

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Monthly Meeting: The Road/Rail Forum

The environmental and economic merits of rail versus road transport will be the topic of the September Monthly Meeting at the Conservation Hut. The Blue Mountains Sustainable Transport Alliance and the Groups involved in the Mt. Vic By-Pass issues have been invited to participate along with a Keynote Speaker presenting environmental and economic data.

Road Transport has been favoured by Commonwealth and State Governments for many years with taxpayers financing the roads, owner drivers paying the license fees while the Transport Companies reap the profits. The usual economic analysis seems to involve only a comparison between the costs to a Transport Company of transporting a container versus the cost of the entire Rail Network.

The Road Transport Lobby has been very effective and rarely even questioned, much less confronted. The September Monthly Meeting will ask the relevant questions, particularly to do with the environmental impact of Road Transport versus Rail.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Monthly Meeting

7:30 PM. Friday, September 25, 2009

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

VISITORS ARE WELCOME



Celebrating 50 years of the Blue Mountains National Park

The Golden Gumtree Postal Run

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society, the Blue Mountains National Parks Service, the Blue Mountains City Council and the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute have come together to celebrate the first Gazettal date of the Blue Mountains National Park, September 25, 1959. The day will coincide with Spring and also honour the over 100 Eucalypt species that occur in the World Heritage Area, and which are the major Australian flora that distinguishes the Park worldwide.

The Golden Gum Tree Postal Run is divided into two parts:

Part One is "The Bush Room" where children from 13 Blue Mountains schools have monitored and recorded the natural events occurring in a "bush room" in their area. Their diaries provide the stories and information on plants and animals and thus the stimulation for the creation of the "sense of place" postcards, which will be collected and exchanged by the bush-postie. All the postcards will be collated to form a major public art display.

Part Two, "The Golden Gumtree Postal Run" is a celebratory walk in September from Penrith to Lithgow via schools in the towns and adjoining National Park. Wyn Jones, the bush-postie, and Blue Mountains Conservation Society bushwalkers will walk along some well-known and lesser known paths within the National Park. The bush-postie will visit schools along the way collecting and delivering postcards made by the children, with a traditional campfire at each school. More information: www.bmwhi.org.au/what/events/goldengum.html

On **Thursday 24 September at 10am** the bush postie will be welcomed at Katoomba High School with a campfire and postcard exchange. The welcome will be a community celebration of the 50th anniversary. Activities include a greeting of the walkers / a campfire ceremony / displays and talks on the ecological significance of having a National Park in the Blue Mountains. All members and friends are very welcome. Enquiries to David Hall 040412 3001 david.delegate@idx.com.au

From the President

Thank you for reading this edition of Hut News. It has been a busy time for us, particularly with the Cox River case (see page 4).

This month is characterised by a number of activities related to environmental education. September marks the second anniversary of *Strobos*, our bi-monthly newsletter written by school students. This extremely interesting publication is distributed through schools and can be found on our website at www.bluemountains.org.au

The Youth Environment Summit at Winmalee Primary on September 8 is another event that Chris Yates (Education Officer) has been helping to organise. Students will begin the day around the campfire with the "bush-postie" Wyn Jones who will visit the school as part of the 'Golden Gumtree Postal Run'. (See the story on this page.)

Wyn and the others walkers will be greeted at Katoomba High School at 10am on 24th September and many activities are planned. These include a big birthday cake and a talk by Chris Darwin (descendent of Charles). Many thanks to all the students involved.

You will notice that this month's Hut News does not contain the usual 'Letter of the Month' on Climate Change issues prepared by Robin Mosman and Rosemary Lathouris. They have decided to have a well earned break after contributing for five years. Thank you Robin and Rosemary! We hope to continue highlighting concerns relating to climate change and sustainability through other contributions. Tara Cameron

HELP NEEDED

Nursery Manager Kevin Bell is calling for a volunteer (with a lawnmower) to mow the Lawson nursery grounds once a month. If you can help please phone Kevin on 4787 6436.

Volunteers are needed to help on the Society's stall at the Footbeat Festival to be held at Wentworth Falls TAFE, 23-25 October. This was formerly the Songlines Festival. The theme this year is Sustainability. If you are able to help on the stall for any length of time during the weekend, please contact Liz 4757 2694 mcreysw@bigpond.net.au

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HUT NEWS EDITORIALS

The deadline for the next issue of Hut News is **19th September 2009**

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Lachlan Garland, phone: 4757 1929
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.

Nursery News Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager

With the approach of warmer weather, one's thoughts turn again to Spring planting and this has been reflected in an increase in sales at both our nurseries and, especially, at the Lawson Magpie Markets. At this venue in July we made \$453 and improved on that to \$607 in August. So, why not come along on the 3rd Sunday of each month to the grounds of the Lawson Public School to enjoy the congenial market atmosphere and make yourself known at our stall where you will find a good selection of local plants.

Our plea for more volunteers at our Lawson nursery on Wednesday mornings was nicely answered with five new, enthusiastic volunteers who, with all our regulars, will ensure that we meet our contractual requirements. Of course, there is always room for more so if you can spare a morning a week give me a call on 47876436. If numbers continue to grow we may consider opening on Saturday mornings.

One of the most familiar groups of Australian plants, the Grevilleas come in a great variety and occupy most parts of the continent. Not only are they attractive garden specimens with their characteristic "spider" flowers but many also provide a valuable nectar source for honeyeaters as well as attracting insects upon which other birds rely. However, one should avoid planting hybrid Grevillea species such as "Robin Gordon" or the many "Poorinda" types as these nectar-rich species tend to attract large numbers of Noisy Miners and the deleterious effect of this was pointed out in Carol Probert's article in the August *Hut News*.

