

HUT NEWS

Issue No. 421
February 2024



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



NOW is the time to prune your Agapanthus, before they set seed .

Blue Mountains Conservation Society NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

We will be at the Blackheath Growers Market on
SUNDAY 11th FEBRUARY
(8am to 12 noon)

(AND on the 2nd Sunday of every month until the winter break.

For enquiries and to place an order, please contact
Nursery Manager, Paul Irwin:
plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com

Gift Certificates (\$10, \$20 or \$50) available
at our market stall or email Nursery Manager.

Become a member of Blue Mountains Conservation 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. Please join online at www.bluemountains.org.au/joining.shtml or phone 0418 462 576. Members have the option of receiving our monthly newsletter, Hut News, by post or online.

SUNSET GATHERING

Thursday 22nd February, 6.30 PM
The Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls

You are invited to join us and, weather permitting, share one of the best sunset views to be had in our Blue Mountains. Talk to new and not-so-new members and exchange ideas. If you are not already a member find out more ... meet some of our volunteers from the management committee and learn about recent Society activities ... find out how you can become involved.

Guest speaker: After supper, **Dr Roy Tasker** will talk about new technology for the production and uses of biochar as one of the most effective ways for carbon dioxide removal. Dr Tasker is Chief Scientific Advisor at Planet Ark, Climate Reality Leader, and Adjunct Professor of Chemistry Education at Western Sydney University.

The Conservation Hut is in the Blue Mountains National Park at the end of Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls.

Registration: To assist with catering, please register at **Humanitix** (<https://bit.ly/sunset24>) or phone 0490 419779 and leave a message indicating your attendance.

WHO LET THE CAT OUT?

A national overview of cat impacts, curfews and the case for change.

Saturday 10th February, 2.30 PM
Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson

Speaker: Candice Bartlett (Conservation Officer with the Invasive Species Council)

Hosted by: Blue Mountains Bird Observers and Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

Registration: To assist with catering, please register at **Humanitix** (<https://bit.ly/CatsinBM>) or phone 0490 419779 and leave a message indicating your attendance.

A date for your diary ...

Blue Mountains Conservation Society
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Wednesday 27th March 2024, 6.30 PM
At the Wentworth Falls School of Arts

More information soon on our website
www.bluemountains.org.au and in March Hut News.

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

From the President ...

I hope you had a wonderful Christmas break. A wet start to 2024 thankfully helped to keep bushfires at bay here in the Blue Mountains over December and January.

Our National Parks Subcommittee worked diligently over December and January on the Western Sydney International Airport Environmental Impact Statement submission. This was a mammoth effort to respond to the 4000+ pages and emphasise the potentially detrimental effect on the GBMWA.

The Society will continue to support efforts to ameliorate any adverse effects the proposed flight paths will create. We strongly support the redesign of flight paths to avoid the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and the adjacent protected areas.

2024 will be again filled with challenges as we focus on ensuring that the natural environment that we share is protected. In doing this, we are building strong links with other conservation and government organisations to promote the wellbeing of our landscapes and biodiversity.

Work on preventing destruction of bushland is one of our priorities by advocating for more areas receiving adequate protection or National Park status. Restoration of degraded areas and education of our community so that we are all better informed are also important. Our volunteers do the work gladly, but it is more effective when we have the support of other members and can share the load.

With our Annual General Meeting coming up at the end of March, please consider nominating for a position on our Management Committee or joining one of our subcommittees. All the office holders are volunteers. An extract from our Mission Statement is on page 11 to give you some ideas. And, of course, we always welcome volunteers to help with various events throughout the year. Remember too that items for Hut News are useful. We want to hear what you are doing in our beautiful natural environment!

-- Annette Cam, President

History of our Society

Much of the Society's history is buried in the archives of our newsletters. They are a valuable resource. The Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society was founded in 1961 and its first newsletter appeared in June 1970. The Lower Mountains Wildlife Conservation Society had its first "Bulletin" in 1966. The two Societies merged in 1996. Members can find all the newsletters on the Society's website at <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/hutnews-archives.shtml>

Phoebe Coster has volunteered to retype the older newsletters so they can be more accessible. They are being appended to the original scanned newsletters. Alan Page (our voluntary webmaster) has enabled us to find them on the internet by googling a few words. We owe thanks to thousands of volunteers who have contributed to the work of the Society over the past 63 years.

The Society restored a derelict tearoom for its headquarters and to educate the general public about the Blue Mountains natural environment. The bushland island in front of the Conservation Hut is the John Buki Garden. There is a plaque commemorating John Buki as a founder of the Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society.

Newsletter 72, July 1988, pays tribute to John Buki.

(continued on page 4).



Photo supplied by
Alan Page.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

Phone: 0490 419 779 (leave message)

Email: bmcs@bluemountains.org.au

Website: www.bluemountains.org.au

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram:
addresses can be found on website.

