly worth while following that route, we were treated to a display of dozens of tree ferns. We went as far as the lookout and had another view of Donkey mountain and the Wolgan Valley.

We returned via the Grotto and climbed out, with a few tired walkers. Not so Lottie and Alice who took off like rockets and got back to the cars in 15 minutes. It was great to see Judy Dervin

(a former leader), walking with us again. Unfortunately the time got away from us, too late for our customary coffee stop.

Photo: "I put down a rope and everyone climbed into the canyon"



BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY 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 Liz van Reyswoud on 4757 2694, email bushwalks@bluemountains.org.au or write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782. **Before attending a walk please discuss the walk with the contact person or group co-ordinator (see below)**

SATURDAY WALKS: Usually a full day longer walk at a faster pace. Before attending ring the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Jim Percy 4758 6009 or email jp34@tpg.com.au

Date	Details	Grade	Contact	(Map)	(km)	Meet
May 16	Blue Gum Swamp/Grose Head South. Steep climb to lookouts. Views north to Mt Yengo.	2	Ros 4733 3880	Springwood	12	Springwood Station carpark 9.15 am
May 23	Glenbrook abseilers' track/Euroka. Very steep, rocky ascent to Tunnel Lookout. To Mt Portal Lookout, then Euroka via Portal Waterhole track return to park gates.	3	Ros 4733 3880	Penrith	9	Glenbrook Station carpark 9.30 am
May 30	Victoria Falls to Burra Korain Flat. Great views, steep descent/ascent of 300m from the lookout to the Victoria Creek Grose River junction. All on track	2/3	Meredith 4782 4823	Mt Wilson	6	Blackheath Station carpark 8.15 am
Jun 6	Two heads and a mine walk No 1. Ikara and Valhalla and Athol No.4. Two steep, scrambling descents. Bring torch for the mine inspection. Some off-track.	3/4	Jim 4758 6009	Mt Wilson	9	Blackheath Station carpark 8.15 am

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

May 11	Evans Crown, Tarana. Views over Liverpool Plains. Lunch at pub.	2	Mary 4757 4569	9am, Mt Victoria rail station.	Car pool.
May 18	Lockley's Pylon. Views over Grose Valley	2	Norm 4784 1554	9am, Leura Rail Station	commuter carpark..
May 25	Bus Trip: Hidden Valley, Newnes Plateau. A new adventure.	2	Phil 4787 5560	8.30, BMCC Council depot, North Katoomba.	Fare \$12. Book and pay Birgitta 4784 3191
Jun 1	Asgard Swamp, Mt Victoria. Possible walk to old mine.	2	Maurice 4739 4942	9am, Mt Victoria rail station.	Car pool.
Jun 8	Horseshoe Falls Reserve, Hazelbrook. Classic upper mountain waterfalls	2	Judith 4758 6310	9am, Hazelbrook Rail Station.	

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS: Walks of 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 Simone Bowskill, 4757 3416, email simbow@tpg.com.au

May 14	Fortress Hill, off Mt Hay Road. Ridgetop walk with spectacular views	2	Phil 4787 5560	Leura Public School, 9.45 am
May 21	Silver Mist to Katoomba Cascades. Clifftop walk	2	Joan, c/o 4782 5966	Gearins Hotel, Katoomba, 9.30 am.
May 28	Fairy Bower to Dunn's Leap. Beautiful forest and overhanging cliffs. Lots of steps.	2	Phil 4787 5560	Mt Victoria Station 10 am.
Jun 4	BUS TRIP TO KANANGRA WALLS. See note in bushwalkers newsletter about bus trips.	2	Simone 4757 3416	BMCC Council Depot, North Katoomba, for 8.30 departure. Cost \$12. Bookings Simone.

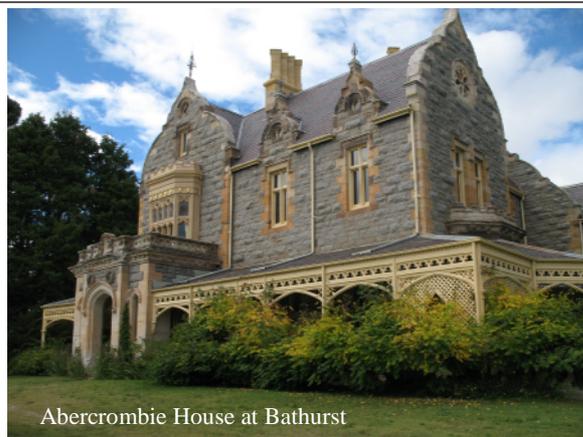
From Dunn's Swamp to Abercrombie House

On April 2 the Thursday walkers had a bus trip planned to Dunns Swamp. However as the previous days had had heavy rain it was likely that the road would be unsuitable for the Council bus. I remembered a visit with the Blue Mountains Historical Society to Abercrombie House west of Bathurst. A phone call confirmed that we could be accommodated for a tour. So a bus full of expectant Thursday walkers set off.

The house is owned and occupied by the Morgan family and Christopher Morgan greeted us by giving a brief history of the district and the significance of General William Stewart. He was the father of the builder of the house, James Stewart. The house was built in the Scottish baronial style from a single granite outcrop on the site, and has had a chequered history and lay

empty for many years. It was the home of the Land Army during World War 2 - a location some distance from the Army base the other side of Bathurst!

Our guide described his father's and the family's involvement in education and the Duke of Edinburgh award, and of the collection of artifacts gathered by his father over many years Christopher led us into this fascinating house, with the 52 rooms and 7 staircases, and gave us an insight into the practical problems of maintaining and restoring a large historic home, much of which is undertaken by the family eg when we visited the ball room with its 8.6 m ceiling he left everyone aghast as



Abercrombie House at Bathurst

he described how he and his wife spent months decorating the ceiling on scaffolding, finally giving it a gold leaf finish. Although not a bushwalk as such, Thursday walkers enjoyed their visit and particularly appreciated the warm welcome and personal tour conducted by Christopher Morgan. **Simone Bowskill.**