



*"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"*



## Sunset Gathering THURSDAY, 22 FEBRUARY, 7 PM at the CONSERVATION HUT, Wentworth Falls

You are invited to join us and share one of the best sunset views to be had in our Blue Mountains.

Meet old and new friends ... talk to new and not-so-new members and exchange ideas ... if you are not already a member find out more ... meet some of the management committee and learn a little about recent Society activities ... find out how you can become involved.

There will be some songs from local songwriters and a short talk by Wyn Jones (read more on page 3). Supper will be provided.

The Conservation Hut is situated in the Blue Mountains National Park at the end of Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls. Enquiries: Heather Coster, Events Coordinator -

[heather@coster.com.au](mailto:heather@coster.com.au)

(Photo by Ian Brown—see note on page 10)

## NURSERY NEWS

### "busting out all over"

Our first markets for the year will have a huge variety of plants eager to be put in the ground after the hot wet summer has produced abundant growth.

Plants are looking exceedingly healthy. Climbers (*Pandorea pandorana* and *Hardenbergia violacea*) are climbing out of their pots. Some Acacia species will be on special as they need to be planted soon.

We will be at Blackheath Community Market on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February and 4<sup>th</sup> March and Lawson Magpie Market on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> February and 18<sup>th</sup> March and on every first and third Sundays until the winter break.

## BAT NIGHT 2018

National Parks and Wildlife Service Heritage Centre, end of Govetts Leap Road, Blackheath

- FREE Event
- Friday 9<sup>th</sup> March from 6.30 to 9 pm, all weather
- Bookings essential for Bat Walks

Bats ... they are not blind, they do not get caught in your hair and they do not suck your blood. Just reading this, you already know more than most people about bats. Bats are important to our life on earth, yet they are one of the most misunderstood animals on the planet. There are more than 1,200 bat species found throughout the world, and they account for almost one quarter of the world's mammal species. Australia has around 80 different species of bats.

Come and learn more about bats at the seventh annual Blue Mountains Bat Night. There will be bat talks, walks and fun activities for adults and children of all ages; learn about flying foxes and our fascinating microbats.

NPWS rangers will be taking guided walks to try to spot microbats chasing their dinner - you will be able to hear their calls via a bat detector! Bring a torch, you may also see other wildlife on the way.

There'll be a range of speakers including local ecologist Marg Turton and flying fox expert Tim Pearson.

The popular Bat Cave will be running children's activities, craft, mask-making and temporary tattoos. There will be bat t-shirts for sale and, if you get hungry with all this activity, a sausage sizzle provided by Blackheath/Mt Victoria RFS.

Bring the family; dress in costume. There's something for everyone on the night. Bat night is free but donations are welcome. Due to the overwhelming success for past bat nights **bookings are now essential for the bat walks:**

[www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/bat-night](http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/bat-night)

This event is supported by Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Blue Mountains City Council, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Greater Sydney Local Land Services, the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and the Australasian Bat Society.

**BLUE MOUNTAINS  
CONSERVATION SOCIETY**

[www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)

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The **DEADLINE** for the next issue  
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## Autumn 2018 Great Grose Weed Walk

The Great Grose Weed Walk continues, with activities planned February-May 2018. For 24 years, dedicated bushcare volunteers have worked to control ridgetop weeds travelling over the cliffs and down the waterways and taking over the beautiful creeks, swamps and bushland in the Grose Valley. Activities are organised by National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC).

On 25 February (9am-1pm) you can spend the morning with the Braeside Bushcare Team controlling weeds that are invading the swamp. No experience necessary. Tools, equipment and morning tea provided.

Contact Vanessa on 4787 3112 or

[vanessa.richardson@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:vanessa.richardson@environment.nsw.gov.au) by 22 February to book or to find out more. Or on 7<sup>th</sup> March (9am-4pm), enjoy a walk along Popes Glen creek treating and checking for weeds. Morning tea and lunch provided. Contact Lyndal on 4780 5623 or [lsullivan@bmcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:lsullivan@bmcc.nsw.gov.au) by 2<sup>nd</sup> March.

You can find a full program on our Society's website [http://](http://bluemountains.org.au/documents/articles/)

[bluemountains.org.au/documents/articles/](http://bluemountains.org.au/documents/articles/)

[GREAT GROSE WEED WALK AUTUMN 2018.pdf](http://bluemountains.org.au/documents/articles/GREAT_GROSE_WEED_WALK_AUTUMN_2018.pdf)

## AN EDIBLE GARDEN TRAIL

The Blue Mountains is hosting what appears to be a world first: an edible garden trail. It will be held on the first weekend of March (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>)

Founded by Susanne Rix, who was aghast at the lack of frog sounds in our mountain waterways where nearby gardens reveal clear poison borders around lawns and garden beds.

When gardeners move away from simply decorative gardens and include edible plants, they are less likely to use herbicides and pesticides. Chemicals such as those that are widely used to control weeds and insects, not only kill pests, they also kill the frogs, bees and generally damage the environment and our health in all kinds of ways.

Hence – the Edible Garden Trail.

It is sponsored by Bendigo Bank, auspiced by Slow Food Blue Mountains and supported by a team of dedicated organic growers.

Over 40 gardens will be open from Lapstone to Hartley to inspire us to create our own edible paradise. Learn how people are composting, mulching, companion planting, worm farming and managing the range of climatic conditions. There will be several school and community gardens as well as many home gardens – all using organic principles to protect the environment and their health.

In addition to the trail, there will be workshops held on the weekend covering: getting started; planning the year; seed saving and biodynamics as well as a panel discussion/dinner featuring local produce. (Phone 4759 3478 to book for workshops)

Purchase a ticket (\$25/\$20) and map from 10<sup>th</sup> February, so that you can plan your trail in advance from: Glenbrook Village Nursery; Lyttleton Stores, Lawson; Fed Café, Wentworth Falls; Blue Mountains Food Co-op; Katoomba; Gleebooks, Blackheath; Bogbean Health Foods, Blackheath  
Or you can visit individual gardens for just \$5.00 (\$2.00 concession) per garden on the weekend of the festival.

