



HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

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BMCS AGM 2026 – It's a Wrap!

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society's 2026 Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday, 11 April, with approximately 50 members in attendance. While the meeting ran a little longer than anticipated, it was warmly received, with a positive atmosphere that allowed time for meaningful connection among members, robust discussion and the formal voting-in of the 2026 Management Committee.

The President's and Treasurer's reports were presented, providing members with a comprehensive overview of the Society's activities, achievements and financial position over the past year. A highlight of the formal proceedings was the acknowledgement of outgoing President, Annette Cam, who was thanked for her dedicated and principled leadership. Her tenure was marked by tireless commitment, integrity and a deep alignment with the Society's conservation mission.

Recognition was also given to key contributors across the Society. Madi McLean spoke about her impactful work with the National Parks Sub-Committee and broader conservation efforts. Certificates of Appreciation were awarded to Madi McLean for her years of service to the Society in various roles including President, Vice President and chair of the National Parks Sub-Committee, Meredith Brownhill for leading the Plant Study Group, Harold Thompson for his long-standing role as Saturday bushwalk leader, and Jeanette Robertson for her dedicated administrative service.

A list of names and contact details for the newly elected Management Committee is on page 2 of this newsletter.

Several important volunteer roles remain open, including Meetings Secretary, Publicity Officer, Events Coordinator, and Nursery Manager. Members are encouraged to consider contributing their skills to support the Society's ongoing work – further details are available in the position descriptions.

A major highlight of the AGM was the focus on the critically endangered dwarf mountain pine (*Pherosphaera fitzgeraldii*). Guest speaker Eilish McMaster, a PhD student and Scientific Officer with the Botanic Gardens of Sydney, presented insights into the species' genetic diversity and vulnerability across Blue Mountains sites. She was joined by Mira Jordan, who shared propagation knowledge and practical advice for cultivating the species. BMCS Threatened Species Officer Liam Ramage complemented this with updates from field surveys, including identification of previously undocumented populations.

The afternoon concluded on a warm and collegial note. Sincere thanks go to the Events Team – Jo Carroll, Glenda Pryor, Ros Rix for their organisation of the delicious afternoon tea and to Alan Foster for technical support. Overall, the AGM was a fitting celebration of the Society's collective efforts and a strong foundation for the year ahead.

Annette Sartor, President

Living Near the Bush

HOW TO SUPPORT NATURE IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

The new, free, fully illustrated 2026 edition is now available!

In 1998 the Society published a special little book, *Living Near the Bush*. The book presented "simple things that we can all do to minimize damage to natural ecosystems".

Early in 2025, the Management Committee of the Society resolved that a new edition of *Living Near the Bush* was sorely needed.

Living Near the Bush, second edition, 60 pages, fully revised and beautifully illustrated. Chapters on First Nations cultural heritage; household waste and recycling; environmentally friendly gardening; local wildlife, domestic pets and feral animals; minimal impact and safe recreation; reporting pollution and environmental damage; preparing for and managing bushfire; climate change mitigation are now available as a digital flipbook, a downloadable PDF, and in a print version!

To obtain your copy, visit

<https://bluemountains.org.au/LNTB.shtml>

or come to a Society function!

Living Near the Bush

HOW TO SUPPORT NATURE IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS



Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Public forum: Sunday, 3 May, 1.30 pm

Katoomba Leura Community Centre
81-83 Katoomba Street

A vital public forum exploring Australia's new Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation reforms.

<https://resilientbluemountains.org/event/future-of-nature-laws/>

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* To contact management committee and subcommittee members by phone, please leave a message with your full contact details and reason for your call on 0490 419 779.



Meet the New President Annette Sartor

I feel privileged to lead the Blue Mountains Conservation Society as president, and acknowledge the dedication and work of outgoing President, Annette Cam.

The Society has long been a source of inspiration to me as a beacon of how environmental protection can be done thoughtfully and effectively. This is thanks to the dedication of its many members and contributors who continue the vital work of protecting the ecology of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage region.

I grew up on a farm in the Riverina near what is now known as Cocoparra National Park. My childhood was deeply immersed in wildlife, particularly during long walks with my father. These early experiences planted the seed for my lifelong interest in ecology, leading me to major in the field while completing a science degree in the early 1980s.

I subsequently became a high school teacher, continually seeking opportunities to engage in environmental education. On moving to the mountains in the early 1990s, I completed an Outdoor Guiding course at Katoomba TAFE and went on to work for nine years as a part-time Discovery Ranger with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Blue Mountains.

After leaving the school system in the early 2000s, I taught sustainability education at TAFE and later moved into

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Call to Action – Management Committee Positions Available

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is seeking members to step into key volunteer roles and contribute to our ongoing conservation work:

- **Meetings Secretary:** prepares agendas and minutes for monthly meetings and the AGM. *Ideal for someone organised and detail-oriented who can help keep the Society running smoothly.*
- **Publicity Officer:** coordinates promotion of the Society's activities across social media, newspapers, and the website. *A great opportunity for someone who enjoys communication and storytelling to help amplify our impact.*
- **Events Coordinator:** organises events for members and the broader Blue Mountains community, including managing volunteers, equipment, and the Events Calendar. *Perfect for someone enthusiastic about bringing people together and creating engaging community experiences.*
- **Nursery Manager:** oversees nursery operations across propagation and sales sites, manages materials and finances, and promotes the use of endemic Blue Mountains plants. *Suited to someone passionate about native plants and keen to lead a hands-on conservation initiative.*

For more information on these roles, please contact President, Annette Sartor at president@bluemountains.org.au

Join Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Find out how you can help preserve our beautiful World Heritage Area.

<https://www.bluemountains.org.au>

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Dharug and Gundungurra people, and pay respect to Elders past and present.

