Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

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Caring for Country: World Heritage 26th anniversary

29 November 2026 marks the 26th anniversary of the declaration and inscription of the Greater Blue Mountains on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area protects one million hectares of national park and wilderness. The area supports exceptional biodiversity and is a refuge for many endangered animals and plants. It has outstanding geological features, such as sandstone cliffs, slot canyons and waterfalls. It is highly valued for its Aboriginal heritage.

Take this time to go to a national park or other protected area and reflect on the significance of the World Heritage Area. Take this time to understand, connect with and seek to protect it. Underneath is a link to a video you can share.

https://backboneproductions.com.au/portfolio/yarning-about-country

Yarning about Country showcases Traditional Custodians sharing cultural stories across the rich Blue Mountains cultural landscape.

> **I walk with the knowledge of my ancestors. It is my responsibility to care for country, leaving it for our children better than we found it. I can't change things that have happened in the past but I can change it now for a better future. Bring back the magic, that's my goal, the magic that everyone can see. When I do a welcome to country, all I ask is that you take some of that magic with you when you go and leave some of yours for those that follow. That way, the magic will continue to grow.** (Uncle Peter Swain, Wiradjuri)



The Grose Wilderness (Ian Brown). The Grose Wilderness was declared on 11 May 2001. It encompasses about 37,900 hectares mostly within the catchment of the Grose River.

Red imported fire ants found at Sydney freight depot

Opinion by Chris Whiteman

When the Blue Mountains Conservation Society was sending submissions against the building of the Badgerys Creek international airport, the biosecurity dangers of having an open field airport so close to a world heritage national park were clearly stated. It was revealed on 13 October that on 23 September red imported fire ants were found at Enfield Intermodal Logistics Centre. Containers are railed to the centre and then loaded on trucks which distribute loads throughout New South Wales.

Badgerys Creek as a 24-hour airport will be handling freight which will be distributed just as freight is distributed from Enfield. Qantas Freight will have 75,000 square metres of total warehousing and be capable of servicing eight wide-body aircraft at any one time. Freight may include cut flowers from South American countries and seasonal fruits including grapes, oranges and cherries from the USA. In the USA, the Food and Drug Administration estimates more than $5 billion is spent annually on medical treatment, damages for livestock, wildlife and control in infested areas of red imported fire ants. Red imported fire ants are native to the tropical areas of central South America.



Red imported fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*) by parkes.nsw.gov.au via: Wikipedia Commons

Red imported fire ants are one of the worst invasive species and are now found on the NSW/Queensland border. It would be disastrous if these ants ever reach the Blue Mountains. They are highly mobile over and under ground. They can also raft on waterways after floods or rain. The queen has wings and can fly up to 5 km to establish new colonies. They can stowaway on goods and vehicles and can move with shipping containers. Fire ants are predatory towards animals that nest, feed or simply go near the ground, including insects, spiders, lizards, frogs, birds, sea turtles and mammals.

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President's report

This month, I begin with the good news that we welcome Paul Toni as the new Land Use Committee Coordinator and Dave Cox as our new volunteer Publicity Officer, to help strengthen our communications and community engagement. The past weeks have been very busy, with activities spanning environmental advocacy, community engagement and strengthening partnerships.

The Society lodged objections to two development applications: the proposed demolition of the former Wentworth Falls Bowling Club and construction of a restaurant and drive-through facility, and a proposal affecting Blackheath Golf Club. We raised concerns about excessive rural land clearing in NSW through correspondence with Ministers Sharpe and Moriarty and our local member, Trish Doyle.

In a positive development for threatened species conservation, Blue Mountains City Council recently passed a motion, supported by BMCS, to strengthen awareness and protection of the highly vulnerable dwarf mountain pine (*Pherosphaera fitzgeraldii*). Threatened Species Officer Liam Ramage has highlighted threats such as climate change, urban pollution, water quality and altered water flows.

An important development in the fight against weeds is our involvement in the Blue Mountains Weed Management Stakeholder Engagement Group with Council, government agencies, land managers, Traditional Owners and community organisations. Our networking continues with preliminary discussions with the National Parks Association of NSW to explore closer collaboration, including possible affiliated association status. This could strengthen our collective influence and broaden opportunities for conservation action.

In recent months we have engaged with the wider community such as the inaugural Blue Mountains Day of Peace in Katoomba, where I spoke about the Society's legacy of democratic conservation. We also did our annual presentation at the Sustainability Festival, exploring the main themes of the recently updated *Living Near the Bush* booklet, particularly how everyday human activities can have cascading ecological consequences.

Our participation in these events, along with the Springwood Festival and BMCC's Biodiversity Day, was made possible by generous contributions of many volunteers. A sincere thank-you to Andrew Solomon, Elizabeth Begg, Ian Watson, Brendhan Haynes, Alan Crooks, Angelika Treichler, Haidee Roper, Ebony Bennett, Nathalie Verellen, Elizabeth Howard, Carolyn Williams, Peter Ardill, Kathryn Foley and Patrick Murphy. Nursery volunteers have continued their commitment while operating without a dedicated nursery manager. Special thanks to those who organised and ran the September and October stalls at the Blackheath Growers Market.

Lastly, our strategic planning process continues, with working groups progressing priorities identified through workshops and our member survey. As we move towards implementing new activities and processes, our challenge will be to balance our conservation ambitions with our available volunteer capacity. A separate article in this edition provides further insights into the member survey results, see page 8.

Annette Sartor president@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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Society acts on devastating rates of rural land-clearing in NSW

Recent 2026 media reports reveal that, overall, the rural land-clearing rate in NSW has now reached record levels.

