



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



WINTER MAGIC FESTIVAL Saturday, 24 June, 2017 at Katoomba

Blue Mountains Conservation Society will have a stall at Winter Magic on Saturday 24 June. It will be there all day and we need volunteers to staff it. Can you help for an hour or two?

We will have environmentally-friendly sample bags with information about the Society and the local environment to hand out, petitions to be signed and a major campaign "**Leave Radiata Plateau Wild**" will be launched (see story on page 3).

The parade starts at 10.30 am and we need people to come along and march behind our banner. Our theme colour this year is blue, so please wear something blue, a shirt, a scarf, or perhaps a whole outfit!

Contact me to volunteer for the stall or to join us in the parade:

Heather Coster, Events Coordinator,
Heather@coster.com.au 0408 223 843.

Come along, join the fun, be part of our team!

Where Song Began and The New Nature: A talk by Tim Low

Co-sponsored by **Blue Mountains Conservation Society** and **Science at the Local**

Where: Blue Mountains Theatre & Community Hub, Springwood

When: Sunday 23rd July 2017, 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm (doors open at 2 pm)

Tim Low is a biologist and best-selling author of seven books about nature and conservation. He writes a blog for Australian Geographic magazine and has a lizard named after him.

Admission is free and seating is on a first come first served basis – You can register at <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/tim-low-science-at-the-local-blue-mountains-tickets-34099801424> to help us get an idea of numbers attending.

Gardens of Stone campaign wins award

The National Trust (NSW) recognised the "Gardens of Stone: *In Focus*" photographic exhibition with a 2017 Heritage Award in the category of "Advocacy Campaigns." It is a well-deserved honour for all contributors. These include photographers, volunteers, donors, supporters and the Gardens of Stone Alliance comprised of Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Lithgow Environment Group and Colong Foundation for Wilderness.

The "Gardens of Stone: *In Focus*" photographic exhibition in September 2016 showed the best photo entries, many taken on specially arranged field trips to this spectacular area. While the judges felt that the photographic exhibition in itself was a wonderful and deserving project, the honour was awarded in recognition of the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 Reserve Proposal campaign in its entirety.

This award recognises the efforts of conservation groups to ensure that the Gardens of Stone is protected for all Australians. The National Trust has been a strong advocate of the Gardens of Stone, producing its own proposal for a 'Pinnacles National Park' in 1977.

Joan Domicelj, founding Chair of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area Advisory Committee and author of the 1998 World Heritage nomination report, attended as an honoured guest of the Gardens of Stone Alliance.

Three other outstanding conservation achievements in the Blue Mountains also won awards: the Grand Canyon Track and Mitchell's Causeway in the landscape conservation category and Woodford Academy for education and interpretation.

Photo (left to right): Joan Domicelj, Janine Kitson (Colong Foundation for Wilderness), Brian Fox (Bush Explorers); Madi Maclean (Blue Mountains Conservation Society); Keith Muir (Colong Foundation for Wilderness); Alex Allchin (Bushwalking NSW)

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

www.bluemountains.org.au

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The **DEADLINE** for the next issue
of HUT NEWS is

17 JUNE 2017

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Nursery volunteers enjoy a field trip

Propagation work slowed down in May and some of the volunteers enjoyed a field study morning instead of the usual nursery work. We made the most of a beautiful



morning looking at the local flora around Blackheath. The Sunshine Wattle (*Acacia terminalis*) was starting to flower and we were delighted to see some *Epacris reclinata* in full bloom. The volunteers are keen to learn more about native plants as well as propagation techniques.

The rest of the month was occupied with the end of season cleaning and tidying the glasshouse, shadehouse and shed in preparation for the winter. The glasshouse is full of cuttings which will be ready for the spring markets.

The plant nursery is now in winter break mode and markets and sales will recommence in August. A big thank you to all our customers. See you in August at the Blackheath and Lawson markets.

Sue Nicol, nursery volunteer.

(Photo: Nursery volunteers Bruce McKaig, Leona Kieran, Fiona Forrest, Steven Marsh, Lois Miles.)

Stop Adani

Most Consoc members would be aware of the Indian company Adani's plan to dig one of the biggest coal mines in the world in Queensland's Galilee Basin. A Stop Adani Alliance has been formed to lobby against the coal mine. The Alliance's thirteen members include Bob Brown Foundation, the Australian Conservation Foundation, 350.org, Get Up, the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, the Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network and the Australian Marine Conservation Society.

The alliance's declaration argues the mine will "fuel catastrophic climate change" because burning 2.3bn tonnes of coal from the mine over 60 years of operation would create 4.6bn tonnes of carbon dioxide. It also states the project would "trash Indigenous rights", citing the fact Adani does not have the consent of the Wangan and Jagalingou people in the region. The Alliance cites recent polling that shows three-quarters of Australians oppose subsidies for the mine when told the government plans to loan its owners \$1 billion.

The Alliance has called for

- Urgent and serious action to cut carbon pollution;
- A complete withdrawal of the Adani Carmichael mine, rail and port project;
- A ban on new coalmines and expansions in Australia; and
- An end to public subsidies for polluting projects.

If you'd like more detailed information and to find out more about the Stop Adani campaign go to <http://www.stopadani.com/>

VALLEY OF THE WATERS BUSHCARE GROUP

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets on the second Saturday of each month, 9am - noon. Tools and gloves are available. Bring a drink, a snack and a sunhat.

