



HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

Issue No. 422
March 2024

Blue Mountains Conservation Society
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Wednesday 27th March 2024, 6.30 PM
at the Wentworth Falls School of Arts
Cnr GWH & Adele Ave, Wentworth Falls

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on 27th March. (See Notice of AGM on page 6.)

Please come along and support your Society. Vote for a management committee to serve the Society in a voluntary capacity for the coming year. Consider nominating for a position. Learn what the Society has been doing in the past year and what is planned for the coming year. And remember, this is your Society! Ask questions if there is anything you need to know.

After the formal part of the meeting, there will be a short break for supper and you will hear from our guest speaker:

Dr Ian Wright - State of the Waterways in the Greater Blue Mountains Area

Dr Ian Wright is a lecturer at Western Sydney University, an environmentalist and passionate water researcher. He has been researching the Blue Mountains region for over ten years, often involving his students in the studies.



Image: Dr Ian Wright takes samples to test the health of the creek

Visitors will be very welcome!

Registration: To assist with catering, please register at Humanitix bit.ly/BMCS2024AGM or phone 0490 419 779 and leave a message indicating your attendance - this is a free event.

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

Our Management Committee

Members of the management committee are ordinary members of Blue Mountains Conservation Society who put up their hand and are willing to work as a volunteer for 12 months to help with the work of the Society to "conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains and to increase awareness of the natural environment in general".

Read our Mission Statement:

www.bluemountains.org.au - 'About Us'

At the AGM we will elect a Management Committee for the coming year.

What is involved ...

With this newsletter, members will receive a page giving a brief outline of some of the duties and responsibilities of all management positions, or it can be downloaded at <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/agm/bmcs-mc-position-descriptions-2425.pdf> ..

Please consider nominating for a position. All positions fall vacant and some present management committee members will not be renominating.

If you want to find out more, please email bmcs@bluemountains.org.au or leave a message on 0490 419 779 with your name, contact number and what you are interested in. A member of the management committee will respond.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

We will be at the Blackheath Growers Market
on **SUNDAY 10th MARCH**

(8am to 12 noon)

AND on the 2nd Sunday of the 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) online or at the Growers Market

Become a member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society

We are an incorporated voluntary organisation whose goal is to protect the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains www.bluemountains.org.au You can 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.

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is an incorporated voluntary organisation of more than 800 members. Our goal is to protect, conserve and advocate for the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains. Read more: www.bluemountains.org.au

From the President ...

ConSoc's advocacy for changes to the Western Sydney International (WSI) Airport's flight paths and lack of curfew is ongoing. We are working with other community groups and BMCC to insist upon changes beneficial for the environment and community members. Please keep up to date with the information on our website.

Remember to have a look at our submission when you have time! Thank you for your continued support on this important matter.

Changes to create low-and mid-rise housing

As you may have seen in a recent edition of the Gazette or heard on the news, there are considerable changes being planned for housing density in the Six Cities Region. This is a "region defined in the *Greater Cities Commission Act 2022* which stretched from the Shoalhaven-Wollongong regions to the south, the Blue Mountains to the west, and the Newcastle-Lower Hunter region to the north."

These are sweeping changes intending to address the current housing shortage. Changes allow increased building heights and density in certain areas of our villages. Whilst there are aspects of this proposal with merit, there has been no consideration for the impact of these changes on the Blue Mountains natural areas nor on the effects on the World Heritage Area. The new planning regulations (called "non-refusal standards") will override Council's current development controls, including environmental and heritage protections.

There is an item in this issue of Hut News which explains our concerns. Check out ConSoc webpage "Proposed Housing Reforms".

Strategic Planning

Recently, Management Committee has been continuing to work on Strategic Planning as a follow-up to our Planning Day in August 2023. Our short-term focus is to provide training in advocacy for both MC and members, to establish an Events Co-ordination team with volunteers, continue investigating a new location for the Nursey, improve our communication, increase both our pool of volunteers and our general membership, and have additional areas added to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

There is always a great deal to do in conservation to protect our beautiful Blue Mountains environment and we certainly need the help and support of our membership.

Please consider offering your support or nominating for a position at the upcoming AGM in March.

-- Annette Cam, President

NEW VOLUNTEERS WELCOME AT OUR NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

The BMCS native plant nursery needs more volunteers in order to meet the demand from local residents for low cost local native plants. No experience is necessary - volunteers will be trained. If you would like to assist the nursery we meet on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings at the nursery in Blackheath.

Please contact Paul Irwin, Plant Nursery Manager, plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com

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THE DEADLINE FOR APRIL HUT NEWS IS 12 MARCH

hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

Enquiries: Christine 4787 7246

Increased Evidence for a Decline of Insects

-- Chris Whiteman

Although **invasive** insect species originating from overseas such as Red Imported Fire Ants and Varroa mites have increased in Australia, local species of insects have declined. A decline in insect species can affect pollination of plants; it also reduces food for reptiles, frogs, spiders, mammals and birds resulting in a change to ecosystems. Causes of the decline are considered to be:

- The widespread use of insecticides, particularly Neonicotinoids eg Confidor.
- Land clearing of native plants that are critical for specific insects to complete their development.
- Urbanisation with increased lighting; a significant problem with the building of a major (24 hours a day) international airport next to a world heritage national park.
- Climate change is another factor where insects may be confused with breeding cycles due to increased temperatures, dry or wet periods and significant bushfires.

