



Bridal Veil Falls, Leura
February 2020
Photo by Marilyn Kraus

The photo was taken from a lookout on the Prince Henry Clifftop Walk, a short distance from Cliff Drive. "As we stood and listened to the roar of the waterfall, the rain eased and the curtain of mist parted. Before us, the 'bridal veil' in all its splendour."

Annual General Meeting
Thursday, 26 March, 7pm
at the Conservation Hut,
end of Fletcher Street,
Wentworth Falls
(See Notice of AGM on page 2)
Followed by (at approx 8pm)
Native Fauna of the Greater
Blue Mountains World
Heritage Area
Peter and Judy Smith

After the formal part of the Annual General Meeting is over, Blue Mountains ecologists, Peter and Judy Smith, will talk about their recently published book "Native Fauna of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area".

During their talk they will touch on likely impacts on the fauna of the recent fires coupled with severe drought and high temperatures.

Come along and support those taking responsibility for running the Society. Enjoy the talk and meet other members over supper.

Visitors are very welcome!

Don't let the bushfires be forgotten

The fires that have dominated the headlines for seven months have been extinguished. And the news cycle moves on—floods, cyclones, storms, coronavirus—it's all bad news. **But don't forget the horrendous winter, spring and summer of 2019 and 2020.**

The Conversation, 4/2/20, tells us: *Lots of people want to help nature after the bushfires. Big, life-changing moments provide unique opportunities to disrupt habits and foster new behaviours. Think of how a heart attack can prompt some people to adopt a healthier lifestyle. The moment can easily be lost. BUT research has shown when people undertake one pro-environmental behaviour they are more likely to repeat it in the future.*

Australia has demonstrated to the World what happens with 1 degree Centigrade of human induced global warming. Can we even begin to imagine the effects of the 2 degree Centigrade model, or the one after that? **TAKE ACTION** and talk about global warming. Your voice, your letter, your presence at a protest march, might make a difference. Here are some ideas:

* **Paint something yellow, write "we want climate action"**, photograph it with you in the photo, share it on Facebook and Twitter. Hashtags **#ClimateActionNow** **#ShowOurColours**. Ask your friends to make their own signs. Hold a sign painting party. https://www.acf.org.au/show_our_colours

* **Download a conversation guide** to find out how to turn an ordinary conversation about the weather into something a lot more interesting, and far more important: climate change. <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/actions/download-guide-climate-change-weather/>

* **Sign an Open Letter** – To our elected representatives: Act on climate, now! https://www.acf.org.au/open_letter_bushfires

* **Grandparents CAN for more ideas** grandparentscan.org



"Hut News", the newsletter of
Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, 2782
Phone 4757 1872 (leave message)
Email: bmcs@bluemountains.org.au
Web page: www.bluemountains.org.au
Facebook: Blue Mountains Conservation
Society Twitter: bmcsnsw

President: Tara Cameron 0419 824 974

president@bluemountains.org.au

Senior Vice President: Madi Maclean
0412 428 202

gos@bluemountains.org.au

Second Vice President:

Don Morison 8230 2116

donmorison@bluemountains.org.au

Treasurer: Elizabeth Howard 0414 090251

eh.mistover@bigpond.com

Administration Officer: Jeanette Robertson

sao@bluemountains.org.au

Bushcare Officer: Paul Vale

4787 8080 0429 014 454

bushcare@bluemountains.org.au

Climate Change and Sustainability Officer:

Clare Power

sustain@bluemountains.org.au

Environmental Education Officer:

Cathy Cavanagh 0431 692 394

education@bluemountains.org.au

Events Coordinator: VACANT

Gardens of Stone Officer

Madi Maclean 0412 428 202

gos@bluemountains.org.au

Landuse Officer:

Angela Langdon 0417 004 722

landuse@bluemountains.org.au

Meetings Secretary: Heather Hull

4739 1493 hhull001@bigpond.net.au

Membership Secretary: Ross Coster

0418 462 576

membership@bluemountains.org.au

National Parks/World Heritage Officer:

Adam Curry 0425 326 842

adsycur@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor:

Christine Davies 4787 7246

hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

Nursery Manager: Paul Irwin

nursery@bluemountains.org.au

Publicity Officer: VACANT

Threatened Species Officer:

Judy Smith smitheco@ozemail.com.au

Website Manager: Alan Page

leuralan@hotmail.com

Walks Convenor:

Maurice Kerkham 4739 4942

mauricekerkham@hotmail.com

Bushfire Representative: Hugh Paterson

4751.2303, mob 0427 512 303

fmatter@bigpond.net.au

The **DEADLINE** for the next issue of
HUT NEWS is **18 MARCH 2020**

Please send contributions to
Valda Low, Acting Newsletter Editor,
valda@mountaintracks.com.au
PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Ross Coster 0418 462 576
membership@bluemountains.org.au
PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

Printed on Australian-made 100% Recycled Paper

Blue Mountains Conservation Society 1 March 2020 Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given of the Annual General Meeting of the Society to be held at the **Conservation Hut, Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls at 7 PM on Thursday 26 March 2020**. Business will include receipt of reports, adoption of annual accounts, changes to Constitution, determination of structure of Management Committee, election of President, Management Committee members and other office holders and appointment of auditor.

Changes to Constitution

You will be asked to vote on Management Committee's recommendation that the Objects of the Constitution be changed as set out below.

The Objects of the Society's Constitution are guiding principles that serve to outline what the Society does in terms of its purposes, activities and work. Our Constitution is a very old document and while we continue to act in line with the Objects, we have found that the Society's work has evolved since it was first written and subsequently amended. In the early 2000s, Society members wrote a Mission Statement for the Society which included Aims and Objectives. This has guided our efforts over the past 20 years. We are now proposing to update the Objects of the Constitution to make them more in line with the Mission and current work.

The revised Objects are:-

To help protect, conserve, and advocate for, the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

This may include:-

- (a) to foster an understanding of the ideals of nature conservation among the members of the Society and the public generally;
- (b) to undertake nature conservation activities;
- (c) to provide information to members of the Society and the public in relation to the conservation of the natural environment, by conducting meetings, and other activities as may be determined by the Society;
- (d) to liaise and work with other environment and nature conservation based community organisations, especially those locally based.

