

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

HUT NEWS

Nature conservation saves for tomorrow



Federal environmental law under attack

Madi Maclean
Senior Vice President

In September the federal government introduced changes to the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) which would hand over its project approval role to state governments under the guise of helping the post COVID recovery of the economy. The federal government did not even wait until the current review of the EPBC Act finished. This independent review is mandated to be held every ten years.

Independent federal role needs to continue

Environmental groups, including the society, have opposed delegating the approvals power to state governments because it would weaken the independent role of the federal government. It is federal environmental protections that stopped the Franklin River being dammed and protected the World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef from being drilled for oil.

The EPBC Act is focused on environmental protection. Its first objective is to “provide for the protection of the environment, especially matters of national environmental significance and conserve Australian biodiversity”. In contrast, the NSW government’s role in approving development projects is under the NSW planning law which has different and broader objectives.

The EPBC Act has the important function of approving development proposals which are likely to

have a significant impact on “matters of environmental significance”. These matters include world heritage, national heritage and threatened species and communities. So, in the Blue Mountains, the EPBC Act protection covers the values of our Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and national threatened species and ecological communities wherever they occur.

The Society’s aspiration for EPBC

Conservation groups, including this Society, have for years wanted the EPBC Act to be strengthened. Labor went to the last federal election in 2019 with a detailed proposal to do this, however they did not win government.

The current review of EPBC Act

This review began in 2019 and is led by Professor Graeme Samuel, a former chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. Thousands of submissions were submitted including one by the Society. Many submissions sought to strengthen the legislation to address the issues of our drying continent, the rapid extinctions of our native fauna and bushfires supercharged by climate change. As recently as last month submissions were still being added to the Review website.

In July the review panel released an interim report for discussion. However, the federal government cherry-picked bits of the review’s work and (cont. overleaf)

(from page 1) went ahead with changing the EPBC Act. Environment Minister, Sussan Ley, has promised more changes to the latter. The review seems to have been largely to tick the box.

What's next for the Bill

Labor, the Greens and some independent members of parliament all applied the government's amendments but it was not enough to stop the government's proposals passing in the lower house. The government gagged debate to push the bill through quickly. As we go to print, the government legislation still has to pass the Senate in early October. The outcome for the environment is unpredictable.

From the President

This month, I would like to express our sadness at the passing of Lachlan Garland and the gratitude we feel for his enormous contribution to the Society and natural environment of the Blue Mountains.

Lachlan fulfilled a number of roles including that of President in 2010-2011 and then again in 2019. During this time, he worked valiantly to protect Radiata Plateau and the recent campaign win there was a testament to his efforts. Lachlan was also the Membership Secretary for many years, helping the Society with important administrative work and increasing the number of supporters. Later, Lachlan took over as the National Parks Officer and was a committed and tireless worker on the Landuse sub-committee. It seems that there wasn't an area in which Lachlan didn't serve! Whether it be arranging events for members, writing to the Council about zombie development applications, doing site inspections of illegal clearing, or leading the charge at a rally opposing hunting in National Parks or an inappropriate Blue Mountains LEP, Lachlan was always there to advocate for the bush he loved.

Moreover, the Society was only one of a number of organisations that benefitted from Lachlan's generous and tireless efforts. He was a long-term volunteer in a number of Council/NPWS Bushcare and Swampcare groups and also co-ordinated the Jamison Creek Catchment Group. Lachlan served on the National Parks Regional Advisory Committee as the

Community Conservation representative attending meetings and site visits as well as pouring over management plans. This was an important role in which he advocated for the plants and animals who deserved their voice at the table when people talked about park usage.

Like others, I feel privileged to have worked alongside Lachlan. He will be remembered as a man who put his thought and passions into action in protecting the environment he loved.

Tara Cameron

About us

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society (BMCS) is an incorporated voluntary group of about nine hundred members helping to conserve the World Heritage Blue Mountains region. It was originally the Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society, formed in 1961.

We are governed by a management committee and much of our conservation work is undertaken by sub-committees and campaigns. We also have a native plant nursery, several bushwalking groups and a Bushcare group.

Become a member

You can become a member by

- Contacting our membership secretary, Ross Coster on 02 4739 2987
- Emailing Ross at membership@bluemountains.org.au
- Sign up on our web page www.bluemountains.org.au or scan this with your mobile:



Visit us

www.bluemountains.org.au

Facebook: Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Twitter: bmcnsnw



The Xanthorrhoeas (grass trees) are thriving on Narrow Neck. Photo by Alan Page

The Management Committee

There are 22 positions on the management committee and a full list of members occupying those positions can be found on the web page at bluemountains.org.au.

