



From the President

September is a lovely time to be outdoors and our annual picnic is a great way to meet other members of the Society. Importantly, the picnic provides an opportunity to announce the winners of our **Sustainable Living Competition** which has been running for the past year. This rewards the household who has made the greatest reduction in energy and water use. We have some great prizes to present (thanks to Aussie Solar, Go Enviro Plumbing and the Society).

On the environmental front, I still have no news to report on our case against Delta Electricity for alleged pollution of the upper Cocks River (high levels of salts and metals). The Society was successful in being granted a 'Protective Costs Order' to limit the costs of running the case in the Land and Environment Court. Delta appealed against this decision and we are still waiting to find out the results of the appeal. In the meantime, the Society is examining the implications of some changes to Delta's Environment Protection Licence.

Finally, some sad news. Margaret Withington, a much loved member of the Society passed away last month. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge her contribution to our nursery and other activities. We will miss her. Tara Cameron

Monthly meetings and other events

Over a hundred people turned up at the Wentworth Falls School of Arts to see a slide presentation and talk by Carol Proberts and Jill Dark. Both had travelled to the inland to witness the desert coming to life after Queensland rains brought flood waters to the rivers in the Channel Country and the Cooper's Creek area.

Carol talked about the birds who arrived in their thousands to breed. It is a mystery how they know to come. She showed slides of some of the amazing birds. Jill talked about the plants and showed us slides of some of the beautiful inland wildflowers whose seeds stay in the soil for years and come to life when the water comes.

There will be no monthly meeting in September. Instead, please come to our annual picnic which will be held on **Sunday 26 September**. (see the box on this page)

Last year's picnic was a great success. It was nice to be able to meet and talk to other members of the Society, and it was great fun watching the kids and bigger kids join in the tug-a-war and sack races. Thanks to the Gang Gangs for again coming along to provide lunchtime music.

And a reminder, keep a note in your diary about our Bush Dance to celebrate 10 years of Blue Mountains World Heritage. It will be held at the Mid Mountains Community Centre on **Saturday 27 November**, starting at 6pm.

See you at the picnic. Christine.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society
FAMILY PICNIC
SUNDAY , 26 SEPTEMBER, 2010
11 am to 3 pm
Wilson Park, Wentworth Falls
(Corner Great Western Highway and Falls Road)

Lunchtime music by the
Gang Gang Bush Orchestra

Come along for a day of fun.

Bring the family ... bring a friend ...

Meet other members of the society

Activities include sack races for the kids (and kids at heart), tug of war, a bushwalk down Darwin's walk.

BARBECUES PROVIDED

BYO food and drinks, picnic blankets, chairs, etc.

PLUS

Sustainable Living Competition Prize presentation

To the household/s who have made the greatest reduction in their energy and water use during the two year period of the competition.

Representatives from
Aussie Solar and Go Enviro Plumbing
will be there to present their prizes.

.For more information contact Tara
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Phytophthora workshops

Zoe-Joy Newby, PhD Candidate
The University of Sydney.

Saturday **18 September**, Wentworth Falls School of Arts, 10 am to 11:30am

Sunday **19 September**, Warrimoo Citizens Hall, 10am to 11:30am

Both workshops will cover the same content including an introduction in **Phytophthora cinnamomi and its significance in Australian natural ecosystems**, how local community members can take precautions when dealing with Phytophthora in natural areas, the Dieback Project and how community members can get involved. Light refreshments will be provided and a free sampling kit will be given to all participants as long as stocks last.

"Hut News", the newsletter of
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HUT NEWS EDITORIALS

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

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BUSHCARE GROUP

The 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

Plant Sales: With the approach of warmer weather, one's thoughts turn to gardening again and we will be opening our Lawson nursery on Saturday mornings in September to cater for, what we hope will be, a demand for lovely, local plants for your garden. They have survived the rigours of a Mountains winter and have, therefore, adjusted to the conditions into which they will be planted.

Beware of buying plants

that have come direct from a hot-house because it is unlikely they will survive the shock of being exposed to our harsher weather. We have tried to keep our prices as low as possible and offer tubestock and small pots at \$3 each or, at the special price of 4 for \$10, the latter being the same as it was 5 years ago. Society members receive a further 10% discount on these prices. At our first appearance at the Magpie Markets on Sunday 15th August after the winter break we made \$262, despite the cold, roaring wind and sudden hailstorm. We will be at the Blackheath Community markets on Sunday 5th September so drop in and see us there.

Carbon Offsets: Council has informed us that we have been successful for the third year in succession in gaining the contract to supply plants for their Carbon Offsets Scheme. Clearly, this venture has been so enthusiastically received that the number of plants to be made available has been increased by a thousand to 4,000, 500 of which are to be distributed in December 2010 and the bulk of 3,500 in February 2011. Watch for notices here, in *News from the Hill* or *The Blue Mountains Gazette* for dates when the vouchers will be issued but, be quick! All 3,000 from last year went in less than two days. We will be making available a big variety of lower, mid- and upper mountains plants.