Net proceeds will be donated to community/school gardens.

For more information, checkout our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/bluemountainsediblegardenfestival/> or mail to [ediblegardenfestival@gmail.com](mailto:ediblegardenfestival@gmail.com)

## 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](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/GoS_VisitorsMap.htm)

A recent article from Simon Holmes à Court in the Guardian has plenty of reason to feel good about clean, renewable energy: <https://amp.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/dec/31/a-great-year-for-clean-energy-in-australia-ends-while-bad-news-for-coal-continues> Simon points out some home truths that people in the coal and gas industries don't want to hear.

The building of coal-burning power stations in China and India has stalled. China installed 7 solar panels *per second* in 2017. India expects to install 200 GW of renewables by 2022. (that's 100 Mount-Piper sized power stations!)

New coal mines in the Hunter Valley and the Galilee Basin are being built to supply a demand that just will not be there when they open. Carbon capture-and-storage plants have been widely identified as a complete failure, the only one in existence has been closed down, and no new ones are being built.

Renewables-friendly governments operate in every state and territory, with Victoria targeting 40% renewables by 2025, and Queensland and the Northern Territory targeting 50% renewables by 2030. 50+ large-scale renewables projects are under construction in Australia totalling 4.5 GW (enough to power millions of homes).

Tesla installed the 'mega-battery' in South Australia to stabilise a grid heavy in renewables, and the unit has proven to be brilliant at absorbing oversupply and propping up under-supply. Solar Reserve is starting construction of a 150 MW Solar Thermal plant at Port Augusta, after winning a technology-agnostic bid (cheaper than new coal or gas!). <http://www.solarreserve.com/en/global-projects/csp/aurora>

The giant Hazelwood brown-coal power station in the Latrobe Valley was closed and is being pulled down, and AGL have confirmed that Liddell in the Hunter Valley will be shut down in 2022, and replaced with new renewables. Four private pumped-hydro projects are under development to help smooth the emerging renewables grid.

BHP threatened to quit the Minerals Council unless it stopped advocating for coal, as BHP sees renewables as the future. Western Sydney has over 400 MW of residential rooftop solar installed and operating, with more being installed every day.

The Federal Government has of course lagged all year, brandishing a lump of coal in Parliament, talking about subsidising giant coal mines and new coal-burning power stations, and blaming renewables in South Australia for black-outs that were in fact caused by massive weather events exacerbated by climate change. The Federal Government is operating in a dream world however, as new coal is now more expensive than new renewables, and as equipment prices continue to fall, new renewables will soon be cheaper than existing coal-burners, putting all of them all out of business, World-Wide. The move to a 100% renewable energy grid is well under-way and is unstoppable, as economics rather than ideology now drive the revolution in energy.

The other great contributor to greenhouse emissions - transport - is also about to undergo a revolution based on new technologies. Electric car take-up here in Australia is very low compared with other countries, held back by a



Aurora Solar Thermal Power Station being built in Port Augusta (artists impression).

lack of charging points, a perception of higher costs, and poor support from governments. However, as large transport and fleet operators crunch the numbers on electric cars, buses and trucks, and come to realise that they are now cheaper over the vehicles life, the transition will be rapid when it comes.

The future is bright, thanks to the early adopters who drove the technology, and to the governments who drove demand.

## Wyn Jones to make short presentation at sunset gathering

The experienced Blue Mountains conservation activist Wyn Jones will make a short presentation to our Sunset Gathering at the Conservation Hut on 22 February.

Wyn will speak about his association with long distance walks in the Greater Blue Mountains and his particular current interest in the Coxs Road route from Emu Plains to Bathurst. Some Society members remember joining with Wyn in parts of his pro-World Heritage walk from the Hunter Valley to Mittagong in 1992, the survey of the Kowmung River from its source to the Coxs in 1994, and the "Gum Tree Song Lines" series to mark the actual World Heritage declaration in 2000.

There is widespread recognition of the role of walks like these in maintaining consciousness about the Blue Mountains environment and the history of interactions between white settlers and indigenous Australians. The physical presence of Coxs Road relics and modern understanding of the 1815 road opening's impact on indigenous society are crucial to our comprehension of what has happened to the Blue Mountains in the last 205 years.

### VALLEY OF THE WATERS BUSHCARE GROUP

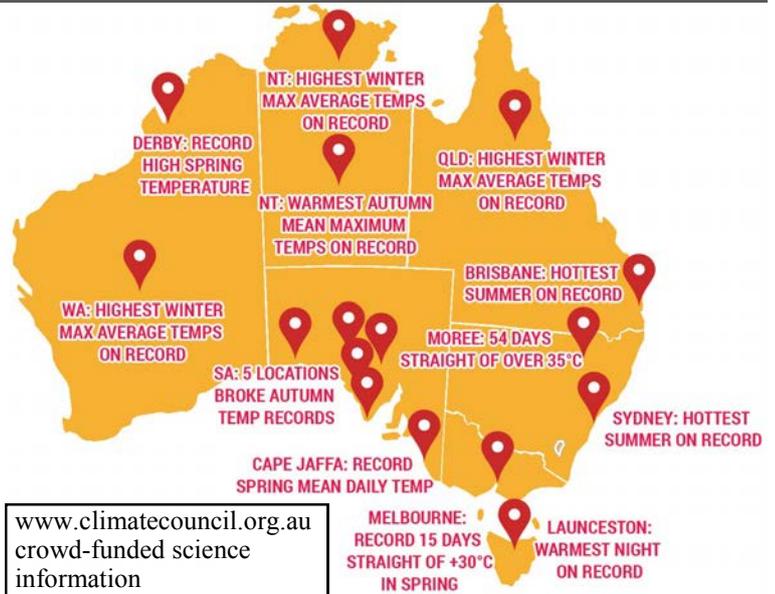
The Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets on the second Saturday of each month, 9am - noon. Tools and gloves are available. Bring a drink, a snack and a sunhat. NEW MEMBERS ARE WELCOME.  
Phone Karen 4757 1929.