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university teaching. During this time, I completed a doctoral thesis exploring children's place-based knowledge, participation and identity within the context of the Blue Mountains, and continue to work at university in sustainability education.

I joined the Management Committee three years ago and have since been inspired by the commitment and expertise of fellow members, as well as the broader Society membership. I look forward to meeting more members in the coming months and warmly encourage you to reach out via email on president@bluemountains.org.au



Malcolm Read

new National Parks and World Heritage Officer

With my best buddy Sue, we moved from Windsor and built our house in Springwood in 1985. Although we moved back to Sydney for work and family commitments for several years, our weekend

bushwalk trips resulted in the permanent move back. Ten years ago we were able to purchase land in the Hartley area complete with cows and weeds, in much need of rehabilitation. With support from Council, Lithgow Land Services, and lots of our own efforts we have rehabilitated the property, removing weeds, restoring creek lines and revegetating with native flora, including a major project in our valuable Blue Mountains swamp. We have placed a conservation agreement in perpetuity. This has led to long-term work with our neighbours in restoring 4 km of creek-line, very satisfying on a local level but making me even more aware of broader threats to our environment.

My personal ethos is grounded in a simple principle: leave no trace. I strongly oppose inappropriate development within National Parks and public bushland – large-scale infrastructure, commercial ventures, or activities that introduce pollution, noise, or visual disruption. Consistent with this, I worked with the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Colong Foundation, Wilderness Australia on the Gardens of Stone campaign and remain concerned about current threats to this area that are public assets, entrusted to governments for protection on behalf of the community, and I am committed to doing my part to defend them.

Professionally, I bring experience in leadership roles across the corporate sector, including business management, contract management, finance, marketing, campaign management, alongside technical expertise in industrial electrical energy automation, skills complementing the diverse capabilities of the Conservation Society committee.

I have served on the Lithgow Environment Group Committee as Renewable Energy Officer,

working with the dedicated team to promote to residents, business and council, renewable energy adoption, passive energy management, energy efficiency, and ultimately reduce community carbon emissions to help fight climate change.

Fewer than 0.5% of Australia's national estate is classified as wilderness. That is an alarmingly small proportion, and a key reason why I have stepped forward to be involved. My focus is not only on protecting what remains, but also on exploring opportunities to protect, expand and strengthen these National Parks and World Heritage areas.

The Society stands as an extraordinary community resource – both a strong voice for environmental protection and a vital bridge between the community and local government. I acknowledge and congratulate the many past and present members whose dedication and hard work have built the Society into what it is today. I look forward to contributing meaningfully to the continued success of the 2026 committee and helping achieve its important objectives.

Malcolm Read Email: NatPks@BlueMountains.org.au

Black Carbon

In climate discussions, the focus is mainly on emissions such as carbon dioxide and methane. However, Black Carbon has recently received more attention as another significant contributor to global warming.

Black Carbon is a fine particle that gives soot its black colour, although soot contains several other chemicals. It forms when fossil fuels, biomass or wood burn incompletely or inefficiently or when there is insufficient oxygen during combustion. Major sources include diesel and petrol engines (especially older ones), industrial and agricultural processes, wood heating in homes, bushfires and transportation such as shipping.

Black Carbon is also a major component of fine particulate matter (PM2.5), which poses serious health risks, penetrating deep into the lungs and bloodstream, increasing the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Reducing Black Carbon pollution benefits both the climate and environmental health.

In Arctic regions, Black Carbon can settle on snow and ice, reducing their reflectivity, known as the albedo effect. Darker surfaces absorb more heat, causing faster melting of glaciers and sea ice, creating feedback loops. The Arctic is currently warming three to four times as fast as the global average.

Antarctica is also affected by Black Carbon transported through atmospheric circulation, including smoke from large bushfires such as the 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires.

Black carbon stays in the atmosphere for only a short time, between a few days to about two weeks and is considered a powerful short-lived climate pollutant. Some studies estimate that black carbon contributes roughly 5–15% of current warming and may be among the largest contributors after carbon dioxide, although its exact contribution remains uncertain.

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BMCC Weed Management Strategy 2026–2031 updated and approved!

The new Weed Management Strategy was adopted at the Blue Mountains City Council meeting on 31 March 2026.

Council's draft Weed Management Strategy was placed on public display during the latter months of 2025 and, reflecting the importance of this concerning environmental issue, community input was considerable. Newly formed Blue Mountains weed management advocacy group, Weed Action, contributed a detailed submission, as did Blue Mountains Conservation Society, other community groups and individual environmental advocates. In particular, Weed Action members met regularly with BMCC environmental managers during the post submission review period. Thank you to all Society members who contributed submissions to the review process.

A significant addition to the new Strategy is a new Weed Management Stakeholder Engagement Group (WMSEG), a forum intended to promote open dialogue between stakeholders, develop best practice weed management and minimise urban and biosecurity impacts within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWA). Community members, BMCC environmental managers and councillors supported this initiative. BMCC, various state government entities including Transport for NSW transport corridor managers, the Society, Weed Action and a volunteer catchment group member will sit on the WMSEG.

Also pleasing is that the BMCC Nursery Accreditation Scheme will be expanded to include "very high-risk" environmental weeds as well as Priority listed weeds, and weed inspections of local market plant stalls are planned. These were policies advocated for by the Society.

However, according to feedback from Society members



Thriving *Gahnia*. Great work by Water Nymphs Dell Bushcare Group. Photo: P. Ardill 2025

deeply concerned about this issue, there is a critical need for effective regulation of inter-state online environmental weed sales, a major source of environmental weed distribution in Australia. The Society will make further representations on this matter to the responsible authority, Senator the Hon. Murray Watt, Minister for the Environment and Water, Australian Government.

