



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

Blue Mountains Conservation Society
Monthly Meeting
SATURDAY MORNING, 30th July, 10 am
Wentworth Falls School of Arts Theatre

JIM SMITH

THINGS SEEN AT DUSK: 35 YEARS OF NATURE OBSERVATION AT WENTWORTH FALLS AND NEARBY

Dusk is a busy time in the Blue Mountains bushland. Birds, reptiles and insects and other daytime creatures are having their last feed of the day, finding shelter, settling down for the night. Birds, mammals, insects and other creatures of the night are beginning to stir. Soon it will be their time ... to search for food, to hunt, to look for a mate, to explore and defend their territory.

Dusk in the Blue Mountains bushland is a marvellous time of day. The changing light, the glow of twilight, the shadows, all the bush activity ... an amazing free show. And it's all happening just a few minutes from where we live.

Jim Smith has been studying this special time of day for over three decades and will present stories of some of the remarkable things he has seen and heard at Wentworth Falls and beyond.

Jim considers himself very lucky he spent his childhood without a television in the house. He feels that people, and especially children, today are missing out on contact with the natural world with so much of their time spent on computers, televisions and other electronic technology. He is promoting the idea of spending one hour a day to reconnect with Nature. The best times are at dawn and dusk.

It's a powerful thing to do the same short walk every day, see the daily changes in Nature, to observe the changing of the seasons.

Jim's message is: Don't just go for a bushwalk. Stand still, float, immerse yourself in Nature. There's an amazing world out there. Go out and have a look.

We are so lucky to live in the Blue Mountains where every one of us is within a ten minute walk of the bush.

The meeting will be held at the Wentworth Falls School of Arts, corner of Great Western Highway and Adelaide Street (opposite Falls Road), on Saturday 30 July, starting at 10 am.

Visitors are very welcome.

BMCS Native Plant Nursery

Our Lawson nursery is closed for sales over winter but will re-open on Wednesday 3rd August. We will also trial Saturday morning sales from 6th August and continue these if demand is sufficient.

Look for us at the Blackheath Community Markets on 7th August and the Lawson Magpie Markets on 21st August where we will have many bargains and much new stock to tempt you at the same low prices. Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager.

The Magic of Winter Magic

The Winter Magic Festival was a great success, with sunshine breaking through the clouds after a week of rain. Blue Mountains Conservation Society's stall was in Main Street, opposite the station. Lots of people called in to say hello or to find out about our campaigns. Thank you to Laurie and Marie and others who worked on the stall.

Laurie (photographed in our stall, below) was a member of the Strobos team and has been prominent in our Drink Tap Water Campaign. He was able to demonstrate, via a model supplied by Blue Mountains City Council, why managing water sustainably is important.

The parade was huge, and so much fun. It went on for ages. Winter Magic has a wonderful atmosphere and thousands of happy people lined the streets to watch the parade.

Lachlan and Tara and some other members of our management committee carried the 'Protect the Gardens of Stone' banner up Katoomba Street in the parade, and during the day we collected over 300 signed form letters asking our politicians to stop the open cut coal mine in Ben Bullen State Forest.

Well done to everyone who participated!



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HUT NEWS EDITORIALS

The deadline for the next issue of Hut News
is **23 July 2011**

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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.

Orchids of the Coalpac Extension Chris Jonkers

The most alluring of wildflowers to greet visitors to the GoS2 area at almost anytime of the year must surely be the many species of orchids. Sadly some of the most profuse orchid areas in Ben Bullen State Forest are under threat from open-cut mining as part of the Coalpac Pty Ltd Consolidation Project. Regular visitors to the Ben Bullen SF will be familiar with at least 20 orchid species that occur within the proposed mine disturbance area. Yet the Coalpac Flora Assessment submitted as part of the EPBC Act referral only identified 5 orchid species on site.

During spring the woodlands of the lower slopes near Cullen Bullen are ablaze with the yellow Donkey Orchids *Diuris sulphurea* and *Diuris maculata*. Intermingled with them are the Caladenia's (now called Petalochilus due to another tedious name change) *Petalochilus catenatus* (White Fingers) and *P. carneus* (Pink Fingers). The Common Onion Orchid (*Microtis unifolia*) may also be seen. On higher ground keep an eye open for the purple Waxlip Orchid (*Glossodia major*), and on sheltered sides of pagodas for the cream and white Streaked Rock Orchid (*Dockrillia striolata*) and Rock Orchid (*Dendrobium speciosum*). Alas yet another name change has renamed them *Dendrobium striolatum* and *Thelychiton speciosus* respectively.

In late spring hundreds of Dotted Sun Orchids (*Thelymitra ixioides*) begin to appear, a glorious spectacle especially when they occur with the Common Fringe-lily (*Thysanotus tuberosus*) which flowers at the same time. In pagoda heathlands small colonies of the Duck Orchid (*Caleana major*) and Small Duck Orchid (*Paracaleana minor*) may be seen.

