



# HUT NEWS

*"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"*

Issue No. 429  
October 2024



## Springwood Fair a success for Society

New volunteers and old hands joined forces at the Society's stall at Springwood Foundation Day. We promoted the Society, sold native plants and gathered signatures for petitions about noise from the forthcoming airport and about the proposed repeal of the parliamentary act that legitimises feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park. A big thank you to our Society's events coordinator, Jo Carroll, for planning and executing this activity. The Invasive Species Council has done excellent work in organising the horse petition.

There were a lot of people circulating along Macquarie Road which had been closed for the day. The volume of music from the entertainment was set at a convenient level to allow our volunteers to interact with the numerous passers-by who were attracted to our stall by the upbeat displays that Jo and others had installed.

The campaign against the law that gives heritage status to feral horses has been vigorously pursued. Volunteers from other interested organisations came to help explain this issue to our audience.

An event like this showed appeal for many members of the public who were keen to find out more and to share their own perspectives. It was a vindication of those members of the Society who keep putting in their own time to spread the message and to encourage new people to get involved.

— Don Morison.

Images supplied by Annette Sartor: (top) Heather Hull offers copies of Hut News while Jo looks after the stall. (right) Bob Salijevic from Kosciuszko Hut Association was collecting signatures for the horse petition. Next to him is Annette Sartor, the Society's Environmental Education Officer.



## Blue Mountains World Heritage areas highly contaminated by PFAS chemicals

A recent report by Sydney Morning Herald (17/9/24) mentioned that, in early September, independent testing of water collected by University of Western Sydney water scientist, Ian Wright, at Adams Creek which flows into Medlow Dam, found cancer linked PFAS chemical levels more than 50 times higher than Australian drinking water standards. This is far higher than authorities have previously admitted.

In Greaves Creek, below Medlow Dam, foamy water was found to contain more than 14 micrograms per litre – around 200 times drinking water guidelines and among the highest levels of PFAS recorded in Australian water.

The samples were collected by Dr Wright according to strict quality control standards and the tests were performed by Envirolab, an independent laboratory that does commercial and government work.

Wright said that the PFAS seems to be sitting in the water table and that it requires a lot more study to fix the problem. PFAS chemicals are synthetic chemicals which persist for long periods in the natural environment. Some have been linked to causing cancer by the World Health Organisation.

Australian drinking water guidelines are currently under review. A federal parliamentary inquiry into the health effects of PFAS was announced in August.

**Note:** At the March 2024 BMCS Annual General Meeting, Dr Ian Wright spoke of the "State of the Waterways in the Greater Blue Mountains Area". He is a senior lecturer in Environmental Science at Western Sydney University and has been researching the Blue Mountains region for over ten years. An article in the July Hut News covers the issues Dr Wright spoke of at the annual general meeting.

## Four-year Council Term

Councillors seeking re-election to Blue Mountains City Council were successful at the election on 14<sup>th</sup> September and are now set to serve a full four-year term. Many of these experienced Councillors, who will now form a majority of the numbers, have shown a good understanding of the aspirations of environment groups operating in the Greater Blue Mountains. It is to be hoped that a constructive relationship will continue over the coming years.

— The Hut News Team.

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

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](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)

## NPWS Regional Advisory Committee



The Society's National Parks Officer, Madi Maclean, is also the environmental groups' representative to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Advisory Committee for the greater Blue Mountains. This Committee's role is to provide advice to

NPWS on policies and plans in national parks and to advise the Minister for Environment on park plans of management. Some of what the committee comments on is confidential.

If you have any comments or questions on our Blue Mountains national parks and reserves, you can send them to Madi at [natpks@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:natpks@bluemountains.org.au)

**HUT NEWS TRIVIA:** You will find the answer to this question within this newsletter.

**Question 7:** If anyone has visited the Grand Canyon in the USA they will know it is much deeper than the Blue Mountains and its canyons. The greatest depths of the Grand Canyon lie 1,800 metres below its rim; but is the Grand Canyon in the USA older than the Blue Mountains?

## Spring wildflowers

*Pomaderris andromedifolia* is spectacular this spring throughout the upper Blue Mountains. This photo was taken in Michael Eades Reserve in North Katoomba, where a lovely display of *Pomaderris* borders a walking track. (Meredith Brownhill)



## MEMBERSHIP: Join the Society

Join online [www.bluemountains.org.au/joining.shtml](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/joining.shtml) or phone 0418 462 576. Members receive our monthly newsletter, Hut News, by post and online.

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If you want to volunteer to help with the work of the Society, in any capacity:

**email** [bmcs@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:bmcs@bluemountains.org.au) or **phone** 0490 419 779 (leave a message).

Management committee can appoint members to fill vacant management committee positions, to serve until the next AGM (March/April 2025)

## From the President

So much has happened over the past couple of months! In September, the Society held stalls at Springwood Fair and the Sustainability Festival and held a members' meeting at the Lawson Mechanics Institute. I hope that you were able to enjoy some of these events!



In October, we will have a stall at World Animal Day to celebrate the importance of the native animals that inhabit the World Heritage Area and our Blue Mountains Environment and a general meeting to celebrate wilderness at the Conservation Hut.