President: Annette Cam 0450 215 125

president@bluemountains.org.au

Senior Vice President: Tara Cameron

taracameron4@gmail.com

2nd Vice President: Alan Page

alanpage7@bigpond.com

Administration Officer:

Jeanette Robertson

sao@bluemountains.org.au

Bushcare Officer: Paul Vale 0429 014 454

bushcare@bluemountains.org.au

Environmental Education Officer:

Vacant - bmcs@bluemountains.org.au

Events Coordinator: Andrew Solomon

0408 267 078 events@bluemountains.org.au

Gardens of Stone Project Officer:

Vacant natpks@bluemountains.org.au

Land Use Officer: Angela Langdon

landuse@bluemountains.org.au

Meetings Secretary: Heather Hull

0456 618 948 hhull001@bigpond.net.au

Membership Secretary: Ross Coster

0418 462 576

membership@bluemountains.org.au

National Parks & World Heritage Officer:

Madi Maclean natpks@bluemountains.org.au

Newsletter Editor: Christine Davies

hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

Nursery Manager: Paul Irwin

plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com

Publicity Officer: Hayley Poynton

publicity@bluemountains.org.au

Sustainability & Climate Change Officer:

Nathalie Verellen

sustain@bluemountains.org.au

Threatened Species Officer: *Vacant*

bmcs@bluemountains.org.au

Treasurer and Public Officer:

Elizabeth Howard 0414 090 251

eh.mistover@bigpond.com

Website Officer: Alan Page

alanpage7@bigpond.com

Bushwalking Convenor: Doug Nicholls

0455 850 753 doug nicholls@bigpond.com

Bushfire Representative:

Hugh Paterson 0427 512 303

fmatter@bigpond.net.au

Invasive Species Liaison contact:

Paul Vale 0429 014 454

bushcare@bluemountains.org.au

**THE DEADLINE FOR MARCH HUT
NEWS IS 12 FEBRUARY**

hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

Enquiries: Christine 4787 7246

BLUE MOUNTAINS EDIBLE GARDEN TRAIL SATURDAY 2ND & SUNDAY 3RD MARCH



THE BLUE MOUNTAINS EDIBLE GARDEN TRAIL - Eat your street!

The Blue Mountains Edible Garden Trail is a celebration of the myriad ways Blue Mountains residents are creating food security, saving money and the environment, while enjoying the health benefits of organically grown fruit and veg.

Over the weekend of 2nd and 3rd March 2024, backyard growers, large and small, from right across the Blue Mountains region will open their gardens to the public to share their passion and knowledge and inspire home-grown environmental sustainability.

The Blue Mountains Edible Garden Trail is one of many trails held throughout the country and is a community run, not-for-profit event, organised by Blue Mountains Food Co-op. Proceeds from ticket sales go to participating school and community gardens.

For more information and to purchase tickets see <https://www.ediblegardentrail.com/>

How did Agapanthus take over the Blue Mountains?

-- Opinion by Christine Davies

I came to the Blue Mountains 35 years ago (1989) and I was not aware of Agapanthus. Around that time, or soon after, a person regularly advertised in the Blue Mountains Gazette - the first post in the "For Sale" section - "Agapanthus \$1 (or it might have been \$2) each." The plants may also have been sold in local nurseries.

When I moved to my present Blackheath home and planted a native garden, I dug out some Agapanthus and put them in the green bin. I missed some of the roots and, 24 years later, new plants still pop up from time to time.

In summer 2024, as you drive around the streets of the Blue Mountains towns, Agapanthus are everywhere. They are very pretty, but there is a downside. Agapanthus planted in gardens easily escape onto road verges and into the bush. They are also spread in dumped garden waste.

Agapanthus form thick, dense, ever spreading clumps. In bushland they crowd out native species, especially native understory. Each flower head results in a large number of tiny black seeds. The seeds are transported in soil and by wind and water.

Agapanthus are listed in Blue Mountains City Council's priority weeds list, but apparently given a low priority. The control measure is: *The spread of this plant should be adequately contained to prevent spread impacting on a priority asset. Weed Notices will only be issued for these weeds under special circumstances.*

The City of the Blue Mountains is on top of a ridge and weed seeds are carried downhill into our national parks. Where will we be in another 35 years?

We are the guardians of a World Heritage Area. Is it time we recognized Agapanthus as a very invasive weed and upgraded the control measures?

Can you volunteer to help protect the Blue Mountains natural environment?

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is an incorporated voluntary group. Our mission is to help protect, conserve and advocate for the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

We are governed by a management committee with much of our conservation work and campaigns being undertaken by sub-committees. We also have a Native Plant Nursery and there are five bushwalking groups and a plant study group.

Helping in a subcommittee is a good way to get involved in the work of the Society. These include National Parks, Land Use, Sustainability and the Hut News Team. There are lots of other activities where you can volunteer to help, for as much or little time as you are able to offer. We need an Events Coordinator who can organise the events and lots of people who are available to help when they can. You can help with clerical work and write submissions and volunteer at the native plant nursery.

