

# HUT NEWS



Issue No. 415  
July 2023

*"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"*

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

## Autumn to Winter

Still, the golden glow on sandstone walls.  
Parrots chatter overhead,  
Those distant hues of blues and greens,  
Gumleaf trails to tread.

But there comes a certain softness now.  
Greening dampness after rain,  
A mellowing of light and shade,  
Mountain's mildness once regained.

That cooling breeze marks season's change.  
Such relief from summer heat.  
A lighter spirit in the bush,  
With summertime's retreat.

©Ross Bridle

NPWS has been working for seven months, with frequent rain delays, to renew the Govetts Leap Lookout and it is again open to the public. (See Page 5) This photograph of the Grose Valley was taken from the lookout at sunrise on 13th June 2023.

## EDITORIAL ... a Winter Wonderland

The Blue Mountains is a wonderful place to be in the winter months. It might be a little chilly, but you can put on a few extra layers of clothing, your beanie, scarf and gloves, and go out there!

You can say hello to some visitors and share your knowledge of the Blue Mountains. You can increase their enjoyment and appreciation of the Mountains. The more people who know and love the Greater Blue Mountains, the more people who will help us protect our environment from its many threats. You will meet people from all over Australia and from many other parts of the world!

Wintertime is the lyrebirds' breeding season. If you go near the bush, you will hear lyrebirds singing. When it sounds like there are birds of multiple species lining up to sing their song, it is usually only one bird ... the lyrebird.

Winter is a time of plenty in the Blue Mountains and the bushland is full of life. Many nectar-producing plants flower in the winter and attract nectar-feeding birds like Red Wattlebirds and New Holland, White-naped and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. Many of these migrate and spend the winter feasting on the nectar of the flowering banksias, especially in the heathland of the Upper Mountains. Crimson Rosellas and Satin Bowerbirds also love nectar. Flocks of tiny Silvereyes fly here from Tasmania to spend the winter.

Some people go away to warmer climes in the winter, but this is the place to be!

-- Hut News Editorial Team.



© Christine Davies

## President's report

**Thank you** to those who took the time to contact ConSoc with offers of assistance and to contribute to Hut News with various articles or letters. It is always enjoyable to read what our members have been doing. There have been some wonderful events over the past month including the Winter Magic Festival, the Nest Box talk at Lawson, post bushfire Bird Survey at Blackheath and more! Thanks to the organisers and great to see members involved! Details of these are in this or future issues of Hut News.

### Koalas:

Did you know that we have a population of koalas in the Blue Mountains? Most of the recent sightings have been in the lower Blue Mountains, along with the Hawkesbury. Research has shown that the Blue Mountains populations are the most genetically diverse which makes them very important for koala conservation. Following the 2019/2020 fires, koalas have also been sighted in the Lithgow area, Newnes & Kanangra Boyd NP.

You can read more about the Blue Mountains koalas on the Science for Wildlife website <https://www.scienceforwildlife.org/communityresources>

BMCS supports various organisations and individuals that are rallying to protect the disease-free koala population at Gilead in Campbelltown. These include the Total Environment Centre ([https://www.tec.org.au/save\\_sydney\\_koalas\\_campaign](https://www.tec.org.au/save_sydney_koalas_campaign)). TEC have also established the "Sydney Basin Koala Network", with aims to protect and expand koala populations in the Sydney Basin Bioregion, from Ulladulla to Nelson Bay and inland to Mudgee.

### Movie "Flyways"

Recently, I watched the movie "Flyways" at Glenbrook Cinema. The film followed the lives of three species of shorebirds: the Eastern Curlew, the Red Knot and the Bar-tailed Godwit as they venture off on their annual migration from the southern hemisphere to the northern hemisphere.

The movie also follows the lives of the scientists who are studying these birds, their passion and deep connection to the birds. I found the film both troubling and inspiring. Although I have studied birds all my life, this visually stunning film with its insights deepened my respect for these majestic shorebirds and those who spend their life studying them. If an opportunity presents itself for you to see the film, take it!

*Editor's note: "Flyways" can now be seen on ABC podcast <https://tvblackbox.com.au/page/2023/06/20/flyways-documenting-the-epic-annual-migration-of-shorebirds-amidst-rising-challenges/>*

### Podcast Big Sky Country by Bush Heritage

Bush Heritage has some great podcasts highlighting the work they are doing across the country. In a time when so many reports on the state of the environment are gloomy, it is great to hear of things that are going well. Look up "Big Sky Country" wherever you get your podcasts!

### Management Committee meeting 17 June 2023

Items raised include:

- Submission over the past month: Harold Hodgson Reserve Plan of Management.
- Plight of Koalas in Campbelltown area
- Agreement to form a Strategic Planning Subcommittee which will consider the strategic future of Blue Mountains Conservation Society, investigate alternative ways to address these needs (including recruitment of volunteers, possible payment of workers) and set a date for a General Meeting.

-- Annette Cam

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**THE DEADLINE FOR AUGUST  
HUT NEWS IS 15 JULY**

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# Phytophthora - An Invisible and Silent Killer

-- Chris Whiteman

*Phytophthora* (sometimes called Dieback), often mistakenly thought to be a fungus, is actually a Water Mould (an Oomycete) which is a microscopic, soil-borne organism invisible to the human eye. Oomycetes are ancient organisms diverging from brown algae about one billion years ago. The genus name *Phytophthora* comes from the Greek (*phyto*), meaning : "plant" – plus the Greek (*phthora*), meaning : "decay or perish". *Phytophthora* can cause significant damage to plants mainly through root and stem rot. There are 91 species of *Phytophthora* which have been recorded in Australia, with the species *Phytophthora cinnamomi* and *P. multivora* being the main species of concern due to the destruction they cause to native plant communities, resulting in a decline in biodiversity and disruption of ecosystems. *Phytophthora cinnamomi* was first isolated from cinnamon trees in Sumatra in 1922, hence the species name *cinnamomi*. It is thought to have been introduced into Western Australia in the mid 1900s where it has caused extensive damage to ecosystems in south-west forest areas.