Of course, securing adequate funding of BMCC's environmental weed management program is always an important, ongoing issue. As well as the vital need to maintain the environmental health and biodiversity of our unique local ecosystems and the GBMWA, effective management of environmental weeds helps to secure the future commercial viability of locally based, genuinely nature focused ecotourism operators. Surely worthwhile investments?

BMCS Bushcare Officer



Bat Night 2026

The annual free, family-friendly Bat Night occurred on Saturday, 21 March at the Cultural Centre. The event was full of bat-themed activities and information, and free entry to the Cultural Centre gallery. The event attracted a strong attendance, particularly from local families.

Hut News Trivia: Question 22

What is Lepidopterology?

The answer can be found on another page of this Newsletter.

Many visitors delved into fascinating bats through talks by bat experts, displays and unleashing creativity in art-making activities including giant bat wings. The information sessions included:

- *Ninjas of the night: use of urban landscapes by bats in Sydney* by Dr Leroy Gonsalves, exploring how insect-eating microbats and flying foxes navigate, roost and forage within the Sydney metropolitan area. This metropolis supports a surprisingly diverse bat population utilising urban green spaces, waterways and man-made structures.

- A talk on Flying Foxes by Tim Pearson, a wildlife ecologist and researcher specialising in the behaviour and communication of Australian flying foxes. Tim is known for his work in understanding the complex vocalisations and social interactions of these intelligent, vocal and vulnerable animals.

Many visitors came to Blue Mountains Conservation Society's stall to connect and reconnect with our volunteers, often engaging as if greeting an old friend. Children, in particular, were drawn to Janine's playful puppets. The bat ears (see photo), created by local artists at Kookabubble, were especially popular.

There was also significant interest in BMCS activities and campaigns, including the proposed Narrow Neck development and our weed campaign.

Face painting, sponsored by the Society, remained a highlight for younger children, complementing the live flying fox displays presented by volunteers from Sydney Bats. Overall, the night was enjoyable, educative and full of opportunities for community connection.



Public meeting rejects Commercial Glamping Proposals for Gardens of Stone

On 8 April at a public meeting in Katoomba, over 50 concerned citizens sent a clear and defiant message to the NSW Government that conservation areas are for nature and not for resort development.

The meeting, organised by the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, brought together scientists, legislators and conservationists to address growing fears for the Garden of Stone's internationally significant "platy pagoda" landscapes.

Threats: Outgoing President, Annette Cam, opened the proceedings with this stark warning: "These are not just 'tents'; they are commercial operations in one of the world's most fragile landscapes," she said, reaffirming the Society's fierce opposition to the developments. The environmental risks were then detailed by stalwart campaigner, Keith Muir, with a sobering technical analysis of the three essentially pristine glamping proposal sites. Muir warned that the waste management plans are fundamentally flawed: "Building large artificial soil mounds to dispose of grey water on bare rock and stone won't work," and are likely to introduce invasive weeds and devastating pathogens into pristine ecosystems.

The Value of the Wild: Associate Professor Ali Chauvenet, a senior scientist specialising in park management, reminded the audience of the intrinsic and mental health benefits of undeveloped national parks. She argued that while commercialisation is a growing global trend, the true value of these spaces remains tied to their natural, untouched state.

A dramatic turn of events occurred when our environmental champion and Local Member Trish Doyle MP addressed the meeting. Ms. Doyle explained her objections to these proposals and her opposition made the subsequent vote against the glamping resort proposal unanimous. Then Sue Higginson, NSW Greens MLC, spoke, echoing the sentiment of betrayal felt by many who have spent decades fighting to build the protected area network, as they did not do it for it to be then privatised by resort development zones.

The Katoomba Resolution. The meeting concluded with the formal adoption of a resolution calling on the NSW Government to reject all commercial glamping proposals for the Gardens of Stone. The Society remains committed to ensuring that pagoda landscapes are permanently protected. **Keith Muir**

Plant Study Group

On a bright Saturday morning in April, 15 members of the Plant Study Group met at Adeline Park (Council Community Land) to explore the plant community. This sclerophyll woodland, often with hot dry conditions and poor nutrient levels in the soil, is characterised by vegetation with leathery leaves which reduce moisture loss. *Eucalyptus burgessiana*, otherwise known as the *Faulconbridge Mallee Ash*, is found here and more broadly in the Springwood to Linden area.

The hakeas have begun flowering, particularly *Hakea propinqua* (pictured), which has impressive-sized woody fruit, reddish stems and needle-like leaves. The variety of vegetation can be appreciated when walking slowly and observantly. We are overtaken, unsurprisingly, by most other visitors.

The Plant Study Group's 2026 programme is now up on the website – <https://www.bluemountains.org.au> – Plant Study Group – 2026

If you are interested in learning about our Blue Mountains flora please contact Genevieve at genevievepowell99@gmail.com



Hakea propinqua, flower and fruit.

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Unlike greenhouse gases such as CO₂, black carbon is an aerosol particle that warms the atmosphere mainly by absorbing incoming sunlight (solar radiation). It can also influence cloud formation and rainfall patterns in some regions. Because it remains in the atmosphere for a very short time, reducing black carbon emissions could slow global warming relatively quickly while the world transitions to cleaner solutions.

Nathalie Verellen,
Sustainability Climate Change Officer

No helipad for Fairmont

The Fairmont Resort's bid for a helipad has failed, with its development application rejected by a local planning panel. The panel found the helipad would result in unacceptable noise for residents and for visitors of the adjacent Blue Mountains National Park. It also said having guests flying in and out to the Fairmont by helicopter could interfere with other helicopter operations for bushfire fighting or emergency rescues.