NEW MEMBERS ARE WELCOME.

Phone Karen 4757 1929.



Campaign launch at Winter Magic

Leave Radiata Plateau Wild will be launched at Winter Magic on Saturday 24th June.

With the support of local residents and the outdoor community, we are looking forward to raising awareness amongst the broader community about the necessity of protecting Radiata Plateau from development.

As part of the campaign we have developed a comprehensive website (<http://bluemountains.org.au/leaveradiataplataeuwild>) that includes:

- Reasons for protection
- History of the Plateau
- Maps
- Details about what you can do to help
- Links to social media

Two of the three development applications that had been lodged have been refused, leaving one approved for a dwelling. At this stage, it remains unknown as to whether the owners of the land will pursue development or be open to selling the property. The land was offered for sale unsuccessfully in 2004.

The Society is firmly committed to raising awareness of the need for protection to be sought and for the Plateau to come under public ownership and be incorporated into the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. As part of the campaign we are reaching out to numerous stakeholders, locally and nationally, to harness their support and will have an ongoing media, as well as social media, presence.

There is a major event planned in July - watch this space!

Contact: Landuse@bluemountains.org.au

Newnes Plateau SwampCare

Help care for our unique upland swamps: home of the threatened Giant Dragonfly and Blue Mountains Water Skink.

When: Saturday 17 June 2017, 10:00am to 1:00pm

Where: Brown's Swamp (near Zig Zag railway), Chifley Road, Clarence

Bring a warm jacket, hat and sturdy shoes.

We will learn about our local upland swamps and help control weeds which threaten their integrity and function. We will hear about the achievements of local Landcare groups who have been caring for 'their swamps'. We will discuss how we can work together to help these swamps into the future.

Morning tea and lunch will be provided

Please register by 5pm Thursday 15 June – Contact Marg Duffy, Land Services Officer, Central Tablelands Local Land Services, marg.duffy@lls.nsw.gov.au 02 6350 3113

Project assisted by: NSW Government - Environmental Trust - Local Land Services Central Tablelands; Saving our Species: Lithgow Oberon Landcare Association, Lithgow City Council

Mr Foley's "Terra Nullius"

NSW Labor leader Luke Foley has been quoted as saying that "flying over unpopulated areas to the south-west (of Badgerys Creek) at night 'strikes a balance between residents' concerns (about aircraft noise) and the necessity for the airport to be a commercial success" (Blue Mountains Gazette 3/5/17). People living at Mulgoa, Silverdale, Greendale, Wallacia, Warragamba and Luddenham might be surprised to learn that their villages are unpopulated!

But really, somebody should show Mr Foley a map! In these "unpopulated areas", which Mr Foley dismisses so lightly, he would discover Lake Burragarang – the main water supply for an expected city of eight million people. Protection of this Special Area extends for three kilometres from the top of the full storage water level in Lake Burragarang (formed by Warragamba Dam), with fines of up to \$44,000 for unauthorised entry. We can't walk anywhere near it, camp beside it, swim or paddle a canoe in it ... but Mr Foley would have noisy polluting aircraft flying over it all night, every night.

Like the World Heritage National Parks which adjoin it, the Burragarang Valley is rich in biodiversity. I recommend to Mr Foley the definition of biodiversity on the Australian Museum's website:

"Biodiversity is the variety of all living things; the different plants, animals and micro-organisms, the genetic information they contain and the ecosystems they form. Biodiversity is usually explored at three levels - genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity. These three levels work together to create the complexity of life on Earth."

Our national parks are quiet places where a little bird can be heard when it sings to find a mate and the smallest sound can sometimes warn of a predator. Here, above all, the noise of aircraft would do the most damage.

The debate about Badgerys Creek is centering on the spurious argument that there is a need for a second Sydney airport, the totally unproven and unlikely prospect of quality jobs in the region and the proposed airport's adverse effects on present human populations. We need to turn the debate back towards nature. Protection of our unique natural environment in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area needs to be the priority.

Christine Davies

JAIL RISKED TO PREVENT COAL MINING DESTRUCTION

Don Morison



The localities of Bulga and Warkworth in the Hunter Valley have been largely erased from the landscape by open-cut coal mining. Now the village of Wollar, home of activist Beverley Smiles and many others, is under threat.

It is this that has led to the arrest of Beverley and two fellow campaigners. For getting in the way of coal mining associated works to try to save Wollar village, they could each face up to seven years in jail. They will be the first tried with new harsh penalties in place.

There is great irony in the truths that, now coal mining is economically marginal, coal supporters inside and outside parliament favour severely environmentally damaging forms of mining and extraction methods that create very few Australian jobs. In the last couple of decades, New South Wales has witnessed damage from open-cut mining that could not be fully remediated in any foreseeable era. In 2016, Blue Mountains cinema goers saw the independently-created documentary film, "Black Hole", which communicated the ongoing "void" to be left by the Maules Creek coal mine, north of Gunnedah. The highly important relationship of Indigenous Australians to the lands in Leard State Forest disrupted by the mine can now never be re-established.

In the Blue Mountains Conservation Society's own area of interest, we also are observing the ghoulish production line that transforms human communities and near-pristine natural areas surrounding them into wastelands. The newest grave at the cemetery at Blackmans Flat near Wallerawang is dated 2012 and this historic village is now virtually uninhabited by humans. The open-cut coal mine proposals around the charming township of Cullen Bullen, a few kilometres further north, appear to be continually reactivating and mutating.