In April 2025, the Society made a submission to the NSW Natural Resources Commission. The Commission was examining options to further protect and restore indigenous biodiversity on private rural land located in regional landscapes. In its submission, the Society expressed alarm about the devastating levels of clearing of indigenous flora, fauna habitat and ecological communities occurring on private rural land in NSW. The Society noted that the rate of private rural land clearing in NSW has increased alarmingly over the last decade.

The Society proposed a number of reforms to the current rural land-clearing assessment system. In particular, the Society endorsed repeal of the Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code 2018 (*Local Land Services Act 2013* NSW) that enables private landowners to self-assess proposed land-clearing.

The NSW Natural Resources Commission's final report was due to be delivered to the NSW Government by 26 March 2026 but as at 1 September 2026 it was overdue.

Accordingly, the Society wrote to the NSW Minister for the Environment, Penny Sharpe MLC, on 24 September 2026, requesting that the Commission present its report to the government as soon as possible. The Society urged the Minister to repeal the Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code 2018 and introduce a land-clearing assessment system that prioritises the application of ecological criteria and environmental conservation principles to all rural land-clearing proposals.

The letter can be viewed on Society's submissions webpage: **https://www.bluemountains.org.au** – campaigns – all submissions. The Society continues to monitor this vital environmental issue.

BMCS Bushcare Officer

Red imported fire ants found at Sydney freight depot: *from page 1*

Fire ant workers vary from 2 mm to 6 mm in length. They have a copper-brown body, with a darker abdomen and can be very aggressive. Fire ant colonies contain 200,000 to 400,000 workers. They respond to disturbances by swarming and repeatedly stinging. **Do not disturb them.**

Report any unusual pest or disease immediately on the **National Exotic Pest Hotline: 1800 084 881** or the **NSW Biosecurity Helpline 1800 680 244.** Early reporting increases the chance of effective control and eradication.

Further information can be found at:

https://www.dpird.nsw.gov.au/dpi/biosecurity/invasive-plants-and-animals/insect-pests/rifa
https://invasives.org.au/blog/8-facts-every-australian-should-know-about-fire-ants

Why are our taxes funding a threat to native fish?

For many years, certainly before 1994, the NSW Department of Primary Industries has been releasing the invasive brown trout into Wentworth Falls Lake, which flows directly into the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

The *NSW State of the Environment Report 2024* identified brown trout as a major threat to NSW river and wetland biodiversity. Fish 'stocking' – the technical name for the introduction of trout and other non-native fish into NSW watercourses – is identified as a *Key Threatening Process* (an activity that threatens, or may threaten, the survival of native species) by the Fisheries Scientific Committee appointed under the *Fisheries Management Act 1994.* In fact, the 1994 *Environmental Impact Statement* for the *Freshwater Fish Stocking Fishery Management Strategy* specifically identified the threat that stocking trout posed to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (page 182):

> [World Heritage] values … include endemic species, relict species, species with restricted ranges and rare or threatened species. Any of those species that are aquatic, primarily fish and frogs, are likely to be affected by fish stocking … The potential for an impact in the absence of evidence to the contrary suggests that stocking is likely to undermine … [World Heritage values].

Notwithstanding this, the NSW Department of Primary Industries regularly stocks Wentworth Falls Lake with trout for recreational fishing. The watercourse flowing from the Lake (Jamison Creek) enters the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area less than five kilometres downstream. Trout have been observed escaping the Lake, swimming downstream, and in the pool below the Wentworth Falls, which is in the World Heritage Area.

In 2002 the Society first raised concerns with the state government department responsible for the fish stocking program and has continued to do so. Recently the Society issued two freedom of information requests. The documents provided in response suggest that environmental impact assessments prior to each release have not been adequate.

Given the significant impact trout may be having in the World Heritage Area, the Society intends to continue to pursue this matter with relevant MPs, Ministers, government departments, and agencies.

What you can do: The Society would appreciate any information (particularly photographs) that show trout escaping the lake by swimming over the dam wall or swimming in Jamison Creek.

Land Use Subcommittee
landuse@bluemountains.org.au



Wentworth Falls Lake (Adelina)

Bogong moths and fond memories

Large numbers of bogong moths and native bees are feeding on the flowering *Prostanthera* (mint bushes) in my garden. The bogong moths also feed on the flowers of a grevillea (I don't know its species name). This grevillea seeded from a plant which grew from a small cutting taken in Rachel Makinson's Mount Victoria garden and planted in my new native garden, about 25 years ago.

The bogong moths are migrating in thousands from their breeding grounds to their summer camps in the Australian Alps. Have they been distracted by our artificial lights or would they have always passed through here and interrupted their journey to rest and feed?

This has brought back memories. Rachel was a member of the conservation society and a friend. When I first knew Rachel, she issued an annual invitation in November for society bushwalkers to inspect her garden and admire the view over the Kanimbla Valley while having a sumptuous morning tea (supplied by Rachel).

After morning tea, we drove to the Kanimbla Valley to meet a resident of the valley, Charles Johnson, who led us on a bushwalk. Charles provided afternoon tea. In a former role, Rachel (1917–2014) was the first woman to become a chief research scientist at the CSIRO.

Christine Davies, October 2026



H5N1 bird flu

Detailed information can be found on the Commonwealth Government "Bird Flu (Avian Influenza)" website:

https://www.agriculture.gov.au/campaigns/birdflu/latest-data

If you find sick or dead birds or other animals, the Australian Centre for Disease Control says:

- do not handle the birds or other animals
- record your location and what you see (take photos or video, if possible), also GPS reading
- report this information to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on **1800 675 888**

Narrow Neck campaign update

Thank you to everyone who has continued to support our campaign opposing the proposed development at 142–150 Narrow Neck Road, Katoomba. Your ongoing commitment has helped ensure that member and community concerns continue to be heard.

A decision has still not been made and, under the assessment timeframe, may not be made until next year. We will let you know as soon as we hear further.