# 2017: AUSTRALIA'S YEAR OF HEAT RECORDS

I recently found a letter that my father wrote to me in late 1989 about the challenges of installing a solar hot water system on the roof of our suburban home. Writing about his efforts he noted: 'we are certainly doing our best to avoid burning harmful fuels' and he then went on to comment; 'I suppose the fact that world is aware of what it is doing to itself gives some hope for the future'. These hopeful words were written in the year that Bill McKibben published 'the End of Nature' which is regarded as the first book about climate change written for a general audience.

However, 29 years later the Climate Council's 2017 report provides many sobering findings that realise the warnings of early climate change scientists and activists. The key findings are: 1. The four hottest years on record are 2017, 2016, 2015 and 2014, continuing the strong, long term upswing in global temperatures; 2. Temperature records toppled across Australia through 2017; 3. The increasing global heat, driven primarily by the burning of fossil fuels, exacerbated extreme weather events around the globe and in Australia in 2017. Some of these events included massive flooding in South Asia, wildfires in southern Europe and the US and devastating tropical cyclones across the globe. As we move into another year, we have already seen Penrith awarded the dubious accolade of the world's hottest city on earth on the date of January 8<sup>th</sup>, when temperatures reached 47.3 degrees. The report can be read in full at <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/2017-heat-report>.

If, like me, you grapple with the challenges of knowing how to respond to such information, you might like to consider undertaking the 2018 commitments suggested by the Climate council. They suggest that we: 1. Stay up to date with the facts on Climate change. 2. That we stay up to date



with news and information on renewable energy. 3. That we nominate Blue Mountains City Council for a Cities Power Partnership. This is a Climate Council initiative empowering councils with actionable information on renewable energy, efficiency and transport, and establishing knowledge-sharing between regional and metropolitan councils. If enough of us nominate BMCC at the following website we may initiate action on this <http://citiespowerpartnership.org.au/nominate/>

- Write a letter to our MP.
- Keep Climate change issues alive on social media, and in the media in general.

And some inspiration to keep us going: Ireland has voted to be the world's first country to fully divest public money from fossil fuels. The Irish Parliament passed the historic legislation in a 90 to 53 vote in favour of dropping coal, oil and gas investments from the €8bn Ireland Strategic Investment Fund, part of the Republic's National Treasury Management Agency.

Clare Power

## AGAPANTHUS TIME AGAIN

Christine Davies

In the year 2000, when I moved into this house in Blackheath, there were numerous Agapanthus growing in the garden. Three-year-old Brodie was a great help, putting them in the bin as I dug them up. But 17 years later, the odd Agapanthus still shows itself above the ground.

In the year 2000, Agapanthus may not have been recognised as a problem. But the weed potential should have been apparent. They are very easy to grow and very hard to remove, with underground reproductive structures which last in the soil for many years.

Now, in the upper mountains, there are more and more Agapanthus every year— not just the ones planted (and still being planted) in gardens but the ones that have escaped onto the grass verges and are working their way into bushland. A photograph on the right shows a clump of Agapanthus growing beside a drain near the oval at Blackheath – now think, how did the seed for this plant get here and where will its seeds end up?

In his monthly report, Bushcare Officer Paul Vale writes: "It is agapanthus time again. I think upper mountains blooms have arrived earlier this season? Many of the

heads around me are already going to seed so I have begun my annual dead-heading patrols, starting with my very nice neighbours. They have masses of plants, not of their own choice originally, and are happy to have my help and are also employing professional bush regenerators to do additional work. Good on them!"

And good on you, Paul. Perhaps we could all carry a pair of secateurs and behead the Agapanthus flowers before they set seed. But I might win more friends if I were to let them get beyond the bud stage.



Agapanthus ready to produce seed. Runoff from these Blackheath streets is to the Grose Valley via Popes Glen Creek.

## COMMENT

### **“Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose”<sup>1</sup> by Dr Brian Marshall**

The epigram loosely translates as ‘*the more things change, the more they stay the same*’. In politics, it even more loosely implies that the real position or philosophy doesn't change, despite a plethora of weasel words and ‘polly-speak’ trying to convince us otherwise; tax cuts for ‘big business’ springs to mind. The epigram embodies a pessimistic, somewhat jaundiced perception.

In contrast, the ‘silly season’ from Christmas through to January-end will soon be over. People should be refreshed such that adversarial positions could and should be less blinkered by partisan obduracy, and more inclined to achieve beneficial compromises. This is a more optimistic perception.

Pessimism or optimism, which is preferable? What is the lesson from 2017 and what is the message as the ‘pollies’ return to office?

The perennial debate about date and concept of Australia Day is filling the media. Some councils have changed the date of citizenship ceremonies, some states ask why the First Fleet landing in NSW should be fundamental to their parts of Australia, and many indigenous people question why invasion of their lands should be a day for all Australians to celebrate. This is inevitably conflated with debates about the flag, republicanism and constitutional recognition of indigenous people. The PM mouths platitudes but seemingly lacks the conviction to lead.

Coal is important to some politicians; perhaps that's why people concerned over climate change see them as black hearted!

In 2016 in the Land and Environment Court (L&EC), 4Nature challenged the validity of the development consent for Springvale Mine's Extension. The L&EC rejected the arguments, but in 2017 the Court of Appeal reversed the judgement. Springvale's consent was unlawful, but the NSW government rapidly amended the legislation such that the Court of Appeals' decision was nullified. The changed legislation validated Springvale's consent and modified the water quality test such that extensions are not required to meet a higher standard than the original development. In effect, the legislation perpetuates the ill-informed standards of yesteryear; pity about polluting Sydney's water supply.

