



*Blue Mountains Conservation  
Society Inc.*

# HUT NEWS

April 2022, Issue number 401

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Darug and Gundungurra people, and pay respect to their elders past, present and emerging.

## Hut News Survey 2022 Summary

Susan Crick and Rebecca Knight

Heartfelt thanks to the 180\* members who responded to the survey conducted during February. This represents 28% of total memberships (640) and provides us with valuable feedback about Hut News. Given the consistency of the responses we can safely regard the survey as representative of the views of our members and a reliable basis for the content and design of future issues.

We can now say that Hut News is well received and valued by members and we also know more about our readers and their preferences. The average level of satisfaction was 8.9/10 for the printed version and 8.4/10 for the digital version.

A full report on the survey is available on our website at <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/hutnews/hut-news-2022-survey-summary.pdf>

### Interesting results

While we recognise that there are many who did not respond to the survey, the relatively high percentage combined with the consistency of responses give us confidence to say the following about readers of Hut News:

- Most read all of each newsletter and spend half an hour doing so.
- Most paper version readers do not want to switch to the digital version.
- Most prefer news and reports about Society activities, news about general environment issues and features about animals or plants native to the BMWHA. Slightly more than half also like to read about environmental education, history, the walks program and to see photographs.
- Of the Society's activities most want to read about campaigns to protect the Blue Mountains. Digital readers are more likely to prefer to hear about meetings and events than those who read the paper version (77.66% compared with 57.14%). The results for all other topics were evenly spread.
- Most readers say that the maximum length of 500 words for each article is just right.
- Most want no change in frequency of Hut News while about 30% opted for a bimonthly publication.
- Most have a tertiary level of education with a higher number in the digital reader category.

- By far a majority use the ABC, newspapers, other online or printed newsletters and books as their source of information about environmental/conservation issues. Here there is an unsurprising but significant difference between digital and paper readers, reflecting a preference for hard copy by paper readers.
- Most paper readers read the Sydney Morning Herald or the Age and a significant number of digital readers read The Saturday Paper.
- 37.5% of paper newsletter readers also use social media while 43.62% of digital readers use such media.
- Most 83.75% (paper) and 87.23% (digital) are residents of the Blue Mountains.
- Most are between 60 and 80 years of age (68.75% paper and 73.12% digital) although a reasonable number (13.75% and 18.28%) are between 40 and 60.

### Open comments

The survey provided space for responders to make open comment. While the space available to do this was necessarily small in the printed version, responders to the digital survey were able to write longer responses. There were 60 open comments in the paper survey and 58 comments in the digital survey.

Without any doubt by far the majority were positive comments and supported the current style and frequency of Hut News or said that Hut News was important to them as a source of information and thanked the Society for its production. Many made helpful suggestions such as bringing back the column about birds by Carol Proberts.

### Recommendations

The Management Committee has accepted the final report on the survey and its recommendations. They are in summary:

- That the various aspects identified in the survey, both positive and negative, be recognised and acted upon and serve as one of the bases for future planning and for future editions of Hut News.
- That the Society ensures that its topics of interest and media and styles of communication are consistent with the need to attract more members from its target audiences, especially among younger age groups

\*Note. While 180 responses were received, two were too late to be added to the final tallying of results.

### From the Editor

This is the last issue I will be producing. It has been a very satisfying experience and I thank all those who, without being asked, contributed articles and photographs and put up with my pedantic editing.

I am particularly indebted to Alan Page who provided continuous, generous and kind support and helped me through many hurdles while I was learning to publish this newsletter. I also thank my ever prompt and amazingly diligent proofreaders, Alan Page, Elizabeth Howard and Jeanette Robertson. Finally thanks to Alan Page, again, and Ian Brown whose excellent photos were always available.

