



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

A challenging but rewarding year for our Society

At the Society's Annual General Meeting on 28 March 2018, we completed the evening with every management committee position being filled. Continuing as President, Madi Maclean gave an overview of a particularly busy and successful year for our Society, its subcommittees and our multiple activities including our native plant nursery, bushwalks, plant study and environmental campaigns. She congratulated the nursery manager and volunteers for the contribution they have made to the Society's finances with their dedication to growing native plants and made special mention of our former treasurer Bart Beech and Elizabeth Howard who took on the role during the year. You can read Madi's annual report here:

http://bluemountains.org.au/documents/2018_BMCS_Annual_Report.pdf

Three new life members of the Society were inducted. Margaret Baker became known to many of us through her writing on the environment of the Blue Mountains and her teaching and bushwalk leading at Blue Mountains TAFE. Margaret's books on Blue Mountains flora (co-written with Jill Dark and Robyn Corringham) remain treasured possessions for Blue Mountains enthusiasts. Heather Hull has been one of the most energetic volunteers for many Blue Mountains organisations, with her intense knowledge of administration, finance and meeting procedure. The Society has benefited tremendously from Heather's work as minute taker for both the management committee and the land use subcommittee, as well as her ever cheerful face at bushwalks and other Society events. Hut News readers would feel they know Ross Coster well because of how much he has written on Badgerys Creek airport, energy, water and other topics over the years. The membership secretary portfolio has long been well looked after because Ross never seems to get tired.

The evening drew towards a close with a fascinating presentation by Janine Kitson on the work of award-winning photographer, Henry Gold, whose images have been invaluable in environmental campaigns for protection of the Greater Blue Mountains during half a century.

As we were leaving, a Boobook Owl outside the Conservation Hut had the last word ...



"mo-poke ...
mo-poke ...
mo-poke ..."

Southern Boobook
photo by
A Lumitzer, Birds
in Backyards,
Birdlife Australia

Springwood Foundation Day

We need volunteers to staff our stall at Springwood Foundation Day on 28th April. If you would like to help for an hour or two, contact me to discuss.

Heather Coster, Events Coordinator,
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Bob Brown calls for protection of the Gardens of Stone

Bob Brown, when he was here in September 2017 for the Mick Dark Talk, made a commitment to walk in the Gardens of Stone. So during his visit to the mountains in March 2018 the Gardens of Stone Alliance (Colong Foundation for Wilderness, Blue Mountains Conservation Society and Lithgow Environment Group) organised a very successful walk to the area.

Madi Maclean reports that they went down to Carne Creek on Newnes Plateau to a large cluster of pagodas, through forest and ferns and then through the flora reserve there. "Bob Brown did some good video for the campaign which we should have up in three weeks. We really appreciate him giving us his time and support. Ian Brown also came on the walk and took a lot of photos as well," Madi said.

Bob loved the place and its beauty. He said that its pagoda landscapes were "very different from anywhere else around Australia or indeed elsewhere around the world."

"One of the thrilling things about this beautiful Gardens of Stone is that it is a garden. It's got a thousand species of native plants and of those 42 are threatened. That thousand is almost equivalent to the plant diversity of the whole of the World Heritage Area," he said.

Dr Brown said the Gardens of Stone is about lifting the spirit. "It's a wonder everywhere you look. It's just different, an amazing kaleidoscope of sandstone formations in a living landscape." ... "at least it should be listed as National Heritage. It's right up there and it needs protecting."

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 0407 955 028 or Sue Nicol 0457 140 905 nursery@bluemountains.org.au

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Thank you, Brian Marshall

The Society thanks Dr Brian Marshall, long-time National Parks Officer and former President, for his work for the Society and the Blue Mountains environment. Brian has been unable to nominate for a position on the management committee this year and he will be sorely missed.

Brian has been a fixture in the Society for as many years as most of us can remember. He enthusiastically applied the knowledge he developed as a Professor of Geology to protecting the environment of the Blue Mountains range and the areas of the western escarpment most threatened by coal mining. The Brian Marshall era has been a time when conservationists have truly come to grips with the tremendous ecological and geological diversity of the great National Park system originally proposed by Myles Dunphy in the early 20th century and finally enshrined in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage declaration of 2000.

From the complexities of the Thirlmere Lakes system to the upland swamps of the Newnes Plateau to the localised impacts of the very long sewerage tunnel bored from the upper Blue Mountains range to Winmalee, Brian has displayed a unique ability to analyse the issues and define a position. During the years that Brian has fostered our Objective 3 subcommittee's care for the western mountains escarpment lands we have cooperated most effectively with the Colong Foundation and the Lithgow Environment Group as well as institutions such as the Environmental Defenders Office to further our objectives.

THE PLANT STUDY GROUP

The BMCS Plant Study Group is one of the several activities offered by the Society for members. It is made up of people who love to go out and about in the Blue Mountains to study the native plants, at the same time increasing our botanical knowledge using texts and keys of Blue Mountains plants. We have monthly walks in our area and go on bus trips further afield once or twice a year, most recently to Newnes. Our members share the responsibility of choosing and leading walks, often introducing us to little known locations. Our walks are not hard but we are often challenged with identification.