Sydney University researchers have recently found, from long term studies of insect numbers worldwide, an average 37 per cent of species were declining while populations of 18 per cent of agricultural nuisance pests were increasing.

The research found some interesting highlights for Australia. In the Murwillumbah area in northern NSW, where butterflies have been sampled for over 23 years, the overall abundance of 21 species declined by 57 per cent due to human disturbance.

Changes among 46 butterfly species in a peripheral urban landscape near Melbourne, studied since 1941, found up to 48 per cent of species declined since 1981. Urbanisation of the region implied habitat loss and ecosystem dysfunction which, together with climate change factors (water stress and heatwaves), are considered the most likely drivers of the changes.

The decline of the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) at some of its overwintering grounds in Australia can be ascribed to urbanisation, with >90% population declining from the 1960s around the Sydney region.

Populations of the migratory Bogong moth (*Agrotis infusa*) have crashed in recent times. Every year, about four billion moths used to aestivate in the Snowy Mountains where they constitute the main food resource of the critically endangered mountain pygmy possum (*Burramys parvus*), bush rats and several alpine birds. Historical surveys in the alpine region show steady moth numbers from 1951 until about 1980, followed by a steady population decline and a dramatic drop in numbers from 2017 onwards. This may be due to the recent severe drought in the moth's breeding grounds.

Invasive species of insects, such as Red Imported Fire Ants and Wasps, can pose a threat to native species through direct predation and competitive exclusion. The accidental introduction of two species of European wasps (*Vespa* sp.) in Tasmania has contributed to population decline of the endangered butterfly *Oreixenica ptunarra*, as the wasps prey on the

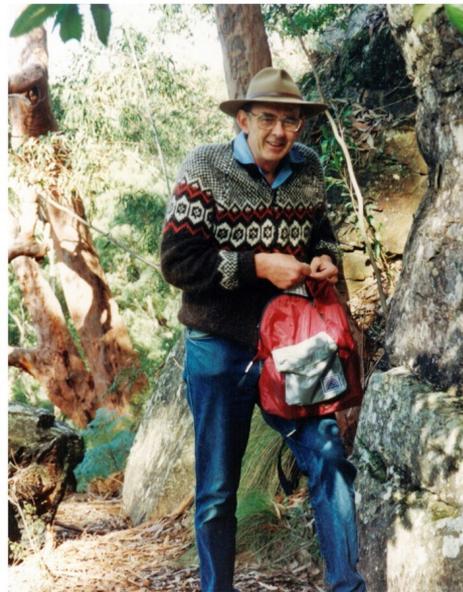
caterpillars. The European bumblebee has also caused problems in Tasmania, competing with native species for pollination and nesting sites. It appears to have a negative impact on some local Tasmanian native bee species.

The Sydney University research included 40 long-term studies from around the world which added weight to their conclusion of insect decline. Researchers concluded that insects which constitute vital food sources for numerous vertebrates and underpin the functioning and integrity of entire ecosystems require further urgent research and action that is essential for the survival of the world's ecosystems.

References :

Braby, Michael; Yeates, David and Taylor, Gary (2021) Population declines and the conservation of insects and other terrestrial invertebrates in Australia.

Sánchez-Bayo, Francisco and Wyckhuys, Kris A G. (2021) Worldwide decline of the entomofauna: a review of its drivers; and Further evidence for a global decline of the entomofauna (2023).



Les Coyne
1990

Photo supplied
by Michael
Coyne

Tribute to Les Coyne

Les Coyne (1940-2024) was one of the most impactful of secretaries and treasurers in the history of Blue Mountains Conservation Society. He inspired and enthused his colleagues.

He also took part in Society bushwalks and was the Society's representative on the committee that prepared the nomination for the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

Multiple tributes to Les' life and work have been posted online and were also made at Les' funeral on 7th February 2024.

Hut News thanks those who have already contributed some beautiful writing about Les and a collation is being prepared for our May 2024 issue.

If you have personal reminiscences of Les Coyne or other thoughts about him you would be willing to share with our readership, please send to hutnews@bluemountains.org.au or PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782, or leave a message for Christine on 0490 419 779.

The Intergenerational Transformations Series

Public spaces in 30, 60 & 90 years' time

Series coordinated by Don Morison.



Kingsford Smith Park, Katoomba



Blaxland

In this article, we present two further responses by the public spaces specialist, Mr Steve Alton, about high profile public spaces expected to be the subject of future actions by Blue Mountains City Council.

KINGSFORD SMITH PARK, KATOOMBA

Hut News: The southern part of Kingsford Smith Park, popular with dog walkers, picnickers and so on, contrasts markedly to the northern part of Kingsford Smith Park which is characterised by unruly exotic shrubs, badly broken path pavements and small landslips. Old *Eucalyptus oreades*, which dominate the northern skyline, actually have their roots outside the park. How would you address these issues?

Mr Alton: The unkempt parts of the northern section of Kingsford Smith Park should receive much more regular minor maintenance activity to keep them tidy. Any removal of exotic shrubs and trees from this section needs to depend on maintaining the overall stability of the steep slopes which is being protected, in part, by the root systems of plants.