Susan Crick

## Report on the Management Committee meeting of 19 March, 2022

The following matters were discussed or decided:

- Annual General Meeting discussed including the Financial Statement, details of the elections and COVID precautions.
- The Mick Dark talk will be held with Varuna during October.
- Replacement of Caroline Druce by Angela Langdon on the Leura Community Alliance.
- The Federal Election Questionnaire to be sent to all candidates when the date of the election is announced. The intention to work with other environmental groups was noted.
- Hut News survey report tabled. To be used to help shape and guide future directions of Hut News and other communication channels.
- Submissions related to the Department of Environment and Planning in support of the Design and Place SEPP.
- Endorsement of letters to BMCC re South Lawson Park Plan of Management and to Crown Lands re Katoomba Airfield.
- Screening of the Pilliga Project and 'The Message of the Lyrebird'.
- Draft protocols for visitors to management committee meetings.
- Report on cracking and sink holes at Mugii Murum-ban State Conservation Area and response from the Department of Planning.

**Welcome to new members**

The Society welcomes the following new members:

- Bronwyn Shumack
- Gregory Keightley
- Jennifer Brown
- Victoria Adams
- Damon Angelopulo
- Sarah Redshaw
- Ron Fuller
- Alethea Morison
- Sophie Shornikov
- Sue Lightfoot
- Berin Mackenzie
- Meredith Hagger
- Aaron Kim

There are now 912 members.

# Sunset Gathering Success

Mist as far as the eye could see, a fire burning inside and the gentle strains of harp music made for a cosy and very congenial Sunset Gathering on Friday 25 February. Approximately 60 people attended and enjoyed one of the best events the Society has had since COVID interfered.

Tara Cameron, President spoke about the year’s achievements as did Angela Langdon (Landuse), Madi Maclean (Senior Vice President) about Gardens of Stone, Adam Curry ((National Parks) and Clare Power (Climate Change). Susan Crick (Second Vice President) spoke about the recent survey about Hut News. Bob Debus (former State MP for Blue Mountains and Minister for Environment) conducted the draw for prizes for those who submitted their responses to the survey. The winners were Rowe Morrow, Julie Favell and Helen Shields.



*Upper left: Susan Templeman, Federal Member for Macquarie chats with Dr Michael Kindler*

*Lower left: Bob Debus and Ron Fuller*

*Above: A few of the many who attended*

*Photos by Susan Crick*

## 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 <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/sales-map.shtml>

## National park at risk without EIS

Bridget Jackson

It appears that Transport for New South Wales (TfNSW) is planning to review and assess the environmental impact of the Great Western Highway works through the Upper Mountains, as separate projects - not as a whole.

There are currently several sections of highway designated for upgrade or duplication from Katoomba to Medlow Bath, Blackheath to Mount Victoria and Little Hartley; with widening and straightening proposed from Medlow Bath to Katoomba and either one long or two shorter tunnels between Blackheath, Mount Victoria and Little Hartley.

This work will affect the surrounding environment, whether at a surface level or the aquifers deep below and the Society is calling on Hon. Sam Farraway, NSW Minister for Roads and Transport to commit to a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIS) for the whole section, to address the cumulative impact of the project.

To date a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) has been used to assess the Little Hartley section and TfNSW are planning to adopt this process for the Katoomba to Blackheath section, including Medlow Bath. But REFs aren't comprehensive or binding enough for the significance of the development and wouldn't take into consideration the fragility of the surrounding environment, much of which is World Heritage listed.

An EIS on the other hand is much more comprehensive, provides details of the environmental impacts of the development and how they will be managed. It would also address key features of the surrounding environment that may be affected, including the Blue Mountains National Park and other conservation and culturally significant areas. The statement should also explore ecologically sustainable development options.

Until we have one EIS that addresses the full extent of the planned highway work, no one has a true understanding of the overall impact this will have from a community, environmental or cultural perspective.

## Campaign to oppose the raising of Warragamba Dam continues

Bridget Jackson

As members will know, the Society has long advocated against the State Government proposal to raise the Dam wall as it would inundate 4,700 hectares of the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains National Park and 65 kilometres of wilderness streams, threatening numerous plants, animals as well as significant Aboriginal heritage.

Concerning comments were recently made by Sarah Richards, Liberal candidate for Macquarie, in support of raising Warragamba Dam wall. Quoted in the [Sydney Morning Herald](#) (10, March), following the recent flooding of the Hawkesbury area, Ms Richards said she'd seek the Prime Ministers' support.

