



HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

From the President

The Society was recently awarded the Member Group Award from the Nature Conservation Council for our efforts over the past year. I would like to thank all of you for helping us to be a strong organisation that can work for the environment of the Blue Mountains. Whether it be through conservation work, the nursery, bushcare, bushwalking or the plant study group, it is our combined efforts that have results.

Looking to the year ahead, we face some challenges in respect to membership numbers and renewing the Management Committee. I have personally found it extremely rewarding and energising to be President of the Society but my term will finish next March. Working with others for a good cause is actually FUN (yes it is true!). Many hands make light work and it is possible to be involved and not be overburdened. I would love to chat to anyone interested in getting involved in a small or large way (no strings attached).

I hope that you all have a wonderful Christmas and break. As usual, there will be no Hut News in January as Christine deserves a break.

All the best, Tara 0419 824 974
domtara@bigpond.com

Blue Mountains City Council

16th Annual School Environment Awards 2010

Congratulations to all the Blue Mountains schools which won awards at this year's presentation at Winmalee Public School on 28 November 2010. A special mention of Katoomba High School which won the Environmental Education Award sponsored by Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

Full details can be found on the Blue Mountains City Council website.

Monthly Meeting at The Hut

Living with Fire in the Mountains

Hugh Paterson is the Conservation Society's Bushfire Officer, represents the Nature Conservation Council on the Blue Mountains Bushfire Management Committee and is a Deputy Captain of Valley Heights Rural Fire Brigade. He brings a knowledgeable and local perspective to this discussion about bushfires in the mountains.

Hugh will discuss strategies we can (and do) use to prepare ourselves and wider issues such as hazard reduction. Such topics have been very politicised so this is a great opportunity to discuss the facts in a sensible way.

**Blue Mountains Conservation Society Monthly Meeting
Conservation Hut (end of Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls)**

7.30 pm, Friday, 28 January 2011

Visitors are very welcome

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Experience

www.worldheritage.org.au

The Society's Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Experience website is online and was launched at the 10th Anniversary celebration of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area at Govetts Leap on Monday 29 November 2010..

Now you can go online to a map of the GBMWA and click on a location to see a 360 degree image taken from that spot. You can pan around the panoramas and a "hotspot" facility allows you to jump to other locations.

There are over 250 of these panoramas taken in and around the GBMWA's national parks and reserves. To complement the panoramas, stories of experiences are included – such as the 2002 bushfires, the Stealth Movie Story, the Maxwells of Kedumba. These stories are accompanied by stunning photos.

Various photo galleries are being developed, including –

- ❖ "360 degrees of native flora and fauna" – an old style "stamp album" containing slots for Society members to add photos of 360 of our endemic wildflowers, birds, animals and insects.
- ❖ Artist Galleries - acknowledging and promoting both our professional and amateur artists. Ian Brown, Alan & Dianne Page, and Steve Tredinnick are already included.
- ❖ "Shadows in the Bush" Gallery - showcasing the images taken by Katoomba High School students in their 3-day bush camp immersion experience within the World Heritage Area.

The Society gratefully acknowledges the effort and support of Aaron Spence from Panedia, NSW NPWS and Society members.

The GBMWHE website provides a truly amazing companion and partner to the BMCS "business" website.

**"Hut News", the newsletter of
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HUT NEWS EDITORIALS

The deadline for the next issue of Hut News
is **20 January 2011**

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

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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

Nursery Closures: Our dedicated volunteers need an occasional break so we will be closing our Lawson nursery for sales after Wednesday 15th December and we will re-open on Wednesday 12th January 2011. So that all can have the opportunity to buy some plants for yourself or as a gift, we will open the Lawson nursery from 9-noon on the first two Saturdays (4th, 11th) of December. Don't forget that we also have gift certificates for \$10, 20 and 50.

Markets: November saw the last of the Magpie Markets for 2010 until February 2011 but we ended on a spectacular note with record takings of \$592 from cash sales and another \$137.50 from a Council voucher making a total of \$729.50. Bad weather had forced the cancellation of several markets during 2010 and we missed some valuable income. If you have never been to the Magpie Markets (3rd Sunday of the month) they are the biggest and most patronised in the Mountains and we have a permanent presence there, so much so that many people tell us that we are the prime reason they come. We started at the Blackheath Community Markets this year and our last two appearances in September and November (1st Sunday of the month) yielded us \$212 and \$190 respectively and as our presence there becomes more widely known, these figures are sure to increase.

Our Plants: We hope to maintain our low prices (lower than Forestry Commission and K-Mart, for example) for tube-stock and small pots through 2011 but if the cost of consumables (potting mix, tubes, pots, fertilizer etc.) escalates, we may be forced to increase our prices as we have considerable overheads at Lawson with rent, Council and water rates. Recently, we have been growing more advanced plants in larger pots and, as these have proved popular with customers, we will continue the practice. Look forward to being able to purchase a variety of these next year which sell for \$4 - \$8 depending on the species and size.

Our Customers: Finally, a thank-you and Seasons Greetings from all the volunteers to you, our loyal customers and we look forward to seeing you in 2011 when we will be able to offer a big variety of quality, local plants. Please bring back those unwanted tubes and pots for which you will receive 10c for each off your next purchase. Over the festive season you may also accumulate some wine-casks which we would appreciate (even empty) as, cut in half, they make excellent boxes for customers.

Highway Water Issues Working Group

The Highway Water Issues Working Group (HWIWG) has been formed, so that local people with local knowledge and an interest in preserving the health of our natural water system, can be involved in the process of minimising adverse impacts on the waterways and catchment areas in the Blue Mountains affected by highway upgrades. The Group will act as a central point of communication between Blue Mountains City Council, key agencies and the Blue Mountains community, with respect to protection of natural water systems.

