



## Maintaining vigilance

No doubt you have read about some of the positive impacts of our reduced footprint on the Earth in a largely locked down world – the largest number of nests of rare leatherback sea turtles in two decades on Thai beaches, cities with greatly diminished pollution levels so that residents can see surrounding mountains for the first time in their lives, cleaner waterways, reduced greenhouse emissions globally and international flights reduced by 96%.

Despite these encouraging breathers for the planet, this is not a time for complacency.

As the Australian Conservation Foundation write on their website "We are living in an emergency, but that's not an excuse for our government to rush through important policy without proper consideration or consultation".

Our vigilance is needed because many critical projects are being rushed. This is an important time to write emails and submissions, phone politicians and participate in online training and protests.

Before writing this piece I visited a range of environment and climate change focussed websites and they all had calls for action on vitally important issues. Many of them can be found on the BM Con Soc climate change page <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/climate-change.shtml> Please visit some of these sites and choose actions you are able to take.

Two important virtual actions coming up in May are a Stop Adani rally and the School Climate Strike.

Due to public pressure over 60 companies have to date refused to work with Adani. Current activist actions against the Adani Coal mine are pressuring contractors, insurance companies and haulage companies to follow suit. Marsh, a major insurance broker, are looking for a company who will insure the coal mine.

You can help. Go to <https://www.stopadani.com/marsh> Also, at this link you'll find information about the online rally Stop Adani are organising for 21<sup>st</sup> May to coincide with Marsh's Annual General Meeting to demand that Marsh does not broker insurance for Adani!

In May the school strike for climate is going ahead as a global online protest. The organisers say it will be an opportunity to collectively create a vision for the future, one that leaves no one behind, a visioning of the things we need to stop and the things we need to start to set us in the right direction. The protest will include hearing from those affected by the climate crisis and the COVID pandemic, making sure our politicians hear our message loud and clear. Also this incredible group of people have devised a curriculum to provide a forum where people can connect and learn about climate justice, and plan their online climate strike. More information at <https://www.schoolstrike4climate.com/may15>

**And in the words of poet John O'Donohue:**

*May the nourishment of the earth be yours,  
may the clarity of light be yours,*

*may the fluency of the ocean be yours,  
may the protection of the ancestors be yours.*

## From the Editor

Thank you for the opportunity to be editor of Hut News. I am only too aware that I have big shoes to fill. Christine not only did a sterling job but she maintained her unfailing effort for 24 years. So I wonder how best to carry the banner?

Here is a brief summary of my credentials. After completing my degree in Agricultural Science I taught science and then worked in community relations and communications for such organisations as the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Australian Museum, the Royal Botanic Gardens and Sydney Water. During that time I also completed a graduate diploma in marketing. I was responsible for, among other things, editing and publishing numerous magazines, annual reports and brochures for these organisations. Before I retired I also worked as a consultant in the same field for construction companies, often preparing newsletters for internal and external use.

I grew up in Faulconbridge and have since spent over half my life in the Blue Mountains. My mother, a former councillor of Blue Mountains City Council, successfully campaigned to prevent Clutha from mining here so the Blue Mountains and its conservation are in my blood.

While I'm unpacking boxes I've been gathering my thoughts about the newsletter and its design. There is much to value in the style and content of previous editions and the trick will be to strengthen those while adding some new ideas. I would like to hear what thoughts are out there among members.

And on that subject I'm introducing 'Letters to the Editor'. I'd love to hear members' news, thoughts, ideas and criticisms and will publish a selection of them. Why not?

Now and again I will contact members to ask about their interests and backgrounds with a view to publish profiles with photos, only if the subjects are willing, of course.

And on the topic of photos, let's see them. Have you been able to snap some moment, some phenomenon or aspect of natural beauty that you would like to share?

Another new item will be an 'Environment News Roundup'. While such news may be taking a back seat at the moment, we can't afford to forget the extreme problems that face not only our beloved Blue Mountains but our planet. They will endure far beyond this current crisis. Might there be a link between the two issues of COVID-19 and climate change?

Please write to me at [susan@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:susan@bluemountains.org.au), send me your news, your photos or just tell me what you would like to see in Hut News. If you want your thoughts published label your email as 'Letter to the Editor'. I look forward to hearing from you and preparing the June issue.