The Society was able to make comments in the Blue Mountains Gazette highlighting that raising the wall is an incredibly destructive proposal that experts have shown would not actually solve the problem of flooding in Western Sydney. [Leaked charts](#) prepared for Infrastructure NSW indicate that raising the wall would have only a moderate effect even in a 1 in 500-year flood event. The [report](#) by Professor Jamie Pittock from the Australian National University outlined that half of all floodwaters in the Hawkesbury-Nepean originate from catchment areas that are not upstream of Warragamba Dam – meaning that even if a raised wall were to hold back some floodwaters, significant flooding could still occur in the valley from other catchments. In fact, floodwaters from the Grose River alone can cause moderate to major flooding of Richmond in the lower Hawkesbury.

The fact that the [Australian Insurance Council withdrew its support](#) for raising the dam wall back in February, is further evidence that there is no quick fix here. When the insurance industry talks about poor planning and raises the idea of buybacks, you know that other issues need to be addressed.

The truth is that with climate change, these flood events will become more common like fires and we need to work together to find genuine solutions.

# The impacts of dogs on bushland

Jim Smith

Meredith Brownhill's article about environmental problems at Minnehaha Falls (*Hut News*, number 399, February 2022) raises issues relevant to many Blue Mountains City Council bushland reserves. Regarding dog walking, our council does not distinguish between urban parks and bushland reserves, and dogs may be walked on leads, with the proviso that their droppings are picked up. I think anyone who regularly walks on council managed bush tracks adjacent to our townships will have come across both loose dogs and waste which has not been picked up.

Owners who walk their dogs around urban parks, sports fields and 'off leash' areas are usually not far from their homes or garbage tins and don't have to carry their bagged deposit too far. In these places there will always be a majority of responsible dog owners who provide some social pressure to do the right thing. There is also the very small possibility that a council ranger may see a non-compliant dog walker in these open areas. In contrast, people walking dogs along historic walking tracks such as those at Minnehaha Falls, North and South Lawson Parks and Terrace Falls at Hazelbrook may spend several hours in the reserve, often hidden by vegetation from other walkers. In this situation, when faced with the option of carrying a smelly bag for an hour or more, or leaving their dog's droppings in the bush, we know that a significant proportion of humans, knowing that there is virtually no chance of them being observed by a ranger, choose the latter option.

A number of scientific studies in the last decade or so have quantified the environmental changes caused by domestic dogs in the bush. A controlled study by academics from the University of New South Wales was carried out in 90 sites within the Hornsby-Berowra-Cowan area. The authors concluded that "dog walking in woodland leads to a 35% reduction in bird diversity and 41% reduction in abundance, both in areas where dog walking is common and where dogs are prohibited.

These results argue against access by dog walkers to sensitive conservation areas."<sup>1</sup>

A biologist in Tasmania carried out research for his master's thesis on the environmental impacts of domestic dogs in Tasmanian bushland. He also observed a similar reduction of bird diversity and abundance, explaining that disturbance by dogs "can contribute to energetic loss through premature flight or reduced feed intake and reproductive disruption due to nest disturbance. Dogs have been implicated in disease transmission to native wildlife; with faecal contamination of waterways having potential negative effects for marine mammal health."<sup>2</sup>

Another study in Belgium concluded: 'Taking your dog for a walk in a nature reserve could harm biodiversity because its faeces and urine bring in excess nitrogen and phosphorus to the ecosystem.'<sup>3</sup> The authors estimated that picking up dogs' solid waste removed most of the phosphorus but still left 57% of the nitrogen input in the soil. Even the most conscientious dog walkers do not collect their animals' urine. Apart from the immediate effects it has on the soil and vegetation where it is deposited, the excess nitrogen eventually ends up in waterways.

The small bushland reserves adjacent to our townships were typically gazetted over 100 years ago to protect the vegetation around scenic features such as waterfalls. These were developed long ago with the constructed walking tracks and lookouts that we still enjoy today. They are nearly all in the upper catchments of creeks which flow into the surrounding national park. Responsible bushland management should aim to preserve the health of the whole catchment, not just those sections within a national park boundary.