MEMBERSHIP

Community Members

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RailCorp

Blue Mountains City Council

Department of Environment, Climate

Change and Water

Councillor

Cr Howard McCallum

Shadows in the Bush

(Earth Journeys with Katoomba High School children, on exhibition at the NPWS Heritage Centre, Blackheath, until end December 2010).

It's so easy to come to one of the many lookouts in the Blue Mountains, to gaze out and be impressed with the magnificent landscape, perhaps snap a memento photograph, then jump back in the car. I've done it, we've all done it. It's a very natural thing to do. But views like this have been described as being treated sometimes like 'green wallpaper', a pleasing backdrop to our lives.

But as with so many things, the closer you look at the bush the more complex and interesting it becomes. Anyone who walks out into that wallpaper, like Alice through the Looking Glass, anyone who takes their mind and imagination with them, who sits on a rock or a rotting log, who waits and looks and listens.....they will find a seething mass of living things and constant motion as stuff happens, and keeps on happening. It's a world of breathtaking detail and constant activity.

Wyn Jones has spent much of his life in the Blue Mountains, as an ecologist, a parent, a bushwalker, a photographer, an educator, an artist...and a lot of other things. He believes with a passion that people, especially young people, should walk in their land, immerse themselves in that breathtaking detail.

This year, as part of the Earth Journeys program, Wyn took eight young people on a three-day camp into World Heritage bushland. They observed, watched, and waited. Then they used cameras to record some of the things they saw, that they wanted to show and share with other people. That collection is called Shadows in the Bush. It's the shadows of other beings, the shadows of natural things, the shadows of themselves.

Photography is a funny business. It's a mechanical process of adjusting knobs and pushing buttons. But cooking isn't just working stoves and pots and pans. Before the buttons and knobs of a nature photograph comes the looking, the seeing and, most important of all, the feeling.

I've looked at the exhibition of what these young people saw. If you go and look at it, I'm sure you'll see too, and feel. What I noticed most was the focus on the little things. The flowers, the leaves, the rocks, the bark, the clouds, the raindrops; it's all those little things making up that wallpaper that really matter. World Heritage in a grain of sand, if I may misquote William Blake.

There is no doubt those young people were feeling, out there in their bush rooms. And isn't it fantastic to have that feeling combined with the fresh vision and the energy of youth? We desperately need more young people who love the world and will carry on the struggle for harmony.

Those of us who are a little older, don't we remember that sense of wonder we first felt when we discovered something new and magical? If you want to touch that feeling again, go and look at Shadows in the Bush. I commend it to you, and I congratulate the eight participants, Wyn for pulling it all together and the sponsors for their support. **Ian Brown.**

Nature Conservation Council NSW Environment Awards 2010

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW is the peak environmental organisation in NSW representing over 120 member groups. The NCC holds an awards night annually to acknowledge the efforts of those who work for the environment.

Winners of this year's awards were:

The Dunphy Award for the most outstanding environmental effort of an individual - Tara Cameron, Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

Member Group Award for the best efforts of a member group within the past year - Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

The Dunphy Award is given annually to an individual who has demonstrated outstanding commitment and success in the conservation of the NSW environment. The award honours the work of Myles and Milo Dunphy. Myles Dunphy (1891-1985) campaigned for national parks and wilderness in NSW.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society runs conservation programs, a nursery, bushcare, bushwalking and a plant study group. Programs that have been driven by the Conservation Society over recent years include legal action against Delta Electricity over alleged pollution of the Cox's River, consistent and robust confrontation of coal mining companies over damage to watercourses on Newnes Plateau consequent to mining-caused subsidence, assistance and support for Katoomba High School students in their 'Drink Tap Water' campaign, preparation of a major report supporting preservation of part of the Gardens of Stone area as a State Conservation Area, lobbying for an environmentally sound outcome for the GWH upgrade and Mt Victoria bypass, monitoring developments in the planning for industrial sand mining on Newnes Plateau, campaigning against the discharge of raw sewage into Fitzgeralds Creek, Valley Heights, ongoing bushcare regeneration of the Valley of the Waters, Leura, and maintenance of an extensive nursery program that has been a major supplier to the RTA and BMCC.

Congratulations to Tara and to all the volunteers who are involved in the activities of the Society and those who support the Society in so many ways.



Photo: (left to right) Professor Don White, Chair, NCC; Michael Maack, Meetings Secretary, BMCC; Tara Cameron, President BMCC; Pepe Clarke, Exec Officer, NCC.

The intense Murray-Darling Basin negotiations are intended to produce an agreed allocation of water, away from existing extraction entitlements, to environmental flows. Since we can't negotiate with nature, 'business as usual' (BAU) has no future, and there will be losers. Emotions are running high. Cool heads are seeking sustainable agriculture.

But here is another consideration that will be alien to all involved in the negotiations, for those with a long term perspective (which would, I hope, apply to all members of ConSoc) - **agriculture per se is not sustainable.**

Such a proposition, at first appearance, sounds utterly absurd. But it is simply based on the principle that anything that we do or consume has an environmental effect. Human existence can be subdivided into pre- and post-agriculture. With agriculture came a distinct rise in population. Then, with fossil fuels, came a population explosion, and any indication of a slower growth, or shock horror, a population decline, causes alarm. Humans are addicted to growth. However, soon, in the post-fossil fuels age, we can expect human numbers to decline, probably steeply, although global warming might intervene with the same result. There will, of course, be collateral damage. The 6th great extinction of species, now well underway and due to human-caused habitat destruction and predation, will reach truly awful proportions.

What better way to disrupt, to destroy habitat, than to level a piece of land, eliminating all life on it, then to plant a single crop exclusively for human use. That is the nature of a monoculture; that's modern agriculture, and it has spread over more than a billion hectares of the earth. Indeed, any human-caused environmental damage prior to agriculture pales in comparison to what has come after.