**By order of the Management Committee
Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc**

Raising Warragamba Dam wall is not the solution

The NSW State Government proposes housing for another 134,000 people onto the Western Sydney floodplain in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley, an area of high flood hazard, to be made worse with increased population and climate change. Read this extract from Infrastructure NSW's "Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Strategy":

"Expanding urban development across the Valley means that flood exposure will increase in the future. Climate change may further increase this flood risk as it has the potential to increase the severity and frequency of the flood hazard in the Valley. The Insurance Council of Australia considers this Valley to have the highest single flood exposure in New South Wales, if not Australia."

The Government's response is to raise the Warragamba Dam wall, with serious environmental and cultural consequences.

In early February, major flooding occurred throughout Western Sydney. People were evacuated, bridges were blocked and the Hawkesbury River rose by over 10 metres, yet none of the flood water came over Warragamba Dam. Raising the Warragamba Dam wall is simply not the solution.

"Adding 134,000 more people onto Western Sydney floodplain has to be one of the most dangerous policy initiatives in the history of Australia. The people of Western Sydney have been told this dam project is all about public safety, when really it's all about profits." (Harry Burkitt, GIVE A DAM campaigner) TAKE ACTION. Go to www.giveadam.org.au/

IT'S A BAT FEST!



BLUE MOUNTAINS BAT NIGHT

**SATURDAY
21st MARCH**

6.30—9.00 pm

**Blue Mountains
Cultural Centre,
30 Parke Street,
Katoomba
(entry via
Coles car park)
FREE EVENT**

Come and learn more about bats at the Blue Mountains Bat Night. There will be bat talks, lots of fun batty activities for all; learn about flying foxes and our fascinating microbats. Why not come dressed as a bat!

The only true flying mammal, there are over 1,200 bat species in the world making up almost a quarter of the world's mammal species. Australia has around 80 different species of bats. At this event you will be able to hear microbat calls after dark live via a bat detector and meet a Flying Fox!

Enjoy a bat talk with local ecologist Marg Turton and flying fox expert Tim Pearson as well as other bat scientists and aficionados. There will be the popular Bat Cave for kids' activities such as mask-making and more. Also badge making and temporary bat tattoos. Go batty in the library until 8pm. If you get hungry with all this action, support the local RFS at their sausage sizzle.

This event is proudly supported by the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, Blue Mountains City Council, Blue Mountains Library and the Australasian Bat Society.

More information: www.bluemountains.org.au

Management committee roles

At the AGM on 26th March, two current MC members, Admin Officer and Newsletter Editor, will not be standing for re-election.

Administration Officer is an essential part of the running of the Society but it is not a daunting job. Contact Jeanette on 0414 956 060 or sao@bluemountains.org.au to find out what is involved.

The **Newsletter Editor** is retiring after 24 years. What will the new newsletter look like? If you have ideas and might volunteer for the position you can talk to the president or vice president (contact details on page 2).

Regeneration and rejuvenation, not adaptation Don Morison

Language is important and the word "adaptation" has been sucked into Prime Minister Scott Morrison's marketing strategies. It has become a catch cry to justify the policies that led to the climate crisis experienced in Australia in 2019/20. "Adaptation" has come to mean giving the government and the mining industry excuses for what happened, and encouragement to continue with their policies.

Let's talk about regeneration and rejuvenation. Conservationists need to talk about how most of the good things in the ways of life of our own species and other species in Australia can still be saved. This cannot be done without tackling climate change.

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

'Like' us on Facebook:

Blue Mountains Conservation Society

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

Grandparents CAN (Three months later)

You may remember reading in Hut News last year of the Grandparents Gathering in late November at which I launched **Grandparents CAN (Grandparents want Climate Action Now!)**, a campaign to assist folks to easily pressure politicians and businesses to take action on climate change. By simply registering your email address on our website, grandparentscan.org you are sent weekly information on a targeted action you can take.

Over one hundred people attended the Gathering, and since then the number of people signed up to receive actions has risen to over 170, without any further effort on our part. We also have a Facebook page, **Grandparents CAN**, on which we post the weekly action, and relevant items of interest.

If you are less than satisfied by the State and Federal governments' response to the challenge of climate change but don't know what to do about it, check us out!

Robin Mosman.

I wrote this poem quite a long time ago, when I first encountered epicormic growth (without knowing what it was). It reflects perhaps a more hopeful outlook than is possible, twenty-six years later. Diana Levy.

Black January

NSW 1994

Black, yes,
but I remember
because I forgot
to photograph that tree
in the Gibraltar Range, burnt amputee:
stuck into black earth
like a candle into a cake,
its trunk hollow, licked out
by greedy tongues of flame.