You can read all about us if you open the BMCS website www.bluemountains.org.au, go to activities and scroll down to The Plant Study Group. Here you can read the Group's guidelines and see what we have been doing on our monthly outings over the past few years. There are also descriptions of our projects, submissions and survey reports. As you can read in our guidelines we are open to anyone with a basic knowledge of plants and botanical terminology, and who is a member of BMCS with bushwalkers insurance. If you think this would suit you please go to the website, read about us and make contact.



Disappearing Islands

Clare Power

"Climate change is not just about statistics. Climate change is not just about science. Climate change is about human rights."
Ursula Rakova

I had the honour of listening to two women activists at a talk called 'Disappearing Islands' during the 'All about Women' festival at the Sydney Opera House on March 4th, 2018. Ursula Rakova from the Carteret Islands and Kathi Jetnil-Kijner from the Marshall Islands are both living the reality of the impact of rising sea levels.

I had seen Ursula speak once before, in Katoomba, about ten years ago, as part of a tour alerting the world to the impact of climate change on the low lying atolls of the Carteret Islands. They lie 1.2 metres above sea level and are located about 56 kms from Papua New Guinea. In 2006, the chiefs and elders of the Carteret Islands, which is a matrilineal and matriarchal society, asked Ursula, who was working for Oxfam at the time, to address the crises caused by rising sea levels on their islands. The Carteret Islands are a non industrialised nation, yet they were faced with the choice of leaving their homeland, their livelihood and the inheritance of land for their children or staying and watching all of this disappear before their eyes. Ursula explained that it was becoming impossible to live on their islands. For example, one island lost 50-60 metres of coastline, the sea walls are no longer sufficient to buffer the ocean, and king tides have swept into family homes and food gardens and into water supplies making them no longer viable.

The need for relocation became evident and the Catholic Church on Bougainville gifted land to the Carteret Islanders. Consequently, the Carteret Islanders developed an Integrated Relocation process and the first group of families have now moved to Bougainville with three more groups of approximately 20 families each to follow. The Carteret Islanders share clan systems with some of the people on Bougainville but it continues to be critical to build relations with their host community as they establish their home there based on the principles of peace and unity. Housing and food gardens have been established and, rather than fishing, the Islanders' livelihoods now come predominantly from farming copra and cocoa. They still return to the Carteret Islands for cultural practices, but the stronger ocean currents being experienced in the region have led to the loss of many lives at sea in the past 17 years. So directly affected by climate change, the Carteret Islanders are not just adapting to their situation, but also educating young people about climate change. They also participate in the Climate Change Warriors network and are building relations with other first nations peoples, such as the Inuit in Alaska whose lives are also being drastically affected.

Further north in the Pacific Ocean, the Marshall Islands is a low lying atoll nation located near the equator which was the site of 67 nuclear tests by the US between 1948



Women and children from Carteret Islands (Tulele Peisa)

and 1956. The 29 atolls that comprise the Marshall Islands are mostly around 2 metres above sea level and in some places so narrow, Kathi Jetnil-Kijner said you can feel the sea spray from both sides. Unlike the Carteret Islanders, the Marshall Islanders do not have a larger island nearby where they can relocate. This means their focus is to do what they can where they live. The main impacts of climate change are similar, with a greater number of king tides flooding over the sea walls causing the loss of homes and salt water drying up crops. And recently the worst drought the elders have ever experienced.

Kathi is a Marshall Islander activist, poet and spoken word artist. She received international acclaim through her poetry performance at the opening of the United Nations Climate Summit in New York in 2014. Her very moving address and poem can be seen here: <https://www.kathyjetnilkijner.com/united-nations-climate-summit-opening-ceremony-my-poem-to-my-daughter/>

Kathi is currently working on a poem about the Runit Dome, a concrete structure on an atoll in the Marshall Islands which houses tons of radioactive waste from the US nuclear tests. This structure has been eroded over time, and is now breached by rising sea levels and, disastrously, is leaking into the ocean. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-27/the-dome-runit-island-nuclear-test-leaking-due-to-climate-change/9161442>

What can we do?

Towards the end of the talk, the facilitator asked 'What can we do?' Ursula, in her succinct manner, responded that there has been enough time for planning, action at all levels is needed, and fast. She added that much assistance provided to Pacific Islanders as foreign aid is lost through corruption. She wants to see support given directly to local solutions proposed by local communities. Kathi, pointing out that we share the same ocean, said that Australia has been seen as a protective big brother in the Pacific. But with projects such as the Adani mine, Australia is not taking responsibility for its Pacific neighbours. She urged people to work in our communities, to push for 100% renewables, to stop Adani and to remember that the people most affected by climate change are women and children, people of colour, indigenous peoples and developing nations.

Freshwater crayfish of the Blue Mountains and a new giant “spiny”

By Ian Baird

Most readers of this newsletter will appreciate that there is still much for us to learn about our world and the other creatures that call it home. This is regularly highlighted by the discovery of new and remarkable species and even entire new ecosystems in less accessible parts of the world. New discoveries, however, also happen close to home.

In the forested headwaters of the inland flowing Cudgegong River in Coricudgy State Forest, below basalt-capped Mt Coricudgy, a giant, stream-dwelling, burrowing spiny crayfish species, *Euastacus vesper*, closely related to *Euastacus spinifer* of eastern drainages, has recently been described by freshwater crayfish researchers, Rob McCormack and Shane Ahjong¹. The species was recorded from two small streams just west of the watershed of the Great Dividing Range. According to Rob McCormack the conservation status of this species is probably Critically Endangered². The discovery of this apparently highly-localised species provides further evidence of the high conservation value of Coricudgy State Forest and of the opportunities for further research in this area³. Coricudgy State Forest adjoins Wollemi National Park, part of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, and has been proposed for National Heritage listing. Such listing is a prerequisite for nomination for addition to the World Heritage Area^{3, 4}.