The principals are:

President: Tara Cameron, taracameron4@gmail.com,
0418 824974

Senior Vice President: Madi Maclean,
gos@bluemountains.org.au

Contact us

- By mail at PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls, NSW 2782
- By phone at 02 4757 1872 (leave a message)
- By email at bmcs@bluemountains.org.au

Society doings

Management Committee Monthly meeting, 19 September, 2020

The following is a summary of key topics and issues discussed at the normal monthly meeting:

- Planning day follow up

- The proposed wildlife rehabilitation centre at RSPCA facilities in Katoomba. The Society supports this.
- The Vice President, Madi Maclean presented a copy of the Destination Pagoda publication and the Committee agreed to support the printing of this and the accompanying Economic Study and brochure.
- A letter has been sent to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment urging the inclusion of the Katoomba airfield in the Blue Mountains National Park.
- A campaigner will be employed to assist the Society with the airfield campaign and the highway widening issue.
- The President will meet with Blue Mountains State MP Trish Doyle. She also spoke about her recent interview on Blue Mountains Radio.
- The tourism subcommittee presented its recommendations. Further consideration will be given to them at the next meeting.
- Lyndal Sullivan was thanked for her successful submission to BMCC about Senior Living North Katoomba where suggestions to make the proposed building more solar passive and for more appropriate plantings were agreed to.

Welcome to new members

A warm welcome to our new members who are as follows:

Felicity Legge
Elizabeth Walker
Katherine Chapman-Paton
Benjamin McGarrity
Miriam Norman
Chris Bruce
Jennifer Watt
Christian and Leo Harrington

The plant nursery

The nursery is now accepting plant orders via email and orders for collection in Katoomba can be placed by emailing plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com.

The nursery also attended the Blackheath markets. Volunteers are again working at the nursery on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings.

Raise your voice on climate change

Help stop more fossil fuel projects

Clare Power

'Help Stop more fossil fuel projects' is one of the actions included in our recently published climate action flyer. The Federal Government's announcement about a 'gas fired recovery' provides great impetus to become active in whatever way you can to oppose this retrograde step. Gas is a fossil fuel and we need to phase out its use. As Katherine Murphy explains: The Government's 'power plan is nothing but a gas-fuelled calamity' (The Guardian September 15th 2020).

Join campaigns to phase out existing fossil fuel projects and prevent new ones.

- There are a plethora of campaigns to join and you just need to choose the ones that resonate most with you and where you feel that your time and skills are best contributed. Consider joining a few campaigns so that you are on their mailing list and remain up to date on actions that you can participate in, which often might just be writing letters/ email, signing petitions or phoning politicians. Support material is usually provided to bring you up to speed when writing letters or submissions.
- The Society's website provides links to our own campaigns as well as a range of different organisations on our [climate change page](#). Some of these are Blue Mountains based such as [Grandparents for Climate Action Now](#), [Stop Adani Blue Mountain](#), and [Extinction Rebellion Blue Mountains](#).
- [Lock the Gate](#) are incredibly active in opposing coal seam gas, shale gas fracking and open cut mining in order to protect natural areas, water resources and food growing lands. They are a diverse coalition including farmers, traditional custodians, conservationists and urban residents.

Volunteer your time, skills or energy, and donations always help.

This is pretty self-evident. Any contribution of any form is always gratefully received.

Support youth-led campaigns

I am in awe of the clarity, commitment and organisational skills of the local, national and global youth-led campaigns. One of the striking features of their campaigns is their inclusivity and their focus on climate justice.

- At a local level, Macquarie Electorate Student Climate Activists (MESCA) are an independent student initiative that aims to reduce the impact of the community on its environment. MESCA organise climate change actions as well as facilitating communication between the wide range of climate change related groups in the area.
- The [School Strike 4 climate](#) actions on September 25 2020 used the theme 'Fund our Future, not Gas'. In the absence of being able to gather together in rallies, banner drops with message were displayed across Australia. Look at their website to see the range of activities happening and how you can support them.
- [Fridays for the Future](#) is an international coalition of youth climate activists whose name is based on Greta Thunberg's weekly school climate strikes in Sweden. As Greta says: No one is too small to make a difference.

Seize the moment! We need meaningful Climate Action Now.

