

HUT NEWS

Issue No. 329
September 2015



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Varuna, the National Writers House and Blue Mountains Conservation Society present the Inaugural

Mick Dark Talk for the Future

TIM FLANNERY

When Mice turn on Giants
*How Communities are
Defeating Climate Change*

**Saturday 19 September, 3-5 pm
Wentworth Falls School of Arts**

**Tickets: \$25 (\$20 BMCS members,
Varuna Alumni and concession)**

www.trybooking.com/IMKY

Why it's time for a Mick Dark Talk for the Future Don Morison

The late Mick Dark, life member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society, understood the important things about living in an environmentally special place. He campaigned respectfully but determinedly towards objectives that will preserve our ecology in reality and in symbolism.

In September 2015, many are despairing at the venom and short-term political opportunism being injected into debates which will affect Australia's and the World's ecological systems for centuries or longer.

The format of the Mick Dark Talk for the Future, hosted by Blue Mountains Conservation Society and Varuna, promises something different. Environmentalist Tim Flannery will outline arguments presented in his book, "Atmosphere of Hope: Searching for Solutions to the Climate Crisis", (scheduled for launch on 26/8/15).

There is widespread scientific confirmation of the climate crisis – serious difficulty in preventing the World's average temperatures rising by more than two degrees Celsius. The question-time after Tim Flannery's talk, hosted by Kate Fagan, will let attendees question Tim about his perspectives on the various political and technological options for slowing the warming.

In the Blue Mountains, we are very aware of the international environmental issues confronting us and their complex relationships to the World Heritage Area that surrounds us. The opportunity to rise above the low quality environmental slanging match favoured by sections of the body politic and the media should not be missed.

No Western Sydney Airport

The BMCS Management Committee has authorised the No Western Sydney Airport Sub-Committee (NWSA SC) to campaign (within Nature Conservation objectives) on the following issues:

Impacts on World Heritage, Drinking Water Catchments, Wilderness Areas, Tourism, Communities, Bushland at the Airport Site, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, South Creek and the Hawkesbury/Nepean River.

We will also argue that the Airport is not needed, and that Fast Rail is a better, faster, safer, greener alternative.

Do you have expertise or interest in any of these areas? Can you help us to review the Environment Impact Statement when it is released? Come and join our Sub-Committee and help us defeat this project. Contact Ross Coster, membership@bluemountains.org.au

Our new flyer is reproduced on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter. You will find more details there.

Ross Coster, Convenor, NWSA SC.

Save our LEP Campaign—Petition tabled in Parliament

On July 30 we met with our state MP Trish Doyle at her office in Springwood to hand over our 'Save our LEP' petition which she tabled in parliament the following week. The nearly 2,300 signatures collected in only 5 weeks shows how strongly the community feels about maintaining our current strong environmental protections and village character. (Photo: Presenting the petition. Trish Doyle, with Kerry Horne, Carolyn Williams, Ann Cantwell and Bob Cantwell.)



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.

**"Hut News", the newsletter of
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**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT
ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS
19 SEPTEMBER 2015**

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MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Ross Coster
02 4739 2987 0418 462 576
membership@bluemountains.org.au
or write to
PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

Nursery News

The nursery is open again after the winter break and the plants have survived the frosts, snow and wind. We have several new volunteers who are enthusiastic and eager to learn. There is always room for more so contact me if you are interested in learning plant propagation or you would like to help with sales.

The customers have returned and we have had good sales at the markets and Lawson Nursery. We have a range of Banksias ready to plant now and several Correas which we grow from cuttings. Customers and volunteers often bring us cuttings from their gardens for us to propagate. If you have a favourite native shrub you would like more of or that you think others would like, we are happy to help out.

We have some nice *Banksia cunninghamii* ready to plant in your gardens. This is a large shrub or small tree which will attract honeyeaters during the winter months and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos when they are in your area.

Sue Nicol, Nursery Manager. nursery@bluemountains.org.au 4787 8887.



Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo in a *Banksia cunninghamii*, photographed by Christine Davies in her garden at Blackheath.

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 Blackheath 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

BIG TOURISM?

The Society opposes rezonings for major tourist development on sensitive sites, being considered by Council, at Blackheath and Kings Tableland.

Blue Mountains City Council is currently reviewing the Strategic Tourism and Recreation Planning Study (known as the Stafford Report). It is seeking community responses to the introduction of a new Special Purpose–Tourist (SP3) zone on prime sites, some of which have high environmental, conservation and visual significance. The main objective of introducing the SP3 zone seems to be the development of exclusive, medium to high end resorts and ‘glamping’ experiences. The strategy appears to be driven by ‘Big Tourism’ which potentially threatens the smaller scale natural and cultural experience that is the basis of most of the tourism in the Blue Mountains.