We are excited to welcome Liam Ramage to the Management Committee as our Threatened Species Officer. Liam comes with a depth of knowledge about conservation of the threatened plants which are unique to the Blue Mountains and the requirements for their conservation.

Over the next 12 months we are planning additional activities for families to engage in learning about our natural heritage. Look out for these family days which will be advertised in Hut News, on our Website and on our Facebook page. As always, let us know what kind of activities you would like to see us doing.

**Western Sydney International Airport.** The Senate Inquiry is due to release its report on 31 October and we are hoping that the recommendations will contain strategies to address many of the concerns the community has with the potential adverse impacts on the World Heritage Area, the wilderness and the general community impact.

Members of the Society, along with members of RAWSA and a coalition of residents of Western Sydney, have been active in making submissions to Minister King. They have also attended the Senate Inquiry into the impact of airport noise, appeared at the hearing in Penrith on the 9th August, met with Minister King's office, with Senator Canavan, and attended the hearing in Canberra on the 20th September. They have met with State, Federal and Local Government to discuss our ongoing grave concerns about the impact this 24-hour a day airport will have on our health and wellbeing and our natural bushland. We will continue to advocate for natural quiet and the wellbeing of our native animals and our community.

In the meantime, it is important that you continue to raise your own concerns with Minister King and local members, both Federal and State. We need you to make your concerns clear!

Residents of Brisbane, Hobart and Melbourne who are already, or will be, affected by 24-hour, curfew free airports, are similarly raising their voices to say that the detrimental impacts of aircraft noise are not acceptable. Action will happen if we all continue to voice our concerns!

There is more information on our Website (<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/campaigns/WSI.shtml>) and on the RAWSA website (<https://www.birdsnotboeings.com>). Also check out RAWSA Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/rawsa>).

— Annette Cam, President

## General Meeting at The Hut 17th October 2024, 6.30pm Wilderness is Sacrosanct!

20 years ago, an American film company, backed by Fox Studios and the NSW Premier, was given a Special Licence to film scenes of "Stealth", a war adventure movie, in the Blue Mountains Grose Wilderness.

The Grose Wilderness, declared in 2001, is within the Blue Mountains National Park and the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Wilderness. It has the legal protection of all three listings, the strongest rules being applied to Declared Wilderness.

The Blue Mountains community, with support from Colong Foundation for Wilderness and the National Parks Association, stood up for the Wilderness and, in an action packed campaign, secured its protection in law.

At our meeting, past president Robin Mosman who coordinated the Mountains community action will tell the story.

Ian Brown will give a slide show of some of his wonderful images of the magnificent Grose Wilderness we were working to protect..

The meeting, at the Conservation Hut, 92 Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls, starts at 6.30 pm.

Visitors will be very welcome.

## EDO more needed than ever

As Hut News goes to press, projects that could affect our region are being constrained by legal process. The progress of the multi mineral mine scheme near Rylstone and the gold mine proposed near Blayney are two examples. Some tabloid media and politicians have been loudly calling for the rulebook to be torn up.

In the past, the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) has been of great assistance to Societies like ours in creating a level playing field for the consideration of environmentally sensitive projects. We are reminded that, in January, the Federal Opposition Leader made a promise to remove federal funding from the EDO. But we need the EDO more than ever. (Details of the Rylstone example are on page 8.)

--The Hut News Team

## Blue Mountains National Park —Plan of Management

The Minister for the Environment, the Hon Penny Sharpe MLC, has adopted a plan of management for Blue Mountains National Park and Kanangra-Boyd National Park under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

This plan sets long term objectives for the management of these important parks and outlines the actions to achieve these objectives.

The plan is available at:

[www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-management/plans-of-management](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-management/plans-of-management)

## Contributions for Hut News

The deadline for the November Hut News is **12 October**. Please send your submissions to the Hut News Editor at [hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au)  
Enquiries: 4787 7246

# Conserving biodiversity: BMCC's new interactive waterways data explorer is an absorbing environmental tool!

— Peter Ardill, BMCS Bushcare Officer

Since the 1990s, Aquatic Systems Officers of the BMCC Healthy Waterways Team have annually collected water quality and biodiversity data at a number of Blue Mountains waterways. The data has been shared with the local community as an annual stream health snapshot report.

Blue Mountains City Council has now collated all of this data and stored it in an online, interactive data explorer tool. Dubbed the Waterway Health Explorer (WHE), the tool can be accessed at council's website: <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/waterquality>.

As well as storing and analysing valuable datasets for approximately sixty waterways, WHE is also absorbing to play with! There are illustrations, stream and catchment maps, lots of geographical and environmental information, interpretive graphs and more. Many kids will adore the water bug section; great for school and university assignments. Local residents and bushcarers are now able to access long-term health and water quality data for their local stream, in many cases going back to the 1990s. Natural area managers and scientists can track biodiversity trends and the effectiveness of conservation efforts.

Three types of waterway data are available on WHE. First, historical water quality data has been collated and stored. Testing streams for water quality, such as oxygen and phosphate levels, is important because stream macroinvertebrates (aka water bugs) require suitable, unpolluted water to live in.

A second set of data records historical stream health scores, dating back to 1998. The scores are based on annual sampling for macroinvertebrates such as mayfly

nymphs, damselflies, water mites, snails, crayfish and worms. The resulting score determines the annual health rating of the tested stream. Thirdly, recreational water quality for six sites has been collated.