The Giant Spiny Crayfish, *Euastacus spinifer*, a very spiny stream-dwelling species, is one of only two crayfish species which have previously been recorded from the Greater Blue Mountains and known to be indigenous to this region. The other, the Sydney Crayfish, *Euastacus australasiensis*, a smaller and less spiny burrowing species, is unusual in that it occurs in both streams and upland swamps⁵. Its burrows can also frequently be seen in association with seepage along bases of moist cliff-lines in the Blue Mountains, such as along the National Pass track. This species is clearly capable of overland movement, possibly following drainage lines during rainfall events to disperse. This is the variably orange/red crayfish which many Blue Mountains walkers will have observed in streams such as Greaves Creek along the Grand Canyon Track. In upland swamps (including hanging swamps) the burrows of small individuals of this species can be confused with burrows of larvae of the endangered Giant Dragonfly, *Petalura gigantea*⁶.

Interestingly, also in the upper Cudgegong River area, the iconic Murray Cray, *Euastacus armatus*, has previously been introduced or there have at least been attempts to do so. The other native crayfish which has been introduced in the Blue Mountains is the widespread Yabby, *Cherax destructor*, which can be distinguished from the spiny crayfish (*Euastacus* species) by their smooth bodies and smooth-edged claws⁵. All spiny crayfish, on the other hand, have prominent spines along the edges of their claws, as well as variably on their bodies, particularly on their ‘tails’⁵. The Yabby is naturally restricted to west of the Great Dividing Range in the Murray-Darling catchment, but unfortunately, as a result of human translocations, now occurs widely in coastal drainages where it has been introduced to farm dams

and coastal streams as a human food item⁷. This species should generally be treated as an introduced species in the Blue Mountains, other than perhaps in some lower elevation inland drainages west of the Great Dividing Range. This species should not be translocated in the Blue Mountains under any circumstances and should be treated as highly invasive. As a result of human translocation, most notably for aquaculture, freshwater crayfish have now established themselves outside their native ranges in many countries where they now threaten whole aquatic ecosystems, and in many cases, endangering the less competitive, locally endemic, crayfish species. Globally, as a result of multiple threatening processes, a high proportion of freshwater crayfish species are now endangered, with that number expected to rise dramatically. Ironically and perversely, where they have been introduced outside their native ranges, freshwater crayfish now also include some of the most invasive and damaging freshwater organisms in the world.

Our local spiny species are well worth spending some time quietly observing as they go about their business foraging on detritus, aquatic macrophytes and algae; hunting for small aquatic animals (e.g. insect and frog larvae, other crayfish); or interacting (sometimes aggressively) with their relatives in shallow streams. You can often find individuals of *Euastacus australasiensis* of all sizes co-habiting in pools in streams, as this species appears to be less aggressive than the larger *Euastacus spinifer*. They are fascinating animals to study. Some species, particularly some of the burrowers, are considered ‘ecosystem engineers’, and in addition to large predatory fish, freshwater eels and water rats (which predate upon them), they may be one of the dominant aquatic predators in their respective ecosystems. They are long-lived animals and removing large, old individuals, particularly breeding females which can take many years to reach sexual maturity, can have significant negative cascading effects on the whole stream ecosystem and food web. I would encourage everybody to refrain from collecting these “spinies” and take the opportunity to spend some time quietly observing and appreciating them in their home.



The Sydney Crayfish, *Euastacus australasiensis*.
Photo by Rob McCormack

Endnotes on page 10.

Biosecurity risks to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

The Environmental Impact Statement for Western Sydney Airport (WSA) does not seriously address the biosecurity threat from building this airport as a major air freight hub for Sydney or its close proximity to the Greater Blue Mountains Heritage Area (GBMHA). It has also ignored submissions on biosecurity from the general public. (RAWSA Fact Sheet: WSA Biodiversity Impacts http://www.nobca.org.au/RAWSA_Biosecurity_Fact_Sheet.pdf)

All international airports run a risk of animals, plants, bacteria, fungi or other pathogens 'escaping' from incoming freight and into the local environment. If the escapees are discovered in time it may be possible to contain and eradicate them.

But what if they are brought into Australia and released at an airport which is only 10km from the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area – “an area of one million hectares of vast, ancient and spectacular national park and wilderness” (NSW Office of Environment and Heritage)?

It is easy to imagine an escaped pest species travelling this far in a short time and potentially devastating the GBMWA.

Residents Against Western Sydney Airport (RAWSA) have put together an excellent fact sheet detailing the biosecurity risks of the proposed Western Sydney airport. The fact sheet details risks to agriculture, humans, and the environment. The link is given above.

Plenty of exotic pests and diseases have escaped from international airports in recent years, including the following. These are all bad news for native species.