The Options Paper prepared by Council looks at 6 sites where this new zone may be applied:

- Blackheath Caravan Park, Blackheath
- Vacant Land at end of Hat Hill Rd, Blackheath (including old airfield)
- Hydro Majestic, Medlow Bath
- Scenic World, Violet Street, Katoomba
- Fairmont Resort, Leura
- Queen Victoria Hospital site, Tablelands Rd Wentworth Falls

The Society is specifically concerned about the impacts of applying the SP3 zone on the following three sites:

- **274 -318 Hat Hill Road, Blackheath.** Most of this area is undeveloped and zoned for Environmental Protection (E2), which will be retained. The flatter areas nearer the road, currently able to be developed, are being considered for the Tourist Zone. This area is surrounded by swamps and steeply sloping land. Retaining adequate well vegetated natural bushland buffers is essential for their protection, as well as for the protection of the National Park below.
- **Queen Victoria Hospital, Kings Tableland, Wentworth Falls.** The former Queen Victoria Hospital, originally built in 1902, has both local and State Heritage significance. A significant population of the rare Blue Mountains Water Skink, as well as two threatened plants *Persoonia acerosa* and *Pultenaea glabra*, are present. The hospital land extends to the clifftops and therefore has scenic importance as well. Its single access road and being in a designated bushfire prone area makes it unsuitable for intensive development.
- **Blackheath Caravan Park.** Whilst already developed, the Blackheath Caravan Park is not an appropriate site for a larger tourist resort because of its proximity to the fragile environment of Popes Glen Creek. Even small developments within the existing Caravan Park have resulted in rubble on the edge of the creek. Any rezoning should be increasing the Environmental Protection zones, not increasing the intensity of development permitted immediately upslope.

The Society recommends the retention of the existing zoning to the above three sites as there is no environmental or community benefit for any of these

sites being rezoned for intensive tourism. Do you see any benefits in the new zone for any sites?

Council has outlined its proposals in an Options Paper which can be viewed online (via the web address below). Hardcopies are available at Council libraries and offices. If you are having trouble downloading the Options Paper contact Council.

There are another 10 sites which the Stafford Report advocates should be considered for the new intensive tourist zone. However, Council is NOT supporting rezoning these sites at this time. The Society also does not support the rezoning of these additional 10 sites which are: Rhododendron Gardens, Blackheath; Megalong Valley; Katoomba Airfield, Medlow Bath; Echo Point and Scenic World, Katoomba (3 sites); ‘Khandala’, Katoomba; Radiata Plateau, 28 Pulpit Road, Katoomba; Wentworth Falls Lake; Breakfast Point, Wentworth Falls; Lawson Golf Course and South Lawson Park, Lawson (2 sites) and Lapstone Hill (including Knapsack Reserve) Glenbrook.

What to do:

Make a submission to the Strategic Tourism and Recreation Planning Study Options Paper opposing rezoning of the three sites listed above. Deadline for submissions is Wednesday 16 September. Email: council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au or write to: General Manager, Blue Mountains City Council, Locked Bag 1005, Katoomba NSW 2780 or make an online submission at www.bluemountainshaveyoursay.com.au/strategic-recreation

LEND A HAND ...

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society has over 800 members. To run it we have a management committee, supported by subcommittees. If you are interested in getting involved with any of these, contact details are on page 2. Members are welcome to come to management committee and subcommittee meetings as observers.

We need other help from time to time. If you are not able to take on a major role within the Society, there are lots of little, medium size and bigger things that need to be done on a regular or irregular basis.

Our nursery needs volunteers at Lawson and Blackheath one day a week, and at market stalls two times a month, as well as casual help on special occasions.

We need members to help at general or public meetings: Meet and greet, technical support, setting up and cleaning up afterwards, serving refreshments, make name tags. Help with organisation and running of public rallies. Help at street stalls, collecting signatures on petitions, letterboxing. Can you draw a cartoon or other illustration for a news item or poster? Can you create a flyer for a campaign? Can you write submissions? Can you facilitate a meeting? Can you mend broken nursery equipment? Can you offer occasional advice to some of us who find working with computers challenging. If you have a skill we haven't thought of listing, let us know what it is.

