



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

Flannery to present the Inaugural *Mick Dark Talk for the Future*

Even before the sad passing of Mick Dark, work was underway to hold an environmental lecture in his honour.

The inaugural lecture will be delivered by nationally prominent environmentalist, Tim Flannery, on the afternoon of Saturday, 19th September, at Wentworth Falls School of Arts. It will be co-hosted by Blue Mountains Conservation Society and Varuna Writers' Centre. Admission will be charged, with discount for current BMCS and Varuna members. Signed copies of Tim's new book, "Atmosphere of Hope", supplied by Megalong Books of Leura, will be for sale on the day.

The Inaugural Mick Dark Talk for the Future

Speaker: Tim Flannery

Saturday, 19 September, 2015, 3.00 to 5.00 pm

Venue: Wentworth Falls School of Arts

Ticket prices: \$25 (\$20 BMCS members, Varuna Alumni, and concession)

Tickets will be available online from early August. See BMCS and Varuna websites for details and bookings:

www.bluemountains.org.au www.varuna.com.au

A tribute to Mick Dark is on page 4 of this newsletter.

Nursery reopens after winter break

The Society's native plant nursery at Lawson is open for sales on Wednesday and Saturday mornings and our volunteers will be at Blackheath and Lawson markets (more information on page 2). New volunteers are always welcome. Contact Sue Nicol nursery@bluemountains.org.au

COMING EVENTS:

Sep 2 (Wed) 7 pm: **Six of the Best** (a Special General Meeting at the Conservation Hut). (See page 3)

Sep 5 (Sat), 1 pm: **Threatened Species Month Event** at the Mid Mountains Community Centre. (See page 2).

Sep 19 (Sat), 3 pm: **Inaugural Mick Dark Talk for the Future**, Wentworth Falls School of Arts. (See page 1).

Community support at LEP2013 rally

Snow, black ice, road closures, heavy traffic and railway closed for "track work" did not deter Blue Mountains residents attending the rally in Katoomba on 18 July in support of the draft Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2013. The rally was co-ordinated by Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

The rally demonstrated the broad political support for the draft LEP 2013, with Labor, Liberal, Greens and Independent representatives attending. The Mayor Mark Greenhill, Cr Daniel Myles and local MP Trish Doyle all spoke passionately in support of the draft LEP 2013.

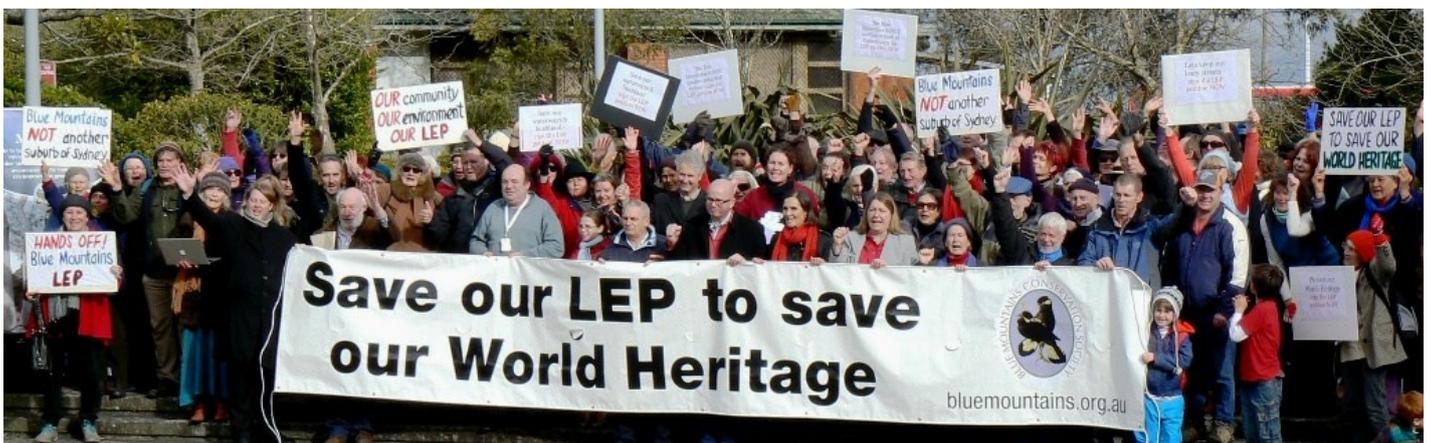
When Council was required to develop a new single LEP, the community fought long and hard to retain the existing strong environmental clauses which were supported by almost two thirds of the 600 submissions received.

The Mayor highlighted that Council has been in constant contact with the Department and previous Planning Ministers. Why the apparent dropping of key provisions when the LEP is so close to being finalized?

The Society is lobbying to ensure the NSW Planning Department and the Minister understand that the Blue Mountains is a city surrounded by World Heritage listed national parks, and an environmentally sound LEP is needed to protect the World Heritage area.

What you can do

- **Keep up to date** by going to the Society's website at www.bluemountains.org.au and click on the DLEP 2013 box, or like us on Facebook.
- **Send a prepared email to the Minister of Planning** asking him to approve the LEP unchanged. Go to the Society's website, click on the DLEP 2013 box and follow the prompts.



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**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT
 ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS
 15 AUGUST 2015**

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 PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

**Blue Mountains Conservation Society
 THREATENED SPECIES MONTH EVENT**



**Saturday, 5 September, 1 pm
 Mid Mountains Community Centre
 7 New Street, Lawson**

SPEAKERS:

Chris Tobin: *Welcome to country and
 a Darug perspective*

Dr Ian Baird: *Giant Dragonfly*

Sarsha Gorissen: *Blue Mountains
 Water Skink*

Dr Kellie Leigh: *Koalas and Badger
 the Detection Dog*

Dr Brad Purcell: *Dingoes (what
 makes a dingo a real dingo?)*



**The day will finish with a Q & A
 ALL WELCOME
 Gold Coin Donation**

More information about the speakers and
 their topics can be found on other pages
 of this newsletter.