There are numerous local Grevilleas which can enhance your garden and provide an adequate nectar source for honeyeaters from the dainty, elegant Eastern Spinebill to the amusing and raucous Red Wattlebird.

Our nurseries will have available in Spring a range of local Grevilleas including the following: *Grevillea acanthifolia*, an endemic upper mountains straggling shrub found along creek-lines and bearing glorious deep-pink flower combs mostly in Spring; *Grevillea laurifolia*, a ground-cover with shiny green leaves and red flowers restricted to the Blue Mountains; *Grevillea gaudi-chaudi*, a naturally occurring hybrid of the two previous species and with characteristics of both, again restricted to the upper mountains; *Grevillea longifolia*, an attractive open, spreading shrub with saw-toothed leaves and bright red flower combs; *Grevillea arenaria*, a small, spreading shrub with yellowish-green flowers tinged with pink and suited to shady sites; *Grevillea oleoides*, commonly called "Red Spider Flower" is an erect shrub to about 2m; *Grevillea juniperina*, a low growing shrub with prickly leaves and yellow to pink flowers; *Grevillea sericea*, commonly called the "Pink Spider-flower" is widespread in a variety of habitats, flowering mostly early Spring but showing some flowers at other times; *Grevillea buxifolia*, the "Grey Spider-flower" appears in a variety of forms but commonly seen as a small (less than 1m) shrub with grey flowers in the mountains. I have seen honeyeaters enjoying nectar from all but the last two species, although they all attract insects and Rosellas like to chew the flowers as well.

Visit our nurseries to discuss which species would be most suitable for your particular garden.

WHAT'S ON IN SEPTEMBER?

29 August to Sunday 20 September, 10am to 4pm

BLUE HORIZONS, a photographic exhibit by Wyn Jones, celebrates the 50th anniversary of Blue Mountains National Park. Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre. Free after garden entry.

Thursday 24 September, 10 am

Bush-postie at Katoomba High School and community celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Blue Mountains National Park. (See The Golden Gum Tree Postal Run on page 1.)

Friday 25 September, 7.30 pm

Monthly Meeting at The Hut. "The Road/Rail Forum" (See Page 1)

Saturday 26 September, 9.30 am to 12.30 pm

Blue Mountains Swamp Vegetation Workshop 9:30am - 12:30pm
Want to learn more about the flora and ecology of Blue Mountains Swamps. Join Ian Baird and Lyndal Sullivan for Blue Mountains Swamps 101. Book with Michael Hensen on mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au (preferred) or 4780 5471.

National Parks Under Attack: Public Meeting held on 15 August at Lawson

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society recently held a public meeting on the topic of **pressures affecting National Parks particularly; hunting, development proposals for tourism purposes and under-funding.** The keynote speaker was Andrew Cox, Executive Officer of the National Parks Association. Approximately seventy people attended the meeting including; the Mayor of the Blue Mountains Adam Searle, Deputy Mayor Janet Mays, Councillor Van der Kley, and Stan Wood of WIRES.

Three key issues affecting National Parks were discussed.

The first was proposals to allow recreational hunting in National Parks put forward by the Shooters' Party through the 'Game and Feral Animal Control Amendment Bill'. Andrew Cox rejected claims by the Game Council of NSW that it would support conservation by culling feral animal populations. "There is no scientific evidence to support recreational hunting as a form of pest control," he said. The money should be re-directed to government-run, properly run pest control programs. "The hunting impact is minimal and made worse by deliberately introduced feral animals to provide hunting targets" added Andrew Cox. Attendees of the meeting expressed concern about cruelty to animals, particularly as hunting with bows and arrows is proposed (permissible now in State Forests). One member of the Game Council attended and a local recreational hunter to speak in favour of hunting in National parks and State Forests.

The meeting also addressed proposals to allow eco-resorts and other such developments in National Parks. The consensus of the meeting was the quality of walking tracks, not any lack of accommodation facilities inside national parks, was more likely to affect visitor numbers. Further that development inside the Parks would take business away from small business operators in the gateway towns.

The important issue of funding National Parks was then raised. Tara Cameron spoke about significant funding cuts to the parks and reserves in the Blue Mountains region in the coming financial year. Funding for remote area weed control has been effectively slashed. The phytophthora attacking the Wollemi Pines will not be sprayed unless additional funding is found outside the normal budget. At least four staffing positions will be lost in the area through non-replacement when people retire or



Photo: Andrew Cox, Executive Officer of National Parks Association, addresses meeting

go on leave. There is no State Government funding for infrastructure such as tracks and lookouts. Federal Government grants have funded the upgrade of the Grand Canyon track but this money has now been used. "It seems that protecting the Wollemi Pines, attacking weeds and improving visitor infrastructure are just talking points and not real priorities" stated Tara.

The motions passed at the meeting are copied below:

Motion 1 - OUR PARKS AND ANIMALS ARE NOT FAIR GAME

That this meeting opposes the Shooters Party Game and Feral Animal Control Amendment Bill that allows:

- a) hunting in NPs; b) private game parks; c) hunting of native animal and birds; d) release or relocation of introduced birds*

and calls on the Premier Nathan Rees and the Leader of the Opposition, Barry O'Farrell to oppose this Bill and see to it that the entire Bill is voted down.