- Red imported fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*) escaped from Port Botany and/or Sydney Airport in 2014.
- Browsing ants (*Lepisiota frauenfeldi*) escaped from Perth Airport in 2013.
- Electric ants or little fire ants, (*Wasmannia auropunctata*) escaped from Cairns Airport in 2006.
- Yellow crazy ants (*Anoplolepis gracilipes*) escaped from Cairns Airport in 2001-2003.
- Asian black spined toad (*Duttaphrynus melanostictus*) were detected in Sunbury Victoria in 2014 and in Belrose NSW in 2015. How they arrived is unknown.

Of the diseases not yet detected, *Xylella fastidiosa* (a bacteria) is really scary. This is a bacterial disease which has the potential to infect 52 native plant families which includes 768 species in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Species include Eucalypts, Acacias, Banksias and Callistemons. An outbreak would leave the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area devastated.

Section 6.1.10 of the Western Sydney Airport Environmental Impact Statement mentions “*Introduction of novel species: As with any international airport or sea port, operation of the proposed airport poses a biosecurity risk. There is the potential for the introduction of exotic species as a result of the transport of goods on aircraft.*”

The EIS recognises the risk of the invasion by an 'exotic species' as follows: “*Any escaped novel species could potentially establish in nearby vegetated areas, or be transported to other areas of native vegetation with cargo, and impact the local native flora and fauna.*”

So, given that Australia has an obligation to protect

biodiversity in the GBMWA, why would anyone propose, let alone approve, an international airport only 10km away?

If you think this idea is crazy, join us in campaigning against it. Write to your Federal MP (Susan Templeman for most of us) and tell her it is **NOT OK to take this risk.**

Ross Coster

Convener – No Western Sydney Airport Sub-Committee
Blue Mountains Conservation Society

nwsa@bluemountains.org.au



Red imported fire ant

Asian black
spined toad



Public consultation on the future of the old Lawson Golf Course

The Masterplan process for the former Lawson Golf Course has commenced, and Council is currently seeking community input. The Masterplan process will determine the future uses of all the Crown Land associated with the former Golf Course, including Lawson Cemetery and the BMX track and oval.

Why is the area so important?

- The former Lawson Golf Course site includes areas of high environmental value. The site includes Blue Mountains Swamps and the rare plant *Persoonia acerosa* (Needle Geebung) has been recorded on site.
- The area is directly adjacent to Lawson Creek. Problems in the past include stormwater overwhelming the creek, with silt and sediments negatively impacting on water quality.
- The South Lawson Bushcare Group has been working on the site since 1995, and has a keen interest in future of the site.
- The area is an access point for numerous bushwalks, and is heavily used for public recreation.
- The area is currently in public ownership as Crown Land managed by Council and is open to all members of the community. The site needs to stay in public ownership.

Options being considered for investigation include residential development of some of the site, and commercial recreational re-development such as a campground/caravan park or adventure sports facility.

Now is the time to have your say. The future of the old Lawson Golf Course is an important community issue.

- Find out more on the Council website here: <https://www.bluemountainshaveyoursay.com.au/lawson>
- Complete an online submission, emphasising the above dot points

The Society is also advocating, as part of Masterplan process, of ensuring a permanent home for the Society's community native plant nursery. A site on the old Lawson Golf Course is ideal for the nursery.

PREDATION (from the viewpoint of the prey)

Don Morison, 2018

I've feared you'd overpower me
And I've dreaded you'd devour me
And so before you I cower timidly.

Some lives are short and nasty
Survival skills are vastly
Stretched before a predator like thee.

You stated you're a herbivore
A worse lie I've not heard before
Your gastric juices stirred much more by flesh.

Dripping carnal delicacies
In your pincers' grip you seize
Feeling your prey squirm and writhe and thresh.

Respect the apex predator
The lesser species' editor
The population monitor for life.

We minor species hiding
Through a brief presence abiding
Till, resigned to fate, we face the reaper's scythe.

You fancy peristalsis
And you fancy mastication
Once your quarry is dismembered in your craw.

Varied lumps of organism
In existential schism
Forced stomach-wards like similar before.

I should cease idle talking
My predators still stalking
With tooth or talon, claw or sting or snout.

My predators are thorough
Like a feral Attenborough
Or a scornful kookaburra swooping out.

My present is transitional
My future use nutritional
Bit player in a puzzling cosmic whole.

And not re-in-car-nat-ed ...
Perhaps re-gur-git-at-ed ...
Further food chain fodder is my role.

Nursery News

It's coming to the end of the growing season but we still have plenty of plants for sale at the markets and now is a great time to get them in the ground and establish their roots before winter.

Don't ignore the prickly plants which offer a great bird refuge, like the *Hakeas* (*H sericea*, *H teretifolia*, *H pachyphylla*) or *Acacia ulicifolia* (Prickly Moses) already in bud as it flowers late winter. We have a good range of *Leptospermum* species (tea tree) which are quick growing and beautiful in flower and popular with Crimson Rosellas and other birds when they are in seed.

Be early if you want to snap up the last of the ferns.

