



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

BOB BROWN AT THE HUB

The philosophical father of Australia's green movement addressed a packed Springwood Hub theatre on September 21 for the Mick Dark Talk for the Future. He heralded busloads of protesters arriving at the Carmichael mine site in Queensland and the vulnerable temperate rainforests of Tasmania's Tarkine. He promised that, in 2018, he will visit the Gardens of Stone together with Paul Thomas, his life partner and major contributor to the magnificent Australian odyssey publication, "Green Nomads".

Bob Brown's return to the region where he grew up (in Oberon and Trunkey Creek) should not be judged by the most dramatic possibilities he referred to. Bob is a determined old man much more than an angry old man. The audience was taken on a journey that carefully established the context of Bob's blunt analysis of the human species' choice between self extinction and remaining longer than a few more decades upon the earth. Bob referred to the views of the physicist Stephen Hawking, explaining that it was a virtual mathematical certainty that life has existed elsewhere in the universe. The reason *Homo sapiens* has detected no communication from alien life may be that "intelligent" life has destroyed its own habitat at other locations in the universe.

A most evocative image was that of a 21st century adult dreaming that their great grandchildren came to them and asked: "What did you do when the seasons began to change?" "What did you do when the species began to extinct?" Bob's rallying cry was: "Step off the footpath!" by which he meant "make a difference in any way you can".

This was the third Mick Dark Talk for the Future co-hosted by Varuna Writers Centre and Blue Mountains Conservation Society. The enthusiasm of Varuna spokesperson Amy Sambrooke and our president Madi Maclean underscored the momentum of this annual event. Former federal ministers Bob Debus and Neil Blewett were in attendance. As on previous occasions, Jill Dark was an inspiring presence. Jill is known as an intensely dedicated author, wildlife carer and conservationist as well as the widow of Mick, a conservation leader whose spirit will never leave us.

Towards the end of Bob Brown's talk, he played a performance of Earth Song, a mesmerising musical rendition by diva Claire Dawson with the music and lyrics composed by Bob himself over a stunning series of Australian nature photographs. Any of us who can contribute in any way to the causes dear to Bob will be left with the feeling that we are both saving the planet and marching with the most insightful and trustworthy comrade we could have in any political movement.

Don Morison

Don't Raise the Dam Keith Muir

The enclosed 'Don't Raise the Dam' brochure outlines the impacts that will result if Warragamba Dam wall is raised by 14 metres as proposed. You can download it at http://bluemountains.org.au/warragamba/Kowmung_Brochure.pdf

Like freeways, dam proposals are decided by the State Government. A new environmental impact statement is in preparation for this proposal which was originally rejected in 1995. We need to start fighting to save Blue Mountains World Heritage from flood inundation, as the proposal won't be subject to public hearings and independent review processes.

Sufficient people power must be raised to convince decision-makers to ditch the dam plan. The brochure explains the steps you can take to stop the DAMage.

A bigger Warragamba dam can only offer marginal improvement to flood mitigation already provided. It can't eliminate floods. Downstream of the dam, floodplains must be retained for agricultural purposes (and floods). It is worrying that urban expansion plans are already in place that could put more people at risk on the floodplain, and if they go ahead the dam proposal will be part of this deadly real estate deal.

Practical alternatives, such as lowering the full supply level and downstream floodplain management to prevent floodplain sprawl, will avoid damage to our beautiful wild rivers and national parks upstream.

Please say NO to a bigger Warragamba Dam – beauty must not be replaced by blight!

A letter writing and campaign guide to save Blue Mountains rivers is on the back of the brochure.



BMCS President Madi Maclean and Membership Secretary and anti-airport campaigner Ross Coster took time before the talk to tell Bob Brown about the Society's current campaigns. Photo by Paul Vale.

NURSERY NEWS

"Hut News", the newsletter of
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mass of cream flower spikes in spring, and *Darwinia taxifolia*, a prostrate, spreading plant suitable for rockeries. We have a range of Prostantheras (mint bushes) which will be flowering soon and Croweas which are always in demand.

Sue Nicol. Nursery volunteer



The volunteers have been doing some urgent maintenance to the shadehouse and glasshouse at Blackheath in the last month. The work at the nursery can be varied and challenging at times but the volunteers always rise to a challenge. The usual work of propagation has been ongoing with new volunteers learning on the job. New volunteers are always welcome.

Our new seedlings and cuttings have been keeping warm in the glasshouse over winter and are just waiting for the spring growth spurt to be at their best. We will have a good range of species ready for the October markets. Among them will be a limited release of *Symphionema montanum*, a low shrub with bright green foliage and a



Images: Volunteer Bruce Mckraig wiring up the heated beds in the glasshouse; Volunteer Fiona Forrest potting seedlings; A tiny *Acacia* seedling about to be potted. Photos by Sue Nicol.

BMCS NURSERY PLANT SALES

We offer the home gardener, landscaper or contractor a big variety of quality local native plants at economical prices.

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. Discounts for bulk orders.
Enquiries: Hugh Brougham 04079 55028
nursery@bluemountains.org.au

Welcome to new members

Suzanne van Opdorp
Enmoore Lin
Stuart Dobbie
Patrick Moylan
Jack O'Gorman
Eva Regitz
Kathryn Jakes
Annette Gray
Robin Gurr

This year we celebrate 50 years of national parks in NSW – and Australia. In October 1967 the National Parks and Wildlife Act was passed by the NSW Parliament. Significantly, this was under the Askin coalition government with Lands Minister Tom Lewis as a pivotal figure. The National Parks Association of NSW, created in 1957, worked over many years for this outcome and is now celebrating 60 years of successes.

The NPW Act was the first formal National Parks legislation in Australia and all other states and territories eventually followed our pioneering lead.