Are you concerned about environmental damage or a development related activity in your neighbourhood but don't know who to contact?

The Society's Planning & Development Resource Kit may help you.

<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml>

Wildlife rehabilitation centre proposal

Lyndal Sullivan

During and after the 2019/2020 bushfires many injured wildlife were sent to Taronga Park Zoo for care by specialist staff. For many months dedicated local volunteers and zoo staff collected huge amounts of leaves for koalas alone and delivered them to the zoo.

This highlighted the need for a permanent facility closer to the origins and food sources of native animals without the transport difficulties of the Sydney location.

The RSPCA is looking into providing such a centre at its premises in Katoomba. This would be a significant expansion of its role beyond the care of domestic animals. It is exciting news for conservationists because it acknowledges the RSPCA's responsibilities for all animals and the challenges of addressing the needs of each.

Given the overwhelming response from the Blue Mountains community to assist wildlife after the fires, it is therefore no surprise that this 'pilot' proposal is gathering support.

The Katoomba RSPCA Manager Nick De Vos has stated in the Blue Mountains Gazette that the shelter will still cater for domestic animals. He said 'The RSPCA NSW is committed to maintaining the shelter for companion animals, and is exploring options that enable us to establish a facility that provides support to native wildlife in need. The RSPCA intends to continue to provide essential services to stray, lost, injured, neglected and at-risk animals and pet owners in the Blue Mountains community.'

However some people are understandably suspicious and are concerned that this may be another attempt by the RSPCA to close down the shelter.

Others are quite rightly asking how the traditional role of the RSPCA shelter can continue alongside this

proposed wildlife recovery area. How can each domestic and native animal be cared for in a safe stress free environment.

The RSPCA owns an area in Katoomba of over 50,000 square metres. It extends from Mort Street down to Katoomba Creek, over 420 m away. The shelter section is currently housed on a small area at the top of the slope (less than a quarter of the total). Below this there is a paddock over 50 metres from the woodland and swamp below. The woodland area has been lovingly restored by the RSPCA Landcare group over the last 11 yrs and would be an ideal location for 'recovering' wildlife.

Already all cats are housed in a large custom built 'cattery'. The dogs are currently in concrete 'pounds' however indoor facilities more than 100 m from the bushland are also a possibility. Indoor shelters for dogs are common in many cold European countries for climatic reasons and the Defence Forces at Holsworthy house their trained dogs in an indoor facility. Predator exclusion fencing for wildlife could be erected around the area near the bushland.

While more details are required, in principle it is an exciting development and will mean more wildlife can be rehabilitated closer to their origins, rather than them being sent to Taronga Zoo.

The Management Committee of the Society has discussed this and supports the proposal.

If you can give your support by talking to friends and/or writing to the Gazette that would be helpful too.

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

Ash

Cathy Cavanagh



This is the story of 'Ash', the third instalment of *The Death of Wombats* – but this is also a story of survival.

Ash was rescued after his mother was killed by a car on the Ganbenang Rd in the Kanimbla Valley. Zoe, who rescued him, moved the dead wombat to the side of

the road then carefully removed the tiny wombat from the pouch, bundled him up and took him to the local WIRES wombat carer Anna Culliton.

Anna remembers...*It was mid-January, the summer we will never forget. When Zoe arrived the air was thick with smoke and while we were talking, we were soon covered in ash. Weighing in at 1.080 kg. the joey had a soft velvet covering of ash coloured fur. So 'Ash' he is!*

He spent the next few weeks getting used to being in care, learning how to suck from a silicon teat and living with humans who weren't sure when they might have to evacuate. But then the rain came! And so did 'Hank' and 'Mena' to buddy up

with little Ash. Six months later the trio is inseparable and Ash weighs 8.060 kgs. They are now teenagers and share a burrow that was built by previous occupants of the enclosure. They still have bottles twice a day, though most of their nutrition comes from native grasses supplemented by pellets and grains. Ash and his buddies have a



lot of growing to do and it will probably be another year before their gate is opened and they will make their way to be real live wombats.

Leaving the safety of his enclosure will be dangerous for Ash. His habitat needs will more than likely conflict with landowners if he establishes a burrow along a fence line or under a house. He will face many threats including sarcoptic mange which is rife in the valley. But he has learned to be with other wombats, eat and dig and when he leaves the enclosure it will be another sign of hope for him and us.

These three articles are a tribute to Anna Culliton and WIRES volunteers who spend their days and nights caring for threatened species and showing us, by example how we as a species can coexist with the unique wildlife left to us.