Sue Nicol
Nursery Volunteer



Radiata Plateau
27 March
2017



Radiata Plateau
12 March
2018

Dam on Radiata (Elphinstone) Plateau

On 27 March 2017 I did the BMCS walk with the Monday walkers and took a photo of the "lake". On 12 March 2018, I repeated the walk and took another photo. We were all amazed at the difference, where has all the water gone? Susan Jalaluddin on behalf of Monday walkers

Reply:

Dear Susan, I believe the dam near the centre of Radiata (Elphinstone) Plateau was constructed before 1989, possibly to help with the radiata pine plantation. By 1989, timber harvesting had ceased and the three titles making up the majority of Radiata Plateau were in the hands of followers of the late Maharishi Mahesh Yoga, as they remain to this day. Soon after that, the earth wall of the dam developed a breach and the small lake has been dry for over 90% of the time since then. Only during brief periods of unusual weather does the inflow into the dam exceed the outflow but it's a most charming sight when it does, particularly if it coincides with wattle blossom time.

As a regular visitor to Radiata Plateau, I have seen the dam full several times. The first time was in 1989, when a Maharishi representative, long since departed from the mountains, Vladimir Lorenzon, was showing a group of us the property. While we were there, an anti-Maharishi activist, Barry Higgins, strode out of the scrub and a most amusing incident occurred which I'll tell you more about if I meet you face to face. Don Morison.

Members, Please send your questions about the Blue Mountains on subjects which might interest other members. I will try to pass them on to somebody who knows the answers. Editor
(hutnews@bluemountains.org.au)

KANGAROO: A LOVE HATE STORY

Documentary movie directed by Michael McIntyre and Kate McIntyre-Clere

Reviewed by Don Morison

In a film lasting less than two hours, these directors have created a technically competent argument for completely prohibiting kangaroo shooting and for banning export of kangaroo products overseas.

Foreign release occurred in 2017 and the March 2018 Australian release has provoked a backlash from the commercial and political interests that one would expect.

I don't fully endorse the shooting and export bans but I felt compelled to take the case the movie was making very seriously. I hope that these film makers create further works about all the animals in Australia that some view as pests, given the impressive gallery of relevant academics and celebrities they were able to interview.

The violence against adult animals and joeys depicted in this movie is truly horrifying. The usual warnings against children or adults who are medically vulnerable seeing this material would hardly cover it. Nevertheless, the violence is not gratuitous. It is largely directed to the point that existing codes of conduct for commercial kangaroo shooting are being partly ignored. Adult Australians who want to participate in debates about managing Australia's ecological systems should force themselves to watch the footage in this movie.

The human given the most time to present his view is Animal Justice Party NSW Upper House MP, Mark Pearson, and he acquits himself admirably. He effectively ties the intellectual and emotional strands of the documentary together by taking a methodical approach but always treating the subject matter with gravitas and sensitivity.

Diane and Greg, landholders, are billed as "Blue Mountains residents". One website identifies their property as about 40 km from Bathurst. It is around the story of these two collecting evidence of kangaroo shooting abuses along their property boundaries that the documentary hovers between the intellectual and the emotional. The combination of upset reactions and determination these two display is highly convincing.

I felt frustrated that we could not immediately have a further series of documentaries to pursue the points raised by other human contributors. The impact of the interview with renowned philosophy professor, Peter Singer, author of the 1975 book "Animal Liberation", was profound but all too brief. Singer provokes the audience to think about why humans regard some animals as comrades and others as pests. The ecological generalist, Professor Tim Flannery, struggled to pin down which questions need to be answered in the brief excerpts of him shown, as did the presumably outgoing NSW Greens Senator Lee Rhiannon. Australia Zoo stalwart Terry Irwin did not have time to properly explain her organisation's contribution to kangaroo conservation. Queensland National Senator Barry O'Sullivan played a solid innings for the commercial kangaroo industry



against the interviewer's bowling.

The lightest moment came when a government-funded scientist squirmed painfully when asked to explain in layperson's terms how official estimates of kangaroo populations in Australia are arrived at.

Overall, this is a much more useful contribution to the animal management debate than documentaries like "The Man from Coxs River" (2014). At least, in a debating environment where the ABC and The Conversation are highlighting ideologues speaking outside their subject areas and distorting topics like brumby management and firestick farming, "Kangaroo: a Love Hate Story" presents as a dose of ideological balance. We still need documentaries that concentrate on the views of the broadest and most disciplined thinkers about ecology and I think these filmmakers would be capable of creating them in the future.

Photo: Eastern Grey Kangaroos by Christine Davies.

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY WILD LIGHT, an exhibition of wilderness photography

At the Conservation Hut on 28 March, after the business of the Society's AGM had been concluded, Janine Kidson talked about legendary wilderness photographer HENRY GOLD who has been Honorary Colong Foundation photographer since 1968 and showed a slideshow of his photographs.

This year the Colong Foundation celebrates its 50th anniversary and Henry Gold's photographs continue to inspire and demand protection for precious wild places.

Join the Colong Foundation in celebrating Henry Gold's wilderness photographs at his upcoming exhibition:

Henry Gold's Photographic Exhibition *Wild Light*

Bondi Pavilion, 5-17 June 2018, 10-5 pm

Free entry. All funds raised from the sale of photographs will go to conservation.
www.colongwilderness.org.au

Wednesday 6 June, 6pm, Bondi Pavilion
Wild Light opening by Clover Moore
All welcome.

Go to the Colong Society for Wilderness website
www.colongwilderness.org.au for information
about this and other anniversary events.

