

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



'The Burning Season'

Award-winning documentary by Cathy Henkel
Narrated by Hugh Jackman



Dorjee Sun

'The Burning Season' is an acclaimed documentary about deliberately lit fires raging across Indonesia. The fires destroy rain forests, endanger wildlife, including orang-utans and contribute to climate change. The film also tells the story of Dorjee Sun, a young Australian carbon trading entrepreneur who goes in search of a solution.

'The Burning Season' takes us to the front lines of forest destruction in Indonesia and tracks the work of the carbon trading entrepreneur who decided to tackle the problem head on by setting up his own carbon trading scheme.

Come along and see 'The Burning Season' and discover why the film was screened to great acclaim at last year's Sydney Film Festival.

**Blue Mountains Conservation Society Monthly Meeting
The Conservation Hut, far western end of Fletcher St.
Wentworth Falls.**

**7:30 pm Friday, February 26, 2010
Visitors are very welcome.**

From the President

I hope that this edition of Hut News finds you well rested after the summer break.

I was pleased to spend a lot of time in the bush over January and, while much of this was bushwalking, there were some conservation issues to attend to.

The Society is opposed to plans by Sydney Water to discharge untreated sewage (5-8%) and stormwater down Fitzgeralds Creek in the lower mountains.

Well known to many members, this creek contains platypus and flows through beautiful Blue Gum Riverflat Forests.

We have approached our local member Phil Koperberg and are working hard to get Sydney Water to discharge in an alternative creek that already receives overflows and is not as environmentally sensitive.

See full article on page 3.

Another issue affecting the bush is the construction of downhill bike tracks on the Eastern escarpment. Recent tracks have been built through endangered ecological communities and a bush regeneration site. This is quite organised work by clubs.

The Society is not opposed to bike riding on 4WD roads through the bush, but is very concerned about construction of jumps and tracks on steep surfaces, causing erosion.

On a more positive note, Society member Joan Gahl has been named "Citizen of the Year" for the Blue Mountains in recognition of her numerous volunteering activities. Joan has been a long time volunteer in our Nursery and acts as relieving manager when Kevin Bell is away. She is well known for her energy and good humour.

She is an inspiration to all of us.

Congratulations Joan!

Tara Cameron

Join the campaign for No New Coal Power in NSW

The Greens have launched a campaign to stop new coal-power in NSW. Join the Greens and environment and climate action groups around NSW to help create a clean energy future.

The NSW Government has plans for two new coal-fired power stations, one near Lithgow and one in the Hunter Valley.

The two plants as planned would increase NSW's total emissions by 15%. These plants, if built will lock NSW into a fossil-fuel future and undermine growth in the renewables sector. This will destroy the opportunity for new, long-term jobs in a clean energy future.

New coal power will be an environmental and economic disaster for NSW.

These new plants would be expensive and unnecessary. NSW does not need a new baseload power plant. Energy efficiency measures such as solar hot

water, insulation and improved building design standards and decentralised renewable energy options like photovoltaics will go a long way to reducing baseload energy needs.

If the NSW Government is serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions to a sustainable level, it must prohibit new coal-fired power stations in NSW and back up the prohibition with a plan to phase out coal-fired power plants and invest in large-scale renewable energy.

Write to NSW Premier Keneally,
Governor Macquarie Tower 1
Farrer Place, Sydney NSW 2000
Telephone: (02) 9228 5239 Fax:
(02) 9228 5239 or go to Greens'
online campaign page
(<http://www.johnkaye.org.au/campaigns/energy/no-new-coal-power-no-electricity-privatisation-2/>) to send your 'No New Coal Power' message.

"Hut News", the newsletter of
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HUT NEWS EDITORIALS

The deadline for the next issue of Hut News
is 20 February 2010

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

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PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

BUSHCARE GROUP

Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group
meets second Saturday of each month, 9am
till noon. Tools and gloves are available.
Bring a drink, a snack and a hat. New
members are always welcome. Phone Karen
on 4757 1929.

Nursery News

Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager

Nurseries re-open:

After a short closure over the holiday period, our Blackheath and Lawson nurseries re-opened on 12th and 13th January respectively. We are well-stocked with a good variety of lovely, local plants at bargain prices suitable for your garden. If you can't come to our weekday morning nurseries (Tuesday at Blackheath, Wednesday at Lawson) look for us at the Lawson Magpie Markets on Sunday 21st February.