**Susan Crick**  
**Editor, Hut News**  
[susan@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:susan@bluemountains.org.au)

### **COVID-19 is impacting all of our lives.**

To remove one small concern, the Society is extending all memberships by three months.  
That is, no memberships will be due for renewal for the time being.

For further information, please contact our Membership Secretary, Ross Coster, on  
m. 0418 462 576      [membership@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:membership@bluemountains.org.au)

## Breaking News

The Society has received a community information letter from the National Parks and Wildlife Service about a proposed program of works for the next three years. The works are part of their *Improving Access to National Parks Program*.

Key projects for the Upper Blue Mountains are the Grand Cliff Top Walk and Gordon Falls Lookout accessibility upgrade. Comments are invited before works start in June this year.

For further information please go to Society's website [bluemountains.org.au](http://bluemountains.org.au).

## Letter to the Editor

### Protecting the environment

I'm currently scanning early Society newsletters in preparation for them to be added to the website. This is from our September 1970 newsletter -

*"... we are forewarned not to let undesirable exploitation of a resource or an environment proceed to a stage where either a commercial undertaking or a Crown Agency is 'dug in'."*

Fifty years ago! Have things changed? Yes, sadly they're worse.

Wave after wave of threats roll in. Many have a grievous side effect of harming our environment or community with an ebb tide that reduces resources tasked with maintaining its health.

Our past campaigns and submissions webpages detail these threats. And current ones grace our home page. It's a never-ending story. Threats prowl in the undergrowth of inquiries, proposals and reviews.

Our submissions are magnificent. They provide fact and supporting material, they offer solutions and justify reasons, and they detail our beliefs. But is this enough in this age of blatant disinformation where false or misleading information is spread deliberately to deceive? Are the days of decent debate and truth in decline?

I can't and won't accept this, but we have a fight on our hands. I now support Extinction Rebellion and yet a few years ago I would have reeled against it.

Maybe, just maybe, the dark politics will bring out the best in us.

**Alan Page.**

## Hut News Deadline

The **DEADLINE** for the next issue is

**16 MAY 2020**

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## Planning panel rejects dump site in former Bell sand quarry

Blue Mountains Conservation Society was one of 470 objectors to a proposal to dump truckloads of clean fill from Sydney construction sites into a system of disused sand quarries a short distance north-west of the Newnes Junction railway station buildings. The trucks would have entered the location by the Great Western Highway, Darling Causeway and Sandham Road, Bell.

On 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2020, it was reported that the Western Regional Planning Panel, a body appointed by the NSW Government, had rejected the proposal unanimously. The applicant has six months to appeal but would need a very good reason.

In making its findings, the Panel stated that the dumping “would not be in the public interest having regard to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. It also found that there would be adverse impacts on Newnes Plateau Shrub Swamps and Temperate Highland Peat Swamps on Sandstone in the Wollangambe River catchment.



Our Society had argued that the area had become stable since the sand mining ceased and it was undesirable that this sector of the Wollangambe catchment suffer additional pressures after an accidental discharge of large quantities of coal fines into the river through an accident at the nearby Clarence Coal Mine in 2015. Rectification of damage caused by that accident has so far been entirely independent of the care of the former sand mining sites.

We can only hope the Planning Panel’s finding will prevail after 14 months of cooperation between our Society, the residents in both Blue Mountains and Lithgow LGAs potentially affected by the dumping and other interested parties such as Mount Wilson entrepreneur Peter Pigott who launched a highly informative media campaign against the proposal.

© Don Morison



# Flowering plants of the upper Blue Mountains

A few weeks ago Ian Olsen sent me a valuable list of flowering plants in the Upper Blue Mountains. The list was compiled from a decade of observations of plants in flower from Wentworth Falls to Newnes Plateau.

Ian's list is so very important because ongoing observation and recording over time provides information to support the battle against decline and loss of our treasured "backyard". Anecdotal evidence doesn't cut it.

The list is amazing in that it contained 280 species. He later started adding the times of year when seed pods or seeds were observed.

I've added common names where known, and have transposed Ian's list of months into a Gantt Chart – see an example below.

A webpage was then created for it - <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/flowering.shtml>

Our flora and fauna are being affected by climate change. Personal local observations will not only alert us to changes in behaviour, and loss of susceptible species but also arrival of new species – not all native. And new native species can thrive at the expense of existing species, Yellow-tailed Cockatoos being a prime example.