A tribute to Jack Austin (1927-2017) **by Jim Smith (continued from March Hut News)**

The origin of the bushwalking story below, written by Jack's sister Margaret, was a poem by J. Bennett, entitled 'Nelly's Glen', first published in 1898 and reprinted in my 1985 book *From Katoomba to Jenolan Caves*. When Margaret read the poem's description of the Bonnie Doon track, she asked Jack to take her there. This well-constructed track was made for mining entrepreneur John North, probably in the early 1890s, as a shortcut from North's home into Nelly's Glen. When North moved out of the area, the track became overgrown and forgotten. Some maintenance was done on it in the 1920s, but it was then virtually abandoned. The ill-advised attempt to construct a road down Nelly's Glen in the 1960s destroyed nearly all of the final connection of the track with Nelly's Glen. I was able to follow most of the track in the 1970s. During my explorations in the area, I located a previously unknown colony of the Blue Mountains Dwarf Pine. Part of the Bonnie Doon track was later restored and is in use today as a connecting track between the top of Nelly's Glen and Stuarts Road Katoomba.

At Jack Austin's funeral, on 28 July 2017, Margaret Austin gave an enthralling account of her walks with Jack in the Bonnie Doon area. I asked her to write it down, and the article below is a shortened version of the full story.

Those of us who were privileged to "walk on the wild side" with Jack Austin treasure our memories of his inspiring personality and love for the bush.

The Lure of Bonnie Doon: A walk on the wild side with my brother Jack Austin by Margaret Austin.

Sitting at the kitchen table in my brother's Woodford home, I noticed a book which I proceeded to browse through. My eye fell on a beautiful drawing of wilderness area below which was a poem about an old track above the Bonnie Doon Falls.

I started to read, and these words "A wild and perilous track"—"A rock between two waterfalls overlooking Megalong Valley", fired my imagination. When I read the poem to Jack we were both eager to find this long-lost track.

So it was that we spent four days searching the area east of Nellie's Glen for a way into the gorge. Finally, Jack found a new track cut down a grassy hill which he said had been made by the scouts. The track swung around to the left and stopped at the cliff edge. Far below was lush rainforest, including the most enormous Banksia we had ever seen, which was obviously a great attraction to the white cockatoos, as a large flock were flittering around among its branches.

We were returning along the track and noticed a dry watercourse, to which I felt oddly drawn. The cliff edge was covered in vines and seemed unremarkable. However, the siren call I felt came from the other side, so I crossed the vines and looked over the cliff, and there was a distinct track below.

To Jack, an old track was totally irresistible so he soon had his rope looped around a tree and we climbed down the cliff. I was thinking about the challenges we might encounter on that "wild and perilous track" when, to my horror, I realised Jack had pulled the rope down after

himself. Being a person who had always ensured I had a back-out strategy I suddenly found myself without one, so forward it was, and deal with whatever the track had to offer.

The way was surprisingly easy 'till we met our first challenge, which came in the form of a sheer cliff, on which there was a very narrow ledge bending around out of sight. There was nothing to do but remove our backpacks, hold them in front of us and crab-walk along the ledge. Risking a quick look down, I estimated it was at least a 200 foot drop, so I was very glad that the ledge was as flat as if cut out of the cliff with a knife because a trip would have had fatal consequences.

Eventually we reached the end of the ledge and stepped up onto a good track between trees which we followed for a time. A small creek was crossed, and another larger creek appeared, so that we were between the two creeks when our way was blocked by a large boulder. We climbed the rock, and the two creeks went over the cliff on each side, so here it was, "a rock between two waterfalls". Several hundred feet below, the rainforest stretched away to the top of Bonnie Doon Falls and beyond was Megalong Valley. We sat on the rock for a long time in silence, no words exist to describe the feelings we were experiencing.

Unfortunately, we had to leave this magical spot and continue, which involved crossing the waterfall of the larger creek, so we each took an end of the rope and used it as a safety line as we crossed. On the other side we entered rainforest like none Jack or I had ever encountered in all our explorations of the mountains. The thick trees had a wet, shiny, green sheen on trunks and roots, while the large rocks were covered in moss so deep that our hands virtually disappeared into the lush growth.

We remembered that our parents, who honeymooned in the mountains, had mentioned the fact that they were much wetter then. Human habitation had changed things unfortunately.

We descended through this glorious rainforest 'till we emerged abruptly into a desolate landscape of rubble on top of an 85 foot cliff above Nellie's Glen.

The track had been obliterated, and, while I was still weighing options, Jack, in his usual unflappable manner, had determined our best bet was to follow the cliff north 'till Nellie's Glen came up to meet us. This was not without danger, as the top of the cliff was covered in small rounded pebbles. Jack found a spot at last, only 20 feet above the glen, where rubble had formed a bit of a ramp and we were able to scramble down into Nellie's Glen.

I learnt something important that day. Sometimes back-out strategies are limiting, and I needed to let go and trust in my ability to deal with whatever challenges occurred.

Jack believed in me, and gave me a belief in myself. That was his gift to me. Thanks Jack.

**BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION
SOCIETY www.bluemountains.org.au**
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Blue Mountains Conservation Society
Follow us on Twitter: [bmcsnsw](https://twitter.com/bmcsnsw)

Wild Life in Blackheath Christine Davies

I planted a waratah cultivar 18 years ago and it produced its first flowers three years ago. This year it has produced another two inflorescences, well out of season in March.