If you would like to donate to the defence of Beverley Smiles and her colleagues in activism, go to <https://www.chuffed.org/project/support-the-campaign-to-save-wollar-help-fund-court-costs>

Photos (clockwise from top):

Landscape barred to most human activities for centuries? The sign reads "Danger ... no swimming allowed ... deep holes"

A viable community buried their dead here from 1877 to 2012. Is Mount Piper coal fired power station, in the background, an epitaph for a civilisation?

A long-established home at Blackmans Flat being demolished due to coal related activities.

This is still a functioning township surrounded by beautiful pagodas, potentially part of Gardens of Stone National Park? However, open cut coal mining proposals that are regularly revived could make Cullen Bullen unliveable.

The building that proves there is still a living town there.

(Photograph of Blackman's Flat home being demolished supplied by Madi Maclean; other photographs taken by Christine Davies)



Welcome to New Members

Helen Cardy
John Cardy
Samantha Harvey
Ann Mikkelsen
Lisa Jeffery
Phil Jeffery
Luke Jeffery
Sophie Jeffery

Big Project with a Huge Impact Ross Coster

One of our members prepared a very useful document for us about the species impact of the proposed Western Sydney Airport. This article shamelessly steals parts of this document.

The proposed Western Sydney Airport will have serious and irreversible impacts on some of the nation's most endangered species, both on the airport site and within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

The proposal will directly remove over 300 hectares of Cumberland Plain Woodland, a critically endangered ecological community. The airport proposal singlehandedly constitutes a significant reduction in the viability of this ecosystem.

The airport will have considerable regional-scale noise impacts on wildlife and especially on threatened bird species. The majority of the Cumberland Plain landscape will be subject to noise levels above the known upper tolerance of bird communities. Scientific research shows that areas subjected to over 50 dB typically result in declines of 10 to 25% total bird abundance, with many sensitive species 'disappearing' entirely.

The impact of noise and direct strike on the critically endangered Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater are particularly concerning. Both species are in steep decline due to habitat loss and predation with fewer than 2000 wild birds remaining. The airport not only removes hundreds of hectares of Swift Parrot feeding habitat, but also straddles its key migration route. No studies have been undertaken of either critically endangered species' response to aircraft noise and strike mortality.

Airport operations are also likely to impact sections of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Similarly there has been little to no research or assessment on the potentially severe impacts of the proposed airport on the biodiversity of this region.

The Scarlet Robin is a well-known species of the Cumberland Plain Woodlands, and these birds migrate between the Blue Mountains forests during summer and the Cumberland Plain's open woodlands to feed in winter. The noise from an operating airport will cover both summer and winter habitat for this species and will cut off its annual east-west migration to the eastern Cumberland Plain. If the airport is built there is sound basis for concern that this species' song could be lost forever from Western Sydney.

The Little Eagle is another characteristic woodland species not found in Sydney's sandstone habitats and is in national decline and protected as Vulnerable to Extinction in NSW. Local birders report that Badgerys Creek is one of the best and last remaining 'hotspots' for this species in the region. This species does not tolerate disturbance. Combining the massive on-site impact and heavy noise disturbance extending to the majority of the Cumberland Plain landscape this species may well similarly disappear from the Cumberland Plain's woodlands forever.

Every species responds in its own way to noise, making local knowledge critical. There are however some impacts which are common to noise responses globally:

- A substantial decline in wildlife abundance occurs

with regular noise over 55 dB

- Species respond differently. Some species are not impacted at all; others are entirely excluded by even low levels of noise
- Some species acclimatise to noise over time and others are immediately and permanently excluded by noise
- Some species survive noise (with reduced abundance) through adaptation; e.g. birds increasing the pitch or timing of calls to overcome noise pollution.
- To date, acclimatisation has been observed only in common urban species. Rare & endangered wildlife do not generally adapt to noise pollution

The EIS process has completely failed to address impacts of noise on wildlife of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. There is very little background noise in almost all of the World Heritage Area, which is habitat to a wide range of sensitive wildlife species.

The Burratorang Valley region contains a considerable suite of rare and endangered grassy woodland fauna, most of which are not present elsewhere in the WHA or the region. The Burratorang is coincidentally the region likely to receive the greatest noise impacts from the proposed airport. These serious impacts need serious assessment; however at present the details of such impacts remain unknown.

We call on Environment Minister Josh Frydenberg to tell us that these devastating impacts on wildlife have been considered during the approval process. Email him at Josh.Frydenberg.MP@aph.gov.au

Ross Coster, No Western Sydney Airport Subcommittee, nwsa@bluemountains.org.au

The Quiet One

Modest grey bird, the quiet one,
sitting inside the bushes, silently,
avoiding, or avoided by, his own kind,
ostracised youngster, seeking small companions —
thornbills, scrub wrens, fantails,
robins, red and yellow.

In winter, find a mixed flock feeding:
midst all the chirpings and the flutterings,
the hoppings and the dartings here and there,
goes the grey quiet one, unobtrusively.
Does he know in springtime he will blaze
like wattle? Shining, yellow-gold bright singer,
Golden Whistler.

— Graham Alcorn

The Sustainable Home, by Gary McCue and Alex Bergmann

Are batteries the right thing for you following the end of the Solar Bonus Scheme?