Volunteers: We are urgently looking for new nursery volunteers as we prepare thousands of plants for re-vegetation works along the Great Western Highway at Lawson/Bullaburra and for early next year at Wentworth Falls as well as other, smaller contracts and the maintenance of stocks for general sales. If you can spare a Tuesday morning (Blackheath), a Wednesday or Saturday morning (Lawson) we can guarantee you will find the work enjoyable. Just contact Kevin Bell (47876436) to discuss what is involved.

It is sad to conclude this report with the tragic news that one of our long-term Blackheath volunteers, Margaret Withington, died early on Tuesday morning, 17th August. All of our volunteers have a preference for what task they undertake and for Margaret it was the joy of planting seeds. Just before her illness prevented her coming to the nursery, she and co-volunteer Kate Cowper, had collected some of the large fruits of the Woody Pear (*Xylomelum pyriforme*) and it's pleasing that the seeds we extracted from these and planted have all germinated. Her legacy is that these and thousands of other plants grown from seeds sown by her are to be found all over the Mountains in private gardens, parks and along the highway and will provide a constant reminder of her dedication and pleasure she found in this task. We will all miss her greatly. Kevin Bell.

Photo at top: Kevin Bell and nursery volunteers admiring new seedlings at the Blackheath nursery on a rainy Tuesday. Photographed by Gwen Wilson.



AN INVITATION TO 'COAST SPIRIT'

Local photographer and Consoc member Chris Ireland would like to extend an invitation to all Consoc members to enjoy her latest exhibition, 'Coast Spirit'.

'Coast Spirit' seeks the ancient sense of place common to indigenous cultures, and to our own ancestral Old European culture. In these cultures, nature and place are seen as imbued with an essence, a sacredness. Western culture has moved away from this sensibility into a relationship with nature and the land that sees them as separate, as resources, and exploitable. These works seek to re-establish a connection with nature and with the forces that shaped the land we walk today. The coast of our continent was the first place seen by Europeans and the first place settled and used. The wild places are rare here, protected in parks and reserves that seek to keep the wildness alive.

These photographs have been taken in National Parks and Nature Reserves along the coast of NSW. They seek not to convey the grandeur of landscape, nor the scientific accuracy of botanical illustration. Rather they seek the ephemeral beauty of different habitats that have been formed over aeons of geological time, places that have been shaped by climate, plants,



animals and humans. They seek to immerse the viewer in the spirit of these places, and to offer hope of reconciliation and healing.

The exhibition will be held at the National Parks and Wildlife Service Blue Mountains Heritage Centre, end of Govett's Leap Road, Blackheath, and will open with drinks on Sunday 19th September, 2010 at 1 pm. The show will run until 30th October 2010.

WOLLEMI EXPLORATION HISTORY: A new book by Andy Macqueen

Andy Macqueen (local historian and member of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society) has published a book which will appeal to anyone interested in the history of the Colo River country, now part of the Wollemi National Park..

It is a biography of his great-great-grandfather, colonial surveyor Frederick D'Arcy. D'Arcy was sent to survey the Colo River and its tributaries by Major Mitchell in 1831. No European had been there, and no-one realised it was the most rugged country on the Australian mainland. But against all odds, D'Arcy eventually completed the assignment. According to Andy, who has followed the tracks of many explorers, his ancestor's explorations were more rugged than those of any other known early explorer.

D'Arcy also made his mark at the fledgling settlement of Melbourne. Years later, while based at Hartley as a licensed surveyor, he was engaged to find a route across the Wollemi. He was also a prolific artist. However, his life was one of conflict, as he and his long-suffering families lurched from disaster to disaster in New South Wales, Port Phillip, Van Diemen's Land and Queensland.

The book is entitled "Frederick Robert D'Arcy: colonial surveyor, explorer and artist". It is in hardback, and has 288 pages with 76 pictures and maps. It retails for \$45 and is available from Blue Mountains outlets, or direct from Andy at andymacqueen@gmail.com

Photo: Colo River, which D'Arcy explored and surveyed.



Leura Weather

Waves of cold batter
our little human settlement
of fibro majestics.

From Sublime Point
Katoomba town is a meagre raft
on a sandstone ocean.

Wind stops momentarily,
a ray of sun, then rain –
the mountain's haiku.

Moment to moment
learning to love
the ever-changing.

Hey, is that sleet, in October?
Only yesterday we played
tennis in shorts!

Brendan Doyle

Interpretive Bushwalks

Journeys through time

A lyrebird scratched beside the track as we left the cold wind behind us and descended into cool temperate rainforest. A sunbeam spotlighted the Witch's Leap waterfall. A white reflected light lit up parts of the gully; patches of golden sunlight "switched on and off" as clouds sped overhead.

After the rain, Katoomba Waterfall was splendid, its sound drowned by the roar of the wind on the ridge-top. Gusts of wind caught hold of the waterfall and hurled it into the air.

Down through layers of sandstone and shale, past dripping ferns and mosses, water trickling down and seeping through stone, hidden bird songs; a tiny White-throated Scrub Wren hopped at our feet. Views of Mount Solitary. We found a worm, just like an ordinary garden worm, but it was about one foot (30 cm) long.