In the meantime, the NSW Department of Planning has raised a substantial number of issues that the developer is required to address. In June, the Department issued two detailed requests seeking further information and changes on matters including impacts on the escarpment and tree canopy, slope constraints, bushfire evacuation, building height and density, character and landscape, visual impacts, traffic and parking.

The developer has also been asked to prepare a strategic bushfire study addressing safe evacuation in light of the proposed increase in residential density. The Department stated that the proposal does not currently exhibit design excellence and requires significant further design development.

The Society will continue to monitor the assessment closely and keep members informed. Thank you again for your continued support, it has made, and continues to make, a real difference to this campaign.

Land Use Subcommittee
landuse@bluemountains.org.au

Create a springtime snapshot of bugs across Australia

Bugs in My Backyard Week 16-22 November 2026

Step into the hidden world just beyond your doorstep! With only your phone and a curious eye, you can join thousands of Australians uncovering the extraordinary invertebrates that live in our gardens, parks and schoolyards.

Bug Hunt is inviting people across the country to discover, photograph, and record insects and other invertebrates in their local environments.

During **Bugs in My Backyard Week** we're encouraging families, schools and nature lovers across Australia to head outside and uncover the wild, wonderful creatures that keep our world humming. Each photo you upload to the Bug Hunt Australia project to iNaturalist adds to vital knowledge – helping protect lesser-known but critical species and detect invasive species before they spread.

By taking part, you become part of a national movement of everyday people contributing to real science and wildlife protection. Bug Hunt is a national citizen-science initiative led by the Invasive Species Council and Invertebrates Australia. The project is supported with a grant through the Australian Geographic Awards for Nature.

Visit **https://bughunt.org.au/** to find out more.

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Save the Coxs River: Our Water, Our Wildlife, Our Responsibility

The Coxs River is a precious part of the Blue Mountains' natural heritage and the wider catchment that supplies Sydney's drinking water. It sustains native animals, aquatic life and ecosystems connecting the Gardens of Stone Conservation Area with the Blue Mountains and Kanangra-Boyd National Parks. Yet this river is under serious pressure from coal mine wastewater pollution.

According to the Gardens of Stone Alliance, around **20 million litres of largely untreated mine water enter the Coxs River each day,** and mine water accounts for approximately 80 per cent of dry-weather baseflow in the upper river. The Alliance also reports that platypus, known as *biladurang* in Wiradjuri, have disappeared from stretches of the river near Lithgow. University research has linked salinity and heavy metal pollution to declines in yabbies, mayflies, dragonflies and other invertebrates that form the foundation of the river's food chain.

When the food web collapses, native wildlife loses its home. We cannot stand by and accept this as inevitable.

In 2017, changes to the Neutral or Beneficial Effect (NorBE) water-quality test weakened protections for Sydney's drinking water catchment by creating exemptions affecting some existing coal mines. Before the NSW election, Labor representatives Chris Minns and Penny Sharpe, along with Greens representatives Sue Higginson and Cate Faehrmann, expressed opposition to the changes. With the March 2027 election approaching, our community should ask our elected representatives what they will do to honour those commitments and ensure mining developments are subject to effective water-quality safeguards. Register your support at **www.GardensofStone.org.au**

There is reason for hope. Central Tablelands Local Land Services and NSW Fisheries has mapped aquatic habitats along 92 kilometres of the Coxs River, from Lidsdale into the Kanimbla and Megalong valleys where it enters the National Park. This work identifies the locations for first-step restoration, helps identify important species, including the Blue Mountains perch, and solutions to restore river health. The report is available at **https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-4215057880/view**



Coxs River Rehabilitation – Community Engagement

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society continues working with a range of bodies including Local Land Services and Blue Mountains Council to improve the river's condition. We can all contribute through weed and erosion control, restoring vegetation buffers and protecting our waterways.

Now we need our politicians to act

Register your support at **www.GardensofStone.org.au**

Write to your NSW MP and the Premier. Demand effective water-quality testing for mining developments, proper treatment of mine wastewater and an end to pollution that threatens our waterways and wildlife.

This is our river and our responsibility. Every letter adds to the community's voice.

Save the Coxs River. Protect our drinking water. Give our native wildlife a future.

Malcolm Read
National Parks and World Heritage Officer
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Launching the campaign to fix our drinking water

The Gardens of Stone Alliance is campaigning to fix our drinking water by closing the loopholes in our water quality protections, and you can help support it. Over October, the Alliance has been building a campaign to stop the pollution seeping into drinking water. In October *Hut News*, we noted that:

> *The previous government watered down the water quality NorBE1 test (pun intended). For most mining modifications, the NorBE test does not apply, and more mining in our drinking water catchment is not legally required to consider whether its proposal has a negative effect on water quality.*

Since then, we have been planning a campaign, to build community support and political pressure to fix the NorBE test. With our webinar soft-launching the campaign just passed, we are building the movement and hope that many of you can join us at our November event to bring this issue to our elected officials. It is through community action and putting pressure on our elected officials that we can move the needle on protecting our water.

Visit our website and Facebook to find details about the November event and learn about the campaign. See explainer videos on NorBE and the release of our Watershed documentary series. View the beauty of the Gardens of Stone and learn how you can help protect the water we drink with a simple email. *We hope to see you at our November event!*



Luke Gelder at Gardens of Stone

Luke Gelder, Gardens of Stone Alliance campaigner
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Website: **https://www.gardensofstone.org.au/**
Facebook: Protect Gardens of Stone

A report card on the Kedumba Valley escarpment

Part 8. Left to our devices on the Kedumba Valley escarpment?

Opinion by Don Morison

Serious challenges lie ahead for the Blue Mountains City Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service in managing the expected growth of visitor numbers along what Council calls the "Southern Scenic Escarpment" (the sections of the Kedumba River and Megalong Creek catchments approximately from Lincolns Rock on Kings Tableland to Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park in western Katoomba).