As of April 2017, there are over 1.66 million photovoltaic (PV) solar installations in Australia, with a combined capacity of over 5.92 gigawatts. In NSW, 15 percent of dwellings have a PV system installed. The Solar Bonus Scheme ended on 31st December 2016. Since then many NSW residents owning a solar PV grid-feed system will or already have their Solar Gross meter changed to a Solar Net meter.

Once the Net meter has been installed, it is important to use as much of your solar-generated electricity during the daytime to maximise the savings on your electricity bill. Another option is to introduce battery storage to store that solar energy for use at other times. Generally more electricity is consumed whilst the generated solar energy is not at its 'peak' or likely not available at all (e.g. night time). Battery options for solar PV grid-feed systems are a recent technology and need to be carefully considered before making 'rash' decisions.

When looking into a battery-storage system the following points need to be considered:

- Is your current solar system large enough, i.e., is there excess solar power being generated to store into batteries? This information can be found on your electricity bill for those with Solar Net meters already installed.
- Is there enough roof space to expand your system if required?
- Is the reason for installing batteries for self-consumption or for a back-up system? A self-consumption system will allow you to use stored power outside of daylight hours, whereas a battery back-up system will also provide some power to your house during blackouts.
- Can the cost of the battery storage system be justified by the savings to your power bill?
- What is payback period for your investment?

The addition of batteries to a solar PV system is not always the best option for everyone and it pays to do your research and seek professional advice. Our next article will cover battery storage design for self-consumption vs. battery backup.

This column is by local solar experts Gary McCue, with the Sustainability Guys in Blackheath, and Alex Bergmann with Energywise Living in Katoomba. Future columns will address further solar PV options and other sustainable home topics.

Celebrate 10 years of Swampcare! SWAMP SYMPOSIUM AND FIELD TRIP

Wednesday, 21 June, 9am to 5pm

Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, Katoomba

An exciting all day Swamp Conference and field trip in celebration of the 10 year anniversary of the foundation of Swampcare and the listing of Blue Mountains Swamps under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act.

* Explore the ancient origins of swamps (Paleoecologist Associate Professor Scott Mooney); * Celebrate the epic battle to save our Blue Mountains swamps (Lyndal Sullivan); * Showcase the new 10 year "Swamped by Threats" project; * Explore new research into the geomorphology of Blue Mountains Swamps (Dr Kirsten Cowley); * Examine the results of groundwater monitoring in Newnes Plateau Shrub Swamps (Dr Martin Krogh); * Updates on the current state of knowledge of the Giant Dragonfly (Ian Baird) and Blue Mountains Water Skink (Sarsha Gorrissen).

These presentations will be followed by a field trip to visit the latest soft engineering innovations being developed and/or adapted to local conditions by Eric Mahoney and his team from Blue Mountains City Council to protect swamps from stormwater.

Book with Michael Hensen at mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au (preferred) or 4780 5471. Find out more: <http://www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au/event/celebrate-10-years-of-swampcare-swamp-symposium-and-field-trip/>

Lillian Esgate

A connection with Katoomba's early past has been lost with the death of Lillian Esgate at the age of 100. Lillian was born in 1916, the eldest of four children of George and Ada Barker. In 1933 she was working at the Empire Tea Rooms in Katoomba when Ben Esgate (1914-2003) did some building work there. He courted her for the next three years and they married in November 1936. Their honeymoon was a camping trip (without a tent) beside the Coxs River near its junction with Megalong Creek. In 1938 Ben and Lillian moved into a house built by Ben on the great Western Highway near 'Shell Corner'. He named the house *Tiwilla* after one of his favourite walking areas. Ben had been bushwalking in the Coxs River catchment with his brothers since the age of five and developed a very deep knowledge of this environment as well as the Grose River area. Ben and Lillian had three daughters. His firstborn, Evelyn (later Elfick) learnt much from him, becoming one of the most experienced bushwalkers in the Sydney Bushwalking Club.

Ben moved with Lillian to Berowra in 1960. I began walking occasionally with him from the mid-1980s and did taped interviews about his life and philosophy at Berowra in the early 2000s. Lillian assisted with some of the details of my historical queries. After Ben's death in 2003 I worked with Lillian and their daughter Ann to produce a biography of Ben (*The Last of the Cox's River Men*) which was launched on Lillian's 90th birthday. By then she had moved in with Ann in the Southern Highlands where she continued her hobby of gardening, specialising in orchids and bonsai trees. It was only in her late 90s that she needed professional care and moved to a nursing home in Bargo.

I always found Lillian Esgate to be a kind and considerate person and I am grateful that she encouraged my friendship with Ben, as this turned out to be one of the most important relationships in my life.

Jim Smith

“AN ACCIDENT WAITING TO HAPPEN” Madi Maclean



waiting to happen”. The pumping of the coal slurry into the hole was handled in a very incompetent and casual manner. No records were kept of how much slurry had been pumped and how high it was. There were no flow meters. Deciding whether the hole was full was done by visual checking. At night, staff only had a headlight or car headlights to check on the height of the slurry. As well, Clarence had ignored expert geotechnical advice that the stability of the waste needed to be improved and their water management plan did not anticipate this slurry would even be sent to this hole.

The lack of records mean that we will never know how much coal fines went into the world heritage area. Even the records of what was taken out during the clean-up were guesstimates.