There is an opportunity to engage in new native plantings around the perimeters of the large grassed area in the centre of the park.

There are locations where natives like *Eucalyptus oreades*, of which large specimens characterise the park's surround, could, over time, become well established within the park. This would greatly contribute to the ambiance of this precinct.

The strategy for the steep untidy slope areas could include a naturally regenerative process during which just a few old exotic shrubs are replaced with natives. This could make that part of the park become more interesting over a period of multiple years.

BLAXLAND SHOPPING STRIP

Hut News: How do you expect issues such as the need for shade for humans and native fauna as well as the image and public tolerance of native trees to be resolved if there are significant changes to the large trees in the Blaxland shopping strip?

Mr Alton: The amenity of places like the Blaxland shopping strip is improved by planting shade trees. Blaxland is a particularly appropriate place for using exotic trees because it is not easy to manage native trees that shed branches and leaves irregularly in a shopping strip of this kind. Plane trees have worked well in other locations that have this kind of challenge.

The appearance of a place like the Blaxland shopping strip would be much worse if there were no trees.

There could be an opportunity to introduce "block planting" with some seats located between planted areas, even on sections of the highway. Native shrubs or grasses, which may have to be replanted in a 20-year cycle, could help quickly restore the appearance of sections of the Blaxland strip in the event that the existing Canary Island Date Palms are removed.

Public Meeting - Struggle to discourage dumping of unwanted pets 3PM, Saturday, 9th March 2024, Katoomba RSL

David Burrell, experienced veterinary surgeon, longtime BMCS member and frequent contributor to discussions about the welfare of native animals, will be the main speaker.

A statement will be provided from Blue Mountains MP Trish Doyle.

Questions and contributions from the floor will be welcome.

Blue Mountains Association for the Protection and Care of Animals Further information: www.bmapca.org.au

Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport Airspace and Flight Design

This is a summary of the Society's submission which you can read at <https://bit.ly/3OyfOcn>



The Society's submission in response to the draft EIS focusses on the impacts on conservation, biodiversity in natural areas and the integrity of the GBMA, which the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for WSI has failed to adequately address.

The Society has serious concerns about the flight paths arriving into and departing from Western Sydney International airport (WSI) and the highly detrimental impact these flights will have on the Blue Mountains natural areas including the biodiversity and the Outstanding Universal Values of the Greater Blue Mountains Area (GBMA). Without appropriate consideration of these issues, WSI will have an adverse impact on the biodiversity of the UNESCO-listed Greater Blue Mountains Area.

Our concerns are summarised on pages 4-5 and detailed on pages 7-45.

The 2023 Draft WSI EIS is inadequate in assessing and mitigating the potential negative impacts on the Greater Blue Mountains Area as well as other areas protected under the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Heritage Estate.

There is no guiding principle in the EIS relating to protecting the important values of the surrounding environment, including the GBMA. This is in conflict with the Australian Government's ongoing commitment to protecting the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBMA under the UNESCO World Heritage Agreement.

The EIS fails on all accounts.

The draft EIS is inadequate in its treatment of noise impacts, impacts on wildlife, declared wilderness, visual amenity and landscape, (anything) in the GBMA and requires extensive change.

Our recommendations are set out on pages 45 and 46. These include:

- An independent, expert peer review of the biodiversity of the GBMA and the likely impact of the WSI flight paths on biodiversity.
- An independent review into Sydney Basin Airspace.
- A curfew, from 11pm to 6am.
- Proper mitigation and management measures.
- New modelling of the impact of noise on the GBMA and other natural areas.
- Assessment of the impacts on wilderness.

We call on the Federal Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Tanya Plibersek, to convene a public inquiry into the 2023 Draft WSI EIS to examine alternative flight paths and redesign Sydney Basin Airspace, avoiding flights over the GBMA of lower than 31,000ft thus minimising harm caused to the GBMA by WSI operations. The EPBC Act allows the Minister to revoke her decision to assess the impacts of this proposal through an EIS and direct it be assessed through a public inquiry.

Cumberland Land Conservancy -- on your doorstep

CLC has been operating for nearly 10 years and is a dedicated restoration project, working hard to restore four degraded properties that integrate into existing bushland corridors on the critically endangered Cumberland Plain.

The four properties within the CLC portfolio are spread across the Cumberland Plain from Mulgoa to Londonderry and vary in size and habitat. Wallaroo is a 38 hectare property where restoration of the critically endangered Cumberland Plain Woodland and endangered River-flat Eucalypt Forest is encouraging the return and proliferation of seven species of endangered wildlife. Wombat is a 4.8 hectare property and provides a critical link between Blue Mountains National Park and Mulgoa Nature Reserve. Marsdenia is 3.75 hectares in Llandilo and forms part of a key corridor between the Wianamatta Regional Park and the Wianamatta Nature Reserve. And, Thornbill, 2.2 hectares in Londonderry that forms part of a key corridor between UWS Richmond Campus and the Agnes Banks Nature Reserve.

CLC is always looking for volunteers for Saturday Bushcare – which moves from property to property over the month. Checkout the CLC website at <https://www.cumberlandlc.org.au/> Become a member and join us at one of the bushcare days.