Motion 2 - NATIONAL PARKS ARE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION, NOT TOURIST DEVELOPMENT

That this meeting:

- a) is opposed to the NSW Government plans to expand commercial tourism development and in particular construct new accommodation facilities inside National Parks, and amend the National Parks and Wildlife Act and the Wilderness Act to facilitate such developments;*

- b) supports improved, low impact facilities for National Park visitors and better promotion to encourage more public use, off-park accommodation and other tourist management services in Gateway*

Towns which support local economies while avoiding destructive impacts on National Parks.

and calls on the Premier Nathan Rees and the Leader of the Opposition, Barry O'Farrell to continue the tradition of low-key, low impact visitor management and use for the NSW national parks estate.

Motion 3 - INCREASED FUNDING OF NATIONAL PARKS

That this meeting calls for increased funding for conservation works inside National Parks generally and the promotion of National Parks, particularly for the National Parks in the Blue Mountains Area.

ACT NOW ...

Write to oppose hunting, commercial development and funding cuts in National Parks:

Mr Phil Koperberg, Shop 3, 107-109 Macquarie Road, SPRINGWOOD, 2777 bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Ms Carmel Tebbutt, Level 30, Governor Macquarie Tower, 1 Farrer Place, SYDNEY NSW 2000

dp.office@tebbutt.minister.nsw.gov.au

Mr Nathan Rees, GPO Box 5341, SYDNEY NSW 2001

thepremier@www.nsw.gov.au

Welcome to new members

Laurie Sharman, Wentworth Falls

James McIntyre, Leura

Anne Ammann, Dargan

Isobel Johnston, Hazelbrook

Update on Coxs River case Tara Cameron



Photo: BMCS President Tara Cameron

As reported in previous editions of *Hut News*, the Society is taking Court action against Delta electricity over high levels of salinity and metals such as aluminium, arsenic, boron and copper in the upper Coxs River. We are very concerned about the impacts on aquatic ecosystems and are seeking orders that the alleged pollution cease.

The first phase of the action was a request for a 'Protective Costs Order' of \$10 000 in the Land and Environment Court on 18 August. Such an order would limit our financial exposure and make it possible for us to run the case on the water pollution issues. The NSW Land and Environment Court has never made such an order before so it would be a precedent if granted. The Court may decide to either reject the order, grant an order for \$10 000 as requested, or make an order for a higher amount. Delta's legal team vigorously opposed our application for a 'Protective Costs Order'.

The Road Transport Lobby David Hall

The political adage is that the more noise a Lobby Organisation makes the less real influence it has. The people with real access do not have to campaign in the media or on the streets. The Road 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—despite road transport emitting 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. One 26 wagon coal train, with each wagon carrying 77t of coal products takes the place of 148 truck movements.

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 Road 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. The Rail Operator 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 be to have Planning Legislation that expedites Development Approvals, then commercial facilities inside National Parks for the exclusive use of well heeled 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. The Transport Industry can then charge for where goods are stored, tourists are accommodated and how they are transported and the tourists entertained.

For this to succeed they do, of course need publicly funded super highways regardless of the impact on local communities and not to be bothered by environmental impact studies.

Environmental Notes by David Hall

■ If Australia commits to emission cuts of 20% below 2000 levels by 2020, more than \$34B may need to be spent on renewable electricity generation, mostly wind farms, around \$6B on peaking gas plants to support green power intermittency and \$21B on developing gas-fired, base load power stations to meet new demand and replace coal burning plants stranded by carbon charges. The target may also require transmission network expenditure of around \$5B between 2009 and 2020 in addition to the \$16B to meet increased electricity demand and replace old assets --- **Morgan Stanley Research.**

■ The additional up-front costs of a sustainable building construction are estimated to be, on average between 0.6% and 2% of the total project cost. These costs can be recovered 10 times over, within 20 years just with reduced energy usage --- **US Green Building Council.**

■ **The US Green Building Council** believes that Solar Thermal Energy and Biomass Generators will be crucial in reducing energy use in the built environment. Solar Thermal Energy Generation is a process whereby the sun's energy is used to generate heat before being converted into electricity. Biomass Generation runs on a range of fuels such as woodchips and grasses and can be used to produce hot water and electricity.

VACANCY BMCS Management Committee Position

Climate Change/Sustainability Officer

Duties and Responsibilities:

- * Liaise with local CC/Sustainability groups and BMCC
- * Takes an active role in political/governmental aspects of CC policy, submissions and grants
- * Supports sustainable village models and concepts, with an emphasis on transport and food solution
- * Attends monthly Management Committee Meetings and other meetings as needed.

If you would like to find out more about this very worthwhile volunteer position please contact Tara Cameron, 4751 1130 or email domtara@bigpond.com

Hell on Earth: the Devil is in the detail!

Brian Marshall

Few will be unaware of debate about the anthropogenic contribution to climate change, and the disbeliefs or doubts of some politicians. Professor Ian Plimer¹, a geologist, is a commonly cited 'denier'. Ian's views are expounded in a recently published book². Some will have read the book and many will have heard of it, perhaps disparagingly or perhaps as a basis for re-thinking the likelihood of anthropogenic global warming. My aim is to evaluate aspects of the book, and point the reader to authoritative critiques.