There have been 170 *Phytophthora* species described worldwide with many undiscovered species estimated to exist. Some species are native to Australia and many introduced from overseas. Australians with Irish ancestry should be aware of *Phytophthora infestans* which caused the Irish potato famine in the mid-19th century. The origin of *P. infestans* has been traced to a valley in Mexico. The disease spread to America and then to Ireland and Europe via infected potatoes on ships; an early example of the need for quarantine/biosecurity regulations.

*Phytophthora ramorum* (Sudden Oak Death) is a species of major concern which hasn't been recorded in Australia, although overseas it has been found on *Eucalyptus haemastoma* and *gunnii* and *Pittosporum undulatum*. It has been found to infect 70 genera of plants representing 33 families. *Phytophthora ramorum* has become a serious problem in European and West Coast USA forests, where it has been observed that nearly all woody plants in some Californian forests including the iconic Redwoods are susceptible to *P. ramorum*.

## How does Phytophthora spread?

*Phytophthora* can spread with mud on vehicles and heavy machinery, including in road building, recreational motorcyclists, off-road drivers, cyclists as well as by bushwalkers. With the increase in nature based tourism, travellers can carry large numbers of *Phytophthora* propagules on their clothing, footwear and backpacks. Native, feral and companion animals can also spread



Phytophthora dieback on Kings Tableland heathland  
*Phytophthora*. Using infected dam water for fire fighting has also been identified as a potential source.

Projects in the Blue Mountains such as the proposed "Croc Park" at Bodington Hill pose a serious problem as *Phytophthora* could easily spread from this area via downstream creek habitat. There are many other areas of concern. *Phytophthora* has already spread onto the Wollemi Pines in their natural growth area. This includes *Phytophthora cinnamomi* and a new emerging species in the Blue Mountains area, *P. multivora*, originally from South Africa.

The increase in cars and tourist buses to the Lincoln Rock area is a concern for the Kings Tableland where the heathland / open scrub in this area is very susceptible to *Phytophthora*. Another area of major concern is the Gardens of Stone area where an adventure theme park is proposed with resorts and construction of mountain bike tracks.

## Control and Prevention of Phytophthora

Fungicides have been used in the past but control has proved to be difficult as *Phytophthora* isn't a fungus. Phosphite, also known as phosphorous acid, has been used as an aerial spray, with some success, in Western Australia. Further research into new chemistries or alternative treatments such as biological control is required.

### Control methods may include:

- \* Controlling access to susceptible areas.
- \* Provide designated parking facilities.
- \* Boardwalks for tourists and bushwalkers.
- \* When working in bushland areas ensure shoes, tyres and equipment are free of soil at the start of activities. Disinfectant foot baths can be used before accessing areas.
- \* When revegetating bushland areas, use clean plant material. Many nurseries are accredited under the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA) and use hygienic practices to prevent *Phytophthora* from infecting their stock. Ideally plants

(continued on page 4)



Allocasuarinas, which Glossy Black Cockatoos depend on for food, are susceptible to *Phytophthora*

## Phytophthora - An Invisible and Silent Killer (Continued from page 3)

should be grown in soil mixes which have been steam-air pasteurised (30 minutes at 60°C). Plants should be kept on raised benches until required for planting.

### Testing and Identification for Phytophthora

NSW DPI Laboratory Services have tests for Phytophthora. Prices and contact details are available on their internet site. Phytophthora Pocket Diagnostic single test kits are also available on the internet.

### References

Burgess TI, Edwards J, Drenth A, et al. 2021. Current status of Phytophthora in Australia. Cahill DM, Rookes JE, Wilson BA, et al. 2008. Turner Review No. 17. Phytophthora cinnamomi and Australia's biodiversity: impacts, predictions and progress towards control. Australian Journal of Botany 56: 279 – 310.

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<https://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/getmedia/2f4ee1e8-adc2-4465-a2e2-7bf85aa12281/Five-strategies-approach-to-managing-Phytophthora-in-bushland.pdf.aspx>

Photographs by Chris Whiteman

## Hope for Kosci?

Federal, State and Territory Environment Ministers have agreed to cooperate to improve conservation outcomes in the Australian Alps. The Alps Ministerial Council, which last met in 2010, will be revived. Federal Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek, who organised a meeting in Sydney on 9/6/23, said "We have to act now to tackle serious threats like climate change and invasive species that are damaging fragile alpine and sub-alpine ecosystems".

The feral horse population in Kosciuszko National Park had jumped more than 30 percent in November 2022, following two years of high rainfall and abundant feed. ACT and Victoria conduct culling of feral horses, typically via ground shooting by contracted professionals. But NSW passed a law in 2018, under pressure from then Deputy Premier John Barilaro, that protected the "heritage values" of the feral horses and discouraged culling. The NSW government has since focused on trapping and rehoming, but the process is slow.

Conservation groups argue that 6,000 horses must be removed from Kosciuszko National Park and that trapping is not a viable option.