Before 1967 our system of national parks, state parks and nature reserves was under the control of the Fauna Protection Panel and the Reserve Branch of the Lands Department. NSW national parks were a concept, with no legal basis for the label. They were reserves under the Lands Act and 'national' in name only (as they still are). The 1967 act created national parks as legal entities and a professional agency to manage them - the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Under the NPW Act, Lands Minister Tom Lewis also established a charity, the National Parks and Wildlife Foundation, to assist the NPWS to raise funds for conservation. The first director of the NPWS was Samuel P Weems, imported from the US National Park Service, along with a para-military ranger uniform of epaulettes and 'Yogi Bear' hats.

When the Royal National Park was gazetted in 1879, it was the second National Park in the World, the first being Yellowstone gazetted the year before. Ku-ring-gai National Park was gazetted in 1894, Blue Mountains National Park in 1959 and Kosciuszko National Park in 1967. All the pre-1967 'national parks' were progressively brought under the NPW Act and management transferred to NPWS. Many parks had been managed by local trusts and these were gradually converted to advisory committees.

All these important institutions still survive today, despite various forces who would like to degrade conservation efforts. Remarkably, the NPWS lyre-bird logo (affectionately known as 'the chook') also survives, as one of the most recognisable 'brands' in the state. NPWS now manages more than 870 parks and reserves (of many categories) covering over seven million hectares, more than 8% of the land area of NSW. The Parks estate includes four World Heritage sites, numerous National Heritage listed areas and 17 Ramsar wetlands.

It is estimated that over 40 million people visit national parks in NSW each year, and survey after survey shows that NSW *loves* its national parks.

In 1987, NSW backed up its national park innovation by pioneering wilderness protection in Australia, with the Carr Labor government enacting the country's first Wilderness Act.

National parks and wilderness areas are now seen by some as 'so last century', and are under attack on many fronts by those who would rob us of their benefits for a few quick bucks. But the NSW reserve system and its management have been described as 'world class' and

they remain some of the greatest achievements of the NSW community, governments and public service. Conservation is now rightly a landscape-wide effort, but well-managed reserves are the bedrock of environmental conservation and the mother lode of biodiversity protection.

At over a million hectares, the BMCS home territory of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area takes in Blue Mountains National Park, six other national parks and Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve. This is the largest reserve system in NSW, two-thirds of it wilderness, with the two largest legally-protected wilderness areas in eastern Australia. A deeply caring local community, dedicated NPWS staff and proximity to Sydney ensures that the Blue Mountains is a centre of gravity for defending conservation gains and improving park management. May it ever be so.

We thank and congratulate the conservationists, governments and wonderful NPWS people who for the past 50 years have looked after our beautiful World Heritage Area and its precious national parks and native fauna and flora. We recognise and thank Aboriginal people who have cared for this landscape for many thousands of years before that, and still today. In these challenging times we owe it to all of them, and to nature itself, to protect and expand such a magnificent legacy.

Footnote: On this page we celebrate the wonderful achievements of National Parks and Wildlife over its 50 years of service. Under the current state government there have been massive funding and staff cuts and there is a plan to extend the F6 motorway through the Royal National Park.

<https://npansw.org/latest-news/media-releases>

<http://www.bluemountainsgazette.com.au/story/4864556/national-parks-cuts/>

<https://johnmenadue.com/john-benson-biodiversity-is-threatened-in-new-south-wales/>

BOOK LAUNCH

Wayfaring in Wollemi stories of people in wilderness by Andy Macqueen

The stories of 28 explorers, surveyors, wanderers, cattlemen, would-be developers, adventurers and conservationists who each spent a part of their life in the Wollemi, the largest declared Wilderness in NSW. What took them there and what did they get up to? Did the experience change their lives? The author follows their footsteps through the gorges, over the mountains and into the hideaways.

•hardback •352 pages •140 maps & images •RRP \$40

Sunday 22 October 2017
10.30am - morning tea supplied
Education Centre
Blue Mountains Botanic Garden
MOUNT TOMAH

Hosted by the Colong Foundation
Please RSVP at www.colongwilderness.org.au

Cruising into the future Clare Power

Have you noticed that almost every time you are near Sydney Harbour a massive cruise ship is docked or in transit? According to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia's 2016 *Report*, 1,281,159 Australians took a cruise in 2016. That's a phenomenal 1 in 19 Australians, and the highest per capita ratio in the world. Over three quarters of these cruisers visited ports in Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific.

Personally, I prefer perching on rocky headlands watching the waves crash onto rugged coastlines. However, I'm intrigued that so many Australians experience the ocean and visit the South Pacific yet the plight of our Pasifika neighbours who are among the world's most vulnerable to climate change is not a consistent part of our national or local conversations. If one in nineteen Australians go on cruises, there must be some ConSoc members among them.

A quick google search using the terms 'climate change', 'cruise ships' and 'Pacific ocean' brought up the following headline from last year 'Breaking the ice: luxury *cruise ship* brings mass tourism to the Arctic, thanks to *climate change*'. The celebration of this frightening impact of climate change chills my being. When I added Pacific Islands to the search terms the impact of climate change was a long way down the list of results, and the first is about a plan by a billionaire investor to build floating islands in French Polynesia.

Just to be clear, I am not suggesting that the cruise ship industry is contributing to climate change in the Pacific, (although it would be interesting to explore its environmental and cultural impacts), but I do think that a greater awareness and ongoing activist support for our neighbours would be a reasonable act of reciprocity as gratitude for hosting our leisure time activities.