The development of this stream health interpretive tool is a major gain for the Blue Mountains community and environment. Congratulations to the BMCC Healthy Waterways Team, natural area managers and the many volunteer bushcarers, landcarers and streamwatchers who work to restore and conserve the health of our streams and local biodiversity.

Image: Macroinvertebrate sampling workshop, G Peeples/USFWS 2009 CCLic.2



**Have Your Say on NSW Plastics: Give feedback by completing a survey or write a submission by email.**

## Plastics – How bad are they?

According to Clean Up Australia, in 2023 plastics were the most reported litter, presenting 81% of all counted litter. In 2022-2023, NSW created 891,000 tonnes of plastic waste, of which only 14% is recycled! Recycling of plastics is complicated and expensive and does not offer a solution for the issue at hand. So far, recycling efforts have not been able to keep up with plastic consumption.

Most litter in our waterways is plastic, which eventually turns into micro plastic which causes environmental damage and puts our health at risk.

Since 2000, Australia has doubled its consumption of plastics and it is expected that by 2050 the use of plastic will double again, despite the attempts of governments and citizens to reduce the use of plastics. Even more alarming, it is expected that the demand for plastic will increase.

The planet is one system. Everything that happens on our planet affects all of us. If we make plastic, it stays - every little piece we create. It doesn't go away, not for at least a hundred years. If we are lucky it gets recycled or it will end up as landfill. But, more often than not, plastic will end up in our waterways and into the ocean, into the stomachs of fish, birds, seals and many other animals.

The only tangible solution is to change human behaviour to reduce the use of plastics, starting with governments tackling the issues to create better policies and waste solutions.

The NSW Government has spoken to stakeholders, communities and individuals to identify issues and solutions to reduce plastics in NSW and is now seeking feedback from the community by "Have Your Say" on the future of "Plastics in NSW".

The Draft Paper for Consultation can be accessed here: <https://hdp-au-prod-app-nswepa-yoursay-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/2017/2578/6913/NSW-plastics-way-forward-consultation-draft.pdf>

You can provide feedback:

- Complete a "survey" on : <https://yoursay.epa.nsw.gov.au/nsw-plastics-way-forward>
- Make a submission by email : [plasticsconsultation@epa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:plasticsconsultation@epa.nsw.gov.au)

—Nathalie Verellen, Sustainability and Climate Change Officer

## Introducing the Society's new Threatened Species Officer



I'm a South African and have lived in Australia for seven years. I studied at Macquarie university and earned a Bachelor of Science degree majoring in geology. Whilst I have this formal qualification, I have a broad understanding in all natural sciences and I have a very keen interest and concern for the conservation of the natural environment.

As Threatened Species Officer at BMCS, I would like to contribute to our understanding of threatened species and communities and to advocate for their protection. This includes promoting public understanding and awareness of threatened species and what threats they face.

I have been involved with working as a volunteer for the Royal Botanic Gardens in the Restore & Renew project as well as recording occurrences of threatened plant species in my own time. I believe that my background provides a unique insight into threatening processes in the Blue Mountains as many of the most insidious threats to biodiversity derive from disturbance of geochemical processes, either through mining or else eutrophication\* from the impacts of urbanisation.

I am keen to learn and collaborate with likeminded people and will be an impassioned advocate for threatened species in the Greater Blue Mountains.

### —Liam Ramage, Threatened Species Officer

\*Eutrophication is the process in which a water body becomes overly enriched with nutrients, leading to the plentiful growth of simple plant life. The excessive growth (or bloom) of algae and plankton in a water body is an indicator of this process.



## A link to the Auditor-General's Report into a vital State Government Department

Over 1,100 native animals, plants and ecological communities are listed as threatened in New South Wales. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) delivers programs and activities aiming to reduce the risk of extinction for threatened species and ecological communities.

The Auditor-General for NSW released a report in August assessing whether DCCEEW has effectively delivered outcomes to support threatened species and ecological communities across New South Wales including delivery of the statutory Biodiversity Conservation Program (Saving our Species).

A main conclusion of the report said DCCEEW uses a risk-based approach to guide and deliver a range of programs and initiatives to improve outcomes for threatened species and ecological communities. However, DCCEEW has not effectively determined departmental priorities, coordinated programs to align efforts, or reported on the overall outcomes it is delivering for threatened species and ecological communities.

Further, DCCEEW does not capture sufficient data to monitor species that it is not actively managing, therefore creating a risk that it cannot readily identify or respond to further species decline.

DCCEEW did not deliver any conservation activities, including monitoring, for 69% of threatened species and ecological communities in 2022-23.

Under the Saving our Species program, DCCEEW is delivering conservation actions for less than one third of all threatened species and ecological communities. This number has reduced over time, in line with reduced program funding.

Gaps in core program planning and risk management frameworks, including some required by legislation, create critical gaps in the oversight provided by DCCEEW's governance structures. For example, a business implementation plan for the 2021–26 tranche of the program was not finalised until April 2024.

The auditor's report is interesting in that it reveals what should be done and what isn't being done to save our species. Unfortunately saving our species appears to be a low priority for our government. An increase in funding is desperately needed for this department.