Photos: Giant Dragonfly (Ian Baird), Blue Mountains
 Water Skink and Dingo Pup (Nakia Belmer)

BMCS NURSERY PLANT SALES

Our nursery offers the home gardener, landscaper or large contractor a big
 variety of quality local native plants at economical prices.

Lawson Nursery, Wednesday and Saturday mornings, 9am to noon.

The nursery is located in the Lawson Industrial Area on the corner of Park
 and Cascade Streets - see map on our website
www.bluemountains.org.au.

Blackheath Community Market, 1st Sunday of the month at Black-
 heath Public School, 9am to 1pm.

Magpie Market, 3rd Sunday of month at Lawson Public School, 9am
 to 2pm.

Tube stock \$3. Larger pots available.

Discounts for bulk orders and large contracts.

Enquiries Sue Nicol 4787 8887, nursery@bluemountains.org.au

Six of the Best

Six members have been nominated to receive Life Membership of Blue Mountains Conservation Society. They are:

Brian Marshall
Christine Davies
Joan Gahl
Kevin Bell
Lyndal Sullivan
Robin Mosman

Life Membership is conferred upon Society members who have made a meritorious contribution to the work of the Society and to the Conservation cause.

A Special General Meeting is to be held at -

**7pm Wednesday 2nd September
at The Conservation Hut,
Wentworth Falls**

This is a time to not only celebrate some outstanding individuals, but to celebrate the contribution of all Society members and the achievements of the Society over its 54 years.

Join us for an evening of humour, acknowledgment and warmth - with plenty of time to chat and catch up.

Gardens of Stone - In Focus

The Gardens of Stone: *In Focus* Photographic Competition is going from strength to strength. Now an independent judging panel has been announced.

News photographer Nick Moir, conservationist Joan Domicelj and Blue Mountains photographer Paul Chantler will bring their own special skills to the challenging job of judging the hundreds of entries.

Throughout June and July photographers of all levels have been out and about on guided walks in the Gardens of Stone region, gathering photos for the competition. Once images are selected they are destined for a prestigious exhibition in Sydney curated by Tony Bond OAM, former director curator at the Art Gallery of NSW.

BMCS Planning and Development Resource Kit

Do you want to take action on an environmental issue in your neighbourhood or the Blue Mountains more broadly?

Do you want information about the laws and procedures relating to development and environmental protection?

Find out what YOU can do! Go to the Planning and Development Resource Kit

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



Protect the Gardens of Stone

There has been a lot of activity on the coal mining front during recent weeks. Here is a brief summary by Madi Maclean.

Springvale Mine Extension.

The Planning and Assessment Commission's (PAC) review of the Springvale proposed mine extension has supported approval for the extension with additional conditions on its operations. This extension will undermine 29 nationally threatened shrub and hanging swamps on Newnes Plateau and allow the discharge of up to 50ML a day of toxic saline mine waste into Sydney's main water supply via the Coxs River.

The next step will be a determination of the project by the PAC, possibly by the end of September.

The Society and other organisations have been campaigning against this approval in its current form and seeking a second PAC public meeting. Members will have received email information about how to support this campaign.

Public concern about impacts of Springvale Mine extension.

The Sydney Morning Herald ran a feature article on the nationally threatened swamps at risk from the Springvale Mine proposals.

It also reported that an environmental consultant working for Centennial Coal, the owners of Springvale mine, was sacked in 2001 after warning the company that its long wall mining was causing serious damage to endangered swamps on Newnes Plateau.

A more recent report covered the impacts on Sydney's water supply of Centennial's highly saline discharges to the Coxs River since the closure of Wallerawang Power station in 2012 combined with the proposed discharges from Springvale.

Mine pollution of Wollangambe River.

On 1st July 2015, mine waste heaps at Centennial's Clarence Colliery collapsed sending fine coal particles into the Wollangambe River which runs through the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. The EPA has issued a clean-up notice. Photos show grey coal sludge in the stream beds and over plants. This environmental disaster raises new questions about Centennial's ability to manage its mining operations in an environmentally safe manner.

Balance restored?

Planning Minister Stokes proposes to remove the requirement making the significance of the mining resource the principal consideration of consent in the mining SEPP. Once gazetted, this important change restores the balance between environmental, social and economic considerations which was removed in November 2013.

New Owners for Coalpac's mines.

Coalpac's mines have been taken over by a newly formed company, Shoalhaven Coal, trading as Castlereagh Coal. Shoalhaven Coal has links to a major creditor of Coalpac. In April the Federal Government gave the go-ahead for Coalpac to mine six hectares of a proposed conservation area under an existing development consent. New owners could mean a whole new proposal comes forth.

MICK DARK – a Champion of the Blue Mountains

With the death of Mick Dark in July, the Blue Mountains lost one of its great environmentalists. From Dark's Common at Glenbrook/Lapstone to the saving of the Mount Hay area from action movie filming, to Varuna at Katoomba (a very environmentally aware writers' retreat), so much of what we value bears Mick's signature.

Mick was a life member of the (amalgamated) Blue Mountains Conservation Society and, prior to amalgamation, had served as president of both the Upper and Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Societies. Christine Stickley and Craig Linn recall planning meetings for the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society in the 1980s on the veranda of Mick and Jill Dark's home near The Bluff, Glenbrook: *"A white cockatoo would be keeping an eye on us all in the circle of canvas chairs overlooking the bush"*. Later, Mick and Jill established a bushland fringe garden at Hazelbrook where WIRES rescue animals were cared for and copy for several books about Blue Mountains flora was produced.