-- Jo Carroll

Wild! A Greater Blue Mountains Alphabet

This series was donated to the Society by Ingrid Hess for children and their parents so that they can learn more about this region and its environment. Ingrid is a cut-paper artist and a professor of graphic design at the University of Massachusetts Lowell in the United States. In 2022, Ingrid spent a month in Australia at the BigCi artist residency.

The letters A to Q were published in previous editions of Hut News, in both colour and black and white editions.

Now you can finish the alphabet by downloading Letters R to Z from our website at <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/kids.html>

Browsing through our newsletter archives ...

“Tread Softly For We Are But Passers By”

In the 1970s. our Society set up a Land Preservation Fund “to give lovers of the bush an opportunity to preserve environmentally important land in the Blue Mountains by purchase and dedication as a reserve.”

In spring 1978 the Land Preservation Fund received an anonymous donation of \$300; the opportunity table at the November meeting raised \$113.48; a beautiful Xmas cake which was made and donated by Hilder Duckham raised \$23 in a raffle. The fund then stood at \$1098.24. “The committee would be pleased to receive suggestions regarding blocks of land suitable for preservation.” (November 1978 newsletter)

Society members propagated and grew native plants (at their homes) and sold them at the Conservation Hut to raise money for the Land Preservation Fund. The autumn 1988 plant sale raised over \$1000. The Land Preservation Committee thanked “hard-working propagators, Jill Dark, Grete Vanry and Len Symes”. The event included a talk by Jill Dark, and then a ramble to Den Fenella. “From Lady See’s Lookout we saw a wonderful flight by a Peregrine Falcon ...” (April 1988 newsletter)

On Saturday 17 June, 1995, Society members were treated to a bus trip arranged by NPWS to witness the handing over and claiming of a 24 hectare former grazing property which was an inholding in Kanangra Boyd National Park. The owner had wished to sell it for tourist development. National Parks Services wished to keep it undeveloped and was able, with \$41,000 from our Society to help, to pay for the land.

The trip to the land was full of interest, with lots of snow. “After lunch Geoff Luscombe (NPWS) welcomed us and gave some history of the land we could see from our slope. He stressed that groups could work together, encouraged us to continue our work and thanked us for our monetary donation. He then took possession of the land for National Park.

“Thor (Thor Schache was the Society’s president) and Reg responded with thanks to all who had helped. Grete Vanry was then asked to unveil the plaque which had been set in stone and was now covered with snow. Grete was one of the initiators many years ago of the policy to purchase important land threatened by development.

“The plaque reads: Development in this portion of land within the park was averted with the assistance of the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society. Returning the land to its natural condition satisfies one of the Society’s long-held goals. **TREAD SOFTLY FOR WE ARE BUT PASSERS BY**” (July 1995 newsletter)

Blue Mountains Conservation Society

1 March 2024

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given of the Annual General Meeting of the Society to be held at the Wentworth Falls School of Arts, 217 -219 Great Western Highway, Wentworth Falls, at 7 PM on Wednesday 27 March 2024.

Business will include receipt of reports, adoption of annual accounts, changes to Constitution, determination of structure of Management Committee, election of President, Management Committee members and other office holders and appointment of auditor.

Changes to Constitution

You will be asked to vote on Management Committee's recommendation that the following Clauses be changed as set out below.

In recent times it has become difficult for the Financial Report to be produced in time for the AGM, which is currently required to be held in the month of March. In order to alleviate this situation the relevant revised clause will read:-

Clause 9. Annual General Meeting

“The Annual General Meeting of members shall be held by 30 April each year, when the Annual Report and audited financial statements shall be presented.”

Due to Government changes the Register of Environmental Organisations, on which we were registered as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR), no longer exists, and we are now classified as an Environmental Organisation with the Australian Tax Office. In order to reflect his change the following clauses will read:-

Clause 14.1 The Public Gift Fund

(h) “In the event that the Public Gift Fund is wound up, any remaining assets in the fund are to be transferred to another fund with similar objectives that is an Environmental Organisation.”

Clause 19 Dissolution

(b) “... The receiving Organisation must have similar objectives to the Society, and must be an Environmental Organisation.”

**By order of the Management Committee
Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc**

Looking Back ...

This is the Day!

How many times have you passed a spot that looks interesting and promised yourself that **one day** you would explore it?

Recently the Thursday pleasure walkers discovered that a couple of us had always been attracted to the same interesting rock outcrop on Kings Tableland and decided, **this is the day!**

Scrambling through a gap in the rocks we entered a world of small caverns, magnificent rock formations and interesting plants. A great place for morning tea!

I’m now compiling a list of all those **one day** spots and intend to visit them all as soon as possible. Joan.

Source: Hut News November 2003.

Birds of the Blue Mountains: The Fantails

-- Annette Cam

I am lucky to have fantails that visit my garden – most commonly Grey and Rufous Fantails. Occasionally a Willie Wagtail or two drop in but they never stay for long.

Fantails belong to the bird family *Rhipiduridae*. There are two species of fantail common in the Blue Mountains.

Grey Fantail *Rhipidura albiscapa*

This year a pair of Grey Fantails nested on the edge of the bush near our house and, over a few weeks, the adults and chicks visited the grassy areas that run along the edge of our property, catching various moths and other insects. They are such delightful birds to watch as they twist and turn, hawking for insects and flicking their tails as they perch and sing.