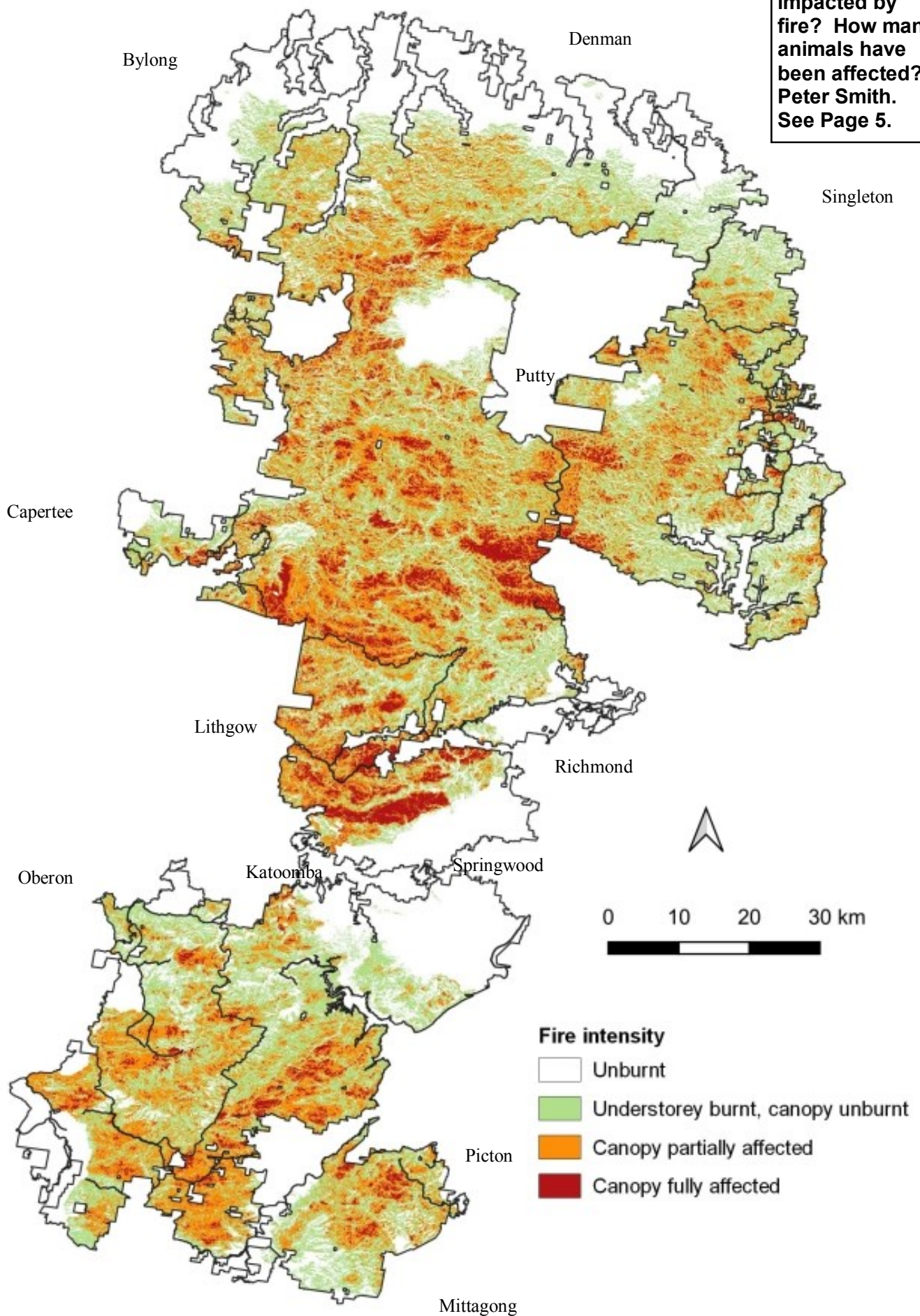
The background:
many more gutted candles
in a crisp icing
of black charcoal and white quartzite,
unhappy death day to you
possum, koala, glider -

But in the middle of the picture,
raspberry and lime green:
from the side of that eucalypt
sprang a shoot of leaves
their stems and tips red
and that whole spray of green leaves
blazing at the sun.

Diana Levy

Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area Impact of 2019-20 Fires

How much of the World Heritage Area has been impacted by fire? How many animals have been affected? Peter Smith. See Page 5.



How much of the World Heritage Area has been impacted by fire? How many animals have been affected? Peter Smith

The 2019-2020 fire season has seen more extensive bushfires in New South Wales than ever before. These have burnt a large proportion of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area but just how much has been burnt and how severely?

To answer these questions, I have examined fire mapping data up to 20th January 2020 from GEEBAM (Google Earth Engine Burnt Area Map), a joint project of the NSW Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Environment and the University of NSW. GEEBAM maps fire intensity, allowing identification of unburnt areas within the fire boundary and providing a better picture of fire impacts than a simple fire boundary map. It shows that although the fire boundaries cover 80% of the World Heritage Area, the area actually burnt is 68%, including 27% where the understorey has burnt but not the canopy.

The fires have certainly had a massive impact on an unprecedented scale but they have been less severe in the World Heritage Area than in some other parts of the State. They have left areas of unburnt or partially burnt vegetation that will hopefully play a critical role in providing refuges for the local fauna to survive and eventually recolonise the burnt areas.

How many animals have been affected? Using estimates of fauna densities in NSW from a WWF-Australia report on the impacts of land clearing*, I calculate that some 13 million mammals (excluding bats), some 15 million birds and some 95 million reptiles were living in the 68% of the

World Heritage Area burnt by the fires. These are rough estimates but it is clear that huge numbers of animals have been affected. The majority of these are likely to have died as a result of the fires or the drought preceding the fires or the shortage of food, water and shelter after the fires.

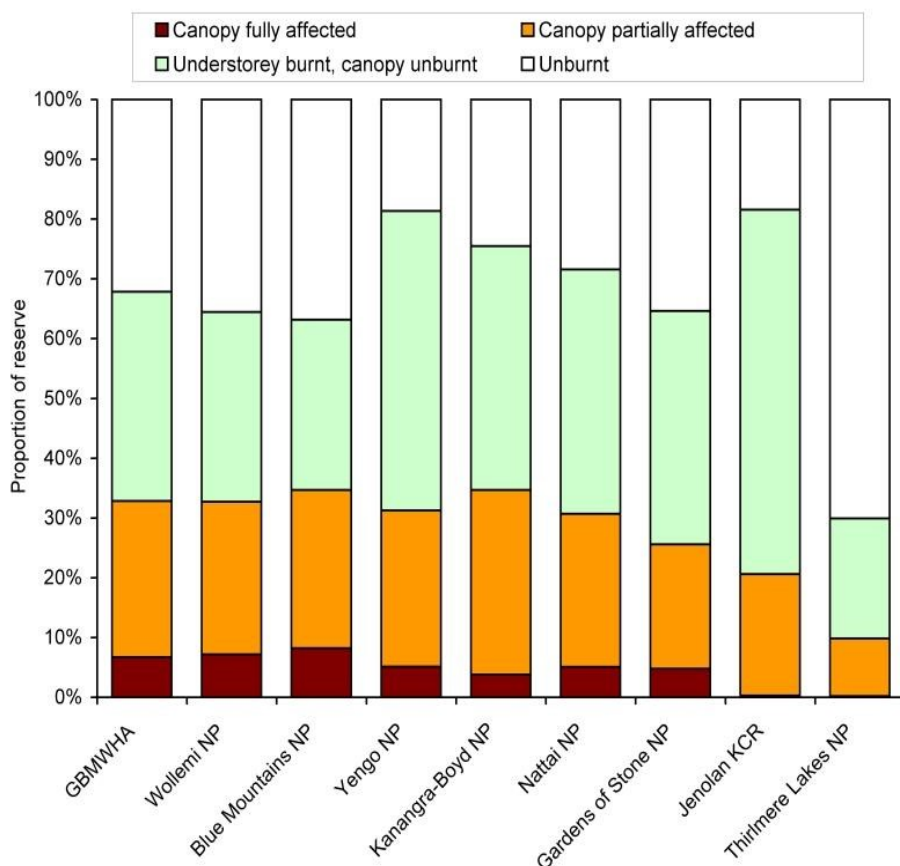
The unprecedented scale of the fires, and the additional impacts of drought and heatwaves, make recovery of the local fauna and flora more problematic than in past fires. However, the patchiness of the fires gives some hope for at least partial recovery.