Kiribati which is an archipelago of 33 tiny coral atolls is the world's lowest-lying country, with an average height above sea level of just two metres. It is known by its inhabitants as the 'kiss of the Pacific' but its coastline is disappearing due to extreme weather events, king tides and creeping sea levels. As the sea encroaches on the land, food and water sources are contaminated and lost and if this continues unchecked on these tiny atolls people will have nowhere to go. Imagine what it would be like for us to be forced to the edges of our ridges in the Blue Mountains with nowhere to go.

Erietera Aram, a Kiribati man who visited Australia earlier this year as part of a delegation visiting Australia said "We don't want to leave our country. We love our land, and it doesn't have the same meaning to be living somewhere else. We don't want to be migrants of climate, but if there is no change our country will disappear into the sea."

In July Hut News I wrote about the divestment campaign and the Adani coalmine. A group of people from the Pacific Islands Climate Action Network (PICAN) wrote an



open letter to the Australian Ambassador for Climate Change, Patrick Suckling in February. It can be read in full at:

<http://www.greenpeace.org.au/blog/pacific-islanders-call-out-australian-climate-change-ambassador/#.WZd9liqjHIU>

The letter opens with:

Time and again, Pacific island leaders have explained that climate change is the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific. We must work together to tackle climate change.

Unfortunately, and there is no polite way to put this, your government is knowingly undermining our future and the future of our children. In full knowledge of the facts and long-term impacts, the Australian government is pressing ahead with new coal mines and coal-fired power plants. This directly contradicts global efforts to tackle climate change and puts our communities in peril.

The letter closes with:

This year, Fiji is President of the global climate negotiations. Fiji and other Pacific island governments are demanding that polluting nations reduce emissions, consistent with keeping temperature rise below 1.5°C.

It is time for Australia to accept the scale of action required to tackle climate change. We must all move away from fossil fuels, and immediately transition to renewable energy. Together, we must support climate action around the globe.

Pacific islanders are not drowning. We are fighting for our future. As our friend and near neighbour, we expect you, and the Australian government, to do more.

As Australians PICAN urge us: 'Raise your voice, raise your hand. And Australians – please don't allow your government to use your money on a sinking project that makes the world a more dangerous place for us all'.

Subsidence, Subsidies and Subsistence Dr Brian Marshall¹

Subsidence, subsidies and subsistence, what do they have in common? Subsidence is induced by longwall coal mining, subsidies reflect governments supporting such coal mining, and subsistence expresses the living-mode of low-paid workers and pensioners consequent upon escalating power-prices. An over-simplification, but the previous sentence is a useful starting point!

Much current debate revolves around the extent to which governments, oppositions, market-mismanagement and business-greed are responsible for escalating power-costs. The major political parties characteristically blame each other for creating instability and business-uncertainty, the market operator has seemingly been insufficiently forceful² in the face of governmental instability, and the coal and gas industries have, not unsurprisingly but perhaps too greedily, exploited high export prices to the detriment of the 'local' market. There is enough blame for all to share. The federal government should now create business-certainty in the context of Australia's regrettably inadequate commitments to the Paris Agreement. Vacillation and internal politics are placed above the needs of the country. Subsistence-living linked to escalating power-prices will be an ongoing outcome of this short-term thinking.

Subsidies are of concern to the Coalition. The National Party's federal conference at Canberra resolved that subsidies for renewable power-sources should be phased out. The conference also rejected the Finkel Report's clean energy -target of 42 per cent of renewable energy by 2030, whilst at the state Liberal National Party's convention in Brisbane, the motion to withdraw from the Paris Agreement was only just defeated. Nothing was said about subsidies for the coal industry!

The coal industry benefits directly and indirectly from governmental subsidies. For example, government subsidies for Australia's coal-export industry approximate \$1.8 billion a year, and this excludes the environmental cost of coal-production subsidies. The Australia Institute, in a separate determination, suggested that the Federal Government's subsidies to the **entire mining industry** amounted to \$4.5 billion in 2013. This was a substantial underestimate because certain types of federal subsidy were omitted. Furthermore, had generous **state** subsidies also been included, the total value of subsidies from governments could have doubled³.

The mining industry and the Australian Minerals Council have disputed the various determinations based on matters of detail including what should be defined as a subsidy. The determinations are 'approximations' but they nevertheless show that the coal industry and the mining industry at large benefit greatly from federal and state subsidies.

The following potential and existing subsidies for the coal industry⁴ will place **subsidizing renewables** in a sensible perspective.

- As envisaged in the Finkel report, despite his assertion that the concept is energy-source 'agnostic', subsidising renewables would help to meet Australia's pathetic commitments at the Paris Agreement to combat climate-change; subsidising

coal compromises the commitments and constitutes global suicide.

- The Coalition is now likely to **reduce** Finkel's Clean Energy Target and adopt an emissions index such that 'clean coal' and perhaps even 'dirty coal' are beneficially favoured – this will subsidise the coal industry rather than penalise it.
- Were the Federal Government to make a payment or low-interest loan to Adani, under the guise of the NTIF (Northern Territory Infrastructure Fund), it would be directly subsidising the coal-export industry; the Queensland Government has already offered Adani special dispensations.
- NSW's Biodiversity Offsets Scheme and the federal Department of the Environment through the bilateral agreement support the coal industry (and developers in general) by ensuring that, if all else fails, approval can be given contingent upon a 'suitable' financial offset – this is an indirect subsidy.
- Seemingly inadequate time-limits and their enforcement, when coal mines go into 'care and maintenance' and/or remediation works are prescribed, are an indirect subsidy; insufficiently large financial assurance funds lodged to meet site-rehabilitation needs, particularly if the commitments are 'on-sold'⁵, are also an indirect subsidy. All benefit the company and are detrimental for the taxpayer and the environment.
- Additional direct and indirect subsidies include: removal of the 'carbon tax'; the Federal and State Governments' funds for research into 'clean coal'; provision of infrastructure such as road/rail transport and loading/unloading and port facilities; the Federal Government's Diesel Fuel Rebate Scheme which particularly benefits the mining industry; and taxation concessions related to capital expenditure and exploration costs.
- Finally, the coal industry does not pay for the huge volumes of mine-water pumped from beneath the watertable and used for operational purposes, nor does it pay for treating the polluted water to sufficiently high standards before being discharged to once-pristine watercourses⁶, and nor does it pay compensation for the health-costs inflicted on communities during mining, treatment, transport and utilisation.