January is keenly looked forward to, because this is when a profusion of pink Hyacinth Orchids (*Dipodium roseum*) appear from seemingly nowhere, as do the elegant Ladies Tresses (*Spiranthes australis*). Also worth looking for at this time is the Small Tongue Orchid (*Cryptostylis leptochila*), which has a purple underside to the leaf. Blue Mountains folk may be more familiar with the Large Tongue Orchid (*Cryptostylis subulata*), which has leaf surfaces that are green/yellow on both sides, and appears to be more common in the Blue Mountains west to about the Darling Causeway.

And just when you thought the orchid season was over, the Autumn/Winter species begin to appear. These include the Mosquito Orchid's (*Acianthus fornicatus* and *A. exsertus*), Ant and Bird Orchids (*Chiloglottis* sp), Parson's Bands (*Eriochilus cucullatus*), and several Greenhoods including the Tiny Greenhood (*Pterostylis parviflora*).

We have yet to sight the Bristly Helmet Orchid (*Corybas hispidus*), recorded on the NPWS Wildlife Atlas as occurring near the Coalpac site in 1956. Hopefully we will do so before the area is sacrificed to the rapacious coal-god.

Orchids are one of the many highlights of the GoS2 area, yet sadly are no better protected by law than the most common gum, wattle, native grass or bracken fern. Coalpac have downplayed the existence of Orchids in their Flora Assessment.

Rarely if ever are orchids replanted as part of mine rehabilitation projects. When their habitat is destroyed, these Orchids will be gone forever.

If you want to help save these orchids for future generations to enjoy, write to the Premier and say that the scale of open-cut mining proposed in a publicly reserved State Forest by Coalpac Pty Ltd is overwhelmingly against the public interest, and is in direct conflict with this state's efforts to conserve biodiversity and reduce deforestation. Chris Jonkers.

Photo: *Paracaleana minor*





Protect the Gardens of Stone

“Say NO to open cut mining!”



Over 1088 hectares of public forest within this uniquely scenic and biodiverse area are now at risk of exclusive occupation and destruction by open cut coal mining.

Passionate about protecting the Gardens of Stone? ...

Help us get letters in the Sydney Morning Herald!

On Wednesday 22nd June, I was very happy to present 893 form letters to the Member for Bathurst, Paul Toole to table in Parliament for the attention of the NSW Premier, Barry O’Farrell. There are still more coming in to give to him later which is fantastic!

Thanks to EVERYONE for their mighty efforts so far!

Our campaign to ‘Protect the Gardens of Stone’ has had great media coverage all around the state. Recently, I was interviewed on Rural ABC NSW. The item had such a high level of public interest that this was broadcast nationally all day, including in the ‘Country Hour’ segment.

Newspaper coverage has been extensive and so far involves the Blue Mountains Gazette, Lithgow Mercury, Maitland Mercury, Mudgee Guardian and the Newcastle Herald.

The missing link is?... THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD!

How good would it be for decision making politicians to see a stack of your letters in that paper? It would certainly help to ensure your local voice is heard by every politician and representative in Sydney.

There is plenty of info you can talk to within previous editions of Hut News, so in the first two weeks of July, write a letter that’s less than 200 words long and submit it to:

Sydney Morning Herald GPO Box 3771, Sydney NSW 2001
or email: letters@smh.com.au

On a final note, I’ve had a flurry of phone calls from recently from local residents. Coalpac Pty Ltd recently updated their proposal to reflect community concerns, but many residents remain dissatisfied.

The open-cut mining boundaries were initially mapped-out to be quite close to the Cullen Valley Village. Coalpac’s new map shows it’s been moved back a bit and has been replaced by underground mining; but overall, the volume of mining within close proximity has in fact increased!

There are obviously concerns about property damage from blasts, including to the relocated Catholic Church. Residents are well aware that no one is, or can safeguard the value of their home once the town is virtually surrounded by an open-cut coal mine.

A lot of residents are miners themselves but don’t wish to live in a dust-pit worrying about the health of their children. What guarantees can Coalpac provide regarding their health if any?

Coalpac also continues to ignore the wishes of the Department of Parks & Wildlife Services to have the Ben Bullen State Forest put within a reservation system as a matter of priority.

Thanks for all your support – let’s keep striving towards protecting the Gardens of Stone!

Justin McKee, Gardens of Stone Campaigner

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On page 12 we have again included a letter to your Local MP for you to sign and send to us. If you’ve already sent a letter, you can get another member of your family or a friend to sign one. Let’s keep up the pressure!

Stop Coal Seam Gas Rally

Peter Green

On Sunday 29th May, I attended an anti-CSG (coal seam gas) rally at Austinmer Beach in the Illawarra. The event was organised by the local group ‘Stop CSG Illawarra’. The crowd of over 3000 was over twice the expected size, and attracted a squadron of media helicopters. The mood was buoyant and friendly, with people coming from far and wide, and the anticipated publicity was probably achieved. Hopefully, politicians were listening and are not too beholden to the energy industry and their ‘suicidal self-interest’ (to quote Tim Flannery in his book ‘Here on Earth’).