(Source: *Blue Mountains Gazette* 16/4/26)

Editor's note: A proposed illuminated 'Las Vegas-style' sign was also knocked back.

Environmental weeds of the Blue Mountains

Mother of Millions *Bryophyllum* spp.

Originally native to Madagascar, like many environmental weeds Mother of Millions was introduced to Australia as a garden ornamental. As the name suggests, it reproduces prolifically, via plantlets and numerous seeds. The weed forms a dense mat of vegetation that smothers locally indigenous vegetation, including herbs, grasses, groundcovers and smaller shrubs.

Occurring primarily in the lower to mid Mountains, Mother of Millions is a Local Priority Weed that should be fully and continuously suppressed and destroyed. The plant parts are poisonous to humans and other animals, if ingested.

For garden infestations, manually remove by hand or mattock. Wear gloves and full body clothing. Ensure that any broken pieces of the plant are collected. Place all parts of the plant in your BMCC green bin. Do not attempt to compost this plant, as it may persist. As with all environmental weeds, follow-up treatment is likely to be needed. Further information: <https://bit.ly/4s1BQQK>

If encountered in bushland or along streams note the location and extent of the infestation. *Take photographs.*

Important: Report the infestation to BMCC
Phone: 4780 5000. Email: council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

BMCS Bushcare Officer



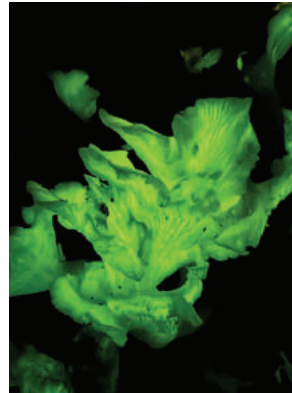
Characteristic grey stems. Photo: P. Ardill 2024



Red-pink flower cluster. Photo: P. Ardill 2024

Ghost mushrooms at Katoomba

We had glow-in-the-dark mushrooms in our front yard and in the bush nearby. The night-time photo was taken at home and the day-time photo in the bush. They are both ghost fungus, *Omphalotus nidiformis*. **Kerry Nettle**



Omphalotus nidiformis has a strong but not unpleasant smell and is extremely attractive to small insects and arthropods which feed upon the gills. At night in rainforests, the whole fungus is often attacked by the giant snails and slugs which seem to be attracted by both the smell and light and feed on it voraciously. Possibly the fungus is spread by the spores present in the slug and snail droppings. The fungus is quite toxic and will produce violent vomiting if it is eaten. It is occasionally mistaken for the edible species *Pleurotus ostreatus*. (Source: lucidcentral.org/)

PFAS and bushfires mentioned at the Falling Walls Summit in Berlin

The prestigious Falling Walls Science Summit is the international, interdisciplinary and intersectoral forum for global science leaders. It is held each year on the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Falling Walls has become an ever-growing network of the most ambitious and forward-thinking minds from around the globe.

Recently the *ABC Science Show* broadcasted some very interesting research which was mentioned at last years' Falling Wall Summit. Two of these presentations are particularly relevant for the Blue Mountains.

Anyone living in the Blue Mountains should by now be aware of the PFAS chemical issue which has affected our water supply enabling PFAS contamination of a wide range of wildlife species and humans. Mabel Day, a researcher from the University of Adelaide, was representing Australia in presenting her research on PFAS degradation and breaking down forever chemicals using light-initiated degradation techniques.

Another speaker at the summit was Karen O'Connor, who works for the Earth Fire Alliance, a project aiming to help firefighters globally with better satellite imaging. Bushfires are a major concern in the Blue Mountains. Karen said "We are a country of fire, but now countries that have never had fire problems are starting to have them. We definitely think it's associated with climate impacts".

Listen to the podcast: [Google](https://www.google.com/podcasts?hl=en)

ABC Science Show Falling Walls Summit podcast

Gardens of Stone Alliance at SEGRA Summit 2026: Strengthening the Case for Water Protection in Lithgow

In late March, I attended the SEGRA (Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia) Summit on behalf of the Gardens of Stone Alliance. The conference brought together regional leaders, policymakers, industry representatives and researchers to explore how communities like Lithgow can navigate economic change, particularly in the context of energy transition.

A consistent theme throughout the conference was the importance of 'adaptive capacity': the ability of regions to respond to change by building on existing strengths, investing in skills, and protecting the assets that underpin long-term prosperity. Clean water emerged repeatedly not merely as an environmental concern, but as a foundational requirement for future economic development, population growth and community wellbeing.

This is directly relevant to our campaign. In Lithgow, ongoing coal mining continues to discharge pollutants into the headwaters of the Sydney Drinking Water Catchment, and damage waterways in the stunning local surrounds. While there is growing recognition of the need for environmental protection, current regulatory settings allow this to continue in ways that would not be permitted for new developments.

Attending SEGRA has strengthened our ability to position the Gardens of Stone campaign within this broader regional and economic narrative. It reinforces that reinstating a robust water quality test (the NorBE test) is not about opposing jobs or development; rather, it is about ensuring that the economic transition from coal to renewables is sustainable, and that communities are not left with long-term environmental and financial liabilities.

The conference also provided valuable opportunities to connect with regional practitioners, researchers and advocates working on workforce transition, community resilience, and benefit-sharing – all of which are critical to building a credible and politically viable path forward.



From left to right:
Steph Lentz, Gardens of Stone Alliance campaigner;
Julie Favell, Lithgow Environment Group;
Councillor Darryl Goodwin, Lithgow City Council;
Jessica Gadd, Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan

The support of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society in funding my role has been instrumental in enabling this engagement at SEGRA. It ensures that the campaign is informed by the latest thinking and positioned effectively within the policy and political landscape.