Council's Carbon Offset Program:

Following on from last year's successful carbon offset program, Blue Mountains City Council is, once again, joining with us to make free trees and shrubs available to residents and community groups within the Blue Mountains. This year there is a more diverse selection of local native plants including a greater number of smaller species. Up to 3 000 plants will be made available free-of-charge through a voucher system. Private residents will be entitled to 5 trees and not-for-profit groups up to 50 on a first come, first served basis. Be quick as the vouchers were rapidly expended last time!

Starting on Monday 22nd February, vouchers will be available from Council Libraries in Blackheath, Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth Falls and at Council Offices in Katoomba and Springwood.

The vouchers may be redeemed at our Blackheath and Lawson nurseries, and at the Magpie Markets. During March and April, we will open our Lawson nursery on Saturday mornings specifically for this purpose. For further information contact Blue Mountains City Council on 4780 5000 or visit the Council's website at bmcc.nsw.gov.au

New additions:

From time to time we try to expand our species list while deleting some plants that have not sold over the past years.

From March we will have two new

local wattles available, *Acacia implexa* (Hickory) and *Acacia trinervata* (Three-veined Wattle). The former is a common, very hardy, long-lived small tree suitable as a wind-break. Frost tolerant, it will grow in dappled shade or full sun. The leaves have been used for dyeing, the bark for tanning and the wood is very strong and similar to the more familiar "Blackwood" (*Acacia melanoxylon* which we also stock). Clusters of pale yellow flower heads of 30-50 appear January-March.

The characteristic three veins in the phyllodes make *Acacia trinervata* readily identifiable. It occurs around and south of Glenbrook, is common in the nearby National Park and, surprisingly, there is a local community at Hawkesbury Heights. It is a hardy shrub, 1-2m tall, adaptable to a range of conditions and produces large, bright-yellow flower balls from March to June. It is found mostly in open forest on sandy soils.

These two are just some of the over 30 species of wattles we offer and by having a good selection in your garden, you can be guaranteed of having some flowers all through the year. The insects and birds will love you for it!

Kevin Bell.

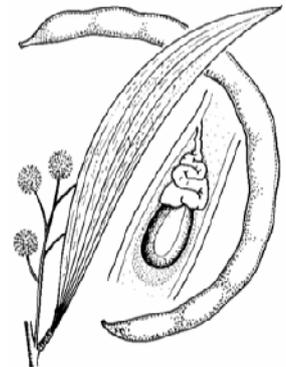


Illustration: *Acacia implexa*
(Hickory Wattle)

NEW SOUTH WALES
FLORA ONLINE

<http://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/>

Do you have any forestry tubes or super-tubes or small (less than 1 litre) round pots sitting idle at home? Then why not bring them to our nurseries or the Magpie Markets and we will give you 10cents off your next purchase for each intact pot or tube. Council's recycling service rejects these and, tragically, they end up as landfill whereas we can put them to good use, again and again. It's good for you, good for us and good for the environment.

Bushwalkers and bush carers - anybody who has a weekend, a day or a few hours to spare: Help to continue the tradition of caring for the magnificent Grose Valley.



THE GREAT GROSE WEED WALK IS ON AGAIN!

March 2010 Program:

Acacia Flat: two days weeding and wading along Govetts Creek. . Camp overnight Acacia Flat..
Saturday 6 March to Sunday 7 March
Contact: Vanessa Richardson 4787 3112

Katoomba Creek:
Sunday 14th March, 9am to 4 pm
Contact: Lyndal Sullivan 4780 5528

Wentworth Creek Swampcare:
Tuesday 16th March, 9am to 3 pm
Contact: Michael Hensen (BMCC) 4780 5471

Braeside Blitz:
Sunday 24th March, 9am to 3 pm
Contact: Vanessa Richardson 4787 3112

**Govetts Leap: Weeding with a View
(And a BIG morning tea!)**
Wednesday 31st March, 9am to 1 pm
Contact: Vanessa Richardson 4787 3112

For more information contact:

Vanessa Richardson, National Parks and Wildlife Service,
Ranger for the Grose Valley: 4787 3112,

Lyndal Sullivan, Blue Mountains City Council, Bushcare
Co-ordinator: 4780 5528.

Platypus at risk in Fitzgeralds Creek

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is urging Sydney Water to urgently reconsider its plan to use Fitzgeralds Creek in Springwood for the discharge of untreated stormwater and sewerage. The discharge point is just below the Council Depot near the Buckland Retirement Village. This becomes Fitzgeralds Creek and flows on into Sun Valley, Warrimoo and down to the Nepean River.

Fitzgeralds Creek is a very popular location for walking dogs, bushwalking, mountain biking and as a play area for children. The Long Angle Gully Bushcare Group has also been removing weeds along the Creek for some time.