More enforcement personnel are needed on the ground, whether they wear council or national park uniforms or neither, and the funding for this is almost certainly going to have to come from the state government.

Will this include confiscation of misused devices? Already, authorities are confiscating misused e-bikes in other parts of New South Wales. At lookouts and natural areas, drones misused by visitors are threatening the safety and enjoyment of peaceful visitors. A more long-established device, the cigarette lighter, is the greatest threat of all to the escarpment bushland during periods of fire danger.

Serious problems of management are site-specific. Early summer seems entirely the wrong time to reopen Lincolns Rock, even just for pedestrians. Pedestrian congestion is a problem on and around the stepping stones at the head of Wentworth Falls – the slippery conditions on the rocks outside the current railing have led to numerous deaths and injuries to pedestrians.

Council's restored night lighting on part of Leura Cascades will need monitoring. I walked the track to the head of Leura Bridal Veil Falls in 1964 when the night lighting exceeded the section recently reinstituted. By 1988, the area was dominated by ruins of the



A waterfall plunges from a Blue Mountains escarpment into the Kedumba Valley (Christine Davies)

decommissioned night lighting and ruins of the flying fox serving the now decommissioned sewage treatment plant below lower Leura Falls. Thankfully, all of that, plus the dumped car bodies below Bridal Veil Falls, have been painstakingly removed. It now must be ensured that the small section of night lighting that has returned does not attract visitors with inappropriate attitudes or lure people onto tracks that should be managed for day use only.

In the early 1990s, I attended the then Outdoor Guides course at TAFE which included practical research into fauna at Jamison Creek. Bush rats, swamp rats, antechinus and greater glider possums were prevalent in areas near the escarpment. Are they all there now and which of those will remain?

The future of this escarpment must receive more attention and public debate in the coming months.

Plant Local, a new bush gardening resource for local residents

Reviewed by BMCS Bushcare Officer

In recent years, renewed interest in all matters relating to vegetation management has emerged in the Blue Mountains: environmental weeds, environmentally friendly gardening, annual native plants gardening festivals, new advocacy groups, a Blue Mountains City Council/community consultative committee on environmental weeds, and accompanying campaigns, articles, hand-outs, webpages, social media, advertising and learned discourse! Of course, differences of opinion do arise, but overall the Blue Mountains community is privileged to have such a wonderful range of resources and enthusiastic contributors.

BMCC has enhanced this burst of floristic interest and energy, with a new webpage and digital tool devoted to the development of "gardens that reflect and strengthen the natural bushland character of the Blue Mountains". Aptly titled *Plant Local*, informative text on the introductory webpage succinctly explains why gardening with locally indigenous plant species is enjoyable and benefits sustainable land management in



Isopogon anemonifolius (drumsticks) at Blackheath. (Adelina)

the Blue Mountains. On the *Find Plants* page, the reader is asked to answer four questions about garden location, soil type, landscaping requirements and their local vegetation communities.

A click of the *Find Plants* button produces a substantial list of plant species that occur naturally in the nominated locality! A word of caution though: the plant lists are quite extensive, so don't be disappointed if initially you can only source a relatively small number of the plants. Be patient, plan carefully, establish tree, shrub and ground-level layers of vegetation, keep visiting nurseries and over time add additional plant species to your garden.

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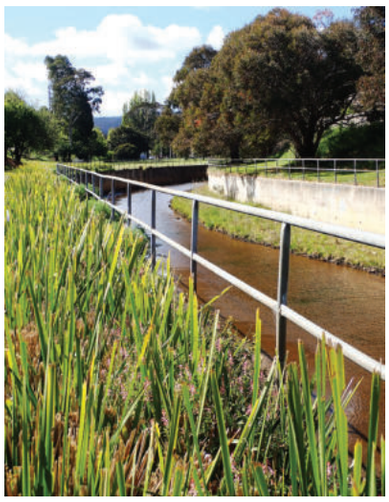
Subcatchments of the Coxs Valley



1. Upstream from the Oakey Park brewery precinct (C. Davies)



2. Lake Pillans and blast furnace ruins (C. Davies)



3. Near Lithgow centre (C. Davies)

Part 3. Farmers Creek

Farmers Creek is a relatively small subcatchment of the Coxs valley and is the most transformed by non-indigenous humans, embracing as it does the urban areas of Lithgow and the evidence of 160 years of industrialisation and grand infrastructure.

It rises in the south of Newnes Plateau, near where the Coxs catchment adjoins the Wollangambe catchment. Near the watershed, it has been protected to the extent that it provides Lithgow's drinking water. As it flows south-west and approaches the urban areas, more weeds appear along it (photograph 1).

It bisects the Lithgow suburb of Oakey Park, notable for the old brewery building and the handsome early twentieth-century houses built for the brewery workers. A tributary of the creek here leads down from a spring that has recently been used for bottled water.

The Lithgow blast furnace, which cast its first pig iron in 1907, has had a dramatic impact on Farmers Creek and especially on Lake Pillans, a natural water feature in the valley which was commandeered and changed beyond recognition to aid the metal industries (photograph 2). A plaque at the restored Lake Pillans wetland public reserve articulates Lithgow council's present intentions towards Farmers Creek: "to improve biodiversity, maintain water quality and create a safe area for community recreation".

Although the Lake Pillans reserve is currently in need of weeding and rubbish removal, many native birds can be seen in the reserve and at the sewage treatment plant, two kilometres downstream. The last few kilometres before it exits the urban area, many sections of Farmers Creek are channelised and landscaped into urban parkland (photograph 3).