The biosphere is progressively losing that most precious resource – soil. Every significant rain event

sees brown rivers laden with irreplaceable soil, yet the news reports simply focus on the toll on human structures and life. Dust storms take away less, but they take the fertile fines fraction. Being decomposed rock, soil is slow to be replaced – quickest in the wet tropics, slowest in cold, dry climates. Our lost soil won't be replaced in a thousand lifetimes; already we have lost perhaps one third of arable land, worldwide. Even seemingly perfect farmland like Iowa's USA food bowl has lost about half of its soil thickness in the few hundred years since farming began there.

Agriculture's problem is that it has been accompanied by, inter alia, erosion, deforestation, the global spread of chemical toxins, the death of coral reefs and species extinctions (including those that we know that we need). Palaeontologist Niles Eldredge writes [1], "Agriculture represents the single most profound ecological change in the entire 3.5 billion-year history of life.... Indeed, to develop agriculture is essentially to declare war on ecosystems." Agriculture is probably the most destructive thing humans have done to the planet." Human numbers figure as a fundamental driver of nearly all environmental degradation, and in less than one percent of our history our numbers jumped from perhaps five million to 6.7 billion, an increase of 134,000 percent. Yet, despite all the signs, the incessant growth of human numbers and per-capita consumption, and the insatiable lust for economic growth continue unabated.

The future, of whatever form that might take, will almost certainly involve localised horticulture and a markedly reduced population. More perceptive minds than mine are evaluating this topic, with some unpalatable implications.

Regardless, we've been living the dream, but is it a fool's paradise?

[1] <http://www.actionbioscience.org/newfrontiers/eldredge2.html>

Learning to Live with Fire in the Lower Blue Mountains Ian Brown

A seminar with the above title was held by the Nature Conservation Council's Hotspots program at Winmalee on Saturday 13 November. NCC was asked to run a community education event by the Grose Fire Group, a loose accumulation of folk concerned about aspects of the Grose Valley fire of 2006. Leftover funds paid the direct costs of the event. The Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute had earlier held similar events at Mt Wilson and Blackheath.

About 40 people attended at Winmalee to hear and question 5 speakers: Dr Stuart Matthews (CSIRO) on fuel and fire behaviour, Glenn Meade (NPWS) on Blue Mountains fire management, our own Hugh Paterson (BMCS) on fire and fauna, Peter Belshaw (BMCC) on Council fire management and David Hoadley (Rural Fire Service) on risk planning.

Some interesting themes emerged. Fire ecology and fire hazard are highly site specific and every bit of bush is different, so practices cannot be transferred from one

region to another. Hazard reduction burning has some fire suppression value but is hard to organise and do, is of limited value in extreme conditions and starts to lose its benefit after 2-3 years. Fuels ain't necessarily fuels – available fuel depends on wetness. BMCC prefers to use mechanical means (trittering) rather than burning to manage fuels on their urban bushland interface. The bulk of fire funding currently goes to fire suppression, but most people would prefer to see more used for upfront planning and protection. The fire agencies are emphasising more and more that they can't protect every home with a 'red truck' and property owner responsibility is vital for adequate protection.

I strongly believe that better community information is a key path to achieving more rational, science-based and bio-centric fire management, to counter the ignorant media circus and shock-jock tirades that typically attend such matters. It was an interesting forum and I recommend any future events to folk interested in this complex topic. Ian Brown.

ADVANCE NOTICE

Planning workshop with a focus
on the Blue Mountains and Local
Environment Plans

11am, 5 February 2011,
SES Hall Faulconbridge

The Landuse subcommittee has asked the Environmental Defenders' Office to come to the Mountains to help us get our heads around current planning laws. We will particularly focus on Local Environment Plans as the Blue Mountains LEP will be 'squeezed' into the 'one size fits all' standard LEP in the next few years. This will be very important for the environment as land currently protected through zoning may be opened up for development.

This workshop is a must for anyone interested in stopping inappropriate development in environmentally sensitive areas.

Call Tara on 0419 824 974
domtara@bigpond.com

Environment groups launch *Natural Advantage – a 2011 NSW State Election Agenda for Safeguarding the Benefits of Nature.*

Blue Mountains Conservation Society has joined with five other environment groups to outline what a future government could do to protect the environment in NSW. The groups involved are the Nature Conservation Council, the National Parks Association, the Colong Foundation, the Wilderness Society and the Total Environment Centre.

The launch occurred at Parliament House on Wednesday 24 November and meetings have been held with the Coalition and the Labor Party (a meeting with the Greens is planned). The document addresses areas such as: climate change, threatened species, forests and native vegetation, planning, rivers and wetlands, pollution and waste, and mining and gas. Each section contains specific suggestions. For instance, in respect to Climate Change, the groups ask a future government to prohibit new coal fired power stations and redirect subsidies from polluting to non-polluting activities from the 2011-2012 budget onwards.

Our local Blue Mountains concerns are discussed within the broader context. Section 2 is called 'Ecosystems and Protected Areas' and supports the implementation of the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 proposal. Members will know that we have been working hard to get Mt Airley, Mt Genowlan as well as lands such as Newnes Plateau protected.

The document also includes a call for increased

THE BLACKHEATH CREEK IS RUNNING

The Blackheath Creek is running.
In the still air of the morning I can hear the water roar
Over rocks that now form rapids
And against the banks that are its shores.
The rain has stopped its thunderous fall across high plateau
But the water's voice is calling as it tumbles down below.
It falls from the escarpment in a white spray like a veil
Cascading over rocks and logs, along its well worn trail.

Enclosed amongst the eucalypts, it runs along the valley floor.
In shaded cool its sound becomes a whispered hush
As on the deep and glassy pools reflects a perfect summer sky.
Then on and down amongst the rocks it runs in fast unbridled rush
Bubbling, foaming, gurgling, singing out its mountain song
Taking sticks and leaves and tiny rocks as it races on and on.
And all its world is shining bright, full of new life it seems.
The air abuzz with busy sounds, and green banks for sleeps and dreams.