"Fitzgeralds Creek looks green, lush and beautiful" said Bob Cantwell, a member of the Society living in Springwood, "And so it is now. It also passes through endangered ecological communities which could be affected by this discharge."

The Society is not sure if landholders living near the Creek have been informed. Buckland Village seems to have been notified but Society members spoke to a woman living about 70 metres from the discharge point who knew nothing about it.

"The discharge will be small to begin with" said Tara Cameron "These are the one in every 18 month releases. The one in 17 year releases will involve a large amount of water flowing at almost double the rate that usually flows in the Nepean at Penrith Weir. It could also smell."

Sydney Water, through its Sewerfix has done a Review of Environment Factors which they were willing to read to Society members but not provide a copy. The document only seemed to describe the impact of the discharges on the area within 250 metres of the initial discharge point. This ignores the downstream impacts where large sections of alluvial deposits in the form of soft creek banks could be washed away and nutrients allowed to sit in pools and support weed outbreaks. This would destroy the many years of volunteer work over the years in removing weeds from the area.

There have also many sightings of platypus along the Creek. Platypus like large pools but some pools have already silted up. The Sydney Water plan could make their situation much worse by bringing sediment to the Creek to exacerbate the problem.

Karleen Waldron, a local landholder and bush regenerator has seen many platypus along the Creek "The baby platypus could be caught in the stormwater as they emerge from their burrows" said Kathleen "This could kill them."

"The worst thing about this is that Sewerfix has identified an alternative location" said Tara Cameron "That alternative location is the obvious solution, an unnamed creek east of the sewerage treatment plant at Winmalee. This is a much shorter creek that already receives such overflows and is not surrounded by houses."



Photo: Tara and Elata Cameron
beside Fitzgerald Creek, January 2010.

BMCC Review of LEP 91 - You can help to get it right!

Some of you may be aware that Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) is currently undertaking a review of Local Environment Plan (LEP) 91.

I am involved in a project, on behalf of Blue Mountains Conservation Society, looking to obtain from the residents, their knowledge on the vegetation in the Mountains.

You may know or have an inkling that some areas are not quite right when it comes to how they are mapped in the Council records. Or you may be just fascinated with maps and vegetation communities and would just like to have a look. If that is the case, then you may be able to help.

So bear with me as I explain.

Which are LEP91 Areas?

The Local Government Area (LGA) is generally split into two groups. LEP2005 covers the built up areas and LEP91 covers the bigger areas outside the LEP2005 group, e.g. more rural type land, but not always. I will make some generalisations throughout this explanation, but it will cover the basic concept. LEP91 areas can be seen on BMCC Interactive Maps website under "LEP Zoning" and "Environmental" headings. More on this later.

Importance of the Project:

BMCC currently has maps of the whole of the Mountains area it governs. These maps show what can be done on various parcels of land, what significant vegetation exists and water courses, amongst other things.

My area of interest is the incorrect mapping of the significant vegetation and water courses, whether it is missing altogether or not shown to its full extent.

It is important to ensure these significant areas are protected for the future. More pressure can be placed on Council if an inappropriate development is applied for and the mapping already shows significant vegetation or a watercourse and it's buffers already exist on the land in question.

As with all these projects there is a time limit, initially it had to be done by 31 January. It has now extended to the end of February, but that is the time I have to have my work to BMCC. I need any information from you as soon as possible.

What you can do:

Think about your own area or areas you are very familiar with. Do they or do you think they may have significant vegetation on them? Is there a watercourse? Do you have a feeling that this area may not be mapped properly? Or the watercourse doesn't show on the maps or doesn't extend to its extremity? Go with your gut feeling!

Now go to the maps.

How you can do it

Go to the BMCC website. Near the upper left is the Interactive Map tag. At the next screen after reading the Disclaimer, if you need to, click on **View Interactive Maps** at the left.

Select an address near the areas you want to look at and submit it.

At the next screen select **View Maps**

Once at the next screen there is much you can do. You can zoom in and out, which is handy if you aren't quite in the area you want to be. You can select other parcels of land to get closer to your required destination. And you can select various map views.

The important maps for this exercise are:

Topographic Map – most significantly shows the water courses.

LEP Zoning – this shows the various zones under different LEPs. It isn't always easy to distinguish the different zones due to the colours used. If the area you are concerned about ends up being in LEP2005, don't worry, I am happy to take information on that also. We can advise BMCC of these in a separate listing.

LEP Protected Areas – shows the current protected areas for the LEPs. It also shows the LEP91 areas and are generally easier to identify.