Were the book submitted for a higher degree, I would reject it as being intensely and confusingly repetitive. Proper editing with internal cross-referencing would reduce the length by at least one-third, and remove the impression that repetition enhances credibility. Figures are liberally distributed, but they are not directly linked to the text, generally not sourced as to content, and the time axis on graphs variously reads from left to right or vice versa. Much in the text is derivative, so in view of the breadth of data covered, the more than 2300 footnote references is not disproportionate. Unfortunately, the mode of referencing, without page number or direct quotation, impedes knowing where a citation stops and the author's commentary takes over

Books that purport to be for the 'general public' yet profess scientific rigour and are damning of others inevitably risk criticism. My comments about length, figures, mode of referencing, and division between citation and opinion, suggest a lack of rigour³. I might be requiring too high a standard from a work directed at the general public, yet Ian is attempting to (p9) "...look at what history tells us about past climate and how the Sun, the Earth, ice, water and air affect climate." In so doing, he varies between explaining relatively well-known terms (e.g. interglacial, p10) to protracted expositions necessitating such knowledge as the geological timescale, the evolution of life-forms and the atmosphere, plate tectonics, variations in solar activity and the Earth's orbit, and the carbon and water cycles, all interspersed with data on glaciations, techniques for dating climatic events and conditions, global temperature variations, and oceanic chemistry. Not surprisingly, many of the general public rapidly drown in an admixture of data and opinion that inhibits understanding and critical evaluation.

The book uses techniques which necessitate 'belief' through creating obfuscation. References must be either checked to determine their level of pertinence⁴, or taken at face value. The targeted general public are likely to opt for 'face value'. Repetition of data and contentions in supposedly different chapters creates a familiarity that passes for understanding and morphs into acceptance. Conditioning is achieved by emphatic answers to questions posed at the beginning of each chapter, an unreferenced summary in which fact and interpretation are blended as certainty, and a convoluted discourse aimed at substantiating the claims or at least creating uncertainty⁵.

Why have I been so critical? The simple answer is that Ian has taken the high ground by claiming scientific integrity, whilst denigrating climate scientists, computer modelling, the IPCC and many other scientists who happen to believe that anthropogenic global warming is a reality (p12 para 1). If one claims the high ground, one's presentation and content should be beyond reproach.

Through analysis of the Sun's activity as the principal driver of climate, the effects of the Earth's wobble, and the role of geological processes such as vulcanicity and plate motions, Ian has convincingly demonstrated the levels of complexity associated with 'natural'⁶ climate throughout Earth's history. It is true that temperatures have been higher in the past, atmospheric CO₂ has been higher, the correlation of temperature and CO₂ is inconclusive⁷, water vapour and other greenhouse gases tend to be neglected due to the focus on human CO₂ emissions⁸, and the Earth is a (p10) "...warm wet volcanic greenhouse planet, which is recovering from glacial times and is naturally warming." It is equally true that the Earth has been evolving chemically, geotectonically and climatically for 4.6 billion years, and has witnessed natural climate change over numerous time-frames and change-rates, and that this preceded any possibility of an anthropogenic component⁹. So it is reasonable to ask whether human-produced CO₂ (or CO_{2-e}) is truly changing climate. (continued on page 6)

¹ Ian was one of my first honours students at UNSW in the late sixties. I have known him and had occasion to work with him until I retired from academia.

² Plimer I R, 2009, *Heaven and earth: global warming, the missing science*, Connor Court Publishing Pty Ltd, Victoria, 503pp.

³ Or, at best, too much haste!

⁴ Is the cited matter a principal finding based on sound data or purely a speculation? Has the work been superseded by later studies? Is the paper acknowledged within its field? These are all difficult to know unless one is familiar with the pertinent body of literature, or has time to research the issues.

⁵ And in this respect the book most certainly succeeds.

⁶ It is simpler to use 'natural' as opposed to non-anthropogenic, even though all climate (including human-induced effects) is natural, if humans as an evolving species are natural.

⁷ Though far from straightforward – compare Figures 24, 27 and 28 for behaviours over different time-frames.

⁸ This is partly redressed by the use of CO_{2-e}, but the focus on CO₂ remains disproportionate.

⁹ Even if the potential for significant anthropogenic intervention is generously limited to the past 250 years, this is still less than 0.5x10⁻⁵ % of geological time.

In Hut News¹⁰, I wrote about the research process, and the difficulties of **proving** the much-debated human contribution to climate change. It still applies and in Ian's words (p14): "*Science is married to evidence derived from observation, measurement and experiment. Evidence is fraught with healthy uncertainties and scientists argue about the methods, accuracy, repeatability and veracity of data collection.*" And largely because of this, inconclusive data are interpreted and join a spectrum of supportive and contradictory papers that are progressively distilled into those withstanding additional work and those falling by the wayside. Selectively citing papers that accord with one's position before 'distillation' is complete can be risky. Ian makes much capital from the discredited original Mann 'hockey stick' graph (pp87-98), but actually falls on his face¹¹. Are all (any?) of his statements and supporting references 'fireproof'?

The answer lies in three pieces of geology and academic critiques.

In opposing a relationship between climate change and coral reef bleaching (p319), Ian suggests that bleached coral reefs over geologic time have mostly recovered, increased bleaching along the Great Barrier Reef reflects more efficient observation rather than reality, and coral growth will keep pace with increasing temperatures increases and rising sea levels. None of this inspires confidence. One might ask about the time taken for recovery and why some didn't recover¹², and whether efficient observation is actually recording the truth. Or perhaps as Joh Bjelke-Peterson used to say, "*Don't you worry about that.*" Regardless, the facts are that the Barrier Reef is experiencing bleaching and its future is threatened.

Ian suggests (pp320-321) that Tuvalu's current problems are not a function of anthropogenic global warming, but relate to self-created factors and the type of ocean-floor sinking that is too rapid for coral-growth to keep pace. I can't comment on the self-created factors, but it is hard to reconcile ocean-floor subsidence with no absolute change in sea level (Fig. 33).