The full 82 page extensive report with graphs can be accessed at the following web address:

<https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/threatened-species-and-ecological-communities>

### —Chris Whiteman

—————  
*Rhodamnia rubescens* is listed as critically endangered in NSW. This specimen was part of a small population I encountered near Glenbrook in the Blue Mountains National Park. Photograph Liam Ramage.

## Thank you to Kindlehill School

A special thank you to Year 7 students at Kindlehill School for their fundraising efforts and donation of \$150 to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society. The funds will be used for bush care activities including in threatened swamps.

## Feral horses in Kosciuszko - Ask the Minister to repeal the Wild Horse Heritage Act

- If you are unable to sign a petition you could write your own letter. This letter was received in the Hut News mailbox:

Dear Editor,  
Thanks for the news about the petition. I wasn't able to sign in person but have sent the following letter to Minister Sharpe. Cheers ... Alan Lane.

18/09/2024

Dear Minister Sharpe,

### Request to repeal Kosciuszko Wild Horse Management Plan

I request that the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Management Plan and its target of 3000 feral horses be repealed so that a proper scientific evaluation can be made to determine what ongoing population, if any, is sustainable.

I congratulate you on your courage and far-sightedness in implementing this measure and on the success of the cull so far. I read that the High Country environment is already responding very positively to the greatly reduced numbers and will continue to recover as the numbers continue to fall.

I understand that the target of 3000 remaining horses is specified in the management plan.

However, I wish to argue that the target of 3000 has no basis in environmental science. It is an entirely arbitrary number arrived at as a compromise in heated negotiations involving a small, passionate but ill-informed group who oppose any reduction in horse population. I suspect that the biomass of 3000 horses (approx. 1,200 - 1,500 tonnes) would be comparable with that of all native fauna combined and, though a reduction from previous disastrous numbers, would still have an unacceptable ongoing impact.

The Management Plan under which this target is set should be repealed so that this arbitrary number, including the ongoing costs, can be properly assessed.

Sincerely  
ALAN LANE (Dr)

The anemone buttercup (*Ranunculus anemoneus*) only occurs in a narrow area, about 8km wide and 32km long within Kosciuszko National Park. It lives in environments with late melting snow on south to east facing, steep grassy slopes, or on rocky crevices and short alpine herb fields. It is highly sensitive to grazing and trampling by feral horses and deer.  
Image Casey Gibson.



## TOO LATE

I buried a friend today,  
just before the sun set,  
in a shallow grave in the garden,  
the patch beside the back fence  
I am preparing for planting out,  
digging in compost and mulch,  
hoping to have green vegies in,  
come Spring.

We never spoke of that, my friend and I,  
though he'd come every day for months  
since Winter first began,  
gaining confidence with each visit,  
greeting me like I were the Maitre d  
and my garden his favourite gourmet restaurant  
where he did dine most sumptuous –  
the grevillea by my front door a favourite,  
flowering all the while, so mild has the weather been.

We often talked there, the Wattlebird and me,  
he becoming so bold he'd not fly off  
even when caught unawares,  
me opening the door unannounced.  
But an aggressive little bugger he was too ---  
staking out the whole garden as his own,  
trying to chase all others off,  
though there be enough for all to share.  
And claiming the birdbath as his own as well  
frolicking there, and bathing without shame  
though I did watch from my kitchen window.

Till today miscalculating, over-confident,  
diving into a bin I keep beside the house,  
a habit I formed in time of drought,  
collecting the run-off rain from off my roof;  
but there being no footing, he unable to get out  
and me not seeing him till far too late,  
finding his poor little body bloated and sodden  
and feathers floating, telling of his panic -  
he there did drown.

Too late,  
I did lid the bins this evening.

© Paddy Cavanagh, August 2024

## Society submission on affordable housing

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society made a submission to Blue Mountains City Council on this subject on 1st September 2024. This, of course, follows on the State Government's abandonment of its proposal to override Council's Local Environment Plan to increase residential densities, especially near transport terminals.

Issues covered in the submission include the futility of attempting to increase affordable housing unless its status is guaranteed in perpetuity, the flexibility of built heritage rules when a structure might be suitable for conversion to affordable housing and the high vacancy rates in residential properties, especially from Leura through Mount Victoria to the Mounts.

The full submission can be found on the Society's website.

—The Hut News Team

## 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](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml)

## Boom in nature tourism is increasing safety challenges for Blue Mountains, parks boss says.

By Ursula Malone, 7 September 2024. Source: ABC Australian Broadcasting Corporation

(A summary by the Hut News Team.)

Two hazardous and costly rescue operations in the Blue Mountains in August, involving police helicopters and dozens of police and ambulance personnel, were to rescue bushwalkers who had set out on tracks that were clearly marked as closed.

For David Crust, Blue Mountains Branch Director at NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, it's incredibly frustrating. "Often when a track is closed, it's for people's own safety," he said.

Since the Black Summer bushfires of 2019 there has been successive years of floods, triggering rockfalls and landslides. At the same time there has been a marked increase in the numbers of visitors to the Blue Mountains and a boom in nature tourism.

Over the past four years, the NSW Government has spent \$32 million on track maintenance, repairs and upgrades in the Blue Mountains. \$10.5 million was spent on establishing the Grand Clifftop Walk, a two-day walk aimed at the mainstream tourist market. Visitor numbers have increased 30 per cent since the walk opened in March.