Captions

Top: A very young Ash



*Left top: Ash in the 'pouch'
Left: Ash, Hank and Mena
Above right: Ash - moving forward.*

All photos by Anna Culliton

From the archives

The Society has been producing newsletters for over 50 years. They are a treasure trove of conservation and observations of nature. Our website now contains over 400 newsletters, thanks to Alan Page.

See www.bluemountains.org.au. In addition, Phoebe Coster is retyping the older newsletters so articles can be extracted and used. Please acknowledge the Society if you use an article.

The newsletters, published by our forbears, the Upper and Lower Blue Mountains Wildlife Conservation Societies and the Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society are held by the Blue Mountains library.

Below is an article from the December 1970 newsletter. It was written by Graham Alcorn who among many other experiences, worked in the Blue Mountains as a ranger for BMCC before the national park was declared. Graham died in 1998. This information comes from <http://togsplace.blogspot.com/2006/10/graham-alcorna-working-and-political>.

Nesting Time

Graham Alcorn



Spring and early summer is an interesting time for bird lovers: nesting time. Not all birds nest in the spring; lyre birds nest in the winter, yellow winged honeyeaters nest any time when conditions suit them, red browed finches often nest again in the autumn. In the dry inland many species nest again after the rain.

But here in the mountains, now is the time to see mating flights and displays, to hear the most melodious bird songs and to find cunningly hidden and beautifully constructed nests.

The most interesting nest found by the writer is in a scribbly gum at Minni-Ha-Ha Falls Picnic area. Built in the fork of an upright dead branch, the outside of the nest is covered with flakes of bark, so cunningly placed, that the nest appears to be part of the tree. The builder is the orange winged sittellas. Unlike the tree creeper, which hops up the tree trunks seeking insects, the sittella starts at the top and hops down. The

perfect camouflage of the nest is somewhat contradicted by the behaviour of the birds.

The noted ornithologist Keith Hindwood reports that up to a number of eight have been seen attending one nest and feeding the young. Three birds attended ours, calling constantly "chur-dit, chur-dit". By watching them we found the nest.

When however we scrambled with some difficulty to the lower branches of the tree and, with the aid of a mirror tied to a pole, examined the inside of the nest, a possible explanation arose. The nest was lined with grey-green lichen and contained young birds covered with pale grey down! Now robins, yellow, rose and scarlet – use lichen to camouflage the outside of their nests. Sittellas, it seems, use it to camouflage the inside. To any predator looking down, the grey-green lining and downy grey young would blend with the dead branch and the white bark of the scribbly gum!

In one case, two sittellas laid in the same nest and sat side by side until the eggs hatched...!!

Varied Sittella - image courtesy of Julian Robinson and the Canberra Ornithologists Group - <http://canberrabirds.org.au/>



Blue Trail Village scenes no.6

Memories of non-indigenous pioneers, Kanimbla Valley

Don Morison (copyright)

There are many indigenous sites in the Kanimbla Valley area. Structures connected with non-indigenous pioneers are, however, easier for visitors to notice.



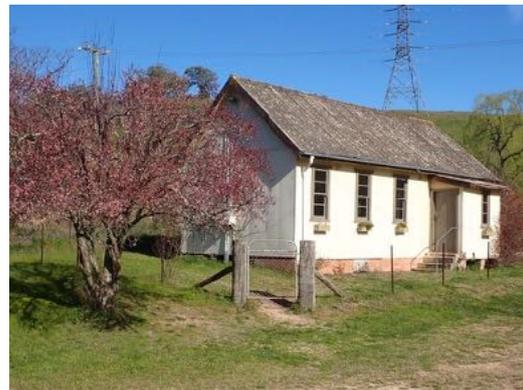
Bernard O'Reilly (1903-1975) was born in a slab hut near Sandy Hook. His writing of volumes about the natural environment of the Coxs River catchment and invasive species such as brumbies, based on his childhood memories, remains among the most loved nature prose of the Blue Mountains.

In 1937, O'Reilly showed his skills as a bushman when he initiated a single-handed search in the Queensland rainforest. This allowed the rescue of two survivors lost for a week after a plane crash. He went on to promote the establishment of the Lamington National Park and the still famous O'Reilly's Guest House.

Ben Esgate (1914-2003) was also a bushman. His contribution to ongoing tourism involves the Blue Mountains. Together with Harry Hammon and Bill Wingrove, Ben engineered the original 1957 Scenic Skyway car which still stands at Katoomba Scenic World.