Environmental – the most important – shows ecological buffers, significant vegetation and more. It also shows LEP91 land but at times can be overlaid with significant vegetation colours.

Using a mix of the maps above you can get a feel if the area you are concerned about is correct or not. If you are still not sure, send it to me anyway with an explanation and I will look at it and get back to you.

Getting the info to me

I really don't care how I get the information. My email address, phone numbers and postal address are below. Send me an email with words explaining the area and the concern. Photocopy maps and circle/highlight the area of concern, provide a brief explanation and post it to me. Topographic map grid references are always handy too.

I (and Council) just need to be able to identify the land in question.

Also remember if the area turns out to be an error in LEP2005, send it to me anyway.

Well that's about it. Sorry this is so long, but it was the only way to explain what is going on.

Please remember to feel free to email or phone me if you would like any further information.

Lachlan Garland

Email: Lachlan.a.garland@bigpond.com

Phone (02) 4757 1929

Mobile 0415 317 078

Address: 69 Shortland Street,
Wentworth Falls NSW 2782

Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

As 2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity, it's a fitting time to consider the diversity of our birdlife and think about what the future might hold. In the last 20-30 years we've seen dramatic changes in the birdlife that inhabits our gardens, towns and local bushland. The most noticeable changes are the birds that have increased or moved into our area - usually the larger, more aggressive and adaptable species. But such changes reflect something deeper and often go hand in hand with losses of other species. Unfortunately the smaller or more specialised birds are disappearing almost unnoticed.

I wonder what a walk through the bush will be like in 10, 20 or 50 years time. Let's imagine it's 2020 and we're walking on a track somewhere near Leura or Blackheath. The first thing we might notice is a cacophony of loud bird calls. Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Rainbow Lorikeets and Noisy Miners dominate the bush. A few cheeky Pied Currawongs follow us for a hand-out and a Red Wattlebird swoops across the track in front of us, but is soon chased away by the miners. Further down the track, we round a bend to find the huge mound of a Brush-turkey as the bird itself appears out of nowhere. We've walked for two hours and so far have seen no small birds.

Reaching a lookout, we gaze down on tall forests of dead and dying Blue Gums. (Is this a result of drought, more frequent bushfires or an abundance of psyllids "farmed" by the ever-increasing Bell Miners?) We sit and reflect on the variety of birds we used to watch along this beautiful walk. We lament the fact that we haven't seen any Flame or Scarlet Robins for several years, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos are a rare sight and we no longer seem to come across Gang-gang Cockatoos. The busy little parties of Sittellas have disappeared. Koels now keep us awake all year, but we miss the incredible flocks of needletails riding the storm fronts in summer. We remember with nostalgia when tiny thornbills, fairy-wrens and finches were common.

A depressing scene indeed. Of course, no-one really knows what next year, let alone 2020 holds, but if we pay attention to what nature is telling us and work together to address the many threats to biodiversity, the picture will be much rosier. Healthy diverse ecosystems can both mitigate and reduce the effects of climate change. In 2009, bird observers recorded 179 species in the Blue Mountains. Let's make it a priority to be able to record at least that many in 2020.

Carol Proberts (origma@westnet.com.au)

"A blight on us for a perfectly fruity fetish"

Next time you're sorting through the tomatoes at your local greengrocer or supermarket, think about this! What happens to the less attractive fruit?

In an article in the Sydney Morning Herald, January 21, 2010 Chris Middendorp writes:

"When it comes to the critical problems facing humanity, there is one issue that does not command our attention the way it should, but in its own quiet way is every bit as compelling and troublesome as climate change or the global financial crisis. It's our flagrant abuse of fruit and vegetables.....

For some years, the major supermarkets have decreed that the fruit and vegetables they sell must meet stringent standards of appearance, or no

entry. Although this quest for perfect-looking produce is driven by what customers want, it raises some serious agricultural, not to mention ethical, problems. ... Consumer expectations were unrealistic and growers are going broke.

The problem is simply stated: people only want to buy produce that looks attractive. Any fruit and veg with a few blemishes or a slightly unorthodox shape are shunned. In some cases, growers have had whole crops rejected by supermarket buyers.

The banana provides an instructive example. In Queensland, Australian Banana Growers Council chief executive Tony Heidrich recently admitted to a high level of wastage At least 100,000 tonnes or bananas are deemed not

attractive enough for public consumption and are sent to the shredder and buried.