During this year's NSW election campaign, Labor promised to slash horse numbers in Kosciuszko to 3000 by 2027, but has yet to detail its plan.

**Source:** Sydney Morning Herald, 10 June 2023. Ministers unite to cut feral horse numbers. Mike Foley, Climate and energy correspondent.

## Ensuring continuing public access to Bruce's walk

The Society recently wrote to NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service about a property currently for sale at 141 Kent St, Bullaburra. The land is undeveloped and has significant natural and historic values. The Society requested that the land be considered for purchase by the State government as an addition to the Blue Mountains National Park (see submission page on the Society website).

The land is located at Bullaburra on the northern side of the Great Western Highway at the end of a long ridge. The Blue Mountains National Park borders two sides of the property (west and north), while the eastern side borders the North Lawson Crown Reserve managed by Blue Mountains City Council. The southern side of the property borders private land. The land is effectively surrounded by public land managed for natural and cultural values.

According to Blue Mountains City Council vegetation mapping the property includes Blue Mountains Swamp. Blue Mountain Swamps are listed under state legislation as a vulnerable ecological community and listed nationally as an endangered ecological community. State listed threatened species which depend on Blue Mountain Swamps for habitat include the Blue Mountains Water Skink and the Giant Dragon Fly.

The property includes a part of "Bruce's Walk" a historic walking track that links Blackheath to Lawson. Bruce's Walk originally began as a maintenance track in 1931 to service an electricity transmission line which was put through north of the Great Western Highway from Blackheath to Lawson. The State Government then decided to promote the maintenance track as a walking trail, and a pamphlet was published to publicise the walk. The walk was officially opened on 21 November 1931. The surveyor who planned the track was a Mr A. Bruce, and as a result the track eventually became known as Bruce's Walk.

However, from World War II onwards, the track was neglected. In 1986 local historian Jim Smith and bushwalker Wilf Hilder organised a group of volunteers to clear the track between Bullaburra and Wentworth Falls, and in the process finding many features of the original historic track including signs, shelter caves, seats and picnic tables. The historic heritage of the Bruce's Walk is recognised as being of State significance, as the walk is specifically listed as part of Blue Mountains Walking Track state heritage listing.

Bruce's Walk traverses the property to meet up with walking tracks in the North Lawson Crown Reserve. The Society was keen to ensure continued public access over the part of Bruce's Walk which traverses the property.

The Society recently received a reply from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to the Society submission. The reply stated NPWS was aware of the sale and "would consider acquisition in the context of its relative priority against other lands on offer and available budget".

Importantly, the NPWS in its letter assured the Society that public walking access to Bruce's Walk was assured if the land was sold. NPWS had "established a formal easement (right of way) over the property, permitting permanent public access on the existing walking track". The right of way also authorised the NPWS to carry out maintenance work on the track. The Society was very pleased to see that public access to this part of Bruce's Walk was not in jeopardy if the land was sold and remained in private ownership.

### -- Land Use Subcommittee



## First light at Govetts Leap

*(June 2019) The sun had risen and there were hundreds of lyrebirds calling from the Grose Valley. I could imagine the scene being repeated across the length and breadth of the valley - each male dancing on its own little circular stage, displaying his beautiful tail, testing his repertoire, wanting to outdo his rivals - each female trying to choose the one worthy of being the father of her chick. It was absolute magic!*

And then the bushfire burned through the valley and the valley was silent.

Govetts Leap lookout was closed for reconstruction in late 2022, three years after the fire. It reopened on the 7th June 2023. It is a job well done - congratulations to NPWS.

The valley has many moods. Over the past 23 years I have visited the lookout many times, in all seasons, in different weather conditions and at different times of the day. The scene is always awesome! Early morning sunrise, the gold of the cliff-faces in the late afternoon, the moving shadows of overhead clouds. Shrouded in mist or dark under a starry sky. A ribbon of silver, deep in the valley, where Govetts Creek reflects the light of a full moon.

*(June 2023) The sun had risen and there was a river of cloud through the valley. I listened for lyrebirds and there were a few - nothing like the hundreds that had been there before the fire - but it was a joy to hear them. (See photo on page 1)*

-- **Christine Davies**

## Govetts Leap Lookout is again open to the public



Govetts Leap Lookout reopened on 7th June. Image (left to right): Dr Will Batson (NPWS), Don Morison (Hut News Team); Trish Doyle (Member for Blue Mountains), David Crust (NPWS), Soren Mortensen (NPWS), Steve Nichols (NPWS). Photo Christine Davies.

The lookout has been renewed and is much more accessible for visitors. Most of the heritage features have been retained, car places are better organised and access for pedestrians from the Heritage Centre is on a better surfaced track.

Govetts Leap is the only Grose Valley lookout with a sealed road, easy walking access from Blackheath Station, a reliable weekday bus service and a staffed interpretation centre. This also has an excellent publication sales section and regular exhibitions relating to the whole of the World Heritage Area.

## A LYRE BIRD CONFRONTATION

-- **Graham Alcorn, June 1986**

On a recent trip to the Snowy Mountains, rounding a corner on the very steep road above Tumut 2 Power Station, I disturbed a confrontation between two male lyre birds.

They faced each other about a metre apart, their long tails upright an arresting sight. Their tails were not expanded and spread over their heads as in the courtship display, but narrow, closed and straight upright, the magnificent lyre-shaped outside feathers outlining striking replicas of that instrument.