The above is incomplete. It only scratches the surface of how the coal industry (not alone in such practices) exploits the system while polluting the air and water and in other ways wreaking environmental destruction. Some is a heritage of past practices but now is the time to move forward and embrace renewables for your health and that of the planet.

What can you do? Tell your local state and federal members to press for action on removing subsidies for coal and promoting the adoption of renewables. Australia and the planet needs your help.

(Continued on page 6: Endnotes)

Night gale

Like a shark provoked
she rips and tears
at any weakness
of habitat or branch,
rough as steel rakes clawing at whatever
has the temerity to stand above earth.

Now hear this! now feel this!
she cries in defiance
of our petty constructions,
bowls over bins like tenpins
and hurls them
down the neighbour's driveway.

Still not satisfied
she raises a rebellion at two am
and wakes the hapless sleeper.
Nothing to be done,
just listen and hope
it will blow over –

but please not the huge gum
that leans with menace
above my cringing eaves.

Brendan Doyle

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

Subsidence, Subsidies and Subsistence (continued from page 5)

¹ A fully referenced article is available from http://bluemountains.org.au/documents/articles/Subsidies_BMarshall.pdf or the Author.

² At least in terms of the information available in the public domain.

³ I emphasise that despite these figures being for the entire mining industry, the coal industry would be a significant beneficiary.

⁴ As acknowledged by then Minister Canavan; see <http://www.tai.org.au/content/adani-and-end-subsidy-denial>

⁵ <https://independentaustralia.net/environment/environment-display/peabodys-grossly-inadequate-rehab-bond,8894>

⁶ This is slowly changing following many years of inadequate licensing by government and strong resistance by the coal-mining industry.

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.

15 years of top notch work

The Society is deeply indebted to Bart Beech who leaves us for an extended stay overseas after 15 years as our treasurer. Bart has been described as “always as good as google, coming up with the answers to so many of our questions”. In addition to keeping our accounts in excellent order, Bart was a central contributor to the management of the Society's investments and the operation of our Gift Committee. He has been a great authority on matters connected to the operation of our constitution, our charitable status and the terms of engagement of our contractors.

Colleagues have written regarding Bart: “He is a wise man.” “He is always able to tell us the correct procedure.” “His counsel on financial governance and constitutional matters has been invaluable.” “He will be sorely missed.” “He has been a friend and we will miss his wit and humour.” “Best of luck on your travels, mate.”

Politicians who don't care

Over the past two years I have written a LOT of letters to politicians. These are people who are elected to represent us.

I wrote (on behalf of our 800 Members) to Urban Infrastructure Minister Paul Fletcher several times, detailing our objections to the proposed Western Sydney Airport.

His replies to letters are slow, infrequent, and do not address in any way *any* of our objections based on World Heritage protections, Aboriginal and European cultural heritage, destruction of Cumberland Plain woodland, or effects on our local communities. Instead they extol the virtues of ‘jobs and growth’ and imply that an extra million people in Western Sydney by the 2030s is a good thing. High speed rail is rejected as being too expensive and not serving the ‘demands’ of the aviation industry.

I wrote to Senator Marise Payne, who is based in Parramatta, as one of our colleagues found a letter to the editor from her, written in 1999, discussing the proposed Badgerys Creek Airport and stating in conclusion: *‘I remain committed to opposing this proposal’*. This is in stark contrast to her recent flyer that states: *‘An airport in Western Sydney will be a long-term source of jobs and economic growth for our region’*.

I wrote (on behalf of our 800 Members) to ask Senator Payne why her view of the recent identical proposal is so different to her earlier stance.

Her response took months, and consists of an invitation to subscribe to *her* e-mail newsletters so we can keep track of the marvellous job she is doing. She did not address *any* of our concerns in any way in her reply.

Recently the NSW Government has scrapped land clearing laws, seized control of development application powers, sacked councils, used an administration period to massively ramp up land sales and huge building approvals, and proceeded with mass-scale road projects. In every case, significant community opposition to these decisions was completely ignored.

‘Consultation’ now consists of designing outrageous projects that nobody wants, in pursuit of ‘Jobs and Growth’, producing glossy brochures and web sites, ignoring community feedback, and proceeding with the project(s) regardless. In the past, consultation with the community consisted of setting up committees (I have served on many), discussing proposals, taking on board community feedback, and modifying proposals to minimise community opposition.

I despair for the future of Sydney, NSW and Australia if this is allowed to continue. We MUST DEMAND better than this from our politicians. This is NOT how Government is supposed to operate! **Ross Coster**

Threatened fauna of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area: Greater Glider *Petauroides volans* and Powerful Owl *Ninox strenua*