Brian Michael Dark was born in Katoomba in 1929, son of Doctor Eric Dark, the Doctor's Reform Society founder, and Eleanor Dark (nee O'Reilly), a novelist who promoted the recognition of indigenous Australians and ordinary classes of white immigrants in our understanding of the "civilising" of the Blue Mountains and Greater Sydney.

Years before the establishment of Blue Mountains National Park, Mick came to know "Doctor Dark's Cave". By establishing this remote retreat near the Mount Hay Road, Eric proved to his family and friends that they could straddle the culture of living in a European-inspired town and true Australian bush life.

Craig Linn writes of the time he and Mick were sent to a polling booth near Lithgow to help save Tasmania's Franklin River from "the dam":

"One young fellow wanted to vent his spleen about greenies always protecting trees and informed us that a field of improved pasture was an environmental improvement every time over a lot of ugly useless scrub. Mick showed enormous patience with the young fellow, pointing out the value and need for biological diversity if we are to have a land worth living in. To the young man's credit he listened, and while he wasn't entirely convinced you could see that he had started to think about the matter. This was Mick, always ready to take the time to discuss, promote, and campaign for the environment thus encouraging people to think about it, and on this particular day to vote for it."

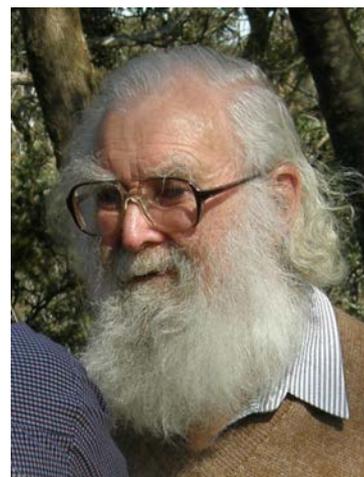
Here are words from "No Barrier", a novel by Mick's mother. They may help us to think of Mick when we see mist in the Megalong or the Kedumba or another mountains valley.

"But the eastern valley was clear, its blue pure, delicate and elusive, and the sun was just touching the top of Korrowal. As Miles watched, a faint breeze from the west began to stir the mist dammed back by the isthmus, and now the sun caught the surface of that white sea so that it seemed capped by restless,



Mick Dark was one of six people arrested at the Stealth blockade near Mount Hay to face the music at Katoomba Courthouse (2004).

Mick Dark at Blue Mountains Conservation Society's 50th anniversary celebrations in October 2011. Photo by Alan Page.



rosy waves. A few vaporous wisps drifted across the dividing wall, and drawn by some downward current of air, slid over the eastern cliff face. More followed, faster and faster, rolling up in billows and spilling over the edge, not floating down, but pouring hard and fast like water, so that the wall was lost beneath a rushing cateract that glowed like pink dust in the early sunlight."

Craig Linn concludes: *"I will remember Mick for his enormous generosity and knowledge of the Mountains; as a respected wise leader, who stood up for his beliefs, and who quietly, with strength of purpose and character, got things done."*

Don Morison and Craig Linn.

Welcome to new members

Mick Beltran, Blackheath
John Orme, Katoomba
Anna Martin, Blackheath
Alandra Tasire, Katoomba
Juliana Swatko, Woodford
Saul Whitton, Lawson
Angeline Dalman, Lawson
Merren Dargan, Leura
Elizabeth Howard, Katoomba
Graham Begg, Mount Riverview
Elizabeth Begg, Mount Riverview

Fast Rail – Not Another Airport Ross Coster

In April 2013 the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development released a report entitled: High Speed Rail Study Phase 2 Report (https://infrastructure.gov.au/rail/trains/high_speed/). This report details the route, stations, speeds, costs and patronage of the proposed network.

The **graphic** I like the most is the one that shows travel times.

The **number** I am most interested in is the Sydney to Melbourne travel time.

At present, to get from Sydney CBD to Melbourne CBD by air, you need to:

- Catch a train from Central to Domestic Airport (9 minutes)
- Arrive well before your flight (45 minutes)
- Fly to Melbourne (80 minutes)
- Wait for your luggage at the carousel (20 minutes)
- Catch a taxi to Melbourne CBD (26 minutes)

Total travel time is **180 minutes, or 3 hours!** For 80 of these minutes you are crammed into a tiny seat, unable to use your Mobile phone or the Internet, and exposed to noise levels that make concentration or conversation difficult.

If and when the High Speed Rail (HSR) network is built, the trip can be done in comfort and relative quiet, with continuous Mobile Phone and Internet access, watching beautiful scenery flash by, and be **16 minutes faster** than flying!

24% of all passenger movements at Mascot Airport are to and from Melbourne.

If we allow the Western Sydney Airport to be built we are effectively giving up on the HSR network forever, as no future Government will risk the financial impact on both Mascot and Western Sydney Airports of the HSR. The time to build the HSR link to Canberra and Melbourne is now!