The recovery process will be an important subject for monitoring and research and for development of better land and fire management practices to address both nature conservation and the protection of life and property.

As well as adapting to a changed fire regime, we also need to take urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to prevent things getting worse. Fires and droughts are likely to increase in frequency and severity with increasing climate change and bring about radical changes in the Blue Mountains flora, fauna and landscape. All is not yet lost but we need to act now and be positive in meeting the challenges.

* C. Johnson, H. Cogger, C. Dickman and H. Ford (2007), *Impacts of Landclearing: The Impacts of Approved Clearing of Native Vegetation on Australian Wildlife in New South Wales*, WWF-Australia, Sydney.

Intensity of 2019-20 fires in Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area



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 WELCOME

Phone Karen 4757 1929

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, Blackheath Public School 9am to 1pm.

Magpie Market, 3rd Sunday of month. Lawson Public School, 9am-2pm.

Tube stock \$3.50. Discounts for bulk orders.

nursery@bluemountains.org.au

Once the smoke has cleared after a bushfire, new life bursts forth to clothe the alien sculptures of blackened trees. The appearance and colour of the post-fire growth on many eucalypts always fascinates bushland visitors. New leaves may appear as fuzzy clusters from epicormic shoots on branches and trunks of tree species or as new limbs from the underground lignotubers of mallees. Normally we would expect this new growth to be green but a wow moment comes when someone spots red to red-purple leaves standing out from black backgrounds. But aren't leaves meant to be green? How can they be red and purple too?

Well, leaves are not just green. Leaf colour comes from pigments contained in different cells within the leaf structure. These variously coloured pigments collect light at different wavelengths and perform different functions. Most familiar is chlorophyll (usually green) that everyone knows is essential for photosynthesis, and carotenoides (yellow) that are antioxidants preventing oxygen damage to chlorophyll molecules in the presence of light.¹ The colour we see is not the colour absorbed by the pigment but the colour that is reflected by that pigment. So what colours new red leaves?

It seems that the answer to the interesting red leaf puzzle lies in the concentration of a water-soluble red to purple pigment called **Anthocyanin** in newly emerging growth. This seems to occur because abundant carbohydrates stranded within the plant by the sudden fire-loss of foliage favour Anthocyanin formation.²

Studies of the **benefits of having extra Anthocyanin in new leaves** of re-sprouting eucalypts and of other genera suggest that it provides significant **protection against being eaten by insects** (insect herbivory).³ Such protection would be very important when competition for scarce plant resources intensifies after a fire especially as the local insect populations re-establish. The red pigment protects against insect munching in three ways:

- A red leaf is less easily seen than a green one by photoreceptive foliage-eating insects; some species of psyllids however do prefer the red leaves
- Insect camouflage is reduced by the red colour so making potential leaf chewers more obvious to their predators
- The higher concentrations of Anthocyanin and other phenolic compounds in new red leaves may directly deter insects because of their astringent taste⁴

The second advantage in having red new leaves is that **the colour provides protection from sun damage**. Red leaves strongly reflect excess near-infrared light thus markedly reducing structural damage to the developing chloroplasts needed to re-establish photosynthesis.⁵ This is a significant protective role for plants that have no shade in a burnt plant community. Anthocyanin may also provide UV-B protection but recent research suggests this may be less important than once thought.⁶

The attractive new foliage doesn't stay red to purple for long. As more leaves grow and mature the extra Anthocyanin is metabolised, chlorophyll that is required for photosynthesis becomes the dominant pigment and the leaves gradually turn a familiar green.



Stunning red foliage on *Eucalyptus sieberi*, Mount Wilson, February 2020. Photo Mark Baker. (See colours in March Hut News online at www.bluemountains.org.au)

Endnotes:

- ¹ Raven, P.H., Evert, R.F. & Eichhorn, S.E. 2005, *Biology of Plants*, W.H. Freeman & Co, New York; p.121
- ² Robinson, R. 1936, 'Formation of Anthocyanins in Plants', *Nature*, 137, pp.172-173
- ³ Karageorgou, P. & Manetas, Y. 2006 'The importance of being red when young: anthocyanins and the protection of young leaves of *Quercus coccifera* from insect herbivory and excess light', *Tree Physiology*, 26(5):pp.613-621
- ⁴ Karageorgou, P., Bushmann, C. & Manetas, Y. 2008, 'Red leaf color as a warning signal against insect herbivory: Honest or mimetic', *Flora*, 203 (8), pp. 648-652
- ^{5,6} Gould, K.S. 2004, 'Nature's Swiss Army Knife: the Diverse Protective Roles of Anthocyanins in leaves', *Journal of Biomedicine and Biotechnology*, 5, pp.314-320

How do birds cope with rain?

Christine Davies

During a weekend of torrential rain in February, I was able to observe a family of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos. The female has a white beak and grey eye ring. The male's beak is grey and he has a pink eye ring which makes his eye more prominent.