If you want to help in any way at all, email Ross Coster membership@bluemountains.org.au or you can phone Christine Davies on 4787 7246.

NO Western Sydney AIRPORT

AIR pollution
WATER pollution
NOISE pollution
24 hours a day
7 days a week

A second airport
IS NOT NEEDED

Very Fast Train
is a Better Option
Faster, Cleaner, Sustainable

AT RISK in the Blue Mountains:

- ♦ UNESCO World Heritage Listing ...
- ♦ National Parks ... Wilderness ...
- ♦ Drinking Water Catchment ...
- ♦ Clean Air ... Quiet Places ...
- ♦ Unique Flora and Fauna ...
- ♦ Unique Ecosystems ...
- ♦ Sustainable Tourism ...
- ♦ Our Communities ...



What can I do? *Write letters to politicians—some names and contacts are on the back. *Ask Greg Hunt (Minister for Environment) for 60 days to review the Environmental Impact Statement. *Tell Warren Truss (Minister for Infrastructure & Regional Development) we don't want the airport and why. *Send copies of your letters to Shadow Ministers Mark Butler and Anthony Albanese and to local Federal Member Louise Markus. *Write to newspapers. *Join our subcommittee (Ross@coster.com.au) *Talk to your friends and family. *Talk to your neighbours. *Spread the word on Facebook *Sign petitions *Keep informed—watch our Website and Facebook Page.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society

www.bluemountains.org.au

Facebook: Blue Mountains Conservation Society

(See contents of reverse page on page 5)



Underneath is the information on the back of our flyer:

NO WESTERN SYDNEY AIRPORT

IMPACT ON WORLD HERITAGE: The Blue Mountains National Parks were declared as World Heritage in 2000. What will be the impact of a 24 hour no curfew airport only 17 km away? The whole point of World Heritage Listing is to commit all levels of Government to preserving the area for the whole world to enjoy.

UNIQUE FLORA AND FAUNA AND ECOSYSTEMS: The Blue Mountains' diverse plant communities and habitats support some 52 mammal, 63 reptile, over 30 frog, about one third (265) of Australia's bird species, 120 butterfly, 4000 moth species. What impact will noise and pollution have on biodiversity?

IMPACT ON DRINKING WATER CATCHMENT: The Southern Blue Mountains forms a large part of the catchments for Lake Burragarang which supplies 80% of Sydney's drinking water. Human activity is excluded to ensure water quality. Flying large numbers of huge, noisy, polluting aircraft over the catchments is risky.

WILDERNESS AREAS: The Blue Mountains includes several declared Wilderness Areas. What value is wilderness with a steady stream of aircraft flying overhead, belching out particulates and noise.

TOURISM: What will happen to our tourism industry when any quiet enjoyment of the bush is ruined by aircraft flying overhead? Will the view from Echo Point be the same with a huge aircraft in the eye line?

OUR COMMUNITIES: Cafes, street markets, festivals, bushwalks, lookouts, Aboriginal and European culture, art, theatre. The Blue Mountains has it all. We love the place and do not want it ruined by 24 hour aircraft noise.

NOT NEEDED NOW ... NOT NEEDED IN THE FUTURE: Kingsford Smith Airport at Mascot runs well below capacity. Growth in passenger numbers is being catered for by bigger planes, not more flights. Half of all passenger movements are to and from Australian East Coast destinations, including 24% to and from Melbourne, 20% to and from Brisbane and Gold Coast. We don't need another airport - a Very Fast Train along the East Coast of Australia would eliminate any future need for a second airport.

FAST RAIL - NOT ANOTHER AIRPORT! A High Speed Rail from Sydney to Melbourne can reduce travel times, noise impacts, promote development in regional areas along the route, and allow people to travel in comfort. The HSR can be run on electricity from renewable sources, with little or no pollution or greenhouse gas emissions.

The time to build the HSR link to Canberra and Melbourne is now, with a link to Brisbane to follow. If the Western Sydney Airport is built, no future Governments will risk the financial impact of HSR on airports. More at <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/campaign-airport-fastrail.htm>

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)



Off Track

Led by a winding path
away from roads and lanes,
this filament through scrub
will lead me to the ridge.

The scent of nectar hangs
in pale translucent flowers,
with acid shots of tangerine
where fungi swells on wood.

I reach a cambered ledge
as ground gives way to sky,
my path dissolves in cloud
I lack the wings to tread.

Michele Fermanis-Winward

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.

Poets,

In July and August Hut News we had the wrong email address for contributions to Poets Corner. This has now been corrected with the removal of "au" from the gmail address. Our apologies! Brendan and Hut News editor.