A dam across the Coxs River to provide water for Mount Piper power station and the now closed Wallerawang power station was completed in 1982, flooding the confluence of Farmers Creek and the Coxs River (photograph 4). Marangaroo National Park was established in 2007, protecting much of the bushland on Mount Walker which overlooks the confluence. Nevertheless, a pumped hydro-electric scheme which would seriously impact bushland around the confluence is currently under consideration by government. Lithgow Environment Group, Blue Mountains Conservation Society and others are opposing the pumped hydro project.



4. Farmers Creek's egress into Lake Lyell (T. Ebersoll)

© 2026 Don Morison and Christine Davies

See also Save the Coxs River and Launching the Campaign on page 5.



Waratahs, beautiful during October (C. Davies)

Members Survey 2026 – what our members told us

The BMCS recently conducted a member survey to better understand what motivates members, how they engage with the Society and what they see as our priorities for the future. The 121 responses provided valuable insights into our strengths, opportunities for improvement and future direction.

A strong commitment to conservation

The survey revealed a strong and enduring connection between members and the Blue Mountains natural environment with protecting native plants, wildlife and wilderness landscapes remaining central to why people join and support the Society. Members particularly value BMCS's environmental advocacy, its history of conservation achievements and its role in informing and educating the community. Bushwalking and nature-based experiences remain important, alongside opportunities to contribute to practical conservation activities and connect with like-minded people.

Overall, members expressed strong support for the Society's work, recognising its effectiveness in addressing environmental issues.

Environmental priorities for the future

Members identified invasive weeds, inappropriate urban development and land use, declining water quality and feral animals, in that order, as the most pressing environmental threats facing the Blue Mountains. Climate change, threatened species and fire management were also recognised as significant challenges.

Looking ahead, members strongly supported environmental education, conservation advocacy and practical conservation programs as core Society activities. Bushwalking, youth engagement, the native plant nursery and citizen science were also identified as important ways of connecting people with conservation.

These findings suggest that members want BMCS to maintain its strong advocacy role while expanding opportunities for environmental learning, community participation and practical action.

Participation and volunteering

Although members expressed considerable interest in becoming more involved, many face practical barriers, particularly limited time, travel distances, accessibility and the timing of activities. Members suggested more flexible volunteering opportunities, including short-term projects, activities across different parts of the Mountains and opportunities that accommodate different abilities, interests and availability. There was also interest in clearer pathways into volunteering, better use of members' existing skills, mentoring, training and greater recognition of volunteer contributions.

An important finding is the gap between members' expectations of what BMCS should achieve and their reported levels of active participation and volunteering. While members strongly support practical conservation, environmental education and community events, considerably fewer report involvement in the activities required to organise and deliver these programs. For example, only 14.9 per cent of respondents reported participating in committees, subcommittees or working groups during the previous 12 months, while 11.9 per cent volunteered at events and 10.9 per cent at the nursery.

This highlights a distinction between providing activities and having the time, capacity or opportunity to help deliver them. This distinction is particularly important for strategic planning. The Society needs to balance members' aspirations with its capacity to deliver activities, while finding ways to make volunteering more accessible and rewarding.

Engaging younger and newer members

A recurring theme was the importance of attracting younger generations and creating opportunities for new members to become actively involved. Suggestions included stronger partnerships with schools, TAFE and universities, more family-friendly and youth-focused activities, and greater opportunities for younger people to contribute to decision-making. Environmental education and hands-on conservation were seen as particularly promising ways to develop the next generation of conservation advocates and leaders.

Communication and organisational capacity

Members highly value *Hut News* and *E-News* as sources of information about conservation issues and the Society's activities. Respondents also suggested improving external communication, community visibility and the use of contemporary communication platforms.

The survey highlighted the importance of effective volunteer coordination, transparent governance, respectful relationships and succession planning. Some members suggested that dedicated paid support could help strengthen organisational capacity and reduce reliance on a relatively small group of active volunteers.

What happens next?

The survey provides an important foundation for BMCS's current strategic planning process. It reinforces the importance of maintaining our core conservation purpose while exploring ways to broaden participation, strengthen partnerships and respond to emerging environmental challenges.

A key message is that members want BMCS to remain a strong and effective voice for conservation while becoming more inclusive, accessible and proactive in engaging the wider community. Achieving these aspirations will require careful consideration of the Society's volunteer capacity, organisational resources and priorities. The challenge is not simply to expand our activities, but to identify what we can realistically achieve, strengthen opportunities for meaningful participation and ensure that responsibilities are shared sustainably.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey. Please contact me if you have any questions, feedback or you'd like to get involved in the next steps.

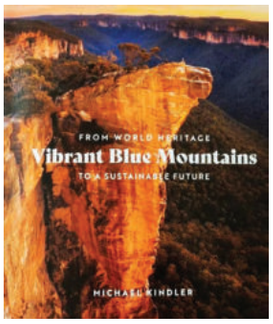
Annette Sartor
President – Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Join Blue Mountains Conservation Society

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

https://www.bluemountains.org.au

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Book review:

Vibrant Blue Mountains: From World Heritage to a Sustainable Future

Author: Michael Kindler

This is an engaging and visually pleasing book released to coincide with the anniversary of the region's UNESCO designation as world heritage. The photographs are beautiful and the landscapes stunning. The book's primary audience will be for visitors to the Blue Mountains, new residents and those who will value an informative yet concise account of the topics addressed.

In the book, Michael addresses the growing footprint of tourism, habitat loss, and invasive species. In doing so, he poses an essential question to the reader: *Are we doing enough to preserve this environment for future generations?*

He opens by honouring the traditional custodians of the land, acknowledging the deep cultural connection of the Darkinjung, Darug, Dharawal, Gundungurra, Wanaruah, and Wiradjuri peoples. This first chapter also includes details of the colonial history of the Blue Mountains.

