



HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

Issue No. 430
November 2024

Sustainability Festival 2024



In this image, Society members Meredith Brownhill and Lyndal Sullivan, along with Invasive Species Council CEO Andrew Cox, engage with members of the public inside the Katoomba Cultural Centre during the Sustainability Festival.

In spite of difficult weather outside, multiple organisations set up inside the Cultural Centre to promote their messages to a steady flow of people.

Thanks to everyone who made the effort to be there in person. It's a gruelling period for the news cycle and those who stay focussed on conservation messages really do make a positive and energising impression on people they meet face to face and can provide angles on the issues many people may not have considered before.

Photo supplied by Linda Groom.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

We will be at the Blackheath Growers Market
SUNDAY 10th NOVEMBER
(8am to 12 noon)

AND on the 2nd Sunday of every month. For enquiries and to place an order, please contact **Nursery Manager, Paul Irwin:** plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com

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

Your Conservation Society at work: Getting tough on environmental weeds

The damage they inflict is not always obvious but environmental weeds pose a major, ongoing threat to the ecological integrity of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, our numerous local streams, urban bushland reserves and their wildlife.

Accordingly, throughout the spring and summer of 2024-25, the Society will be publicising the Blue Mountains environmental weed problem.

Perhaps you saw the half-page advertisement in the Blue Mountains Gazette on 9 October? Other initiatives will round out the campaign. There will be further advertisements, social media postings, targeted advocacy and a new environmental weeds webpage, chock full of useful resources.

The weed management challenge is enormous. Supporting our hardworking bushcare and landcare volunteers, numbering hundreds of local residents, is another objective of the campaign. Each year they restore and maintain many hectares of local bushland. The environmental repair work undertaken by professional bushland restorationists and managers, whether employed by BMCC, NPWS, other organisations or privately, is also invaluable.

The campaign spreads the word that we can all contribute to environmental weed management by checking our own yards, gardens and properties and culling out problematic plants. Plant seed is distributed far and wide by wind, water, people and other animals – particularly birds. There is a good chance that any weed removal work that you undertake is going to benefit local bushland and wildlife.

Do have a peek at the Society's new environmental weeds webpage and its resources and do your garden and local biodiversity a favour by tackling a weed or two:

<https://bluemountains.org.au/environmental-weeds.shtml>

—Peter Ardill, Bushcare Officer

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



From the President

Summer is almost here and its approach has been heralded by the outburst of calls from cicadas! They seem to be particularly loud here at my home, masking the beautiful song of the Grey Shrike-thrush (up there in my top 10 bird calls!) and the Grey Butcherbird who are wishing also to be heard! I watched the outside thermometer this morning (it is mid-October as I write) and when the mercury hit 10 degrees C the cicadas started. Perhaps the ones in the sun were warming first. I've watched the wattlebirds in my yard feasting on the bounty, joined by Satin Bowerbirds. I am sure they make a good meal for many of our native fauna.

Cicadas calling remind me of my childhood and the days when we couldn't hear the teacher speaking because the cicadas were so loud! I am sure it is good luck to have this many around as it will mean healthy soil and plenty of trees.

I read there are 237 recorded species of cicada in Australia and up to 800 Australian species still to be scientifically recognised. And loud! The Greengrocer cicada (*Cyclochila australasiae*) can reach up to 120 decibels!

Communicating with you

The Management Committee is working to make better use of our social media pages, particularly Facebook and Instagram, and keep these updated with activities and information. If you have ideas of other ways we can keep you better informed of Society events, activities and news then please email these to the Society or the Hut News editor.

Weeds

Hope you saw our Weeds item in the Gazette recently! We have launched our Spring campaign on garden plants that escape to become environmental weeds. Now is the right time to be removing these from your garden and planting environmentally friendly plants. Check out the item in Hut News as well.

Western Sydney International Airport update.

Check out our website for updates on this campaign. As President, I have met with the CEO of Western Sydney Airport Company and representatives from the Department of Infrastructure, in late October. The Secretary of RAWSA and a representative of the Residents of St Clair accompanied me. Jointly we are showing that all of Western Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the GBMWA need to be properly considered when designing flight paths out of WSIA

It is very important that you make your concerns known to Minister King and Susan Templeman MP about the potential impact of these low-flying aircraft over the Blue Mountains and the impact of planes flying over the scenic grandeur of the World Heritage Area. The proposed flight paths will send aircraft over Burratorang State Conservation Area at 2,500 ft night and day and then into the GBMWA. The best way to be listened to is to have a strong, united voice!

Hope you can spend time in our great outdoors, watching and enjoying the spring activities of our fauna and the beauty of our local plants!