The only negative for me, judging by my observations of the car parks and trains, is the overwhelming number of people who came by car rather than by public transport. People need to walk the walk to demonstrate that they are seeing the bigger environmental picture.

The spectre of CSG exploitation hangs over much of eastern Australia (all those areas underlain by Mesozoic Basins like the Sydney, Clarence-Morton, Gunnedah, Surat and Bowen basins), and that includes the Blue Mountains World Heritage areas. I suspect that, due to passionate public representations, there would be far greater control on injected liquids during the ground fracturing process, but damage to aquifers via changed hydrologic regimes and releases of previously trapped methane will still be a problem, as will the inadvertent or careless release of this methane into the atmosphere and the ground surface damage from surface installations and access construction.

Coal seam gas is not a solution to the greenhouse gas problem; it is just less damaging than coal combustion and is not an alternative for renewable, non-GHG energy sources. We in the BMCS need to remain vigilant to these threats, and act politically to thwart deleterious environmental developments – all of us.

Peter Green, Publicity Officer

The Environmental Advantages of “Organic” Food Craig Linn

The plain English adjective “organic” simply signifies something living, or some product arising from a living organism. However, over recent years the term has taken on a much more specific meaning in the context of food production; for when a food is *certified* “Organic” by an accredited certifying body (see Side Bar) then a great many good things are implied.

First let us acknowledge that all food production will in some way disrupt and alter the pristine natural environment. What differentiates the organic approach from most conventional agriculture is that organic methods explicitly seek to minimise impacts on surrounding ecosystems, and ensure that cropped/pastured lands are bio-diverse in their own right and improve in health and resilience from year to year. Typical organic farming practices include:

- ◇ Improving the fertility, biological activity, and organic matter of the soil through such methods as: composting, cultivation of green manures as part of crop rotation programs, well timed and minimal tillage techniques – all within the context of conserving and recycling nutrients on a farm wide basis.
- ◇ Organic and mineral (e.g. rock dusts) fertilisers are used where required, rather than synthetically derived and highly soluble fertilisers which are prohibited.
- ◇ A focus on intrinsically resilient and locally adapted crops; with any pests, diseases, or weeds being managed primarily by biological and physical means. Synthetically derived pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides are prohibited, and there are extremely strict controls on the use of naturally derived agents (e.g. pyrethrin).
- ◇ There is an absolute prohibition on the use of genetically modified organisms and their products;

similarly the use of ionising radiations and nanotechnology is prohibited.

- ◇ All livestock are raised in free-range open-air environments that allow for the expression of natural behaviours. Animal feed is fresh on farm or itself organically certified if brought in.
- ◇ Synthetic growth hormones are prohibited, as is the routine use of antibiotics on livestock.
- ◇ Buffer zones are provided, as required, to protect adjacent natural areas or to protect the organic farm itself from unwanted drift of sprays etc from adjacent non-organic properties.

Such practices result in a healthy environment for farm workers and animals, as well as producing food that is safe and healthy for consumers. However, these same organic practices also result in very significant environmental benefits. These include:

- ◇ Nutrient runoff to adjacent lands and watercourses is minimised as organic methods build fertility through increasing stable organic matter (humus), rather than by using highly soluble synthetic fertilisers.
- ◇ Similarly, as highly toxic synthetic pesticides etc are not used on organic farms, there is absolutely minimal runoff of toxins to adjacent lands and watercourses.
- ◇ Organic standards specify that more than 5% of total farm lands must be devoted to “*regionally appropriate tree, bush and/or native grassland areas so as to enhance on-farm flora and fauna protection and biodiversity.*” Many organic farmers adopt a much higher figure, 20% is not uncommon.

(Continued on page 5)

Walking among the pagodas in Ben Bullen State Forest

Sue Nicol

Following on from the Gardens of Stone protest and banner ‘drop’, the Interpretive walking group explored more of this spectacular area which is threatened by the expansion of coal mining.

We drove through the Ben Bullen state forest, past Long Swamp and up onto the ridge between the Wolgan and Capertee valleys. Reminders that coal mining tunnels under this ridge from the Baal Bone Colliery appear in the form of warning signs of mine subsidence and on the top of the ridge a huge ventilation shaft and noisy fan. However the views are unspoiled; the Wolgan Valley resort is hard to pick out even with binoculars and Donkey Mountain and the Newnes Plateau dominate the landscape at the first lookout.

After leaving the vehicles we climb up onto the ridge and look down on pagodas and cliffs towering over the Wolgan Valley. Then we catch glimpses of the Capertee Valley through the trees to the left and finally a veritable maze of pagodas covering the ridges and slopes. Following the ridge we reach a steep, fern filled gully that cuts through it near Mt McLean and scramble

down to explore the cave and leave our names in the biscuit tin (along with other Consoc walkers from previous visits over the years)!