Protect the Gardens of Stone



Second PAC Review for Springvale Mine Extension

Springvale mine extension will allow longwall (underground) mining under 28 nationally threatened shrub and hanging swamps on Newnes Plateau. The Department of Planning (DPE)'s Addendum Assessment Report to the Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) has been released. It recommends that the project be approved.

However, instead of going to the PAC for determination, the Minister for Planning requested the PAC hold an unprecedented second review on the DPE report and on the impact of the proposed change to the Mining SEPP (removing the "significance of the resource" principal consideration).

Two other mining projects - Warkworth and Mount Thorley Continuation Projects – are also to have second reviews. Presumably, these second reviews are to ensure that the projects have been thoroughly assessed in relation to the draft Mining SEPP.

A second PAC public hearing will be held at Lithgow on 3 September. Holding a public hearing removes the right of any third party appeals on the merits of the PAC's decision. Written submissions close on Thursday 3 September. PAC is to give its final report to DPE by 17 September and makes its decision after that.

Centennial announced they would stand workers down from 21 August if there was no decision because their consent finishes at the end of September. This keeps the pressure on government for a decision. However, Centennial could also apply for a shorter extension as they did last year.

Wollongambe Mine Waste Clean Up

The clean-up has been frustratingly slow but it does need to be done carefully to minimise damage. Waste is now about 12 km down the Wollongambe River, thus in the World Heritage Area. The EPA has issued a second clean up notice setting out how the cleaning will be done. You can see the notice on the EPA's Licences Register.

Airly Mine Extension Progressing

The Airly Mine extension is for underground mining under Mugii Murum-ban State Conservation Area (MMSCA) near Capertee. MMSCA is the part of the GOS Stage 2 conservation proposal which has been protected. Underground mining is allowed in an SCA, however it must still not impact on the values that made the area worth conserving.

The proposed mining operation would extend eastward including under the sensitive Genowlan Mountain area. The Society will make a submission to the upcoming PAC Review. All submissions are on the Society's website.

Madi Maclean.

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.



Battle in the skies over Blackheath

In the second week of August, I was excited to see a familiar flash of orange-red and a flick of the wings: the Flame Robin had returned to his old territory at Blackheath. He had raised a family there two years ago but last year he appeared for three or four weeks and then vanished as no mate joined him. So when I returned the next day and saw he had a mate with him I was already counting chicks!

Flame Robins tend to breed in woodlands on the tablelands and in the Snowy Mountains but disperse to lower, more open country in winter and gather into bigger parties. We have seen about twelve together in Lithgow in winter.

The Flame Robin's arrival had not gone unnoticed by something else — a Scarlet Robin. I first saw him fluttering over their heads as they fed on the grass, then sitting on the fence staring at them, no doubt thinking: 'This is my place. I was here first!' I returned on subsequent days with my camera, hoping for the perfect shot, and have watched several confrontations. More than once the male Flame and Scarlet Robins have faced off, perched only two feet apart on a fence and glaring at each other. The Scarlet Robin finally launches an attack and they fly up and engage in an aerial skirmish. Then they retreat to separate fences to regroup. I hope they can reach a truce in this battle for territory.

The Flame Robin couple seem undaunted and are still there ten days after I first saw them. Here's hoping for a happy event to report next month.

Sue Nicol.

Photo: Male Flame Robin, Sue Nicol.

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

COMMENT Entitlement and enlightenment

Brian Marshall

When Treasurer Hockey said that the age of **entitlement** was over, many appreciated that we were living beyond our means; the government's income could no longer sustain its expenditure. The message was simple, but it was botched when the first budget sought to raise extra money from those less able to afford it. Thanks to an **enlightened** Senate, many of the excessively unfair measures were rejected. But by the second budget, the Prime Minister somewhat disingenuously assured us that there was no need for pessimism; the economy was performing as well as could be expected. Full of enthusiasm, the Treasurer experienced a 'spend up big' Damascan conversion. Father Xmas was back in town!

The overwhelming lack of fairness which marked the first budget was temporarily solved, but the Treasurer and his Prime Minister displayed little **enlightenment**. Some of the swingeing measures from the first budget remain 'on the books', ready to be enacted should the opportunity arise. In addition, with an election looming, the government refuses to change mid- to high-income **entitlements** embodied in negative gearing, super-annuation and capital gains concessions, and the tax-minimisation benefits of family trusts. Also, whilst rejecting the less regressive option of increasing the Medicare levy, government hints at increasing and concurrently broadening the highly regressive GST. This is supported by big business (guess why!) but the 'Captain' has avoided political risk before the election by the mantra that all the States must first agree to it!