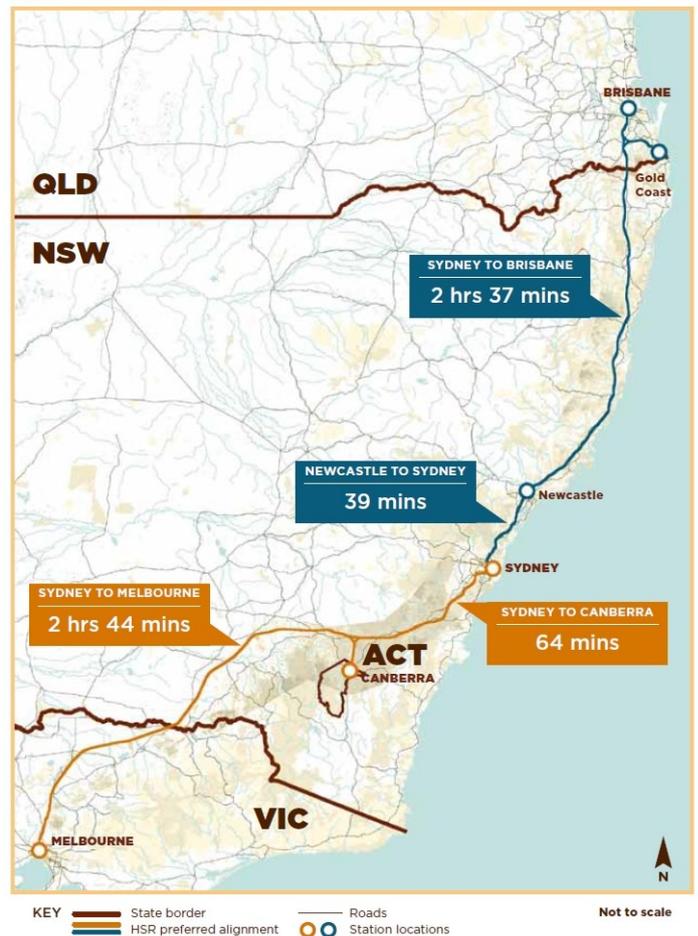
The HSR can reduce travel times to Canberra and Melbourne, reduce noise impacts on Sydney residents, promote development in Regional areas along the route, and allow people to travel in comfort and in contact with the World.

THREATENED SPECIES: Blue Mountains Water Skink (*Eulamprus leuraensis*)

PhD candidate, **Sarsha Gorissen** of the University of Sydney, is towards the end of her research project that aims to uncover more about the ecology and conservation biology of the iconic and endangered Blue Mountains Water Skink.

The Blue Mountains Water Skink (*Eulamprus leuraensis*) is found only within the endangered highland swamps of the Blue Mountains and the adjacent Newnes Plateau. This lizard is restricted to about 40 isolated swamps, most of them small, fragmented and close to urban areas. This unique habitat type is threatened by processes acting on a local scale (e.g., urbanisation, weed invasion, introduced animals, forestry and mining) as well as on a landscape scale (e.g., changes in climate and fire regimes).

Figure ES-2 HSR travel times between major cities



The HSR can be run on electricity from renewable sources, produce little or no pollution, contribute nothing to greenhouse gas emissions, and *not* burn precious oil-based fuels.

Flying between Sydney and Canberra or Melbourne, and eventually between Sydney and Brisbane, would no longer make sense with HSR in place.

We need this infrastructure program to start now, be built soon, and the money that was going to be spent at Badgerys Creek used to build a better, faster, safer, quieter, more convenient form of travel on these busy routes.

Sarsha's project focuses on the impacts of fire and groundwater loss on urban and bush populations of the lizard, the effects of which are unknown.

Photo: Sarsha Gorissen holds a Blue Mountains Water Skink in her hands, giving some idea of the size of this endangered animal.



WORLD HERITAGE – NOT Badgerys Creek Airport

The soon to be released Environmental Impact Statement for the Badgerys Creek Airport may have a consultation period of only 20 days. That is not long enough for this major project.

PLEASE WRITE to Minister for the Environment Greg Hunt to ask for more time to respond to the Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Western Sydney Airport. (The Hon Greg Hunt, Minister for the Environment, PO Box 6022, House of Representatives, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600. Email: Greg.Hunt.MP@aph.gov.au)

(SAMPLE LETTER)

Dear Minister Hunt,

I am writing to you to request an extension of the consultation period to respond to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Western Sydney Airport.

Under the EPBC Act, Section 103, we note that you have the discretion to extend the consultation period for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which may be as short as 20 days. Given this is a controversial project which will have impacts on millions of Sydney residents and on the environment of the Cumberland Plains and the Greater Blue Mountains, it is really important we have enough time to read and understand the EIS and make informed comments. We therefore request the consultation period be extended to at least 60 days.

We believe that the public will be disadvantaged if they are not allowed a reasonable time to read and respond to the Environmental Impact Statement for this major project.

Yours sincerely, (signed, your name, address, contact details)

THREATENED SPECIES: Giant Dragonfly (*Petalura gigantea*)

Dr Ian Baird is one of Australia's foremost experts on giant dragonflies and has been studying this family of dragonflies (Petaluridae) and their peat swamp habitats since 2003.

Petalura gigantea, commonly known as the Giant Dragonfly or Southeastern Petaltail comes from a prehistoric line, sharing characteristics with fossils 190 million years old. It is a very large dragonfly with a wingspan up to 13 cm and is recorded from peat swamps, bogs and seepages along the coast and ranges of NSW, including the Blue Mountains; and a small area in southeast Qld. The family is unique amongst dragonflies, in that larvae of most species excavate burrows which extend below the water table in soft peaty soils in mires, seepages or along stream margins. The larvae occupy and maintain these burrows for their entire larval period, generally surviving on creatures captured within the burrow system, or perhaps ambushed at the burrow entrance. Petalurid dragonflies have very long larval stages, which are known to extend for at least five years in two overseas species, and probably longer in *Petalura gigantea*.

Petalura gigantea is listed as endangered in NSW under the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*, with habitat loss and degradation identified as the main threats to the species. All of the species' peat swamp habitats in the Sydney Region are also classified as endangered under either Commonwealth or NSW legislation. Ian's presentation will focus on these peat swamp habitats in the Blue Mountains, and the unique life history attributes of the species, which makes it particularly vulnerable to threatening processes such as lowering water tables, more intense fire regimes, and the potentially compounding effects of rapid climate change.

Elphinstone (Radiata) Plateau under threat

Two development applications (DAs) for the construction of two new dwellings have recently been lodged on land on the Elphinstone (Radiata) Plateau. The DAs and supporting documents can be found on Councils website - go to www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au, click on the "Sustainable Living" box, then the "Developing Land" box, then click on "Development applications on exhibition" under the heading "Key Links" and then click on "On Exhibition" and look for DAs X/611/2015 and X/612/2015 28 Pulpit Hill Rd Katoomba.