—Annette Cam, President

president@bluemountains.org.au

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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

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).

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area celebrates 25 years in 2025!

Be part of the celebration!



“The sheer scenic grandeur of the Greater Blue Mountains has been recognized since humans first arrived in the region.” wrote Haydn Washington.¹

It was recognized by the first Australians and sacred to the Aboriginal custodians. Important creation stories such as the Gurangatch and Mirragan story relate to the landscape of the southern Blue Mountains. Since European settlement, this landscape has similarly inspired many artists, photographers, authors, film-makers and poets eliciting emotional, spiritual as well as intellectual responses.

The Strategic Plan for the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (NPWS, 2009) notes:

“The wild and rugged landscapes, diverse flora and fauna, and opportunities for solitude and quiet reflection are attributes that promote inspiration, serenity and rejuvenation of the human mind and spirit. Such feelings are valued by individuals and society and lead to contributions in the fields of philosophy, painting, literature, music and photography. The Greater Blue Mountains WHA has inspired such contributions and these have promoted a sense of place for all Australians who then want such places protected. Existence values derive from the community’s pleasure from simply knowing that places such as the Greater Blue Mountains WHA exist and are protected, even though they may never visit them.”²

“Beyond the massive and colourful cliffs, there are hanging swamps, deep and narrow slot canyons with waterfalls. “Here are the deep Jamison and Megalong Valleys, and the mighty sandstone gorges of the Grose, Wollangambe and Colo Rivers, with rock piles, rapids and deep serene pools. Here are the serene closed drainages such as Thirlmere Lakes and the Mellong Swamps. Here are the tessellated sandstone pavement of Mount Irvine and Kings Tableland, looking like close-fit Inca stonework. Here are the high basalt caps of the northern Blue Mountains with their broken scree slopes, and columnar basalts.”³

And of course, the dramatic pagoda rock formations, which adorn the Gardens of Stone National Park and State Conservation Area.

The GBMWA exists today because of a 70-year campaign by conservationists to have areas of outstanding bush across the region reserved. The eight connected conservation areas which comprise GBMWA are: Wollemi, Yengo, Gardens of Stone, Blue Mountains, Kanangra-Boyd, Nattai and Thirlmere Lakes National Parks and Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve. This is a 10,000 square kilometre area extending from the Hunter Valley to the Southern Highlands, and from Western Sydney to the farmlands beyond Lithgow.

The Greater Blue Mountains was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2000 because of the international significance of its natural biodiversity

with its richness of plant and animal species. Diversity and evolutionary significance is particularly evidenced in the Eucalyptus genus, with the richness of temperate eucalypt-dominated forests and woodlands which are outstanding in international terms. Many species are significant in terms of the evolution of southern hemisphere plant taxa and communities (e.g. Wollemi Pine *Wollemia nobilis*).⁴

From December until the end of 2025, the Society will have a focus on the GBMWA, its values, threats and concerns, unique geology and biology, including flora and fauna. We are partnering with other organisations to provide events, information and education. More information to come!

We are looking forward to sharing this celebration with you!

—Annette Cam

President

Image:

Kanangra-Boyd Wilderness from near Splendour Rock, GBMWA.

© Ian Brown

References:

¹ Washington, H (2015) in “Values for a new generation: Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area” Chapter 6 “Time to value the scenic grandeur of the Greater Blue Mountains.” P 158

² <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/Parks-plans-of-management/greater-blue-mountains-world-heritage-area-strategic-plan-080491.pdf>

³ Washington, H (2015) in “Values for a new generation: Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area” Chapter 6 “Time to value the scenic grandeur of the Greater Blue Mountains.” P 161-162

⁴ Benson, D. and Smith, J (2015) in “Values for a new generation: Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area” Chapter 2 “Protecting biodiversity values in response to long-term impacts: additional areas recommended for inclusion in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area” P 52)

Global bird flu epidemic poses a threat to Australian wildlife: RECORD FUNDING ANNOUNCED!

The deadly bird virus, H5N1 is killing wildlife around the globe. From Asia to Antarctica, the deadly new strain has infected over 500 bird species and 60 mammal species, devastating wildlife populations and threatening local extinctions. Advice to the federal government has predicted that the virus's impact on Australia's native wildlife will be catastrophic.

An email from Andrew Cox, CEO of the Invasive Species Council, sent to supporters on 15th October, contained the following news.

Today (15 October), the Federal Government has announced funding of almost \$100 million to prepare Australia and our wildlife for the threat of the deadly H5N1 bird flu. With \$35.9 million of the package set aside to protect vulnerable wildlife and biodiversity, Australia now has a real chance to save iconic species like the Tasmanian devil, black swans and sea lions from potential extinction.