So the Treasurer, seemingly guided by his Captain's call, has retained **entitlements** benefitting the least needy. The focus now is on cutting funds from the public sector and environmental organizations, while lowering taxation rates for business and individuals on high incomes. This can only be achieved by revisiting the first budget's swingeing measures and further erosion of the social welfare system, public health and public education. The most needy will remain so as they attempt to live on 'safety-net' **entitlements**, while waiting in vain for trickle-down benefits.

When discussing welfare **entitlements**, tales of abuse, particularly by low-income recipients, tend to be recounted. However, 'choppergate' shows that **entitlement-abuse** is not restricted to low-income earners. Indeed, members from both sides of parliament have made travel claims which fail the 'pub' test, even if within the 'rules'. Not surprisingly, having attempted to gain the moral high ground by naming each other's principal offenders, both major parties were sufficiently **enlightened** to opt for overhauling and clarifying the rules. Whether this will resolve the problems and be fully implemented remains to be seen!

The interplay between **entitlement** and **enlightenment** is complex. 'Workers' are **entitled** to proper consultation prior to dismissal proceedings; this comprises procedural fairness. Conversely, a company may contend that it is **entitled** to dismiss 'workers' by sending them a text message to check their emails, even though this may be perceived as lacking basic humanity. And alternatively, an impacted third party might hope for early **enlightenment** (for either or both parties) such that the dispute is rapidly resolved.

The Federal government has now used outrageous hyperbole to attack environmental organizations for using legal **entitlements** to challenge the expansion of the coal industry in Queensland. The government wishes to repeal the section of Australia's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act that enables third party actions. Should this happen, it will apply to all major developments (not just coal) throughout Australia. Despite the environmental damage which will ensue, the government has demonstrated a frightening capacity to reject science and wallow in extreme **un-enlightenment**. So, because the government is **entitled** to attempt this vandalism, it will bludgeon the amendment through the House of Representatives and must then confront the Senate. There, with Labor and the Greens opposing the change, it may have fallen to the **enlightened** crossbenchers to temper the insanity which is consuming this country.

DLEP2013 update Carolyn Williams

Meetings with NSW Planning and MPs. Since last month's Hut News, we have met with senior personnel in the NSW Department of Planning, state MP for Penrith Stuart Ayres (whose electorate covers Glenbrook) and federal MP for Macquarie, Louise Markus. We have received no response so far to our letter to the NSW Minister for Planning, Rob Stokes, requesting a meeting with him.

At these meetings we stressed the importance of an environmentally sound LEP for the protection of the World Heritage area. In our meeting with Mr Ayres we also highlighted the concerns of the lower Blue Mountains community to maintain Glenbrook's village character. We asked Mr Ayres and Ms Markus to make representations on our behalf to Minister Stokes and federal environment minister Greg Hunt respectively, and to convey our request to meet with them.

The next phase. The Society is now moving into the next phase which will see the media campaign extend to Sydney and nationally. The new LEP for the Blue Mountains is not just a local issue. The future of the World Heritage listing is at stake if we end up with a weakened LEP, as is the domestic and international tourism on which the Blue Mountains economy depends.

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 for Planning asking him to approve the LEP unchanged. Go to the Society's website, click on the DLEP 2013 box and follow the prompts.

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY www.bluemountains.org.au

'Like' us on Facebook:

Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Follow us on Twitter: [bmcnsnw](https://twitter.com/bmcsnsw)

Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

Birds have inspired humans for as long as there has been art, music and storytelling. Today, birdwatching is one of the fastest growing recreational activities around the world. Birds are an obvious and compelling part of our environment, being mostly day-active, relatively easy to see or hear, yet challenging enough to remain interesting. They are often colourful, usually endearing and their ability to fly promotes wonder and conjures freedom; watching them becomes an escape from the mundanity of everyday life. They can be found everywhere, from the deserts to the oceans to the middle of cities, and you could travel and watch birds your whole life and still never see all of the 10,000+ species in existence. And they are never entirely predictable - birds will always hold mysteries and surprises for us.

For these reasons birds make good ambassadors for conservation and like the canary in the coal mine, their populations are indicators of the health of the environment.