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society and local residents have a long standing interest in this site, due to its scenic escarpment and largely intact forest (Eucalypts with a few old plantation pines).

We note that:

- the development footprint for the dwellings, due to the need for bushfire mitigation, landscaping, driveways and on-site sewer systems, is very large;
- the siting of the proposed dwellings is a long way into the property;
- up to 100 trees will be removed;
- the environmental impact assessment does not appear to adequately address the impacts on at least two threatened plant species (*Leioema lachnaeoides* and Dwarf Mountain Pine) or Aboriginal cultural values;

The two week public exhibition is insufficient for the community to assess and comment on the development applications. The Society is asking:

- that the public exhibition is extended for six weeks, and
- that any decision on the development application is considered by the full Council at a Council meeting.

What you can do:

- Make a submission outlining your concerns, even if the public exhibition period is not extended. Help and ideas for making a DA submission can be found in the Society's "Planning and Development Resource Kit". Go to www.bluemountains.org.au and click on the "Resources" box at the top of the home page.

Post-fire Recovery of Endangered Plants Margaret and Mark Baker.

After a fire sweeps through your bushland property it is always an interesting though anxious time waiting for the plants to recover. When some of those plants are listed under the Threatened Species Conservation Act (1995), the angst is doubled. So it has been for us as we watched for the re-appearance of the endangered species *Leucopogon fletcheri* subsp. *fletcheri* and the endangered population of *Pultenaea villifera* var. *villifera* that grew on our place, *Banksia View*, in Winmalee prior to an escaped hazard reduction in September 2013.

Pultenaea villifera grows on the South Coast and in a few small stands on clay soils primarily on private property in the Lower Blue Mountains from Warrimoo to Winmalee. It flowers sparsely and sporadically through the year with flowers spaced along graceful arching branches. *Leucopogon fletcheri* subsp. *fletcheri* was first collected by J.J. Fletcher in 1887 in North Springwood. It has also been recorded from Winmalee where its stunningly white pendant flowers make it easy to spot in early Spring in rocky sandstone locations.

Banksia View is protected from development and disturbance by a Conservation Agreement with the NSW State Government, partly because of the presence of these endangered plants, but that doesn't of course stop damage by fire. We knew that both species should recover from the 2013 fire; they had done so following the January 1994 Grose valley fire, as well as from a hazard reduction in the 1980s. As the rest of the bush regenerated we waited ... and waited for any sign of the *Pultenaea* and *Leucopogon* seedlings.

By late April this year, just as we started to become quite concerned that both species had been lost, we spotted the first specimens of *Pultenaea villifera*, each with just a few sets of distinctively hairy leaves. One 'advanced' plant, only 6cm high, even had a flower. Perhaps it had taken the late summer/autumn rains to promote germination of seed that had been heat treated almost 18 months before. There are now over 150 specimens in an area of about 400 sq m. *Leucopogon fletcheri* was even tardier. We did not see the first tiny seedlings until the very end of May. Suddenly there they were with their characteristic incredibly pungent leaves and near-parallel leaf venation distinguishing them from the range of other pointed-leaved species in our bush. We don't know yet how many there are as we daren't walk among these tiny fragile survivors.

The return of these species to the bushland of *Banksia View* has been a very special and emotional experience. It's like having all of the members of a precious family finally assembled again in the one place after a long absence. Our challenge will now be to provide continued protection for two species that are slow to germinate, flower and seed, and which both have a preference for living right on the edge of, or even worse, across our bush track which doubles as the NPWS access track and fire trail. No wonder they're endangered.



Leucopogon fletcheri subsp. *fletcheri* (Mark Baker)



Pultenaea villifera var. *villifera* (Mark Baker)

Elphinstone – Leave Alone

Oh! Elphinstone do you need
The weight of concrete blocks and,
Flush designs on random rocks.
Now! ... upstart man
Vainly tries again
Unhappy with two false starts
Scratch the plateau,
Renew the pain.

Why must we pioneers always be?
Can't we feel and meditate
In space unseen,
Places clean, unclad
Uncluttered
By man's disgrace?
Elphinstone! Beyond the avarice and creed,
Aloof from egocentred men amiss

Ignore this site's ignoble heir
Return to future plateau bliss!
Maker of Eagle airs,
Keeper of Mountain Ash
Secure your liquid carved crystal crags.
The last Misty Milestone – step to Kanangra,
Twixt Bluegum.
Elphinstone! Top of Megalong!!

Wyn Jones, Blackheath, March 1990.

These are the final three verses of Wyn Jones' nine verse poem about Elphinstone plateau which towers over Megalong Valley near Katoomba. Elphinstone is the surname of a former NSW government surveyor.

VALLEY OF THE WATERS BUSHCARE GROUP

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

THREATENED SPECIES:

Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*)

The recent Great Koala Count run by the National Parks Association of NSW has shown the power of citizen science for finding koalas. However the next step of assessing low density populations in rugged terrain is more challenging.

Dr Kellie Leigh is a director of Science for Wildlife and a research partner with the University of Sydney that will undertake the regional koala mapping using innovative research methods such as a koala detection dog. The resulting data will be used in the University's genome research.

Koalas in the Blue Mountains are thought to be particularly important for conservation of the species due to high levels of genetic diversity. The large World Heritage Area might be an important habitat refuge for other populations under pressure from climate change.

Farewell Margaret Hyslop

Margaret has passed away after a long illness, leaving us with 18 years of shared experiences and memories.

Hundreds of bushwalks in our beautiful Blue Mountains, holidays, picnics, barbeques, happy hours, birthday cakes on bushwalks, Christmas parties where we talked around the circle about all the wonderful things we had experienced during the year.