Unattractive fruit won't sell. Customers will only take home the perfect specimens. Fruit that fails the appearance test is rejected, thrown away or ploughed back into the ground. **This happens to up to 25 per cent of all produce.**

When you consider how many people on earth are starving, and that industries are looking to minimise carbon footprints, it is totally unforgivable to throw away carefully grown and tended food just because it isn't pretty enough."

See the full article and comments at (<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/a-blight-on-us-for-a-perfectly-fruity-fetish-20100120-mlov.html>)

Membership Application Form

(Use capitals please—even for email address)

Name(s) 1.
2.
3.

Address:
.....PC

Phone(s)

Email

MEMBERSHIP FEES (please circle one item)

Single \$25 Concession (Senior/Student)\$15
Household \$30 Concession (Senior/Student)\$20
Corporate (open to negotiation) \$100

Bushwalkers only.:
(\$20 per walker per annum) \$.....

Donation (tax-deductible) \$.....

TOTAL AMOUNT INCLUDED \$.....

Note: All fees include GST at the relevant rate.

Would you like to be involved in any of the following activities or working groups? (Please underline): Land use/development issues; Environmental Education; Threatened species issues; Web or database management; Plant nursery assistance; Bushcare; Publicity/photography; Water quality/sourcing studies; Society administration.

I/We agree to support the aims and objectives of the Society as set out on reverse side of this membership application:

Please sign if named above.

Signature(s) 1.
2.
3.

ENQUIRIES: Phone (02 4757 1872

Email: membership@bluemountains.org.au

Please cut out and forward this form with your cheque or money order to:

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls NSW 2782

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

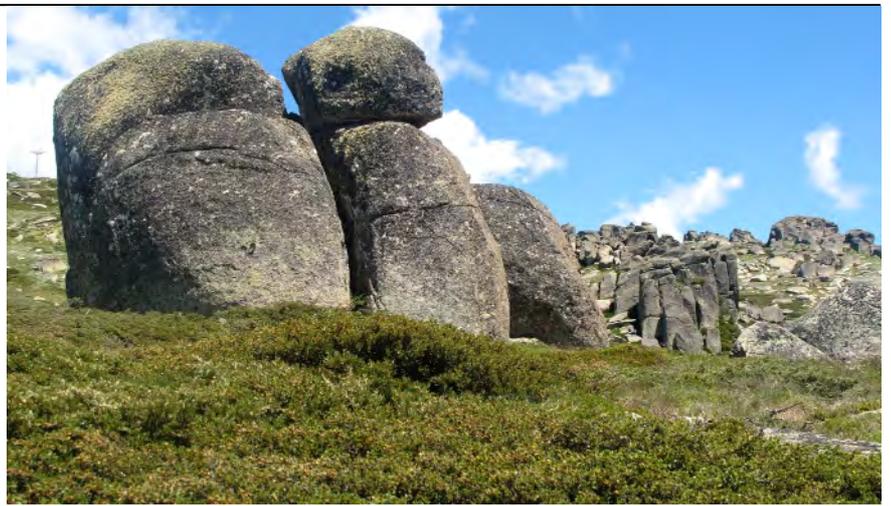
Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community organisation working to achieve the preservation and regeneration of the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

The Society believes that World Heritage status provides an opportunity for local community members to become custodians of the unique biodiversity and scenery of the Blue Mountains.

The Mission of the Society is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains.

The Aims and Objectives of the Society are to:

- Disseminate and foster an understanding of the ideals of Conservation.
- Promote the need for ecological sustainability.
- Protect the natural environment—flora, fauna, habitat, water, land and air.
- Actively oppose those human activities which degrade or destroy the natural environment.
- Repair the adverse effects of human activities upon the environment.
- Encourage the love of the natural environment by conducting a regular program of bushwalks.
- Increase the pool of expert knowledge about the natural environment, through meetings, excursions, research and other activities.
- Provide information to the public on matters of Conservation, especially through the Conservation Hut at the Valley of the Waters, Wentworth Falls.
- Maintain close and friendly relations with like-minded groups.



Observing Nature in the Snowy Mountains

Christine Davies

In January 2010 the interpretive bushwalkers and other members of the Society spent a week at Perisher Valley in the Snowy Mountains - 14 people including two (grand) children, Oskar and Brodie.

I have not seen the Snowy Mountains in winter, but can imagine how beautiful they must be, blanketed in snow. In summer there are masses of wildflowers, including white, yellow, orange and mauve daisies. Lovely are the twisted Snow Gums and lichen-patterned granite boulders.

Most commonly seen birds were Little Ravens, found around the lodges and near the roads, road kill perhaps a large part of their diet. Little birds near the Perisher lodge included White-browed Tree Creepers and pretty Flame Robins. There were lots of rabbits and some hares. Several Huntsman Spiders had taken up residence in the lodge.