On a broader level whole vegetation communities are also changing, especially the wet sclerophyll forests, rainforests and wetlands. These together make up less than 10% of the GBMWH<sup>1</sup>.

The dry sclerophyll forests, that make up 85% of the GBMWH<sup>2</sup>, are threatened by climate change and severe bushfires. Parts may transform into semi-arid woodlands currently only found west of Cowra<sup>2</sup>.

Thank you Ian. I'm sure the list will prove it's worth in coming years.

## Native Plant Flowering Timetable

by Ian Olsen

From observations made from Wentworth Falls to Newnes Plateau from 2009 to 2017

Botanical Name	Common Name	Newnes Species	Retains Seeds	Flowering & Fruit & both											
				J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
<i>Acacia asparagoides</i>															
<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	Silver Wattle														
<i>Acacia decurrens</i>	Black Wattle														
<i>Acacia dorothea</i>	Dorothy's Wattle	Newnes													
<i>Acacia echinula</i>	Hedgehog Wattle	Newnes													
<i>Acacia elata</i>	Mountain Cedar Wattle														
<i>Acacia falciformis</i>	Broad-leaved Hickory														
<i>Acacia floribunda</i>	White Sally														
<i>Acacia hamiltoniana</i>	Hamilton's Wattle	Newnes													

© Alan Page

- <https://bmnature.info/veg-overview.shtml>
- [https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedSpeciesApp/VegFormation.aspx?formationName=Semi-arid+woodlands+\(shrubby+sub-formation\)](https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedSpeciesApp/VegFormation.aspx?formationName=Semi-arid+woodlands+(shrubby+sub-formation))

## Controlling foxes - how the Society is helping

The Society has contributed \$10,000 to a joint fox control program. I'm involved because I want our Society to be part of on-the-ground activities that benefit our wild native animals. Maybe you can help too.

Foxes are one of the biggest killers of Australian wildlife, and their numbers are increasing throughout both urban and rural landscapes. In fact I've seen them in the streets of Penrith late at night and they are widespread in our national parks.



(Photo thanks to ABC)

They are a major threat to the survival of native Australian fauna including numerous endangered and vulnerable species, particularly small ground dwelling mammals between 35 grams and 5.5kg and ground-nesting birds. Foxes also eat reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. They are mainly carnivorous and their food can include live prey, carrion and insects but also fruits and berries.

After the recent devastating bushfires, wildlife is under enormous pressure as animals move to unburned areas, only to find foxes ready to eat them.

Greater Sydney Local Land Services (LLS), in conjunction with National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC), and our Society (BMCS), are working on a fox control program for the Upper Blue Mountains.

The program is supported by funding from the Australian Government through the National Landcare Program. It focuses on the Upper Blue Mountains (Woodford to Mt Victoria) because these areas are affected by fires. They also include swamps, particularly delicate ecosystems that contain vulnerable animal species such as the Blue Mountains Water Skink.

After last summer's bushfires, NPWS will be conducting state-wide aerial vertebrate pest control programs to give wildlife a chance to recover in burnt areas. In the Upper Blue Mountains foxes will be targeted around Blue Mountain swamps.

Closer to towns, landholders and residents who participate in the program will be placing fox traps on private property at strategic locations. The Society's funding has paid for 40 traps, as well as infrared motion-detection cameras to observe fox (and other species) behaviour. Trapped foxes are euthanised and kept for future research, including stomach content analysis to find out what they have been eating.

A contractor will deliver the traps and cameras, and provide training to set the trap and use the camera using national standard guidelines and standard operating procedures.

If the trap host can't take a fox to be euthanised then the contractor will collect it. Two local veterinarians have offered to euthanise the animals for a nominal fee.

Perhaps you can help by hosting a trap. If you live near a swamp between Woodford and Mt. Victoria and are within 1 km of a bushfire affected area, have foxes visiting your property and would be willing to host a cage trap, let me know. We will add you to our list. Someone from the Fox Control Program will contact you.