Work has started on another multi-day walk in the Gardens of Stone Conservation Area, near Lithgow. "Part of this process, I guess, was about helping to make a significant contribution to the visitor economy for Lithgow and helping Lithgow be better placed for the transition away from mining and coal production," Mr Crust said.

A proposal to lease part of the area for development of a commercial tourism operator is under consideration\*. Wilderness campaigner Keith Muir says that if approved it would set a dangerous precedent. "This proposal is just one of many in Australia's national parks that are seen by the tourism industry as the next development opportunity," he said. "The tragic reality is that many of these proposals, if they are allowed to proceed, will permanently damage our national parks forever." The final say on whether the development will go ahead now rests with NSW Environment Minister, Penny Sharpe MLC, who is expected to announce a decision by the end of the year.

\* Blue Mountains Conservation Society opposes this proposal. You will find our submission at [https://www.bluemountains.org.au/submissions-2024\\_shtml](https://www.bluemountains.org.au/submissions-2024_shtml)

## Challenges for safe, environmentally friendly bushwalking

Opinion by Don Morison

The article summarised on this page (left) should stimulate a holistic discussion about the future management of National Park and Council lands in the Greater Blue Mountains.

Issues that need to be integrated into the discussion include:

- National Parks and fire authorities need to exercise land care responsibilities while protecting public safety but maintaining a reasonable level of public access for bushland recreation and education.
- There is worrying pressure from commercial interests on the bushland including from entities in States with low population. The New South Wales Government must be extremely cautious about giving these interests any foothold a few hours from massively populated Greater Sydney where there is such a high demand from locals and visitors for bushland access.
- Those wanting to organise bushwalks, especially for groups, need to arrive at track heads with adequate local knowledge and a flexible attitude. Weather, fire and track closures must be accepted as reasons for revising one's plans. However time poor and desiring of particular locations visitors might be, leaders of all groups or individuals need to have backup plans if their preferred itinerary becomes unavailable.
- The information supplied by authorities now competes with multiple internet sources purporting to advise the visitor about desirable routes and locations. There is no way of policing dangerous or inappropriate advice circulating on the internet. There needs to be a better funded education campaign urging bushland visitors to focus on what the authorities are advising by way of safe and appropriate activities.
- Nearly all Blue Mountains track heads lack sufficient public transport to allow a choice of starting walking at one point and finishing at another, especially on weekends and holidays. This must change.
- Recent improvements have not solved the problem of visitors' vehicles parking in residential streets at peak periods. This further underscores the need to improve public transport and make it more attractive not to take a car to the start of a bushwalk, including through making walks from railway stations to track heads more appealing.
- The establishment of tidy permanent public toilets has not kept pace with the rising popularity of bushwalking, especially along the Grand Clifftop Walk from Wentworth Falls to Katoomba. This must be urgently addressed.
- There is no substitute for having representatives of NPWS, Council and the Fire Services on the ground, explaining to the public what is going on as frequently as possible. Funding for this must be increased.

This opinion piece has been offered as a contribution to drawing together multiple threads that obstruct development of appropriate attitudes and safe enjoyment for humans in the Blue Mountains bush.



View from the Upper Grose Valley where ongoing restoration of tracks, including of the "Horse Track" has added to opportunities for safer, long-distance bushwalking. Image: Edwin Franks.

## Silver/Lead Mine deemed void by NSW Supreme Court

ABC News has reported that the Bowdens Silver/ Lead mine project at Lue, north of Rylstone, has been deemed void after an appeal by the Bingham Catchment Landcare Group to the NSW Supreme Court was upheld. The mine is near the North/West boundary of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage area, 25 kilometres west of the significant Cox's Creek / Nullo Mountain area.

The Bowdens Silver mine is the largest undeveloped silver project in Australia and one of the largest globally. The project comprises mineral tenements covering 2,007 square kilometres (496,000 acres)

The court found the state's Independent Planning Commission failed to consider the impacts of a transmission line, when it granted the approval in 2023. The future of the silver mine is in doubt. The mines' parent company Silver Mines Limited said it was disappointed and would explore its options. The company omitted the 13-kilometre transmission line from its initial Environmental Impact Statement, citing ongoing discussions with landholders.

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment later stated that the transmission line would require a separate application. A panel of judges in the state's Court of Appeal found the IPC failed to consider the impacts of the transmission line. Accordingly, the mine's approval has been deemed "void and of no effect" and construction, which was due to begin this year, cannot proceed.

President of the Bingham Catchment Landcare Group, Jack White, said they were feeling "relieved and vindicated" by the decision. "It confirms our view for many reasons that this project should never have been given the tick of approval ... Overall, there were so many issues with this project, and that is not essentially what has caused it to come undone, but it's in a way satisfying that the truth has come to the front in the end."

For the past four years, the Mudgee Region Action Group has been fighting the development, claiming the impacts of silver and lead in the air and surrounding groundwater could be disastrous. Member of the action group, Gary Rush, said the court's decision showed the need for major reform in the planning approval process. "It brings into focus the real need for a significant overhaul of the approval planning process," he said.

The action group was also concerned that the project could have potentially cleared more than 300 hectares of native vegetation, which it said included koala habitat, spotted-tailed quolls, critically endangered regent honeyeaters and swift parrots.