What will the penalty be?

The maximum penalty for the pollution charge is \$2 million and for the national parks charge is \$1.1 million. However, the judge has to take into account the seriousness of the event and the rules relating to sentencing. For instance, the penalty can be reduced by 25 per cent if the defendant pleads guilty soon after the charges are laid. Clarence Colliery did enter an early guilty plea.

Clarence Colliery stated that it had no prior convictions. Frustratingly, however, Clarence’s main owner, Centennial Coal, has had several convictions for pollution incidents at its other mines. As well, in 2011 two Centennial coal mines entered into an enforceable undertaking of \$1.45M with the Commonwealth government for mining without approval and damaging three nationally listed Temperate Highland Peat Swamps.

Orders sought from the court

The EPA has sought an environmental service order so the penalty money can be spent on some environmental works or other physical community benefits in the general area of the offence. What that would be was still being finalised at the time of the hearing.

The EPA also sought a publication order. Typically, this is a statement published in newspapers, setting out what the offender did and the court’s penalty. Clarence asked the judge to not require publication in the *Financial Review*.

The judge, Robson J, has reserved his judgment. The court is unlikely to announce the penalty for at least a month.

2015 Clarence mine waste collapse

Centennial Coal’s day in court

The hearing for the prosecution of Centennial Coal for the massive coal fines waste collapse from its Clarence Colliery was finally held on 8 May at Sydney’s Land and Environment Court. The society attended to learn how it happened and what the penalty will be.

To recap, in July 2015 a huge mine waste collapse from Clarence Colliery, near Lithgow, sent tonnes of toxic coal fines into a channel and then into the Wollangambe River. There it turned into a black sticky sludge extending down the river, smothering its banks for 10 kms. It is likely to have caused significant damage to aquatic life in the river. Environmental groups, including the Society, as well as walkers and canyoners raised concerns about the impacts on the river and our world heritage national park.

The Environment Protection Authority-directed clean-up of the river took nearly a year, at a cost of around two million dollars to the owners of Clarence Colliery. According to the EPA: “A total of 214 tonnes of coal fines have been removed by hand and the company has made more than 700 trips in a helicopter to airlift bulka bags of coal fines out of the Blue Mountains National Park.”

Prosecution announced

Clarence Colliery (owned mainly by Centennial Coal) pleaded guilty to a Tier One pollution charge (the most serious level) under the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act* and to damage to a national park under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*. In August 2016 the Society wrote to the EPA asking them to seek the maximum penalty and a sentence which would ensure such a damaging event by this company does not happen again.

Court hearing 8 May 2017

The incident

The prosecution and defendant (Clarence Colliery) agreed that Clarence had been pumping coal fines slurry into a hole in a containment area which collapsed when it was overfilled. The national park boundary was only 400 metres away.

The EPA’s barrister said the spill was “an accident



Photos:
(top) Mine waste collapse
(left) Coal fines in river

Bob Brown spent many years saving wild places in Tasmania. Now the people who have agglomerated around him and created the Bob Brown Foundation are campaigning to protect the Tarkine. This area is in northwest Tasmania, “out of sight and out of mind”, but it contains the largest temperate rainforest in the southern hemisphere. In order to bring it into focus, they adapted the idea tried elsewhere in Tasmania, of bringing artists to an area to respond to a landscape in their chosen medium. Mine is poetry, and I went to the third year of these camps, called *Tarkine in Motion*, over Easter. 120 artists and 30 volunteers camped in about half a dozen different spots, some “ramblers” went on hikes, and some people kayaked up rivers. The Bob Brown Foundation launched a Pozible fund-raising campaign to pay for the food and transport needs of the artists. This exceeded the target, through a last-ditch effort. Above a certain amount, contributors were rewarded with little gifts; I have just received some greeting cards with beautiful photos of ‘takayna’, as the area is known to the indigenous people. Speaking of which, an important aspect of this campaign has been to partner with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre.

I spent Easter camping at the Frankland River site, with a group of about 20 people. I had asked for “river”: “coast” and “forest” were the other options. Turned out that the Frankland had been a protest camp, 100 people have engaged in various tactics and held up logging since the 14th February.* Conditions were rough but that was amply compensated for by the company I was in. We had volunteers who cooked wonderful meals for us over fire and gas, and a guide. One of the volunteers was Jenny Weber, a member of the Gunns 20**.

A happy coincidence was the presence nearby of researchers from the University of Sydney who were gathering data on the Tassie Devil. There are some very hopeful developments here which I’ll write about in Part 2.

I chose to saturate myself with that place, going with our guide Jef when he took us into the forest or to the river. It is a most marvelous thing, to be in a forest with huge myrtles towering above you. As we walked around, or sat by the river writing or photographing, he would answer innumerable questions. He said, “There’s more life in a dead tree than a live one” (meaning one that is vertical). In the dark greenish light, crayfish chimneys poked from the ground.

*a tangle of rot
the moss pretending
to be a tree*

We swam in the tannin-coloured water knowing it was pure and home to the giant crayfish (*Astacopsis gouldi*), the largest freshwater invertebrate in the world.



Over the days Jenny outlined the threats to the Tarkine. They are various and include off-road vehicle driving, mining and logging. The logging conducted by Forestry Tasmania makes no economic sense at all. It is in fact costing the Tasmanian taxpayer. Last year’s bill was \$67 million. I was shocked to learn that, apart from the wedge-tailed eagle, no other species that is threatened or endangered receives habitat protection under Tasmanian law.