Following 22 years of deliberations, the recently approved Wallarah 2 longwall coalmine places the Central Coast's water supply at risk. In the 2011 State election, the Coalition came to power promising to stop Wallarah 2 and end mining in sensitive drinking water catchments. Now, 6-7 years later, all is forgotten! The Planning Assessment Commission contends that water-supply impacts can be ‘acceptably managed’ if the Company supplies up to 300 megalitres of treated mine water per year. But what happens if that is insufficient, or the mine closes having irreparably damaged the geohydrologic regime? Once again, the NSW government appeases the coal industry. Intense community opposition and environmental concerns are

sacrificed on the altar of jobs, royalties and overseas economic interests.

Prime Minister Turnbull has anointed the Snowy 2.0 scheme. It is said to be technically and financially feasible. Do not be fooled! Technical feasibility means it can be engineered; financial feasibility means it can be funded, but it may not be either the best use of public money, or the best of several schemes in benefit/cost terms. For instance: some dispute the economic viability of Snowy 2.0 and suggest the cost could be around \$8 billion rather than the feasibility study's \$4 billion ‘guesstimate’; others favour the similarly-priced Tasmanian pumped-hydro scheme because its discrete projects better suit progressive market needs, whereas Snowy 2.0 unacceptably impacts Kosciuszko National Park and is a single project with a 10-year lead time; and still others emphasise that developing smaller pumped hydro sites in NSW and Victoria could be better tailored to market needs and would have lower development and integration costs than the inflexible Snowy 2.0.

Recognition as the father of Snowy 2.0 might appeal to the PM, but profligate use of taxpayers' money to promote a grandiose thought-bubble is precipitate. This is particularly so, as the Australian Energy Market Operator has released a ‘fast change’ model, as opposed to the Turnbull government's ‘business as usual’ model, outlining a potential cut of 52% to all electricity-generated greenhouse gas emissions by 2030<sup>2</sup>.

Environment Minister Frydenberg, in responding to an editorial (*Dismal record on climate change* - Sydney Morning Herald, 19/01), assured readers that emissions are the lowest for 28 years on a per capita and GDP basis, the 2020 target will be over-achieved and that progress is being made towards the 2030 target. Such data are pathetic: falling per capita emissions over 28 years owe little to the Abbott and Turnbull governments and are now a function of the rapidly increasing population, whilst the 2020 and 2030 targets are ridiculously unambitious in terms of keeping global warming to 1.5-2.0 °C. Setting emissions-targets well below what they should be is grossly irresponsible.

Now to focus this article. Taking inordinate risks to achieve growth and benefit ‘big business’ (e.g., not properly addressing global warming, proceeding blindly with the Western Sydney Airport, supporting Adani and the declining coal industry, accepting Barangaroo over-development, and permitting the WestConnex fiasco) would seem to be an unchanging hallmark of Coalition governments. Either government(s) must change their philosophical approach, or they themselves must be changed!

<sup>1</sup> The fully referenced article is available at [http://bluemountains.org.au/documents/articles/Plus\\_ca\\_change\\_HNArticle\\_FullRef\\_180123.pdf](http://bluemountains.org.au/documents/articles/Plus_ca_change_HNArticle_FullRef_180123.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/australias-energy-operator-proposes-fast-change-scenario-to-cut-emissions-by-52-per-cent-by-2030-20180123-h0mp6x.html>

# WHAT IF THERE WAS NO BUSHCARE IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS?

Peter Ardill argues that it may not matter!

## Future perspectives on bushcare in the Blue Mountains

The year is 2040 and BMCC-sponsored volunteer *bushcare groups* no longer operate in the Blue Mountains. Disaster and despair! A wall of ridge-top weeds is sliding even deeper into a climate change-challenged World Heritage Area. Waterfalls are reduced to a trickle as swamps have been sucked dry by dense stands of privet. Acres of impenetrable holly, honeysuckle and blackberry thickets smother creeks and threaten walking tracks and lookouts. The drab blue and green of agapanthus obliterates beautiful bush colours and cascades down formerly golden-brown escarpments. The monotony of montbretia has replaced delicate ferns and slender saw-sedges along stream banks. Local ecosystems have evaporated.

Fortunately, weeds, both the traditional varieties and also climate change-encouraged new arrivals, will not be rapidly taking over already stressed local ecosystems in 2040. Numerous BMCC sponsored volunteer *environmental repair units*, once known as *bushcare groups*, will be hard at work throughout the Blue Mountains managing these issues.

Today, in 2018, *Bushcare*, as it is fondly and traditionally known, is down to the participation of volunteer groups, guided by a bushcare officer, in a range of organised bushland conservation activities, such as the removal of weeds and the planting of local species of trees, shrubs and grasses in degraded areas. The program has been operating in the Blue Mountains since c1990. But is this all there is to it? A bit of weeding and planting?

The new October 2017 edition of the Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia's (SERA) "National Standards for Ecological Restoration" identifies a spectrum of *environmental repair* activities that culminate in an intention to implement an ecological restoration program:

1. *Management of adverse impacts*. Local villages, gardens and agricultural lands can impose adverse impacts on adjacent healthy ecosystems. Many of these impacts can be successfully managed. For example, many Blue Mountains' residents reduce or eliminate their use of plastic bags and bottles and remove bush invading weeds from their properties. Pollution is monitored.

2. *Rehabilitation* is an environmental repair activity that involves the reinstatement of degrees of ecosystem functionality to a degraded site but a plan to effect full ecological restoration is not adopted, usually because this type of restoration is simply not possible on the site. It may, for example, be possible to remove the worst types of weeds from a site but very difficult to restore indigenous fauna because the site is surrounded by housing.

3. *Ecological restoration* is the most comprehensive form of environmental repair activity. The international Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) defines ecological restoration as "the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged or destroyed". A degraded creek that flows into

the World Heritage Area may have potential for ecological restoration as there are opportunities to remove weeds, encourage the growth of indigenous flora and to allow indigenous fauna from the adjacent World Heritage Area to resettle the site.