The male spent the weekend, and the female a great part of it, in the Banksia nearest to the house, tearing the Banksia follicles (or "cones") apart to feed, or resting. While they rested they had a way of posing so that the rainwater ran down their backs; possibly they slept during this time. I couldn't see but could hear Junior who was nearby, calling loudly and incessantly.

On Monday morning, what I thought was a sorry looking sight greeted me. Both adults looked very bedraggled, their head feathers ruffled and their wing and tail feathers spread, posed in an unnatural position. Then I realised that the rain had stopped and the birds were "hanging out to dry", their bodies exposed to the sunshine beginning to filter through the mist.

The sun came out and the female and Junior flew away. After a while the male flew in the direction of her call. I have seen and heard them every day in the week since and have seen the male feed on Hakea and Banksia seeds, sometimes carrying a Banksia "cone" away.

A poem for the land and the people of the land

I am Kalang, 21, born of the Blue Mountains, and I have a message for fellow people of the land. The past months we have shared I will never forget. I have seen places of my childhood in flames. Pages of my story-book have been ripped out. But there is more to come in this never ending story. The rain has done both harm and good. So, we must share the feelings of the moment. We must use them as our fuel for inspiration and our reservoir for action.

I wrote this poem as I departed for the cold shores of Scandinavia, on a university exchange. I left with heartache, but with the knowledge that there are many caretakers left behind.

Listen for the black cockies' cry, feel the mountain mists and build your strength for what is ahead.

For mighty Kosi, the waters of Kowmung, Colo and Grose, for Blue Gum, for Kanangra and dear old Kedumba and so much more. For the people that treasure them and the people that don't.

Fern-fanned and fossil-fuelled,
A careless chaos, not a blaze of glory,
A flashback to the birth of the world,
This forest funeral, this charcoal story,

It's yours, it's mine, this cremation nation,
Where calls of "We didn't start the fire!"
Echo 'round the concrete trees,
"At least they don't burn! It isn't so dire!"

Hazy reality, the smoke in the Big Smoke,
Is it all part of THE PLAN?
A Carbon Emissions Relocation Scheme:
'We move your footprint, New York to Japan!'

Holidays and horror days go hand in hand,
Battles are fought with red trucks and hoses,
See the face of a child, weary and masked,
Now we welcome the boats, encourage the 'dozers.

Yes, courage, survival, these things we excel,
Take pride in the people with melted black boots
Who come home to their family with little to say,
Exhaustion is endless, there's no time for disputes.

Trapped on the beach with that unearthly glow,
We're eager to ask and afraid to know,
When will it rain? When does it end?
Will there be any seeds to sow?

There's despair in waiting and aftermath fury,
Billions gone, in the blink of Scott's eye.
Yet I see it all, past tears and the lies,
This forest funeral in cricket match disguise.

What does it mean for all that is sacred?
Those places of birth and places of worth,
Whose rivers run dry,
Whose forests have fallen and lost their great girth.

"The bush will grow back!" Well-wishers exclaim,
They cry and they hope, believe it is true.
Know that it's changed, the dawn chorus is hushed,
Less busy, less chatter, the ants do not queue.

Now is YOUR time. Make some noise, make it loud!
Dress to impress in Hawaiian cricket gear,
Get ready for a day in the sun, make it count,
And tell them the words they don't wish to hear.

Please, tell your stories, in protest or praise,
How the bush gardens burnt. Whose home you have saved.

The words of warning swallowed by flames.
How you hugged that koala 'cos her country's been razed.

Our canvas of land, it's charred, somewhat bare,
It leaves room for the brush, a picture to paint,
A spark of creation with a kind guiding hand.
Please, take care of our country, heal, stay grand.

Kalang Kedumba Jones
January 2020

A Timeline for the Upper Blue Mountains:

Members' observations

Robin Murray: I saw the first Plumbago Blue butterfly for the year outside the Orient Hotel Springwood yesterday 28th Jan. 2020. I thought you might be interested in the previous years :- 28 -1-2020 : 1 - 1-2019 : 27 - 1 2018 : 10 -5 - 2017. This is the butterfly I used to associate with March.

Peter Ridgeway & Stephanie Chew: Greater Gliders which are usually solitary are seen pairing in April-May in the Megalong Valley.

Peter Ridgeway & Stephanie Chew: Fireflies emerge and are seen in gullies and some ridgetops, concurrently at Wentworth Falls and Springwood, from the first week of December through to Christmas or occasionally New Year.

Christine Davies: 8/2/20 Y-T Black Cockatoos feeding juvenile; 20/2/20 Huntsman spider with spiderlings emerging from egg sac; 21/2/20 Grey Butcherbird feeding juvenile.

"A Timeline for the Upper Blue Mountains", compiled by Jim Smith can be found on the Society's website www.bluemountains.org.au - "Resources", "Flora and Fauna Timeline". Please send your observations to Jim Smith, 65 Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls 2782.

The Great Grose Weed Walk—Autumn 2020

This volunteer program encourages everyone to join in and protect this precious area by helping to stop the spread of weeds. All are welcome. The Autumn Events schedule is now out! This year we are going to be conducting a smaller than expected calendar of events due to the bushfires. Download a copy of the autumn program at

<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/hutnews/2003-great-grose-weed-walk-autumn-2020-brochure.pdf>

Welcome to new members

Clare McNamara
Heather Knight
Eleanor Ward

What's in a name? That which we call a fire, by any other name ... — Andy Macqueen

It's unfortunate that bushfires are usually named after the places they start. Those places get a black name ever after, however special they may be. Perhaps the State Mine deserved its fiery appellation, but most of our Blue Mountains wildfires seem to defame wonderful, innocent places that most people hadn't previously heard of.

Take the Green Wattle Creek Fire. Green Wattle Creek is in a very remote part of the southern Blue Mountains. I first went there in December 1966. I was walking from Kanangra to Katoomba by a very circuitous route with three friends. It was the most endearing spot I encountered on the trip. As I recorded in my journal, we camped on a "flat grassy campsite, with tall, slender blue gums" amidst the "quietness and serenity of nature". In the morning we were woken by "a menagerie of bird calls" and found "fresh animal tracks of great variety in the sand along the creek".