In March Hut News we will include a list of management committee roles, with their duties and responsibilities. At the AGM (Wednesday 27th March) all positions fall vacant.

If you are interested in helping in any way and want to find out more, please leave a message for our Admin Officer sao@bluemountains.org.au or 0490 419 779 (message phone) - what you are interested in and your contact details.

The Intergenerational Transformations Series

Public spaces in 30, 60 & 90 years' time

Series coordinated by Don Morison.

Steve Alton holds a qualification from the Ryde School of Horticulture to work with plantings in publicly accessible landscapes. He has worked for a number of councils in NSW and for many years contributed to the interpretive plaques used by National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Greater Blue Mountains.

In this article, we present Mr Alton's views on the first two public spaces discussed in the December/January instalment of this Hut News series.

GLENBROOK PARK

Hut News: What strategy would you propose to ensure Glenbrook Park continues to communicate the significance of large old native trees in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area?

Mr Alton: A 100-year planting program is needed to maintain the significance of large native trees in public spaces like Glenbrook Park. Time should not be wasted. It's vital to start now in planting trees that could still be healthy in 100 years. It is necessary to examine which native species that are similar to the existing species would have that timespan of viability.

It would be possible to introduce partly advanced trees and fence around them to give them a chance to establish.

Glenbrook Park is large enough for a patch of re-established forest or several patches of re-established forest, including planting understorey species.

It is desirable to avoid having large areas become treeless.

It is most important to have on-site interpretation which explains to the public what the park managers are trying to achieve by what they are doing in the park. It is equally important to allow community members to become involved in carrying out and monitoring the long-term management strategies.

WENTWORTH – CLANWILLIAM – PRINCE GEORGE PRECINCT, BLACKHEATH

Hut News: As the deciduous exotic trees age in Blackheath Streets like Wentworth, Clanwilliam and Prince George, can a less regimented planting strategy for the future – which would include native plants – progress environmental coherence and visual spectacle in a way that tourists and locals will value?

Mr Alton: The streets with colonnades of old deciduous oaks and other species producing autumn colours represent a unique and traditional spectacle. They are far more desirable exotics than the *Pinus radiata* which have been sensibly phased out of certain pockets of Blackheath and other upper mountains towns.

When old specimens of the autumn colours trees die or have to be removed, they should be replaced by young specimens of similar species.

It is, however, necessary for the Blackheath trees to be managed by qualified arborists to the best possible standards to aid their longevity and minimise conflicts between the aesthetic value of the trees and other urban usages of the corridors where they grow.



The local community campaigned to save this beautiful old Glenbrook Park Eucalypt. It is near the playground and was considered a danger to the public because of falling branches. The simple solution: build a fence around the tree to exclude people!

History of our Society (continued from page 2)

(Newsletter 72, July 1988)

JOHN BUKI, born Sapron (Hungary) 1917,
Died Sydney (Australia) 1988.

It is to John Buki alone that we of the Society owe thanks for "The Hut" and for the viability and vitality that our control¹ of "The Hut" has brought to the Society. The story of this has been told in earlier issues of "The Newsletter"; let it suffice to say here that it was John who conceived the idea of the Hut and whose unremitting work and rather charming persistence brought the idea to fruition.

The Committee in those early days was unwilling to launch the Society on a scheme that seemed beyond us; we had no money and few members. John changed all that. He wrote innumerable letters and secured donations of materials that enabled the restoration of the building to proceed. His infectious enthusiasm brought many, many hands to the work and what seemed impossible was gradually accomplished.

He organised the "Official Opening" by a Minister of the Crown (who arrived with motor-cycle police escort). A perusal of the Visitors Book will show that more than three hundred attended.

Note: ¹ In recent decades the Society has had conditional access but not control over the Conservation Hut.

(continued on
page 5)

Grand Clifftop Walk

A stocktake of the Grand Clifftop Walk (Katoomba to Wentworth Falls)

-- Opinion by Christine Davies

In December/January Hut News (page 5), Don Morison asked the questions: *What kind of investment would make the Clifftop "Grand"?* and *How can government protect the natural area experience?* He reasons that *The Grand Clifftop Walk will do best if long-stay visitors are prioritised through most of it.*

We need to consider which needs do this walking track network already fulfil and which needs can be better fulfilled? How can we make it better for residents and long-stay visitors?

Changes in progress: The adequacy of public toilet blocks is central to the natural area experience for hundreds of thousands of people expected to walk this route in coming years. Those at the Conservation Hut precinct and Echo Point are satisfactory. Construction to replace portaloos at Gordon Falls Reserve is slow. The site of a new toilet block at Leura Cascades has been approved. At Katoomba Falls Reserve, the existing toilet block is separated from the clifftop walk by a busy traffic route - this is one of the issues on which Council will still accept input.