Flannel flowers on Rigby Hill in springtime after bushfire. Waratahs on Newnes Plateau. Rainforest and waterfalls at Mount Wilson and lunches in Liz Gow's lovely garden. Denis Kevans composing poems and reciting them on the little bridge near Walls Cave. Lester playing the didgeridoo at the Wind Eroded Cave. Swimming with the fish on Lord Howe Island and Bob's famous pancakes. The Warrumbungles when the barbeque caught fire. Sharing the sunrise with a kangaroo at Green Cape lighthouse. The sunset at the Broken Hill sculpture park.

One of our bushwalkers sums it up: "For me, mainly, Margaret is part of my bushwalking family from my beginnings with the bushwalking group. People have come and gone, but Margaret and Ron have always been there, part of the family since day one. What a beautiful time we have all had together. Aren't we lucky!"

The Thursday Interpretive Bushwalkers.

Poets' Corner

Blue Mountain Day

Rays of sun gold-tip still leaves
the horizon blue-pencils the line of ancient plateaux
valleys are filled with tumbled clouds,
dawn awakens morning.

The blue of the ridges heightens.
Down the escarpment, day draws
bands of red clay in sandstone,
wind wisps away the last lazy clouds
unveiling rocky slopes and creek lines below,
ageless cliffs brood over shimmering waves of trees
that slowly recede and meld with the blue haze.

The sun climbs. Camouflaged,
a bush chorus sings and drums, birds flash and call –
the long afternoon holds its breath.

Then comes the time that I love best.
Daylight's orange and gold fingers
linger on the warm rock face,
firing the cliffs, a last caress
before dusk drains the colour
and etches in the night.

Lois Holland.

Readers of Hut News are invited to send a poem inspired by the Blue Mountains, maximum of 20 lines. Each month, one or two will be published in Poets' Corner. Poems can be emailed to brendan049@gmail.com or even posted to Poets' Corner at 5 Lurline Street, Wentworth Falls 2782.

CARDINAL CLIMATE CLASH

In the Red Corner ("Red" for devilishly hot) Cardinal George Pell, Vatican Financial Controller and former Catholic Archbishop of Sydney: "The church has no particular expertise in science. The church has got no mandate from the Lord to pronounce on scientific matters." (Pell's quote in the Financial Times, 16 July 2015)

In the Green corner for this fight, Rod Benson, public affairs officer for the NSW Council of Churches: "Those who think there is an incentive for countries to 'free-ride' on the climate protection provided by others are very much mistaken." (Quote from economist Fergus Green). Good news for God's good earth, and a clear warning for the Abbott government and their ilk. (Editorial by the NSW Council of Churches, 5 pm, 19 July 2015, Radio 2CH Sydney).

We've all heard of "Liberation" theology. Let's have plenty more "Save Creation" theology.

Grandparents for Generational Equity

www.genequity.net

Go to the website ... keep informed ... write letters ... tell your friends. Let's take some real action to help leave a world our grandchildren can survive in.

Loose Feathers, with Carol Probet

Beetle wings, grasshopper legs, pieces of snail shell, rodent fur, bone fragments, scales, teeth and claws, feathers, privet and olive seeds.... No, it's not a magical concoction from a fairytale. These are some of the things you might find in a regurgitated pellet.

You may have found such pellets in your garden, under the birdbath or on a bushwalk under a big tree. These compacted oval castings are not scats, dung or vomit as people sometimes assume. Birds, of course, have no teeth, so food is ground in a muscular section of stomach called the gizzard and (in some species) the indigestible parts are compacted into a pellet which is then disgorged via the mouth at a later time.

Birds of prey, owls, currawongs, magpies, butcherbirds and even smaller birds like Willie Wagtails all produce such pellets. For diurnal raptors and owls these are often found accumulated under roosting and nesting sites and can be a handy way for researchers to discover what the bird has been feeding on. In general, owl pellets contain more bone than those of diurnal birds of prey, sometimes even including the intact skulls of small vertebrate prey. It seems that owls are more uncouth in their table manners!

It's the castings of currawongs which people mostly encounter in their gardens, on their decks and around birdbaths. The act of drinking seems to provide the right lubrication and stimulates the bird to disgorge its pellet, which is why birdbaths can be littered with them. Pied Currawongs are omnivorous - eating a wide range of food - and their pellets are often entirely made up of seeds, especially in winter when the privet and other bushland weeds are fruiting. As each pellet may contain up to 150 seeds, the potential for the spread of weeds is considerable.

Pied Currawongs gather in winter flocks to take advantage of concentrations of fruiting plants around the townships. Their massed calls create an unforgettable soundscape filling the air with a variety of musical whistles and cries. Next time you see one angle its head forward with a glazed look in its eye and bill open, you'll know what's coming! If a pellet has formed, it must be expelled before the bird can eat its next meal.

Carol Probet. origma@westnet.com.au Twitter: @carolprobet



*Pied Currawong above the Jamison Valley.
Photo by Carol Probet.*

You can become a member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society

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

(Use capitals please—even for email address)

Name(s) 1.
2.
3.

Address:
.....PC

Phone(s)

Email

I/We agree to support the aims and objectives of the Society as set out on reverse side of this membership application:

Please sign if named above.

Signature(s) 1.
2.
3.

MEMBERSHIP FEES (please circle one item)

Single \$30 Concession (Senior/Student) \$20

Household \$35 Household Concession \$25

Corporate (negotiable)

Membership (circled above) \$

Donation (tax deductible) \$

Bushwalkers: please add
\$20 per walker per annum. \$

TOTAL AMOUNT \$

Send my copy of Hut News by

Please tick box mail internet only

Would you like to be involved in any of the following activities or working groups? (Please underline):

Land use/development issues; Environmental Education; Threatened species issues; Website and social media; Plant nursery assistance; Bushcare; Publicity/photography; Water quality/sourcing studies; Administration;

ENQUIRIES: Phone 02 4757 1872

Email: membership@bluemountains.org.au

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY www.bluemountains.org.au

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BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community organisation working to achieve the preservation and regeneration of the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

The Society believes that World Heritage status provides an opportunity for local community members to become custodians of the unique biodiversity and scenery of the Blue Mountains.