Judy Smith

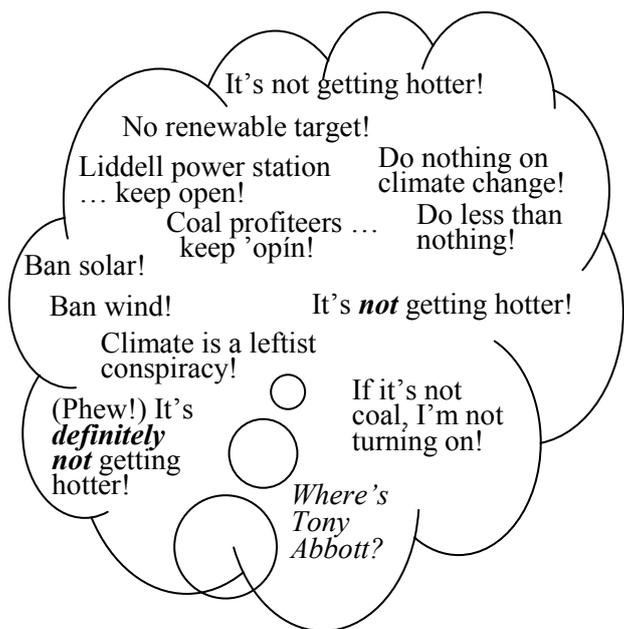
The Greater Glider (vulnerable species at national level) and Powerful Owl (vulnerable at state level) are Australia's largest glider and owl. They inhabit tall, mature forests found on the richer, moister soils of gullies, alluvial flats, shale and basalt caps, and volcanic diatremes across the World Heritage Area. The Greater Glider is sedentary within a small home range, whereas the Powerful Owl ventures more widely into neighbouring drier forest to feed.

Powerful Owls in the Blue Mountains have increased greatly since the 1980s. We are not sure why. Their resounding "whoo-hoo" call is now frequently heard in gullies and valleys, the higher pitched calls of the female sometimes alternating with the deeper calls of the male during the autumn-winter breeding season. The Greater Glider is faring less well locally. Their sluggish behaviour, a consequence of a diet of low energy eucalypt foliage, and their large reflective eyes make them a relatively easy animal to survey. Over the last decade they have declined markedly at lower elevations, most likely due to increasing temperature and associated effects. Feeding Greater Gliders select younger eucalypt leaves, which are more nutritious than older leaves. Supplies of young leaves may well be limited during times of prolonged heat, drought and wind.

The Powerful Owl commonly preys on Greater Gliders, which are not much smaller than itself. The photographed pair were in Gillindich Nature Reserve, to the south-west of the Blue Mountains, several weeks ago. A little gruesome, but removal of the glider's head is typical Powerful Owl feeding behaviour. In this instance a 'pale phase' (grey to white) glider was captured, rather than the more usual dark phase (black above, white below) form. Before we came across the pair we had not heard or seen Powerful Owls but had noticed that the Greater Gliders were being rather skittish – in future we will pay more attention to skittish behaviour. Near to the owl-glider pair a second dark Greater Glider was silently watching, one can only guess what it might have been thinking.



Powerful Owl with Greater Glider. Peter Smith.



One side of Parliament House, Canberra

At the fire front,
Beacon Hill, Sydney

No point! The tree'd probably catch fire.

Are you going to plant an oak tree at Faulconbridge, Mr Abbott?



**DAILY
NON FAKE
NEWS
HOTTEST
SEPTEMBER
DAY IN DECADES**

ON THE DAY OF TONY ABBOTT'S FIREFIGHTING LEAVE

Cartoon by Don Morison, inspired by Parliamentary Question Time on ABC television

Just Quolling About

Louise Bennett

On a visit to Jenolan Caves last summer, I was enjoying a quiet twilight cuppa under a wisteria pergola and reflecting on the loveliness of the area, when I heard a rustling above my head. Looking up I saw two bright curious eyes staring down at me in the dusky light. Then when I saw the rest of this little creature, I realised I was looking at something very special indeed. But what?

I asked the passing waitress: "Do you know what sort of animal this is?" pointing up into the thick leaves. She looked up and gushed excitedly: "It's a spotted quoll! We rarely see them here. What a treat!"

I took as much delight in sharing her animated enthusiasm as I did in spotting the quoll itself. It was quite a bold creature – looking down hopefully through the thick wisteria leaves at the empty tables, (for an evening snack no doubt) and seemed quite unconcerned by our curiosity. We stood for some time admiring it before it scampered off to do secret, quoll-like things somewhere else.

Just who is the 'real' spotted quoll?

As is the case with so many Australian native species, there are numerous variations in name. The **spotted quoll** is also known as the **tiger quoll** (for obvious reasons), the **spotted-tail quoll**, the **tiger cat** and the rather more exotic sounding **spotted-tailed dassure**.

The spotted quoll is no shrinking violet. It can grow quite large indeed, with males and females weighing in at about 3.5 and 1.8 kg, respectively. In fact, it is mainland Australia's largest carnivorous marsupial. It has relatively short legs, a long tail, and (dare I say it) a very cute elongated snout. It has pink ridged foot pads, perfectly adapted to suit its arboreal lifestyle.

Spotted quolls are normally nocturnal and rest during the day in dens, which may include caves (maybe that's why they like Jenolan!), as well as rocky crevices, tree hollows and under houses or logs.

Like so many native marsupials, quolls face a myriad of problems, and numbers are vulnerable to decline due to several reasons, especially habitat destruction. The spotted quoll is listed as vulnerable or endangered in most states.¹

So, if you find a spotted quoll lolling about under your house, or under a log on your property, consider yourself very lucky indeed! Take a moment to consider the plight of this beautiful and rare marsupial.

¹ <http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/spot-tailed-quoll-dasyurus-maculatus>

Photo courtesy: www.survival.org.au



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ACTIVE AGAINST AIRPORT

Colin Anderson was active against the proposed Badgerys Creek airport in the 1990's as part of MABCA (Mountains Against Badgerys Creek Airport). He continues to oppose the proposed airport as part of RAWSA (Residents Against Western Sydney Airport).