Earlier, in the 1930s, he had helped engineer the flying fox which brought milk and eggs from the Mark Foy farm in Megalong Valley to the Hydro Majestic Hotel. During World War 2, he was one of the foremost bush experts in the Citizens Defence Movement in the Blue Mountains. In the 1940s, he directed the building of many structures, including the church that is now run as a Uniting Church in the Megalong Valley and the Congregational Church hall in the Kanimbla Valley (pictured), a project that involved Italian prisoners of war from the Cowra Prisoner-of-War camp.

These Kanimbla Valley sites are a precious reminder of people who helped shape modern attitudes to the Blue Mountains environment.



To find out more read:

- O'Reilly, Bernard – *Green Mountains and Cullenbenbong*
- Smith, Jim – *The Last of the Coxs River Men*, Ben Esgate, published by Den Fenella Press 2006. .

Captions

Top left: Bernard O'Reilly relaxes after coordinating a rescue for 1937 plane crash survivors. Courtesy of the State Library of Queensland
 Top right: Kanimbla Valley community hall, formerly the Congregational Church hall, a project of Ben Esgate in 1944 and 1945, inscribed on 15 February 1945. (Christine Davies)
 Bottom right: The slab hut in Kanimbla Valley which was O'Reilly's birthplace in 1903. (On private property and photographed from a road reservation – Christine Davies)



Spring Tours

GARDENS OF STONE

17 – 18 October 2020

Learn more about this spectacular landscape north of Lithgow

The Gardens of Stone Alliance is offering two different tours:

- Introducing the beauty of this spectacular landscape area AND/OR
- Learning about mining damage that must be stopped

Tours start at Lithgow. Due to COVID-19, numbers are limited and bookings are essential.

Click on this link:

<https://www.gardensofstone.org.au/saturday-17th-october-destination-pagoda-spring-tour-booking-form>

Photo: the Gardens of Stone by Henry Gold.

Photographic exhibition

Chris Ireland

'Dryads' is the new photographic exhibition from local photographer Chris Ireland.

'Dryads' seeks the magical essence and sacredness of the forests; the majesty of huge trees, the dappling light falling upon ferns, shrubs and mosses, the complexity of a system that sustains itself and us.

Common to indigenous cultures, and to my own ancestral Old European culture, is a profound reverence for the trees, as arbiters between heaven and earth, as providers of the very air we breathe. These works seek to re-establish our deep connection with the forests that surround us in this ancient land.

The exhibition comprises a series of photographs taken in various Australian forest environments.

The exhibition will be held at the National Parks and Wildlife Service Blue Mountains Heritage Centre, Govetts Leap Rd, Blackheath. The works will be on view from the 1 November to 29 November 2020.



One of the photos in the exhibition.

Walks program

The three month walks program appears on our web page: <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/bushwalking.shtml>

Saturday walks

Saturday Walks are usually a full day, longer walk at a faster pace. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water.

Co-ordinator: Harold Thompson phone: 0409 010737 email: harold.thompson@bigpond.com

Date	Walk description	Contact	Meet at	Grade
10 October	Nellies Glen with side trip to waterfall. 8km. Katoomba map	Colin 0431707137	Katoomba station CP. 8.30 am	3
17 October	Hazelbrook Amphitheatre, Hazelbrook. 10 km. Map Katoomba	Diana 0432 619305	Hazelbrook shops CP. Campbell St 8.30 am	3
24 October	Mount Banks Round Walk. 12.5km. Map Mount Wilson.	Alice 4739 3086 or 0425 738766	Wentworth Falls Stn CP 8.30 am	2
31 October	Bowtells Swing Bridge. 12 km. Map Hampton	Geoff 47589113	Blackheath Stn CP 8.30 am	3
7 November	Camarthen Ridge 11 km. Map Mount Wilson	Harold 0409010737	Mt Vic Station CP 8.30 am	3

Monday walks

Monday walks are short day walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of average fitness. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. The Group Coordinator is Keith Dorrian 0411 162345