In addition to the \$35.9 million secured for vulnerable wildlife, there's a \$7 million boost to vital bird flu surveillance and \$10 million to fund a public communications campaign. There will be an emergency meeting of environment ministers from across the country to discuss bird flu and its impact on wildlife.

The Invasive Species Council has been leading the national campaign for this funding. It has been warning the government about this looming national disaster, in high level meetings with ministers and bureaucrats and in the media.

Never before in history has an environmental issue been offered this level of preparedness. Now we can expect real ambition for our government to protect wildlife across the country!

Thank you to Agriculture Minister Julie Collins and Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek for doing the right thing by nature.

A Letter to the Editor GOS Luxury Glamping - a Counterpoint

Much opposition has been voiced around the proposal to lease land to a private operator to build luxury glamping facilities in the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area. The Society has lodged a well-argued submission against the proposal. Coming from the hospitality industry myself, I want to express some thoughts challenging this opposition.

I fully agree that the proposed **location** of the development is inappropriate. It sits near the cliff edge and in pristine 'Pagoda Country'. It would be highly visible from afar, it would cause many environmental challenges, it would not meet the NPWS Sustainability Guidelines and it would sit in prime pagoda landscape which we all treasure. However, I don't see the reason to condemn the entire proposal.

Could the development be located in one of the devastated areas that were 'left to rot' when the State Forestry Corporation walked away from their mess? The approval could be made dependent on rehabilitation of the area and strict environmental guidelines for the infrastructure could be enforced. More upmarket accommodation would make the GOS accessible for people who prefer more comfort or are unable to camp. The likely tendency of the operator to 'value add' could also provide nature and aboriginal heritage education. The development would also support the Lithgow economy and tourism.

Much opposition focuses on the idea of **leasing public land** to a private operator - the "*alienation of public land for private businesses' benefit*". Assuming that NPWS would not be able or interested in providing and operating more comfortable accommodation, I see no harm in a private operator developing and running this kind of a business under strict guidelines. The lease paid to NPWS would create an income which could support their work. In general, I don't believe that commercialisation of small areas of National Parks would be harmful, provided it happens under strict guidelines and does not lock away areas of natural beauty from public access.

—Thomas Ebersoll
Newnes Hotel Cabins

Editor's note:

You can read the Society's submission at <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/submissions-2024.shtml> - Notice of Intent to Grant a Lease in Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, 25 June 2024.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Membership:

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

Hut News Deadline:

Hut News is delivered and goes online at the beginning of the month. Deadline for submissions is the 12th day of the previous month.

Please send your submissions to the Hut News Editor hutnews@bluemountains.org.au or PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782. Word limit is 400 words or by negotiation.

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

A fungi species, not previously recorded in Australia, discovered in the Blue Mountains. Please keep an eye out.

My name is Leif, and I was recently involved with my mum and brother in discovering a species of fungi never recorded before in Australia. Fungi expert Tom May confirmed our observation as *Onygena corvina*.

Onygena sp grows on keratin-producing substrate such as the feathers, beaks and horns of decaying birds and animals. We found the specimen growing on a decaying bird carcass in the Water Nymph Dell Public Recreation Area at Wentworth Falls.

It would be great if local bushcare and swampcare volunteers could keep an eye out for *Onygena*. Observations should be added to iNaturalist via the website or app. You can also send your observations to fungimapids@gmail.com.

I have attached a photo of the Wentworth Falls specimen and include a link to a journal article about our discovery for further information.

-- Leif Pegrem-Brand

The discovery was made during the Citizen Science project, the Great Aussie FungiQuest 2023, organised by Fungimap

An article by T.W. May et al was published in the Australian Journal of Taxonomy on 20 September 2024. Here is an extract: "A recent collection of a stipitate ascomycete with a powdery spore mass, collected from a bird carcass in New South Wales, is identified as *Onygena corvina*. This collection represents the first confirmed record of the species from Australia. *Onygena corvina* is otherwise rarely reported from the Southern Hemisphere, being known in the Oceanian region only from New Zealand and probably also occurring on the subantarctic Macquarie Island ..."

Read more: <https://www.taxonomyaustralia.org.au/ajtpapers/03xwb3gnry>



Onygena corvina growing in a bird back or wing.
Photo supplied by Leif Pegrem-Brand.

How do I know that is a weed?

—Eva Johnstone, Blackheath

In Blackheath, many pink tags appeared recently on trees and plants, denoting notifiable weeds. In some quarters this led to a flurry of activity but, regrettably, in other cases no action has taken place to treat or remove these weeds.

Where we live in Blackheath there are a great number of properties with absentee owners – people who come to their holiday homes once a week, once a month or less frequently and others who let their properties as a BnB.