In actual fact, contemporary Blue Mountains' bushcare groups engage in any one or more of these three environmental repair activities. A local group could be advising adjacent neighbourhoods on ways to remove pest plants from gardens, and/or rehabilitating a bushland site by concentrating on removing several particularly persistent weed species. In some circumstances a group may go all the way and aim for full ecological restoration, dragging a site back from a condition of ecological collapse to much improved functioning, over many years.

Back to the future and the year 2040. Volunteer Blue Mountains' *environmental repair units*, once known as *bushcare groups*, are typically participating in three main activities:

- observing and recording the impacts of climate change on indigenous flora and fauna;
- observing and recording the climate change induced arrival, dispersal and impacts of exotic flora and fauna species; and
- implementing targeted and planned rehabilitation and ecosystem restoration and maintenance programs that utilise the latest science based climate change data and restoration techniques available.

All done via the best traditions of Blue Mountains' bushcare! The name has been updated to reflect new techniques and responsibilities and climate change has created a new operational context and imperative, but old problems and a good program have persisted.

Care for a spot of weeding, planting, adverse impact management, environmental rehabilitation or ecological restoration this weekend? There's sure to be a bushcare site near you.

Peter Ardill

### Resources:

Society for Ecological Restoration [www.ser.org](http://www.ser.org);  
Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia  
[www.seraustralasia.com](http://www.seraustralasia.com); Blue Mountains Bushcare  
[www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au](http://www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au)

## 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**, 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month at Blackheath Public School, 9am to 1pm

**Magpie Market**, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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](mailto:nursery@bluemountains.org.au)

## OPINION PIECE BY DON MORISON:

### Who is provoked by Blue Mountains Council? And why?

The December 2017 attempt to have the 12 Blue Mountains councillors suspended split the community. The decision by NSW Local Government Minister Gabriel Upton to issue a performance improvement order, specifically relating to Council's dealing with asbestos, rather than to immediately suspend the Council, has been widely reported.

There is a broad feeling that the relish with which some parties contemplated the councillors' suspension and the equally fierce vehemence of those who sprung to councillors' defence is associated with many issues other than asbestos. The 12 councillors are working to protect an urban area within a World Heritage listed national park under the NSW Local Government Act which gives councillors a responsibility to be "active and contributing members of the governing body" and "to uphold and represent accurately the policies and decisions of the governing body". The differing interpretations placed on such responsibilities are the source of much divided opinion about Council.

Our Society, especially the members of our Land Use Subcommittee, has worked for years to retain and improve a Local Environment Plan (LEP) suited to managing the interface between urban development and the World Heritage Area. Provisions to protect valued elements of the built environment are also in the LEP. Critics would characterise the Blue Mountains as having a hostile climate for development. It is interesting then that a Fairfax Media report (Sydney Morning Herald, 16/1/18) found the Blue Mountains equal lowest among 43 Greater Sydney Local Government Areas for the percentage of development applications refused (0.6% during the years 2014 to 2016).

With reports like this, you could be cautiously optimistic our Society's campaigns have helped establish a balance between the need to protect the World Heritage bushland and the functioning of the Blue Mountains urban areas. Yet some developers, including operators of some large tourist resorts, are outspoken and hostile whenever Council or environment groups seek any restraints on their plans.

Regarding the proposed Badgerys Creek airport, certain front benchers in the major political parties and parts of the media have joined a cheer squad to drown out any serious scrutiny of the real effects on jobs, the environment and residential amenity. In the face of derision from this cheer squad, most Blue Mountains councillors have tried to spotlight the truth behind the proposal.

In 2014, when Robert Stock (elected as an Independent) and Geordie Williamson (elected as a Green) resigned from Council, the subsequent by-election results gave some endorsement to the councillors they had been criticising. During most of the period since, according to statements by announcer Ray Hadley on Macquarie Radio during December 2017, someone has been leaking confidential Council documents to him. It was his choice to advise the Premier to suspend Council during December 2017 and many of that view seemed surprised by the numbers of people openly opposing the suspension of Council, even at that time of year.



Image source: CartoonStock.com

Will Council in the mountains be the scene of a long running "civil war" like the Sydney City Council where numerous legislation changes, possible amalgamations, campaigns by strange political bedfellows and abuse from critics in the right-wing media have all failed to unseat Lord Mayor Clover Moore?

It's quite possible, but we must hope not. We need our elected councillors in place. Most will surely play a vital role in important upcoming decisions, such as the plans for the Eastern Scenic Escarpment (Nepean River catchment) and the Southern Scenic Escarpment (on and around the Jamison Valley cliffhines). All the communities within the mountains are dominated by a shared sense of the specialness of the place and the bipartisan sentiment to defend the mountains and our environment has, in recent years, usually crossed political party lines and brought us together.

### Candidate Faruqi passionately defends National Parks Service

In a Sydney Morning Herald opinion piece (page 22, 19/1/18) endorsed Greens Senate candidate Mehreen Faruqi has leapt to the defence of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. Ms Faruqi is, of course, only one of many politicians from parties other than the Coalition to accuse the Liberals and Nationals of hostility towards the Service. Former Labor Minister, Blue Mountains and Macquarie MP Bob Debus, has spoken of "a culture war against nature conservation". It is a terrible shame that nearly everyone is now questioning the State Government's commitment to an organisation that plays an absolutely vital role in conservation education, bushfire fighting and prevention, feral animal control and general public welfare. <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/will-our-national-parks-survive-this-government-20180107-h0eq2b.html>

# Where the Waters Run Icy

Louise Bennett

As the hot weather threatens us *yet again*, my thoughts turn to the cool relief of waterfalls, cascades and waterholes. These are timeless treasures of the Blue Mountains; I often see professional photographers scrambling with tripods and heavy camera gear over boulders in streams, looking for that perfect mossy river shot.