They can be very inquisitive and come over to see what I am doing in the garden – maybe they are hoping I'll disturb an insect for them to catch for dinner!

Grey Fantails are a common species, found across most of Australia where there are trees, except for the very dry, arid areas. The subspecies that is found in most of eastern and south-eastern Australia is *R.a. alisteri*. Males and females have the same plumage.

This species feeds on flying insects, sallying forth from tree branches to catch them. I have seen the birds fly down to chase small moths off clover flowers or dandelions and then catch them once they are in the air.

Rufous Fantail *Rhipidura rufifrons*

Some years I have been treated to seeing these glorious birds in my garden and on bushwalks in South Lawson Park. This year, one delighted me by visiting the tree just outside my study window, hawking for insects just over the outer foliage of the tree.

There are two subspecies in Australia - *R.r. rufifrons* and *R.r. intermedia*. The subspecies found in the Blue Mountains is *R.r. rufifrons*. They live in coastal eastern Australia, extending west to the Great Dividing Range, the Grampians National Park in Victoria and north to the NSW-Queensland border. Sometimes it is seen in SA west to the Mr Lofty Ranges and is a vagrant to Tasmania. This subspecies has been recorded as far north as south Papua New Guinea. The range of *R.r. intermedia* is from the NSW-Queensland border northward. Male and female Rufous Fantails have the same plumage.

R.r. rufifrons is migratory, with most of the population absent from south-eastern Australia in winter, leaving in March-April and moving north to Queensland. They arrive back in their breeding grounds in south-eastern Australia in August-December.

Their main habitat is in the understorey of rainforests and wet sclerophyll forests, paperbark forests, parks and gardens where there is a dense understorey or vine thickets.

Rufous Fantails eat insects and forage in the low to middle strata of forests, sometimes in the canopy or on the ground. Mostly they forage aerially by sallying from a branch but they will also glean items from foliage and occasionally take food from the ground.



Grey Fantail (C) Kristina Sands 2022
birdlifephotography.org.au



Rufous Fantail (C) Tim Van Leeuwen 2019
birdlifephotography.org.au

Logging threatens Greater Glider

It is a legal requirement that a 50-metre exclusion zone from logging be created around the hollows that the endangered greater gliders use to nest in and sleep.

Forestry Corporation claims there is no evidence of gliders in areas they log but the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has found otherwise. It has been revealed that surveys for nocturnal animals are undertaken during the day.

After thousands supported our petition to mandate Forestry Corporation survey for the endangered, nocturnal marsupial during the night, I met with the head of the EPA who agreed that surveying for nocturnal gliders during the day was not working.

But, rather than mandate night-time surveys, the EPA has now removed the requirements to look for gliders altogether. The 50-metre buffer zone still stands, but neither Forestry nor the EPA will be looking for these habitats. **That means it's up to us!**

We need to expand our Breach Watch program, <https://www.breachwatch.org.au/> so citizen scientists can do the work that Forestry and EPA won't. Please donate to Save Our Forests <https://forests.nature.org.au/>

--Jacqui Mumford, Nature Conservation Council

Please also read: Notice by Forestry Corporation on Page 11 - "Forestry Corporation of NSW convicted of felling hollow-bearing trees in Mogo State Forest".

'Blue Mountains - NOT Another Suburb of Sydney' ... AGAIN !



Photo: Rob Linigen

Members and Hut News readers may recall the Society's 2013 campaign against the NSW government's targeting of the lower Blue Mountains from Falconbridge down for high levels of urban growth to help absorb Sydney's increasing population. The proposal was defeated following a concerted campaign by Council and the community, culminating in the Society's rally on the Falconbridge footbridge in August 2013.

Eleven years later we are facing the same threat, except it's mountains-wide. The NSW Government's commitment to deliver at least 314,000 new homes by 2029 under the National Housing Accord has resulted in another 'one-size-fits-all' planning proposal that will radically change the character of the Blue Mountains.

Under the government's proposal, increased building heights and density will be permitted in certain areas. In the Blue Mountains this will mean:

- Up to 6-storey residential flat buildings and shop-top housing in town centres and medium density residential areas within 800m of a railway station or town centre
- 2-3 storey residential buildings of various types in low density residential areas within 800m of a railway station or town centre
- 2-3 storey dual occupancies (attached or detached) on smaller blocks in all low density residential areas.

These new heights and densities (called 'non-refusal standards') will override Council's current development controls, including environmental and heritage protections.

The proposal can be viewed at: <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/draftplans/exhibition/explanation-intended-effect-changes-create-low-and-mid-rise-housing>

Submissions closed on 23 February. You'll find the Society's submission on our website. In its submission, the Society objected to the proposal on the following grounds:

- it overturns **20 years of careful planning** by Council and the community which appropriately responds to our unique location

- it ignores the danger of putting more **housing in bushfire prone areas**
- the Sydney-centric proposal is based on the false premise that the existence of a railway station means that there is **regular public transport**
- the proposal overrides local planning controls to **safeguard the environment**. Now creeklines, sensitive vegetation communities, and steep slopes will not be protected
- the **World Heritage Area** will be at risk because of the lack of adequate stormwater controls required to deal with runoff
- **Blue Mountains Swamps** could be threatened by increased hard surfaces, reducing the water available to recharge the essential groundwater.