As June is the beginning of the lyre bird breeding season, I assume this was a male territorial challenge, leading up to physical combat if one bird did not give way.

Male lyre birds take up territories in which they build dancing mounds to which they attract females for mating with their song and dance act. Like male bower birds they take no part in nest building or rearing the chicks.

From now on, if you creep very, very cautiously through the bush towards a singing male lyre bird, you might be fortunate enough to witness his remarkable courtship dance.

Spreading his tail feathers over his head, exposing their white undersides, he jumps up and down, making them shimmer like a cascading fountain. But be very cautious - he's extremely alert.

(Source: UBMCS Newsletter 64, June 1986)

## What's on in the school holidays?

### The Fairfax Heritage walking Track

This wheelchair-accessible path meanders from the Blackheath Heritage Centre, skirting a hanging swamp, through a forest of peppermint and scribbly gums, to the dramatic cliffs and lookouts of Govetts Leap.

This easy walk is perfect for families who want to experience the Blue Mountains' diverse vegetation and spectacular views.

Find out about other, longer walks at the Heritage Centre.

### NPWS "Discovery" School Holiday Program:

- Aboriginal games for kids.
- Bush alive. Learn about our native bees.
- Junior ranger - navigational adventure.
- Leaping lizards. Do you love lizards? You can explore their habitat and find out how you can help to protect our reptiles.

For more information, go to the Blue Mountains Heritage Centre (end of Govetts Leap Road, Blackheath), phone 4787 8877 or google "Blue Mountains Heritage Centre."

# Paroo Darling (Peery) National Park Bird surveys

## Part 2: *Parrots*

-- Annette Cam

Excitingly, as I write this (*in the first week of June 2023*), there is more rain falling in the Paroo Darling NP. That might lead to more beautiful wildflowers across the landscape; hopefully they will be out when I am there in late August/September this year. If we are lucky, further rain will also fall in south-western Queensland in the Peery Lake catchment area and more water will move into the lake over the next few months.

The main aim of the work Graham and I are doing in the Paroo Darling NP is to learn about the bird species there and how they use the landscape, which of course includes the plants.

Our survey team members have currently sighted 111 species of birds in the surveys areas from the date of the first survey in April 2022 to the end of May 2023. All birds are beautiful, but perhaps the most exciting species for a bird watcher to see are those birds that you rarely see where you live. In walking out to the lake in mid-May, we were lucky enough to see Brolgas, thousands of breeding Australian Pelicans, and hundreds of Pink-eared Ducks and Red-necked Avocets.

Because of the good seasons with plenty of rain over the past few years, there have been many parrots, particularly roosting along creeks lined with *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*. We have many sightings of the wonderful Major Mitchell Cockatoos (also called Pink Cockatoos), Bourke Parrots, Mulga Parrots, Australian Ringnecks, Blue Bonnets, Little Corellas and Galahs. In September 2022, we watched hundreds of Cockatiels feeding on the seeds of wildflowers on the sand dunes at the north of Peery Lake and many flocks of Budgerigars.

Major Mitchell Cockatoos (*Lophochroa leadbeateri*) were recently added to the Federal threatened species list<sup>1</sup>, having already been listed as Vulnerable in NSW and Threatened in Victoria. We are lucky to have seen up to six Major Mitchell Cockatoos in a small flock on more than four days of our surveys. These beautiful cockatoos are about the size of a Sulfur-crested Cockatoo with a stunning red and yellow crest and pink under the wings.



The eucalyptus trees lining these creeks are very old and full of hollows which are important for our hollow dependent fauna.

It will be very interesting to see if the birds breed as successfully this year as they did last year!

<sup>1</sup><https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/major-mitchell-pink-cockatoo-among-new-threatened-species-on-growing-national-list-20230403-p5cxnb.html>



Images: Major Mitchell Cockatoos. These two photos were taken by Judy Willis in 2023 at Chinaman's Waterhole, along Pine Creek in the Paroo Darling National Park.

## Hut News archives

The latest re-typed Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society Newsletter No 66 from January 1987 is on our website [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au) in the Hut News archives. It was retyped from the original by Phoebe Coster in June 2023.

In this edition:

- Reg and Dulcie Toseland get a tour of the new established (!) Mt Tomah Botanic Gardens. (Reg was the President at that time)
- The Jamison Valley, Narrow Neck and Mt Werong are added to the National Park
- Graham Alcorn discusses small bird's nests and breeding success/failure
- Betty and Ewart Collings tour the Gordon River and discuss the Dam protests
- A Native Plant Weekend raises \$600 for the Land Preservation Fund (this fund was the beginning of what is now our Investment Portfolio)

I like this quote: "The Hut is a good source of revenue and we are fortunate to have it as most other conservation organisations have to resort to raffles and other means to raise funds." Replace 'The Hut' with 'The Nursery' or 'The Investment Portfolio' for a modern twist. This Newsletter, like all of them, is well worth a read.

-- Ross Coster, Membership Secretary

## Downpipe offcuts for Pardalote nest boxes

Peter Ridgeway gave an interesting talk on Nest Boxes for Wildlife. His idea to use downpipe offcuts, half filled with soil and buried in a bank, as nest boxes for Pardalotes came just in time. The pieces here can go for Pardalote housing use instead of into a skip.

Contact Karen on 0458 133 693 to pick up some downpipe from Bullaburra.



## DAM WALL RAISING FOR SAFETY REASONS: REALLY?

The Society was delighted by the NSW Government's announcement in April that it wouldn't be moving ahead with the Warra-gamba Dam wall-raising plans. Yet recent reports are suggesting that the wall may need to be raised for safety reasons.