We then set off to explore the pagoda maze above the gully and find a spectacular view of Pantone’s Crown rising magically in the blue haze in the Capertee Valley. During lunch, sitting on sun warmed rocks, the lyre birds start to call and soon they are on every side, some near and some far and they continue to serenade us all the way back. We also found a display mound with their footprints clearly to be seen in the newly turned earth.

Such a special area and we all felt so privileged to be there. Surely the ugliness of opencast mining should never intrude. Sue Nicol.

Photo on next page: Pantone’s Crown rises magically in the blue haze in the Capertee Valley.

- ◇ Over the long term, with all the climate instability likely, organic systems will actually yield more. Long term (30 year) studies by the Rodale Institute in the U.S. have shown that in typical years organic and conventional systems have fairly similar yields, but in adverse years (very dry or very wet) the greater resilience of the organic soil produces significantly greater yields.
- ◇ Organic farms have a smaller carbon footprint, using up to a third (33%) less fossil fuel than conventional farms - primarily by not using synthetic nitrogen fertilizers which are extremely energy intensive to produce. No-till organic systems have produced even greater fossil fuel savings.
- ◇ Organic farms are also superb systems for the sequestration of carbon, for the simple reason that the primary focus of organic agriculture has always been building fertility through increasing the amount of stable organic matter (i.e. carbon) in soils.
- ◇ Finally, organic farms through their dedicated natural areas, their shelter belts, their crop biodiversity, and their overall toxin free nature provide a safe haven and respite for flora and fauna (including humans!) in this increasingly toxic and industrialised world.

To conclude, it is often remarked that organic produce is great but it is too expensive! The answer to this is actually complex as it involves an examination of the true cost of human food to our planet. But, in brief, the cost of organic food accurately reflects the cost to produce real food over the long term in a manner that does not destroy the soil and biodiversity nor treat animals as factory commodities - that is a truly sustainable and humane food production system. Conventional, synthetic-chemical based, food production is all too frequently not really agriculture at all, but rather

a form of *mining* that in the long run depletes the soil, depletes biodiversity, and depletes food of its vitality. In short, the true price of food will always be paid, either now in cash, or in the future through impoverished food and a degraded environment passed on to our children and grandchildren. An article later in the year will explicitly look at the cost issue of organic food, and show that organic food choices can easily be made that involve very little extra financially, but make a very big difference environmentally.

Craig Linn, Project Officer – Food and Environment

Australian Organic Standards

Two principal standards exist: the *Australian Certified Organic Standard 2010 (ACOS)* from the Biological Farmers of Australia (BFA), and *AS 6000-2009 Organic and Biodynamic Products* from Standards Australia. To be confident that a food item meets these standards then it needs to be *certified*; there are currently seven AQIS accredited certifiers in Australia. These certifying organisations ensure organic status from "paddock to plate" by rigorous checks and audits of the entire supply chain.

The easiest way to know that a food is certified organic is to look for the logo of one of the accredited certifiers. The seven logos are shown below



NIGHT BIRD

It was not what it seemed,
that dried up lump of wood,
piece of rotten branch
caught up where the tree trunk forked.
It moved, shuffled a wing,
opened great night-wise eyes,
became a frogmouth, preened.

Graham Alcorn
Leura Cascades lunch,
9 October 1988

Globally, the environment continues to suffer under attack from the 'dark forces' of some of mankind in so many ways that it is too easy, as conservationists, to be overwhelmed in our attempts to fight on such a plethora of fronts. This has been demonstrated recently by the multi-pronged attack by the O'Farrell government (marine parks, Dept of the Environment, urban sprawl, PV solar feed-in tariff retrospective legislation, proposed recreational shooting in state forests, etc). We respond variously, with some of us becoming exhausted from trying to fight on multiple fronts. I suspect that most conservationists, including ConSoc members, have opted to fight specific battles only. I recall one attendee at the 2008 Katoomba Environment Summit passionately explaining that the answer to all our environmental problems was permaculture. Attractive as permaculture is, with the recent rate of population growth giving the planet a population density of one person per square metre of land in about 750 years, we need to change more than our food production.

A risk in the specific battles approach is that we miss the interconnectedness of so many of the current and imminent global crises. For example, an Oxfam representative with whom I engaged last year was adamant that world food supply was simply a matter of distribution (the global Oxfam assessment), with no link to population, despite there being a wealth of information supporting Paul Erhlich's formula, $I = P * A * T$ (our impact on the planet is a combination of our population, affluence and technology utilised). In another example, one can't fight the virtual annihilation of species unless the inexorable loss of habitat (ie, spread of mankind) is halted. In yet another example, the recent miserably inadequate and deceptive statement from the federal government on population policy seems to be quite ignorant of oil depletion and the extreme decrease in planetary capacity that will emanate from this phenomenon as recently developed methods of agriculture fail.