The Society's campaign against the proposed reforms will continue over the next couple of months. We are hoping that the government will withdraw the proposal altogether or at least exempt the Blue Mountains from the reforms.

For updates, keep your eye on the Society's weekly e-newsletter, social media and dedicated website <https://bluemountains.org.au/housing-reforms-2024.shtml>

-- Land Use Subcommittee



Wildlife and People DO catch cat diseases

-- Meredith Brownhill

How much do we know about wildlife and people catching diseases from cats? Is disease risk a good reason to keep pet cats indoors?

Cats are the only definitive host of *Toxoplasma gondii*, a parasite which passes through cat faeces contaminating soil and water, so that humans and other mammals can catch the disease Toxoplasmosis.

Eastern barred Bandicoots, Pademelons, Bennett's Wallabies and Eastern Quolls are dying from toxoplasmosis, according to the Tasmanian Government report to a federal inquiry 2020. The Meat & Livestock industry in a 2021 report estimate that 11.6% mutton is affected and this is a food safety issue.

People are infected by ingesting uncooked vegetables and meats and contaminated water. Accidental ingestion of the *T.gondii* eggs from handling kitty litter, garden soil and children's sand pits may infect a person.

The trend is for 30% to 50% of the world population to be affected. Some people are asymptomatic whilst others are seriously affected. There are consequences for pregnant women as *T.gondii* can cross the placental barrier to a foetus which is at risk of serious illness or stillbirth. Eye disease with retinal scarring, will affect many people.

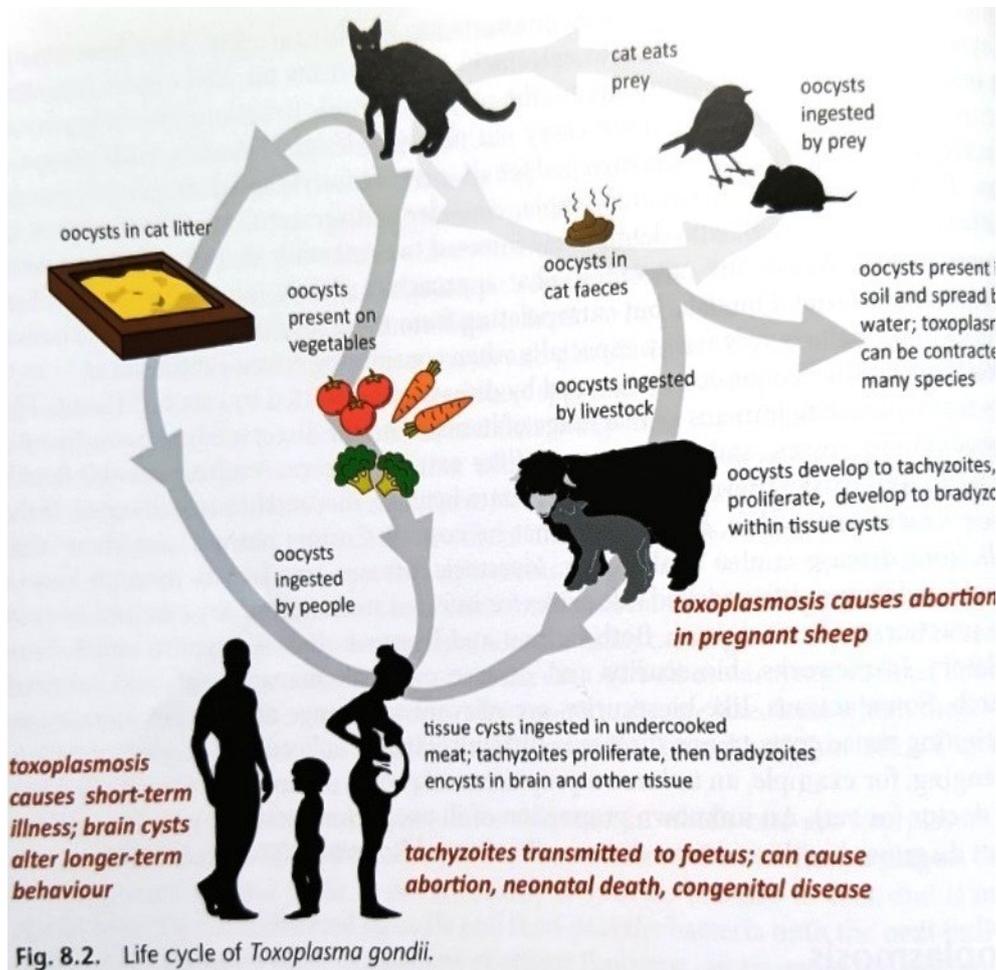
Transmission of this disease will be limited by keeping cats indoors. Cats and their carers will be protected from the disease, and so will urban wildlife. The spread of disease between feral and pet cats will be eliminated. So, yes, keeping pet cats indoors at home will definitely reduce the transmission of *T.gondii*.

Further reading:

Among the Pigeons, 2019, John Read

Cats in Australia Companion and Killer, 2019, C.J. Woinarski, S. Legge, C. Dickman

Image: Reproduced from Woinarski, J. et al. (2019) with permission from CSIRO Publishing.



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

Helping your Society to have more events for members

The Society plans to organise more events for members during the coming year.

AND we are looking for a new Events Coordinator.