The Society has long advocated against the wall raising as it would significantly impact large tracts of the World Heritage-listed Blue Mountains National Park and ruin around 65kms of wilderness waterways. The decision earlier this year, to shelve the plans, came as a huge relief to the Society but recent events have cast a shadow over the announcement.

News of needing to raise the wall for 'safety reasons' appeared in May, following a leaked report to the Guardian newspaper.

According to NSW Premier, Chris Minns, ministers have been briefed by engineers at Water NSW on the geotechnical risks associated with the dam wall, and repairs that may be needed. Yet, this appears to be the first time that safety issues have been discussed.

Former Blue Mountains MP and Chair of Wilderness Australia, Bob Debus speculates that "the same old dam-addicted bureaucrats are up to the same old tricks". See: <https://www.bluemountainsgazette.com.au/story/8201068/we-dont-know-yet-if-there-are-genuine-safety-issues-latest-twist-in-dam-wall-saga/>

The Society is keen to know more about what is being considered. We want the NSW Labor government to stand by its commitment and also to restore legislation which prohibits flooding in any NSW national park.

**Once that is done, we will know it's truly safe.**

**-- National Parks Subcommittee**



## THE POWER OF YOUR MONEY 3 easy ways to make a difference

-- Nathalie Verellen

**Sustainability and Climate Change Officer**

Talking about climate change with your family and friends can be difficult. Many people are worried but don't know what to do with their feelings of anxiety, worry and feelings of not being able to make a difference. But, you CAN make a difference and it is not difficult.

Money talks. There is no clearer message than using your own money to make a point. You can DVEST your money from fossil fuel.

In the last 2 years (2021-2022) the 4 big banks in Australia have invested \$13.1 billion from Australians in fossil fuel projects and this is where a difference can be made! (1)

Here are some suggestions on how to clean your money. (But beware of "greenwashing") (2)

**SUPERANNUATION:** Many superannuation funds DO fund fossil fuel projects. Check your fund and see where they put your money. Some superannuation funds do not invest in fossil fuel companies, others take it one step further and do not invest in companies that invest/work with fossil fuel companies. Check your fund's website. Some funds have different investment options which are more socially and environmentally aware. A switch may be easier than you think.

**BANK:** Check your bank's fossil fuel investment policy and check out which banks do NOT invest in any fossil fuel projects. Market forces website will give valuable information about this. Check it out.

**ENERGY PROVIDER:** Many energy providers have different plans where you can choose to have either a portion of your power provided by renewables or 100%. Some companies use only renewable sources. Changing the source of your home power sends a strong message to your provider to clean up their act, putting them on notice.

You can get further information from [www.marketforces.org.au](http://www.marketforces.org.au)

### Notes:

(1) <https://www.marketforces.org.au/campaigns/banks/banking-climate-failure-2023/>

(2) What is greenwashing? "The potential for funds to over represent the extent to which their practices are environmentally friendly, sustainable or ethical is referred to in the market as "greenwashing" <https://asic.gov.au/about-asic/news-centre/articles/what-is-greenwashing-and-what-are-its-potential-threats/>

## Robert's Ranges: A series of photographs of some of the walk locations promoted by Robert Sloss

Due to the resuscitation of the "Miner's Track" by NPWS, both the Katoomba to Kanangra walk and Robert Sloss's beloved Katoomba to Mittagong walk now start from Narrow Neck Lookout on Cliff Drive. This zoomed photograph, taken from the lookout, shows an early morning walker ascending the Narrow Neck zigzags on the common first leg of these classic walks.

Photo by Christine Davies.

## **Parking issues - Valley of the Waters Wentworth Falls**

Traffic congestion, safety issues and lack of parking during high visitation periods are ongoing issues at popular lookouts along the Southern Scenic Escarpment from Wentworth Falls to Medlow Bath. Jim Smith's recent letter to Hut News highlighted the issues of parking and traffic issues at the Conservation Hut at Wentworth Falls, the stepping off point for many popular walks.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) recently upgraded the car park and toilets at the Hut, making the toilets more accessible and slightly increasing the number of car parking spaces. The Society supported the recent upgrade as it addressed many safety concerns.

There have been a number of proposals in the past to undertake traffic upgrades and expansion of car parking at the Hut including turning the triangle of bushland at the corner of Fitzgerald/ Fletcher/ Valley Road into a roundabout or alternatively creating additional car parking. Jim's letter referenced a recent Blue Mountains City Council meeting paper on safety and traffic issues at Valley Road which highlighted a number of previous proposals raised by residents to improve traffic flow and safety, including installation of a roundabout.

It is important to note that the Council paper did not recommend a particular course of action but that "Council would undertake a full review of the area and refer the suite of issues and solutions to the Local Traffic Committee" (Council Business Paper 26 April 2023 Item 15).

The Society has previously opposed (most recently in 2019) the destruction of the remnant bushland at the corner of Fitzgerald/ Fletcher/ Valley Road in order to address traffic and car parking issues and will continue to do so. The Society has campaigned to both Council and the NPWS to look at more innovative alternatives to resolving parking and traffic issues at popular lookouts such as small bus services. The Society will continue to monitor any future proposals in relation to car parking and traffic management at the Hut and will continue to lobby that conservation values should not be compromised.

The Society urges local residents and community members who have an interest in the issues related to traffic and car parking at the Hut to write to Council and express their concerns.