The remainder of this article can be seen on our website at <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/hutnews/hut-news-2204-dogs.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> Peter Banks and Jessica Bryant, 'Four-legged friend or foe? Dog walking displaces native birds from natural areas', *Biology Letters*, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Bob Holderness-Roddam, 'The effect of domestic dogs (*Canis familiaris*) as a disturbance agent on the natural environment', thesis for degree of Master of Environmental Management, School of Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Tasmania, Hobart, October 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Chen Ly, 'Dog waste may harm suburban nature reserves', *New Scientist*, 12 February 2022, p.9. This study is also available on a New Scientist podcast.

# Climate Change, Population and Infrastructure

## A challenge for government budgets and conservationists

Don Morison

Around New South Wales, billions of dollars in resources and labour will be called on to restore roads, railways, communications, drainage and other systems to their standards prior to the rains of March 2022. Without a slowdown in major projects to expand infrastructure where population is increasing, we are going to have more of a “fluoro vest, hard hat” economy than ever.

Numerous worthy objectives of government spending will be sacrificed or postponed, even while public debt increases. Measures to protect the environment will come under at least as much pressure as the rest.

But why is this not leading to more questioning of government policies to concentrate population where the infrastructure to cater to that population will prove most expensive and most environmentally disruptive? Now we are seeing the true intensity of climate change driven events, it does not make sense to push ahead harder than ever with Badgerys Creek airport, with highway and motorway tunnels, with new and higher dams and with long distance waste shipping proposals. Yet that is exactly what we are seeing governments do.



We know that some politicians believe technology is a huge part of the answer to climate driven problems. Because of the pandemic many people do their jobs successfully from home. Yet decision-makers continue to encourage population growth in the Greater Sydney Basin, one of the most expensive areas in Australia to install and repair virtually every kind of publicly provided infrastructure.

It is the pressures on the Blue Mountains to be the playground of the unnecessarily growing Greater Sydney that are causing environmental threats from infrastructure expansion at the same time that climate driven events are causing more and more regular failures in the capacity of our local infrastructure.

Who really benefits when delicate geological and hydrological systems are disrupted to create wide road tunnels for fossil fuel burning trucks, or airport runways wider and longer than needed for aircraft most airlines currently find viable, or taller dam walls? The media has recently identified some of the people who appear to have been engaging in property speculation, hoping these projects will arrive on schedule.

Surely the confluence of accelerating climate change and emerging technologies will allow us to defuse this planet wrecking clash between 20<sup>th</sup> century style infrastructure and the health of this century's environment?

*Left: Narrow Neck plateau, a natural environment that is a magnet for locals and visitors had its only road access severely damaged in the March rains. Repairs will be in a long queue as so many other areas also suffered damage. Image by Christine Davies*

**Are you concerned about environmental damage or a development 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>

# Walks program April/May 2022

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

## Monday walks

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

### 4 April

Bald Head from Hat Hill approx 6Km. Blackheath Grade 3. Leader Barbara Crighton 0428 962 460. Meet at Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 8.40am. Car pool.

### 11 April

Glenbrook - Red Hands Cave Track - Link Track- Exit Track - Euroka Clearing - Euroka Track- Grade 3. Leader: Wayne Read 0429 021 296. Meet at Glenbrook Station car park 9.10 am. Car pool. Bring National Parks Pass.

### 18 April

Easter Monday - No Walk

### 25 April

ANZAC Day- No Walk

### 2 May

Lockley's Pylon Leura, Approximately 8km, with 160m ascent/descent. This involves driving up Mt Hay Dirt Rd using your own transport or car pool- Grade 3. Leader: Mave Roberts 4784 2691. Meet at the commuter (Baptist Church) car park, Leura. 8.20am.