Our new Events Coordinator will help to organise the events and be a member of the management committee, but he/she won't have to do all the work.

Our new Events Coordinator will, if required, get lots of help with the organisation of the events, and, on the day will need to be able to call on other volunteers.

We need lots of helpers - the more the better - ideally a long list of people in all parts of the Mountains who can be contacted to help out at various times for an hour or two for a stall, three or four hours at events, or other times as needed.

We need people who help set up the event and welcome members and visitors. We need people who can offer technical support.

We need people who can help with supper; we need people who can talk to other people; there is something for everyone.

Contact SAO - that's the Society's (volunteer) Administration Officer -

bmcs@bluemountains.org.au
0490 419 779 (leave a message)

Port of Newcastle blockaded Paddlers protest lack of climate action

-- Anne A

John and I participated in the blockade of the Port of Newcastle on 25-28 November 2023. The event was organised by a non-aligned, non-violent, protest group called Rising Tide.

This was the 12th blockade of the world's largest coal port. It was the biggest direct action in Australia's history. The blockade lasted 30 hrs, stopped the movement of eight coal ships and cost coal companies half a million dollars. That some 107 paddlers, trained in peaceful resistance, were arrested without incident after the blockade was officially complete, was a testament to the brilliant organisation of the event by the mostly young people of Newcastle.

Over 3000 people attended the protest. 500 people camped and there were at least 350 kayaks and other craft. The event attracted extended national and international coverage in social and mainstream media.

Protesters called on the federal government to stop all new fossil fuel projects and address climate change. There were people from all ages and all walks of life. The young people were fed up, they said, with the politicians ignoring them. The oldest attendee, who also got arrested, was 97.

Included in two linked articles is a snapshot of the event, the legal issues that climate activists face when they enact their democratic right to protest and its implications for our notions of democracy.

Image: Rising Tide Facebook



The most important issue is, of course, the climate crisis and powerlessness that many of us feel as we realise that our governments continue to be beholden to the fossil fuel industry.

Nevertheless, as citizens, we must not look away.

<https://michaelwest.com.au/the-price-of-peaceful-protest-109-arrests-but-the-newcastle-port-blockade-will-be-on-again/>

<https://michaelwest.com.au/peaceful-coal-port-protesters-prosecuted-like-bikie-gang-on-bail/>

<https://www.facebook.com/risingtide.aus>

www.risingtide.org.au

A Valentine's Day card for the Planet

Raise greenhouse gas emission reduction targets

To the Hon. Speaker of the House of Representatives and Members of the House of Representatives.

According to the Climate Council, Australia's target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 43% below 2005 levels by 2030 is insufficient to prevent self-sustaining and irreversible climate change of catastrophic levels. Instead, they present a minimum 75% reduction as imperative.

As a country with one of the highest greenhouse gas emission rates per capita, it is Australia's duty to reduce emissions faster in order to protect our own and the world's environments and people.

We therefore ask the House to initiate a legislated pledge to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions to 75% below 2005 levels by 2030, instead of the target for 43%; and to repledge to 2050 with a new target of 2040.

Full Name	I confirm that I am a resident or citizen of Australia	Signature

Happy faces at the launch of Korowal student Dylan McCarthy's Climate Change petition, on St Valentine's Day - 'A Valentine's Day card for the planet!' Dylan and his Dad Dan are 3rd and 4th from left, back row. Photo by David Christie



Today, on Valentines Day 2024, the Queensland Premier, Steven Miles, has introduced a bill legislating a 75% carbon reduction target by 2035. The target is based on science and meets internationally agreed targets. Obviously Dylan is ahead of the game but good to see a state willing to tackle close to what his petition is asking. It's going to be a long haul but the movement has started! -- Erst Carmichael.



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.
Mar 4 **Victoria Falls**, 4km return, Grade 4. 380m descent and ascent. Melanie 0431 214 687
Mar 11 **Lockley's Pylon** 7.8 kms return, Grade medium. 160m ascent/descent. Angela 0427133327
Mar 18 **Asgard Swamp and Thor Head** including Asgard coal mine. 9 kms, Grade 3. Wayne 0429021296
Mar 25 **Empire Pass Lawson** 7km, Grade 3. Lyn 0432 352 850
Apr 1 – **no walk scheduled** (Easter Monday)

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)
Mar 12 **La Perouse Bushwalk and Museum visit.** Lynne/Roger 0407 498397 / 0449 902774.
Mar 19 **Transit of Venus walk** G2/5K, Judith 0419780640.
Mar 26 **Northmead to Nth Parramatta via Darling Mills Creek & Lake Parramatta** G2-3/9K, Doug 0455 850 753.
Apr 2 **Wentworth Falls Lake Circuit** G1/5.5K, Rob 0429708393,
Apr 9 **Jack Evans Track** G2/3K, 190 m ↓ ↑ Maurice 0402402783.