**-- Land Use Subcommittee**

## **Nest Boxes for Wildlife**

**Did you know Australia has the most hollow-dependent wildlife in the world?** Tree hollows support a huge variety of native animals - sugar gliders, kookaburras, microbats, ducks, owls, parrots, galahs, cockatoos and possums - for nesting, roosting and shelter.

It takes at least 80 years for trees to start forming hollows - and close to 300 years for a hollow large enough for a brushtail possum or a cockatoo to use. But, unfortunately, older trees are getting harder to come by. With fewer natural tree hollows around, you can help native wildlife by installing a nest box.

**Blue Mountains Conservation Society held a Nest Boxes for Wildlife Event at Lawson on 27th May. The speaker was Peter Ridgeway.**

The Society's Environmental Education Officer Alan Page reported: "I can't recall a more interesting and engaging presentation. The audience of fifty were enthralled. Peter not only covered the subject but warmly answered questions throughout his presentation - which was well over an hour."

Peter Ridgeway studied nest boxes and how they are used over many years for NSW Government Local Land Services Greater Sydney. His presentation included first-hand knowledge and experience of nest boxes: the size, shape and position of the opening for different species; materials to use; how to affix it so as not to damage the tree, and how to encourage a variety of species to use the boxes and discourage too many Brushtail Possums and unwanted species like Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and feral honey bees. On the other hand, Kookaburras, according to BirdLife Australia, are disappearing in suburbia because of loss of hollow-bearing trees and can benefit from suitable nest boxes.

For those who missed the event or want detailed information, please go to [https://www.bluemountains.org.au/events/2023/Peter\\_Ridgeway\\_BMCS\\_Nest\\_Boxes\\_talk\\_27-5-2023.pdf](https://www.bluemountains.org.au/events/2023/Peter_Ridgeway_BMCS_Nest_Boxes_talk_27-5-2023.pdf) (or type in the short link) <https://bit.ly/nestboxtalk>

**The Society has a number of ready-made nest boxes** which were kindly donated to us by Michael Graham and are suitable for Rosellas. If you want one of these nest boxes, please contact: Andrew Solomon [events@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:events@bluemountains.org.au) or 0408 267 078.

**-- Hut News Team**

TV program review: (Nine Network)

## **"Police Rescue Australia"**

The first few episodes of the Nine Network's series, "Police Rescue Australia", could equally be called "Police Rescue Blue Mountains". Stunning scenes of locations such as Fortress Ridge, the Wollangambe canyons, Narrow Neck Plateau and Adelina Falls at Lawson are the backdrops to absorbing stories of how the NSW Police Force Rescue and Bomb Disposal Squad go about their daily tasks.

In an era in which social media, and even some hard copy publications, tempt people into competing with each other to "conquer" the least accessible Blue Mountains beauty spots, it could be difficult to tell the stories of people who get into trouble without excessive moralising. Even so, this series manages to stay on the message of **encouraging everyone to seek help from emergency services as soon as they need it** without feeling overcome with shame.

It emphasised cooperation of the police with NSW Rural Fire Service and other agencies. There was a moment at the top of Wentworth Falls in Episode 2 when an officer briefly told a visitor they were not supposed to have a dog in the National Park, before getting straight on with locating an injured walker.

This series is well worth watching for anybody interested in visitor management and the resources available for such management, even if that is not the program's main theme. The scenes of police rescue

(Continued on page 9)



## Show us the numbers!

### Backlash against alleged concealment of major project details

#### Opinion by Don Morison

On May 25, award winning Nine Newspapers reporter, David Crowe, posted that the Labor, Liberal and National Parties had combined to defeat an amendment in the House of Representatives that concerned Federally-funded infrastructure. The amendment was supported by The Greens parliamentarians and most other cross-benchers.

What the amendment was about was giving the public more information about the benefits and costs of infrastructure projects worth more than \$100 million that the Federal Government is considering contributing to. If not defeated, the amendment moved by NSW Independent, Allegra Spender, could have massively improved the standard of public debate about the highway and road tunnel projects between Katoomba and Lithgow, which are currently under review and which have been questioned by the Blue Mountains Conservation Society and numerous other groups.

Depending on the cost and suitability for Federal contributions, further plans to change the wall of Warra-gamba Dam as well as projects affecting the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area could also come to be discussed by a better-informed public.

In opposing Allegra Spender's amendment, Labor's Federal Infrastructure Minister, Catherine King, said that it could lead to "sensitive information" being publicised. Doesn't the public have a right to feel even more sensitive about being denied this information?

Ecological systems in the Greater Blue Mountains and elsewhere have been threatened by sensationalised infrastructure projects. What the majority of Federal parliamentary cross-benchers are seeking is a more responsible approach to allocating public money.

It may seem difficult to put a dollar value on retaining more natural areas or diverting public money into projects that rehabilitate the environment. But the techniques for quantifying such values are becoming more sophisticated. In recent years, it has become clear that vested interests are the ones most fearing the full disclosure of financial details relating to environmentally intrusive developments.

The concept of "commercial in confidence" information seems to be too often an excuse for stopping the



Clearing natural vegetation to make way for a five-lane section of highway to nowhere! As Hut News goes to press, a corridor of natural vegetation in Medlow Bath is being removed. The previous State Government believed this would fit in with a fairly small component of highway upgrading it organised, with the entire four-lane route between Katoomba and Lithgow still nowhere near approval. However, despite many calls, there has been no Environmental Impact Statement for the entire Katoomba to Lithgow section. Funding for the overall project is almost certain to depend on the Federal Government processes discussed in this article. Photo by Christine Davies.

public from being able to properly judge whether Government decisions about resource allocation are being made in the public interest. Only a very few parliamentarians have been willing to say in public that they think the practice known as "pork barrelling" is a good idea.

A very large amount of public money has gone into consultancies, planning, supposed public input exercises and preparatory work for environmentally damaging projects in our region and elsewhere. Has this occurred even when those in the best position to know think that the projects in question would have minimal chance of passing an objective benefit-cost analysis test?

#### Review: "Police Rescue Australia"

(continued from page 8)

personnel having to pick their way through crowds of lightly-clad and poorly prepared visitors on the very steep walkway down the side of Wentworth Falls were concerning.

This Police Rescue Australia series should help provoke discussion about National Park visitor management generally. It does reinforce the message that **so much of the best of the mountains can be seen by those who undertake activities that suit the prevailing conditions and their own abilities.**

-- Hut News Team.

## Membership Matters

Many of you have never given us your e-mail address. If you don't want to, that's fine, but ...

If we have your email address, you could be getting our weekly E-News, we could be sending you Renewal and Reminder Notices, and Receipts, by e-mail, saving paper, postage and effort.

Maybe you have given us one e-mail address for the household, but you have other e-mail addresses that you use?

If you want to update your Membership by supplying me with your up-to-date address, or an additional e-mail address, just send me an e-mail and it will magically happen.

-- Ross Coster

Membership Secretary

## Thought-provoking New Zealand 4: When cooperation supplants conflict

10<sup>th</sup> July 1985 was the worst day in the history of relations between New Zealand and France. Journalists from the Australian TV program, Four Corners, established that the bombing of the Greenpeace ship, "Rainbow Warrior", in Auckland harbour on that day was carried out by French secret agents. The bombing killed a Dutch-born photographer who was one of the Greenpeace activists attempting to stop French nuclear testing in French Polynesia (which did not end until more than a decade later). An era of tense relations followed, including a year of incarceration for two French agents arrested by New Zealand authorities.

Today, in the small North Island town of Dargaville, masts from the Rainbow Warrior have been embedded in the soil near the local museum as a memorial to that incident.

By contrast, the New Zealand and French flags fly side by side in the South Island tourist village of Akaroa. In the late 1830s, as the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi by British leaders and Maori chiefs grew near, many Europeans were looking for a new life. Poor communication meant that both French and British immigrants bound for Akaroa hoped to see familiar flags when they arrived. In fact, only those who saluted the Union Jack had their expectations met. Even so, the situation was resolved by those of British and French descent populating Akaroa together.

When members of the Thursday Interpretive Nature Group visited Akaroa in March 2023, we learned that Akaroa is the gateway to the South Island's highest profile marine sanctuary. Several dolphin species, including Hector's Dolphin, the world's smallest, share Akaroa's inlet with White-flipped Penguins, seals, the occasional whale and the New Zealand Paua, or Abalone.

It is the Paua which grows the trinket known as the Blue Pearl, made up of thousands of layers of nacre and conchiolin.

It was inspiring to be in this very peaceful place and know that the descendants of peoples once in conflict shared our purpose to honour its ecological treasures.



Images:

New Zealand and French flags on a building, a stone's throw from Akaroa Inlet. (Christine Davies)

A blue pearl from Akaroa (Dina Burrell)

From the ship's resting place in Auckland Harbour, the masts of the Rainbow Warrior were taken nearly 200 kilometres to the Dargaville Museum. (Zoohistorian, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons.)

Text by Christine Davies.



### Blue Mountains Conservation Society Planning and 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](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml)

### How to Join the Society

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is an incorporated voluntary organisation of more than 900 members. Our goal is to protect, conserve, and advocate for, the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains. You can become a member. Join online at [www.bluemountains.org.au/joining.shtml](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/joining.shtml) or phone 0418 462 576.

Membership includes our monthly newsletter, Hut News, by post or e-mail (or both).

### Members!

We want to hear from you. Please consider contributing content for Hut News. The deadline for Hut News is the 15th day of the previous month. [hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au) or enquiries to Christine 4787 7246.





## BUSHWALKING:

Enjoy the bush, learn about the Blue Mountains natural environment and find out why bushwalking has been a popular pastime in the Blue Mountains for more than 100 years. Our bushwalking convenor is Doug Nicholls [dougnicholls@bigpond.com](mailto:dougnicholls@bigpond.com), phone 0455 850 735.

Walks are graded and generally suitable for walkers of average fitness but may vary in degree of difficulty. Participants need to be aware of their own capabilities and can discuss with the bushwalking convenor, group coordinator or leader.

Underneath is a brief summary of walks and leaders for this month. **Check our website <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/bushwalking.shtml> for a detailed walks program and program changes.**

**MONDAY LEISURE WALKS:** Short day walks 3-5 hours. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. Coordinator: Keith Dorrian 04111 62345. [keithdor53@hotmail.com](mailto:keithdor53@hotmail.com)

Jul 10 **Pippas Pass and Florabella Pass.** ~10km. Blaxland Rwy Stn CP north side 9.10. Barbara Crighton 0428962460

Jul 17 **Lockley Pylon**, 8km, 160 m ascent/decent, Baptist Church CP Leura, Cnr The Mall /GWH, Carpool, Angela 0427 133 327

Jul 24 **Ruined Castle from Narrow Neck lookout** via Golden Stairs 12.5 km. Katoomba Stn CP 8.30. Carpool, Lyn Bevington 0432 352 850

July 31 **Glenbrook station to Elizabeth / Marge's lookouts**, return via Glenbrook lagoon, 6km. Glenbrook station 9:20am, Gr2, Melanie Lawson 0431 214 687

Aug 7 **Grand Canyon, Neates Glen to Evans Lookout**, Blackheath N.C. 9:40, Car pool, Wayne Read 0429 021 296

Aug 14 **Empire Pass Lawson**, 7km, 270m ascent / descent, some creek crossings, Lawson Bowling Club CP 8.45, Lyn Bevington 0432 352 850

**TUESDAY FITNESS WALKS:** Coordinator: Susan Nicholls (4754 1516 [suerosn@bigpond.net.au](mailto:suerosn@bigpond.net.au)).