A dazzling array of birds comes down where eddies form and slow.
They dive into the water, excitedly to bathe and flap their wings.
Drinking from the plentiful they revel in the scene.
Then perched up on a branch they preen and stretch as to their mates they sing.
Their varied chorus through the day performed in joy for free
Seems never ending and to come from every tree.
For all the songs are sung in turn more complex than before
This wondrous special music for which there is no score.

The water flow assumes a slower pace, its mood mysterious, serene.
When softly morning mists emerge along its course to drift in wispy curls and ebbs
I lose myself in its gentler grace and the calmness of a place
Where tiny jewels of water sparkle upon the spiders' webs.
The Blackheath Creek is running. It will join the Coxs too
Together they will run away for that's what rivers do
But we can share the pleasantness as long as rivers run
And with the singing birds and trees with nature we'll be one.

Reg Reid, Kanimbla Valley, NSW..

funding for National Parks, actions to address invasive species, and changes to the planning system. The Society is very concerned about plans to build an additional 7000 dwellings in the Mountains and change our Local Environment Plan.

We will be developing a short cover letter that outlines specific Blue Mountains issues contained in the election platform and discussing these with local candidates for the NSW state election.

**A MEET THE CANDIDATES is planned for 25
February 2011 at the Conservation Hut.**

See our website www.bluemountains.org.au for a copy of the *Natural Advantage* document.

Cycling and mountain biking in parks

BMCS' position

Society members may be aware, perhaps through public consultation forums, of an NPWS discussion paper (DP) entitled "*National Parks and Wildlife Service Cycling Policy Review and Sustainable Mountain Biking Strategy*"¹. Excerpts from the Society's detailed response² to the discussion paper are the basis for this article.

In summary

NPWS had cycling-linked tourism, mtn biking, and increased park visitation thrust upon it by political dictate. Conflict between NPWS' core *raison d'être* and compliance with dictate is salvaged by adequate sprinklings of 'sustainable', and comfort statements such as 'core responsibilities will remain paramount and uncompromised'.

The NPWS DP partially accommodates the 'wants' of the mtn bike lobby to the detriment of 'traditional' park users. Existing opportunities in parks for cycling (including mtn biking) are seemingly unacceptable because they are insufficiently challenging.

BMCS stands firm on its view that cycling and less extreme mtn biking are adequately served by existing Plans of Management.

BMCS opposes the dilution of NPWS' inadequate financial and human resources by the proposed construction of new mtn bike trails and mtn-bike friendly modifications to existing walking trails.

BMCS believes the environmental and cultural impacts of creating, managing and utilising challenging trails for 'extreme' mtn biking are substantially understated in the DP and should be objectively reassessed.

BMCS believes newly declared parks should receive establishment funding for cycling-friendly infrastructure.

Background

NPWS is reviewing its policy on cycling in parks on the basis that "*Well-managed cycling, like walking and scenic driving, enables the public to enjoy and learn about park values*"³. BMCS accepts this. However, NPWS notes that "*Illegal cycling in unauthorised areas and creation of unauthorised tracks is common in some NPWS parks...*"⁴ and hard to control through lack of resources. NPWS therefore aims to resolve the problem by partially meeting the 'wants' of some mtn bikers through a 'sustainable' mtn biking strategy. The latter involves constructing mtn bike tracks with suitably challenging technical sections in parks: viz., "*The priority for NPWS over the next 5–10 years will be to provide cross-country and all-mountain experiences rather than other styles of mountain biking*".

NPWS emphasises the growth and economic value of cycling and mtn biking (particularly the latter) and the 'wants' of mtn biking associations in terms of access to parks, but the driving force behind the NPWS policy revision and 'sustainable' mtn biking strategy is enshrined in the State Plan, the NSW Bike Plan, and the NSW Tourism Industry Plan.

The State Plan aims to increase the number of bicycle trips in the Greater Sydney Region by 5% by 2016 – this comprises all forms of cycling and is targeted at easing traffic congestion and 'health/fitness' improvements. It also aims for a 20% visitation increase to national parks by 2016. The DP cobbles the two aims together by making one contingent upon the other. It recognises "*...the importance of cycling for transport and recreation, and the important role of parks in...providing opportunities for the community to engage with the natural environment.*" **This is not so.** Cycling in terms of relaxed family outings is an acceptable way for communities to engage with the natural environment. Conversely, high-impact mtn biking detracts from communities engaging with the natural environment.

A small portion of the 72-page NSW Bike Plan invokes the Tourism Industry Plan and requires NPWS to promote recreational cycling, cycle tourism and job creation. NPWS **must** juggle its core responsibility towards conservation of the environmental and cultural values of parks, with the imposed responsibilities of promoting tourism and job creation⁵.

Current situation

Cycling, irrespective of the type of bike, is permitted in parks on public roads and as additionally specified in the pertinent Plans of Management. The latter typically accept cycling on park roads and management trails, including fire trails, but usually exclude cycling from wilderness and nature reserves.

This *status quo* provides ample opportunities for 'family-style' cycling and mtn biking, though not necessarily for the extreme end of the mtn biking sport. The calculations are not available for the Blue Mountains National Park, but the ratio of shared trails (walkers and cyclists) versus dedicated walking tracks generally exceeds 1⁶.

BMCS' formal position

BMCS accepts and supports cycling, including mtn biking, on public roads, park roads, designated management tracks and fire trails in National Parks (**excluding** declared Wilderness and Nature Reserves) provided that the use is in accordance with the pertinent Plan of Management.