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

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS are 2-3 hours and are conducted at a leisurely pace. Coordinator: Beverley Thompson (4757 2076 denfenella12@bigpond.com)
Mar 14 **Castle Head, Katoomba.** Take lunch. Ros 0417 261 465. Grade 2
Mar 21 **Mermaids Cave and Coachwood Glen, Megalong Valley.** Meet BANC 9.45am. Beverley 4757 2076. Gr2
Mar 28 **Kingsford Smith Park, Apprenticeship Bridge and Leura Cascades and return.** Meet Katoomba Stn. 9.am. Libby 4759 2969. Gr2
Apr 4 **Hanging Rock, with view over Grose Valley.** Meet BANC 9.45am. Beverley 4757 2076. Gr2
Apr 11 **Bus trip to Thirlmere Lakes.** Book and pay Maurice \$15. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Gr2

SATURDAY WALKS: Usually a full day, longer walk at a faster pace. Coordinator Harold Thompson 04090 10736, Harold.thompson@bigpond.com).
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.
Mar 23 **Rainbow Cave to Numantia Falls.** Harold 0409010737. Grade 3, 8km. Map Springwood.
Mar 30 **Ikara Ridge to Thor Head v Valhalla Head.** Geoff 0497638033, Grade 3, 10km. Map Mt Wilson.
April 6 **Goochs Crater.** Harold 0409010737, Grade 3, 10km. Map Wollangambe.

About the Public Notice reproduced on this page and what we can do to save Australia's native forests:

On 14 February 2024, a notice by the Forestry Corporation of NSW was published in the Sydney Morning Herald. The reason for its publication is given at the end of the notice.

Some of you may have missed it.

Hut News is reproducing the notice so that we can all read it and understand its significance. Please also read "**Logging Threatens Greater Glider**" on page 7 of this newsletter.

What can we do to save Australia's native forests? Not everybody can tie themselves to a tree, but there are many other ways we can get involved.

Here are links to Nature Conservation Council, Wilderness NSW, National Parks Association and The Wilderness Society.

<https://forests.nature.org.au/>;
https://www.wildernessaustralia.org.au/forests_stand_for_life
<https://npansw.org.au/campaigns-2/forests-for-all/>
<https://www.wilderness.org.au/protecting-nature/deforestation/nsw-forests-stop-the-chop>

Sydney Morning Herald, Page 6, Wednesday 14 February 2024

Forestry Corporation:

Forestry Corporation of NSW convicted of felling hollow-bearing trees in Mogo State Forest

Forestry Corporation of NSW has been convicted in Batemans Bay Local Court and ordered to pay a fine of \$20,000 for contravening a requirement of its forestry operations approval. The prosecution was brought by the Environment Protection Authority.

During March 2020, Forestry Corporation of NSW carried out harvesting operations in Mogo State Forest near Batemans Bay. At the time, Forestry Corporation of NSW was under an obligation to retain all hollow-bearing trees, but four hollow-bearing trees were felled during the course of harvesting operations.

As a result, the harvesting operations caused loss of habitat features for hollow-using species, increased competition for aerial hollows used by faunal species, and caused a deterioration in potential habitat qualities for larger arboreal marsupials and owl species in the future.

On 30 November 2023, Batemans Bay Local Court convicted Forestry Corporation of NSW of the offence and ordered Forestry Corporation of NSW to:

1. Pay a fine of \$20,000
2. Pay the EPA's legal costs; and
3. Publish this notice.

A page for keen nature observers of all ages ...
What to look for in March in the Blue Mountains

Leaf-Curling Spiders - *Phonognatha graeffei*

During March in the Blue Mountains, a common sight is the Leaf-Curling Spider. These spiders protect themselves from predators by hiding inside a curled leaf. The female spider builds a web and then hoists a dry leaf up from the ground on a silk thread. She curls the leaf into a cylinder by spinning silk around it, closed at the top and open at the bottom. She then sits in this cylinder with only her legs showing, feeling for the vibrations of a captured insect.

Look closely and you will see the spider's legs.

Look even closer and you might see a much smaller spider nearby - a male Leaf-Curling Spider. You will usually find him near the top of the curled leaf .



Sometimes the female spider will find an empty snail shell.

In an area where there were no suitable leaves for curling, a Leaf-Curling Spider had curled a little rectangle of soft cardboard. Would that be a "Cardboard-Curling Spider"?

-- *Adelina*

Photos of spider by Christine Davies; fungi and orchids by Sue Nicol

Lots of fungi ...

When you see mushrooms or other shaped fungi, it is the "fruit" you can see. The fungus (plural = fungi) is hidden in the leaf litter or inside rotting wood.

During March in the Blue Mountains, fungi are abundant after rain. They can be found in all sorts of shapes and colours.

How many colours and shapes can you find in the bush?



Bright orange fungus in leaf litter



In rotting wood

A little orchid ...

During March in the Blue Mountains bushland, a common flower is a tiny white (or sometimes pink) orchid. *Eriochilus cucullatus* is its botanical name. Its common names are Bunny Orchid or Parson's Bands. Adelina likes "Bunny Orchid". The flower is pollinated by a small native bee.

You need very sharp eyes to spot some orchids. They can be quite tiny and blend into the background. Most people would walk right past. How good are you at orchid spotting?



Bunny Orchid

? What did you see in the Blue Mountains - in your garden or during your favourite bushwalk - during March? Was it something that wasn't there last month? Please tell Hut News!

Write a short story ... draw a picture ... take a photo. Please add your name, age (if you are under 18), where and when you made your observation and how to contact you. (Your surname and contact details will not be published.) → Send your observations to Adelina at hutnews@bluemountains.org.au or post to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.