Much is made of the physics of ice flow (pp243-252). Ian emphasises plasticity, decries the lubricating capacity of basally located melt waters, and thinks stress drives flow. This best suits his beliefs that (p248) "*...mass loss of glaciers and the flow rate of glacial ice as a guide to climate change is misleading...*" "*...an increase of flow rate is most commonly unrelated to temperature and is a result of increased precipitation thousands of years ago.*" In fact, an aqueous phase in fluid inclusions and as grain boundary films exists throughout glaciers and becomes increasingly active as temperature increases. 'Flow' evolves from solid-state intragranular processes to mixed-state fluid-facilitated intragranular and intergranular processes such that the cumulative flow rate increases by several orders of magnitude¹³. At macroscale, basal melt water engages in dissolution of ice and exerts an uplift pressure, both of which facilitate macroflow. Contrary to Ian's belief (p246 para 2), temperature within and external to the ice very much influences flow rates at constant deviatoric stress.

Authoritative peer critiques are far more damning. George Monbiot's blog¹⁴ contains a letter to Ian requiring a written response to 11 specific items. The letter is based on and provides links to critiques by Professors Ashley, Brook, Enting, Karoly and Lambeck. Those by Ashley, Brook and Karoly are particularly recommended. Ian will possibly enjoy dealing with the concerted opposition, but realistically the book does much harm. It allows Steven Fielding and Barnaby Joyce to 'justify' their beliefs and should be buried without trace!

Anthropogenic warming may only distort the grander scheme of 'natural' climate change, but it is happening now, it is intensifying, and it is amenable to mitigation. Ian says much (p23) about humans adapting in the past, and it is true that we and many other species will continue to adapt. But never before have so many humans been crowded into deltas, coastal cities and low-lying regions, all trying to adapt and maintain or improve their standards of living while finite resources are being plundered. This is why **mitigation now** will reduce the adverse impacts of adaptation as we clamour for higher ground and the diminishing agricultural produce and other resources.

A final question! You are standing in a pool on tiptoe with the water lapping your nostrils, and you can neither swim nor move. (Don't ask why.) A child starts throwing cups of water into the pool. Do you hope for mitigation through someone stopping the child, do you hope to adapt by growing gills, or do you simply deny it? Your choice!

¹⁰ Marshall B, 2007, *Human-induced climate change: fact, fiction or immaterial?* BMCS, Hut News, Issue No 241, p4.

¹¹ Ian continues to use the totally rejected Beck curve in his Fig. 11 and ignores the 'hockey stick' modifications made by IPCC in 2007 and Mann et al in 2008 (see <http://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2007/05/the-weirdest-millennium/> and <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2008/09/02/0805721105> respectively).

¹² Were they too badly damaged by bleaching, could they not grow fast enough, or what?

¹³ Marshall B et al, 2000, *Regional metamorphic remobilization: upgrading and formation of ore deposits*, Reviews in Economic Geology, vol. 11, pp19-38, Society of Economic Geologists, Colorado, USA.

¹⁴ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/georgemonbiot/2009/aug/05/climate-change-scepticism>

Learn the mysteries of plants

Meredith Brownhill

Spring, with all the plants in flower, is a wonderful time to study Blue Mountains plants. Would you like to join our Plant Study Group and learn about native flora?

We share our knowledge with each other about flora and work as a group in the field. We learn the botanical structures of flowers, leaves and fruits, and use botanical terminology – it is a good learning experience, as well as a challenge. There are lots of wonderful discoveries too.

Sometimes we look at small things, like peering into *Pterostylis grandifolium* – a Greenhood Orchid growing beside a walking track or count leaf teeth on an *Allocasuarina* to determine its species.

Sometimes we look at the bigger picture and identify plant communities. On an overcast day in March we found a wonderful diversity of flora in Popes Glen and identified *Eucalyptus dalrympleana* and *E. piperita*: Tall Open Forest, *E. gullicki*: Alluvial Woodland, *E. sclerophylla*: Bench Woodland and *E. oreades*: Tall Open Forest as outlined in Council zoning maps and Schedule 5.

If you are interested in joining us, it is helpful to have a familiarity with local plants in *Native Plants of the Blue Mountains*, by M. Baker & R. Corringham, however beginners are welcome.

The second Sunday of each month is when we have our short rambles in the bush. Enquiries to Meredith 47824823 after 5pm.

Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

The return of migrant birds in spring is always something to look forward to. It's like meeting an old friend who's been away for many months. The beautiful little Rufous Fantail, Black-faced Monarch, Leaden and Satin Flycatchers and Sacred Kingfisher will all be back with us soon, but it's the cuckoos which seem to attract the most attention. Especially those largest, noisiest cuckoos - the Eastern Koel and the Channel-billed Cuckoo - which are impossible to ignore as they announce their presence loudly and often at the most anti-social hours!

It's the male koel, a glossy black bird with red eyes, which has the well-known *koo-eee* call, as well as a more demented rising *wirra-wirra-wirra....* The female sports a chequered coat; her call is a brassy piping often heard in duet with the male.

The Channel-billed Cuckoo has been described as having the worst call of any Australian bird (although personally, I think that honour should go to the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo). Looking like a flying cross with its thin angular wings, long tail and massive bill, it spends each winter in New Guinea and Indonesia, and like the koel, returns to south-eastern Australia from around September to breed. Both these cuckoo species appear to be increasing in range and abundance, and their arrival dates seem to be getting earlier.