If you’d like to see some of the beautiful work that was inspired by these places, go to:

<http://www.bobbrown.org.au> The work from Tarkine in Motion 2016 has just been on exhibition in Hobart, and will travel to Melbourne in July. The exhibition of our work will open next year in Hobart around April. You might like to journey up to Avoca Beach Picture Theatre on Thursday June 6, to see “Tarkine in Motion”, a film by Dan Broun. There’ll be great roots music by Scott Bird and his band (he was at our camp) and a Q&A session. 7 pm, \$20, see: www.avocapicturetheatre.com.au

** in 2004 the woodchip company Gunns pursued legal action against 20 activists and organisations, who were campaigning to protect old growth forests. Eventually Gunns lost.

*On 25 May peace will have reigned over the Frankland for 100 days.

Photo: A Tarkine river, copyright Dan Broun.

A VALUABLE LEGACY Christine Davies

The Blue Mountains is a special place, made more special by the people we meet who influence our lives and leave behind a legacy of loving and caring for the natural environment which we, each in our own way, can try to emulate and pass on to others.

In this issue of Hut News, Jim Smith writes about **Lillian Esgate**, wife of **Ben Esgate**, who reached the grand age of 100.

In 2015, former bushwalks coordinator and leader Jim Percy located **Lloyd and Shirley Jones** in a retirement home at Lismore and has recently found out that, sadly, they both passed away in 2016. Lloyd and Shirley were active in the Society in the 1980s. Jim Smith tells me that they were at every monthly meeting, held at the Hut on a Friday night, and would be going on a Society bushwalk the following day. Lloyd was never without a sketchbook in his hand. He produced a set of greeting cards to raise money for the Society and his sketches were in early issues of Hut News. Lloyd’s painting of the old Conservation Hut hangs in our office in the present day Hut.

Older members will be saddened to learn that **Deidre Morton** passed away recently. In my early days with the Society I visited “Morton Cave”, the wonderful house at Woodford designed and lived in by Deidre and Ivor Morton. Almost completely hidden from view, the house is nestled into a north facing gully

(continued on page 9)

Henry Lawson in the Blue Mountains

Celebrating the sesquicentenary of Henry Lawson's birth

Henry Lawson was born 150 years ago, on 17 June 1867, in a tent on the Grenfell NSW goldfield. He came to the Blue Mountains as a boy, to visit his Grandfather Albury, and again as a young man, to work with his father, painting the houses his father built. These were happy times for Henry. He wrote a number of poems and stories about or influenced by the Blue Mountains.

THE BLUE MOUNTAINS by Henry Lawson

Above the ashes straight and tall,
Through ferns with moisture dripping,
I climb beneath the sandstone wall,
My feet on mosses slipping.

Like ramparts round the valley's edge
The tinted cliffs are standing,
With many a broken wall and ledge,
And many a rocky landing.

And round about their rugged feet
Deep ferny dells are hidden
In shadowed depths, whence dust and heat
Are banished and forbidden.

The stream that, crooning to itself,
Comes down a tireless rover,
Flows calmly to the rocky shelf,
And there leaps bravely over.

Now pouring down, now lost in spray
When mountain breezes sally,
The water strikes the rock midway,
And leaps into the valley.

Now in the west the colours change
The blue with crimson blending;
Behind the far Dividing Range,
The sun is fast descending.

And mellowed day comes o'er the place,
And softens ragged edges;
The rising moon's great placid face
Looks gravely o'er the ledges.

(December 1888)

A valuable legacy (continued from page 8)

underneath a lush native roof top garden grown on a slab which covers the front of the house. I remember an *Angophora costata* tree growing in a small courtyard with rooms around it, and a Rock Warbler nesting underneath the foundations of the slab. Deidre and Ivor were very active in the Society in the 1980s. Deidre and others started growing and selling native plants to raise money and created the Conservation Society's Land Preservation Fund. The aim was to purchase environmentally sensitive land to prevent its unsympathetic development. Money from this fund was used to purchase "Budthingeroo", an inholding near Kanangra which was donated to NPWS and is part of Kanangra-Boyd National Park.

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

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 \$35 Concession (Senior/Student) \$25

Household \$40 Household Concession \$30

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.

Winter Comforter

In winter the Grey Thrush comes to comfort me.

'Cheer up,' he calls.

It doesn't matter if the bleak winds blow,

It doesn't matter if it rain or snow,

Or if the temperature is two below,

He calls, Cheer up.'

I know in springtime he will sing a melody

So sweet and rare.

But now he hops around the garden quietly

With spritely air.

'Cheer up,' cries he

Graham Alcorn

Jenolan Through a Limestone Lens

By Louise Bennett

I recently visited Jenolan Caves, and although I've been there many times, it's a place that never fails to amaze me. My friends were also wandering about with jaws dropping. The Grand Arch entrance alone is astonishing, not to mention the Devil's Coach House, the Blue Lake, historic Caves House ... and I haven't even mentioned the extraordinary caves in all their ancient splendour yet!