Below I have reproduced an article that is a good example of an examination of an array of key issues that cannot be considered in isolation. It can be found at <http://www.countercurrents.org/goodchild130311.htm>, and is notable for expanding the discussion into the human response. Peter Green.

Chaos, Collapse, and Survival

Systemic collapse, the coming dark age, the coming crash, overshoot, the die-off, the tribulation, the coming anarchy, resource wars -- there are many names, and they do not all correspond to exactly the same thing, but there is a widespread belief that something immense is happening.

This event has about 10 elements, each with a somewhat causal relationship to the next. (1) Fossil fuels, (2) metals, and (3) electricity are a tightly-knit group, and no industrial civilization can have one without the others. As those three disappear, (4) food and (5) fresh water become scarce. Matters of infrastructure then follow: (6) transportation and (7) communication -- no paved roads, no telephones, no computers. After that, the social structure begins to fail: (8) government, (9) education, and (10) the large-scale division of labour that makes complex technology possible. Excluded from the list are such uncertainties as anthropogenic global warming, and there are matters such as epidemics that

may become important but that are nevertheless tangential. The international credit collapse that began in 2007 is vaguely connected to fossil-fuel decline, but mainly in the sense that both can be partly ascribed to the above-mentioned failure of government.

After those 10 elements, there are others, forming a separate layer. These are in some respects more psychological or sociological, and are far less easy to delineate, but we might refer to this mixture as "the four Cs." The first three are perhaps (1) crime, (2) cults, and (3) craziness -- the breakdown of traditional law; the ascendance of dogmas based on superstition, ignorance, cruelty, and intolerance; the overall tendency toward anti-intellectualism; and the inability to distinguish mental health from mental illness. Those three are followed by a final and more general element that is (4) chaos, which results in the pervasive sense that "nothing works anymore."

Systemic collapse, in turn, has one overwhelming cause: world overpopulation. All of the flash-in-the-pan ideas that are presented as solutions to the modern dilemma -- solar power, ethanol, hybrid cars, desalination, permaculture, enormous dams -- have value only as desperate attempts to solve an underlying problem that has never been addressed in a more direct manner. American foreign aid, however, has always included only trivial amounts for family planning; the most powerful country in the world has done very little to solve the biggest problem in the world.

Everything in the modern world is dependent on oil and other hydrocarbons. From these we get fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, lubricants, plastic, paint, synthetic fabrics, asphalt, pharmaceuticals, and many other things. On a more abstract level, we are dependent on these hydrocarbons for manufacturing, for transportation, for agriculture, for mining, and for electricity. As the oil disappears, there will be no means of supporting the billions of people who now live on this planet. Above all, there will be insufficient food, and the result will be terrible famine.

A good deal of debate has gone on about "peak oil," the date at which the world's annual oil production of useable, recoverable oil will reach (or did reach) its maximum and will begin (or did begin) to decline. The exact numbers are unobtainable, but the situation can perhaps be summarized by saying that about 20 or 30 major studies have been done, and the consensus is that the most likely date for "peak oil" is somewhere between 2000 and 2020, with the most likely date of all somewhere in the middle, when about 30 billion barrels were produced annually.

In the entire world, there are at most about a trillion barrels of usable, recoverable oil remaining -- which may sound like a lot, but isn't. When newspapers announce the discovery of a deposit of a billion barrels, readers are no doubt amazed, but they are not told that such a find is only two weeks' supply.

After the "peak" itself, the next question is that of the annual rate of decline. Estimates tend to hover around 4 percent, which means production will fall to half of peak production by about 2030, although there are reasons to suspect the decline will be much faster, particularly if Saudi reserves are seriously overstated.

As the years go by, new oil wells have to be drilled more deeply than the old, because newly discovered deposits are deeper. Those new deposits are therefore less accessible. But oil is used as a fuel for the oil drills themselves, and for the exploration. When it takes an entire barrel of oil to get one barrel of oil out of the ground, as is increasingly the case, it is a waste of time to continue drilling such a well.

Coal and natural gas are also declining. Coal will be available for a while after oil is gone, although previous reports of its abundance were highly exaggerated. Coal, however, is highly polluting and cannot be used as a fuel for most forms of transportation. Natural gas is not easily transported, and it is not suitable for most equipment.

Alternative sources of energy will never be very useful, for several reasons, but mainly because of a problem of "net energy": the amount of energy output is not sufficiently greater than the amount of energy input. All alternative forms of energy are so dependent on the very petroleum that they are intended to replace that the use of them is largely self-defeating and irrational. Alternative sources ultimately don't have enough "bang" to replace 30 billion annual barrels of oil -- or even to replace more than the tiniest fraction of that amount.

Petroleum is required to extract, process, and transport almost any other form of energy; a coal mine is not operated by coal-powered equipment. It takes "oil energy" to make "alternative energy."