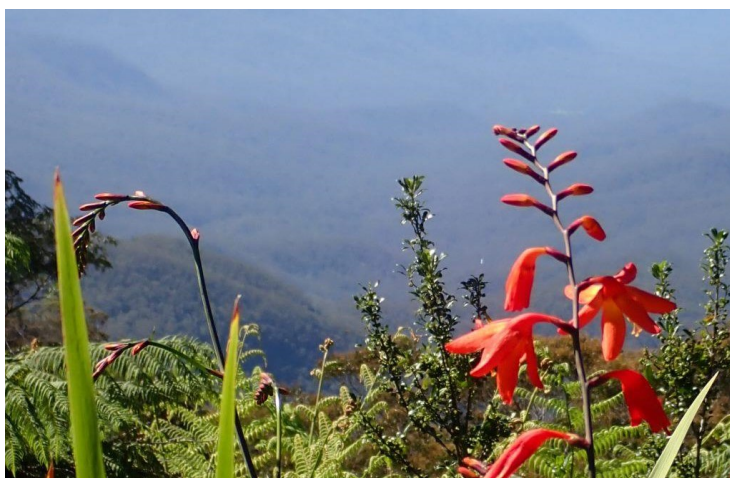
Access for the mobility restricted: A viewing platform and access route for the mobility restricted at Gordon Falls Reserve was abandoned in 2020 after heated public debate. Council has approved a good quality accessible route between Gordon Falls Reserve and Elysian Rock but work has not commenced.

Boundaries between natural vegetation and the intrusion of exotic vegetation: Ecosystems along the Katoomba to Wentworth Falls escarpment are exquisite. Rare and endangered flora can be found. But weed species (such as Agapanthus) are a major concern. We need to advocate for buffer zones between areas of natural vegetation and other areas. This could be the catalyst for a major review of which exotic species need tighter controls.

Day usage versus night usage of clifftop bush-land: There are already enough areas of the clifftop enabling night walking, particularly around Katoomba Falls and Echo Point. More lighting, in areas that have not had night lighting for many years, presents a series of risks - risks to the environment, risks to the individuals undertaking the walking and risks to the amenity of the surrounding areas.

The Grand Clifftop Walk should be an ongoing element of future visitor experience of the Blue Mountains. Its condition will communicate to the World how Blue Mountains authorities and residents value our World Heritage Area.

What you can do: Keep track of Council submission dates for the Southern Scenic Escarpment. Inform local member Trish Doyle's office about your concerns. Talk to your Ward Councillors. The Grand Clifftop Walk will set the standard for public spaces in the natural area for all Council wards.



These images depict a signposted access track for the Grand Clifftop Walk. Weed species include Agapanthus, Montbretia, Buddleia, Ivy and Castor Oil Plant. Is this the view we want to promote? Seeds from these weeds are being washed down the creeks and into the Blue Mountains National Park.

History of our Society (continued from page 4)

John had a chequered life. In his native Hungary he was a university teacher of modern languages until he was required to join the army as an officer. Then he was a POW in Russia until after World War II, when he and Elizabeth came to Australia. He worked from Broken Hill in a NSW Railways gang for two years then joined the NSW Education Department as a teacher, serving at Seven Hills and then at Katoomba Primary School until he was promoted and had to transfer.

His was a fertile and creative mind for all that he was a truly modest and humble man. We are thankful for his years among us and we mourn his passing. To his very dear wife, Elizabeth, we offer our condolences in her great sorrow.

The Society went on to use the Conservation Hut as their headquarters for many years. When the old weather-board building was demolished, the new NPWS building was named "The Conservation Hut".

Elizabeth Buki passed away on 22nd December 2022, just a few months before her 103rd birthday. Her obituary, written by her friend of 70 years, Linda Wake, was published in April 2023 Hut News.

Blue Mountains stream health:



Sassafras Creek, a good health story!

-- Peter Ardill

Every year, Blue Mountains City Council aquatic officers assess the health of approximately fifty local streams by testing for the presence of macroinvertebrates (also known as “water bugs”). These include mayfly nymphs, caddisfly larvae, bloodworms, spiny crayfish, water mites and water treaders. A low score indicates a stressed stream.

To thrive, water bugs require favourable stream conditions. Water must be fresh (non-saline) and well oxygenated. Pools, riffles, logs, fallen branches and leaves provide habitat. Indigenous vegetation stabilises soils, minimising water turbidity. Vegetation and stable soils absorb damaging fertilisers, faeces, sediments and pollutants.

The tributaries of Sassafras Creek form eastward of Faulconbridge railway station. Over the period 2021 to 2023, the stream recorded good to excellent water bug diversity and health scores. This strongly suggests that water quality was also good: oxygen and phosphate levels, freshness, chemical balance and clarity.

Sassafras Creek, its tributaries and the catchment are densely vegetated with indigenous trees, shrubs and groundcovers. This vegetation produces the resources that allow indigenous fauna to flourish: nutrients, protective cover, materials for nest building. Layers of vegetation provide cooling shade for water bugs and create welcome sanctuaries for land dwelling indigenous fauna stressed by severe heat conditions.