I particularly love the secret waterfalls around my home in Leura. Heading down into the Valley of the Waters there are some gems. One of my favourites is the Pool of Asmodeus, which is not often discovered by bushwalkers, as it's tucked away behind boulders and is a bit of an awkward squeeze to get through the gap in the rocks (you're also likely to get wet feet if the water's high). The pool itself is a mysterious, spooky place, with a waterfall and opalescent waters. Recently I had a swim there with friends (on a scorching hot day) but as the water rarely sees the sun – with just a shimmering of light filtering through from the skylight – it was so icy that our plunge was brief indeed! There's a tiny but perfectly formed sandy beach beside the waterhole, so we sat for a while, enchanted by the beauty of the place.

Just down from the Pool of Asmodeus is another slightly tucked away waterhole with a little waterfall. As far as I have researched, this one doesn't have a name, so I'd like to dub it Flora's Waterfall, as there are very old steps hand-cut into the left side of the rock, apparently leading up to Flora's Bath (possibly 100 year-old steps, but I'd be happy to stand corrected if anyone knows more about them). I tried to slither up the steps, but the moss was so dangerously slippery (with nothing to hang on to) that I changed my mind. I'd love to hear from anyone who has climbed up those steps and seen Flora's Bath.

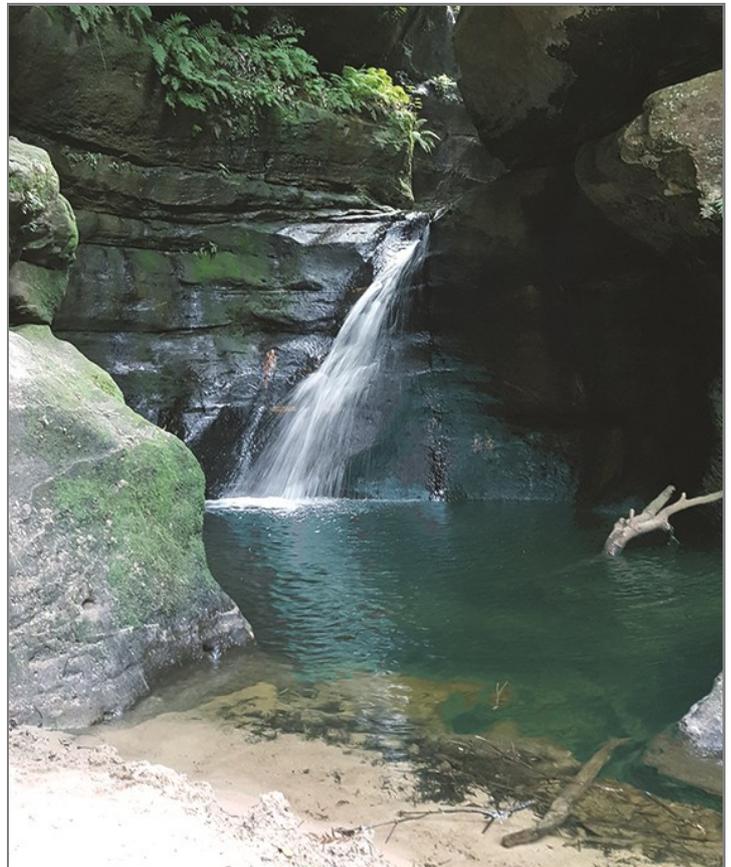
Further down the track into the Valley of the Waters is the staggeringly lovely Empress Falls, a popular canyoning and abseiling spot. I haven't had a dip in the large waterhole there, but today's going to be a hot one, so I'm tempted to head down that way!

On the other side of Leura is the intimate Pool of Siloam, and this is a popular walk as well. It's close to my home, so I often meander down there on warm evenings and have a paddle. I usually take visitors there, especially kids, as they get a buzz out of standing behind the waterfall, grasping at the spray and having their photos taken.

## One tiny way to help keep our waterholes clean

I've made it a habit to carry a little garbage bag (in a backpack) on my walks to collect rubbish from around the waterholes and tracks. Often we think of environmental care as being this huge problematic 'thing' and of course, keeping waterways clean is an ongoing challenge. But if we contribute in small ways, just picking up trash from the bush when we see it, we can collectively help to conserve this beautiful place that is the Blue Mountains.

*Photo: Pool of Asmodeus (author's own)*



## NIGHT BIRD

It was not what it seemed,  
that dried up lump of wood,  
piece of a rotten branch  
caught up where the trunk forked.  
It moved, shuffled a wing,  
opened great night-wise eyes,  
became a frogmouth, preened.

Graham Alcorn, Leura Cascades lunch, 9th October 1988  
("Sipping the Nectar", the Bird Notes of Graham Alcorn)

## Have Your Say: Regional Forest Agreements Review

Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) are agreements between the State and Commonwealth Governments that permit the logging of public native forests. Under the RFAs forests and wildlife have suffered through intensive logging for the past 20 years.

**Help end native forest logging by making a submission to the RFA review.** National Parks Association of NSW has prepared a quick submission letter and a more detailed submission guide for organisations/ individuals who would like to write their own submissions. **Submissions close 23rd February 2018.** <https://npa-nsw.good.do/ffa/rfa-submission/>

## 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](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml)

# DARWIN MEMORIALS WEST OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

John Low

I enjoyed Jim Smith's two-part article about the Blue Mountains memorials to Charles Darwin's journey to Bathurst in January 1836. I share Jim's interest and hope he won't mind (and that readers might find it of interest) if I add a 'Part 3' describing several further memorials that exist west of the Mountains.

The earliest of these is at **Bathurst**: Towards the end of 1936, the centenary year of Darwin's visit, the Director of the Institute of Anatomy in Canberra wrote to a local Bathurst doctor expressing regret that his city, the terminal point of the naturalist's inland journey, did not possess any memorials to the great man and suggested that this would be an appropriate time to redress the matter. While the letter was passed to the Bathurst City Council and the press reported its favourable reception and a likely public meeting, nothing happened.

It was not until the late 1940s when Molong pastoralist and historian, W. R. Glasson, approached the Mayor and offered to assist financially that the council, with the assistance of the Bathurst Historical Society, finally acted. On 13 November 1949, before a crowd of around fifty people, Mr. Glasson unveiled a small plaque attached to the front entrance to The Fernery in Machattie Park. In Bathurst there is also a street in the suburb of Llanarth named 'Darwin Drive'.