What we see as the flower of the waratah is actually a whole bunch of flowers arranged on one stalk. This New Holland Honeyeater in the photo is enjoying a feed of nectar which is offered to attract pollinators but, for the plant, all to no avail. The cultivars do not produce seed, so missing a beautiful visual part of the waratah's life cycle.



I think waratahs are best appreciated where they grow naturally. It is always a thrill to come across flowering waratahs surrounded by Eucalypts and other woodland vegetation. Waratah is an Aboriginal name. The botanical name of our local waratah is *Telopea speciosissima* ('Telopea' meaning 'seen from afar', and 'speciosissima' meaning 'most beautiful').

Whodunnit?

Two spider species commonly seen on the outside of the house are Black House Spiders *Badumna insignis* and delicate little spiders which build their webs in the eaves.

One morning I found a pair (one of each) suspended from a dangling web of the smaller spider, close to a fixed glass door and facing one another. Then the larger spider was still and did not move again. The little spider spent some time coming and going and tending to the victim and then waited in the wings.



Eventually the meal was ready and she came in to feed, on and off over several hours.

Then both spiders and the web were gone! Had a bird taken them? A Red-browed Finch—who seemed to me to be an unlikely suspect—was standing on the path below where the spiders had been, and did not move when I approached. Had this little bird coincidentally flown into the glass and been stunned or perhaps it was so enjoying a feed of grass seeds that it was reluctant to leave?

While I wondered about all this, the bird flew away.

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

Welcome to new members

Rogge Burke
Norbert Bohler
Margaret Bohler

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

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

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".

If now isn't the time to talk about climate change, then when is? Christine Davies

(Extract from an article in Sydney Morning Herald, Peter Hannam, 20/3/18 <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/i-m-furious-tathra-councillor-says-now-is-the-time-to-talk-climate-20180320-p4z5ab.html>)

"I'm furious": Tathra councillor says now is the time to talk climate.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull may have picked the wrong community to be dismissive about climate change, telling an interviewer at an evacuation hall that "bushfires are part of Australia, as indeed are droughts and floods".

Tathra, and the wider Bega Valley area, has long had a goal of reaching 50 per cent renewable energy sources of electricity and cutting energy use by half from 2006 levels by 2020, led by the Clean Energy For Eternity Group (CEFE).

Matthew Nott, president of CEFE, said "In a world that's warming, it's very clear that the frequency and severity of bushfires is going to increase. And you can attribute that change to climate change."

Tathra's community solutions have included equipping all six surf clubs, 12 fire sheds and 30 community buildings with solar panels. It has also installed 100 kilowatts of solar panels – laid out to spell "imagine" – at a cost of \$100,000 entirely funded by locals to power the local sewage treatment works.

On 22 March 2018, Sydney Morning Herald cartoonist, Cathy Wilcox, presented a cartoon captioned "This is not the time to debate climate change". In four panels it showed a bushfire burning houses, oceans drowning low-lying land, a shipload of coal near a coral reef and livestock dying in a drought.

Some of the loudest voices in the nation continue to deny climate change. It is encouraging that some commentators can see that the emperor (or last month, was it the Prime Minister?) has no clothes.

Freshwater crayfish of the Blue Mountains and a new giant "spiny" (continued from page 4—Endnotes)

¹ McCormack RB, Ahyong ST (2017) *Euastacus vesper* sp. nov., a new giant spiny crayfish (Crustacea, Decapoda, Parastacidae) from the Great Dividing Range, New South Wales, Australia. Zootaxa 4244:556-567 doi:10.11646/zootaxa.4244.4.6

² <http://www.aabio.com.au/euastacus-vesper-a-new-euastacus-for-nsw/>

³ Baird IRC, Benson D (2018) Hydrogeomorphology, floristics, classification and conservation values of the little-known montane mires of the upper Cudgegong River catchment, Central Tablelands, New South Wales. Cunninghamia 18:001-021 doi:7751/cunninghamia.2018.18.001

⁴ Benson D, Smith J (2015) Protecting biodiversity values in response to long-term impacts: additional areas recommended for inclusion in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. In: Benson D (ed) Values for a new generation: Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, pp 48-75. Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area Advisory Committee.

Available from <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/protectedareas/values-new-generation.htm>

⁵ McCormack RB (2012) A Guide to Australia's Spiny Freshwater Crayfish. CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Victoria

⁶ Baird IRC (2014) Larval burrow morphology and groundwater dependence in a mire-dwelling dragonfly, *Petalura gigantea* (Odonata: Petaluridae). International Journal of Odonatology 17:101-121 doi:10.1080/13887890.2014.932312

⁷ McCormack RB (2008) The Freshwater Crayfish of New South Wales, Australia. Australian Aquatic Biological Pty Ltd, Karuah, NSW

48. BRACEY'S LOOKOUT, Hassans Walls Plateau

The Hassans Walls Plateau, named by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in 1813 for its similarity to landforms in northern India, offers an eclectic selection of Blue Mountains scenery.

In Hassans Walls (according to Col Bembrick in *Coxs Road Dreaming 2015*), we have a sandstone plateau rising above Permian deposits. Many of the formations appear as outliers of the pagodas and other sandstone structures which characterise the Gardens of Stone district, one reason that Hassans Walls has been recommended to be included in Gardens of Stone reserved area Stage 2.