## Tuesday walks

Medium day walks of 3-5 hours. Suitable for walkers of average fitness. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. Coordinator Susan Nicholls, phone 4754 1516. Email [suerosn@bigpond.net.au](mailto:suerosn@bigpond.net.au)

### April 5

Bulls Camp, Caleys Repulse, Paradise Pool, Colin Ford 0421 502954. Meet at 9.00 am Woodford Station, south side car park. Easy to medium, grade 1-2/3. 5 km. 5km

### April 12

Scenic World to Three Sisters, Katoomba. John Trotter 0490 660845. meet at Scenic World car park 9.00 am. Easy, grade 1/2. 4-5 km.

### April 19

Batman Park to Perch Ponds, Mike Voris, 0401 656848. Meet at Batman Park at end of Farm Road, Springwood, 9.00 am. Easy/ medium, grade 2. 5km.

### April 26

Meadowbank to Parramatta. Judith Dyer 0419 780640, meet at Strathfield Station ticket barrier, 9.38 am. Easy, grade 1. 10 km.

### May 3

Overcliff - Denfenella- Undercliff - Rocket Point- Conservation Hut. Sharon Cox 0404 622515. Meet at Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, 9.00 am. Medium, grade 2/3. 4.5 km.

## Thursday walks

Thursday walks take 2- 3 hours and are conducted at a leisurely pace. Bring morning tea and lunch. Coordinator Beverley Thompson. Phone 4757 2076. Email [denfenella12@bigpond.com](mailto:denfenella12@bigpond.com)

### 14 April

Fletcher Lookout, Undercliff Pass to Denfenella Track, back to picnic area, Wentworth Falls. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Meet Stockyard car park, Wentworth Falls 9.30am. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2

### 21 April

Glenbrook Railway Lines and three lookouts. Leader Robyn 0409 127 012. Meet Glenbrook Theatre 9.30am. Take lunch. Grade 2

### 28 April

Popes Glen, Blackheath. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9.45am. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2

### 5 May

Katoomba Circular Walk, Reid Plateau and Cascades. Leader Amanda 0479 131 315. Meet Katoomba Station car park 9.30am. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2

### 12 May

Transit of Venus, Woodford. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Meet corner Woodford Ave and Great Western Highway 9.00am. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2

## Saturday walks

Saturday walks are usually a full day, longer walk at a faster pace. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. Coordinator Harold Thompson. Phone 0409 010737. Email [harold.thompson@bigpond.com](mailto:harold.thompson@bigpond.com)

### April 9

Bell to December Creek. 8km Map. Mt Wilson & Wollangambe. Leader Harold 0409010737. Meet at Mount Victoria Station car park at 8.30 am. Grade 3.

### April 16

Ben Bullen State Forest 9km Map Cullen Bullen Leader Harold 0409010737. Meet at Mount Victoria Station car park at 8.30 am. Grade 3

### April 23

Kamarah Ridge & Canyon Mine, 9km. Map, Mt Wilson. Leader Harold 0409010737. Meet Mount Victoria Station car park at 8.30 am.. Grade 3.

### April 30

Two Arrows Pt & Mt Banks. 10km, Map Mt Wilson, Leader Harold 0409010737. Meet Mount Victoria Station. 8.30am Grade 3

### May 7

Lockley Pylon 10km Map Katoomba Leader Harold 0409010737. Meet at Mount Hay Road near Leura School 8.30 am. Grade 3

# About Us

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society (BMCS) is an incorporated voluntary group of around 900 members helping to conserve the World Heritage Blue Mountains region. It was originally the Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society 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.

## Contact us

- Call the Membership Secretary, Ross Coster on 0418 462576
- By mail at PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls, NSW 2782
- By phone at 02 4757 1872 (leave a message)
- By emailing [bmcs@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:bmcs@bluemountains.org.au)

## Visit us

[www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)  
 Facebook: Blue Mountains Conservation Society  
 Twitter: bmcsnsw  
 Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/blue\\_mts\\_conservation\\_society/](https://www.instagram.com/blue_mts_conservation_society/)

## Become a member

You can become a member by

- Contacting our Membership Secretary, Ross Coster on 0418 462576

Emailing Ross at

[membership@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:membership@bluemountains.org.au)

- <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/joining.shtml> or scan this with your mobile:



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