Chapter 2 addresses the reasons for UNESCO's World Heritage listing and how the region's Outstanding Universal Value meets the selected criteria relating to biological diversity, threatened species and ongoing ecological and biological processes. This chapter also contains sections on the diverse flora and stunning geology of the park.

Chapter 3 includes notes on birds, local art and artists including both historical and more modern cases, while Chapter 4 introduces local mammalian biodiversity, lookouts with stunning views and various local walks suitable for most walkers.

In Chapter 5, Michael moves his focus onto reptiles and the urgent need to build a sustainable future for the World Heritage Area. Discussed here are the problems of inappropriate tourism, the threat from climate change and from invasive species. He looks at ongoing threats from bushfires and also issues concerning maintaining healthy waterways.

The last pages of the book are devoted to considering the "spirit of the Blue Mountains", stating that "For many Indigenous Australian cultures … the spirit is seen as a tangible, living presence that connects people to each other, to their ancestors and to the land." He goes on to discuss the concepts of "Rights of Nature", a sustainable future and natural capital. There are three pages of references where Michael has detailed his sources.

The book acts as both a celebratory keepsake and an urgent call to action.

Book reviewed by Annette Cam

The Lyrebird Festival – Megalong Valley

The Lyrebird Festival, **Thursday 12 November to Sunday 15 November,** celebrates the spectacular Megalong Valley with music, art, food and wine. The program brings together art, science and conservation relevant to both local and international topics. Participants will enjoy local culinary delights and intimate, world-class performances. **https://lyrebirdfestival.com/**

Hut News Trivia: Question 28

How many canyons are there in the Blue Mountains?

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

***Plant Local,* a new bush gardening resource for local residents:**
from page 6

We are fortunate to have three indigenous plant nurseries in the Blue Mountains: Australian Plant Society nursery, GWH, Glenbrook; Wildplant Rescue Nursery, Oak Street, Katoomba; Blue Mountains Conservation Society nursery, Blackheath growers market. Buy the plant species that occur naturally in your local area. Many Australian native plant species introduced to the Blue Mountains have proved to be just as weedy and environmentally damaging as various international species.

Plant Local is a valuable tool for gardeners developing or further enhancing an interest in growing locally indigenous vegetation. Congratulations to BMCC and all associated with this resource. *Plant Local* can be accessed at

https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/plant-local

Katoomba High School helps regenerate an endangered species



Zieria covenyi
(Cathy Cavanagh)

Shortly after the Black Summer bushfires of 2019–2020, the Blue Mountains Conservation Society (BMCS) became aware of the existence of two small colonies of a critically endangered plant species – *Zieria covenyi.*

Initially it was believed there were only 250 *Zieria covenyi* growing in the wild – a cluster on the Narrow Neck plateau that divides the Kedumba and Megalong valleys just to the south of Katoomba, and another cluster at Breakfast Creek in the Megalong Valley.

Cuttings of the plant had been cultivated by the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney and the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan, then taken to the BMCS native plant nursery to be grown on.

It was important to find suitable locations to grow this precious plant. Schools can be the safest places to grow plants of such special conservation significance, especially at the time of the Black Summer fires. Katoomba High's native plant garden, Birriban, is located within school grounds and is likely to be more protected from fires and macropods such as kangaroos and wallabies.

The then BMCS Education Officer, Cathy Cavanagh, and Katoomba High school students planted 24 *Zieria covenyi* plants. Subsequent visits to Birriban to monitor the plants and work with the students and their teachers were wonderful. In the aftermath of the fires and the threat of Covid19, the *Zieria covenyi* was a metaphor for survival.

Birriban proved to be an excellent site for this rare plant. Today they have grown to well over five feet in height and this spring have flowered spectacularly.

Katoomba High and the students and teachers involved deserve to be very proud of this achievement. Their role in this 'hands on' lesson of biodiversity and the regeneration of an endangered species is of immeasurable value in these critical times of climate change. *Zieria covenyi,* the little "pink star", is as safe as can be in your keep.

Cathy Cavanagh

Blackheath Growers Market

Sunday 8 November, 8 am to 12 noon
at the Blackheath Community Centre
just a short stroll from Blackheath railway station

Today, we're celebrating!

After more than a decade of campaigning, the Great Koala National Park has officially passed through NSW Parliament.

The park was a Labor election promise back in 2015, and the final bill was supported by the Greens, three Independents, and every member of the ALP and Liberals.

It is heartening to see people from across the political spectrum come together to support this game changing win for conservation. Why? **Because people across NSW love saving koalas and protecting our precious forests,** and those in power can see how important this is to their communities.

Yesterday, alongside my colleagues in the environment movement, I was in parliament handing out stuffed koalas and celebrating with everyone who voted "yes". It was inspiring to hear from people with very different political worldviews about why they supported the Bill, and to be joined by community members and nature lovers to watch the debate in the Legislative Council.

Clancy Barnard, Senior Forest Campaigner
Nature Conservation Council NSW
23 October 2026

Notice board at the Conservation Hut

Can you help?

The Society's notice board, in the foyer of the Hut, needs a volunteer who can maintain it.

You would be required to call in regularly (once a week), tidy it up, remove foreign material and add any new material.

Contact Annette Sartor
president@bluemountains.org.au
or leave a message on 0490 419 779

The deadline for December *Hut News* is
12 November
hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

About Jim Wallace, remembered by Jim Smith

I was sorry to hear of the death of Jim Wallace, who was an outstanding student during the years that I taught the Outdoor Guides Advanced Certificate at Katoomba TAFE. Jim loved having an audience when speaking or performing. The photo shows him reading a poem to fellow students 40 years ago. Also in the picture are Maria Ogilvie and Heather Mollenhauer.

Our Society has maintained an interest in Bruce's Walk since the 1970s, with the latest involvement being a campaign by our Land Use Subcommittee to ensure public access to the track.