Green Wattle Creek won't be at all like that now, especially as it was hit by fire in 1997/98 and by severe post-fire flooding in 2006/07. It may recover completely, but its reputation won't. Everyone now knows of Green Wattle Creek and its awful associations—including the death of two firefighters—but no-one has any idea where it is or how exceptional it is.

The other huge fire in the southern Blueys this season was the Kowmung Fire. Another wonderful place defamed. Only a few weeks before the fire started, I was on the river doing a weed survey with a party of Friends of the Colo. It was bloody hot, but magic all the same. The dawn chorus was extraordinary, and there were platypus in the pool near our camp.

Don't get me started about the Grose Valley. The place has been so often associated with the name of fire and with the ardent debates that have arisen, that its unique cultural heritage is in danger of being wiped out in the crossfire. As far as I know none of the conflagrations named "Grose Valley Fire" actually started in the valley: they started on the perimeter or further afield. A gross insult indeed.

Then there's Gaspers Mountain. Oh dear. In my "Wayfaring in Wollemi" I wrote a lot about various people's doings at that basalt feature at the centre of the Wollemi. Despite a common belief that it was first occupied by a reclusive Bob Gosper, it was claimed much earlier by the Laycock family of Putty—who of course were far from the first themselves. The Aboriginal

people called the mountain "Uraterer". So we might really have had the "Uraterer Fire", though that would've been tricky as no-one is quite sure how to pronounce it.

Gaspers Mountain is far from the highest place in the Wollemi but, ironically, it became famous by the fact that its top was cleared for grazing and therefore offered wonderful views. It's an inholding.

Snowy Dubois, who owned the mountain for a while, told me that everyone who went there "sort of fell in love with the place". When government geologist Joseph Carne visited in 1903, researching the volcanics of the region, he was moved to wax lyrical about such "veritable oases in a desert of sandstone". The next year, the eccentric wandering journalist cum phrenologist Cecil Poole was so impressed that he was inspired to write an extraordinarily patriotic poem. It was published in *The Bulletin* soon afterwards.

In 1931 the legendary bushwalker Max Gentle described the mountain as "the throne of the everlasting hills", offering him "the most expansive cyclorama of [his] life". In 1992, a young Sue Morrison's outlook on the bush was transformed by her journey to the mountain, and she subsequently became a conservation activist, well-known in Consoc. I too have great memories of walks to the mountain, approaching from different directions.

With all those accolades we surely do the place a disservice by associating it with a catastrophic fire. It wasn't the mountain's fault that the lightning struck there.

But wait a minute! The lightning didn't strike there at all! The fire started from a strike about five kilometres to the west, in the headwaters of a creek called Running Stream. It was initially called the Running Stream Fire, but was changed to the Gaspers Mountain Fire when confusion arose over another place called Running Stream, up the highway from Capertee. People living in that area might have been blackened unduly (though a few weeks later they had to endure a different fire).

Close to the ignition point is a partly overgrown airstrip put in by the Army in 1963 during massive training exercises. The exercises continued for several years as part of the training for Vietnam. The ignition may have occurred precisely where, in 1966, a company of soldiers pretending to be Viet Cong built defences against other companies practising for their Vietnam deployment.

(Continued on page 9)



View of Tayan Pic from Gaspers Mountain

What's in a name? (Continued from page 8)

The story's in my book. I have wandered around there and tripped over wire and other remnants. So how about "War Games Fire"?

Also very close to the ignition point is an obscure volcanic feature named "Gospers Nob Neck" by Joseph Carne. It appears on his 1908 map. The name never stuck, but "Gospers Nob Neck Fire" would have been an interesting title indeed.

Call it what you like though, we can't escape the sadness. Far from being unburnt for 50 or 60 years (as one newspaper article stated until I suggested to the journalist that she get her facts right), the area around Gospers has burnt too much. There was another huge Gospers Mountain Fire back in 93/94. Then it was burnt again by the Wollemi Complex Fire of 2002/03. Then yet another extensive fire—the Girribung Creek Fire—went through in 2013/14.

We explored much of the Girribung fireground a few months after it and were struck by the apparent scarcity of wildlife. In one delightful exception, not far from Gospers Mountain, we were lying on our backs in the moonlight when we were treated to the sight of a greater glider in a tree above us.

And now it's all burnt again. I wonder how that glider got on.



Exploring the Girribung Creek Fireground in 2014.
It just burnt again, fourth time in 26 years.

The venerable tree on the footpath deserves life Christine Perrers

You don't believe in euthanasia, do you?
We will not euthanise the tree. It is a living force like all of us.
We are not having our lives stanchied.

You are of a venerable age, are you not?
Your family looks after you.
That tree is a venerable age,
and I am looking after it.

My friend had a Scottish Presbyterian relative and knows
the Scots have reverence for longevity.
Your family would not cut you down.

(Idea/thoughts for this poem from a friend, Judy Kelly)

Correction: Valerie Lhuede, referred to in the obituary to Jim Barrett as "the late" in February Hut News, is, in fact, in good health. Hut News regrets this error and thanks the readers who drew this to our attention.

You can become a member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society

- **Post** this Application Form with your cheque or money order to: Blue Mountains Conservation Society, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls, NSW 2782, **OR**
- **Join online** at: www.bluemountains.org.au

(Use capitals please—even for email address)

Name(s) 1.
2.
3.

Address:
.....PC

Phone(s)

Email

I/We agree to support the aims and objectives of the Society as set out on reverse side of this membership application:

Please sign if named above.

Signature(s) 1.
2.
3.

MEMBERSHIP FEES (please circle one item)

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

Household \$40 Household Concession \$30

Corporate (negotiable)

Membership (circled above) \$

Donation (tax deductible) \$

Bushwalkers: please add
\$20 per walker per annum. \$

TOTAL AMOUNT \$.....