Down through layers of time, from the ridge-top (now) to the coal measures, millions of years ago. Imagine! Then a ride up the Scenic Railway. This is a fabulous walk, especially after rain, and for us the nicest way to finish.

The following week, historian John Low again took us back in time. He told us about Major General Charles George Gordon after whom the Gordon Falls and Reserve were named, and led us to the Pool of Siloam where we were once again sheltered from the persistent August winds. This is a pretty little glen, very peaceful, though steel railings dislodged and broken by fierce flooding told of less peaceful times.

We continued on to Lyrebird Dell, where Aboriginal people lived from 18 thousand years ago, after the last ice age, when the climate was very different to what it is now. We tried to imagine what it would have been like. By five thousand years ago the climate had become damper and the large cave uninhabitable, as it would



Katoomba Falls. Gusts of wind caught hold of the waterfall and hurled it into the air. Photo by Christine Davies.

have been now, and the people lived in a smaller cave nearby. This was revealed in excavations by archaeologist Father Eugene Stockton and described in his book "Blue Mountains Dreaming".

In the early 20th century the floor of the larger cave was filled in and levelled and it became a popular picnic place. On one of the concrete steps leading into the dell, Mr Sinclair whose 100 year old son I once met, placed little tiles to commemorate the armistice which ended the First World War, **1918**

11.11.11

and in Lone Pine Road is a memorial gate and plane trees were planted in honour of the men from Leura who went to the war.

Greenhood Orchids, with erect stems and nodding heads, grew amongst the weeds beneath one of the plane trees. And, a finishing touch to an enjoyable and interesting walk, a rainbow in the Kedumba Valley. Christine Davies.

Recycle your old mobile phone and help save Gorilla habitat

12 million or more mobile phones sit unused in cupboards or drawers in Australia. Do you have any? If you do, why not recycle them?

Taronga and Western Plains Zoos are 'calling' on people to recycle their old mobile phones to help save one of our closest living relatives. A rare mineral ore called coltan, found in mobile phones, is mined in Gorilla habitat. The mining is accelerating the decline in Western Lowland Gorilla numbers and at least 10 other African primate species.

By simply recycling an old mobile phone, the pressure on gorilla habitat is reduced and money raised from refurbished mobile phones supports conservation projects in Africa.

By sending your old phone through the free **They're Calling on You** mobile phone recycling program you are:

- Diverting your phone from landfill
- Raising money for the Taronga Foundation and the Jane Goodall Institute's conservation programs, including primate conservation work in Africa,

through the sale of refurbished phones and recycled coltan.

- Reducing the demand for coltan mining by recycling the coltan-coated capacitor in your old mobile phone.

Visit Taronga or Taronga Western Plains Zoos to collect a postage-paid recycling satchel or download a reply paid label

<http://www.taronga.org.au/lib/files/callingonyou/reply-paid-labels.pdf>

For more information, please contact:

Nicole Farrugia

Visitor Education and Interpretations

(02) 9978 4779 email nfarrugia@zoo.nsw.gov.au



POPULATION

Clearly population cannot grow indefinitely, both in Australia and for the planet, even with improvements in the way we live. That is simple mathematics. We are now finally seeing the population issue on political centre stage, but member Peter Green finds the debate to be intellectually bankrupt. The issue should be environmental, but big business from the right and open door advocates from the far left have attempted to pervert the debate. Frustrated, Peter wrote to the Minister for Population to bring focus back onto some common sense issues. His letter, dated 23 May 2010 is reproduced below.

Dear Minister Burke,

Your appointment as Population Minister is a potentially significant step towards an environmentally sustainable Australian society. However, a comment by the Treasurer in a recent letter to me suggested that things might not be as they seem. The comment was to the effect that no matter from where a migrant came, this had no net impact on the global environment. There is abundant evidence that this is quite untrue, a fact that should be known to the government given the resources at its disposal. So, is this comment due to carelessness, to denial or because of patronising disdain for a member of the public? Whatever, this needs to be challenged, along with a host of other aspects of the 'population debate'.

There is also widespread cynicism, which I share, that the purpose of your ministry is to accommodate and justify whatever population growth derives from existing government immigration and taxation policies, rather than determining what populations this country can sustain at various living standards. Unlike Minister Tanner, the prospect of a life style anything like Bangladesh is unthinkable. Tony Abbott's comments mirror this, and the concept of a maximum population (for a specific living standard) seems alien to him, although I do confess that it is difficult to actually know what his policies are on issues from one day to the next. Kevin Rudd's infatuation with a 'Big Australia' reflects an environmentally intellectual vacuum and casts doubt on the likelihood of a genuine population policy. I doubt that a leopard can change its spots.

In this letter I wish to examine the matter of sustainable population, which has now finally been accepted into public debate after decades of being marginalised. For that we must thank groups like Sustainable Population Australia for their persistence over many years. I am pleased to note the Liberal's Scott Morrison enunciating a policy position quite antithetical to that of Labor's 'big Australia'.