The use of "unconventional oil" (shale deposits, tar sands, heavy oil) poses several problems besides that of net energy. Large quantities of fossil fuels and water are needed to process the oil from these unconventional sources, so net energy recovery is low. The pollution problems are considerable, and it is not certain how much environmental damage the human race is willing to endure. With unconventional oil we are, quite literally, scraping the bottom of the barrel.

More-exotic forms of alternative energy are plagued with even greater problems. Fuel cells cannot be made practical, because such devices require hydrogen derived from fossil fuels (coal or natural gas), if we exclude designs that will never escape the realm of science fiction; if fuel cells ever became popular, the fossil fuels they require would then be consumed even faster than they are now. Biomass energy (perhaps from wood or corn) would require impossibly large amounts of land and would still result in insufficient quantities of net energy, perhaps even negative quantities. Hydroelectric dams are reaching their practical limits. Wind and geothermal power are only effective in certain areas and for certain purposes. Nuclear power will soon be suffering from a lack of fuel and is already creating serious environmental dangers.

The current favourite for alternative energy is solar power, but proponents must close their eyes to all questions of scale. To meet the world's present energy needs by using solar power, we would need an array (or an equivalent number of smaller ones) of collectors covering about 550,000 km² -- a machine the size of France. The production and maintenance of this array would require vast quantities of hydrocarbons, metals, and other materials -- a self-defeating process.

Modern agriculture is highly dependent on fossil fuels

for fertilizers, pesticides, and the operation of machines for harvesting, processing, and transporting. The Green Revolution amounted to little more than the invention of a way to turn petroleum and natural gas into food. Without fossil fuels, modern methods of food production will disappear, and crop yields will be far less than at present. Because of the shortage of food, world population must shrink dramatically, but we conveniently forget that war, plague, and famine are the only means available.

The problem of the world's diminishing supply of oil is a problem of energy, not a problem of money. The old bromide that "higher prices will eventually make [e.g.] shale oil economically feasible" is meaningless. This planet has only a finite amount of fossil fuel. That fuel is starting to decline, and "higher prices" are quite unable to stop the event from taking place.

Much of modern warfare is about oil, in spite of all the pious and hypocritical rhetoric about "the forces of good" and "the forces of evil." The real "forces" are those trying to control the oil wells and the fragile pipelines that carry that oil.

There is no "big plan" for dealing with these problems, and there never will be, although most people assume the leaders of society are both wise and benevolent. There will be only the "small plan," person by person, or family by family, at least for those who are not simply immobilized by shock. The "small plan" is variable, but it might include moving to a more-rural environment, where there would be fewer ties to the global economy.



SNOW IN BLACKHEATH

Quite often in Blackheath you will hear "they say it's going to snow...", and it hardly ever does. So it was a real surprise on the afternoon of 22nd June when it actually did snow and nobody predicted it.

I took my camera and an umbrella into the bush out the back.

We usually associate snow scenes with European vegetation, but the snow in the Australian bush, to me, is more beautiful. Fine snow is best, settling gently on the surfaces of the leaves and on the upper sides of branches. It makes such a pretty picture in the bushland. But there was nothing fine or gentle about this snow fall. A thick blanket of sloshy snow which fell in a short time. It flattened some of the shrubs, but they did recover afterwards. I thought this Xanthorrhoea which flowered last year looked beautiful. Christine Davies.

“The Great Disruption” by Paul Gilding

BOOK REVIEW

I have noticed that many of my environmentally aware friends have slipped into a low grade state of despair over the urgency of the problems facing us compared with the sludgy response of our leaders. Paul Gilding’s book “The Great Disruption - how the climate crisis will transform the global economy” (Bloomsbury 2011) analyses the breadth of the serious problems facing the planet, while giving plenty of reasons to be hopeful about our response to this looming crisis.

Born in Australia, Paul Gilding was an important figure in Greenpeace in the eighties and nineties, and when he left, he began to work with business through his consultancy work. In 2005 he wrote a letter to all his contacts called “Scream, Crash, Boom”, and this book fleshes out his argument. Essentially, what we do in the conservation movement is ‘scream’. We talk about what is disappearing, threatened and we use every means at our disposal - science, art, activism - to educate the public and influence decision makers to conserve biodiversity. ‘Crash’ is what we’re heading for. If you are reading this, then you have made the effort to join the Conservation Society because you know the situation is serious, and you want to do something about it locally. What I find refreshing about Gilding’s thesis is his acceptance of the reality that plenty of people are not there yet. I was handing out material at an election pre-poll a while back, and started chatting with another electioneer who was backing the “*Your rights at work*” campaign. We were talking about the state of the world and he observed, “People don’t think about the environment until their lawns start to dry up”.