BMCS is totally opposed to cycling, including mtn biking, in Wilderness and Nature Reserves, other than on any **public roads** entering the reserves. Should a current Plan of Management sanction cycling, including mtn biking, in any such reserve, the Plan of Management should be revised with a view to withdrawing the sanction.

BMCS opposes the construction of dedicated mtn bike trails and the modification of existing walking trails for shared use in existing parks. Both will deplete financial and human resources during construction and ongoing management, and thereby compromise NPWS' core conservation role for which it is currently underfunded. Furthermore, shared trails, even with appropriate signage and careful consistent management, are intrinsically dangerous. There are no

(Continued on page 7)

(Cycling & mtn bikes in NPs - Continued from page 6.)

prizes for guessing who loses when mtn biker and bike hit a walker.

BMCS contends that family cycling is consistent with relaxation and education through 'seeing' the values of the park, whereas 'extreme' mtn biking focuses on point-to-point achievement and technical challenges. The different experiences are akin to those gained from exploratory walking compared with task-oriented serious running. Parks should be for those wishing to experience conserved environmental and cultural values, rather than for those focusing on other parameters.

BMCS recognises that the establishment and management funding of newly declared parks should have provision for developing cycling-friendly trails based on existing infrastructure.

Brian Marshall, NPO

¹The paper can be accessed through https://mountainbiking.discussions.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/discussion_paper.pdf

² Available from bmc@bluemountains.org.au by requesting MtnBikesDiscPap_BMCSSubmission101021.pdf

³ All formal quotations are from the NPWS discussion paper and are fully referenced in the pdf in footnote 2.

⁴ This is mainly attributed to mtn bikers who are said to belong to the more youthful end of the mtn biking spectrum.

⁵ The juggling act must rationalise mtn bikers' 'wants' and slow their progression through resource-based arguments.

⁶ Royal NP ~1.5, Heathcote NP ~4 and Garrawarra SCA ~5; source Gary Schoer, Southern Sydney Branch of the NPA, 12/10/2010.



On Monday 29 November, at Govett's Leap, people of the Blue Mountains celebrated the 10th anniversary of the World Heritage Listing of the Greater Blue Mountains National Parks. It was raining, but there was shelter and nobody cared. The valley was shrouded in mist.

NSW Governor Marie Bashir launched the celebrations. The Patrimonto Pledge to protect the area was delivered by 12 Junior Ambassadors, students from six local primary schools who were born in 2000, the year of the listing. There was a large number of school children present. A group of children, "junior rangers", performed a play in tribute to the World Heritage status. Katoomba High School students involved in the Shadows in the Bush project were there to see their exhibition launched by Ian Brown. It was great to see so many children involved.

In the photograph, Governor Bashir, with NPWS District Manager Geoff Luscombe beside her, presents a certificate to Junior Ambassadors from Blackheath Public School. *Christine.*

What has the Land Use sub-Committee been up to?

The Society's Land Use sub-Committee has been very active in 2010 on a wide variety of issues. The Committee meets around once a month at Springwood and members undertake a variety of activities such as attending and speaking at Council Meetings, writing letters and submissions, liaising with Councillors and state and federal Members of Parliament, meeting and liaising with Council staff, and undertaking on-the-ground inspections.

Issues which the sub-Committee has been dealing with recently include the following:

Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 1991. The major focus for the sub-Committee is the current process to review and update LEP 1991 which covers the rural areas and urban fringes of the Blue Mountains Local Government Area. The Committee has been liaising with Council staff, via face-to-face meetings, to get a better understanding of Council's approach to updating LEP 1991, and to ensure consistency with the environmental outcomes in LEP 2005 (which covers the urban areas). The sub-Committee has presented Council with a report identifying some key areas within LEP 1991, which the Society believes have environmental significance but which may be impacted by future re-development such as subdivision. The Report also identified issues with Council's current

vegetation mapping. The sub-Committee will continue to meet with Council in 2011.

Megalong Valley Clearing of Native Vegetation development application. The sub-Committee made a submission opposing this development, and attended and spoke at the relevant Council meeting, where the development was approved. The sub-Committee is seeking to meet with Council to discuss the development application and the reasons for approval, as the Society believes it sets a disturbing precedent in terms of clearing native vegetation in the Valley.

Downhill Bike Tracks- Eastern Escarpment. The sub-Committee has concerns in regard to the development of downhill bike tracks along the eastern escarpment, given the potential for tracks to impact on state and Commonwealth listed endangered ecological vegetation communities and the scenic values of the escarpment. The sub-Committee has made submissions to Council on the issues and been liaising with Council staff, Councillors and representatives of the bike clubs in an attempt to provide facilities which have minimal impacts on the environment.

The sub-Committee are a friendly group of people and Anne always provides a good cup of tea and a great supper! If you are interested in coming along please contact Tara Cameron.

World Heritage, 10 years on ...

Robin Mosman

I still remember the euphoria on the night in 2000 when ConSoc members first celebrated the World Heritage listing of the Blue Mountains. The Hut was packed to capacity with over a hundred exultant members, toasting the event with champagne provided by Ross Coster, and we were all so happy. We were happy for two reasons.

Firstly because the listing was the culmination of huge effort by some of the committee members of the Society.

Because it needs to be said that the nomination for World Heritage listing didn't just happen because some inspired politicians or bureaucrats thought that this was something important that needed to be done.

The nomination happened because of the vision and intense lobbying of inspired conservationists who realised the importance of such a listing in acknowledging the value of the Blue Mountains.

People like Alex Colley and Keith Muir of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness, who first proposed WH listing in 1987 and worked tirelessly to achieve it. People like Conservation Society committee members Les Coyne, Imre Gahl and Ross Coster, who lobbied personally at the highest levels of government, meeting with the Prime Minister and leader of the Opposition, writing endless letters.

The Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute website says that the nomination *"was prepared jointly by the Australian Government and NSW State governments following years of public concern for recognition of the area and dedication to its conservation"*.