In my street alone, eight of the 16 properties are not owner occupied and, at an adjoining street, 14 of the 19 properties are empty most of the time. There are many questions that might be asked about a housing policy that allows such a large number of properties to be unoccupied. However, in the case of weed control, what knowledge can the property owner have or acquire to be able to respond to the need for better weed management?

My neighbours George and Nicki, who have owned a property since Nicki's late father built it in the 1950s, live in Melbourne and genuinely care for their property which contains springs and a hanging swamp. They are rarely in Blackheath, however, and called me over to help them identify the pink-tagged weeds, which I did. I also enquired whether they knew how to treat them and would they be here long enough to be able to carry out the necessary follow-up. They were leaving for home the next day but, with my assistance, were able to engage a knowledgeable person to carry out the weed control and follow up.

But what of the many absentee owners who do not take that all important next step? Who do not know anyone to help them identify and treat weeds, who don't or may not be able to engage a weed control person or who do not understand the obligation they have to stop the weed proliferation from their own place into the bushland.

If I ruled the world, it would be a condition of sale or development that a property owner be required to undertake a course in weed identification and control, with practical workshops and in-the-field experience in a bushcare group.

But, seriously, how do we solve this absentee landowner weed control conundrum?

E-News needs you!

We are looking for a volunteer to prepare and send the weekly E-News emails for members and supporters. It doesn't require too much technical skill but does require attention to detail and about 2 to 3 hours to prepare. The email is prepared and sent on the [Vision 6 platform](#). Collation from existing sources and selection and editing of submitted articles is required. Full training will be provided.

If you are interested and can reliably commit to being able to complete the task every week no matter where you are (no set day but usually sent on Tuesday or Wednesday) then please contact Andrew Solomon on 0408267078 or at eblast@bluemountains.org.au

Plastic pollution in our oceans is one of the biggest environmental issues we face as a society

—Nathalie Verellen, Sustainability / Climate Change Officer

Bakelite, the first fully synthetic plastic, was invented by a Belgian, Leo Baekeland, in 1907. This invention was engineered to meet specific needs for different industries and it revolutionised the world. Plastic offered many conveniences, from transportation to medical solutions and much more. However, its overconsumption and irresponsible use led to the massive problem of plastic pollution we face today.

Plastic is durable and non-biodegradable. It breaks down into millions of pieces until it is no longer visible by the naked eye, turning into micro plastics. These have been found everywhere in the environment, including at the bottom of the oceans.

According to “The Ocean Clean Up”, it is estimated that between 1.15 to 2.4 million tonnes of plastic is entering our oceans every single year from rivers and coastlines alone (70%-80%). Other major sources of plastic pollution come from cruise ships and fishing boats. These plastics accumulate into the Ocean’s Garbage Patches.

A Garbage Patch is a large area of the ocean where marine debris collects. These are formed by rotating ocean currents called “gyres”, like a big whirlpool that pulls debris that is released from coastal areas into one location forming “patches”. (1)

It is a misconception that a “Patch” is an island of trash. Instead, the debris is spread across the surface of the water and, in some areas, the plastics go all the way to the ocean floor. This makes it possible to sail through some areas of a “Garbage Patch” and see very little to no debris.

There are five big gyres in our world oceans, the North Atlantic Gyre, the South Atlantic Gyre, the North Pacific Gyre, the South Pacific Gyre, and the Indian Ocean Gyre. These currents have a significant impact on the ocean, helping to circulate waters around the globe. In every gyre there are garbage patches of varying size, the

biggest and most known is the “Great Pacific Garbage Patch”.

The Great Pacific Garbage Patch alone is around 4.5 times the size of New South Wales and it is estimated to have accumulated approximately 100,000 tonnes of plastics. (2)

It is estimated that the amount of plastic entering the environment will increase in the future. The most effective way to reduce the amount of micro plastics is to make less plastic in the first place. This starts 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. The NSW Government 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

(1) <https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/discover-marine-debris/garbage-patches>

(2) <https://theoceancleanup.com/great-pacific-garbage-patch/>





The Blue Mountains Cliff Eyebright, a vulnerable endemic plant

—Liam Ramage, Threatened Species Officer



Euphrasia bowdeniae, known as the Blue Mountains Cliff Eyebright, is a tiny herbaceous plant that is found on wet, shady, south facing cliffs of the Upper Blue Mountains. It is listed as vulnerable on both State and Commonwealth legislation and it is endemic* to the Blue Mountains. Due to its minute size and cryptic nature, hidden amongst hanging vegetation high up on cliffs, it can only be spotted during a brief window in Spring when its brilliant mauve flowers can be seen from some distance (often with the help of binoculars).