Penetration of the catchment by weeds is an ongoing concern. Weed thickets exhibit limited plant species diversity and resources. Thickets expand and gradually displace indigenous plant communities and their valuable natural resources. Members of BMCC Jackson Park Bushcare Group have worked for many years to manage weed incursions along a major Sassafras Creek tributary and in the catchment. Their efforts have promoted indigenous plant species diversity and, accordingly, water quality and stream health (see illustration).

A weed-free home garden helps to keep local streams healthy. Many weed thickets originate from local gardens, as birds are effective distributors of plant seeds. Privet, buddleia, ivy, holly, honeysuckle, tutsan, agapanthus and many species of lily are notorious bushland destroyers. See <https://weedsbluemountains.org.au/identify-weeds/>

(Peter Ardill is a Streamwatch practitioner and accredited bush regenerator. He is not a member of Jackson Park Bushcare Group)

Image: Indigenous plant species diversity, Sassafras Creek tributary, Jackson Park, Faulconbridge P. Ardill

Yellow Robin

It was the least that I could do
taking less than a minute to pause
when stepping it out this morning
after all the excess of Christmas
eating and drinking.

Finding you there,
cold and lifeless upon the street
beneath the shop-front window
you had mistaken for clear sky,
thinking your reflection
another of your kind,
a companion,
you hoped to join in flight.

But it took a second or two
before I realised what had happened
and recognised you -
your yellow breast still glowing bright
making me think
you were some decoration,
one of the newer sort,
made to suit the season here;
and simply fallen from the tree
could be retrieved,
dusted off,
and used again next year.

So took a step or two on past
before turning,
gathering you up,
and scraping out a shallow grave
in the flower box.
Then covering you up
so others might not see
the indignity -
you rotting to your little bones.

And murmured to myself
a quite prayer
of thanks
for your beauty;
and sorrow
we must meet like this.

© Paddy Cavanagh, 2023

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Join the Hut News working group

Stimulating voluntary work is continually available including researching, sub-editing, proof reading, interviewing interesting people and discussing future projects with our experienced operatives. Contact Christine 4787 7246 hutnews@bluemountains.org.au



Urunga Wetlands Walk

-- Heather Hull

In early October 2023 the TING group visited Urunga Wetlands. We were amazed at the beautiful area that has been recreated from an ugly industrial site. The 600 metre walking track through the bushland area includes a 150 metre boardwalk over a lake covered in waterlilies.

It is breathtakingly beautiful and the boardwalk contains several seating areas where you can rest and absorb the peace and tranquillity of the wetland and watch the wildlife. I have never seen so many waterlilies in one place in my life.

Amazingly, after a two year period of investigation and planning, it took only 16 months to complete this technically complex project.

The story is told in the Urunga Wetlands Fact Sheet: <https://www.crownland.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-07/Urunga-Wetlands-fact-sheet.pdf>

The Urunga Wetlands site has been transformed from a barren wasteland to a lively wetland habitat following a \$10 million program of extensive remediation and parkland work.

In 1969, an antimony processing plant was established on the site. The processing plant was used for extracting heavy metal antimony from its ore, stibnite, sourced elsewhere. The plant was abandoned in 1974 and eventually the site was sold to a private owner. No remediation work was done.

Following long-standing concern by the community, environmentalists and Bellingen Shire Council, the Environmental Protection Authority declared this a remediation site in 2002. Ownership of the site was transferred to the NSW Government as Crown Land.

Remediation work was commenced in 2015. As part of the site's rehabilitation, around 36,400 tonnes of contaminated material was treated and isolated. A 150 metre boardwalk loop allows people to walk over the wetlands. Decking was constructed using **recycled plastic waste** and is equivalent to nearly 2.5 million plastic bags being diverted from landfill.

A total area of four hectares was rehabilitated for public use, with 1.8 hectares being wetland.

Plant Study Group, visit to Mount Bindo

Mt Bindo is in the Hampton State Forest and has an altitude of 1360m. As we drove up through the pine forest the air cooled a little. We stopped to examine the first plant of interest, the low, spreading *Persoonia acuminata*, which is found only on the higher parts of the tableland. It grows in profusion on the upper slopes of Mt Bindo. On very rocky slopes we saw an unusual form of *Platysace lanceolata*.

We finally emerged from the pines into native eucalypt forest and snow gum woodland (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*) on the upper slopes and summit area. The ground cover included *Stellaria pungens* and bracken ferns.

We had seen signs warning us that we would be under surveillance at the summit, where there are various installations and observation towers. Sure enough while sitting eating our lunch we were visited by a security guard, curious to know what a bunch of people were doing hanging round the base of the towers. He would have realised instantly that none of us mainly older women had plans to scale the ladders!

-- Sue Nicol

The BMCS Plant Study Group (PSG) generally meets on the second Saturday of each month and travels to different locations in the Blue Mountains. The 2024 program can be found at <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/psg/plant-study-group-2024.shtml>
Enquiries Meredith mountains@westnet.com.au



Persoonia acuminata

Orchids of Central Western NSW. Colin Bower and Richard Medd, published by Orange Field Naturalist and Conservation Society Inc., 2023. 272 pp. RRP \$35.