Send my copy of Hut News by

Please tick box ☐ mail ☐ internet only

Would you like to be involved in any of the following activities or working groups? (Please underline):

Land use/development issues; Environmental Education; Threatened species issues; Website and social media; Plant nursery assistance; Bushcare; Publicity/photography; Water quality/sourcing studies; Administration;

ENQUIRIES: Phone 02 4757 1872

Email: membership@bluemountains.org.au

A BEQUEST: Please remember us in your Will

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

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community organisation working to achieve the preservation and regeneration of the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains. The Society believes that World Heritage status provides an opportunity for local community members to become custodians of the unique biodiversity and scenery of the Blue Mountains.

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

The Aims and Objectives of the Society are to:

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

For information about our **PLANT STUDY GROUP** and **TING (Thursday Interpretive Nature Group)** Go to our website www.bluemountains.org.au and click on "Activities"

Women and men of the past built the foundations of modern-day Blue Mountains environmentalism. Their stories can inspire us.

It's our turn now!

By Christine Davies

6. Dot Butler (1911-2008)

Dot Butler was one of the most outstanding figures of 20th century bushwalking in NSW. Her habit of bushwalking barefoot is still carried on by members of her family.

She was a great supporter of conservation, campaigning for National Park status for the Greater Blue Mountains, the Myall Lakes and many other natural wonders of Australia. She worked with the Colong Committee in the Save The Rainforest campaign.

Much information about Dot Butler is obtained in an obituary written by Anne McLeod for the Sydney Morning Herald in 2008 and Australian Geographic article written by Gillian Cootes in 2018. Dot Butler was honoured by Anne McLeod and others in the Blue Mountains Conservation Society seminar,

"Women Pioneers of Conservation", held at Wentworth Falls in 2016.

McLeod notes that Dot Butler was introduced to mountaineering by her contemporary Marie Byles. In 1936 Dot, together with Katoomba resident Eric Dark, made the first ascent of Crater Bluff, a difficult climb, in Warrumbungle National Park. Gillian Cootes writes that "As was her habit, Dot climbed in the lead, taking up the rope and finding something to tie it to: they had no pitons or rock bolts".

Dot Butler was one of only two women among "The Tigers", a group within the membership of the Sydney Bushwalkers who loved marathon weekend walks. Dot walked barefoot because she believed that shoes can ruin women's posture. Presciently, Dot reportedly said "I think the future for Australians will be in regeneration. We have to try to repair the damage we've done to the country".

In her obituary to Dot Butler, Anne McLeod writes that in later life, Dot Butler became partners with bushwalker and conservationist Alex Colley, who lived to the age of 104. She also mentions that the three of Dot's children who predeceased her were all lost to the forces of nature. Sadly, that included her daughter Wendy who drowned in the upper reaches of the Kowmung River.



Dot Butler climbing
Crater Bluff in 1936

The joy of Nature revives our spirits Christine Davies

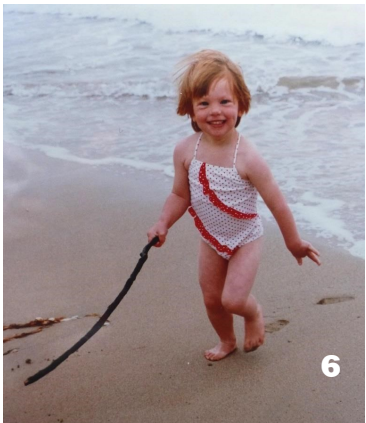
Some Blackheathens used to complain if the summer temperatures went above 22 degrees, and hot nights were rare. But this season's unnatural heatwaves (with temperatures in the 30s) and drought and dust storms and fire and smoke became a part of our lives. I had no idea how depressed I was feeling.

Our beautiful Grose Valley burned, some of it reduced to scorched earth which will take years to recover. What happened to all the lyrebirds who sang in the valley on winter mornings? The bushland near my home escaped the fire. I kept the bird bath full of clean water and watched the little birds crowding around it.

The rains came and during the first deluge I had the company of a family of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos.

One morning I opened the laundry door and heard a lyrebird singing and, the next day, a male whipbird called and his mate answered. These are unusual visitors. A flock of Gang Gangs passed through—I hadn't seen them here for years.

On a cool overcast day I looked out the window and noticed lots of movement. As I watched, there were birds of different species criss-crossing the sky, going somewhere or moving between trees. I went outside to watch some more and heard bird song from every direction. Suddenly the depression lifted. I realised that, in those awful months, all this activity had been missing. Now the world around me was reawakening. And I felt so happy!



4. Eurobodalla district and surrounds

The residents of bushfire affected tourist regions should visit each other's stamping grounds on recreational trips in 2020. Here are some impressions of a February 2020 trip through a region with plenty of tourist accommodation intact.

Approaching the Eurobodalla Local Government Area from Nowra or Clyde Mountain, there are many burnt areas but there is epicormic growth on the gums and, in some places, green Burrawang cycads below. After recent rain, the cattle pastures look very lush.

The villages around Murrumbidgee National Park have generally been saved. Bawley Point



residents are still having their lawns mowed by Eastern Grey Kangaroos. While the waves crash and foam around Kioloa Beach and Brush Island, the dune vegetation provides a dull green backdrop. Volunteers are planting new shrubs beside Durras Lake.

The tourist meccas of Central Tilba, Tilba Tilba and Bodalla are trading their usual attractive wares. So is Mogo, unashamed of its fire scars. In Eurobodalla National Park, the pelicans float on Lake Corunna with multiple shades of green on the slopes behind.