"Mudgee Region Action Group aren't opposed to mining generally; what we were taking into account here is that this was heavy metal mineral mining," Mr Rush said. As we know, lead has a very detrimental impact on human health, particularly children. There is a local primary school nearby.

It also has an internal impact on the environment and we didn't want a lead mine in an area where we have vineyards and an increasing tourism industry. The government must now step in and ensure this highly productive, culturally significant and ecologically sensitive region is protected in perpetuity from any exploration or mining.

—Chris Whiteman

**Editor's note:** Blue Mountains Conservation Society objected to this mine in a submission dated 12th July 2020. <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/submissions-2020.shtml>

## Highly Pathogenic Bird Flu H5N1 Update

Recently 1,500 people attended a webinar concerning the highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 and the risks to Australian wildlife. It was organised by collaboration with the Biodiversity Council, Australian Land Conservation Alliance, Australian Marine Conservation Society, Birdlife Australia, the Invasive Species Council and WIRES.

From the webinar a briefing note has been prepared for distribution to local MPs, councils and organisations regarding the looming threat of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4 b. to Australian wildlife and what can be done to prepare for its arrival.

The briefing note provides a quick summary of the:

- Current global situation
- Potential catastrophic consequences for Australia
- What can be done to protect wildlife
- Priorities for strengthening Australia's preparedness

**The briefing note can be accessed here:** [https://biodiversitycouncil.org.au/admin/uploads/Briefing\\_note\\_bird\\_flu\\_response\\_priorities\\_a3dbdd4012.pdf](https://biodiversitycouncil.org.au/admin/uploads/Briefing_note_bird_flu_response_priorities_a3dbdd4012.pdf)

**The webinar video recording is available online here on Youtube:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPD3PjoINzw>

**Questions and Answers regarding Bird Flu at this link:** <https://biodiversitycouncil.org.au/news/insights-from-our-bird-flu-webinar>

### *Letter to the Editor*

#### **A Climate of Doubt**

Does Australia's Future Depend on Gas?

I read an editorial in The Australian (20/7/24) that argued for the expansion of the gas industry, even in the face of worsening climate change. This represented, I believe, a misguided attempt to prioritise the future of fossil fuels over climate stability. When we read that 2023 was the hottest year on record, in fact the hottest year in 125,000 years, we are reminded of the stark reality of climate change.

Gas may seem like an easy backstop for our energy needs but it's a fossil fuel that will only exacerbate the climate crisis. Increasingly, the true economic cost of gas expansion will be measured in lives lost, homes destroyed, and ecosystems ravaged.

Australia must continue to prioritise a renewable energy future that creates jobs, stimulates innovation and ensures a liveable planet. We can't afford to be seduced by the fossil fuel industry's false promises. It's time for all Australians to acknowledge the imperative of action on climate and support the call for a liveable and sustainable future.

—Anne Ammann



## Birds of the Paroo-Darling (Peery) National Park Spring 2024 Bird Survey

Image: Budgerigar © Tim Van Leeuwen  
2023 birdlifephotography.org.au'



The Budgerigar (*Melopsittacus undulatus*) is a member of the parrot family. They occur throughout much of Australia, particularly the inland areas, but are absent from Tasmania, most of the east coast, the north of the NT and south-western WA.

What an amazing bird the budgie is! At present out west, following recent good seasons with a lot of rain, there must be many thousands of these little green parrots taking advantage of the abundance of seed in outback natural habitats. They were very frequently seen on our surveys since Spring 2023 and in large numbers.

Our team of volunteers was out doing our biannual bird surveys again in August/September 2024 and the large flocks of budgies were still present in the area. You would hear the birds calling to each other with their constant “chirrup” well before you saw them. Some mornings when we were out surveying we saw several flocks of up to 1000 budgies each, flying overhead from where they had roosted and going to their feeding grounds.

Budgies are opportunistic breeders (as anyone who keeps budgies will know). If there is plenty of food and there are nesting hollows available, they will breed. After good seasons the flocks can build up to be very large. We saw many young birds and adults that were still nesting or checking out hollows.

In the area we survey in the National Park there are a number of creeks and shallow watercourses lined with *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, many of them very large and with many hollows of various sizes. Budgies can use the smallest of these hollows! These creeks usually have a small amount of water in isolated waterholes even in the months after the rain. This is important as budgies need to drink each day.

Other birds using the hollows included: Galahs, Little Corellas, Cockatiels, Mulga Parrots, Bourke Parrots, Brown Treecreepers, Black-faced Woodswallows, White-browed Woodswallows and Owlet Nightjars to name a few of the species we saw.

The budgies were seen feeding on native grass seeds and seeds make up most of their diet. We witnessed birds flying overhead, waiting until a flock got to about 50 birds or more. Then they would drop straight down into the grass to feed. If disturbed they would make a vertical take-off accompanied by considerable tweeting and calling! Safety in numbers – most important given the number of falcons and harriers always on the lookout for a tasty meal.

-- Annette Cam



Image: Budgerigars feeding on native grasses  
Budgerigar © Glenn Pure 2022 birdlifephotography.org.au

## Migrating Honeyeaters amazed me!

Not a cloud in the sky, a perfect day after the extreme wind gusts of the previous day. I was dropped off at Echo Point, with my wheelie walker, by Active Care community transport. At 10am, the tourist coaches were yet to arrive. The plan was to take the wheelchair accessible track to Oreades Lookout and return to be picked up by Active Care.