This shy little plant was discovered by avid nature lover and pioneering conservationist Isobel Bowden and was named in her honour in 1982. Isobel was one of the founding members of what is now the Blue Mountains Conservation Society!

Recently, whilst out on the southern side of the Radiata Plateau, it was thrilling to discover a previously unknown population of the Blue Mountains Cliff Eyebright. This is the first record in the Megalong Valley, extending the known distribution of the species, and is important to its conservation.

One of the major threats to this species is fire which kills the plants and their seeds, so long-unburnt areas are a critical refuge. This population is protected in the new Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park, a great example of conservation work achieved by the advocacy of ConSoc, local residents and others.



Images: *Euphrasia bowdeniae* in flower (Liam Ramage); Cliff habitat (Richard Delaney);

* Endemic species are plant and animal species that are found in a particular geographical region and nowhere else in the world. Some species are endemic to a continent while others can be endemic to an island. The Blue Mountains Cliff Eyebright grows on a few south facing cliffs in the Upper Blue Mountains, and nowhere else.

Adelina's Mailbag

Hi Adelina,

I thought this photograph might be good for Hut News. We put ropes up between trees in our garden to help the ringtail possums keep up away from our neighbour's seven cats who seem to live in our garden at night ... and we were happy to see the possums are using the ropes to go between trees.

All best wishes,
Georgie Kenyon



Ringtail Possum on a rope

Aviation and the airline industry: purveyors of “fossil capitalism”

—Comment by Jo Carroll

Recently a friend sent me a link to an article by Tim Winton in the Guardian newspaper (link below). I was struck by the basic truths he spoke to, truths that cause us to take action for our environment and society.

The absurdity of the infrastructure development that is Western Sydney Airport and the need to include it in the climate change debacle that is unfolding under the current government, a government that promised action on climate change, is easy to see in the conundrum associated with the fuelling of the jet aircraft that will fly from this airport. The invasive noise, emissions and visual pollution of current aircraft whether kerosene driven jet airliners or lead fuelled small engine aircraft are a testament to an industry so focussed on profit they have totally missed the impact they are having on society and the environment.

When they should have been working to mitigate or eliminate their polluting activities, they have been declaring massive profits, paying executives obscene wages and using their money to co-opt our governments. An industry that has had many, many, years to rectify the impacts they have on global citizenry and the world environment poured money into more of the same — the politics of corruption and greed.

In 2018, Deloitte was employed to write a report about fuel supply options to Western Sydney Airport (Western Sydney Airport Aviation Fuel Supply Corridor Options Report). The jet aircraft kerosene will reach the airport by pipeline or by fuel truck across the Sydney basin road network. With the closest storage facility at Clyde, Parra-matta, road transport is the only option -

fossil fuels delivering fossil fuels across the highly populated and environmentally critically endangered Cumberland Plain. The report noted that a pipeline would not be in place for the opening of the airport and, even when a pipeline is built, it is likely to need to be supplemented by road transport. Currently the pipeline is not secured.

On Wednesday, 1st May 2019, Labor’s then Shadow Ministers, Albanese and Chalmers, said in a media release:

“Infrastructure Australia has calculated that, without a pipeline, the airport would require up to 65 B-double tankers to deliver fuel each day ... furthermore, Deloitte modelling found the cost of using these tankers, including the damage to local roads, would be \$140 million over a 25-year period ... while the new airport will be an economic game-changer for Western Sydney, the last thing residents need is dozens of trucks passing through their suburbs to deliver fuel.”

Interestingly, the Labor ministers actually mention the imposition of the truck noise on residents but fail completely to consider the pollution and the impact on climate change. They are focussed on a version of economics that takes its position from the viewpoint of fossil fuel capitalism and the aviation industry. This will cost the Australian taxpayer. It is doubtful the Airport will even contribute to road maintenance. Australian citizens will pay for their seat on the aircraft and pay their taxes to subsidise an airport that is polluting. It is things such as the delivery of aircraft fuel that make WSA uneconomic as well as environmentally unsound.

Link to the Tim Winton article https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/sep/30/our-leaders-are-collaborators-with-fossil-fuel-colonialists-this-is-the-source-of-our-communal-dread?CMP=morningmailau_email



Images:

Plant Group stops to admire *Gompholobium*s (Meredith Brownhill);
Raindrops on Eucalypt leaves (Sue Nicol);
Choretrum candollei. (Meredith Brownhill).

Plant Study Group: Birrabang Ridge

Our spring field trip was led by Sue, a longtime member of the Society and the Plant Study Group.

Sue Nicol has always chosen our Plant Study Group field trips well and has been able to show us a diversity of interesting native plants. Sue is now going north to Bellingen to live so will be leaving us.