Gilding explains why it will take a crisis before the political will exists to go through the upheavals that are necessary to save our planet. When things get quite undeniably bad ... lawns drying up ... we will pull together in the way that the Allies did during World War Two. We will do what is necessary for the survival of the planet because the other option, to drift into tipping points is not likely to be what we will choose. Based on the energy with which humans can confront a massive threat, such as war, he is hopeful about the future. The solution is to reduce emissions, and he says they must go no higher than one degree above pre-industrial levels for the planet to be viable. How? We already have many of the technologies needed.

The ‘Boom’ is what will follow when we abandon the growth model of economies and transition to low-carbon and steady state economics. These changes have been bobbling along on the fringes but they are gathering steam, and there will be a cascade of change. As an old Greenpeacer who worked on the anti-nuclear campaigns, I’m watching now as Germany and Italy abandon nuclear power and set targets for renewables - at last! These industries are going to be major job providers in the next decades.

I was wondering whether he had really thought through power relations. But he analyses economies and the environment as interlocking systems. In the end, everything that environmentalists are doing is hugely important because we are setting the foundation for a planned response that will avert runaway climate change. None of it has been a waste of time and energy. This book brings together the ideas of diverse theorists and activists. I’m looking forward to delving deeper into the works of the other writers he quotes.

Diana Levy

Finding the Blue Mountains

Christine Davies

Jim Smith will be the speaker at the Society’s monthly meeting on Saturday 30 July. I hope I will see many of you there.

I came to live in the Blue Mountains at the end of 1988 and enrolled in Jim Smith’s Outdoor Guides Certificate Course with Blue Mountains TAFE in 1989. The course took two years and it changed my life.

In that first summer it rained every Saturday. We walked in the rain, waded through swollen creeks, stood beside magnificent Blue Mountains waterfalls, felt their spray, heard the roar of water as it crashed to the rocks and rushed down the creeks. Rocks glistened; vegetation was lush. Sometimes we came home in the dark, often wet, dirty and bitten by leeches.

During the two years we explored the Blue Mountains walking tracks, most of them made in the late 1800s and early 1900s for the early tourist industry. We learned about European and Aboriginal history of the mountains, the flora and fauna, ecosystems, environmental threats. I learned to observe and begin to understand Nature and to love the Blue Mountains natural environment with passion. At Jim’s suggestion I joined the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

Jim’s way of teaching is unique. He shows you and inspires you to want to learn more. And I have been learning ever since. I am fortunate to live in Blackheath next to the bush, and the bushland creatures have adopted my native garden as their own. I have been fortunate to have made wonderful friends, and to lead bushwalks to inspire others to observe and love the Blue Mountains and its natural environment.

When my grandchildren come to visit I take them into the bush and they are so observant, noticing and pointing out things that my older eyes miss. And I sometimes wonder what my life would have been like if I had not moved to the Blue Mountains and not met Jim Smith and my fellow Outdoor Guides. Christine Davies.

Extract from my diary, after a long walk on 1st April 1989. “We arrived at Medlow Bath Station in the dark, very weary. I thought about the people from the past – the ladies in their long dresses and the men in their suits – who walked along the tracks we had used today. And even though we were cold and wet and tired after walking in the rain all day, I thought of the benefits the rain had given: The waterfalls are magnificent; tree trunks and leaves of the trees glisten with moisture; colours of tree trunks are bright and beautiful, as are the colours of the sandstone rocks and cliffs with their layers of shale and ironstone; the many variously shaped and coloured fungi along the track are fascinating, only “flowering” in the damp weather.”

Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

The Silvereye is one of Australia's most familiar urban birds, common in gardens and bushland across the Blue Mountains. If you have any sort of garden, chances are it's been visited by groups of these small, mostly grey and green birds. The silver-coloured ring around the eye which gives the species its name is not bare skin but a ring of tiny white feathers.

Silvereyes are one of the most well-studied birds in Australia, and for good reason. There are several races of Silvereye. One of these races breeds in Tasmania and migrates each year across Bass Strait to spend winter on the mainland. Being a partial migrant, not all individuals migrate, but those that do may fly as far as south-east Qld, a distance of up to 1600 kms. When spring comes they return to Tasmania to breed.

Silvereyes measure 11-13 cm and weigh just 10-13 grams. That's about the weight of one box of matches! Hundreds of thousands of these little birds complete the treacherous crossing of Bass Strait each year, with islands along the way acting as life-saving refuelling stops.

Once they reach the mainland, they join with local birds and continue to move north, or wander locally in search of small berries or soft fruit as well as nectar and insects (and although disliked by orchardists, they can in fact be a blessing as they reduce insect pests). In Katoomba during autumn I have often heard their delicate flight calls in the early hours of the morning, between 2am and dawn, as they migrate overhead in the darkness. Sometimes it sounds as if the sky is filled with them.

The Tasmanian birds - race *lateralis* - are easy to recognise. They are the ones with deep tawny or rufous flanks (as opposed to light grey - the flanks being the sides of the body below the wings) and greyish white rather than yellow throats.