The Oreades Lookout is close to the Three Sisters. There are views of Mount Solitary and the Ruined Castle. A ramp took me to the railing and I settled down with my flask of coffee, biscuit, fruit and binoculars.

The next half hour blew me away! First their calls, and then they began to appear – migrating Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, heading south. It took me a little while to get a really good look at one. I first thought there were hundreds. No, more like thousands - I kid you not! I had not expected this and it made my day.

I needed to get back in time for pickup. Even after forty minutes at the lookout, the Yellow-faced Honeyeaters were still moving up and across the valley below. People passed on their way to the Three Sisters but few stopped at the lookout.

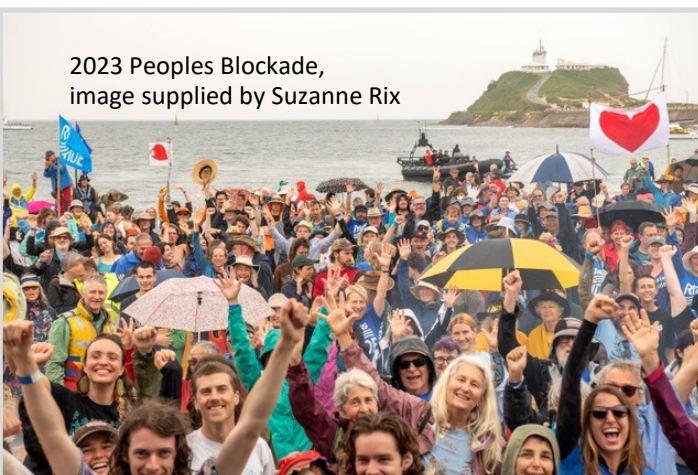
—Ron Hyslop (3rd September 2024)



## Rising Tide - a peaceful mass movement for climate defence

In November 2023, over 3000 people joined a peaceful protest at Newcastle Harbour, the World's largest coal port. The blockade lasted for 30 hours. Protesters called on the Federal Government to stop all new fossil fuel projects and address climate change. The protest was organised by the non aligned, non violent, protest group called Rising Tide.

The Blue Mountains Rising Tide group is preparing for the 2024 Peoples Blockade of Newcastle Harbour. We are having kayak practice and a picnic lunch at Wentworth Falls Lake on Saturday 12th October (11am to 1pm) and affinity group training on Sunday 27th October (2pm to 5pm) at a venue to be confirmed. Come and join us. [bluemountains@risingtide.org.au](mailto:bluemountains@risingtide.org.au)



2023 Peoples Blockade,  
image supplied by Suzanne Rix

## HUT NEWS TRIVIA:

### Answer to Question 7:

No! When the Grand Canyon was forming six million years ago or as some scientists with new techniques now say 70 million years ago, the Blue Mountains and its canyons were already very old. The Blue Mountains were formed from deposition of sediment some 200 to 300 million years ago with uplifts and subsidence around 90 million years ago.

*Society member Phoebe Coster has been slowly working through the Society's newsletter archives and retyping the earlier newsletters to enable search engines to 'see' the text. The retyped versions are being added to our website <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/hutnews-archives.shtml> Underneath is an article from the most recently retyped newsletter which will interest BMCS bushwalkers.*

## HISTORY OF GOOCH'S CRATER

(from Newsletter No 88, July 1992)

In January this year, 1992, John Noble led one of his famous 'Mystery Walks' to a fascinating place known to not many people as 'Gooch's Crater'. No one seemed to know the origin of the name of such a beautiful place. But by some detective work worthy of Sherlock Holmes I found Mr Gooch and herewith print his letter telling of his discovery. (Editor)

'Dear Mrs Bayley,

In response to your phone call here are a few notes on my discovery of 'Gooch's Crater'; I hope the area can remain a pristine wilderness and the delicate ecology remain as it was when I first saw it.

On Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> December 1978 a party of four: John Susmitch, Chris Rowland, my wife Rae and myself, all members of the Kameruka Bush walking club, set out on a long weekend trip to Bungleboori Creek. We started at Bell Railway Station where we left the car. We crossed the Wollangambe and on to Bungleboori Creek. We walked along the bed of the creek and made camp beside the creek Saturday night.

The next day, Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> December 1978 we followed the creek for a short time before heading south to the main fire road that runs along the watershed between Bungleboori Creek and the Wollangambe River. Cutting over the fire road we picked up a creek that followed south into the Wollangambe.

In the mid-afternoon we had a break beside a rock pagoda. I decided to scramble up into the pagoda for a view. From the top I looked down to the west and saw a beautiful lagoon, with high cliffs on either side, a grass flat at the north end which then turned into a steep

Continued on page 11.



## BUSHWALKING:

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

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

Underneath is a brief summary of walks and leaders for this month.