Actually, the word 'ancient' doesn't do the caves justice. We entered the Lucas Cave to gaze at delicate structures that have been shimmering elegantly in the dark millions of years before human beings even *thought* of clumping about on this planet. There was a hushed, almost religious, silence on our tour when the guide mentioned that the caves were around 340 million years old – hard to get your head around a figure like that. More jaws dropping.

I was interested to learn more about how Jenolan faces the ongoing challenges to protect and conserve its unique environment, including the wilderness and wildlife that is very much a part of its unique and fragile landscape. Jenolan proudly promotes its mission as: '*To manage the natural and cultural heritage and visitor facilities of Jenolan Caves Karst Reserve in an environmentally, socially and commercially sustainable manner*'.¹ That's an impressive mission.

Jenolan also claims to be the first ecotourism facility in the world (before ecotourism was invented).

Way back in dusty 1872, John Lucas, Minister for Mines (a title which doesn't sound altogether environmentally friendly!) was besotted with Jenolan. Our Lucas Cave guide, Stewart, highlighted the fact that Lucas was a 'regular caver' who noticed that careless visitors were damaging the cave systems, as well as happily helping themselves to limestone souvenirs along the way. Lucas put his foot down and successfully instigated the very first laws granting legal protection of a cave system (in fact, Jenolan was the first cave system in the world to win legal protection).

Over the decades (since Lucas stopped tourists pinching stalactite trophies) cave guides have faithfully reinforced this protection, and as a result, the caves have sustained minimal damage.

The delights of Jenolan's re-awakening wildlife

The success of the ongoing fox control program has resulted in growing numbers of endangered brush-tailed rock wallabies returning to their old habitats in the Devil's Coach House, as well as the Lucas Cave itself. We were fortunate to 'bump into' some sunbathing rock wallabies, who watched us rather nonchalantly from their boulders in the Coach House.



Last year I was also lucky to spy a spotted quoll enjoying its summer's evening stroll just outside Caves House (a 'quoll stroll' you could say).

The Blue Lake is famous for its platypus sightings, although I haven't had that good fortune as yet. But I plan many more visits in the years to come, so fingers crossed.

Secret loo tip: Many people don't know this, but there's a ladies loo in the Grand Arch that's actually a tiny cave in itself. It's a destination all on its own – the most impressive (and the only) cave loo I've ever been in! And you don't need a ticket.

¹ <http://www.jenolancaves.org.au/about/conservation/>

Photo credit: Gerhard Koertner - brush-tailed rock-wallaby (*Petrogale penicillat*).

38. GRAVE OF DOWELL O'REILLY, ELEANOR DARK AND ERIC DARK, Blackheath Cemetery.

A tall lichen-encrusted Celtic cross in a graveyard beside the Great Western Highway marks the resting place of three of the mountains' most famous citizens.

Dowell O'Reilly (1865-1923) was in parliament (1894-1898) and supported women's suffrage. O'Reilly's environmentalism echoes in the following extract of his poem "Australia":

Love—steadfast as her stars,
And passionate as her sun,
And joyous as the winds, that fling
The golden petals of her spring
By gully, spur, and run,
On dreaming age, and little one:

Courage—when courage fails
In the blind smoke and pain
Of raging fire, and lurid sky,
And dumb thirst-driven agony—
Till river and creek again
Swirl seaward through the teeming rain.'

O'Reilly's writer daughter, Eleanor Dark (1900-1985) described Katoomba's "mist waterfall" phenomenon in her novel "No Barrier".

"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, 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 cataract that glowed like pink dust in the early sunlight."

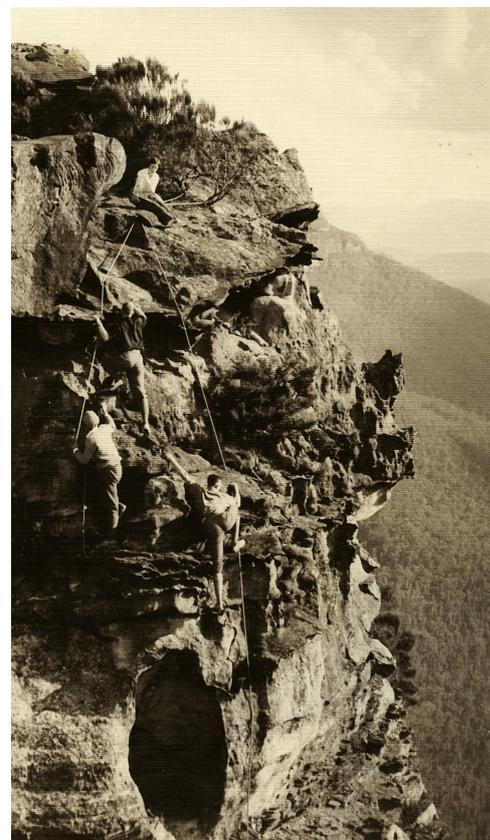
Eleanor's husband, Eric Dark (1891-1987) was a founder of the Doctors' Reform Society. Public canvassing of Labor Foreign Minister Herbert Evatt's proposal to make Eric Dark Australian ambassador to the Soviet Union caused a scandal in the late 1940s (source, Barbara Brooks and Judith Clarke, "Eleanor Dark: a writer's life").

Eleanor and Eric are particularly fondly remembered by those who pursue intimacy with the environment through rock climbing. The Darks pioneered this activity as far afield as the Warrumbungles as well as in the Blue Mountains (see photographs on this page).