When I'm guiding birdwatchers from overseas around the Blue Mountains, I sometimes ask them what their favourite bird of the day was. It can be interesting to hear a visitor's perspective. The answers are as varied as the people giving them, but often it's the common birds we take for granted, like the vibrantly coloured Crimson Rosella, or the tiny blue male Superb Fairywren, the iconic Laughing Kookaburra or the boisterous Galah (pink birds are a real novelty for birders from overseas). The avid twitchers who already have some experience of Australian birds are thrilled by the harder-to-find species like the skulking Pilotbird, the intricately marked Spotted Quail-thrush, or the charismatic Rock-warbler which only occurs around the sandstone rocks of the Sydney-Blue Mountains region. All of them find our birds fascinating and a strong incentive to visit and return to Australia.

BirdLife Australia recently released its "State of Australia's Birds 2015" report which sets out current trends for our terrestrial birds based on large quantities of data collected by volunteers and researchers. One of the most alarming findings is that it's not only the rare birds that are declining. In some areas, common species such as the Willie Wagtail, kookaburra, magpie-lark (peewee) and Crimson Rosella are also disappearing. You can download the whole report for free at: stateofbirds.org.au



Finally, it's now more than six years since I started writing *Loose Feathers* each month and it's time to take a break. Writing this column has been a wonderful journey for me and I've greatly enjoyed all your positive feedback and questions. I hope to still contribute the occasional article for Hut News in the future, and anyone can check my twitter page for regular photos and news from the bird world (even if you're not a member of twitter): twitter.com/carolproberts

If you've found *Loose Feathers* interesting, you might like to learn more about our local birdlife by joining Blue Mountains Bird Observers (bmbirding.org.au) or support and learn about Australian bird conservation and research by becoming a member of BirdLife Australia (birdlife.org.au). Happy birdwatching and perhaps I'll see you out on a walking track!

Carol Proberts. origma@westnet.com.au Twitter: [@carolproberts](https://twitter.com/carolproberts)

Crimson Rosella, photographed at Mount York by Carol Proberts.

Solo Exhibition of Watercolours at Everglades

Owen Thompson, a member of the Society with a lifelong love of our natural environment, particularly the Blue Mountains, is holding a solo exhibition of his paintings at Everglades.

ELEVATION: Watercolours by OWEN THOMPSON

Everglades Gardens Gallery, Leura
11 am to 3pm, Wed-Sun 5-27 September
Preview: www.owenzart.com

Everglades is a National Trust property. Developed in the 1930s, there are twelve and half acres of European style gardens and native Australian bush with stunning views over the Jamison Valley. Entry to Everglades Historic House and Gardens is \$13 (\$8 concession), which includes free admission to the exhibition. <http://www.everglades.org.au/>

Fighting for Farms & Forests

Presented by Joshua Tree Music
Sunday, 20 September, 4.30 pm
Wentworth Falls School of Arts

A unique concert of original music inspired by the people fighting to protect our land from the ravages of big mining—Music and slideshow by Wind Energy, and guest artist Tracey Tsang (violin)

Guest speaker – Dr Haydn Washington
(author and environmental scientist)

Tickets \$25/\$15. Book online at www.trybooking.com/INDT or at the door.

The following article was published recently in Hobby's Outreach, the newsletter of the Blue Mountains Historical Society. It is of special interest to Blue Mountains Conservation Society because the two volunteers chosen to have their effort and achievements publicly recorded are very much a part of the Conservation Society's history.

THE BMHS COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES PROJECT

by Wayne Hanley & John Low

Throughout past decades people across the length of the Blue Mountains have selflessly given their time to serve the various communities in which they have lived. They have contributed enormously to their communities, using their diverse abilities and experience to support countless different organisations and activities. In some instances these people have received public recognition for their hard work over many years. Yet, for a large number of them, their rewards were little more than the knowledge that they had played their part in furthering the cause of their chosen involvements.

With a view to redressing at least a small part of this imbalance, early in 2014 the Blue Mountains Historical Society received funding under the Community Heritage Grants scheme to design and install two commemorative plaques which would be a small step towards permanently recording the work of two largely unrecognised Blue Mountains volunteers.

One of the objectives of this funding programme was to improve community awareness of heritage places and an understanding of the people and their stories associated with them. This framework seemed to be an ideal way for the Society to identify particular community efforts by relatively unknown individuals and to give them permanent and visible public recognition.

Two volunteers were chosen to have their effort and achievements publicly recorded, both in places appropriate to the work they did. Bronze commemorative plaques are now in place for **BERNARD SCHLEICHER** and **MARGARETE 'Grete' VANRY**.