The Mission of the Society is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains.

The Aims and Objectives of the Society are to:

- Disseminate and foster an understanding of the ideals of Conservation.
- Promote the need for ecological sustainability.
- Protect the natural environment—flora, fauna, habitat, water, land and air.
- Actively oppose those human activities which degrade or destroy the natural environment.
- Repair the adverse effects of human activities upon the environment.
- Encourage the love of the natural environment by conducting a regular program of bushwalks.
- Increase the pool of expert knowledge about the natural environment, through meetings, excursions, research and other activities.
- Provide information to the public on matters of Conservation, especially through the Conservation Hut at the Valley of the Waters, Wentworth Falls.
- Maintain close and friendly relations with like-minded groups.

A BEQUEST: Please remember us in your Will.

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

Bulga—Saved by a SEPP? Robin Mosman

Last month's Hut News article *Battle for Bulga* told how, soon after NSW Planning Minister Rob Stokes' visit to the Hunter Valley on 1 June, he indicated that he might put out an amended draft mining SEPP as soon as possible. If so, he would expect the Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) to take it into account when it came to deciding the fate of Bulga, under threat from a proposed expansion of Rio Tinto's Warkworth Mine. We asked you to send letters to Stokes, urging him to act quickly, before the PAC decision was made.

Well, he has! On 7 July the Sydney Morning Herald, under the by-line *Mining Rule Change Gives Hope to Communities*, stated that Planning Minister Stokes would release that day a proposed amendment to the Mining SEPP removing the provision that made the significance of the resource "the principal consideration when determining projects". He said the draft amendment reflects a requirement for lawmakers to consider the likely environmental and social, as well as economic, impacts of any mining development.

John Krey, the vice-president of the Bulga Milbrodale Progress Association, said "There's a good chance the PAC will now reject the Rio mine".

This amendment not only offers hope to Bulga, it would also be hugely significant for other proposed mining developments in NSW, including the 16 new and expanded open-cut coal mines currently under consideration for the Hunter Valley. Not surprisingly, the amendment and the Minister are now under fierce attack from the mining industry, and it has been said that even Premier Baird is opposed to the amendment.

Nature Conservation Council of NSW chief executive Kate Smolski said the proposed rule change could affect many mining projects, but the Government needed to go further. The change would "only take us back to where we were two years ago", before the Mining SEPP was amended to "tilt the planning system further in favour of the mining industry", Ms Smolski said.

At the time of writing this article (mid July), the proposed amendment is still only a draft. If it is to survive, it will need all the public support it can get. Submissions will have closed by the time you are reading this. Let's hope we may have heard some good news in the interim.

Members as observers at MC meetings

Dear Members,

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is run by a Management Committee of 19 people. We meet every month at the Mid Mountains usually at Mid Mountains Community Centre at Lawson, generally on the 3rd Saturday of the Month, at 9:15am.

The next meeting is scheduled for the 15th of August. Meetings last about 3 hours and cover all areas of the Society's operation.

As a Member you are entitled to attend these meetings as a non-voting observer. Why not come along and see how things get done?

Minutes of the Meetings are kept, and are available on request from the Meetings Secretary, Heather Hull, at hhull001@bigpond.net.au.

Ross Coster, Membership Secretary.

The Gardens of Stone Visitors Map

\$7.50 plus \$1.50 postage.

Buy the map online (www.bluemountains.org.au) or write to BMCS, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782 with your cheque or money order.



6. Pulpit Rock, Blackheath.

Pulpit Rock is prominent in many of the most dramatic perspectives on the cliff wall landscape of the valleys of the upper Grose River and Govetts Creek. It is easily reached by the Clifftop Track from Govetts Leap or the steps from the unsealed circuit off Hat Hill Road.

The diversity of ecosystems visible from Pulpit Rock is inspiring. You can look around you at the cliff-top heathland, upslope at the Eucalypt forests towards Hat Hill, spy hanging swamps nestling near Horseshoe Falls, point binoculars at the diverse wet cliff-face foliage around Braeside Creek Falls (Bridal Veil) or stare downwards from the lookout railing at the bright green rainforest crowns in the valley. Bellbird tones waft up towards you as you do. There is a particularly informative collection of National Park interpretive signs around Pulpit Rock, describing both the general ecosystems and some of the more unusual heath plants in the area.

One of the things scenery lovers most value about this valley is the changing parade of colours on the Banks Wall and Burramoko Head varieties of Narrabeen sandstone during the course of the day. In neutral light, the places where sandstone has broken away most recently (that may be hundreds of years ago) look white or yellow, the areas less lately exposed look orange and those altered longest ago look grey. But daily variations or cloud cover change the intensity, particularly when the late afternoon sun shines directly on the yellows or oranges just before the soft blackness of the afternoon shadows sweeps up from the valley floor. (Photo by Christine Davies, July 2015)

This “Blue Trail” is a collective description for sites in the western Blue Mountains that arouse natural or cultural interest or both. Most are only a short walk from roads or vehicular tracks. One day, a high quality walking path may link them.

THREATENED SPECIES:

Dingo (*Canis lupus dingo*)

The dingo is one species that was not well understood, but was heavily managed because it is a predator and is perceived to threaten the livelihoods of livestock producers and sympatric species (those occupying the same or overlapping geographic areas without interbreeding).

Brad Purcell gained a PhD at UWS studying the dingo populations in the remote southern Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. The study generated much interest from public and industry, included a monograph on the dingo for CSIRO Publishing, a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travel Fellowship to Botswana, UK, Poland and America, and unveiled a controversial paradigm for dingo management in Australia.