Already this year there has been a very early report of a koel in Newcastle on 3rd August, and the first Channel-bill was reported at Bulahdelah on 13th August. Occasional birds like this do sometimes arrive ahead of the general influx in Sept-Oct so trends over several years are more meaningful than single sightings. Keeping records of migrant arrival dates in our own neighbourhoods can help to shed light on some of the profound changes happening as a possible result of climate change and other factors.

Cuckoos are nest parasites, which means they lay their eggs in other birds' nests, letting the host birds do all the work in rearing the demanding chick, which ejects the original inhabitants (eggs or young). The instinct to feed a gaping mouth ensures the young cuckoo receives enough food from its hard-working hosts to grow and develop. Here in the mountains, the usual host of the koel is the Red Wattlebird, while the Channel-bills choose mostly currawong nests in which to lay their eggs.

By starting nesting early, before the migratory cuckoos arrive, resident birds can lessen their chances of falling victim.

Carol Proberts (origma@westnet.com.au)

The Smart Transport Option: STAN is born in Lawson

Brian Marshall

STAN, the Smart Transport Action Network, has evolved through the concern of various community groups about the implications of the proposed Mt Victoria Bypass (MVB) for road-freight between the Central West and Sydney. Very simply, if the MVB is designed (as is the intention) to take 26m B-doubles, a significant obstruction to such vehicles crossing the 'sandstone curtain' would be lifted. The purpose of STAN is to counteract this by advocating an alternative approach.

The inaugural meeting of STAN, chaired by Councillor El Gibbs, took place at the Lawson Bowling Club on August 10th. Organisations represented included the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Hartley Highway Action Group, Blackheath Highway Action Group, Mt Victoria Highway Bypass Action Group, Bells Action Group Against The Highway, Association of Concerned Mid Mountains Residents, and the Blue Mountains Commuter and Transport Users Association. The meeting unanimously adopted the following three points of agreement:

- (a) To advocate improved rail-freight (and passenger) services in preference to road-freight across the Mountains.
- (b) To unconditionally oppose 26m B-doubles crossing the Mountains by either the Bells Line of Road (BLoR) or the Great Western Highway (GWH).
- (c) To support safety improvements on the Victoria Pass and

River Lett Hill sections of the GWH, but to oppose major works as envisaged with any MVB option.

In addition to embracing points (a) to (c), BMCS recorded its position on related matters not necessarily shared by all of the other groups. The position comprised:

- (d) Unequivocal opposition to any Newnes Plateau option as an MVB solution.
- (e) Unequivocal opposition to any BLoR upgrade to a 26m B-double standard.
- (f) Only if the MVB is not abandoned, BMCS' first preference is the 'alternative' corridor from Soldiers Pinch around Mt Victoria west of the escarpment to the GWH at the lowermost bend of Victoria Pass, and its second preference is the RTA's modified orange corridor.

For STAN, achieving agreement on points (a) to (c) was the easy part. The next stage is to mount a protracted campaign for their adoption by Government and Opposition such that available funding is focused into environmentally sustainable rail, rather than further subsidising environmentally unsustainable heavy road freight.

It is time to remove the blinkers; rail must be today's choice to ensure a sustainable future for the people of the Blue Mountains and their World Heritage Area.

August Monthly Meeting

Report by Michael Mack and David Hall

Gary Caganoff's film 'Rebuilding the National Pass' was screened to a packed house at the Conservation Hut on August 28. The film set out what a remarkable achievement the construction in 1906-08 would have been at any time but with the means available at the time, only more so. .

The reconstruction was also remarkable for the dedication of the project team in restoring the original appearance while making it more enduring which required stones exactly like the one to be replaced and placing them in the right place. Jim Smith, Historical and Heritage Consultant to the film remarked that knowing which is the right stone to use and where to place them, the Stonemason's art, is a talent that cannot be taught.

Ben Corry of the NPWS, Master Track Builder Colin Delap and Jim Smith explained the difficulties of the reconstruction stemming from that need to restore the track to its longstanding appearance.

Erosion was a major problem in providing a good surface. Dishing of the old stairs was reconstructed by cutting out the old damaged surface and

regrouting new pieces of stone. Damaged dry stone walling was also rebuilt and stepping stones strategically placed along the way to discourage tourists from stepping away from the designated track. Narrow steel staircases were replaced with metal fabrications and timber palings. Water traps under palings and posts were redirected to prevent wood rot. The talus slopes were slipping so the soil was removed, the foundations rebuilt with retaining walls and the soil brought back to restore the original soil structure.

The original catwalks, suspended five metres above the Wentworth Creek at the base of the Falls were washed away by flooding. A clapper bridge was built to avoid this in future which required the construction of tight joins to avoid movement. Diamond core drills were used to drill through the rock into the foundation stone and stainless steel pins epoxy-grouted into those foundations to lock the clapper bridge into place.

The original image of the catwalks used by the project team came from images on postcards from the time of the original construction. The sandstone and all other materials used were recycled

with some of the sandstone coming from the Sydney GPO and underground road culverts along the Great Western Highway.

The funding was provided by a NSW Government Heritage Restoration Fund and the NPWS but only in stages. Year by year the project team did not know where the following year's funding would come from.

All this took eight people, working nine hour days over five years to complete. Helicopters were used to bring in supplies but most of the work was done by manual labour. The filming was also remarkable – a two day shoot and a four day edit.

During the question and answer session, Colin Delap confirmed that the NSW Government's reluctance to provide maintenance funding for the NPWS did not conform to international best practice. In National Parks around the world, five year maintenance contracts are usual. Colin also advised that successful track construction should not be seen, the tracks are meant to be traversed easily while walkers enjoy the natural environment.