It should be quite clear that endless quantitative growth is not possible in a finite system, except for qualitative growth. So the choice is between a (i) population plateau at a level that uses the planet's resources sustainably (ie, at a rate that are endlessly replenished, and at a rate of waste generation that the planet can absorb indefinitely) or (ii) a population at which environmental and human social systems become so stressed that they eventually collapse with dire consequences. It is like a driver finding that the

car's brakes have failed just as the descent of Mt Victoria Pass has commenced. There are two choices. Either drive into a tree immediately, before a high speed is achieved and with some control, and incur minor damage, or attempt to survive the descent with the certain knowledge that the car will eventually leave the road at high speed with fatal results. You also have to be absolutely mindful of the reality of non-linear consequences in environmental systems, and thresholds.

Listed below is a range of supporting data that underpins any conclusion reached. It is not exhaustive.

- 'Sustainable growth' is an oxymoron in a finite system like Australia or the planet. The only sustainable situation is a steady state system. This is simple mathematics and logic.
- Proponents of continuing growth have no target population, unless it is something that is so far away that they will never have to justify it. The problem is that all is predicated on the economics of capitalism, a system that will collapse without growth. Capitalism has achieved much, but never had to deal with limits to growth. This is all about to change, with peak oil being the first domino. Phosphorus, water and other resources will soon follow.
- At our current fertility rate, about 40% of population growth is provided internally (births - deaths), and about 60% from Net Overseas Migration (NOM).
- Population should be included with immigration in a portfolio attached to the environment, not the Treasury. The environment will determine the health of the economy, not vice versa.
- Australia has no population policy; the Prime Minister has 'no position'. Whatever happens, happens.
- There is already plenty of research, based on solid science, indicating that we have exceeded the safe carrying capacity of the country, viz (1) The 1994 Barry Jones 'Carrying Capacity' Report, (2) The 1997 Government's Response, (3) The Academy of Science Report ("Population 2040; Australia's choice"), (4) The 1 May 1992 IGAE (which mandates consideration of ESD Principles in all decision-making at all levels of government) and (5) The CSIRO Future Dilemmas Report. The obvious starting point would be to re-examine this material and determine if they need to be fine-tuned. Then, once a sustainable target is determined, only increase population if the per-capita footprint is demonstrated to reduce. On current indications, we are already living in Australia unsustainably, despite 20 years of trying to redress this. Over recent decades, our per-capita footprint has remained static and the overall national footprint has consequently grown with population.
- The current rate of population increase requires that we double our rate of infrastructure supply, an almost impossible burden on current Australians.
- Increasing population is increasing traffic congestion, hospital waiting lists, demands on infrastructure (paid by today's tax payers for tomorrow's arrivals), demands on water, urban spread onto arable

land, less open space per capita, less mineral wealth per capita, increased congestion on public transport, loss of wild places and ecosystems, further depletion of fisheries, less active children, increased classroom overcrowding and land shortages.

- The government displays total ignorance of the concept of 'peak oil' and the extraordinary effect that oil depletion will have on Australia and elsewhere. Farming will be reduced to a fraction of current output. Modern agriculture has been characterised as converting oil into food. It is likely that we passed peak oil in 2008. Enhanced oil recovery procedures, used widely in the Middle East to maintain a high output, will have the twin effects of a steeper than expected production drop and a reduced total reserve.
- Increasing population benefits property developers, politicians and some religions, but is not beneficial in any environmental way or for quality of life of most of us.
- Our GDP might be increasing, but our per-capita GDP is decreasing. Moreover, GDP is a poor measure of lifestyle; it ignores quality of life metrics, but includes money spent on non-productive aspects like prisons, wars and reconstruction after fire, etc.
- Economic growth destroys the environment; 'smart growth' destroys it more slowly.
- Immigration was ramped up enormously by the Howard government (while disingenuously making a strong statement about border controls) and even more so by the Rudd government. Immigration agents are vocal in maintaining this level of ingress.
- The Rudd government relaxed foreign investment rules, causing a marked inflation in housing prices and shortages, particularly in Melbourne.
- It is immoral to seek to attract professional people from the third world, when those countries are already so desperately short of such talent. This practice is already generating resentment in those countries.
- It is absurd to chase skilled immigrants rather than educating our own.
- We have large underemployment, and abundant ageism-induced forced early retirements, yet employers claim skills shortages. Occasionally spokespeople for business have the honesty or carelessness to admit that they want high immigration so that they can drive down wages. They prefer a surplus of compliant workers. Furthermore, the current cacophony about shortages largely comes from the capital-intensive mining industry, where automation is increasingly being introduced. And booms end, particularly when they are dependent on finite resources.
- Immigration has virtually no effect on the age structure of our population, even at reasonably high levels. The immigrants themselves age. The numbers required to have a significant effect would be quite enormous, and constitute a Ponzi scheme of dire proportions. The only long term solution is to have a parallel-sided age structure and a steady state economy. Refer to the Productivity Commission in 2005 : *"Increased migration cannot do much to avoid population ageing."* With our increased longevity,

people do not have an extended period of end-of-life dependence; they just have a delayed period of dependence, preceded by an active retirement that constitutes a critical part of our volunteer organisations. The most dependent age group remain children, who do not contribute for the first 16-20 years of life.