-- Reviewed by Judy Smith and Peter Smith

Orchids, the "Jewels of the Bush", fascinate and bewitch, but they are challenging: so many and so variable, they come and go and in some years don't appear at all, their flowers can be baffling, and they keep changing their names.

Orange locals, Colin Bower and Richard Medd, have produced the first comprehensive guide to native orchids of Central Western NSW. Their gem of a book has got the measure of the orchids. A detailed but reader-friendly introduction to orchid biology and ecology, pollination and conservation sets the scene. Notes on pollination (most orchids are adapted to particular insect pollinators), illustrated with their magnificent photos of orchids with their insect pollinators in action, are outstanding. Accounts, specific to the Central West, of 137 local orchid species and 3 hybrids follow. Accounts are illustrated with high quality photographs to aid identification and Suzanne Bower has done a great job with the graphic design. The depth of knowledge shared in the book reflects the authors' long-time first-hand knowledge and love of their local orchids and their assiduous research. We recommend this book highly.

We congratulate the authors, Colin and Richard, whose work will be beneficial not only to us but to generations following. We also congratulate the Orange Field Naturalist and Conservation Society (OFNCS) who have supported and published this book. OFNCS was established in 1974, has a membership that bounces between about 25 and 50 with a current high around 60, and all members are volunteers. The dedication of this relatively small band of volunteers is impressive, not only have they published this valuable resource, they are out and about undertaking wildlife surveys on their much loved Mount Canobolas and they have put together some impressive submissions as they campaign to conserve their local environment.

Information regarding the book, including where to obtain a copy in the Blue Mountains, can be found via email: cworchids@hotmail.com or on the website: <https://centralwestorchids.wordpress.com/>.



Dipodium punctatum, photographed at a property just west of Orange, 24/12/2022 - Richard Medd.

Good news for the environment

Much to my surprise I have read that the damage to the Ozone layer is healing. This is a result of more and more people being aware of how critical it is to stop all the bad habits people have developed over recent times, and trying their best to correct those habits.

The UN has advised that if current policies remain in place across the world, the ozone layer should be almost completely recovered by 2040.

-- Liz van Reyswoud

Threatened closure of Burrendong Arboretum

Burrendong Botanic Garden and Arboretum is near Mumbil, south-east of Wellington - a three hour drive from Blackheath or 22 minutes from Wellington Station.

Our TING group went to the Arboretum during a trip to Wellington a few years ago and enjoyed walking through Fern Gully, a beautiful man-made rainforest oasis beneath an enormous thatched canopy.

The Garden is home to one of the largest collection of Australian native plants in cultivation. According to the website "Over 50,000 flowering plants, shrubs and trees from more than 2,000 species are growing on 164 hectares with stunning views over Lake Burrendong". <https://www.burrendongarboretum.org/> The dam is situated on the Macquarie River, just below its junction with the Cudgong River.

The TING group was there during a dry period and the level of water in the lake was low. At full capacity,

the dam holds back one of the largest inland lakes in NSW – three times the size of Sydney Harbour. The lake is a popular sport and recreation centre.

The Burrendong Arboretum is under threat of closure. It was initially funded by grants from Crown Lands and, in more recent years, by Friends of Burrendong Arboretum (FOBA). At the time of writing, an extraordinary meeting of FOBA planned for 15th January may decide its fate.

Below are details to contact the FOBA if you would like to help. PO Box 465, Wellington NSW 2820, foba@burrendongarboretum.org 6846 3486 or 0419 471171. You can google Friends of Burrendong Arboretum Facebook - there are lots of excellent photos of the local native plants.

-- Christine Davies

25 years of bushwalking

-- Christine Davies

Sylvia Beamer enrolled in the inaugural "Interpretive Bushwalks" at Katoomba Day and Evening College in 1996. Three years later, the walks were transferred to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society's bushwalking program as "Thursday Interpretive Bushwalks" (now TING). I was the leader.

We walked during school terms but not in school holidays, in all seasons and in all weathers. Sylvia rarely missed a walk. If any of us thought that we needed a break we could rely on Sylvia to be the first to enquire "when is morning tea?" Members of the walking group became friends and "family". We have frequent multi-day trips and some members of the group engage in other activities together.

Seven of us attended Sylvia's funeral on 29th November 2023. In the eulogy, Sylvia's son Daniel mentioned her love of travel and "countless trips with bushwalking friends". Daniel continued, "Mum's love for the bush and wildlife grew. She was an avid bird watcher and loved being outdoors, especially in the Blue Mountains. Bushwalks were on Thursdays. Even when mum's health declined a little, she and Margaret Hyslop would walk the short flat start to the hikes. And, later, she was still able to attend some lunches. At this time I started to take mum on drives into the bush. If it was a nice day, the window would be down and her head nearly out the window breathing in the eucalyptus soaked air. Bliss!"