We must always remember that without this *'public concern'*, this huge vision and effort by people who love and value the Mountains, the nomination would never have happened, and the listing would never have happened.

We must always remember it because the second reason we were all so happy and excited that night was because we were convinced that the World Heritage listing would give our beloved Blue Mountains greater protection, that all levels of government would now be conscious of the importance of this unique area and the need to preserve it.

And yet only four short years later, we found ourselves having to take the NSW government to court when the Deputy Director of the Department of Environment and Planning gave an approval by special licence for the filming at Butterbox Point of scenes for the American war film *Stealth*. It took the joint efforts of the National Parks Association, the Colong Foundation for Wilderness, the Blue Mountains Conservation Society and the Environmental Defenders Office to defend a beautiful Heritage listed designated Wilderness area from the very government department entrusted with its care and protection.

We had a wonderful party the night we won that fight too, remember?

The World Heritage listing has been a great achievement for the Blue Mountains, but we must always remember that on its own it cannot protect them. It is us, the people who love and value the Mountains, and who are its true advocates, who are its ultimate protection. The price we must pay for our beautiful environment is our eternal vigilance.

'Win-win' as Centennial (Clarence Colliery) withdraws DA 504-00 MOD 1

DA 504-00 MOD 1 was 'soon' to have been determined by the NSW Department of Planning. And based on the Department's compliant record relating to the coal industry, conditional approval was a strong probability.

Centennial Coal (Clarence Colliery) has now formally withdrawn this application (DA 504-00 MOD 1) to expand its existing consent to supply domestic coal markets by truck. As a result, the communities from Clarence through Mt Victoria and along the Great Western Highway will be spared a massive increase in daily coal truck movements (see "Win for residents..." Blue Mountains Gazette, Wed 17 Nov 2010 p14).

The Society strongly opposed the Environmental Assessment prepared in support of the DA. BMCS was a signatory to a joint submission made by a range of community groups from Bell, Mt Victoria, Blackheath and the mid-mountains. It concurrently made a major submission in its own right and raised the matter at a meeting with Centennial's General Manager Western Operations and their Group Environment Manager.

Centennial largely sought the modification to meet potential growth in domestic niche markets, principally in NSW but also in Victoria and South Australia. The Society contended that current domestic markets could be satisfied under the existing Development Consent, any substantial growth should be met by rationalising the markets and refocusing on rail-based distribution, and the cost-efficiency of road haulage, customer convenience, and profit margins should not be the principal determinants of DA 504-00 MOD 1. The Society also challenged the competence of the Environmental Assessment in terms of its lack of consultation and compliance with planning and environmental guidelines, its confusing and seemingly inconsistent data on truck movements and other operational matters, its extraordinarily one-sided cost-benefit analysis, and its disregard of the implications for greenhouse gas emissions and the impact of 'peak oil'.

Centennial now suggests that a significant change in the requirement for additional domestic supply has resulted in the application's withdrawal. The decision will not adversely affect Clarence's economic viability, presumably because the increasing export market (and coal price) will more than compensate, but it will (inadvertently?) yield a positive outcome for the local communities and their environment.

Irrespective of whether or not the withdrawal is a fortuitous convergence of community and company interests, the Society believes that commonsense has prevailed and that Centennial should be congratulated on the 'win-win' outcome.

Brian Marshall.

Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

Last month I described the bower of the Satin Bowerbird. The bower is not a nest, but is built by the male solely for the purpose of attracting, and mating with, females. The actual nest is built only by the female - a saucer-shaped structure in the fork of a tree, where she lays typically two eggs and rears the young, unaided.

Ever since the 1980s there has been a bower at the Leura Cascades picnic area. In the 25 years since I've been visiting the site, this bower has changed its location at least six times but remains generally within an area of about 50 metres radius. About four years ago a distinctive blue plastic toy Joker turned up in the bower as part of the bird's collection. After some months this disappeared and was subsequently found in another bower in a private garden 700 metres away as the bowerbird flies.

Rival male bowerbirds will frequently wreck each others' bowers or steal the decorations. I have seen this happen a number of times at Leura Cascades, and each time his bower is wrecked the owner resolutely re-builds the walls as quickly as possible. However, at the time of writing, this bower has been dismantled and after several weeks, no new one has appeared. All that remains are a few scattered blue objects on a neglected floor of twigs. Has the owner died? If so, one would expect a new male to take ownership of the vacant territory soon.

Researchers studying the Great Bowerbird of northern Australia have recently published an interesting paper which touches on the big question of whether birds can have a sense of aesthetics. The Great Bowerbird (which collects mostly bone-coloured objects) was found to arrange its decorations so that the smallest items are closest to the avenue entrance and the larger items further away. When the objects were rearranged by the researchers so that the size gradient was reversed, the bird put them back to the original arrangement within three days! The researchers surmised that this arrangement made the scene more aesthetically appealing from the females' viewpoint within the avenue, and suggested that the male bird was manipulating perspective to make the bower appear smaller and himself therefore larger.

As for Satin Bowerbirds, I have noticed a definite tendency for the largest blue objects to be placed on the perimeter of the bower.

The widespread rains in 2010 resulted in the absence of many waterbirds and nomadic species from our region as they dispersed to areas further inland. Those species which remain are enjoying what seems to be a good breeding season with plentiful insect food and seeding plants. Over the next couple of years we should see the positive effects of these conditions with increased birdlife in general.

Here's wishing all readers a bird-rich new year!

Carol Proberts origma@westnet.com.au

Reference: John A. Endler, Lorna C. Endler, and Natalie R. Doerr. **Great Bowerbirds Create Theaters with Forced Perspective When Seen by Their Audience.** *Current Biology*, 2010; Vol.20, Issue 18, pp1679-1684, 09 September 2010.