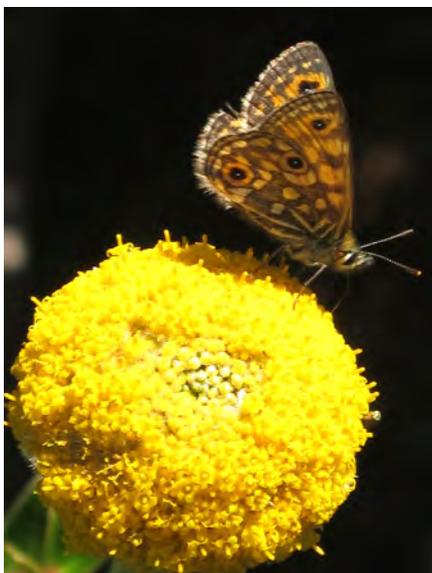
We saw kangaroos, a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles, and an Emu. Unlike his plain brown cousins in the west, this Emu's head and neck were a darker colour than his body, a white collar at the base of his long neck.

At Charlotte's Pass a green beetle was feeding on the nectar of a white snow daisy. Short-horned grasshoppers were also on the white daisies, eating the flowers. Trout jumped in Rainbow Lake, perhaps catching flies - hopefully the same species that was feeding on us.

I didn't attempt the long walks to the Blue Lake and Mount Kosciuszko, so my experience of the high country was at Thredbo, above the chair lift. Here we enjoyed a cup of coffee in the highest restaurant in Australia, 1930 metres! It is beautiful country. Low-growing, tough, heath-like shrubs and snow grasses, and no trees. Views that go on forever, rugged rocks, wildflowers, remnant patches of snow stained brown by last autumn's dust storms, little rivulets of water from the melting snow meandering through the low vegetation. A Spotted Alpine Xenica Butterfly was feeding on the nectar of a yellow button daisy.

The Mountain Pygmy Possum was thought extinct until 1966. Before Europeans brought cattle to graze on the high country the Mountain Pygmy Possum (weighing around 45 grams) was the heaviest animal to live in these delicate ecosystems. Imagine! Little animals like the Mountain Pygmy Possum, native rats and Antechinus survive the winter in spaces between the ground and the snow where they can move and search for food. During the coldest part of the season some animals (including the Mountain Pygmy Possum) hibernate or go into torpor.

Photos: (top) granite rocks in the high country above Thredbo. (left) Spotted Alpine Xenica Butterfly on yellow button daisy. (right) "Watching you watching me" A grasshopper hides from the camera.



Grand Canyon Track closed

Due to track restoration works the Grand Canyon track is completely **CLOSED from January 11 until** further notice. There is no access for walkers from either end of the track and no access to the Grose Valley from Evans Lookout via Grand Canyon.

Current works will be completed by end of June 2010.

Information about The Hut

Joanne Ellem is writing a book partly based on a WWII teenager's links with the Blue Mountains and particularly with the Conservation Hut/ tearooms. Joanne's grandparents and great grandparents were Shoebridges who ran the tearooms for some years. She would like to get any information available about the tearooms, including pictures/ photos.

Can anyone help with any info? Joanne's phone number is 9868 3477, and email joanneellem@gmail.com.

Healthy Catchments Strategy

The Sydney Catchment Authority has released its draft Healthy Catchment Strategy 2009-2012 for public exhibition. The strategy identifies SCA's rectification and preventative priorities in the drinking water catchments over three years, and the range of activities it will undertake to meet these priorities.

The public exhibition for the Strategy is scheduled from 18 January to 5 March 2010.

The Strategy document is available at www.sca.nsw.gov.au The annual Healthy Catchments Program and related technical documentation for the Catchment Decision Support System, which support the Strategy, are also available on the website.

Welcome to new members

Peter Evans, Crows Nest
Margaret Paton, Bullaburra
Neo Paton, Bullaburra
Mandy McAlister, Katoomba
Warren McAlister, Katoomba
Helen Clear, Springwood

Down the Wallaby Track — a backward glance, with John Low

THE MOST LUXURIOUS OF SHOWER BATHS

For the family of geologist, Prof. T.W. Edgeworth David, summer in late 19th century Woodford meant a short walk from their holiday cottage through heat-scented bush to the pool at Mabel Falls. The children learnt to swim in its deep, clean water and hunted crayfish on its sandy bottom. The Professor's daughter, Mary, wrote in later life of family picnics there and the exotic eleven year old "Fijian princess" who came with them to the Mountains one summer in the 1890s. "Elenoa seemed to be just as comfortable under water as above it, and was an expert fisherwoman ... She would emerge with one crayfish in her teeth and another in her hand. I can well recall her beaming smile as she shook the water from her fuzzy dark hair."*