- The government must remain vigilant about advice from vested interests who profit from economic growth, and recognise the ultimate determinant of our population will be nature (ie the environment) not economics.
- The government has already had the effrontery to tell all and sundry nations that we can't be expected to meet greenhouse emission targets because we are growing so fast, as if to imply that the extraordinary population growth rate is quite out of the government's control. To the contrary, it is a direct result of the immigration and taxation policies. People are being bribed to have children, and encouraged by generous taxation concessions to have as many as they like. This claim by the government is a reflection of the accepted formula $I = P * A * T$, which quantifies the environmental impact of a country as being the product of population, affluence and technology, broadly population times lifestyle, with lifestyle including a distance component for all resources consumed.
- There is no qualitative aspect of our lives that is better with higher population.
- The economic benefits of immigration are at best equal to the costs. This was reported to the Howard government.
- To state, as the Immigration Minister recently did, that it is irrelevant in which country people live as to what is their environmental footprint, is deceptive. An Australian has a footprint over 100 times greater than an inhabitant of places like Sudan or Ethiopia, and their impact consequently rises dramatically if they migrate to a first world country and adopt that lifestyle.
- To move Australians to rural cities is no answer, as these are typically in areas that are forecast to be under greater water stress from global warming. Furthermore, this can't be enforced or policed in a democracy.
- The CSIRO study indicates that it is highly improbable that there is a great agricultural cornucopia waiting in the tropics. Most of this area is dry for much of the year, with little geographical opportunity for significant water storage. Australians continue to move to the milder climate of the coast.
- The world is experiencing the 6th great extinction of species, and the first driven by a single species, us. Human growth and consequent destruction of natural ecosystems is at the heart of this extinction, and Australia's record in this regard is among the world's worst.
- Ecosystems destruction also destroys our opportunities to utilise beneficial species. For example, a recently extinct species of gastric-breeding frogs, that was unique to Australia. The chemicals used to gestate spawn internally could have led to a cure for peptic ulcer disease, affecting more than a million Australians and 25 million Americans, inter alia. (*Continued on page 8*)

- No other species needs humans, but humans need healthy ecosystems.
- The health of the economy ultimately depends on the health of the environment (damaged by water supply shortfall, rainfall, soil acidification, soil salination, weather extremes, increased aridity, wind and water erosion, etc). Eventually, all the fancy economic models are worthless if the environment is in crisis.
- Why do pro-growth proponents cite Japan as an example of a falling or steady population when most countries with living standards higher than ours are smaller than us? There is no positive correlation between high population / high growth rate and high living standard. To the contrary, most of the high growth rate / high population countries in the world have low living standards and high environmental degradation.
- It is all too often suggested that technology will be our saviour, enabling us to keep producing more food, etc, to feed expanding populations. This is not borne out by history, with Australians just consuming more and showing no inclination to use technological developments to lower their environmental footprints.
- To suggest that, say, with 35 million we will be much more secure than 25 million if we are invaded by, say, China with its 1.6 billion is fanciful.
- The 'resources boom' is no valid reason for massive population growth through skilled migration. These projects are capital intensive rather than labour intensive; many have 'fly in fly out' back to Perth, adding to Perth's problems. Furthermore, such booms are by definition temporary. A more civilised rate of extraction might also leave sufficient mineral resources in the ground for future generations, as they try to maintain societies being weaned off massive mineral extraction.
- The hyped value of education of temporary migrants

overstates the economic benefits by a factor of 2. It uses current high numbers, many Indian, but attributes to them a higher per-person expenditure characteristic of different sub-groups, such as Japanese. It also apparently discounts money returned to India and jobs taken away from Australian residents (the published figures are inflated because of three broad factors. First, estimates of student expenditure on goods and services in Australia are based on students with different demographic characteristics than the current stock of overseas students. Second, the value of on-shore earnings by overseas students is included in the total. Third, direct costs, such as off-shore agents' fees have not been deducted from the stated earnings. It is likely that the actual export value of education is about half the stated figure).

Even the Henry Tax Review makes the point - "Sound land and water management practices are essential to maintaining agricultural production; biodiversity enables technological progress, particularly in medical and pharmaceutical applications; and low atmospheric pollution is essential to climate stability." But the addition of another 14 million to the population in line with the Prime Minister's 'big Australia' works against these very principles. Farmland will become housing estates. Water will be diverted from farms to swollen cities. Natural habitat and in turn biodiversity will be destroyed by extra infrastructure. Greenhouse gas emissions will rise.

It's hardly surprising this part of the review was rejected.

So, with so much evidence against continued growth, it is inconceivable that this push for endless growth should remain.

I trust that you examine and give proper consideration to the above factors, and educate your government. I look forward to a sincere evaluation of the situation, and to your response. **Peter Green.**

Meet the Management Committee:

Lachlan Garland, Membership Secretary

As I move through my second year as Membership Secretary, I am enjoying the position more and more. Many may find this strange, but dealing with the membership does have its rewards.