**Please check our website for detailed walks program and program changes.** <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/bushwalking.shtml>

**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](mailto:melanielawson@outlook.com.au).

Oct 7 **No walk scheduled due to Public Holiday**

Oct 14 **Bus Trip to Bundeena, Royal National Park.** Fare \$15, book/pay Maurice 0402 402 783. Melanie 0431 214 687

Oct 21 **Lockyer's track and Lawson's Long Alley** 11km. Lois 0427 184 165

Oct 28 **Furber Steps to Scenic World** 5.2km. Lyn 0432 352 850

Nov 4 **Glenbrook station to the Duckhole for a swim at "Glenbrook Beach"** 5km. Wayne 0407 643 512

Nov 11 **Ikara Head/Girraween Cave** 6km  
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](mailto:mrpacox@hotmail.com))

Oct 8 **Ikara Head (wild flowers)** G2-3/7K (187m↑↓), Sharon 0404622515.

Oct 15 **Stockton Lookdown** G2/6K, Maurice 0402402783.

Oct 22 **Winmalee Conference Centre Walk** G2-3/4K, Ken 0417514534.

Oct 29 **South Lawson Waterfalls** G2/5K, Rob 0429708393.

Nov 5 **Blackwattle Bay** G2/7K, Anna/Imma 0403711457/0422313828.

Nov 12 **Mount Hay and Butterbox Point** G2-3/6K, Tony 0410651154.

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

Oct 24 **Echo Bluff Circuit, return by Fairy Falls and Wilson Park, Lawson.** Ros 0417 261 465. Grade 2

Oct 31 **Fortress Ridge, Leura.** Maurice 0402 402 783. Grade 2

Nov 7 **Katoomba Airfield to Point Pilcher, Medlow Bath.**

Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2

Nov 14 **Frederica Falls, Lawson.** Meet Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2

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

Oct 5 **Moffits Pagodas.** Gr 3. 8km. Harold 0490 010 737. Map Ben Bullen.

Oct 12 **Upper Hat Hill Creek.** Gr3. 8km. Harold 0490 010 737/Map Mt Wilson

Oct 19 **Hazelbrook Waterfalls.** Gr3, 8km. Geoff 0497 638 033. Map Springwood.

Oct 26 **Mount Banks.** Gr 3. 9km. Harold 0490 010 737. Map Mount Wilson.

Nov 2 **Glenbrook Circuit via Red Hand Cave & Duckhole.** Harold 0409 010737. Grade 3. 10km. Map Penrith.

**NOTE TO ALL BUSHWALKERS:** Meeting places and times are not given because sometimes there are changes to the program. Please check with the walks leader.

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

## History of Gooch's Crater Continued from Page 10.

slope. The southern end was also blocked by rocks and trees. About one third of the lagoon was covered in reeds.

I called the others and we went and explored. We were so impressed with the area we decided to camp the night. The discovery of a peculiar rock tunnel like a great wombat hole halfway along the eastern cliff and at its base suggested a name to me. I called the area Cave Swamp Crater. The creek that ran parallel and to the west we called Vanishing Creek as it disappeared underground.

Monday 1<sup>st</sup> January 1979. We followed the creek south of the crater, which we called Cave Swamp Creek, although it is a continuation of Vanishing Creek, to the northern arm of the Wollangambe. We had no trouble crossing the river and following a ridge back to Bell railway station.

At the time I was working at Paddy Pallin's bush walking shop and did so for another two years. Although I was very much in touch with the whole local bush walking scene I never found any person who claimed to have found the crater before me, and a careful examination of the crater on our first visit revealed no evidence of fires or rubbish.

I hope these brief notes that deliberately do not include any grid reference, may be of use to you.

Regards, Nicholas A Gooch

Image: The splendour of Gooch's Crater, on the southern flanks of Newnes Plateau. ©Emanuel Conomos.

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

October in the Blue Mountains is amazing. There is so much to see. Start your nature diary. Record what you see. There will be masses of wildflowers, butterflies and other insects to pollinate the flowers, birds coming back to breed.

**Cicadas!** Cicadas are emerging after spending 6-7 years underground as nymphs—the flightless juvenile stage. You will see the nymph shells on tree trunks and fence posts where they have shed their old shells. You may be lucky enough to see this happening. After they emerge they only live for a few weeks.

For generations, children have been fascinated by cicadas, giving them interesting names — Green Grocer, Floury Baker, Black Prince. Different species emerge at different times.

Cicadas are the loudest insects in the world—up to 120 decibels—and at its peak in November-December the chorus can be deafening. It is only the males that call to attract a mate. This year could be a bumper year so you may need some noise cancelling headphones!

**Cuckoos!** Have you heard your first Koel of the season yet? Or your first Channel-billed Cuckoo (the world's largest cuckoo)? Did you make a note of the date? They may be arriving earlier than they used to, after their winter sojourn in New Guinea. Their range could be extending further south too as the climate warms.

They are here to breed, making use of other birds' nests as cuckoos do. Koels like to pick on Red Wattlebirds or Noisy Friarbirds. Channel-billed cuckoos target Currawongs, Magpies or Ravens.

*-- Adelina*



### **Almost there!**

The Wood Duck family, with ten little balls of fluff, is on its way to Catalina Lake (Katoomba). Will this be the chicks' first swim?

(Photo by Meredith Brownhill)



**? What did you see in the Blue Mountains - in your garden or during your favourite bushwalk - during October? Was it something that wasn't there last month? Please tell Hut News!** Please send your stories, photos or drawings to Adelina at [hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au) or post to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.