This was described in *Hut News*, in the July 2023 issue. Jim Wallace was one of the volunteers who helped to clear the track in the mid-1980s.

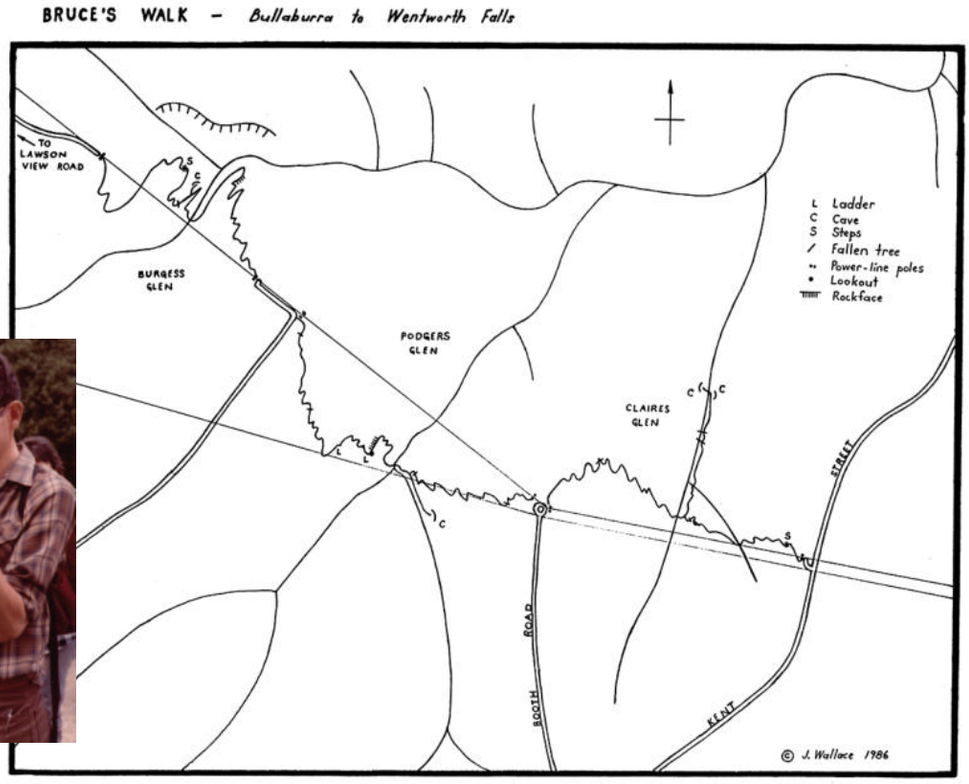
For one of his TAFE assignments, he mapped the section of Bruce's Walk between Bullaburra and Wentworth Falls. I don't know how he was able to depict each of the many zigzags with such accuracy, without using a GPS.

The map is superior to the one I published in my book *How to See the Blue Mountains.* Jim must have had a remarkable degree of spatial awareness to achieve this level of detail.

(Warning: the track is suitable for experienced walkers only.)

Editor's note:
Jim Wallace served as 2nd vice president and meetings convenor for the Conservation Society during his long residency of the Blue Mountains.





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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.

Nov 9 **Spit Bridge to Manly** 10 km one way. Lois and David **0427 184 165**
Nov 16 **Popes Glen and Pulpit Rock Lookout** 7 km in total (out and back). Barbara **0428 962 460**
Nov 23 **Wentworth Falls to Moya Point** 7 km approx, 260 descent. Marian **0411 658 562**
Nov 30 **Old Glenbrook Tunnel, Elizabeth Lookout, Knapsack Viaduct, Lapstone Zig Zag** 8 km approx. Ian **0417 677 483**
Dec 7 **Jack Evans Track – Erskine Creek and return** 6 km approx. Wayne and Mary **0407 643 512**

TUESDAY

Nov 10 **Kedumba Valley Road, Wentworth Falls. Locked gate to Cleary Memorial Lookout and return**. Grade 2, easy, 4 km, 120↓ 120↑, walk is steep in one section. Doug Nicholls **0455 850 753**
Nov 17 **Fairy Dell to Perch Ponds, Springwood**. Grade 3, 9 km return, 230m ↓, 230m ↑. Pam Stewart **0409 442 502**, Doug Nicholls **0455 850 753**
Nov 24 **Red Hands Cave and Campfire Creek loop track**. Grade 2, 8 km, 300 m ↓↑. Roger Blane, **0449 902 774**, Lynne Blane, **0407 498 397**
Dec 1 **Chatswood to Lane Cave and back to Chatswood**. Grade 2, approx. 6 km. Marilyn Savic **0409 924 663**, John Savic **0400 990 444**

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS are 2–3 hours and are conducted at a leisurely pace.
Coordinator: **Beverley Thompson 4757 2076 denfenella12@gmail.com**

Nov 12 **Undercliff Pass, Wentworth Falls**. Grade 2, Beverley **4757 2076**
Nov 19 **Bell Perimeter Walk to creek and pagoda platform**. Grade 2, Angela **0477 133 367**
Nov 26 **Ikara Head Track** 5.6 km. Elevation 160 m. Grade 2, Steven **0412 412 712**
Dec 3 **Darwins Walk, Wentworth Falls**. Grade 2, Mary **0410 691 396**
Dec 10 **Cahills Lookout to Peckmans Plateau, Katoomba**. Grade 1, Beverley **4757 2076**
Dec 17 **Christmas Picnic, Wilson Park, Lawson** 12 noon. Grade 1, Bring a plate to share. Beverley **4757 2076**

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.