Win for Marine Conservation in NSW

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW and National Parks Association of NSW would like to extend a big **thank you for all your support** in our fight to block the outrageous bill for a five-year moratorium on marine parks introduced by the Shooters Party.

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

More than 18,000 emails were sent to the Premier, Cabinet Ministers and the Opposition in support of marine parks, not to mention the flood of phone calls to local members and the generous donations that made our successful campaign possible. Thank you one and all.

It's incredible what our combined efforts have achieved! **NSW Cabinet has reversed its support for the bill and our strong hope for better protection of NSW's precious marine life and habitats remains alive.**

This is an amazing win for marine conservation in NSW Let's look ahead to a more sustainable future for marine parks and sanctuaries in NSW.

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.

Kanangra, Jenolan, Dragons and Butterflies

On 10-11 November the interpretive bushwalkers went to Kanangra Walls and Jenolan Caves. We walked out along the Kanangra Plateau, with grand views over the wild mountainous country. Wildflowers were pretty, a special surprise was finding thin upright stems with flowers of bladderworts standing out of a swampy area.

There were lots of butterflies, including the Caper Whites on their annual migration back to the Hunter region or beyond where they lay their eggs on their larval food plants. Beneath the cliffs, the wind in the valley was blowing them around.

We spent the night at Jenolan Caves House and next day did a tour of the Temple of Doom. Our guide was a young woman named Annalise who was excellent, with lots of information about the caves, their history and their formation, and none of the nonsense that so many of the cave guides go on with. It was very refreshing.

We were told that four platypus now live in the Blue Lake, but we didn't see any. The early morning frog chorus was amazing. There were lots of Eastern Water Dragons along the lake and river and a few Red-bellied Black Snakes. There were butterflies, including Caper Whites.

In recent years I've written about the amazing mass migration of Caper White butterflies that happens over a day or two, usually some time in November. (I've been known to get quite excited about it.) When this phenomenon occurs the butterflies seldom stop to feed. This year's migration has been different - over several weeks, in waves, probably between rainy days. As I write this (on 5th Dec) with more showers imminent, 20 or so Caper White Butterflies are partying in my garden, feeding on the tea tree and pink-flowered exotic shrub outside my window. Christine Davies.



Photo: Caper White Butterfly, feeding

Australian Museum, College Street, Sydney

Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2010 Exhibition: 4 December 2010 to 13 March 2011

See some of the world's most spectacular wildlife and nature. From frolicking pelicans to oxen braced for a blizzard, through to signs of first snow on treetops and birds in flight, these photographic images offer an extraordinary insight into the beauty, drama and diversity of the natural world.

My Photo Studio: Bring your own camera into the Australian Museum and take shots like pro in this fully equipped interactive studio space: Photograph live spiders, snails and insects; Get up close with micro and macro shots; Practise your still-life photography on a selection of animal specimens from the Museum's collections Discover the amazing world that we live in – only at the Australian Museum, Sydney for a limited time. See Australian Museum website for more information and admission prices.

Caper White Butterflies, migrating north,
pausing to sip the dew.
Drosera binata, insect eating plant,
sticky fingers reaching out -
wearing a garland of white butterflies.

Welcome to new members

Alison Bremner, Wentworth Falls
Louise Archibald, Wallerawang
Stuart McGloin, Wentworth Falls

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

A BOXING DAY EMERGENCY

Not long ago Alan Page and I enjoyed a pleasant morning, full of sunshine, blue sky and the neighbourliness of several Glossy Black Cockatoos, out along Kings Tableland, walking down part of Kedumba Pass. From this old motor road built in 1953 we looked down on the remains of the Maxwell farm clearly visible in the green corridor between the cliffs of the Tableland and Mt. Solitary's eastern slope.

Established in the second half of the 19th century by William Maxwell senior and his wife Mary Ann, the farm was for all its working life perhaps the loneliest human outpost in the Blue Mountains. Though only a relatively short distance from Wentworth Falls, its nearest access to Kings Tableland was via an old Aboriginal path known as the Goat Track, picking its way up the cliff not far from where we stood. A steep, precarious and difficult journey, even in good weather!

While reflecting on this long and lonely history, I was reminded of a remarkable incident that occurred there almost ninety years ago. On Boxing Day 1926, when several young men holidaying in Wentworth Falls made their way into the valley to shoot rabbits a moment of carelessness ended with one of them suffering a bullet wound to the kidney. Eighteen year-old Allan Crago was carried to a hut on the Maxwell farm where the seriousness of his situation became clear when a doctor was fetched – his survival depended on a major operation, but he would certainly die if moved! The isolation of the Kedumba Valley had suddenly become a matter of life and death.

Young Crago, however, was lucky. His father was wealthy, owner of the Crago Flour Mills, and his uncle was Hoskins the steel magnate. With money and manpower no problem, the family proceeded to conjure a medical 'miracle' that drew the attention of the press and wide public interest. The primitive hut in which Allan was lodged was transformed into a weatherproof 'hospital', nurses and doctors were summoned and tents erected to house them and members of the Crago family.

Down the Goat Track, in inclement weather, came the operating table, delicate instruments, anaesthetics and other medical equipment. Abundant food supplies were brought in and when an eminent Macquarie Street surgeon was engaged to perform the operation, he and

his nurse were sped to the Mountains by car and, like everyone else, walked into the valley via the slippery and treacherous pass.

As events unfolded like a modern soap opera and reports filtered out of the valley to be consumed by an eager public, Crago's damaged kidney was successfully removed on 6th January. This did not, however, signal the end of the large medical complex that had transformed the Maxwell farm for it was some time before the patient was strong enough to be stretchered from the valley, thus ending what the *Daily Guardian* considered one of the strangest episodes in the annals of NSW medical history.