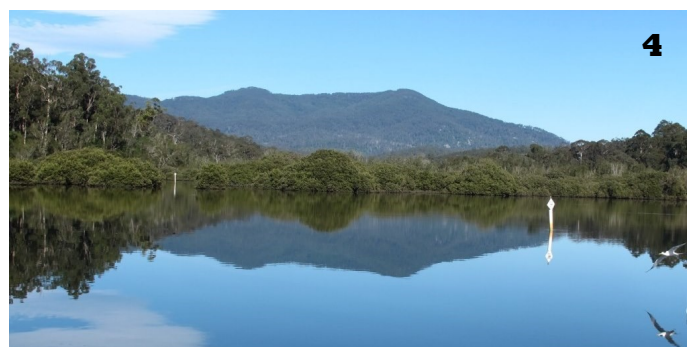
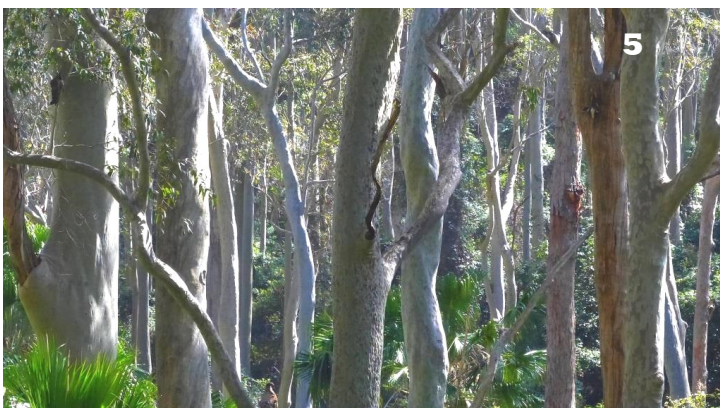
The full Blue Trail series is being added at simplyaustralia.net

Images: (Clockwise from top right) 1. Spotted Gum (*Corymbia maculata*) in Murrumbidgee National Park, about 500 years old.

2. New Zealand fur seal – the type that feature in the Montague Island “swimming with the seals” tours. 3. 100-year-old electric powered launch tours the shores of Wagonga Inlet.

4. the big mountain overlooking Wagonga Inlet, Narooma. 5. forest of Spotted Gums.

6. Catherine at Surf Beach. 7. Silhouettes at sunrise on coast near Batemans Bay. 8. Coastal rocks between Narooma and Bermagui. Photographs 2,3,4,8 by Christine Davies. Photographs 1,5,6,7 by Geoff Dernee.



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. Check www.bluemountains.org.au for updates.

Saturday Walks driver reimbursement: *In an effort to ensure that car drivers are adequately compensated for the use of their vehicles a driver reimbursement policy applies* (Check www.bluemountains.org.au Saturday Walks page for details)

- Mar 7 **Victory Track**, an old favourite. Leader **Eddie 47842691**. Meet Faulconbridge Stn. CP North Side, 8.30am. 12k, Gr3. Map Springwood.
- Mar 14 **Long Angle Rd. Winmalee to Warrimoo**. Leader **Harold 0409010737**. Meet Springwood stn. CP. 8.30am. 5k, GR 3, Map Springwood.
- Mar 21 **Faulconbridge Point**. Leader **Geoff. 0497 63 8033 or 47589113**. Meet Faulconbridge stn. CP. Northern Side. 8.30am. 10k, GR 3, Map Springwood.
- Mar 28 **Lawson and Hazelbrook Falls**. Leader **Harold 0409010737**. Meet Wentworth Falls stn. CP, 8.30am, 10k, Gr3, Map Katoomba.
- April 4 **Mt Victoria Tracks**. Start Pulpit Rock, then Sunset Rock, Bushrangers Cave, Rienits Pass, Mt Piddington, Ross Cave back to Pulpit Rock. Some scrambling. Leader **Alice 47393086 or 0425 738 7669**. Meet WFCP. 8.30am, 9.5k, GR3, Maps Mt Wilson and Hartley.

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

- Mch 9 **Terrace Falls Hazelbrook**. Streams, Forests and Waterfalls. Some steep rough sections, steepes and 4 creek crossings. Aprox. 6Km. Hazelbrook Station Car Park South Side Next to Vet Clinic 8-45am Car pool to start. Lyn Bevington Ph 0432 352 850. Grade 3.
- Mch 16 **Mount Twiss, Linden**. Approximately 8 km. Linden Station north side 9am, car pool. Maurice 4739 3942. Grade 2.
- Mch 23 **Porters Pass, Blackheath**. Circuit walk from Blackheath Station. 8 km approx.. Blackheath Station car park 8.45 am. Barby 0416 109 141. Grade 3.
- Mch 30 **South Lawson Waterfalls, Lawson**. Circular walk to Adelina, Junction, Federal and Cateract Falls. Lawson, top of Honour Avenue south of station, 8.35 am. Keith 0411 162 345. Grade 2.
- Apr 6 **Rigby Hill and Walls Lookout**. Off Bells Line of Road, approx. 4 km. Mount Victoria Station 9.50 am. Car pool fare \$5. Maurice 4739 4942.
- Apr 13 **Easter Monday no set walk**. However all those who would like to walk please meet at Wentworth Falls Stockyard Car Park at 8-30am and make a collective decision on where to walk on the day.

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

- Mar 12 **Elphinstone Plateau, Katoomba. Great views into Megalong Valley**. Meet Katoomba Station Car Park 9.30am. Leader Keith 0411 162 345. Carpool. Take lunch. Grade 2.
- Mar 19 **Minnie-ha-ha Falls, Katoomba**. Meet Katoomba Station Car Park 9.00am. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. Carpool. Take lunch. Grade 2
- Mar 26 **Bus trip to Nan Tien Buddhist Temple, Wollongong**. Meet rear Westpac Bank, Springwood 9.15am. Book and pay Tracy \$15 on 0434 362 611. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. A reasonably priced vegetarian meal is available at the temple or bring your own. Grade 1.
- Apr 2 **Nature Trail, Wentworth Falls**. Interesting level terrain at first then lots of steps back to the hut. Meet Stockyard Car Park, Wentworth Falls 9.30am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Carpool. Take lunch. Grade 2.
- Apr 9 **Du Fours Rocks and Chinaman's Hat, Mount Wilson**. Meet rear Westpac Bank, Springwood 9.00am. Pick up along the highway. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. **Bookings with Maurice essential**. Carpool \$8. Take lunch. Grade 2.

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

Blue Mountains Fauna Inventory: What native animals live near you?

The Blue Mountains are home to an amazing array of birds, mammals, frogs, reptiles, and fish. 455 different species have been recorded in the Blue Mountains local government area.

The Blue Mountains Fauna Project was launched in February. To learn more about what native animals live near you check out the **Blue Mountains Fauna Inventory** which lists all the species and where they are likely to be found based on past records which can be downloaded from Blue Mountains City Council's website <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/bushland-management/native-animals>

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