Bernard's plaque is installed on a steel display stand alongside the concrete horse trough in Glen Street, Woodford, just a few metres down the hill from the Great Western Highway.



Bernard and his sister Ruth settled in Hazelbrook at the end of WW1. In 1930 he became the Secretary of the Hazelbrook Reserves Trust, a position he held for thirty eight years. In 1952 he established a Blue Mountains Fauna and Flora Protection Society at Hazelbrook and, as its long-serving President, persuaded the Mayor of the Blue Mountains to form a similar group in Katoomba in the 1960s. What is today the Blue Mountains Conservation Society arose directly from these earlier organisations. In the 1930s Bernard founded, and was for many years the Chairman, of the Lawson-Hazelbrook-Woodford Branch of the RSPCA. As part of that organisation's long and ongoing

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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

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".

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.

Welcome to new members

Peter Mason, Faulconbridge
Angela Drury, Edgecliffe
Katie Afrakoff, Faulconbridge
Susan Wildman, Katoomba
Giles Hamm, Katoomba.

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

THE BMHS COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES PROJECT

(Continued from page 9).

concern for ensuring adequate animal watering facilities in the mountains, it was responsible for installing horse troughs in Hazelbrook and Woodford circa late 1930s. These horse troughs were Bernard's initiative. He died in 1971 and it is thoroughly fitting that now, in 2015, his work and his compassion for animals should be remembered by all who look at a plaque mounted adjacent to the Woodford trough which has stubbornly survived the passing, of the working horse.

On Sublime Point Road Leura, bounded by West and Willoughby Streets, there is a six hectare parcel of native bush which was gazetted as public land in 1917 and has gloriied ever since in the name of Crown Reserve No. 52069. Nobody has had a longer or closer association with this piece of bushland than Margarete "Grete" Vanry. She was born in Vienna in 1908 and after leaving school became a highly skilled milliner. While her social conscience found an outlet in trade union activity it put her in danger. After Hitler's annexation of Austria in March 1938, she fled with few possessions via Switzerland to France, then eventually to Australia, arriving in Sydney in December 1938. She became involved in the peace movement, indulged her love of music, literature and film and in her house at Narrabeen she established an Australian native garden, beginning a deep and passionate interest that lasted the rest of her life.

In the 1970s Grete and her husband Frank retired to Leura, to a house they had earlier built on land near the reserve in Sublime Point Road. Her garden there, blending with the surrounding bush, attracted a variety of native birds and animals. She joined the Conservation Society, became a regular attendant at the Conservation Hut, taught members the Bradley Method of weeding and propagated and raised native plants. Her custom of always picking up rubbish and pulling out weeds in the bush became legendary. At the time of her death in 1997 a friend recalled: "while others rested for lunch, Grete weeded". If her millinery career lacked a deeper satisfaction, she found it in native plants and her passion for the environment.

Over many years Grete laboured ceaselessly to maintain Reserve No. 52069 in as close as possible to its natural condition, enhancing the bushland and ensuring a suitable habitat for the animal and birdlife which flourished there. Her efforts are today remembered by a commemorative plaque set in place by the steps down from the road into the bushland. This plaque records her contribution to a part of the Blue Mountains that she cared for deeply.



Although small in size, the two plaques chart large footsteps and serve to remind future generations of mountains residents and visitors that, in times gone by, a great deal was quietly and conscientiously achieved by the efforts of many unheralded volunteers who believed in the tasks they set for themselves.

7. Blast Furnace Park and Lake Pillans, Lithgow.

Lithgow Blast Furnace operated from 1886 to 1928, producing the first iron and steel cast in Australia. Its ruins dominate one of the most interesting sites on the urban sections of the proposed Blue Trail. The interpretive and tourist safety infrastructure is currently being upgraded. Soon it should be possible to walk around, observing and photographing what remains of innovative machinery and machinery housing that characterised that period of Australian industrial development.

Working conditions in the early 20th century were hot, unsafe and difficult. Industrial action led to a major confrontation at the Blast Furnace on 29 August 1911, which became known as the Lithgow Riot. Pictured is the remains of works boss Charles Hoskins' prized Renault car, wrecked by striking workers who resented him. A nearby Uniting Church bears Hoskins' name, while the small urban wetland next to the Blast Furnace is named after Robert Pillans, one of the union leaders and the first Labor Mayor of Lithgow.

In winter 2013, more than a dozen flame robins were observed congregating in the Blast Furnace ruins. Flame Robins typically inhabit some of NSW highest locations but in the winter gather in lower and more open areas.