The grey-flanked local race *familiaris*, which breeds in our area in spring, may also move north for the winter, partly to avoid competition from the influx of southern visitors. So there is a leapfrog effect up the eastern side of the country. In the Sydney region, Tasmanian birds can make up more than 50% of the Silvereye population in winter.

Next time you see a flock of Silvereyes, look for the Tasmanian birds with brown flanks and think of the amazing journey they made in order to visit your neighbourhood. And chances are, it's the very same birds which visit your patch year after year, in between flying to Tassie and back!

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 \$30 Concession (Senior/Student)\$20

Household \$35 Concession (Senior/Student)\$25

Corporate (open to negotiation) \$100

Bushwalkers only.:

(\$20 per walker per annum) \$.....

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

Send my copy of Hut News by

Please tick box mail internet only

TOTAL AMOUNT INCLUDED \$.....

Note: All fees include GST at the relevant rate.

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

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

Please sign if named above.

Signature(s) 1.
2.
3.

ENQUIRIES: Phone (02 4757 1872

Email: membership@bluemountains.org.au

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

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



Interpretive Bushwalk: Lake Parramatta Reserve

Lake Parramatta Reserve is a 60 hectare bush and parkland reserve located within two kilometres of the Parramatta CBD. The lake was formed when the deep valley of Hunt's Creek was dammed in 1855 for Parramatta's water supply. The surrounding bushland was reserved to preserve water quality. It was used as a water supply until 1909.

Our recent Thursday walk around the lake's edge was delightful. Here we were, in the geographical centre of Sydney, surrounded by beautiful trees, Banksias in flower, and an abundance of bird life, especially cormorants. And there were so few people! The reserve is remarkably weed-free—congratulations to the local bushcare group!

The large body of water which winds around is beautiful and obviously full of fish and other food for water birds. On this overhanging branch (photographed left) were at least a dozen Little Black Cormorants. Christine Davies

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.

Down the Wallaby Track — a backward glance, with John Low **GONE FOR A SOLDIER**

At the high point of a large, sloping rock shelf on the Linden Ridge, with views to Sydney, there is an interesting little 'cooee' from early colonial times. Carved into the rock, carefully and skilfully, is the inscription '4KOR', a tribal 'We Were Here!' gesture it would seem by men of the 4th Kings Own Regiment of Foot. What their purpose was for being here remains conjecture, but their presence at least can be explained.

In the three decades following the opening of Cox's Road detachments of soldiers from almost twenty British regiments were stationed in the Blue Mountains, manning military depots and guarding convict road gangs. Many in the rank and file came from similar backgrounds to the convicts they supervised, having taken the King's shilling to escape poverty and even gaol, and their lives were often just as harsh.

Soldiers of the 4th KOR arrived in Australia in 1831-32 and remained here until 1837, many of them spending time in the Blue Mountains. In 1835, following the completion of Mitchells Pass at Lapstone, gangs of ironed convicts were placed under military supervision to work on a stretch of the Western Road between 17 and 18 Mile Hollows (Linden-Woodford).

The camp at 17MH was located just west of the present Linden Railway Station, its site now under the railway embankment. When the Quaker missionaries, Backhouse and Walker, passed through here in 1835 they encountered two ironed-gangs, each of about 60 men who when not working were housed under guard in "huts" and "moveable caravans" by the roadside. While no mention was made of how the soldiers were barracked, the answer to this may lie in a short walk into the bush.

A track follows what was once a well made access road and leads to a large overhang cave, the floor of which has been levelled and retained, like the road, by substantial stone work. Its dry interior and natural water supply would have made it more than adequate for barracks and store and its probable association with the 4th KOR was soon expressed in the name 'The King's Cave'.

One soldier who was at 17MH in 1835 was a Middlesex-born Lance Corporal, Francis Smith. Enlisting in the 4th KOR in 1813, he fought Napoleon in the Peninsula, Andrew Jackson and yellow fever in North America, missed Waterloo, occupied France and spent eight years in the West Indies before finding himself on board a convict ship in 1832 bound for NSW.

With a wife and daughter in Sydney, Smith was transferred to Springwood in early 1836 and died there, aged 42, later that same year. Though his remains lie somewhere near the present police station, his gravestone survives in the local cemetery and his place in our story is publicly recognised with a monument and small park outside the Springwood Neighbourhood Centre. It is tempting to reflect on the possibility he might have been one of those Redcoats who left their mark on the Linden Ridge.

John Low (johnlow@iprimus.com.au)

Photo: Kings Cave, Linden, 2011.

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

'Like' us on Facebook: Blue
Mountains Conservation Society
Follow us on Twitter: [bmcsnsw](https://twitter.com/bmcsnsw)



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

- July 9 **Lawson—Dante's Glen and Fredericka Falls.** Some slippery rock walking. Meet Lawson Bowling Club 10 am. Bill 4758 8545. Grade 3. Map: Katoomba
- July 18 **Wolgan Falls from Spanish steps.** 4WD vehicles required. (This walk changed from May 14.) