

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Issue No. 416
August 2023



Biodiversity Concerns Community Survey

In June 2023, the Biodiversity Council released the results of their community survey on biodiversity. It is wonderful to see how much the people of Australia value natural areas, their plants, animals, wetlands, forests and rivers.

The report shows that 95% of Australians, in both regional and urban areas, are concerned about a wide range of threats to nature including:

- Increasing levels of waste and pollution
- The extinction of native plants and animals
- The loss of natural places and pollinator species (87%)
- Land clearing (86%)
- The impact of climate change on biodiversity (85%)

97% of Australians want more action to look after Australia's natural environment. Most respondents (60%) feel that the key responsibility lies with the Australian Government, and also with state and territory governments and local councils. Most Australians also consider that every person has a responsibility to act.

Australians support restoring water to wetlands and rivers (85%), banning native forest logging (70%), requiring businesses to report their impacts on nature (71%) and introducing laws to prevent domestic cats roaming (70%). Australians also support restoration actions, including:

- Restoring nature in cities and towns (84%)
- Establishing fenced reserves (77%)
- Buying high biodiversity value land to create more protected areas (75%)

This data comes from the Biodiversity Council's "Biodiversity Concerns Community Survey" June 2023. You can access a summary factsheet and the full report on their website <https://biodiversitycouncil.org.au>

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



Members of the Plant Study Group were delighted to find a plant they hadn't seen before, ***Mirbelia speciosa***, during a visit to Dharawal National Park. Read about the trip on page 4. Photo supplied by Jill Dark.

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 or phone 0418 462 576.

Membership includes our monthly newsletter, Hut News, by post and online.

A reluctant traveller?

This harmless vegetarian was rescued in a northern suburb of Sydney, from the floor of a supermarket, near the fruit and vegetable section. It was on its back and unable to upright itself. At 7cm in length, the **Rhinoceros Beetle** (*Xylotrupes ulysses*) is Australia's largest beetle. Only the males have horns.

Rhino Beetles live in warm coastal tropical or subtropical climates. In Australia they are mostly found in Queensland, the Northern Territory and northern New South Wales. So, why was this beetle found in Sydney? Had it arrived, undetected, in a delivery of vegetables from warmer climes?



Rhinoceros Beetle: Photograph by Lillian O'Rourke.

President's report -- Annette Cam

Update from Management Committee meeting 15/7/23:

General Meeting – we are hoping that we will have access to the Conservation Hut in September or October. Once we are certain of access, we will organize a General Meeting so members can get together and we can celebrate the opening of the renovated Conservation Hut!

The Strategic Planning Subcommittee has organized the next Planning Day for 19 August 2023. Following this meeting, we will publish a summary of decisions made on the focus for the next year, and requests for assistance from the membership in supporting ConSoc in areas of interest.

Environmental Roundtable – meeting with Minister Penny Sharpe on 5 July 2023. Annette Cam and Keith Muir (Wilderness Australia and BMCS National Parks committee member) attended this meeting, along with representatives from about 35 NSW environmental and conservation organisations. MP Trish Doyle was at the meeting also. There were three main themes to the discussion (attendees were invited to comment on each of these areas):

- Protecting what's left;
- Restoring habitats
- Right regulations, right place

Minister Sharpe also spoke about protecting koalas, and the formation of a Koala National Park; a commitment to expanding the National Park Estate so that NSW will have 30% of its land area protected by 2030; review of the Biodiversity Conservation Act and the Local Land Services, including offset issues; the importance of State and Federal Governments working together and the value of conservation organisations, local communities, private landholders and government working together in a coordinated way.

Participants also raised the critical importance of preventing any further loss of habitat from land clearing, an effective response to the increased bushfire risks associated with changing climate, having effective environmental laws and increased funding for research and for conservation.

Western Sydney airport flight paths. The Society remains concerned about the impact of the recently released flight paths on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and its fauna and flora, and the impact on the wellbeing of the residents of the Blue Mountains. Members of the management committee attending a briefing on the flight paths on 18 July.

There are community briefings in July and August. If you can't attend these, MP Susan Templeman has **invited all residents to share their views on the flight paths with her via an online survey. The link is: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WSIFlightpathcommunitysurvey>**

Susan Templeman has invited ConSoc to meet with her to discuss our concerns about the impact of the flight paths on the World Heritage Area. We are also organizing a review of the literature related to the impact of the airport and aircraft noise on the values of the World Heritage Area and this will form the basis of our submission to the Environmental Impact Statement when it is released. ConSoc will coordinate with the group RAWSA (Residents Against Western Sydney Airport) on this issue.

Feedback and complaints procedure.

The Society has updated its complaints procedure. If you have any feedback to send or an issue to raise, you are welcome to contact the Society or the President on their email addresses and we will get back to you! (see note on Page 3).

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THE DEADLINE FOR SEPTEMBER HUT NEWS IS 15 AUGUST

hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

Enquiries: Christine 4787 7246

Update on Wentworth Falls zoo/hotel

As reported in the June *Hut News*, in March this year the proponent of the Wentworth Falls zoo / hotel development lodged a request for revised SEARs (Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements) with the NSW Department of Planning. Updated plans were also lodged which included a new intersection with traffic lights on the highway and a new 'Predators of Australia' exhibit featuring fresh- and salt-water crocodiles. If revised SEARs were approved, the proponent would have had another 2 years beyond the current due date (July 1 2023) to lodge the Development Application (DA) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Department then consulted with the Blue Mountains City Council, Transport for NSW and the Department's Environment and Heritage Group. After considering these agencies' responses and the proponent's response in reply, on June 28 the Department of Planning informed the proponent that the SEARs would not be revised and the DA and EIS would have to be lodged by July 1. Otherwise, the SEARs would expire and an application for a new one would have to be lodged. The letter added: "Given the significance of the concerns raised by Council, TfNSW and EHG regarding the proposed amended layout and site access arrangements, the Department strongly recommends that you consider revising the design of your proposal before submitting a new request for SEARs."

According to the *Blue Mountains Gazette* (online edition June 29) the proponent immediately wrote to the Department in response, stating "We invite you to reconsider the position you have taken and confirm that the period for making of the development application is extended to 28 June, 2025. Please do so by close of business tomorrow [June 29], absent which our client will on 30 June 2023, file its summons seeking judicial review of your decision."

July 1 passed without the proponent lodging the required documentation, so the SEARs for the proposal have officially expired. So far there is no news on whether or not a summons seeking a judicial review of the Department's decision has been lodged.

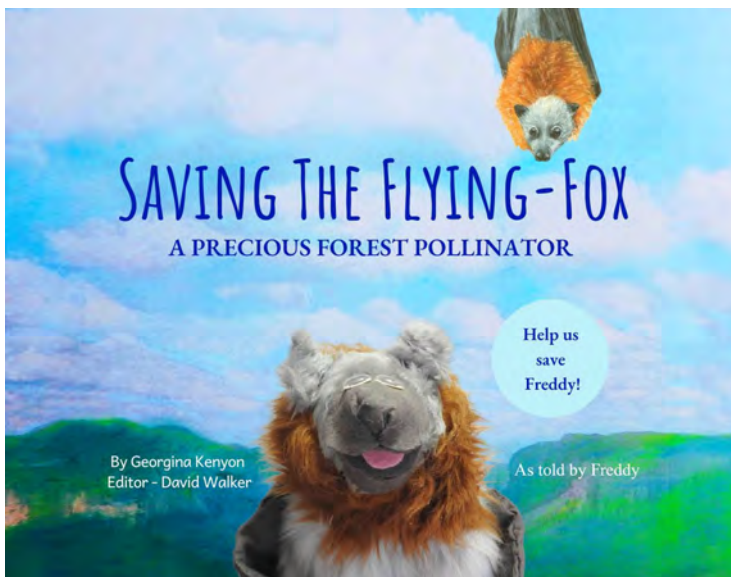
The proponent's options at this point seem to be:

- Lodge a new application for SEARs
- Seek a judicial review of the Department's decision to not revise the SEARs
- Pursue works under the existing 1989 'zombie' consent

This is not over yet!

For more details visit our website: <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/crocpark/>

-- Land Use Subcommittee



Saving the Flying-Fox out now!

A new children's book about saving our forests!

Saving the Flying-Fox is a story about the endangered flying-fox. We rely on this fascinating animal to keep so many of our forests healthy. In fact, whole ecosystems depend on the Flying-fox and other bats for their survival.

"This book is absolutely adorable. It's beautifully illustrated and is highly relevant to teaching kids and adults alike about the importance of flying foxes for our forests." Annabel Dorrestein, ecologist.

Suitable for children and adults aged 7 years and up!

Available at: www.naturebooks.com.au, through bookshops or call Georgie on 0470 152 862 (mobile) or georgiekenyon@gmail.com (email).

The Pilliga Project

The Pilliga Project documentary is a film about a magnificently beautiful and huge forest in North West NSW, in Australia. The forest is crucial to life across a vast region. Millions of Australians rely on the Pilliga forest for drinking water and to grow our food, that includes the people of Sydney. It seems mad that such an important place would be under threat. But it is. And this film shows the forest, its threats and how it will impact you. Go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWXJzPYD9UY> (or Google "The Pilliga Project").

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. Enquiries to hutnews@bluemountains.org.au or phone Christine 4787 7246.

Feedback or Complaints

If you have some feedback or complaint about the Society, you can send an email to the society's email address - bmcs@bluemountains.org.au - or to the President's email address - president@bluemountains.org.au

Please ensure you provide your name in the email.

We take correspondence seriously and will respond.

Bus Trip to Dharawal National Park

-- Meredith Brownhill

Dharawal National Park is a delightful place to walk in, admire plants and listen to many birds. Plant Study Group and some other BMCS members had an enjoyable bus trip and day in Dharawal Country on 9th July, 2023.

This park is still fairly new, being officially created in 2012, although parts of it have been protected as a Special Water Catchment since 1927. The benefits of protection and conservation are evidenced by its high biodiversity with 778 recorded plant species and 282 fauna species. There are large communities of frogs and reptiles - and Koalas too.

There is a big community of *Banksias*, such as *Banksia ericifolia*, with its winter golden yellow flowers and spectacular red styles. The Banksias were a joy to behold.

The Eucalypt Woodlands had a varied understorey with several *Grevilleas*, such as *Grevillea capitellata* and several other species that need detailed identification. With shrieks of delight we found *Mirbelia speciose*, another new plant to us. The Scribbly Gums, *Eucalyptus haemastoma*, were large spreading trees with fabulous scribbles from the *Ogmograptis scribula* moth.

There are several lovely walks starting from the NW entrance, near O'Hares Creek lookout. The pleasant ambience of the walks make the 2hrs driving on the highway worthwhile as a day out. If you decide to go, consider joining a walk with an Indigenous guide. Try to car pool or go as a group in the community bus. Perhaps BMCS could have a system for us all to offset our vehicle emissions.



Lesley, Ros, Meredith and Robin (PGA members) - Liz McQueen
"Scribbles" - Robin Murray
Mirbelia speciose - Jill Dark

BIOCHAR – How is this relevant to the Blue Mountains?

-- Nathalie Verellen, Sustainability and Climate Change Officer

Biochar has its roots in South America. It is known that about 2,500 years ago Amazonian Indians used a technique of making a type of charcoal and mixing it with other organic matters to fertilize their soil, called "Terra Preta" (Amazonian Dark Earth). Until today, these soils remain naturally fertile without any need for further improvements.

Biochar is a fine residue, a type of charcoal, produced by heating organic matter in a low oxygen environment, called pyrolysis.

We are in a Climate Crisis. The Blue Mountains National Park has been deeply affected by the 2019-2020 bushfires followed by three years of La Nina weather, leaving the soil so moist that it has triggered many landslides, damaging natural landscapes and roads as well as creating favourable conditions for weeds to flourish, preventing native plants from regrowing. Our National Park is having a hard time

dealing with all these extreme weather conditions.

Roy Tasker, a Professor at the University of Western Sydney and a Blue Mountains resident is currently working on a project involving Biochar. Professor Tasker says it is crazy that green waste from the Blue Mountains gets transported to the Hunter Valley. We could have a pyrolysis plant in the Blue Mountains, reducing transportation costs and pollution and helping the climate crisis and our National Park.

Biochar production from green waste prevents the release of carbon dioxide that would result if the waste decomposed naturally or was burned in air. Biochar locks in carbon, helping reducing Co2 in our atmosphere.

Anything that helps reducing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere is a tool to help slow down extreme weather events. Biochar can be a helpful tool to do this. The process of making Biochar creates energy, reduces waste and Biochar improves the condition of the soil and the water holding capacity, increasing soil productivity. What's not to like about these little bits of black gold?

(More on page 5)

Take part in the platy-project this September: Look for a platypus and help researchers better understand and protect them!

You'll never forget your first platypus encounter. It's a magical moment when this strange and adorable creature emerges from ripples in the water.

This September, the Australian Conservation Foundation is asking people like you to head down to their local creek or river, find a quiet place on the bank, try to spot a platypus and record what you see.

You might be surprised by the places the elusive platypus calls home. In urban rivers, suburban creeks, farm dams, and local reservoirs – a platypus probably lives closer than you think.

By taking part in the platy-project, you'll help researchers understand more about this elusive animal and how we can better protect it.

Go to: <https://www.acf.org.au/platy-project-signup>
Enter your details to get all the information and resources you need to spot a weird and wonderful platypus this September.

It's true, you'll never forget your first platypus encounter ...

Although the Platypus is widespread, it is rarely seen. In 1836, 26-year-old Charles Darwin walked along Coxs River at Wallerawang and saw a number of platypuses cavorting. His guide shot one so he could have a better look at it. Darwin described the area and its wildlife, including the platypus, in his book "Voyage of the Beagle".

Members of the TING group have seen platypus at Dove Lake (Tasmania), the Turon River, the Snowy River (Dalgety), Tidbinbilla (Australian Capital Territory), Platypus Flat on the Dorrigo Plateau and, the best sighting of all, the Blue Pool at Jenolan. We usually try to take a photograph. The Blue Pool was damaged in floods after the 2019/20 bushfires. Hopefully the Blue Pool's exhibitionist Platypus (or his descendants) found another home downstream. The most recent time I visited Taronga Zoo, there was an excellent Platypus display. **Christine Davies.**

"Native Fauna of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area"

This book by Blue Mountains ecologists Peter and Judy Smith, with illustrations by Kate Smith, was published in 2019. It describes the distribution, abundance, habitat and conservation significance of every mammal, bird, reptile and frog species that has been reliably recorded in the area since European settlement. Underneath is the entry for the Platypus:

The Platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) is an uncommon, widespread resident found in rivers, creeks and open wetlands. Recent records include the Abercrombie River, Coxs River, Kedumba River, Bedford Creek, Horse-shoe Falls, Blue Gum Swamp Creek and Glenbrook Creek (Blue Mountains NP), Carne Creek (Gardens of Stone NP), Capertee River, Colo River, Dunns Swamp (Wollemi NP), Kowmung River (Kanangra-Boyd NP), Blue Lake (Jenolan KCR) AND Nattai River (Nattai NP). Nesting and resting borrows are dug into the river bank above the water level. The entrance hole is arch-shaped (in contrast to the circular entrance hole of the Water Rat's burrow).

The book is available from local bookshops, or contact Peter and Judy Smith smitheco@ozemail.com.au



Gordon's Wattle

One of the delights of bushwalking is to find a plant that you haven't seen before. It's even more rewarding when you identify it as a threatened species.

Seeing Gordon's Wattle (*Acacia gordonii*) in full bloom on the Faulconbridge Ridge Trail was such an experience. It has bright yellow globular flowers but, unlike the Sunshine Wattle (*A. terminalis*) with its feathery bipinnate leaves and the Hedgehog Wattle (*A. echinula*) with its prickly leaves, its leaves* are crowded, and warty and not prickly. (*Its leaves are actually phyllodes which are leaf stems - and are leaf-like in appearance and function).

Gordon's Wattle was named after Eric Gordon who found the plant near Bilpin in 1961. It was initially classified as a subspecies of *A. brunioides*.

Our own Isobel Bowden (1908-1986), in an article on Blue Mountains Wattles published in the September 1972 edition of our newsletter, describes it as "a low growing shrub found at Linden and Bilpin having exceptionally rich golden blooms". Isobel's article, with images taken by this author, can be found on the Society's website:

www.bluemountains.org.au/stories/bm-wattles.shtml

It's interesting to note that this rare plant can be found on both sides of the lower Grose Valley. It can also be found at Glenorie. Gordon's Wattle is in flower in August and September.

-- Alan Page, Environmental Education Officer (Photograph by Alan Page)

More about Biochar (from page 4)

FUN FACT: There are many different types of products that can be used to make Biochar. A promising project by a Brisbane based company is turning a local town's "Humans Number 2's" into Biochar, using the energy of the production of Biochar to fuel the facilities energy needs. What remains of all this poo is a clean natural product that can be used for agriculture. A short documentary called "The number 2 solution" is available to be viewed on iView: <https://iview.abc.net.au/show/number-2-solution>

Honeyeaters at Paroo Darling (Peery) National Park

-- Annette Cam

The honeyeaters are a unique and important Australian bird family (the *Meliphagidae*).

Honeyeaters are present across most Australian habitats and are important for pollinating flowers, as well as spreading seeds of some flowering plants. Honeyeaters have a brush-tipped tongue which they use to collect nectar from flowers. They also eat insects, pollen, manna and sometimes berries.

Many species of honeyeater are mobile, moving around to locate seasonal nectar sources. They follow the flowering of the eucalyptus trees and other nectar-producing plants, such as species of *Eremophila* (Emu Bush) in the Paroo Darling.

The honeyeater species we have recorded in the Paroo Darling National Park so far are the Singing Honeyeater, Spiny-Cheeked Honeyeater, Black Honeyeater, Pied Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, White-fronted Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner. Today, I have focused on two of these honeyeater species.



Black Honeyeater (C)Julie Sarna 2015 birdlifephotography.org.au

The **Black Honeyeater (*Sugomel niger*)** is a small honeyeater with a long, slender down-curved bill. Males are black and white as shown in the photo. Females have a brown head and upper body, a speckled grey-brown chest and white abdomen. The Black Honeyeater is found in the drier parts of mainland Australia. They are nomadic, moving around to find flowering food plants such as flowering eucalyptus, Emu-bush and mistletoe. The Black Honeyeater is found in open woodlands and shrublands or arid and semi-arid regions. Black Honeyeaters, particularly females, are often recorded eating charcoal and ash from old campfires. We have observed this as well in an old campfire next to the quarters at Peery Station.

The **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater (*Acanthagenys rufogularis*)** is a medium-sized honeyeater with spiny white bristles below the ear. It is the only species in its genus. It has a pale blue-grey eye surrounded by bare pinkish skin and a pink bill with a black tip. Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters are sociable and aggressive. They call loudly while feeding, up high in trees and often in a flock. Their song consists of gurgling, chortling sounds and melodic reedy whistles. The species is found across mainland Australia, particularly in the arid interior. Their habitat is dry woodlands, mallee and acacia scrub. The Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater feeds on nectar and fruit, but it will also eat insects and small vertebrates.



Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater (C)Linda Unwin 2019
birdlifephotography.org.au

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

Bruce's Walk

-- Jim Smith

I was pleased to see in July 'Hut News' that Blue Mountains Conservation Society is maintaining an active interest in Bruce's Walk. Originally opened in November 1931, the track was virtually forgotten after World War II.

Retired surveyor Dick Rushton, aged in his mid-70s and a member of our society, found a copy of the 1933 guidebook to the track and decided to search for it in 1979. He was able to locate most of the original features and joined these up with straight tracks he cleared with his surveyor's brush hook. He led a walk on the track for the society in early 1980.

After walking along Dick's line with him, I realised that he had missed most of the many zigzags. In early 1986, I, together with Wilf Hilder and other volunteers, located and cleared all of the original corners. Over 100 people came to the opening of the first section of Bruce's Walk, between Bullaburra and Wentworth Falls, on 28 May 1986. On 13 September we held another opening for the section from Wentworth Falls to the Medlow Bath airfield. Over the next few years, several walks were programmed by our society on Bruce's Walk.

A number of people did sporadic maintenance on the track, but the real champion was Ron Wheeler who in 2005-2006, aged in his late-70s, did a major restoration and repair of ladders. Ron led walks for the society and continued his maintenance up until shortly before his death in 2011.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society successfully protested against the proposal to close off Booth Road in Bullaburra in 2015, one of the access points to Bruce's Walk, and also to the long-lost Lawson Cave Falls that had been relocated by Brian Fox.

Perhaps one of our more adventurous bushwalking leaders would like to investigate the current condition of Bruce's Walk and program it for members of our society who have not experienced its magnificent glens, forests, streams and views. And, don't forget the equally beautiful section between Wentworth Falls and Medlow Bath airfield. That is harder to find, as it has not had the same degree of regular volunteer maintenance. Maps and instructions for these two walks are in the second edition of my book 'How to See the Blue Mountains', published in 1986.

The bigger picture of access to Bruce's Walk is that it would be a vital link in a long-distance 'Across the Blue Mountains' walk. If the tracks in the reserves at North Woodford, North Hazelbrook and North Lawson could be connected, Bruce's Walk would then be able to take walkers to the Medlow Bath airfield, from where the old Point Pilcher track (now maintained as access to Juggler's Canyon) can be followed into the Grand Canyon, up to Evans Lookout and through to Govett's Leap.

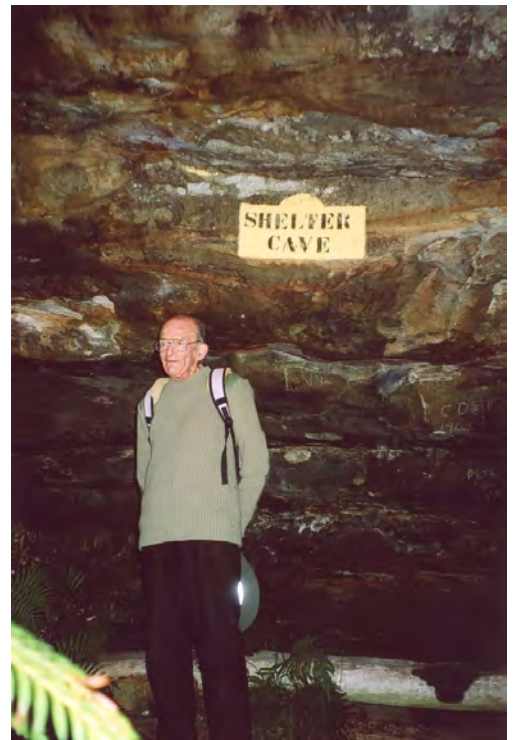
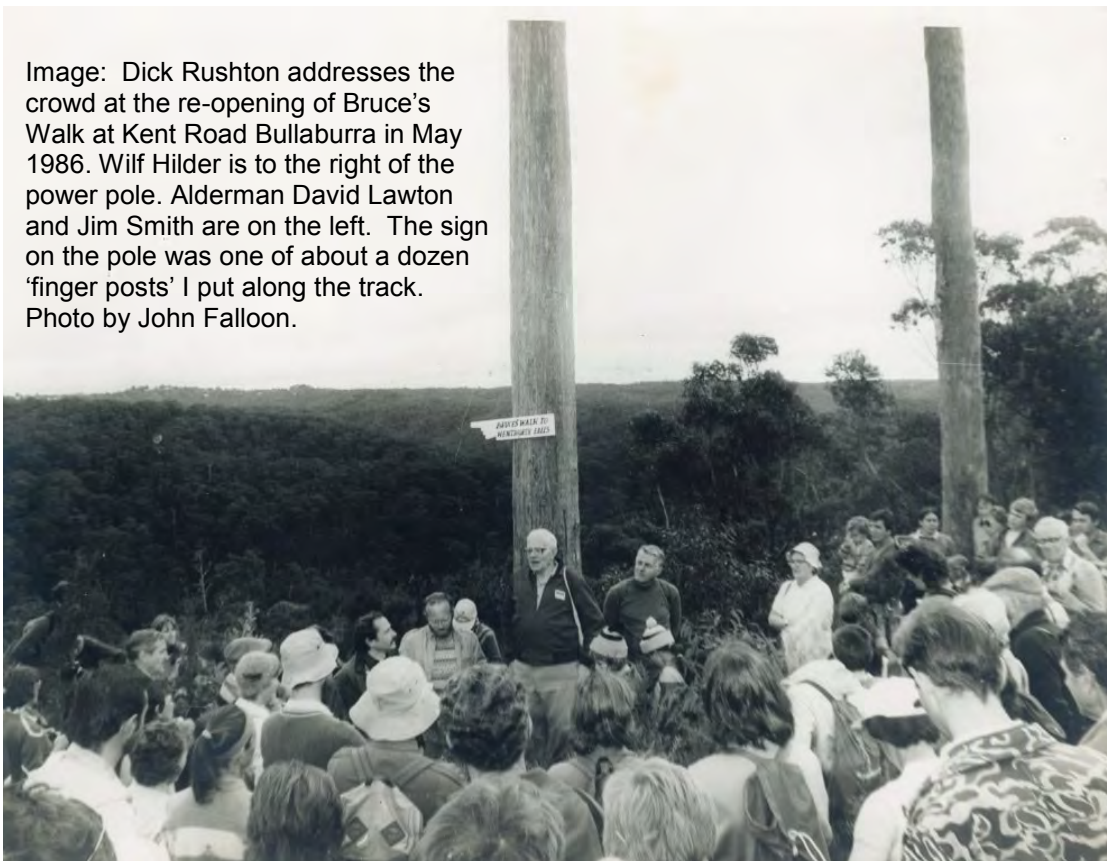


Image: Ron Wheeler in one of the several 'shelter caves' along Bruce's Walk, on a walk he led for the Blue Mountains Conservation Society in 2007. Photo by Jim Smith.

Image: Dick Rushton addresses the crowd at the re-opening of Bruce's Walk at Kent Road Bullaburra in May 1986. Wilf Hilder is to the right of the power pole. Alderman David Lawton and Jim Smith are on the left. The sign on the pole was one of about a dozen 'finger posts' I put along the track. Photo by John Falloon.



New sightings of critically endangered Regent Honeyeater

For many years, Blue Mountains Conservation Society members have been among volunteers in annual tree planting weekends in the Capertee Valley, organised by Birdlife Australia.

The following is an extract of an article by Emma Siossian, ABC Mid North Coast, 1/7/23.

Once widespread throughout south-eastern Australia, Regent Honeyeaters are now critically endangered, with an estimated population of 250-300 birds.

But there is good news from the mid North Coast. The Regent Honeyeater has been making an appearance in several locations along the NSW east coast. In late June there were sightings near Coffs Harbour, Lake Macquarie and Woolgoolga. Two juvenile regent honeyeaters were spotted in March, near the site of the latest release of captive-bred regent honeyeaters in the Lower Hunter region.

A captive breeding and release program has been running for more than 20 years in Victoria and NSW to ensure the species' survival and supplement the wild population with zoo-bred birds.

Birdwatchers urged to keep a look out:

Monitoring of regent honeyeaters continues throughout the year and members of the public are encouraged to report sightings to Birdlife Australia. Breeding season is late July and August.

"Regent honeyeaters are probably the most mobile of all the honeyeaters; you usually only find them where there's lots of blossoms and the trees are high nectar-yielding trees ... they are quite fussy."

"It's a Wonderful World" caught my attention as I entered the Dunedin Botanic Gardens Visitor's Information Centre earlier this year. I couldn't resist it. Christine.

"IT'S A WONDERFUL WORLD"

by Jess French

BOOK REVIEW by Shaye Wardrop, <http://www.kids-bookreview.com/>

Our world is incredible: inspiring, intricate and filled with wonder. It's a complex system that runs on autopilot, always moving and changing and healing. Our animals, plants and weather all have important roles and live by ever-changing cycles that support our planet and give us all life. It's one big team, working together.

We humans haven't always been good team players when it comes to caring for our world. But we can do better. Reading this book will help kids, families, classrooms (and adults) to understand how the world works and what we can do to protect it.

It's a comprehensive and detailed journey, covering everything from where we are in the universe to nature's daily miracles. There are 32 chapters, which go through all the different kinds of plant life that support our world (plants, grasses, fungi, soil etc.), everything you need to know about life cycles (pollination, migration, evolution and extinction etc.) and a giant selection of our worlds fascinating creatures, divided by habitat (think rainforests, mountains, wetlands). There is just so much information in this book!

The layout is awesomely engaging and spot on for kids, which makes this a book they will WANT to pick up. Large text, breakout boxes, and info delivered in short sections means kids can read bite-sized pieces of text, one at a time. And loads of colour, photographs and illustrations on every single page means there is always something to look at while you read, helping to cement concepts.

Non-fiction books delivered with such strong and well-planned layouts are perfect for kids (and adults, too, I might add!). With so much information to absorb, it really helps to be able to take it slow and read small sections at a time ... my kids and I loved opening the book at random and reading a page or two.

Availability: Ask your favourite bookstore or you can search for it online.

THOUGHTS OF THE EARTH ON EARTH DAY

We on the Blue Mountains unconsciously, perhaps, drink in the beauty which enfolds as – of sun, stars, airy clouds and distant horizons, of blue hills and ochre cliffs glowing in the sun. Yet to me personally, the superlative beauty is at my feet – the complexity of the mantle of life woven over vast masses of sandstone. Magnified, a handful of soil becomes no more than a pile of gleaming fragments of sand, such sand as comprises our coastal beaches. Yet woven into this handful are vast masses of minute fibrous roots binding these particles together, living protoplasm, the beginning of life.

On the surface of the rocks minute plants – lichens mosses and liverworts – form a ceaseless uninterrupted movement of life, the very life of which we are a part, but building without man's

interference the beautiful mantle of flowers, ferns, trees, which surround us in all their wealth of colour and detail.

There are few countries in the world which can provide such area for scientific study. But apart from any question of increases of knowledge or provision of man's material needs, here can be met man's deep need to renew his experience of nature, to which we all belong. Should the mysterious working of this fragile life pattern of earth cease to function our lives would cease with it. Men alone can reflect on these things, and experience reverence for life.

Isobel Bowden

(published in Katoomba & District Wildlife Conservation Society Newsletter, September 1972)



A Thursday Walk at Evans Crown Reserve -- Meredith Brownhill

Thursday Bushwalkers had a lovely walk in Evans Crown Reserve on Thursday 22nd June. Evans Crown is a significant cultural place for Wiradjuri First Nations people.

The Nature Reserve, managed by NPWS, was gazetted in 1975 following almost a century of grazing. It is surrounded by farming land and fortunately is now protected with its spectacular granite rocks and boulders. It still has remnant native vegetation and wildlife – the Kangaroo Grass on the ridge slopes has thrived during the wet years.

Unfortunately, feral pigs are making an awful mess with areas of digging and destroyed plants at the entrance to the reserve.

After an easy climb up the steps we had morning tea at the entrance to a cave surrounded by some lovely Eucalypts. After scrambling up on top of some rocks we enjoyed views of surrounding farmland. The morning's sociable outing was completed with lunch at the Tarana Pub.

2023 Sydney Basin Koala Campaign

From the western edge of Sydney, spreading outwards north, south and west – there are little-known, but irreplaceable Koala colonies. Now officially classified as “endangered” under state and federal legislation, they are facing extinction in a few decades – unless we act!

Koalas have declined in the Sydney Basin Bioregion by **an estimated 22% in the last 20 years**. Protection of remaining habitat, including near urban areas, in proposed urban expansion sites, and on public, leased and private lands - is critical.

The Sydney Basin contains **seven areas of koala significance (ARKS) which face multiple threats, but only five of those have surviving colonies**. We will be focusing our efforts on protecting these 5 remaining colonies:

- Campbelltown/Wollondilly/Liverpool/Sutherland
- Southern Tablelands/Wingecarribee
- Hawkesbury
- Hunter Valley/Lake Macquarie/Cessnock
- Blue Mountains

Find out more: Total Environment Centre <https://www.tec.org.au/> and <https://www.tec.org.au/sydney-basin-koala-campaign>

Images: Thursday walkers at Evans Crown. Maurice, Libby, Amanda, Helen. Photos by Meredith.

Not Quite Forever

It's not quite forever

That giant squid will swim in the sea
As long as they do

I hope they leave some space for me
I hope I'm not greedy

If I want to save more than one tree
I do like to spend my time
Sharing a forest with thee

It seems such a long time

That birds swoop within a blue sky
They rush off for some cause

They don't stop to chat about why
The rivers spill over

And then they grow stagnant and die
The leaders plan hopefully
And then they grow weary and lie

The mountains grow fragile and crumble
Where rivers cut through

The fires start and burn

Then everything must grow anew

At least when the smoke and the dust clear

We might have a view
It's a view well worth sharing
A little time longer with you

© Don Morison 2023

Thought-provoking New Zealand 5: Lured to danger by love of nature

-- Don Morison

I met Emmylia (not her real name) on a sparkling November morning in 2017. I had driven from my motel to the outskirts of the beautiful North Island city of Whakatane. Immediately, I noticed a catamaran ferry berthed in the harbour with the words "White Island" emblazoned across the top of it. I drove around the edge of the city on speculation and bought the last ticket available on one of the tourist catamarans making ready to cross the Bay of Plenty.

Emmylia was one of the bright-eyed T-shirted young guides tasked with making the tourists feel comfortable and telling us the drill for the unusual excursion we were undertaking. Our ferry crossed the bar of the harbour under the gaze of the statue of the legendary Maori maiden, Wairaka.

We soon passed Moutohora (Whale Island), which is a specially managed pest-free oasis for some of New Zealand's endangered birds, plants and reptiles. At that time, you couldn't just bowl up and obtain a permit to visit Moutohora, but no such restrictions then applied to Whakaari (White Island), which was letting off a very misty cloud of steam on our horizon. That was the fairest morning they'd enjoyed for some weeks. Pilot whales and dolphins frolicked around our vessel during the crossing.

A couple of hours later, we hove to near the volcano. Emmylia and her colleagues had issued us with gas masks and were assisting us into motorised inflatable dinghies. We landed on the island and were escorted around the seething crater, noting the incredibly bleached appearance and lack of vegetation where the eruptions sometimes occurred. The guides told us about the 1914 eruption and how six mining personnel had died then. Only Peter the camp cat, who could run to the high part of the island, was found alive by rescuers and went on to father numerous kittens in the mainland town of Opotiki. The whole experience was highly surreal and I felt no sense of danger.

Naturally, the events of December 2019 when 22 people died on White Island and tourism was brought to an end there made me think deeply. I also reflected on why people can be lured to relatively dangerous natural sites, when so many others can be visited in relative safety. I thought of the Blue Mountains' own Lincoln Hall and how he just survived his attempt on Mount Everest. I also thought of others who have taken risks at locations near and far in interacting with nature, not all of which have paid off.

Of course, I checked the casualty list of the White Island victims of 2019. It didn't surprise me that Emmylia's name wasn't there. She'd told me she'd applied for a university course in Hawaii. What she described was a very practically oriented course to study sharks.



Images: **Whakaari (White Island)**, Credits: g  rard from Noum  a, (Nouvelle-Cal  donie), CC BY-SA 2.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0>>, via Wikimedia Commons; **Statue of Wairaka**, atop Turuturu Rock at the mouth of the Whakatane River Source Wikimedia.

Australians

Those kids up in the tree-tops,
They're the ones I love to love,
Looking down on dogs and dozers,
From the canopies above;
There, in silent, green communion,
The cathedrals, made of trees,
Spread their patterned sunlight daily,
Through the forest canopies.

Copyright Denis Kevans 1998

Blue Mountains poet, Denis Kevans, published this poem 25 years ago. And, still, our ancient native forests are being logged. In Tasmania, the focus is on the Tarkine.

takayna / Tarkine is Australia's largest temperate rainforest and the second largest temperate rainforest in the world. One of Earth's last great wild places, it deserves secure, permanent protection.

In the words of Bob Brown, DON'T GET DEPRESSED, GET ACTIVE!

Find out more: Bob Brown Foundation, <https://bobbrown.org.au/> and <https://bobbrown.org.au/campaigns/takayna/>



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, 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

Aug 7 **Grand Canyon from Neates Glen to Evans Lookout.**

Blackheath N/hood 9:40, Car pool, Wayne Read 0429 021 296

Aug 14 **Empire Pass Lawson**, 7km, 270m ascent/descent, creek crossings, Lawson Bowling Club CP 8.45. Lyn Bevington 0432 352 850 Aug 21 Please check Website

Aug 28 **Balzer Lookout and Hanging Rock Blackheath** via Rhodo Gardens and return, 14km. Blackheath N/hood Centre 8.45, Barbara Crighton 0428962460.

Sep 4 **No Designated Walk** – Please check Website

Sep 11 **Katoomba kiosk / Furber steps** to Scenic Railway / landslide track to Golden Stairs / Narrow Neck / Narrow Neck lookout, 5.5km, ascent 347M, Car shuffle needed. Katoomba Stn Nth 8.40, Lyn Bevington 0432 352 850

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

Aug 8 **Bridge to Bridge (Penrith)** G1/8K, Tony 0410651154.

Aug 15 **Cooks Creek/ Wolli Creek** G1-2/5-11K, Doug 0455850753.

Aug 22 **Narrow Neck/Castle Head (Katoomba)** G3/10K, Peter 47513870.

Aug 29 **Lillyfield to Dulwich Hill** G1/6K, Lynne 0407498397.

Sep 5 **Portal Lookout/ Euroka/ Ironbarks Circuit** G2/7K, Rob 0400672336

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

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.

Aug 24 **Echo Bluff, Lawson.** Lawson Bowling Club 8.45

Carpool. Take lunch. Leader Libby 4759 2969. Grade 2

Aug 31 **Bonnie Doon, Katoomba.** Katoomba Station 9.30.

Carpool. Take lunch. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2

Sep 7 **Valley Heights Fire Trail Circuit, some steep tracks.**

Valley Heights Stn CP 9.15. Take lunch. Ros 0417 261 465. Grade 2

Sep 14 **Bus trip to Mount Annan Botanic Gardens.** See website for details.

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

Aug 12 **Rainbow Cave & Numantia Falls**, Harold 0409 010737.

Faulconbridge Stn CP 8.30. Gr3. 9km. Map Springwood

Aug 19 **Cliff Drive to Mt Solitary.** Geoff 0497 638033.

Katoomba Stn CP 8.30. Gr 3, 12km. Map Jamison

Aug 26 **Jinki Ridge to Wilkinson Hill via Jinki Gully.** Harold

0409 010737. Mt.Vic.Stn.CP.8.45. Gr 3, 10km. Map Mt Wilson.

Sep 2 **Liversidge Hill.** Harold 0409 010737, Mt Vic Stn CP

8.45am. Gr3, 9km. Map Mt Wilson.

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



Robert's Ranges:

The majesty of *Angophora costata*

The *Angophora costata*, a tree of the *Myrtaceae* family, occurs in numerous Greater Sydney locations including the Blue Mountains from the crest of Wentworth Falls and throughout lower altitudes. Its graceful shades, hollows and permutations delight bushwalkers. Anne Dernee is providing scale for this one as it wraps its roots around a sandstone base, on the Burning Palms section of the southern Royal National Park Coast Track, one of the many locations included in Robert Sloss' bushwalking maps.

-- Photo by Geoff Dernee.

BUSHWALKERS:

Keep your gear clean in the wild!

Weeds, pests and diseases are major threats to Australia's native plants and animals. They can hitch a ride on muddy hiking boots, dirty car rims, in wet fishing gear, or even in your gut.

You can take steps to ensure that YOU don't unwittingly spread weeds and diseases that kill wildlife, contaminate our water and destroy wild places. Find out more:

<https://invasives.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Keep-your-gear-clean-web.pdf>

K

KIDS

Come **EXPLORE** the parks. There are many trails that kids can hike, mountains that kids can climb, and creatures that kids can see.



DISCOVER the many types of trees, flowers, insects, reptiles, mammals, and birds that make the Greater Blue Mountains Area their home.



Reading is one of the best ways to get information. **READ** more about the parks and the creatures that live here.



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Ingrid Hess is a cut-paper artist. Download Ingrid's finished artwork (published in the online version of Hut News) and one to colour (published in the printed version of Hut News).

Collect the pages as they appear in Hut News.

<https://bluemountains.org.au/documents/hutnews/archive/wild-image-LETTER-K.pdf>