The second and largest of the memorials is at **Wallerawang**: On 5 September 2006 the NSW Governor, Professor Marie Bashir, unveiled a monument situated in the parklands adjacent to Lake Wallace at Wallerawang. This included a plaque attached to a stone boulder accompanied by a couple of small sculptures (a platypus and cray-fish) by Lithgow artist Tim Johnman and was initiated by the Lithgow branch of the National Trust.



The monument commemorates Darwin's pause in his journey at the 'Wallerawang' property of James Walker where, hosted by Walker's superintendent Andrew Brown, he remained for two nights and spent a day riding around the enormous property. During his ride, which extended as far north as the Wolgan Valley, he collected geological samples and observed a potoroo, but was disappointed at not seeing any kangaroos. He also took an evening walk along the Coxs River, a walk that was to prove significant for it rewarded him with his much-cited examination of the conical pit-fall of an Australian ant-lion and his first sighting of a platypus (he saw several).

The third and most recent memorial is in **Lithgow**: In 2008 a plan was conceived to draw people into the historical Eskbank precinct at the 'Blast Furnace' end of Lithgow's commercial centre. Funded by the Lithgow City Council and Glencore Coal, this concept was ultimately refined into a public art project for the development of a 'Lithgow History Avenue' and in 2012 a local artist, Phil Sparks, was engaged to implement it.

The result is a fascinating walk, beginning at the town end of Inch Street, marked by a series of sculptures mounted on poles and depicting key moments in the history of the Lithgow region. One of these sculptures, a platypus by local sculptor Tim Johnman, references Darwin's excitement at seeing several in the Cox's River during his stay at Wallerawang.

More memorials are likely to be erected as the years go by and I agree with Jim that 2036 would offer Blackheath an excellent opportunity to make its own contribution, thereby enhancing what is already a pretty impressive pilgrim trail for any Darwin enthusiast travelling to Bathurst.

## 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](http://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](mailto:membership@bluemountains.org.au)



Lithgow sculpture. Darwin saw several platypus in the Coxs River during his stay at Wallerawang. Photos by John Low.

## 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".

## Threatened fauna of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area:

### Red-crowned Toadlet *Pseudophryne australis*

Judy Smith

The Red-crowned 'Toadlet' is strictly a frog. There are no native toads in Australia, only a habit of calling slow-moving, warty frogs 'toads', with an added 'let' if the animal happens to be small. The 'toadlet's' head is crowned with a distinctive orange to red T-shaped patch but, dwelling mainly within leaf litter, it is seldom sighted. The simplest way to locate them is to make a loud noise – clap, shout, whatever, but loudly, in likely habitat, preferably in warmer weather after rain. If present, they quickly answer with a muted but determined nasal twang of a call.

Although relatively common in the WHA, the Red-crowned Toadlet is a threatened (vulnerable) species in New South Wales. It is confined to the Sydney Basin and reaches the western and northern limits of its distribution along the western escarpment of the Blue Mountains and the southern escarpment of the Hunter Valley. We have no records from the three most westerly and elevated reserves of the WHA: Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve and Gardens of Stone and Kanangra-Boyd National Parks.

Small colonies typically form in temporary watercourses and soaks on Hawkesbury and Narrabeen sandstone ridges and slopes, sometimes in seepage areas at the base of pagoda formations. Along the network of firetrails in the WHA, the leaf filled gutters that puddle after rain frequently provide habitat. Occasionally, and contrary to conventional wisdom, they occur around volcanic diatremes, in deep sandy alluvium or in rainforest. Their clear, jelly-like eggs are laid in localised patches of moist leaf litter, sometimes well away from water.

The seeming local abundance is deceptive. It is all too easy to forget that, for these frogs, the Sydney Basin is the limit of their universe. Even small ridgetop disturbances can degrade vital sheltering and breeding points and make a whole population unviable.



Red-crowned Toadlet, photo by Ann Jelinek

### IAN BROWN PHOTOGRAPHY

The photograph on page 1 of this newsletter shows the southern Blue Mountains with Mount Colong prominent on the horizon. It was taken by Ian Brown not far from the Conservation Hut. Go to Ian's website <http://ianbrownphotography.com.au/> where you will find many beautiful nature photos of the Blue Mountains and beyond.

**46. SCENE OF THE HENRY LAWSON POEM,**  
Mount Victoria Sugarloaf

In 1832, Surveyor General Thomas Mitchell directed hundreds of convicts to construct the still impressive stone causeway at Victoria Pass which currently carries the Great Western Highway. This structure became known as “The Second Bridge”. On New Years Eve 1841, events occurred which could be the source of the ghost story in the most famous poem from Henry Lawson’s “Blue Mountains period” of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

You'd call the man a senseless fool, a blockhead or an ass,  
Who'd dare to say he saw the ghost of Mount Victoria Pass.  
But I believe the ghost is there, for, if my eyes are right,  
I saw it once upon a ne'er to be forgotten night.

Whether the real ghost source is an eerily shaped overhanging tree or simply vivid imaginations, the story of Caroline Collits, nee James, is deeply poignant. Caroline's mother hanged herself when Caroline was still a child being brought up at the building now known as Woodford Academy. Richard Davis, in his 1988 book, *The Ghost Guide to Australia*, reports that her father was a drunk. She married James, supposedly the black sheep of the Collits family of innkeepers and her sister married Irish immigrant John Walsh.

By 31 December, 1841, Caroline had separated from James and was living with Walsh and her sister at Blackheath. James was drinking with Walsh and Caroline at Jagers Inn at Little Hartley, Caroline allowed only treacle on account of her youth. The three began walking up Mount Victoria Pass, en route to Blackheath, but there was obviously an altercation and Caroline's body was found by a mail van driver, Matthew Mall, on the roadway at Soldiers Pinch hill on New Years Day. Walsh was hanged for her murder at Bathurst the following May.