Sue will be greatly missed in plant group as she has made a significant contribution by sharing her plant knowledge and plant photos, as well as leading field trips and driving us to interesting places such as Boyd River Crossing in Kanangra-Boyd National Park.

Even with the mist and light rain, our walk along Birrabang Ridge in Blue Mountains Park will be remembered. The wild flowers were lovely in the rain. The chocolate cake for morning tea and a late lunch together in front of the fire at the V&A at Mount Victoria added to the ambience and memory of a special day.

— Meredith Brownhill.



World Animal Day 2024

World Animal Day 2024 was held in the salubrious surrounds of the Planetary Health Precinct, Katoomba, on October 5th.

Conservation Society stall volunteers joined a number of other stall holders to inform attendees of our activities on behalf of domestic and wild animals. Representatives from Blue Mountains Wombats, Blue Mountains Bird Observers, Animal Liberation and Blue Mountains WIRES were also present. A range of excellent Vegan food was available to keep up energy levels.



We met the new manager of the recently open Council-supported Animal Shelter in Katoomba and had important conversations about progressing the issues surrounding feral and domestic cats in the Blue Mountains.

The stall presented all of the Society's current campaigns and informed many attendees of the benefits of becoming a Society member. The overriding discussions of the day were regarding cats in unsecured environments that become a threat to native fauna. We also highlighted the presence of other feral animals in the Blue Mountains such as foxes and the threats they pose to native fauna.

Thanks to Meredith Brownhill for her invaluable help on the day and to Elizabeth Howard and Annette Sartor for their support.

The Society is always seeking helpers for stalls. If you feel engaging with community members and promoting the society and conservation in the Blue Mountains generally is something you can do, please join the stall holders events group. Contact Jo Carroll by email (jocarr2014@gmail.com) or leave a message at 0490 419 779.

— Jo Carroll, Events Coordinator

Image: Meredith Brownhill and Jo Carroll at World Animal Day 2024 (photo taken by Annette Sartor)

Environmental weeds: not welcome in Blue Mountains Swamps

—Peter Ardill Bushcare Officer

Undoubtedly Society members are aware that the protected ecological community, Blue Mountains Swamps, plays a vital role in supporting the rich biodiversity of the region. The swamps act as a giant sponge, storing rainfall and recharging local streams and waterfalls during dry periods (<https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/environment/waterways/swamps>).

Plant seed can be widely distributed by wind, water, human action, other animals and particularly birds and, unfortunately, the moist conditions characteristic of swamps have allowed many unwelcome plant species to thrive. These environmental weeds suppress and displace local plant species, disrupt swamp hydrology and destroy the habitat of local wildlife.

For example, at Kittyhawk Swamp (Wentworth Falls), Spanish heath, tutsan and West Australian import, Kangaroo Paw, have been major pests. South Lawson Swamp and Rocklea Swamp (Hazelbrook), are infested with arum lily and Japanese honeysuckle. Broom (various species), blackberry, blue periwinkle, gorse, Himalayan honeysuckle, mint, montbretia, privet (various species), red hot poker, seaside daisy, tutsan, jasmine (white) and willow (various species) are degrading many of our swamps.

How can you help? Many environmental weeds originate from gardens and urban perimeter acreage. Check your property for the weeds mentioned above. Utilise the weed identification and management resources on the Society's environmental weeds webpage (<https://bluemountains.org.au/environmental-weeds.shtml>). Get some exercise treating a weed or two and do your property and our unique swamps a big favour.



Blackberry growing over ferns and sedges
South Lawson Swamp P Ardill

About native bees

Gardening Australia (5 years ago) - Make a native bee hotel and attract native bees into your garden
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zH7YorgNeXY>

“Josh is in Perth's Kings Park where the native plants attract native bees. Kit Prendergast is a native bee researcher. She says that when people talk about bees, they usually mean European honeybees and forget the 2000 bee species that are native to Australia.”

It would be interesting to find out if it works.

— Hut News Team.

Access to bushwalks — Opinion by Don Morison

The ability to walk into our natural areas without payment has been an important feature of our community spirit and our tourist related industries in the Greater Blue Mountains for many decades. The development of one of the World's greatest arrays of natural area experiences has only occurred because, at crucial junctures, decision makers supported public ownership of land ahead of any possible private use.

There have been particularly significant turning points in the creation of such a worthwhile public estate in the Greater Blue Mountains. These included the purchase of the Blue Gum Forest through various donations in 1932, the purchase of an inholding on Boyd Plateau by our predecessor organisation, the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society, in the 1990s, and the purchase by government in 2019 of the land now known as Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park, near Katoomba.