The Scribbly Gum Moth By Graham Alcorn

Ogmograptis Scribula
The bush graffiti artist,
Of the order Lepidoptera,
Family Yponomeutidae,
Long ago has found a way
To avoid the strife
Of graffitiists' life,
For it lives in the dark
Under the bark
Of various species of gum tree.

It is easy to see where Ogmo went,
Chewing and chomping and scribbling away,
Long after Ogmo's days are spent,
Off to the left for a week or two,
Gulping and goring as Ogmos do,
Then to the right for a similar time,
Gormandising along the line,
There in the dark
Under the bark
Of various species of gum tree.

Eucalyptus sclerophylla,
Racemosa, rossii,
Haemastoma and signata,
Pauciflora, dendromorphy
and dalrympleana -
Here comes the Ogmos, doing fine.
Chewing the left right, right left line,
Delicate calligraphy,
Ogmograptis graffiti,
On all these species of gum tree.

Some chew up and some chew down,
This the philosophers might explain,
But the thing that causes me to frown,
The thing I'd dearly love to learn
Is what makes every Ogmo turn?
Off to the left, then to the right,
Another about turn, very tight,
Chomping a track,
Forward and back,
On various species of gum tree.

Very young ogmos tend to wander
Skittish, no doubt as young folks are,
Filled with the spirit of adventure.
Suddenly they get much fatter.
Adventurings no longer matter.
But what I yearn and yearn to learn
Is how they now know just when to turn
There in the dark
Under the bark
Of various species of gum tree?

At last there comes that glorious day
When this gyrating artistic grub
Turns into a moth a flies away.
No more chewing and scribbling and
shoving
Now is the time for dancing and loving.
Having thus drained life's cup to the dregs,
Before it dies and lays its eggs
Into the dark
Beneath the bark
Of its chosen species of gum tree.

Although the new Ogmos can't be seen,
Next year when the gum tree sheds its bark
It becomes quite obvious where they've been.
Off to the left for a week or two,
Gulping and gorging as Ogmos do,
Then to the right for a similar time,
Gormandising along the line,
There in the dark
Under the bark
Of various species of gum trees.



Spring colours Sue Nicol

At the beginning of August the Interpretive Bushwalkers met at Glenbrook for a short but fascinating walk down to Campfire Creek and up past Red Hands Cave. As the upper mountains walkers got out of our cars we immediately began stripping off our warm layers of winter woollies. The change of climate and seasons from upper to lower mountains was very marked as we set off through a Spring garden of flowering shrubs. The plant enthusiasts were in raptures as we stopped to admire, identify and photograph.

The dominant colours at first were the yellows and golds of *Bossiaea*, *Dillwynia* and *Phyllota*, soon to be joined by *Gompholobium grandiflorum* whose fat buds were ready to burst. This was highlighted by the purple of *Hovea*, pink *Boronia* and *Grevillea* and white beard heath (*Leucopogon setiger*). Lower down in the valley we saw sweet scented sprays of *Logania* and the path was bordered by ferns and mosses.

We followed the creek past rock overhangs and came to a shallow part of the stream bed where the smooth rock was scoured into natural rounded potholes, providing a reservoir for the Indigenous Darug people to sharpen stone tools, as evidenced by the numerous grinding grooves.

Climbing back up we came to the Red Hands Cave, the ochre stenciled hand prints protected by a Perspex screen, unfortunately necessary to prevent vandalism. Amazing to thing they have survived any damaged so close to 'civilization'.

What treasures our Blue Mountains hold. We are so lucky to have all this on our doorstep.

Grevillea & firetail finches

Poem by Geoffrey Dutton

This morning redefined red
With a quick purr of wings,
Ten firetails lifting from a grevillea
To the sheoak by the fence.
Coral antlers, Feathers of flame,
And the wind-sigh sheoak with its
red-gold hair.

Red is the conscience of our country,
Beyond those easy greens.
The hills are brushed green by
autumn,
The plains are still red with summer.
But the firetails are a reminder
That passion may dance as well as
sigh.

(In the garden at Mount
Annan Botanic Gardens)

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

THE HERMIT OF HAT HILL

Over the years the Blue Mountains has provided sanctuary for many who, for whatever reason, have sought solitude in its wilderness. One such was William Murphy who, not long before the outbreak of World War I, took up residence in the shadow of Hat Hill, Blackheath. An elderly man of unknown origin, he was tall and thin with a white beard and pale blue eyes. In the scrub, a stone's throw from the blue expanse of the Grose Valley, you can still find today the remains of the small stone hut he built a century ago.

Though solitary by nature, he did not spurn the occasional company of his fellow men. He walked regularly into Blackheath for provisions, made brooms he sold to the locals and as one old resident recalled in an interview in the 1980s, was always happy to chat with those he met. Indeed, he was remembered as an interesting conversationalist with a good knowledge of natural history who became something of a local attraction when, on Sunday afternoons around sundown, he allowed visitors to watch him feed the animals - wallabies, possums and birds - who were his neighbours. Wild birds would sit on his shoulder and take food from his hand.

Sadly, when fire raged through the Hat Hill area sometime in the years following the end of the war, his life in the Mountains came to an end. In the aftermath of the fire the townsfolk found his house burnt out but still standing and the old man barely clad and cowering nearby in a watercourse that he had regularly used for bathing. The incident had a profound impact and despite attempts by the locals to re-establish him, he moved eventually to Sydney where he was taken in by friends at Kogarah. He died there in November 1927, in his early eighties, and was buried in the Woronora cemetery, his grave recently restored by a grandson of the family who looked after him.