My interest in the environment started in the late 80's mainly through bushwalking in the Mountains, although living in Sydney. I moved to the Mountains in 1992. These days I find I have less and less time to bushwalk, but I am involved in a number of groups and committees supporting environmental work. In my spare time I work as a professional bush regenerator.

My favourite place in the Mountains is anywhere overlooking the Grose Valley. (The photo is taken .

If you have any queries regarding membership, please feel free to contact me. My details are in Hut News and on the website. Lachlan.

Photo: Grose Valley from near Pulpit Rock, by Lachlan Garland.



Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

Windy weather is the worst sort of weather for birdwatching. Not only do the birds take shelter in the densest vegetation, they also stop calling. It must be tough being a small bird trying to find enough food on a cold and windy day. (There is, however, one type of birder who loves windy weather and that is those unfathomable souls who go out on small boats on the ocean to watch seabirds. As a rule you'll see the greatest number of rare and interesting pelagic birds when the boat is being buffeted around on mountainous seas and most people on board have turned green with nausea!)

Here in the mountains, the best plan on windy days is to head down into the deep valleys and sheltered gullies for some rainforest birding. Around this time of year, the Bassian Thrush and Rose Robin will have returned to the rainforest gullies where they breed, after spending the winter visiting gardens and wandering in more open habitats and at lower altitudes. The Bassian Thrush (previously called the Ground Thrush or Scaly Thrush) is a beautiful though unobtrusive ground-feeding bird covered in subdued brown markings which cause it to blend perfectly with the leaf litter. Its large eyes are adapted to the dim light of the rainforest floor. You'll sometimes see them around the picnic areas at Leura Cascades.

Wonga Pigeons are now calling in many areas. Theirs is one of the most monotonous bird calls of all - a far-carrying, continuous "woop woop woop woop...", repeated endlessly. From a distance, it can sound like a truck reversing.

Lyrebirds have become much quieter with the frenzy of displaying over for another year (they breed in winter). The males lose all their tail feathers at the end of the mating season after which the new tail grows over a period of several weeks. As I write, many of the males are tail-less, which makes them look somewhat like a bantam. The females however, still have their tails and a great deal of work to do in rearing the single chick, which will remain in the nest for 6 weeks. A female with a bent tail indicates she has a nest. This is a result of spending a lot of time inside the domed nest with her tail bent around behind her - a bit like waking up with a kink in your hair after sleeping on it the wrong way.

Keep an eye out for returning migrants. The Rufous Fantail, Sacred Kingfisher and Channel-billed Cuckoo are some of the birds which return to our area in September after spending winter in Queensland and New Guinea.

Carol Proberts origma@westnet.com.au

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.

Send my copy of Hut News by

Please tick box mail internet only

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 Dreaming

The Aboriginal Heritage (Second Edition)

Edited by Eugene Stockton and John Merriman.

In 1788 the Aborigines of the Blue Mountains had had no contact with Europeans; within 30 years their traditional way of life had been irrevocably changed. Of the generations of new Mountain dwellers who followed, few appreciated the Aboriginal heritage of the region, even though evidence of their presence was known from the Nepean River and the adjacent escarpment.

Increasingly however, widespread discoveries of art sites, occupation sites, stone tools, axe-grinding grooves and stone arrangements, research into the journals and early writings of European explorers and settlers, and the compilation of oral histories, are providing a rich, if incomplete, account of the traditional lifestyles and environment of the Gundungurra and

Darag people of the Blue Mountains.

The second edition, published in 2009, gathers together new research and information about the original inhabitants of the Blue Mountains. It provides a fascinating account of histories, legends and European contact.

"A proper understanding and appreciation of the history of our region is not possible without some knowledge of the perspectives offered in this book. Blue Mountains Dreaming should become .. 'a meeting place in spirit of two very unlike peoples gathered around a common hearth' As such, it is highly recommended." (John Low, Blue Mountains Historian, in his introduction to the book.)

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.

Grand Canyon, Blackheath

Constructed over 100 years ago, the Grand Canyon track was the first walking track into a Blue Mountains Canyon and is listed on the State Heritage register. With over 30,000 people a year now walking the track, repair and restoration works were essential. The first stage of this work has been completed and the track reopened in July.

Over the last year, skilled teams working in remote sites have been involved in detailed restoration works such as recutting stone steps, repairing stone staircases and installing new stepping stones in selected sections of the track.

23 August – An Important Anniversary *by Denis Rice*

Monday 23 August 2010 marked the fifth anniversary of the passing of Denis Kevans, Australia's Poet Lorikeet and long-standing member of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society. As Mount Riverview-based singer-songwriter, Jim Low, writes on his website (<http://jimlow.net>), Denis was "known for his poetry, his songs, his performances, his scholarship and his passion for the environment. He was also a friend."