While the actual number of hectares of land involved in some of these turning point moments might not have been huge, their significance lies in what they tell us about the role of non-government organisations and the wider community in expressing the public interest in natural areas and the willingness of the decision makers of the day to respond to that.

Blue Gum Forest was earmarked for a walnut tree plantation, Boyd Plateau to be part of the huge swathes of Radiata Pines on the Central Tablelands and the plateau at Katoomba was going to be a meditation academy. The efforts by activists to prevent fulfilment of these private objectives were all immense in the context of the eras in which they took place.

In 2024, with the forthcoming decision of the NSW Government to accept or reject upmarket walking tour operators in the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, the conservation movement is again at a potentially significant watershed. Allowing the commercial interests of a private entity to prevail in this case would send the worst possible message to all other private entities or individuals seeking to exploit territory better left in public hands.

For the future of our species and all other species, it has never been more important to defend the relationship between humans acting as a community and lands that have survived very much in their natural condition. The NSW Government's decision about the Gardens of Stone must be taken very seriously because of that.



Image: Edwin Franks on the Mount Hay Road - Lockley Pylon - Blue Gum Forest track. This is, one of the walks which remains largely unspoiled today due to past campaigns. Photo by Alethea Morison.

When did you see Caper White Butterflies? — Christine Davies



Every November, I would watch for the annual migration of Caper White Butterflies.

A friend would sometimes phone from south Wentworth Falls to tell me the migration had arrived and the butterflies were heading my way. They would start to pass through Blackheath the following day. One year we visited Newnes and saw the migrating butterflies at Wolgan Gap, a day after we had seen them at Blackheath

But, sadly, I haven't seen them for a few years.

Have you seen a migration lately? **Please let Hut News know – when, where, how many, in which direction they were moving, any other observations.**

Write to hutnews@bluemountains.org.au or PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782. Or you can phone Christine at 4787 7246.

Image: Caper White Butterfly, Butterfly Conservation SA Inc (BCSA)
Trevor Rowe / Roger Grund / SA Museum

In past years there have been many accounts of the Caper White Butterfly migrations.

Hut News, December 2004

In the upper Blue Mountains we recently saw a mass migration of Caper White Butterflies. The butterflies started to pass over the Mountains on Sunday 28 November. The migration continued on Monday 29 and Tuesday 30 November, with a few individuals on Wednesday 1 December.

On Tuesday 30 November, callers to ABC radio reported seeing huge numbers of white butterflies in Sydney, flying north in the northern beaches area. Apparently, strong north-westerly winds had blown them off course and onshore winds had prevented them from being blown out to sea.

This butterfly migration is an annual event in the upper Blue Mountains. Each year, sometime between 22 November and 5 December, many thousands of butterflies fly over in a northerly direction. Where are they coming from? Where are they going?

Caper White Butterflies lay their eggs on the plants of the Capparidaceae (Caper) family which grow in the arid

(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, phone 0455 850 753.

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.

Nov 11 **Ikara Head/Girraween Cave** 6km: Lois & David 0427 643 512

Nov 18 **Mark Foy track to Grand Canyon Circuit** 10km. Halina/ Melanie 0431 214 687

Nov 25 **Red Hands Cave loop** 8km: Melanie/Daniel 0431 214 687

Dec 2 **Lockley Pylon** 7.8 kms: Angela 0427 133 327

Dec 9 **Fire Trail from Blackheath to Medlow via Staveley Lookout.** Pat 0461 286 172

Dec 16 **Wentworth Falls circuit and picnic** 5km. Wayne 0407 643 512

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)

Nov 12 **Mount Hay and Butterbox Point.** Tony Raper 0410 651 154. Grade 2-3. 6km.

Nov 19 **Carlingford to Rydalmere – two walk options.** Judith Dyer 0419 780 640. Gr2. 7km

1) Easy 6km adj Light Rail or 2) Med 8km via the Ponds.

Nov 26 **Glow Worm Tunnel – two walks option – bring torch.** Bus \$15, book/pay Maurice. Doug Nicholls 0455 850 735

Dec 3 **Berry Island and Gore Cove reserves.** Maurice Kerkham 0402 402 783. Gr2. 6km.

Dec 10 **Prince Henry Cliff Walk.** Roger Blane 0499 902 744 & Lynne Blane 0407 498 397. Gr2. 6km.

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

Nov 14 **Frederica Falls, Lawson.** Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2
Nov 21 **Braeside Walk, Blackheath.** Tracy 0434 362 611.

Grade 2

Nov 28 **Cliff Top Walk to Lincolns Rock, Wentworth Falls.**

Libby 4759 2969. Grade 2

Dec 5 **Willoughby Road to Sublime Point, Leura.** Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2

Dec 12 **Den Fenella, Wentworth Falls.** 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).