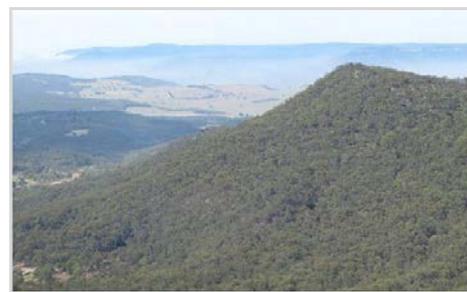
Why would Caroline have chosen to haunt the Second Bridge, several kilometres from the scene of her probable murder? The cleft in the Mount Victoria sugarloaf is undoubtedly the most spectacular landform along the route of Caroline's final walk. The steep, in places jagged, sandstone cliffs are the stuff that ghost stories are made of. And the old stone causeway evokes the suffering of the convicts. It is a fitting place to be linked to the union of tragedy and awe at Australian landscapes represented in the life of the poet Lawson and to other tragic lives of the past.

Illustrations (from top of page)

J Edgar's sketch of the apparition in Lawson's poem, published by permission of the editor of *Blue Mountains Folk Book* (1996); The “Second Bridge” cleft in the sugarloaf; A32 traffic crossing the 1832 convict causeway in 2018. (Only safe pedestrian access via Berghofer's Pass walk); Sugarloaf and Kanimbla Valley from Mitchell's lookout. Photos 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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://www.bluemountains.org.au) Saturday Walks page for details)

**Feb 10, Feb 17** Walkers can meet at Wentworth Falls Carpark, 8.00am, and decide on a walk and leader for that day. Contact Emanuel 0419773906 or [emanuelanddi@yahoo.com.au](mailto:emanuelanddi@yahoo.com.au) to register interest.

**Feb 24** **Ethereal Canyon.** Leader Harold 0409010737. 6km, Gr 3-4. Map Wollangambe. For Further details and to book in, contact leader.

**Mar 3** **River Cave.** Wet feet guaranteed. Leader Emanuel 0419773906. 6km, Gr 3 Map Rock Hill. For Further details and to book in, contact leader.

**Mar 10** **Vera Falls and Hippocrene Falls,** if tracks are open. Leader Mike 47573660. For Further details and to book in, contact leader.

**\*Some suggestions for selecting a walk on hot days:** Grand Canyon, Porters Pass, Edenberry Falls, Valley of the Waters, Horseshoe Falls, Den Fenella, Walls Cave.

**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](mailto:keithdor53@hotmail.com)

**Feb 12** **Jack Evans Track, Glenbrook.** Walk down to Erskine Creek spending the day either swimming if hot or exploring area if not. Climb back out in afternoon. Bring swimmers. Meet Glenbrook Station car park 8.50 am. Car pool. Bring National Park pass if you have one. Wayne Read 4739 0786 or 0429 021 296. Grade 2-3.

**Feb 19** **Dee Why to Manly – Great Coastal and beach walk.** Optional swim at Curl Curl beach. Meet Central Station, top of escalators 9.05 am. Maurice 4739 4942 or 0402 402 783. Grade 2.

**Feb 26** **Valley of the Waters and Inspiration Point, Wentworth Falls.** Very pretty walk with waterfalls. Steep steps in and out of valley. Meet Wentworth Falls Station car park 8.45 am. Car pool. Maurice 4739 4942 or 0402 402 783. Grade 3.

**Mar 3** **Lockyer's Road, Mount Victoria to Mount York, then down Coss Road,** 10 km. Meet Mt Victoria Station 8.45 am. Car pool. Eddie 4784 2691. Grade 3.

**Mar 12** **Radiata Plateau, Katoomba.** Great views into Megalong Valley. Meet Katoomba Station car park 8.30 am. Car pool. Maurice 4739 4942 or 0402 402 783. Grade 2.

**THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS:** Walks 2-3 hours conducted at a leisurely pace to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, adequate water and lunch if noted. Group Co-ordinator is Beverley Thompson, 4757 2076, [denfenella12@bigpond.com](mailto:denfenella12@bigpond.com)

**Feb 8** **Katoomba Airfield to Point Pilcher, Medlow Bath.** Meet Medlow Bath Station north side 8.30am. Leaders Tracy 0434 362 611 and Maurice 4739 4942. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2

**Feb 15** **Hyde Park Reserve, Mid Hartley.** Easy walk to River Lett. Maybe a paddle or swim. Meet Mount Victoria Station 8.45am. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. Car pool \$2. Take lunch. Grade 1

**Feb 22** **Horseshoe Falls, Hazelbrook.** Meet Hazelbrook shopping centre car park 8.45 am. Leader Keith 0411 162 345. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2

**March 1** **Nepean Gorge Lookouts, Mulgoa.** Bus trip \$12. Book and pay Tracy 0434 362 611. Meet Springwood car park behind Westpac Bank 9.00am. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. Take lunch. Grade 1

**Mar 8** **Pulpit Rock to Horseshoe Falls and return, Blackheath.** Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9.45am. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2

### Native Orchids of the Blue Mountains



Sabiye Hanjisch and Ben Jasiak

### Native Orchids of the Blue

**Mountains** features over 125 species of native orchid that occur within the Blue Mountains Region, with over 500 photographs. This intends to aid in the identification of native orchids, and help document and record what currently exists within one of the most botanically diverse regions on the East Coast of Australia.

You can purchase your copy at NPWS Heritage Centre, Blackheath, or by contacting the authors:

[bluemountainsnativeorchids@gmail.com](mailto:bluemountainsnativeorchids@gmail.com)

The book has also been listed on ebay.

Society Bushwalks on facebook:  
Visit <https://www.facebook.com/bmcslongerbushwalks/>

### Welcome to new members

Katie Lavers  
Jon Burt  
Edwina Keene  
Alison Hewitt  
Mal Hewitt  
Reginald Hewitt  
Gordon Hewitt  
Jeremy Hewitt