This site sets off the uniqueness and scenic grandeur of the Lithgow Valley.

Don Morison.

Photos: Industrial ruins in Blast Furnace Park; Lake Pillans Wetlands (Christine Davies); Charles Hoskins' ruined Renault (Lithgow District Historical Society).



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.

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.

Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2015
AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, Sydney
28 March 2015 to 15 October 2015

Be captivated by scorpions basking in the sun, snakes in search of food, and fireflies lighting up the night. Over 100 images selected from more than 40,000 entries worldwide and discover the amazing world we live in.

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/event/wildlife-photographer>

Admission prices include general paid admission
Adults \$20/\$15, Children (5-15 yrs) \$3.

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)

- 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.
- Sep 19 **Mt Mouin** via the Firetrail-Leader – **Harold** 9600 8005 or M 0409 010737 - Meet at Blackheath Stn Carpark-8.00am-17Km-Gr3-Map **Jenolan**
- Sep 26 **Dargan Arch** Cathedral Cave and 'the Ridge'. Your chance to see this spectacular natural feature- Leader **Emanuel** - Ring on H 4757 1090 or M 0419 773 906 for details-Gr3- Maps **Mt Wilson/Wollangambe**
- Oct 3 **Coxs River Adventure** - Gundungurra history. Explore the Coxs downstream from the Campground (Car pool from Mt Victoria)-Leader **Diana** M 0432619305-Meet at Mt Victoria Station Carpark-8.00am-9Km-Gr3-Map **Hampton/Jenolan**
- Oct 10 **Gooches Crater.** We may well get the chance to see this often swampy enclosed area as a lake surrounded by towering sandstone cliffs (Walk postponed from July 18 due to icy conditions)-Leader **Bob** 4757 2694- Meet at Wentworth Falls Stockade Carpark-8.30am-12Km-Gr3-Maps **Lithgow/Wollangambe**

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

- Sep 14 **Grand Canyon, Blackheath.** Magnificent canyon walk. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 8.45 am. Leader Mary Read 4739 0786. Grade 3.
- Sep 21 Lockley's Pylon and Pinnacles with lunch at Du Faur's Head. Meet Leura Station car park 8.25 am. Car pool fare \$5. Meredith 4782 4823. Grade 2/3.
- Sep 28 Blue Mountain Trig, Hazelbrook Station and return. Hazelbrook Station 8.40 am. Liz Stark 4754 4966. Grade 2.
- Oct 5 Ikara Head and Girraween Cave. Meet Mt Victoria Station 8.50 am. Car Pool fare \$5. Tracey 0411 162 611. Grade 3.
- Oct 12 Manly Dam. Meet Central Station 9.30, top of escalators, opposite platform 11. Judith 4758 6310. Grade 2.

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

- 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.
- Sep 17 **Scenic World to Echo Point and Return Katoomba.** Leaders Alan and Jeanette 4757 3750. Car pool. Take lunch. Meet Katoomba Station Car Park 9.30am. Grade 2
- Sep 14 **Mystery walk in the city.** Leader Rose 9420 2103. Take lunch. Meet top of escalators Central Station 9.30am. Grade 1
- Oct 1 **Undercliff Pass, Wentworth Falls.** Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Car pool. Take lunch. Meet Stockyard Car Park, Wentworth Falls 9.30am. Grade 2
- Oct 8 **Waterfall Circuit Mount Wilson.** Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Car pool \$5. Take lunch. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Grade 2
- Oct 15 **Bonnie Doon Katoomba.** Clifftop walk with views. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Car pool. Take lunch. Meet Katoomba Station Car Park 9.30am. Grade 2

Visit to Centennial Park

Thursday Interpretive Bushwalkers recently went to Centennial Park. This was my first visit and I was very impressed by the size of the park. It is very beautiful, and on weekdays uncrowded and peaceful.

One of our highlights was the great diversity of birdlife at the lakes. We had not seen so many species together. The young swan looked a bit lonely. The birds were used to being fed by humans. Neil not only lost a sandwich to an Ibis, but claims he almost lost an eye when a Magpie tried to take food from his mouth. We went through a Paperbark forest where there was a flying fox colony. We walked around the Labyrinth which everyone enjoyed and we visited the Federation Pavilion.

It was interesting to observe a local industry—Dog Nannies. There were a large number of dogs being minded in groups—we noticed some vans with number plates "Furry1" and "Furry2". In a natural area there were numerous Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos. Christine Davies.