John Low <johnlow@iprimus.com.au>



Correction: In the October *Hut News* (No.275) I incorrectly stated that Henri Gilbert, the French globetrotter, stayed at the Hurlstone guesthouse in Leura in 1899. I did not check my facts! It would have been the Hurlstone in Katoomba at which he stayed, for it was not until 1903 that the proprietor, Mrs. Knight, transferred that name to her new guesthouse in Leura.

The Management Committee was thrilled to receive, on behalf of the Society, the award from NCC, but especially pleased that our president, Tara, received the Myles Dunphy award.

Tara has been an exemplary president. She manages a home with small child, a job teaching high school maths and also devotes myriad hours to all the issues the Conservation Society involves itself in. We can never rest on our laurels, as soon as one situation appears to be resolved, another one takes its place. Our monthly meetings always cover a broad range of subjects which we have to discuss and more often than not, it is Tara, who writes the letter, arranges to meet up with one politician or another, - as well, this year, with barristers and our legal advisers. She shows appreciation of the work of other members of the committee, and tries to speak with as many of the Society's members as possible.

As a long term member of the MC I would like to add my personal thanks to Tara for always having time to listen to problems and giving excellent advice.

Congratulations to Tara for doing a marvellous job and congratulations for being chosen for this prestigious award. Liz Reyswoud.

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 |
|--------|--|------------------------------|---|------|-------|----------|
| Dec 18 | Christmas Party Lunch at Wentworth Falls Country Club Deposit \$10, Bookings essential to Bob or Jim. Followed by a walk down to Wentworth Creek via Evans Street. \$25.50 per head. Alcohol/drinks at premises. No BYO.& | Bob 4757 2694 | Wentworth Falls Country Club Blaxland Road, Wentworth Falls 12.30 | 2 | | |
| Jan 1 | NEW YEARS DAY. National Pass | Meredith 4782 4823 | Wentworth Falls Station CP 8.30 | ~6 | 2/3 | Katoomba |
| Jan 8 | Wentworth Pass | Ros 4733 3880 | Wentworth Falls Station CP 8.30 | ~6 | 2/3 | Katoomba |
| Jan 15 | Leura Forest | Meredith 4782 4823 | Leura Station CP 8.30 | ~6 | 2/3 | Katoomba |
| Jan 22 | Surprise walk - weather dependent | Emanuel 4757 1090 | Leura Station CP 8.30 | ~6 | 2/3 | Katoomba |
| Jan 29 | Federal Pass – Leura end – completed 1900 to connect Leura Falls to Katoomba Falls | Jim 4758 6009 | Leura Station CP 8.30 | ~6 | 2/3 | Katoomba |
| Feb 5 | Federal Pass – Katoomba end – completed 1900 to connect Leura Falls to Katoomba Falls | Emanuel 4757 1090 | Gearins Hotel (Katoomba) CP 8.30 | ~6 | 2/3 | 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 Judith Dyer, 4758 6310, judithbushwalker@hotmail.com

| Date | Description | Grade | Contact | Meet |
|--------|--|-------|--------------------|---|
| Dec 13 | Berghofer's Pass Mt. Vic. Explore early Blue Mountains' road. | 1 | Mary 47 57 4569 | Mt. Vic Railway Stn. 9.45 a.m. |
| Dec 20 | CHRISTMAS PARTY. Short walk in Rhodo Gds Followed by lunch at Hotel. (Lunch bookings Judith 4758 6310. | 1 | Ros 47 33 83880 | Gardner's Inn, Blackheath. Walk 1045 a.m. and Lunch 12.30 |
| Jan 3 | Popes Glen – Braeside. Forest glen & waterfalls. Blackheath Station 8.45. Ken 4758 6310. Grade 2 | | | |
| Jan 10 | CITY : Dee Why – Manly. Great coastal walk with ocean/beach views. Top of escalator, Central Station 9.30 Maurice 4739 4942 Grade 2 | | | |
| Jan 17 | Grand Canyon, Blackheath. Great views & rock formations. Blackheath Station 8.45. Car pool. Eddie 4784 2691 Grade 3. | | | |
| Jan 24 | BUS TRIP. Wallace Lake, Nr Lithgow. Easy walk around lake followed by BBQ - BYO. Book & Pay Keith 4736 1010:\$12. BMCC Depot Springwood 8.am. Mary Flynn 6351 3135 Grade 1. | | | |
| Jan 31 | Nature Trail, Wentworth Falls. Great views. Wentworth Falls Station 9.15. Christine 4757 2864 Grade 2 | | | |
| Feb 7 | Transit of Venus, Woodford, Historic waterfall circuit, Woodford Station 9.00, Ken 4758 6310 Grade 2 | | | |
| Feb 14 | CITY : Spit – Manly. Coastal views & swim. Top of escalator, Central Station 9.30. Ros 4733 3880 Grade 2 10km's | | | |

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

| | | | | | | |
|--------|--|---|----------------------|--|--|--|
| Dec 16 | CHRISTMAS PARTY Razz Restaurant, Springwood 12.30 p.m. Contact Gail 47 82 12 15. | | | | | |
| Jan 6 | Coachwood Glen. Cool, easy walk through rainforest. Lunch optional. | 2 | Marie 4787 1257 | Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9.45. car pool. | | |
| Jan 13 | Berghoffer's Pass, Mt Victoria. Explore old road crossing. | 2 | Maurice 4739 4942 | Mt Victoria Station 9.45am. Car pool. | | |
| Jan 20 | Wentworth Falls Lake. Picnic and stroll around the water's edge. Bring lunch. | 1 | Gail 4782 1215 | Stockyard car park, Wentworth Falls Station, 11.30 am. | | |
| Jan 27 | Katoomba Cascades by night. Enjoy a BBQ by the floodlit walk around the falls. Bring dinner. | 1 | Gail 4782 1215 | Katoomba Cascades kiosk 6.30 pm. | | |