Colin has sent us a few of the reasons why RAWSA opposes an airport at Badgerys Creek:

1) Reverberating 24/7 aircraft noise is simply incompatible with the natural quiet of the Blue Mountains National Park. If you think the *existing* aircraft noise (a recent phenomenon) is bad enough, that coming from a 24/7 airport *at the foot of the eastern escarpment* will be infinitely worse.

2) Disturbed sleep and carcinogenic aircraft emissions (added to Western Sydney's *existing* smog, which comes from the east and is driven west towards the Mountains by sea winds) have very *real* health impacts.

3) Talk of Sydney's 'aviation needs' and 'jobs and growth' is just part of the Government's sales pitch. The old Badgerys Creek airport concept, revived by Tony Abbott *only after* the 2013 election (because he wanted to be known as an Infrastructure PM) is primarily a political vanity project and is to be taxpayer-funded (\$5-6bn) because savvy Sydney Airport Corporation found it a dud investment.

4) Fossil fuel-powered aircraft are one of the fastest-growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions, with emissions per passenger far higher than for road travel. Join the dots: more airports = more planes = more CO2 = a hotter planet = more extreme weather events ... in our case, the threat of ever-larger and more intense bushfires.

5) There'll be no 11-6 curfew at WSA. God help you if you're a light sleeper. It's quite literally a tale of two cities: sleep city to the east and *no-sleep* city here in the west.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society opposes the proposed airport on environmental grounds. We don't want it; we don't need it; it will be an environmental disaster. You can find some of the articles which have appeared in Hut News during the past two years at http://www.bluemountains.org.au/articles_NoWSA_4.htm

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

Volunteer power

Congratulations to everyone who has been involved in recent Society events – *Where Song Began* and *The New Nature: a talk by Tim Low*, and *The Mick Dark Talk for the Future* with speaker *Bob Brown*.

There were great contributions, too numerous to mention. Thank you to all the regular and new volunteers. It has made a huge difference having Heather Coster as our Events Coordinator. Heather's enthusiasm, energy and organisational talents have been a great asset and she has been able to inspire new volunteers.

In August, Judy Smith joined the management committee as Threatened Species Officer. Judy and husband Peter are ecological consultants with vast experience surveying and studying threatened species in the Greater Blue Mountains.

This month we say goodbye to Bart Beech who has been our Treasurer for 15 years, and welcome our new Treasurer Elizabeth Howard who is well qualified for the position. Elizabeth has spent time working with Bart to enable a smooth changeover.

Except for the occasional part time paid worker who is employed for a limited number of hours on a specific project, all the work of the Society is done by volunteers. In future editions of Hut News we will tell you more about them.

HOW CONSERVATION SOCIETY MEMBERS REACTED TO MEETING TIM LOW

In July, biologist and best-selling author Tim Low gave a very interesting talk at Springwood Hub. The event was co-sponsored by Blue Mountains Conservation Society and Science at the Local.

Tim Low's publications (*The New Nature – Winners and Losers in Wild Australia*, and *Where Song Began – Australia's Birds and How They Changed the World*) provide an unusual perspective on the progress of Australian fauna.

At the Springwood talk, quite a number of local conservationists took the opportunity to learn more about Tim Low's ideas, to interact with him personally and, in some cases, to become familiar with Tim's books for the first time. One Society member, who purchased both books, said that he was impressed by Tim's views on the complexity of human impacts and his objective assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the ways native and introduced species behave within Australian ecological systems.

He noted Tim's caution against environmentalists making unjustifiable claims and the emphasis on how one or two unfulfilled specific predictions can reflect on credibility. The description of Tim Low as "a passionate scientist and educator" even more so than "an environmentalist" summarised the reactions of several audience members.

Many enthusiasts for Australian nature are particularly intrigued with bird species. Tim Low appears to be no exception to that. He really took the audience with him in describing the way Australian bird species relate to those in other countries.

One of the strongest themes in Tim's presentation related to the flow of information about the environment and the need for specialists in environmental science to concentrate on topics within their own area of expertise. Tim Low displayed modesty and caution in skirting the borders of some of the most politicised subjects in contemporary environmental discussion. A number of audience members at the Springwood talk very much warmed to that approach.

a leaf, a tree, a forest ... Wild Gardens of the Blue Mountains
An exhibition by Ian Brown
2 September to 22 October, 2017
Blue Mountains Botanic Garden
Mount Tomah (Visitor Centre). Free entry.

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

Blue Mountains ECOhomes Tour Saturday 21st October 2017

All-day bus tour led by ECOdesign Architect Nigel Bell. A 'must see' for those thinking of building or renovating within the Mountains and elsewhere. Participants learn from those that have done it – be it straw, earth, recycled or conventional materials, sustainable renovations, solar-cells, passive solar and/or funky home design!

More information and book at <http://ecohomestour.com.au>

**BLUE MOUNTAINS
CONSERVATION SOCIETY**

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

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

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

**The Aims and Objectives
of the Society are to:**

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

**A BEQUEST: Please
remember us in your Will.**

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

**BLUE MOUNTAINS
CONSERVATION SOCIETY
www.bluemountains.org.au**

'Like' us on Facebook:
Blue Mountains Conservation Society
Follow us on Twitter: [bmcsnsw](https://twitter.com/bmcsnsw)

**The Blue Mountains Nature website - [http://
bmnature.info/](http://bmnature.info/) A review by Brendan Doyle**

This unique website was the brainchild of photographer and adventurer Ian Brown and Alan Page, who was the Conservation Society's webmaster for five years and president for one.

Its purpose, says Alan, "is to provide a repository of information and inspiration on the greater Blue Mountains. Not just the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, but adjacent reserves and national parks as well."

The website contains:

- Culture - art, music, literature of the Mountains
- Flora & fauna of the greater Blue Mountains including lists and profiles
- Conservation - profiles of reserves and conservationists
- Documents - precious papers, articles and essays including, for example, the 1998 nomination for world heritage status
- Stories of places, species and experiences
- Landscape - a detailed description of the million hectares of the World Heritage Area and more.
- And all of these are illustrated with superb photographs by Ian, Alan and others.

The website will grow over time as profiles, stories and documents are added. There are already over 50 webpages with contributions from people including John Low, Andy Macqueen, Carol Proberts, Margaret Baker, Judy & Peter Smith, Marg Turton, Jill Dark and David Coleby.

Alan emphasises that "it is strictly a non-commercial venture and everyone working on it, and contributing to it, are volunteers. It is non-adversarial - but is clearly passionate about our natural heritage and our artistic response to this."

"Suggestions of possible contributors are very welcome," he adds, "although contributions are by invitation as we wish to protect the purpose, style and accuracy of the website."

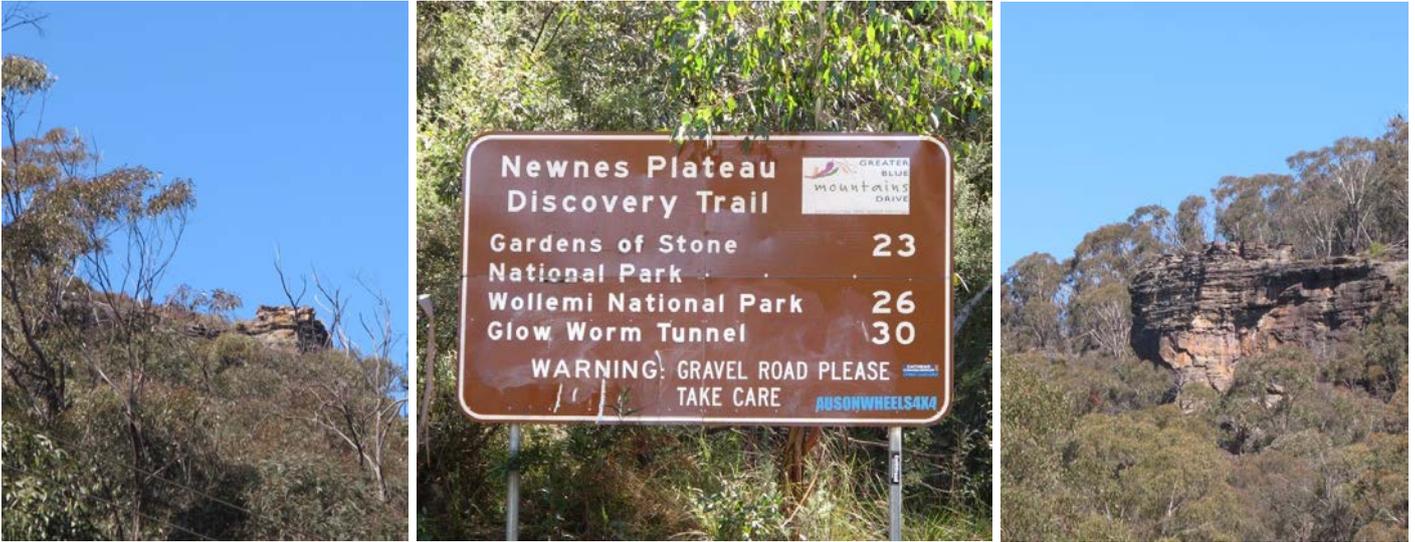
Blue Mountains Nature could certainly be a good resource for students, tourists and the community generally.

The Travelling Stock Routes of NSW

Christine Davies

I love to travel to little country towns and out of the way places on the Central Tablelands of New South Wales, virtually on our doorstep. It is beautiful country. Often you will notice, along the roadsides, bushland with lovely old trees which may represent the vegetation which covered the area before the land on the other side of the fences was cleared. Sometimes, during times of drought, stock will be grazed along the roadside or "long paddock". But, given a long enough period of drought-free years, the native vegetation can become established and may withstand grazing stock in dry times and recover in the good times.

Further west, Travelling Stock Routes (TSR) were established for droving of sheep and cattle during early European colonisation, often along traditional Aboriginal pathways through the landscape. When other forms of transport became available, these TSR's remained as the "long paddock" and are used in times of drought. And over time, during good years, the native vegetation reclaimed these long strips of land which now may be the only safe haven for many endemic species. There are over 8,300 TSRs throughout NSW, covering an area of approximately two million hectares. (continued on page 12)