Jim Low has written a beautiful song "With the Poet Lorikeet" after accompanying Denis on an afternoon bushwalk in July 1997 near Denis' home not far from the Conservation Hut at Wentworth Falls. On his website (<http://jimlow.net/lyrics-lorikeet.htm>), Jim can be heard performing this song which begins as follows:

*We could hear the sound of water on this winter's day,
Walking in the valley, poems along the way.
I met the Chinese lion, we watched the dancing trees.
He shared his love of the Mountains and all the things he sees.*

One Friday morning in June 2005, some of the members of the Sydney band "Loosely Woven" and I were privileged to accompany Denis on such a walk – from the back gate of his home, via the Conservation Hut, to the Queen Victoria Lookout overlooking the Valley of the Waters. (The previous night, "Loosely Woven", Sonia Bennett, Denis and I had performed at the Blackheath Folk Club.) This was one of Denis' favourite walks, and would have inspired a number of his poems and songs, such as "The Valley of the Waters" (co-written with Sonia Bennett), and "Moss's Gentle Fingers".

One Saturday morning in early December 2003, Denis performed "Moss's Gentle Fingers", at the invitation of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, before a large crowd in front of the Conservation Hut. This was part of the ceremony to launch the interpretive signage (on the importance of water) now in the foyer of the Conservation Hut. This signage includes a quotation from "Moss's Gentle Fingers":

*Where the moss's gentle fingers paint the sleeping boulders green,
I'll walk in all my wisdom, where no mortal's ever been.
And where immortal trees stretch up their fingers to the sky,
The moss will cool the waters for the lyre-bird and I.*

Denis Kevans, you are much missed by so many of us. We are so grateful for your poems and songs, not to mention your letters to, for example, the *Blue Mountains Gazette* and the *Penrith Press*. Long may your fighting spirit live on, a spirit expressed for example in your lines:

*O mountains, in your beauty, with your secret water flow,
Ah mountains, all your wonders, I would gladly like to know,
I pledge I'll fight to save you, and I pledge with every vow,
To fight for the Blue Mountains, and I've started fighting now.*

(From Denis Kevans' 1985 poem "The Leura Golf Club Blurp".)

The Work that Reconnects

Workshop organised by **Transition Blue Mountains**
& **Katoomba Climate Action Now**

You are invited to attend a day-long workshop based on experiential processes developed by Joanna Macy. By participating together in meditation, rituals, and creative processes we have the opportunity to honour our pain for the world and be enlivened and empowered to contribute to creating a sustainable future.

Date: **Sunday 19th September** 9.15am - 5pm
Location: Santa Maria Centre, Great Western Highway, Lawson
Cost: \$30 (concessions available) BYO lunch.
Facilitator: Clare Power - trained with Joanna Macy in August 2008
Information and bookings: **bmpower@live.com or phone 47824897**

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

A CAVE OF SECRETS

When 21 year old Ruby Hunter went missing in the bush at Glenbrook in early September 1913 a large search party, made up of men from Emu Plains to Blaxland and including navvies from the Glenbrook Gorge railway deviation works, swept the area within a ten mile radius of the town. During the search one party, combing the difficult terrain to the south of Glenbrook, stumbled upon a startling find. Entering beneath the overhang of a large cave, it's not hard to imagine the impact the soft glow of dozens of red hand stencils must have had on these tired and emotionally wired men searching for a lost girl. This silent, mysterious witness to a culture stretching back into unknown time must have been, to say the least, a little unsettling.

For most of the next decade the Red Hands Cave appears to have been visited irregularly and mainly by locals. In the early 1920s, however, it was drawn to the attention of the Australian Museum and in March 1924 an ethnologist and photographer from that institution were taken by a group of interested locals to visit the cave. Significantly, the party also included a journalist from the *Nepean Times* who diligently documented the "very rough ordeal" it took to get there (no track then) and the enthusiasm of the museum representatives at what they found. His account was published a week or two later.

Though the early declaration of a reserve at the site afforded it some measure of protection, by the 1930s the

cave was under pressure from increased visitation and graffiti and other vandalism. When the Blue Mountains Shire Council constructed a walking track in 1933 to accommodate visitors it also placed a shield of wire netting across the cave's mouth. In more recent times, though access to the site has been made even easier by fire trail construction (1950s) and improvements to the walking track (1980s), protection measures, too, have been upgraded. A new shield of Perspex mounted on a viewing platform was erected in 1987.

Red Hands Cave is considered a major art site, one of the finest in the Blue Mountains. It is a place of great significance to Aboriginal people and, indeed, to all Australians. While their 'meaning' may still be debated, these stencils of human hands present a very intimate connection across time and give pause to reflect on our place in the long human presence in this land. That they keep some of their secrets only makes the experience richer.

But what became of Ruby Hunter, the lost girl who was the catalyst for the cave's rediscovery? Well, the day following her disappearance, she was found drinking from a creek near Blaxland, a long way from the red hands. After a couple of days in bed, cared for by her mother who was the district nurse, she was up and about again and none the worse for her experience.