The Darks' late son Mick was a life member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society and a founder of Varuna Writers Centre at Katoomba.



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.



Images (clockwise from top)

Blackheath Cemetery—Celtic cross celebrating the resting places of three great Blue Mountains contributors (Photo by Christine Davies)

The first ascent of Boars Head Rock. Eleanor Dark (belaying), Eric Lowe, Osmar White, Eric Dark (closest to bottom). Photo by James Starkey, donated to Blue Mountains City Library Local Studies by his daughter Jane Chadwick and son Ian, the Starkey Collection.

Katoomba 2016 access track to Boars Head Rock for modern rockclimbers follows the boundary of the 2014 bushfire near Cahills Lookout. (Photo by Christine Davies)

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 Harold Thompson harold.thompson@bigpond.com 6355 1762 or mobile 0409 010 737

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)

- June 10 Gardens of Stone.** A new adventure of discovery – off track, part exploratory wilderness area so party size limited. Dependent on 4WD availability Book early. 5km., Gr 3. May be scratchy so protective clothing necessary. Leader: **Hugh** hue.s@optusnet.com.au 0423 309 854 after 8pm.
Walkers preferring on-track/longer walk should meet at Springwood Stn. CP at 8.00am, choose walk and leader on the day
- Jun 17 The ever popular **Goochs Crater:** Leader Bob 0408947325. Meet at Wentworth Falls CP at 8.30am. 8km. Grade 3. Map Wollangambe.
- Jun 24 **Gardens of Stone.** A new adventure of discovery – off track, part exploratory wilderness area so party size limited. Dependent on 4WD availability. Book early. 5km., Gr 3. May be scratchy so protective clothing necessary. Leader: **Hugh** hue.s@optusnet.com.au 0423 309 854 after 8pm.
Walkers preferring on-track/longer walk should meet at Wentworth Falls. CP at 8.00am, choose a walk and leader on the day.
- Jul 1 **Prince Henry Cliff Walk,** from Gordon Falls to Copelands lookout. Leader **Emanuel.** Contact 0419773906 or emanuelanddo@yahoo.com.au for details. 6km. Grade 2. Map. Katoomba.
- Jul 8 **Fortress Ridge.** Leader **Diana** 0432619305 or Diana.r.levy@gmail.com Meet at Mt. Hay rd. opposite the school at 8.00am. 8km. Grade 3. 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, 04111 62345, keithdor53@hotmail.com

- Jun 12 **No walk.** Public holiday.
- Jun 19 **Asgard Swamp and Thor Head,** Mount Victoria. Meet Mt Victoria Station 9.50 am. Car pool fare \$5. Tracy 0434 362 611. Grade 2.
- Jun 26 **Mt Twiss,** Linden. Stunning views. Fire trail and bush track. 10 km. Meet Linden Station 9am. Car pool. Chris Smith 4787 6979. Grade 2.
- Jul 3 **Florabella and Pippas Pass,** Warrimoo to Blaxland. Meet Warrimoo Station south side 8.45 am. Ros King 0417 261 465. Grade 2.
- Jul 10 **Darks Cave,** Leura. Historic walk. Meet Leura Station car park 8.20 am. Car pool fare \$5. Eddie 4784 2691. 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, denfenella12@bigpond.com

- Jun 15 **Rigby Hill and Walls Ledge.** Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Car pool \$5. Take lunch. Grade 2
- Jun 22 **Greenwich Point, Harbour City Walk.** Meet top of escalators Central Station 9.10am. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. Take lunch. Grade 1/2
- Jun 29 **Grand Canyon, Blackheath.** Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9.45am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 3
- Jul 6 **Nepean River Walk, Emu Plains.** Easy 7k walk along the river with lunch at O'Donoghue's Pub. Meet Emu Plains Station south side 9.30am. Leader Keith 4736 1010. Grade 1
- Jul 13 **Blaxland to Lennox Bridge and Glenbrook Lagoon.** Meet GWH at bottom of steps from railway 9.40am. Lunch at Blaxland Tavern or take your own. Leader Bernie 4739 6009. Grade 2

Visit <https://www.facebook.com/bmcslongerbushwalks/>

Gardens of Stone Visitors Map

The Visitors Map is full of suggested walks and trips. It is in full colour, 60 by 85 cm in size, and covers the entire Gardens of Stone region at a 1:100,000 scale, making it ideal for planning your next trip to the area.

Well illustrated with colour photos, the reverse side has lots of information on the plants, animals, pagoda rock formations and cliffs, as well as the cultural and historic places in the region.

You can buy a map on the society's website at http://www.bluemountains.org.au/GoS_VisitorsMap.htm

The Australian Bird Guide has landed

The Australian Bird Guide, by Peter Menkhorst, Danny Rogers, Rohan Clarke, Jeff Davies, Peter Marsack, Kim Franklin (CSIRO Publishing).

Australia's avifauna is large, diverse and spectacular, reflecting the continent's impressive range of habitats and evolutionary history. With specially commissioned paintings of over 900 species, *The Australian Bird Guide* is the most comprehensive field guide to Australian birds ever seen. The guide features around 4700 colour illustrations, with particular emphasis on providing the fine detail required to identify difficult groups and distinctive plumages.

Comprehensive species accounts have been written by a dedicated team of ornithologists to ensure identification details, distribution and status are current and accurate. Read more: <http://www.publish.csiro.au/book/6520/>