To see what catching a fox involves, please watch this video: <https://bit.ly/2RD40Z2>

© **Ross Coster** ([ross@coster.com.au](mailto:ross@coster.com.au))

# Update from the Land Use Sub-committee

## **'Flora and Fauna Park' land clearing, Great Western Highway, Wentworth Falls**

The Society continues to follow up with Council about land clearing at the park site a year ago. We are also continuing to pursue reforms to the private certification system and the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act particularly to bring an end to 'zombie' (in perpetuity) development approvals.

The NSW Nature Conservation Council's annual conference in November 2019 resolved to write to the relevant ministers in support of our campaign. This followed a similar resolution at Local Government NSW's conference in October 2019, supporting the Blue Mountains City Council's letter to planning minister Rob Stokes in June 2019 seeking a 'sunset clause' on development approvals.

## **Katoomba Christian Convention (KCC) development, Cliff Drive Katoomba**

The KCC's proposed \$63 million development was refused by the Western City Planning Panel in December 2018. The proposed development included a new 3500 seat auditorium, new administration building incorporating a 500 seat dining hall, and new eco-lodges and chalets accommodating 390 guests.

The KCC had six months to lodge an appeal and did so in June 2019. As part of the appeal process, there was to be an on-site court conference in February 2020 for which Society representatives were preparing. However, the appeal was withdrawn before the conference. The KCC will now need to lodge a new development application if it still wants to re-develop the site.

## **Seniors living multi-unit development, Albion St Katoomba**

The Society wants to see the design of seniors housing developments improved to promote energy efficiency and sustainability, and to reduce environmental impacts. We recently lodged a submission on a proposed seniors development in Albion St, North Katoomba.

While we commended many of the sustainability aspects of this proposal, we argued that other aspects didn't meet the standards laid out in various government policies in terms of building orientation and window design to maximise passive solar heating, and landscape design to minimise energy and water consumption. We recommended improvements to the design and landscaping of the complex.

You can contact the Land Use sub-Committee at [landuse@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:landuse@bluemountains.org.au)

© Carolyn Williams and Angela Langdon

## **Gardens of Stone Visitors Map**

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

You can buy a map on the society's website at:  
[www.bluemountains.org.au/GoS\\_VisitorsMap.htm](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/GoS_VisitorsMap.htm)

# It's our turn now!

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

## 8. Mick Dark – a Champion of the Blue Mountains (1928-2015)

Mick Dark was a committed environmentalist and a highly active resident of the Blue Mountains community.

He was born in Katoomba in 1928 to novelist Eleanor Dark (nee O'Reilly) and Doctor Eric Dark, founder of the Doctor's Reform Society.

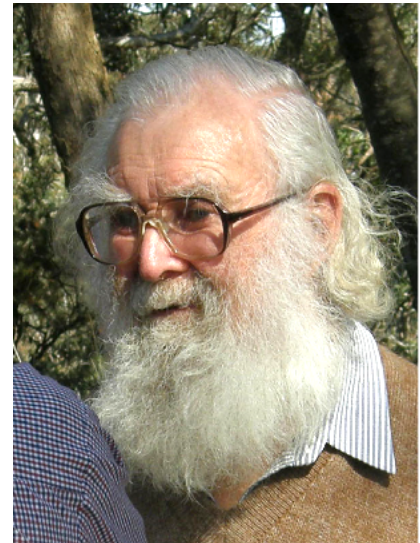
In the 1960s and 70s he was a member of the Colong Committee (now Colong Foundation for Wilderness). He was also President of the Lower and of the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Societies. These later joined to become Blue Mountains Conservation Society with Mick as an Honorary Life member. He was also a member of Greenpeace and the Australian Conservation Foundation.

In the 1970s, Mick was a leading voice in the campaign to preserve the historic area at Lapstone/Glenbrook known as the Spurline. The movement led to the creation of Darks Common, a public reserve. Thirty years later, he was one of six people arrested at the blockade protesting against the making of an action movie being filmed in the Grose Wilderness.

In 1989 he donated his parents' family home, Varuna, to the Australian public as a residential writers' centre. Its extensive gardens were established by his mother Eleanor Dark. It is now known as Varuna, the National Writer's House.