Nov 9 **Watertrough Hill to Bells Creek.** Harold 0409010737, Grade 3, 10km. Map Mt Wilson

Nov 16 **Victoria Brook.** Harold 0409010737, Grade 3, 8km.

Map Mt Wilson

Nov 23 **Six Foot Track.** Harold 0409010737, Grade 3, 12km.

Map Hampton.

Nov 30 **Kamarah Ridge to Koombanda.** Harold 0409010737, Grade 3, 8km. Map Mt Wilson

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>

When did you see Caper White Butterflies?

(Continued from page 10)

regions of north-western New South Wales and south-western Queensland. The caterpillars must have leaves of these plant genera to survive but the butterflies travel to areas where this food plant is not available, including the Blue Mountains.

The butterflies are seen over much of Australia. Mass migrations are also seen in Adelaide. Caper White Butterflies pass through Blackheath earlier in spring, travelling generally in a southerly direction. They feed on the nectar of the Prostanthera flowers in my garden.

During the recent northern migration, some of the butterflies paused to feed on the Callistemon flowers.

City of Marion Council Magazine, 2002

This magazine article describes the amazing November/December 1999 migration when many thousands of Caper White Butterflies passed through Marion, a suburb of Adelaide.

Each year Caper White Butterflies fly south during late spring from their breeding grounds in the North Flinders Ranges and the inland areas of NSW and Queensland, eventually reaching the suburbs of Adelaide.

The butterflies came from the northeast, flew out to sea where many of them perished, then turned west, inundated the southern Fleurieu Peninsula, "hanging in the bushes and settling on the ground like snow" overnight, then headed back north-northeast.

Flights extended to Kangaroo Island and even reached southern York and Eyre Peninsulas. "Where the migration went after Adelaide is not known. It is assumed they flew along the east side of the ranges and headed back northeast to where they originated from.

"If they originated from inland NSW it would have been a round trip of 1300 km through Adelaide, but if the origin was Queensland it would have been 3000 km and comparable to the migrations of the large brown Monarchs (Wanderers) in North America.

"Other butterflies are also known to migrate in South Australia and they usually do so in spring, flying in a general south direction. These migrations now occur almost unnoticed due to the reduced number of butterflies taking part in the migration, caused by the loss of inland breeding habitat

"Historically, they once migrated in huge numbers, with the Painted Ladies once being so numerous as to darken the sky in Victoria!"

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

Butterfly Season. Now is the season for butterflies and it is a joy to watch and identify them. For me it has added yet another dimension to observing nature in the Blue Mountains. Watching and appreciating the natural world can become a lifelong passion – there is so much to learn. Every answer gives rise to another question.

To watch butterflies, it helps to have a good field guide. My favourite is *The Complete Guide to Butterflies of Australia* by Michael F Braby, published by CSIRO. -- *Adelina*

Did you know? Butterflies mostly eat nectar from flowers. They help to pollinate the plants by carrying pollen from flower to flower. But most caterpillars are fussy and need to eat the leaves of a specific host plant to survive. The butterfly must lay its eggs on that plant.

This butterfly is a female. The males have a narrower band of black around the edge of the wing.

The poor old Caper White underneath is a male, his folded wings showing the underside of the wings.



Image: Caper White Butterfly, Butterfly Conservation SA Inc (BCSA)
Trevor Rowe / Roger Grund / SA Museum

SOME BUTTERFLIES SEEN IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

Swordgrass Brown Butterfly, so named because its larvae feed on various species of *Gahnia* (Cyperaceae) which are tall sedges with sharply edged leaves. This butterfly is dark brown with several “eyespot” and usually a broad orange/yellow band on the forewings. It has a slow lazy flight and basks with wings partly or fully outspread.

Common Brown Butterfly. The caterpillar eats various native and introduced grasses, while the butterfly drinks nectar from flowers. The butterflies are also attracted to fermenting fruit and gum seeping from tree wounds.

The males fly close to the ground over grasses early in the season. Sometimes, as you walk along a bush track it can seem like they are dancing around you! A wonderful experience!

The **Caper White Butterfly** lays its eggs on plants of the Caper family which grow in the arid parts of western NSW, Queensland and Central Australia. This butterfly is known for its mass migrations to many parts of Australia. You can read about this on pages 10 and 11 of this newsletter. Please let Adelina know if you see Caper White Butterflies.



© Robin Murray

Poor old Caper White Butterfly. This butterfly is resting during migration. See how tattered the ends of its wings have become, but it will still be able to fly.

? What did you see in the Blue Mountains - in your garden or during your favourite bushwalk - during November? 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 or post to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.