Date	Walk description	Contact	Meet at	Grade
5 October	Medlow Bath Meandering in Medlow	Pat Whitehead 0429 003 639 or 4787 5230	Medlow Bath Station Nth side 8.40 am	2
12 October	Lapstone Zig Zag, Darks Common & The Bluff.	Maurice. 4739 4942.	Glenbrook Commuter Car Park 9.30 am	2
19 October	Leura Station, Golf Links Lookout, Pool of Siloam and Gordon Falls Picnic area and lookouts. 9 km.	Dave 0416 109 141	Leura Station Car Park 8.50 am	2
26 October	Mt Victoria Rennits Pass, Zig Zag and Bushranger Cave	Tracy 0434 362 611	Mt Victoria Station 8.50 am	2
2 November	Pippa's Pass and Florabella Pass, Blaxland Station to Warrimoo Station. 6km.	Barbara Crighton 0428 962 460	Blaxland Station Car Park 9.15 am	2
9 November	Meanderings in Michael Eades Reserve Nth Katoomba.	Beth 0424 732287	Corner Third Ave and Wattle Tree Rd, North Katoomba at 9.45 am.	2

Tuesday walks

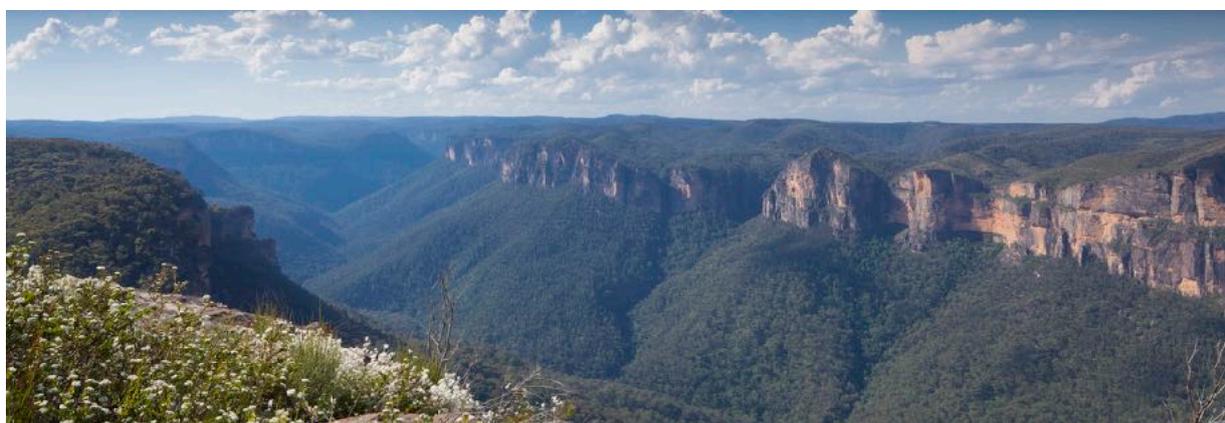
Tuesday walks are medium day walks of 3-5 hours suitable for walkers of average fitness. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. Co-ordinator: Sue Nicholls phone: 0434 258242 email: suerosn@bigpond.net.au

Date	Walk description	Contact	Meet at	Grade
6 October	Little Zig Zag – The Bluff – Glenbrook Station Med 6K	TBA – check website	Glenbrook Station 9.00 am	2
13 October	Shaws Ridge – Blue Gum Swamp 10K Med Optional: Grose Mtn Lookout Extra 4K Hard	John Blanche 4742 4637	End White Cross Rd Winmalee 9.15 am	2-3
20 October	Six Foot Track 0.7K; Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park, Megalong Head Lookout Med 10K	Doug Nicholls 0455850753	Explorers Tree Carpark, Katoomba 9.30 am	2-3
27 October	Fortress Rock Lookout and Fortress Ridge, Leura Med 9.5K	Robyn Hine 0409127012	Leura Primary School 9.00 am	3

Thursday walks

Thursday Walks are walks of 2 - 3 hours conducted at a leisurely pace. Bring morning tea, adequate water and lunch . Co-ordinator: Beverley Thompson, phone: 4757 2076, email: denfenella12@bigpond.com

Date	Walk description	Contact	Meet at	Grade
22 October	Glenbrook Gorge and Jellybean Pool	Leonie 4739 3730	Glenbrook Station 9.30 am	2
29 October	Valley Heights to Sun Valley	Maurice 4739 4942	Valley Heights station car park 9.30 am	2
5 November	Glenbrook Lagoon and Knapsack Bridge	Dinia 0412 879295	Glenbrook Station 9.30 am	2
12 November	Victory Track and Numantia Falls	Maurice 4739 4942	Faulconbridge Station south side 9.30 am	2-3



Looking up the Grose Valley from Anvil Rock. Photo by Ian Brown