The annual Mick Dark Talk for the Future honours Mick's legacy. It is organised by Varuna and Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

In Mick Dark's obituary (Hut News, August 2015), Society member, Craig Linn, was quoted. He had talked about the time he and Mick were campaigning at polling booth near Lithgow to help save Tasmania's Franklin River from being dammed: *Mick showed enormous patience with a young fellow (who disagreed with them), pointing out the value and need for biological diversity if we are to have a land worth living in. To the young man's credit he listened, and while he wasn't entirely convinced you could see that he had started to think about the matter. This was Mick, always ready to take the time to discuss, promote, and campaign for the environment thus encouraging people to think about it, and on this particular day to vote for it.*



Craig Linn concluded: *I will remember Mick for his enormous generosity and knowledge of the Mountains; as a respected wise leader, who stood up for his beliefs, and who quietly, with strength of purpose and character, got things done.*

© Christine Davies

*above:* Mick Dark at Blue Mountains Conservation Society's 50th anniversary celebrations in October 2011. Photo by Alan Page.

*left:* Mick Dark was one of six people arrested at the Stealth blockade near Mount Hay to face the music at Katoomba Courthouse (2004).



# Blue Trail Village scenes No 1

## The *Eucalyptus oreades* stand, Katoomba Hospital precinct

Among the native trees found in the upper mountains, *Eucalyptus oreades* or Blue Mountains Ash is one with a most inspiring appearance and yet is especially vulnerable to large wildfires.



It is found in scattered areas along the Great Dividing Range. It is most common on western parts of the Blue Mountains range, particularly from Lawson to Bell, and on southern Newnes Plateau. Stands of *oreades*, in various stages of maturity flank major tourist areas including Leura Cascades and Radiata Plateau. .

In 1989 a stand of mature *Eucalyptus oreades* on railway land south of Katoomba Hospital was added to Blue Mountains Council's Register of Significant Trees. When the Great Western Highway was widened to four lanes early this century, this stand of endemic trees was protected by separating the eastbound and westbound carriageways

of the highway. In the final design, the westbound carriageway was effectively cantilevered in a section abutting the working lines of the railway. Nowhere else in the four lane sections of the highway has the design been so markedly modified to protect vegetation.

*Eucalyptus oreades* is described as especially vulnerable to large wildfires as trees lack a lignotuber and do not resprout from the trunk or higher branches. At about age 20 years the species develops a distinctive stocking of corky bark that provides some protection of the lower trunk during low intensity prescribed burns however.

In areas where construction and fire control activities will be widespread in future, stands of *Eucalyptus oreades* are among the more vulnerable natural assets.

(Many thanks to Margaret Baker and Ian Brown for advice about *Eucalyptus oreades*.)

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*above:* The Katoomba Hospital stand with Mount Solitary (Korrowal) in background.

*right:* *Eucalyptus oreades* at Pulpit Hill, near Radiata Plateau.

(Photos © Christine Davies)



# Submissions to the NSW Independent Bushfire Inquiry

Thanks to all who have already made a submission to this inquiry.

Please note that the deadline for submissions has now been extended to **Friday 22 May, 2020**.  
Please refer to the Society's website for how to make a submission if you are considering doing so.  
Personal submissions matter.

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



Photo thanks to Barbara Cameron Smith of *All Things Written*

**Do you own or know of a Wollemi Pine  
that was scorched or burnt  
by the recent fires?**

If so Margaret Baker would like to hear its story from you.  
Please contact her on: [emjaybaker@ozemail.com.au](mailto:emjaybaker@ozemail.com.au)



## 50th anniversary of our first newsletter

In June 1970, The Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society published "Newsletter No.1". It was a three page foolscap edition.

We'll be celebrating the 50th anniversary of our first newsletter in the June edition of Hut News.

The first newsletter will be reviewed by a long term Society member and the scanned document will be added to our online archive for you to read.

The second edition was published in September that year, and the third in December.

We'll be reviewing those as well in our June Hut News and adding them to our online archive.

**Alan Page**

## Birth notice

Eric and Marg of Narrow Neck, Katoomba, are delighted to announce the birth of thousands of offspring.

Although only a few centimetres in height, the new arrivals are healthy and look uncannily like their parents at that age.

Eric (*Banksia ericifolia*) and Marg (*Banksia marginata*) are more commonly known as Heath and Silver Banksia.

If you look past the hundreds of banksias lost in the bushfire on Narrow Neck, you will now see thousands on banksia seedlings growing near them. We wish them well on their journey.

**Alan Page**



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