John Low <johnlow@iprimus.com.au>

Megabug attacks minibird Ian Baird

In response to the recent article (Hut News, August 2010) by Ron Hyslop ('In search of southern emu-wrens'), readers may be interested in the following observations.

During my PhD fieldwork studying giant dragonflies in upland swamps (*Coastal Heath Swamps* and *Montane Bogs and Fens*) of the Blue Mountains, I have encountered southern emu-wrens (SEW) during swamp wanderings on numerous occasions. I have observed this tiny bird in wet heathland or sedgeland, typically foraging low, in and above the vegetation in small family groups or pairs.

On one occasion, while observing a male giant dragonfly perched in buttongrass in a swamp, I observed a SEW fly into a low shrub only a few metres in front of me. The male dragonfly immediately flew straight at and into the SEW from several metres away, grappling aggressively with it with its legs and causing the bird to make a rapid departure stage left. The dragonfly then returned to its perch.

This is fairly typical territorial behaviour for male giant dragonflies who engage in often vigorous aerial encounters with other males of their species in defence of a patch of suitable breeding (egg-laying) habitat. The dragonfly presumably perceived the SEW as competition, and not as prey.

I suspect that similar observations of insects

aggressively interacting with birds in such a manner are few, considering the small number of birds that are smaller than insects.

To 'even the score', I did observe a pair of SEW on another occasion disturb a pair of copulating giant dragonflies perched low amongst sedgeland and cause them to fly off together still in the mating position.

You just never know what you're going to see.....out there.

Ian Baird



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 Maurice Kerkham 4739 4942 email mauricekerkham@hotmail.com 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
Sep 13-17	Deep Pass mid week camp. Walk in approx 1km. Delightful campsite with a variety of walks	Jim 4758 6009	Contact leader for directions and possibilities	Various	Variable	NPWS Brochure
Sep 18	Springwood to Glenbrook via Bunyan Lookout	Peter 4751 9637	Springwood Station CP 8am	12	3	Springwood & Penrith
Sep 25	Boorong Crags - Mt Hay and beyond with great views into the Grose Gorge. Steep descents and ascents.	Jim 4758 6009	Leura School Mt Hay Road, 8.30 am	10	3	Mt Wilson
Oct 2	Carlons, Breakfast Creek to Iron Pot Ridge. 400m. Gloves and 2 litres water at least.	Bill 4758 8545	Blackheath Station CP Contact leader for	12	4	Jenolan
Oct 9	October Creek - spectacular spring flowers expected - drop in to DeFours Creek for the adventurous and great views at October Creek.	Bob 4757 2694	Blackheath Station CP 8.15 am	8	3	Mt Wilson

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 Judith Dyer, 4758 6310, judithbushwalker@hotmail.com

Date	Details	Grade	Contact	Meet at
Sep 13	Golden Stairs/ Ruined Castle, Katoomba. Unique rock formation, view of Mt Solitary	3	Eddie 4784 2691	BMCC Chambers, Civic Place 8.45am *** Car pool***
Sep 20	Tinpot Hill/Ironpot Mountain/Ironmonger Spur (Megalong) Glorious views over Wild Dog Range	2	Phil 4787 5560	Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre, 9.45 am. Car pool.
Sep 27	BUS TRIP : Six Foot Track - Black Range campground to Jenolan Caves. Walk last section of this spectacular track. Book and Pay Birgitta 4784 3191 Fare \$10	2	Tera 4751 3303	BMCC Depot South St Nth Katoomba 8am
Oct 4	Amphitheatre and Falls, North Hazelbrook. View the amphitheatre from 3 different angles	2	Judith 4758 6310	Hazelbrook Station, 9am.

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 Gail Schwedler 4782 1215 platypusprotected@yahoo.com.au

Sep 16	Leura Cascades Round Walk Easy cliff top walk via lookouts. Some steps. Great views	2	Joan c/- 4782 1215	Cnr Megalong St & Leura Mall 9.30 am
Sep 23	BUS TRIP La Perouse Cost \$10.00 to be paid on booking. Visit to La Perouse for walk in Botany Bay and visit to museum	2	Simone 4757 3416	Council Depot South Street Nth Katoomba 8.00 am sharp
Sep 30	Descent of Lockyer's Line of Road. Ridge walk along historic road.	2/3	Maurice 4739 4942	Mount Victoria Station 9.45am. Car shuffle.
Oct 7	Solitary Restaurant to Silver Mist. Clifftop walk with many lookouts.	2	Joan c/o 4782 1215	Cnr. Megalong St and The Mall, Leura, 9.30 am.
Oct 14	Lawsons Long Alley, Mt Victoria. Rocky firetrail descent to Hartley Vale.	2/3	David 4757 3416	Mt Victoria Station 9.45. Car shuffle.
Oct 21	Water Nymph's Dell, Wentworth Falls. Delightful walk into rainforest gully. Some scrambling. Steps to climb out.	2	David 4757 3416	Stockyard carpark, Wentworth Falls Station, 9.30 am.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Bushwalking Group practices minimal impact bushwalking.. Minimal impact bushwalking means do nothing. Take nothing but photographs. Leave nothing that shows where you have been.