Jul 4 **Terrace Falls Circuit (Hazelbrook)** G2/10K, Sharon 0404622515.

Jul 11 **Bondi Junction to Rose Bay via Cooper Park** G2/6K, Anna 0403711457.

Jul 18 **Pippas Pass to Florabella Pass (Blaxland/Warrimoo)** G3/7K, Roger 0449902774.

Jul 25 **Chapman Ridge (Faulconbridge)** G2/6K, Ken 0417514534.

Aug 1 **Kings Cave & Paradise Pool (Linden/Woodford)** G3/7K, Sharon 0404622515.

**THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS** are 2-3 hours and are conducted at a leisurely pace. Coordinator: Beverley Thompson (4757 2076 [denfenella12@bigpond.com](mailto:denfenella12@bigpond.com))

Jul 13 **Red Gum Park and Genevieve Fire Trail, Bullaburra.**

Cnr Boronia/GWH 8.45am. Take lunch. Libby 4759 2969. Gr2.

Jul 20 **Adeline Park Circuit.** Faulconbridge Station CP (north side) 9.00am. Take lunch. Carpool. Ros 0417 261 465. Gr2.

Jul 27 **Christmas in July, park opp. Lawson Swimming Pool.**

Bring plate to share, own drinks, cups, plates, cutlery, chair and ? Picnic table. Meet 12 noon. Beverley 4757 2076. Gr1.

Aug 3 **Picnic Point, Lawsons Lookout, Fairy Dell Circuit, Springwood.** Meet CP behind Westpac Bank, Springwood 9.15am. Take lunch. Ros 0417 261 465. Gr 2.

Aug 12 **Birdwood Gully. (4km).** Springwood Station, north side 9.30am. Take lunch. Car pool. Helen 4751 7704. Gr1

Aug 17 **Botanic Gardens and Mrs Macquaries Chair (4kms).** Meet top of escalators Central Station 9.25am. Take lunch. Maurice 0402 402 783. Gr1.

**SATURDAY WALKS:** Usually a full day, longer walk at a faster pace. Coordinator Harold Thompson 04090 10736, [Harold.thompson@bigpond.com](mailto:Harold.thompson@bigpond.com)).

Jul 8 **Rainbow Cave & Numantia Falls.** Harold 0409010737.

Faulconbridge. Stn. CP. 8.30am. Gr 3. 9km. Map Springwood  
Jul 15. **Megalong Cemetery to Bowtells Swing Bridge.** Alice 0425738766. Blackheath Stn CP 8.30. Gr 3, 12km. Map Hampton.

Jul 22 **Walford Walls & Lyon Rill.** Harold 0409010737. Mt Hay Rd Near Leura School 8.30am. Gr 3, 10km. Map Katoomba

Jul 29 **The Barnacles.** Harold 0409010737. Mt Victoria. Stn. CP. 8.30am. Gr 3, 10km. Map Mt Wilson

Aug 5 **Deep Pass to Guzzlers Ruins.** Harold 0409010737. Mt Victoria. Stn. CP. 8.30am. Gr 3, 8km. Map Rock Hill.

Visit the Saturday walks facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/bmcslongerbushwalks?fref=nf>

## Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition

Australian National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour, Sydney.

<https://www.sea.museum/whats-on/exhibitions/wildlife>

From the Natural History Museum in London, this exhibition features over 100 exceptional images which capture fascinating animal behaviour, spectacular species and the breathtaking diversity of the natural world.

Using photography's unique emotive power to engage and inspire audiences, the images shine a light on stories and species around the world and encourage a future of advocating for the planet.

Wildlife Photographer of the Year is the most prestigious photography event of its kind, providing a global platform that showcases the natural world's most astonishing and challenging sights. The competition receives over 50,000 entries from all over the world.

These extraordinary images showcase the rich diversity of life on Earth and spark curiosity and wonder. Telling the story of a planet under pressure, the Wildlife

Photographer of the Year exhibition illuminates the urgent challenges we face and the collective action we need to take. This year's inspiring exhibition will move and empower audiences to advocate for the natural world.

The exhibition will be at the Australian National Maritime Museum until the end of October.

### WINTER SCHOOL HOLIDAY EVENTS:

"Every day of the school holidays is programmed for a full day of discovery and fun for the whole family"

<https://www.sea.museum/whats-on/events/kids-activity-trail>





**GRASSHOPPERS** can jump about the length of a meter. If humans could jump the way grasshoppers can, we could leap more than the length of a football field.



**KANGAROOS** move their hind legs together when they are on land. However, when they swim kangaroos kick each leg independently.



**FROGS** do not chew their food and they swallow food with their eyes shut. They also absorb water through their skin so they don't need to drink.



**JUMP**