Vale Sylvia Beamer, 1941-2023.



Interpretive Bushwalkers at Kings Tableland Aboriginal Place, Wentworth Falls, May 2009. Sylvia on left of photo.



Two Sylvias - During decades of walking, Sylvia was very popular with her companions, including Sylvia Davies, pictured in 2012 at the age of 12, and the late Margaret Hyslop (mentioned in text)

Environment, Better Trains and Housing Opinion by Don Morison

In December 2023, an essay was published relevant to the topic of faster trains between central western NSW and Sydney – this subject was discussed in a Hut News interview with Dr Phillip Laird (page 6, November 2023 Hut News).

Alan Kohler, a prominent economics commentator, wrote a Quarterly Essay about "The Great Divide, Australia's housing mess and how to fix it". Quotes from this essay include "the only way to significantly increase the supply of 'well-located' housing must be trains – fast ones" (p82). Mr Kohler also wrote "commuters need to be able to live in Bathurst, 200 kilometres from the Sydney CBD".

Now is the time to reflect on the public policies and public attitudes dominating coverage of these matters. Mr Kohler's ideas could bring about beneficial progress for the natural environment as well as for housing availability.

If more people travelled by train to reach work and to conduct other aspects of their lives, it would reduce environment harming emissions. It could also reduce the need for environment damaging major roadworks in or adjacent to natural areas.

Wherever anyone has suggested increasing the density of housing near any railway stations within 200 kilometres of Sydney Central, there have been some

objections. Vigorous debates about such issues will certainly continue up until the time of the NSW Local Council elections, set down for 14th September 2024.

In the Blue Mountains Local Government Area (LGA), however, the housing density issues with which environmentalists need be most concerned are those affecting the perimeters of urban development near natural bushland areas. There are certainly areas close to some railway stations in both Blue Mountains and Greater Lithgow LGAs which could have their residential densities increased with nett benefit to the environment if these changes were accompanied by significantly improved train services.

The main environmental benefit would come from emissions reductions caused by a shift to less polluting transport. It would also give more people whose work needs to occur at urbanised nodes an opportunity to spend more time interacting with the natural environment and learning more about it.

There needs to be a very focussed and rational debate about these issues. Some people will foment scare campaigns in the hope of dividing environmentalists and dividing the progressive side of politics. The facts and true balance of benefits and disbenefits need to be at the forefront of this discussion.

A stroll with my bro on the plateau

-- Alethea Morison

Heading west just past Katoomba, turn left onto Nellies Glen Road, continue onto Pulpit Hill Road and follow it to the loop at the end. On a Saturday summer morning, there are several vehicles parked here already, disgorging a small crowd of people and dogs who all greet each other with delight.

With similar delight, I greet my brother, Don, and we set off along the fire trail that loops what is now Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park and part of the NSW national parks estate. Don has led me and my children on many walks here over the decades, calling it "Elphinstone" or "Radiata" Plateau. Each visit, he led us down sidetracks to the views, pointed out plants, birds and animals - or at least their dung (every child must learn cubic poo = wombat) and regaled us with local history.

Today, I'm delighted that the area's future as a park is secure, thanks to a long campaign by the community, the Conservation Society and other local groups. The bush is reasserting its claim against the pines. As the track unfolds, creamy clouds of tea-tree blooms spill over the trail and eucalypt trunks filter views towards Narrow Neck and the Megalong Valley. The cliffs and vistas are spectacular and a reminder that climbers enjoy this place, along with the hikers, dog-walkers and cyclists.

This place is culturally important as part of Aboriginal people's pathways, for the route into the Megalong Valley via Blacks Ladder. Don also indicates a track towards Esgate Ladder, where the late Ben Esgate, a long-term mountain resident, placed spikes in the 1930s so he could carry his dog Scottie in and out of the valley when they went rabbit hunting.

Leaving the main firetrail, we take a track down to Radiata Pond. Here Don recalls an event 30 years ago in the long campaign to protect this area from development. A meeting convened by the landowners to explain the benefits of a resort was derailed when a lone protestor emerged naked from the bush and walked into the pond. As a lawyer attempted to read him a lengthy document on the illegality of his actions, he ducked under the water and held his breath. Each time he popped up, the lawyer resumed, but was obliged to stop again when the protestor re-submerged.

It's fortunate no such action is needed today as the pond is too low. However it's very prettily encircled by brilliant red sundews like myriad tiny starfish, contrasting with patches of lush green moss. Leaving the pond, we head back to the start, mainly via small trails that give a more intimate experience of the bush. As the walk ends, I'm already looking forward to returning to explore this beautiful area in other moods and seasons.



Editor's note: It is wonderful to know that, several years after the purchase of the land to create Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park, it is being appreciated by both locals and visitors.