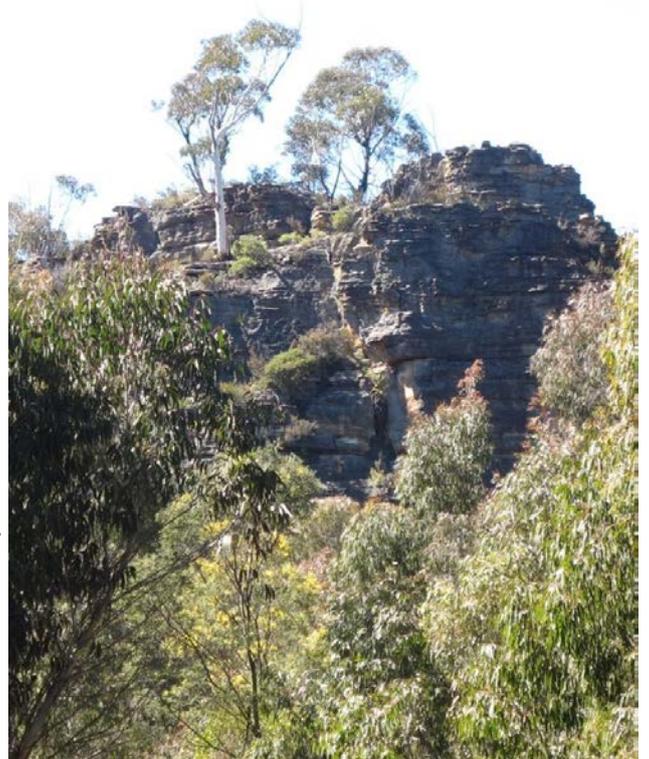


43. GATEWAY TO THE GARDENS OF STONE, State Mine Gully

It is fortunate in one way that there is often light traffic along the unsealed road where this Newnes Plateau Discovery Trail begins. There are few formal car parks, but you need time to stop and take in the scenes in multiple directions. Although it is still 23 km before the currently declared boundary of the Gardens of Stone National Park, in this area the enthralling features of the Gardens of Stone are starting to show themselves to the visitor. If the conservation movement's campaign for an enlargement of the reserve boundaries is successful, the protected area will extend much closer to the northern outskirts of Lithgow.

Once the bitumen on the Glow Worm Tunnel Road ends, you are surrounded by natural features rearing above you on the steep slopes. You notice that pagodas, clumped in groups or standing in silhouette are common. This is a small sample of what to expect if you can take the time to hike down some of the myriad gorges around the perimeter of the Newnes Plateau. Some of the most spectacular formations are accessible only for experienced bushwalkers but there are many stunning vistas only a short distance from the Glow Worm Tunnel Road.

The oranges and greys of the sandstone cliff-faces and overhangs and the diversity of the Eucalypt species and other vegetation are inspiring. The conservation movement's efforts to save the Gardens of Stone are intensifying. This area needs to be understood and loved more than ever.



Images: All of these landscape views were captured within 300 metres of the Newnes Plateau Discovery Trail signboard on the Glow Worm Tunnel Road near the derelict State Mine Gully excavations. The motorist, cyclist or hiker who allows time will be treated to a wonderful variety of scenery virtually all the way from Lithgow to the Glow Worm Tunnel car park. While not ideal for two-wheel drives, side routes like Sunnyside Ridge, Waratah Ridge and the Deep Pass Trail offer fresh frontiers for exploration. Spend some time in The Gardens. Photographs by Christine Davies.

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.

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)

- Oct 14. **Victory Track.** (Falconbridge) Leader: Eddie 47842691. Starting from Falconbridge Station at 9.00am. Map Springwood. For full details and to book in, contact leader.
- Oct 21 **Waterfall walk around Lawson.** Leader: Bob – 0408947325. Map Katoomba. For further details and to book in contact leader.
- Oct 28 **Rock Island.** Leader: Harold 0409010737. Map Mt Morgan. For Further details and to book in contact leader.
- Nov 4 **Rarely visited cliffs and spurs of Mt Banks.** Leader: Emanuel - 0419773906. To book in and for all the details contact leader.
- Nov 11 **Berghofers Pass and Lockyers Track circuit.** Leader: Harold 0409010737. Map Hartley. Walkers should contact leader to book in and for more details.

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

- Oct 16 **Prince Henry Cliff Walk, Olympian Rock, South Leura to Echo Point.** Cars needed to bring back walkers from Katoomba or to catch train at Katoomba. Meet Leura Station Car Park 8-25am. 20 Min walk to start at Olympian Rock. Those not arriving by train should drive to Olympian Rock. Car shuttle. Mave Roberts 4784 2691. Grade 2.
- Oct 23 **Lawson Station to Echo Buff, St Michaels Falls, Dantes Glen and Fairy Falls.** Meet Lawson Bowling Club car park 8.40 am. Jane Boyd 0403 470 101. Grade 2.
- Oct 30 **Bus Trip to Warragamba Park and River.** Fare \$12. Book and pay Maurice. Meet Springwood car park (behind Westpac) 9 am. Maurice 0402 402 783. Grade 2.
- Nov 6 **Radiata Plateau, Katoomba.** Great views into Megalong Valley. Meet Katoomba Station car park 8.30 am. Car pool. Maurice 0402 402 783. Grade 2.
- Nov 13 **The Three Brothers, Medlow Bath.** Approx 6km. Meet Medlow Bath Station, south side, 8.30 am. Eddy Roberts 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

- Oct 12 **Cronulla to Gunnamatta Bay.** Meet top of escalators Central Station 9.05am. Leader Maurice 4739 4942 or 0402 402 783. Take lunch. Grade 2
- Oct 19 **Evans Crown.** Meet Mount Vict Station 9.50am. Leader Keith 0411 162 345. Car pool \$7. Lunch Tarana Pub. Grade 2
- Oct 26 **The Lost City.** Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Maurice 0402 402 783. Take lunch. Car pool \$7. 4WDs preferred. Grade 2
- Nov 2 **Walls Cave, Blackheath.** Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9.45am. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2
- Nov 9 **La Perouse Walk.** Meet top of escalators Central Station 9.30am. Coastal Walk with chance of swim. Leader Keith 0411 162 345. Take lunch. Grade 2

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

The Travelling Stock Routes of NSW

(continued from page 10)

The NSW Travelling Stock Routes have recently been the subject of a review by the NSW Government and public submissions have closed. It is important that these road reserves remain in public ownership.

John Williamson's song, "Campfire on the Road", includes these words:

We must never let 'em take this life away
Old stock routes belong to one and all
Drovers, dreamers all agree, poets, Aborigines
We have a right to light a campfire on the road

You can read more about the Travelling Stock Routes on the National Parks Association of NSW website: <https://www.nature.org.au/media/172026/6-the-tsr-network-heritage-habitat-and-livelihood-2011.pdf>

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. You can buy a map on the society's website at

www.bluemountains.org.au/GoS_VisitorsMap.htm

BMCS Planning & 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