Across the totality of Hassans Walls, there is evidence of major damage to surface features by now defunct underground coal mines but the area around Bracey's Lookout (in the north-east of the plateau), is by no means the worst affected. Bracey's Lookout is connected to the Pottery Estate precinct within the Lithgow urban area by a steep foot track of only a few hundred metres but it is a dead end of more than two kilometres for motor vehicle access. It is very popular with bushwalkers, dog walkers and cyclists.

The lookout offers one of the best overviews of the Lithgow urban area including the central business district, evoking memories of the Inch brothers, Pillans and the Bracey family themselves.



Horace and Alice Bracey arrived in Lithgow in 1886 and set up a retailing business in Excelsior Arcade. Horace became Mayor in the 1890s and the business continued under his descendants, eventually ceasing trade in 2007 by which time it was operating in a substantial purpose-built department store in Main Street. Generations of the Bracey family yielded some of the most outstanding philanthropists in Lithgow's history, especially in meeting the cost of developing Hassans Walls for public recreation and appreciation of nature.



Images (top to bottom)

The section of Lithgow CBD containing the former Bracey's Department Store, looking north from the lookout.

Inch Street (named after the founders of Lithgow Brewery), a north-eastern view from the lookout; a corner of Lake Pillans Reserve, named after another former mayor, is visible at the far right.

A curtain of *Exocarpos cupressiformis* (Native Cherry) on the slope north of the lookout.

Pagodas, outliers of the many thousands of such formations found in existing reserved areas of the Gardens of Stone and proposed extensions.

Photos by Christine Davies.

The Blue Trail series can be found at: <http://www.simplyaustralia.com.au/category/blue-trail/>

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)

- April 14 **Rarely visited spurs on Mt Banks.** Some off-track, Leader Emanuel 0419773906. 8km, Gr3, map Mt Wilson. Contact leader to book in.
- Apr 21 **Butterbox Point** & nearby spurs at a leisurely pace. Leader: Hugh 0423309854. 8km, Gr3, maps Katoomba & Mt Wilson.
- Apr 28 **Mystery Walk.** Leader, Eddie 47842691. Contact leader to book in.
- May 5 **Wongarra Ridge, Walls LO.** Some off Track. Leader Alice & Lotti 47393086, Meet at Blackheath Stn. Car Park, 8.30am, 8km, GR3, Map Mt Wilson.
- May 12 **Goochs Crater.** Leader, Bob 0408947325. 6km, Gr3 map Wollangambie & Mt Wilson. Contact leader to book in.

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

- Apr 16 **Asgard Swamp and Thor Head,** Bell. Meet Mount Victoria Station 8.50 am. Car pool, fare \$5. Tracey 0434 362 611. Grade 2.
- Apr 23 **Castle Head, Katoomba.** Stunning views of Solitary and Lake Burragorang. Meet Katoomba rail park 9.30 am. Car pool. AWD preferred. Fare \$5. Maurice 0402 402 783 or 4739 4942. Grade 2.
- Apr 30 **Red Hands Cave, Glenbrook.** Ancient rock art. Meet Glenbrook car park east 8.30 am. Car pool. Bring National Parks pass. Keith 0311 162 345. Grade 2/3.
- May 7 **Victoria Falls, Mount Victoria.** Pleasant walk down to falls and return. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50 am. Car pool. Tracy 0434 362 611. Grade 3.
- May 14 **West Concord to Meadowbank.** Chance to see new foreshore, sculptures, bridge over Homebush Bay and Nature Walk. About 10 km but flat mainly on footpaths. Train arrives Strathfield 9.09 am (platform 2). We leave Strathfield Station 9.30 am (platform 6). Judith 0419 780 640 or 4758 6310. Grade 2.

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

- Apr 12 **Braeside Walk to Evans Lookout, Blackheath.** Waterfalls, creeks and Grose Valley views. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9.45am. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2
- Apr 19 **Henry Lawson Walk and Sunset Rock, Mount Victoria.** Views into Kanimbla Valley. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Bring your grandchildren. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. Take lunch. Grade 2
- Apr 26 **Kings Table and beyond, Wentworth Falls.** Meet Stockyard Car Park, Wentworth Falls 9.30am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2
- May 3 **Nature Trail, Wentworth Falls.** Meet Stockyard Car Park, Wentworth Falls 9.30am. Leader Christine 4757 2864. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2
- May 10 **Darks Common and Bluff, Glenbrook.** Meet Glenbrook Station Car Park East 9.30am. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2
- May 17 **Red Hands Cave, Glenbrook.** Ancient rock art. Meet Glenbrook Station Car Park East 9.30am. Leader Keith 0411 162 345. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 3

Sonnet for Ravens

In this crass age when dignity is rare,
Consider the dignity possessed
By the Raven. Watch them at their nest.
Enter the territory of a breeding pair.
At once a quiet dark sentinel will appear
And eye you sternly with an implied request
To get you gone, and he will not rest
From his strict surveillance until you are clear
Of his domain. Then he displays his coat
In its black-silver splendour from some tall
Tree, and ruffling the plumes about his throat,
Bugles his slow descending clarion call
To his high tree-top mate who sits alone
Brooding their mottled eggs: they've go-o-o-ne!

- Graham Alcorn

Society Bush/walks on facebook:

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

Other BMCS environmental activities:

Go to www.bluemountains.org.au—Activities

Plant Study Group—read more on Page 2.

Thursday Interpretive Nature Group

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.