You can read about the campaign and the victory in November 2019 Hut News, online at <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/hutnews/archive/1911-hutnews.pdf>

Photos (from November 2019 Hut News): Rally at Cahills Lookout, August 2017; Pulpit Hill resident Glenn Humphreys, one of the original campaigners; Rock climbers hang a sign to "Leave Radiata Plateau Wild"





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 detailed walks program and program changes.**

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS: Short day walks 3-5 hours. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. Coordinator: Melanie Lawson 0431 214 687. melanielawson@outlook.com.au.

Feb 12 **Rigby Hill and Walls lookout and return** 4kms. Wayne 0429 021 296

Feb 19 **Clifftop track, Govetts Leap to Evans Lookout / return.** 6km. Melanie 0431 214 687

Feb 26 **Terrace Falls, Hazelbrook**, 6 km, 240m ascent and descent. Lyn 0432 352 850

Mar 4 **Victoria Falls**, 4km return, Grade 4. 380m descent and ascent. Melanie 0431 214 687

TUESDAY FITNESS WALKS: 'Medium Day' walks suitable for walkers of average fitness, 3-5 hours. Bring morning tea/lunch/adequate water. Coordinator: Phill Cox (0415 449 174 mrpacox@hotmail.com)

Feb 13 **Fairy Bower/Cox's Cave/Mt Piddington** G2-3/6K, Sharon 0404622515.

Feb 20 **Taronga Zoo to Balmoral** G1-2/7K, Anna/Imma 0403 711457 / 0422 313828.

Feb 27 **Linden Ridge and Kings Regiment Carving** G2/4K, Maurice 0402402783.

Mar 5 **Fitzroy Falls/West Rim Lookouts** G1-2/4K, Marek/Margaret 0412 347478 / 0416 849506.

Mar 12 **La Perouse Bushwalk and Museum visit.** Lynne/Roger 0407 498397 / 0449 902774. Mar 19 **Transit of Venus walk** G2/5K, Judith 0419780640.

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

Feb 15 **Berghoffers Pass**, Mt Vic. Maurice 0402 402 783. Gr2.

Feb 22 **Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park**, Katoomba. Take lunch. Beverley 4757 2076. Gr 2 (SEE ARTICLE ON PAGE 10)

Feb 29 **Fort Rock, Blackheath.** Take lunch. Ros 0417 261 465. Grade 2

Mar 7 **Sunset Rock and Engineers Cascade, Mount Victoria.** Take lunch. Maurice 0402 402 783. Grade 2

Mar 14 **Castle Head, Katoomba.** Take lunch. Ros 0417 261 465. Grade 2

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

February **Summer Program:** Walkers to meet at Wentworth Falls Stockland Car Park at 8.00am and select a walk and leader on the day.

Mar 2 **Katoomba Clifftop walk to Furber Steps via Leura Falls.** Harold 0409 010737, Grade 3, 9km. Map Katoomba.

Mar 9 **Centennial Glen, Colliers Causeway, Porters Pass.** Geoff 0497 638033, Grade 3, 7km. Map Katoomba.

Mar 16 **Dalpura Circuit.** Karin, kschianetz@gmail.com Grade 3, 8km. Map Mt Wilson.

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

THE TING GROUP

The Thursday Interpretive Nature Group conducts walks on Thursdays in NSW school terms and also multi-day trips away (next probably late Autumn or early winter). It focusses on slow and thorough examination of natural areas and exchanging knowledge about them. It is our best bush experience groups for people with some mobility restrictions.

Contact Christine hutnews@bluemountains.org.au phone 4787 7246.

See our webpage: <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/wild-ting.shtml>

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Planning & 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

VOLUNTEER WANTED!

The Society distributes leftover copies of Hut News at various places including the Conservation Hut.

Do you live near the Conservation Hut and are you able to top up the supply of Hut News in the foyer on a regular basis?

Contact Christine 4787 7246 hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Society is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains and to increase awareness of the natural environment in general. The Aims and Objectives of the Society are to:

- Foster increased awareness of conservation issues in the community
- Promote ecological sustainability as the basis for all human activities
- Preserve the natural environment: flora, fauna, habitat, water, land and air
- Actively oppose those human activities which degrade or destroy the natural environment
- Repair the adverse effects of human activities upon the environment
- Increase the pool of expert knowledge about the natural environment.

https://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/aboutus/bmcs_mission_statement.pdf



RANGERS take care of the parks and help visitors that come to explore the parks.



SCIENTISTS study the plants and animals that make the Greater Blue Mountains Area their home.



TEACHERS educate students about the Greater Blue Mountains Area. They can help students learn how to take care of the environment.

P

PEOPLE



The **POWERFUL OWL** is the largest owl in Australia. But don't let their size fool you. Owls are very quiet when they fly compared to most other birds of prey.

QUIET



CRAWFISH lay between 100 and 1000 eggs at a time. They carry the eggs in their curved tails for 40 days.



Even though **CENTIPEDE** means "100 legs," centipedes have between 15 and 30 pairs of legs.

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-P.pdf>



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