JOIN Blue Mountains Conservation Society,
or renew your membership online.
www.bluemountains.org.au

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc: BUSHWALKING ACTIVITIES

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. The BMCS Bushwalking Guide which explains the numbered grades can be found on the Society's website www.bluemountains.org.au or can be posted on request. For more information call Maurice Kerkham 4739 4942, mobile 04024 02783, email mauricekerkham@hotmail.com or write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782. **Late changes to the program will be published on the website.**

SATURDAY WALKS: Usually a full day longer walk at a faster pace. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. If you are a new walker to Saturday walks, before attending contact the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Jim Percy—phone 4758 6009, email jp34@tpg.com.au Check www.bluemountains.org.au for updates.

Saturday Walks driver reimbursement: *In an effort to ensure that car drivers are adequately compensated for the use of their vehicles a driver reimbursement policy applies* (Check www.bluemountains.org.au Saturday Walks page for details)

- Aug 15 **Narrow Neck.** Travel by the newly rebuilt Narrow Neck Road then out to the end and back. Leader Eddie 4784 2691. Meet at Katoomba Station carpark 8.00am. 20Km. Gr 2/3. Maps Katoomba/Jamison
- Aug 22 **Pagoda Country.** See why the pagodas of the Gardens of stone are worth protecting. With a new Garden on each trip you won't be disappointed. Get in early for your place - party limit of 8 as wilderness area. Leader Hugh - ring on 0423 309 854 for details.
- Aug 29 **Wollangambe River.** Enjoy one of Bob's river adventures. Leader Bob 4757 2694. Meet at Wentworth Falls Stockade carpark 7.30am. 8Km. Gr 2/3. Map Wollangambe.
- Sep 5 **Wollangambe Wanderings.** Bell Perimeter track to Wollangambe River (and maybe Wollangambe Crater). Leader Warren 4787 5403. Meet at Blackheath Station Carpark 8.30am. 10 to 12 Km. Gr 2/3. Map Wollangambe.
- Sep 12 **Govetts Creek Classic.** Evans Lookout, Horsetrack to Govetts Creek then side trip to Blackwall Gully and Edenberry and Hilary Falls to Rodrequez Track and return to Evans LO. Leader Warren 4787 5403. Meet at Blackheath Stn carpark 8.00am. 9Km. Gr 3/4. Map Katoomba.

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS: Short Day walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of an average fitness. Bring morning tea and lunch and adequate water. The Group Co-ordinator is Keith Dorrian, 4736 1010, keithdor53@hotmail.com

- Aug 10 **South Lawson Waterfalls.** Meet start of Honour Ave Lawson 8.35 am. Leader Keith 4736 1010. Grade 2.
- Aug 17 **Six Foot Track** from Megalong Valley to the base of Bonnie Doon Falls and return 10 km. Meet Blackheath Station car park 8.45 am. Car pool fare \$5. Leader Meredith 4782 4723. Grade 2.
- Aug 24 **Olympic Park to Parramatta along river** 7 km. Meet Strathfield Station – be on train that arrives 9.10 am. Leader Judith 4758 6310. Grade 1.
- Aug 31 **Linden Station to Hazelbrook via Paradise Pool.** Meet Linden Station north side 8.55 am. Be in last 4 carriages – short platform. Leader Kate Litchfield 4759 1943. Grade 3.
- Sep 7 **Bus trip to Bobbin Head.** \$4.50 entrance fee to National Park, \$12 bus fare. Book with and pay Tony 9625 3985. Meet Springwood car park behind Westpac 7.50 am. Leader Tracy 04111 62611. Grade 2.
- Sep 14 **Grand Canyon, Blackheath.** Magnificent canyon walk. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 8.45 am. Leader Mary Read 4739 0786. Grade 3.

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS: Walks 2-3 hours conducted at a leisurely pace to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, adequate water and lunch if noted. Group Co-ordinator is Beverley Thompson, 4757 2076, denfenella@optusnet.com.au

- Aug 13 **Horseshoe Falls, Hazelbrook.** Meet Hazelbrook Shopping Centre Car Park, 8.45am. Leader Chris 4721 4309. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2.
- Aug 20 **Elphinstone (Radiata) Plateau, Katoomba.** Reasonably flat walk with short downhill through heath to breathtaking view. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Car pool. Take lunch. Meet Katoomba Station Car Park 9.30am. Grade 2.
- Aug 27 **Lawson's Long Alley, Mount Victoria.** Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2.
- Sep 3 **Bus trip to Newnes.** Visit the historically important ruins of the oil shale mine and refinery. Book and pay Chris 4721 4309. Meet Council Depot South Street North Katoomba 8.00am sharp. Leader Keith 4736 1010. Take lunch. Grade 2.
- Sep 10 **Terrace Falls Hazelbrook.** Start and finish on fire trail, but in between rainforest walk with ferns, fungi and Coachwoods. Meet Hazelbrook Station Car Park south side 8.45am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2.

Lloyd and Shirley Jones

By coincidence, just as the June Hut News with the Jim Smith item mentioning Lloyd Jones was issued, I located Lloyd and Shirley and visited them on 5th June. They are living in a retirement home at Lismore which appears to be well run with lots of helpful staff. Shirley and Lloyd are together in a double room with a large netted area forming an aviary outside their window. They have been in the home about three years.

Lloyd, who has suffered a stroke and has difficulty communicating, was nevertheless able to tell me that he was fed up to here (pointing to his neck) with the place. So people who knew him will see he has not changed. Shirley appears fine and translated Lloyd's attempts at speaking.

Lloyd and Shirley both indicated that they were pleased that I had visited and would like to hear from other people that they had known. Please contact me for more information.

Jim Percy, 4758 6009, jp34@tpg.com.au