It is probable that tracks into this area date back into Aboriginal time and that access to the waterfall by Europeans followed soon after the construction of an inn on the nearby Western Road in the early 1830s. Known originally as the Woodman and later as the King's Arms, this inn was a popular stopping place for travelers until the construction of the Western Railway in 1867. Following the inn's closure, businessman and amateur astronomer, Alfred Fairfax, purchased the property and converted it into a private residence he called Woodford House. It was Fairfax who more formally developed a walking track to the falls (and beyond) and created the pool, lined with dressed stone blocks, he named for his youngest daughter, Angelina Mabel (1866-1964).

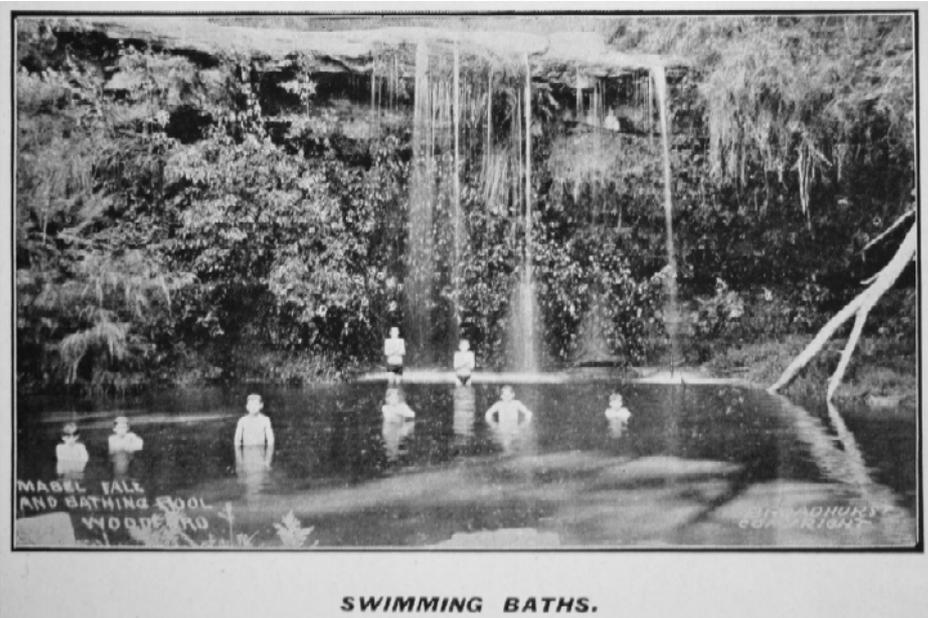
In the 1880s, when Woodford House was operating as a guesthouse, the "safe bathing place for ladies and children" at Mabel Falls found a key place in its advertising. In January 1887 a visitor wrote in glowing terms of the beauty, size and cleanliness of the pool and the abundance of crayfish. "The spray from the falls", he said, "affords the most luxurious of shower baths..." Later, when the property was taken over by the Woodford Academy in 1907, the schoolboys were encouraged to run down to the pool (and back) for an early pre-breakfast swim.

Today Mabel Falls is the first of several waterfalls (including another bearing the name of Fairfax's eldest daughter Edith) on the walking track named for the astronomical station Fairfax allowed on his property to observe the Transit of Venus in 1874. The track is the result of a restoration project carried out in the early 1990s in which our own organisation (then known as the Upper BM Conservation Society) was involved and even features a small bridge bearing the Society's name. Though the pool is now silted and degraded and the stone blocks scattered, with some used to form a path through the muddy access, Mabel Falls is still worth a visit, a cool fern-filled place away from the sun's heat and full of memories.

*Mary Edgeworth David, *Passages of Time: An Australian Woman 1890-1974*, UQP, 1975

John Low (johnlow@iprimus.com.au)

Underneath is a photograph from an old postcard of Mabel Falls.
(Woodford Academy Archives).



BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING ACTIVITIES

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. The BMCS Bushwalking Guide which explains the numbered grades can be found on the Society's website www.bluemountains.org.au or can be posted on request. For more information call Liz van Reyswoud on 4757 2694, email bushwalks@bluemountains.org.au or write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782. **Late changes to the program will be published on the website.**

SATURDAY WALKS: Usually a full day longer walk at a faster pace. Before attending ring the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Jim Percy 4758 6009 or email jp34@tpg.com.au

Date	Details	Contact	Meet at	(km)	Grade	Map
Feb 13	Murphy's Glen Turpentine Track , swim if warm - track has some scrambling.	Bill 4758 8545	Woodford Station carpark south side, 8.50 am	5	2/3	Jamison
Feb 20	Frederica Falls, Empire Pass	Peter 4751 9637	Lawson Station carpark, 8.30 am	5		Katoomba
Feb 27	Porters Pass - Historic track built in 1886 - as a way from Blackheath to Kanimbla valley	Bob 4757 2694	Blackheath Station CP, 8.30 am	5	2/3	Katoomba
Mar 6	Mount Solitary slopes. Golden Stairs to start and finish.	Bill 4758 8545	Gearins Hotel (Katoomba) CP 8.25 am	14	3	Katoomba/Jamison
Mar 13	Nellies Glen and Devils Hole - steep descent and ascent - this walk had to be cancelled on Nov 21 last due to NP closure.	Ros 4733 3880	Gearins Hotel (Katoomba) CP, 8.30am	8	3	Katoomba

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS: Short Day walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of an average fitness. Bring morning tea and lunch and adequate water. The Group Co-ordinator is Maurice Kerkham, 4739 4942, email mauricekerkham@hotmail.com

Date	Details	Grade	Contact	Meet
Feb 8	Govett's Leap to Pulpit Rock. Spectacular valley views.	2	Mary 4757 4569	Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre, 9am.
Feb 15	National Pass, Wentworth Falls. One of the best!	3	Maurice 4739 4942	Wentworth Falls railway carpark, 9.30 am. Car pool.
Feb 22	Pierce's Pass to Grose River and return. Descend into Grose Valley.	3	Ros 4733 3880	Mount Victoria Station 9.45 am. (car pool).
Mar 1	Euroka to Nepean River. Walk to river, possible swim.	2	Heather 4739 1493	Glenbrook Station car park, 9.30am
Mar 8	Balls Head to Berry Island. Lower North Shore walk.	1	Maurice 4739 4942	Top of escalators, Central, 9.30 am.
Mar 15	Botanical Gardens, Mrs. Macquarie's Chair. City walk, harbour views.	1	Maurice 4739 4942	Top of escalators, Central, 9.30 am.

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS: Walks of 2-3 hours conducted at a leisurely pace to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, adequate water and lunch if noted. Group Co-ordinator is Simone Bowskill, 4757 3416, email simbow@tpg.com.au

Feb 18	Undercliff/Overcliff walk, Wentworth Falls. Some steps. Can be wet underfoot	2	Maurice 4739 4942	Wentworth Falls commuter car park (near the clock), 9.30am.
Feb 25	Picnic at Wentworth Falls Lake Bring a picnic lunch.	1	Marie 4787 1257	Wentworth Falls commuter car park (near the clock) 11.30 am.
March 4	South Lawson Waterfalls. Circuit bush track past waterfalls, some steps.	2	Marie 4787 1257	Cnr. Honour Ave and Orient Street, Lawson. NOTE NEW MEETING PLACE.
Mar 11	BUS TRIP to Dunn's Swamp. Cost \$10. Bookings Simone 4757 3416	2	David 4757 3416	Council Depot, South Street, North Katoomba 8 am SHARP.

2010: International Year of Biodiversity: a celebration of the variety of life on Earth

SHARE YOUR STORY

Human activity is causing the diversity of life on Earth to be lost at a rapidly increasing rate. Only last year the IUCN's Red List warned that more than 22 per cent of Australia's mammals were threatened with extinction, with habitat loss and degradation the number one threat to all endangered animals.

Biodiversity losses are irreversible, impoverish us all and damage the life support systems we rely on every day.

The United Nation's 2010 International Year of Biodiversity

provides a great opportunity for the Nature Conservation Council and its member groups to celebrate our hard work protecting the environment of NSW, and focus on greater action to safeguard our irreplaceable natural places and wildlife.

We would like to feature stories about the positive campaigns and programs working towards protecting or restoring biodiversity in Australia in upcoming editions of Nature News Online and on the nature.nsw.org website. Please email jgarcia@nccnsw.org.au or call (02) 9262

2641 for more information.

Given the global and local spotlight on biodiversity throughout 2010, there's never been a more important time to become a VOICE FOR NATURE.

Nature News Online is the fortnightly newsletter of the National Conservation Council of NSW covering the most current environmental campaigns, recent success stories, policy issues, submissions, green jobs and events, and green businesses.