Thank you for strengthening the Alliance's capacity to advocate for lasting protections for the Gardens of Stone region, and for the clean drinking water that millions of people rely on.

Steph Lentz
Campaigner, Gardens of Stone Alliance

Revegetation work trashed at Green Gully

Carlons Farm, Green Gully, in the Megalong Valley was, for many years, a starting point for bushwalks into the southern Blue Mountains. Just over 20 years ago part of the Carlon property was acquired with the assistance of the Dunphy Foundation for inclusion in Blue Mountains National Park and the Dunphy picnic and camping area laid out.

This seemed a good opportunity to do some bush restoration, so the Carlon Creek Bushcare Group was formed in 2006 from members of the Coast and Mountains Bushwalking Club. Our initial task was control of tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) which had become established in two locations on Carlon Creek.

Next, ranger Vera O'Donovan invited the group to assist with revegetation of cleared land between two former farm dams. At this stage, members of Springwood Bushwalking Club joined the project. Since then, our numbers have been strengthened by addition of Blue Mountains Conservation Society (CONSOC) members and the general public.

With encouragement and support from NPWS ranger Chris Banffy and bushcare officer Monica Nugent the planting work has expanded to cover several hectares using thousands of plants, all raised by volunteers at CONSOC's nursery. But the current road reconstruction project by a civil works contractor, under the supervision of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), has resulted in a grossly excessive loss of our now mature plantings, causing us great distress. After investing much effort and time in planting and establishing trees it is upsetting to see them trashed as if they were of no value. We were consulted beforehand about the project but were given no idea that such huge swathes were to be cut through our plantings. We naively assumed that trees would be retained up to the edges of roads like they usually are in National Parks and that every effort would be made to retain as many as possible. Not so at Green Gully.

We thought we were doing something worthwhile with our 18 years of labour at Green Gully and that it was valued by the NPWS but now we are left wondering. **Ian Olsen**

Editor's note: The National Parks and Heritage Sub-committee raised this as a matter of concern with NPWS in their latest meeting in March. NPWS officers said that the roadworks needed to meet updated specifications for this type of road access. The Society president encouraged NPWS officers to make contact with the group who had performed the restoration work.



A report card on the Kedumba Valley Escarpment

(Opinion by siblings Alethea Morison and Don Morison)

PART 4: The “Just as Grand Clifftop Walk” – Potential accessible trail for Cliff Drive and Narrow Neck

A gentle trek along Cliff Drive and Narrow Neck rewards one with most dramatic scenery and beautiful wildlife. Visitors after the 2019–20 bushfires marvelled at the rare profusion of pink flannel flowers emerging against the blackness. The bush and its creatures are thriving again and lookouts along the trail reveal varying perspectives on landmarks like The Three Sisters and The Landslide, sometimes mystically fading into and emerging from low-lying cloud.

Upgrades on Cliff Drive and Glenraphael Drive and keeping Glenraphael Drive car-free, as it is now, could help walkers and pedal cyclists, including the mobility restricted. A formed path along Cliff Drive from near the Scenic World property to the Narrow Neck Lookout would give low impact access to Eaglehawk, Landslide and Narrow Neck lookouts. Works along Narrow Neck could focus on restoring the damaged fire trail for these same users, as well as maintenance vehicles. This would include, in some locations, boardwalks, look out platforms, picnic tables and additional signage.

Highlights would become more accessible including O’Sullivan’s Folly, the engineering remnants of a misguided 1901 attempt to build a road to the Megalong Valley. While this precipitous route proved unsuitable for a road, it is popular today with rope sport enthusiasts and raptors. Access would be enhanced on both sides of Narrow Neck, with views over the Kedumba Valley on one side and to Boars Head and waterfalls above the Megalong Valley on the other. The route could include a boardwalk near the Golden Stairs trackhead, enabling a new viewing platform on the very top part of this trail.

Glenraphael Drive’s current closure presents an opportunity to reimagine access to Cliff Drive and Narrow Neck, better protecting natural values and improving visitor experience in this spectacular area.

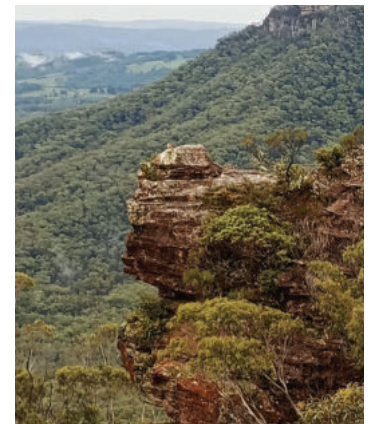
Editor’s note: Visitor numbers to the Kedumba escarpment (in part known as the Southern Scenic Escarpment) are increasing. The *Hut News* team welcomes debate on how crowding at popular locations can be reduced while visitors are given a high quality Blue Mountains experience.



Cloud and mist adorn the low ridge between the **Ruined Castle** sandstone formation on the left and the majesty of **Castle Head** on Narrow Neck plateau. (Edwin Franks)



Two little boys in blue admire the beautiful cross section of sandstone and ironstone rock face, enabled by the 1901 construction of an embankment. A team including the famous track builder Peter Mulheran was making an unsuccessful attempt to build a vehicular road to Megalong Valley. (Alethea Morison)



A native raptor atop a pagoda-like pedestal not far from **Boars Head Rock**. (Edwin Franks).

Lake Lyall Pumped Hydro Project

Lithgow Environment Group invited three representatives of the Lake Lyall Pumped Hydro Project (LEG) to their recent meeting. We had a lively discussion on the project and the recently released Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Report.

The project was started by Energy Australia and gained \$11 million in refundable development funding from the NSW government. Recently the project partnered with a 75% stake by Electricité de France. Should the EIS be approved, the next stage will be a financial approval process between the project and potential financiers. The issues raised at the meeting were environmental, the impacts during the construction phase and the perceived loss of amenity of the rural landscape. The dilemma facing environmentalists became clear again: While we support the roll out of renewable energy, the majority of LEG members present at the meeting were against the project mainly on environmental grounds.

The project will destroy 137 ha of native bushland with old trees, threatened flora and fauna as well as Aboriginal heritage. The proposed ‘offsets’ will not replace the losses. **Thomas Ebersoll**

Blue Mountains Conservation Society – Planning and Development Resource Kit

Do you want to take action on an environmental issue in your neighbourhood or the Blue Mountains 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

Editor’s note: This project is listed as State Significant Infrastructure. It affects the area around the confluence of Farmers Creek and the Coxs River. The Coxs catchment has been the subject of numerous campaigns by environmental organisations over many decades and it continues to be one of the most environmentally threatened catchments within the Blue Mountains Conservation Society’s area of interest.

Submissions to the EIS were to close on 28 April 2026.

Visit to Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area to view endangered *Banksia penicillata*

On 28 March 2026 a small group of Blue Mountains Conservation Society members went to the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area to view proposed “Bush Camp 3” and look for the endangered *Banksia penicillata*. This species was declared endangered in NSW in December 2025 having already been declared endangered by the Commonwealth Government in September 2024.

During the visit to “Bush Camp 3”, members recorded and marked GPS positions of 65 individual plants. These included seedlings less than 50 cm in height and older plants measuring 3 m x 4 m. The older plants were in flower during the visit; these flowers were being visited by New Holland honeyeaters (*Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*) and red wattle birds (*Anthochaera carunculata*) both of which were feeding on the flowers.

There may have been seedlings that we missed, so there could be more than 65 plants. This site does not show signs of recent bushfires and with the exception of a 4WD track, the site does not show signs of degradation. It is low, open eucalypt woodland on rock pagoda formations.

Banksia penicillata do not have lignotubers and so do not reshoot after fire. To regenerate, the species must grow from seed.

This site is valuable for the number of *Banksia penicillata* that are there and the mix of ages, and should be preserved in its entirety to protect these important specimens. **Annette Cam**



Left:
New growth of
Banksia penicillata
(Meredith Brownhill)

Bottom:
Banksia penicillata
(Graham Cam)

Banksia penicillata has reddish-rusty hairy new growth, a distinctive feature of this threatened species.



Surveyor General indulges in vandalism

As related in last month’s *Hut News*, the original track from the *Weatherboard Inn* (near today’s Wentworth Falls village) to Wentworth Falls (the waterfall) was probably one of the first made to scenic spots in the Blue Mountains. Its exact route is unknown, however.

Whether the track had already been made in 1830 is unclear, but certainly the route was used by a distinguished visitor on 1 June that year. That was the famous (or infamous – depending on your point of view) Surveyor General Thomas Mitchell. At the time he was on his way to reconnoitre his new line of road to Bathurst – including the now-notorious Victoria Pass. He was accompanied by the wealthy Bathurst landowner George Ranken and his wife, and a Mr Jones.

Mitchell’s diary relates the following:

The rain having cleared a little, I went with Mrs Rankin [sic], Mr Rankin & Mr Jones to see the Cataract near the Weather Board hut – the wild scenery of the valley into which it falls was very striking. We amused ourselves forcing a large loose rock over the precipice which cost us nearly a full hour to effect.¹

A year later, his wayward assistant surveyor William Govett indulged in a similar practice when visited the Blackheath waterfall which took his name:

It was an amusement with me always when I approached the edge of these precipices, to loosen large masses of rock, and by the assistance of the men lying on their backs, and pushing with their feet, to upset them into the abyss below – and one could form a tolerable judgement of the frightful depth they had to fall before they came



Weatherboard Creek Falls, c. 1867, Eugene von Guérard.

in contact with anything, from observing the time of silence, from the instant of their dislodgment, until they struck, and re-echoing thundered from rock to rock and valley to valley, resounding again and again against the more distance walls of the gully.²

Well, at least Govett offered something of an excuse for his indulgence. To be fair, however, Mitchell was quite capable of appreciating the serenity of nature: just a few days after sending the rock into the valley, he was camped by Coxs River writing of the moonlit scene in most romantic terms.

All that aside, it would be interesting to know precisely where it was that the track followed by Mitchell and friends arrived at the cliff edge, and were able to send a large rock over the edge without accompanying it themselves!

Andy Macqueen

References:

- ¹ Sir Thomas Mitchell: field, note and sketchbook C42, NSW State Library.
- ² William Govett: Notes and Sketches, SAFE/A 330, NSW State Library.

A history of the Blue Mountains walking tracks

The first constructed walking tracks in the Blue Mountains were probably rough tracks cut by the keepers of the *Weatherboard Inn* and *Gardner's Inn* to the Weatherboard (Wentworth) Falls and Govetts Leap. We continue the story, with excerpts of the **Historical Report** from Jim Smith's **Blue Mountains Heritage Track Study**.

Part 2. Private track construction

There was a remarkable period of private track construction on freehold land that became a fashion among wealthy residents of the Blue Mountains from the 1870s.

Martin, the NSW Premier of the time, had stood together with Henry Parkes and Prince Alfred on Princes Rock in January 1868. Eleven years later they (Parkes and Martin) acquired properties near each other between Faulconbridge and Linden and erected their summer homes. Over the next five years, their gardeners were to build some 3.7 km of tracks to lookouts over the nearby glens and to local waterfalls.

Their example probably inspired their neighbours in the Central Blue Mountains as far as Woodford to construct over 16 km of walking tracks, mostly on their own freehold land but sometimes encroaching onto adjacent vacant crown land or neighbours' properties. The private walking tracks were designed as part of the garden's landscaping. An almost invariable feature of these private tracks was that they led to the nearest waterfall, nearly always to the base of the fall if possible. Within the period 1877 to 1882, two similar sets of tracks were constructed by James Neale at Katoomba and William Piddington at Mount Victoria. After a lull of some seven years, there was a new wave of enthusiasm for private walking tracks possibly inspired by Sir Frederick Darley's tracks at Echo Point begun in 1889.

In all nearly 45 km of walking track was constructed by wealthy private individuals as adjuncts to their summer homes.

Next month: The pinnacle of private track building — *The Hydro Majestic*

Part 1 in this series was published in April 2026 *Hut News* www.bluemountains.org.au (*Hut News Archives*)



Henry Parkes' grave at Faulconbridge.
Photographer: Ron Hyslop

SIR HENRY PARKES FATHER OF AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION FIVE TIMES PRIME MINISTER OF N.S.W.

ARRIVED IN AUSTRALIA JULY 25TH, 1839.
WORKED AS STATION HAND, CUSTOMS OFFICER,
BONE AND IVORY TURNER.
IN 1850 BECAME PROPRIETOR OF "EMPIRE" NEWSPAPER.
MEMBER OF N.S.W. PARLIAMENT FROM 1854 – 1894.
SIR HENRY PARKES IS ESPECIALLY REMEMBERED FOR HIS
EFFORTS TO DEVELOP N.S.W. EDUCATION AND RAILWAYS,
AND HIS WORK FOR FEDERATION EARNED HIM THE TITLE OF
"FATHER OF FEDERATION"

Wording of Henry Parkes' plaque.



Trials of a *Hut News* volunteer

"The *Hut News* editor asked Ron Hyslop to take a photo of Henry Parkes' grave ... if it's not too difficult."

The photos came back next day, "You never mentioned the degree of difficulty etc." (Ron)

Ron Hyslop is one of many volunteers who help the *Hut News* team; a number of years ago, Ron (photographed on the way up Mount Solitary) would not have complained about a few steps.



Stand up for climate

A tiny community group from the Upper Hunter is defending a landmark judgment made in the NSW Court of Appeal last year that found that the local impacts of climate change have to be considered in planning decisions about coal mines in NSW. The mining company appealed, which means the High Court of Australia will hear its first climate change case this month. This is about the Hunter, but the outcome will affect us all.

Will you join us outside the High Court on 13 May in solidarity with the Denman Aberdeen

BMCC NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

Native plants will be on sale at the Blackheath Growers Market on **Sunday, 10 May (8 am to 12 noon)**. Gift Certificates (\$10, \$20, \$50) are available at the market or by email.

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

Muswellbrook Scone Healthy Environment Group
When: Wednesday, 13 May, 8.30 am Solidarity Action, 9 am Press Conference.

Where: Outside of High Court of Australia, Parkes Place, Parkes ACT.

RSVP:

https://www.lockthegate.org.au/mt_pleasant_highcourt

If they win this case, it may set a precedent that will help protect communities across Australia from destructive coal and gas mining.

Lock the Gate Alliance

Early Conservation

"The run of water that supplied the settlement was observed to be only a drain from a swamp at the head of it; to protect it, therefore, as much as possible from the sun, an order was given out, forbidding the cutting down of any trees within fifty feet of the run."

Captain Collins, from 'Sydney Cove 1788' by John Copley.



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

All walks are Grade 3 unless indicated otherwise.

- 4 May **Butterbox Point and Mount Hay** 6 km, 290m ascent. Leader **Marian 0411 658 562**
- 11 May **Fortress Ridge trail** 7.4 km, 360m ascent/descent. Leader **Melanie 0431 214 687**
- 18 May **Pierces Pass** 4.5 km, 500m descent. Leader **Lyn 0432 352 850**
- 25 May **Hall Hill to Bald Head** approx 6 km. Leader **Barbara 0428 962 460**
- 1 June **Blue Gum Swamp** 10 km, 350m ascent/descent. Leader **Bill 0407 271 685**

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

- 5 May **Zoo to Balmoral** Grade 2, 6 km, **Marilyn 0409 924, John 0400 990 444**
- 12 May **Echo Point to Scenic World return along Prince Henry Cliff walk.** Grade 1–2, Easy/Medium, 5 km return, 140m ascent/110m descent, some steps. **Julie Martin 0466 964 815, Ian Chappel 0412 757 902**
- 19 May **Meadowbank to Concord West via the John Whitton Bridge.** Grade 1, Easy, 4 km.
Leader: **Judith, 0419 780 640**
- 26 May **Florabella Pass** Grade 3-4, Medium–Hard, 5 km, Rise/fall, 50–60 metres. Small section near cliff edges. Time: 3 hours. Leaders: **Peter McBride, 0400 447 245, Sharon Beavon 0417 433 540**
- 2 June **Pymont Peninsula Walk** Grade 1–2, Length 5–6 km. Terrain: fairly flat but with some steep sections and stairs. Special features: Port and industry history. Leaders: **Margaret Tilden 0416 849 506, Marek Bowman 0412 347 478**

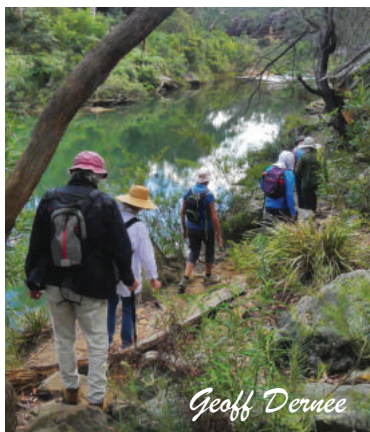
THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS are 2-3 hours and are conducted at a leisurely pace.

Coordinator: **Beverley Thompson 4757 2076** denfenella12@gmail.com

- 7 May **Glenbrook lookouts**, Grade 2, 5 kms. **Ros 0417 261 465**
- 14 May **The Three Brothers, Medlow Bath**, Grade 2. Meet Railway Parade opposite station 9.45 am. Carpool. Take lunch. Leader **Maurice 0402 402 783**
- 21 May **Asgard Swamp, Mount Victoria**, Grade 2. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50 am. Carpool. Take lunch. Leader **Angela 0477 133 327**
- 28 May **Rocket Point, Wentworth Falls**, Grade 2. Meet Stockyard Car Park 9.30 am. Carpool. Take lunch. Leader **Beverley 4757 2076**
- 4 June **Glenbrook Circuit, Darks Common and The Bluff**, Grade 2. Meet Glenbrook Cinema Car Park 9.45 am. Take lunch. Leader **Ros 0417 261 465**

SATURDAY WALKS: There are no Saturday walks at present. Saturday walks will be restarted when we find new coordinator/leader(s). If you have solid bushwalking experience, are comfortable leading small groups, are interested, and feel you're qualified please contact **Doug Nicholls** for information dougnicholls@bigpond.com

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



On the banks of the Bargo River

Interpretive Nature Group walkers visited the Tahmoor Gorge section of the Bargo River, near Picton, on 8 April. This area has a delightful collection of cascades, pools and small waterfalls. Its sandstone ecology hosts a diverse collection of flora with some similarities but many differences in comparison to most ecosystems of the central Blue Mountains.

Contact Christine Davies to participate in future Interpretive walks, davica@bigpond.net.au

Hut News Trivia: Answer to Question 22

Lepidopterology is a branch of entomology concerning the scientific study of butterflies and moths which belong in the insect family Lepidoptera. Someone who studies in this field is a lepidopterist.

A page for keen nature observers of all ages ...

What to look for in the Blue Mountains

Have you ever wondered ...?

Why do bats hang upside down?

Bats are the only mammals that can truly fly. A bat might want to fly at any minute, snatch a tasty insect out of the sky, grab a drink of water on the wing, escape a predator. Hanging by the feet makes it easy to take flight. Simply let go, and you're instantly airborne. Hanging upside down in hard-to-reach locations is also a handy way to dodge predators.

Bats' ancestors were mammals that glided through the air, but modern-day bats have evolved to be able to fly. Birds have hollow bones to reduce their weight but bats do not. This means that they need to reduce weight in other ways to be able to take flight. Their long bones, like femurs, are light so they can fly. Because of this, they cannot withstand the compression if they are standing up.

Many bats can still take flight from the ground. But, already being in the air, dangling from their toes while grasping their perch with their claws, makes going airborne effortless. *Simply let go!*

(Source: Bat Conservation International)

Image: Fruit Bats at Parramatta Park, May 2012.

Adelina



Dear Adelina

I enjoyed the fungi photography in April 2026 *Hut News*. I love fungi and I took a photo of some in my bush block. Perhaps someone might identify it for me.

Elizabeth Reyswood



Caterpillars are fussy eaters

Thank you for the letter from Christine and Susan who liked the article about students at Meadow Flat Public School planting native saplings to help the endangered Purple copper butterfly. (See March 2026 *Hut News*).

Butterflies are nectar feeders and any flowering plant can potentially feed a butterfly. Caterpillars are however very fussy eaters. Caterpillars rely on the female butterfly laying her eggs on an edible plant, we call these host plants or food plants. If a female butterfly does not lay on the correct plant the caterpillars will be unable to eat and starve.

Purple copper butterflies lay their eggs on the blackthorn bush (*Bursaria spinosa ssp. lasiophylla*), which is endemic to the Lithgow/Bathurst area. They make their survival even more complicated by requiring a special species of ant to look after the caterpillars, taking them down into their nest during the day and out at night to graze on the native blackthorn leaves.

One of my favourite butterflies in the Blue Mountains is the swordgrass butterfly (*Tisiphone abeona*). Their caterpillars feed on a species of swordgrass (*Gahnia*). I love to watch these butterflies as they fly slowly and gracefully through the garden, within a metre or two of the ground.

Adelina

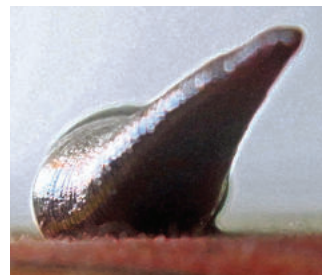
Wild Life in the Southern Highlands

May is the month when you might see a feathertail fly (aka bird of paradise fly or *Calipappus australis*). The male feathertail fly has a tuft of white fibre on its tail, like a feather. But the female is very different in appearance. It is flightless and much larger. This is called sexual dimorphism. The insect spends its larval stage underground, feeding on the roots of plants.

During a trip to Mollmook on the South Coast in May 2012, we stopped at Manning Lookout, near Fitzroy Falls, on the Southern Highlands. I was fascinated to discover a male and a female feathertail fly. While photographing them, unbeknown to me, I collected a large leech which hitched a ride to Mollmook with me.

After resting on the motel bed for a few minutes I was surprised to see a VERY LARGE LEECH, bloated with my blood. I took it outside and left it near a fountain in the garden. *Leeches have to eat too!*

Adelina



The deadline for June *Hut News* is 12 May
hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

What did you see in the Blue Mountains – in your garden or during your favourite bushwalk? Was it something that is not there in other parts of the year? Please tell *Hut News*, send your stories, photos and drawings to Adelina:

hutnews@bluemountains.org.au
or post to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.