Letter to the Editor:

Correction regarding Roberts Pass

I have been enjoying reading the series of extracts from my 'Blue Mountains Walking Track Heritage Study Historical Report' published in 1998. The September issue of *Hut News* contained the story of 'The Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Connection' to the names of some of our walking tracks. However, I later realised that the final sentence in that extract, which claimed that the Roberts Pass walking track in the Jamison Valley was named after Sir Alfred Roberts was incorrect.

The April 2017 issue of *Hut News* included my article 'The Story of Roberts Pass', which revealed that the track was named after Peter Henry Roberts, who was born in Wales in 1838 and died in Kiama in 1914. This miner is known to have been prospecting in the Valley of the Waters between 1890 and 1893. The pass would originally have been only a rough track to access the coal seam, but it was later upgraded for tourist use by the Wentworth Falls ranger Peter Mulheran and named after its discoverer.

The latest edition of the *Blue Mountains Geographical Encyclopaedia,* by Brian Fox, Michael Keats and John Fox, published in 2023, incorrectly claims that this track is named after another prospector Robert Henry Reynolds. The *Evening News* article of 1893, cited by the authors, includes the statement "we followed the track to Robert's Mine", with this spelling implying that it had been named after a man called Robert. It would have been unusual journalistic practice at that time to refer to a man only by his first name. However, there are two further references in this article with the correct spelling: "Roberts's mine", showing that it was named after a person with the surname Roberts.

This is confirmed by the other newspaper reference cited by the authors, in the *Lithgow Mercury* in 1898, in which the track is called "Roberts' Pass". The correct name for this now difficult to access historic walking track is 'Roberts's Pass' or 'Roberts' Pass.'

Jim Smith

Hut News Trivia: Answer to Question 28

There are over 900 identified and named canyons in the Blue Mountains. Generally called slot canyons which are a long, narrow and deep channel with sheer rock walls eroded into the sandstone.

They range from the easy accessible Grand Canyon at Blackheath to the Claustral Canyon near Mt Tomah which offers a challenging 700 metre multi-abseil descent for experienced canyoners.

A page for keen nature observers of all ages …

What to look for in the Blue Mountains



Bearded Dragon

Marilyn Pettitt photographed this eastern bearded dragon at Glenbrook. Bearded dragons can change colour when threatened or for camouflage.

The harsh, spiky appearance of these lizards belie their normally placid temperament. If approached in the wild, the bearded dragon's usual response is to freeze and rely on its camouflage. If further threatened they puff themselves up, extend the 'beard' under the throat and open the mouth wide to reveal the bright yellow lining. (Australian Reptile Park)

Adelina

Migrating honeyeaters

In mid-October, migrating honeyeaters had come over Hat Hill Road ridge, across the Popes Glen Creek gully, through a gap in the trees on the other side and continued along part of the quarry road (past my back gate), heading towards Govetts Leap Road ridge and further south.

There was the sound of numerous bird calls which I did not recognise and I tried to locate and identify them. Then I saw some individuals rising above the fence line and realised what they were and that they were flying low.

I managed to focus my eyes on one individual, very briefly. A small bird, its beak opening to call as it went, body bent to straighten in flight, intent on keeping up with the flock. I imagined that the little bird was enjoying the experience. *I know I did!*

Adelina



The first cicada. Koels and channel-billed cuckoos usually arrive in Blackheath around 1 October (as they did this year). Cicadas emerge around the same time. I found this one on my deck on 2 October.

PASSING MIST

Parched orchids smile to the passing mist,
Mist that's the memory of a vanished ocean,
Mist that's tears that have often fallen,
Gleaming on the rock.

Gleaming on the rock
That is the face you cannot remember.

Who is walking in the mist with their sandals in their hand?
Who is crouching to see the orchid smile?
Who pauses to hear the bracelet of notes
Thrown by the harmonica bird at the covered sun?

Whose voices are under the waterfall?
Whose voices are muffled by the mist?
Whose voices drift with the white mist
Passing, like the ghosts of ocean waves?

Denis Kevans (1939–2005)

Passing Mist was published first in *Hut News* in 1997. It was republished in *Hut News,* May 2003, when the editor wrote:

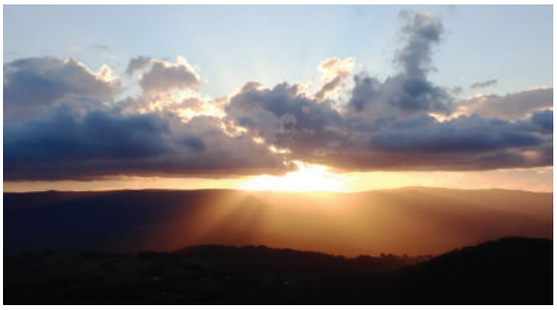
Most poets get their poetry inscribed on stone only after they've died but Australia's '*Poet Lorikeet*' and Blue Mountains Conservation Society member, Denis Kevans, has recently had the distinction of being inscribed at Echo Point – and the last time he was seen he was well and truly alive. A quote from Denis Kevans' poem, *Bushland Gardens*, shares a plaque with a quote from Henry Kendall and the poem *Passing Mist*, published in *Hut News* in January 1997, is inscribed on a piece of mountain sandstone. At its base is acknowledged "Denis Kevans 1997 *Hut News*".

On a very misty day, the Thursday Interpretive Nature Group visited Echo Point and part of the Grand Clifftop Walk. At Echo Point, the standing stones bearing the inscriptions, in 2003 newly cut mountain sandstone, are weathered and mottled with lichen patterns.

The best time to go to Echo Point to find the standing stones and read the inscriptions is early morning or late afternoon on a weekday or when it is misty or raining.

Adelina





Wind and weather make interesting cloud formations. Even when it is very misty or overcast in Blackheath, the setting sun and spectacular clouds can often be seen at Hargraves Lookout and Mount Blackheath, on the Shipley Plateau.

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

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