When last I visited Hat Hill some months ago a family of skinks had established itself among the remains of his hut and mother and babies were sunny themselves on the stones and going about their business quite unconcerned at my presence.

John Low (johnlow@iprimus.com.au)



(Photos courtesy of Local Studies Section, Blue Mountains City Library)

Observing Nature

Recently I was sitting on the deck in the sunshine on a beautiful sunny Blackheath day. Migrating honeyeaters flew overhead "cheep, cheep". A Spotted Pardelote called "I'm pretty ... I'm pretty".

The Sydney Wattle (*Acacia longifolia*) by the deck was laden with golden flowers. The sound of bees. The bees run along the length of the flower spikes, their sacs full of nectar, their bodies dusted with pollen.

Little pieces of the wattle spikes were falling to the ground, perhaps single flowers I noticed one of them move, then another. I couldn't see what was causing the movement so took a few close-up photos and then enlarged them on the computer.

Each little piece of wattle flower had a tiny transparent caterpillar or grub with a black head. The soil around where many had landed was soft as if scratched. Perhaps they burrow into the ground?

Does anybody know what these little creatures are? Christine Davies.



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. **Late changes to the program will be published on the website.**

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
Sep 12	Mt York historic tracks. Lockyers Road to Vale of Clydd and Cox's Road return	2/3	Liz 4754 4966	Mt Wilson	9	8.30 Mt Vic Station CP
Sep 11-12	St Helena Crater restoration. Weekend (scrambling off-track section)	4	Jim 4758 6009	Springwood and Penrith	~12	Contact leader. Martins Lookout
Sep 19	Mt Airlie's wonderland of pagodas and the start of a new coal mine, before coal mining causes rock collapses. Steep uphill at the start of the walk. Scrambling off track section.	3/4	Meredith 4782 4823	Glen Alice	11	8.15 Blackheath Station CP
Sep 26	Bald Head via gullies to Bennett's LO. With some steep and rough bits. Magnificent views into the Grose Gorge.	3	Hugh 0423 309 854	Mt Wilson	~8	Contact leader. Ring early as party limit.
Oct 3	Boorong Crags—Mt Hay and beyond with great views into the Grose Gorge. Steep descents and ascents. Half off track	3	Jim 4758 6009	Mt Wilson	10	8.30 Leura School, Mt Hay Road

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

Sep 14	Golden Stairs to Ruined Castle. Unique rock formation, different views of Mt Solitary.	3	Ros 4733 3880	8.30 Gearins Hotel, Katoomba.		Car pool.
Sep 21	Jamison Lookout - Leura Falls, Leura Forest, Furber Steps. Probable extension to old sewer works.	3	Phil 4787 5560	915 Gearins Hotel, Katoomba.		Car pool.
Sep 28	Longneck Lagoon, Pitt Town. BUS TRIP. Circumnavigate large lagoon. BBQ lunch. Fare \$10. Book and pay Birgitta 4784 3191	1	Maurice 4739 4942	BMCC Depot, South Street, North Katoomba,	8.30 am.	
Oct 5	Blue Mountain, Hazelbrook. A walk to the original Blue Mountain.	2	Judith 4758 6310	9.15 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

Sep 10	Transit of Venus Track, Woodford. Historical walk.	2	Maurice 4739 4942	9 am, Woodford Station (north or downhill side)		
Sep 17	Leura Cascades round walk. Easy clifftop walk via lookouts. Some steps, great views.	2	Joan c/o 4782 5966	9.40 Corner of Leura Mall and megalong Street, Leura.		
Sep 24	Circuit track off Pierces Pass. Great views. Bring lunch.	2	Maurice 4739 4942	9.50 Mt Victoria Railway Station		
Oct 1	Florabella Pass/Pippa's Pass, Warimoo. Walk to Glenbrook Creek. Some steps. Wildflowers.	2	Maurice 4739 4942	9.30 Warrimoo Station (south side). Return from Blaxland Station.		
Oct 8	Campfire Creek loop and Red Hands Cave, Glenbrook. Unique walk in the lower mountains. Bring NP sticker if you have one.	2	Heather 4739 1493	9.30 Glenbrook Station car park.		
Sep 10	Transit of Venus Track, Woodford. Historical walk.	2	Maurice 4739 4942	9 am, Woodford Station (north or downhill side)		

Bicentennial Park, Homebush Bay

On Thursday 26 August the Interpretive Bushwalkers went to Bicentennial Park, Homebush Bay. It was only a short walk to the park from Concord West Station on an absolutely perfect spring day.

We passed a stand of Casuarinas and crossed a creek teeming with little fish with birds feeding and walked around Lake Bevedere. Families were feeding the birds—pelicans, coots, ducks—and enormous eels. There were also swans. They don't eat bread, but were hanging around anyway. Little children watched,

enthralled. A man over the other side of the lake was playing the trumpet, a beautiful haunting tune.

We walked past a long row of water spouts (my daughter Sophia tells me her children enjoy those on a hot day) to Treillage Tower, to the monument to "Cyrus King of Persia who declared the First Charter of Human Rights in 538 BC and created the First Multicultural Society". Boardwalks pass through mangrove swamps and a path leads to a hide beside a salt marsh. There were so many water birds there, waders I had not seen before.

People passed us on bikes or jogging during the lunch hour. School children were playing on the grass and having lessons in the study area in the mangroves. Everybody seemed happy and relaxed.

Sometimes we could see buildings beyond the park and hear traffic, but this didn't spoil the natural beauty or our enjoyment of the place. The area had suffered a long period of abuse since European settlement. But what wonderful work has been done to restore it. I recommend a visit.

Christine Davies.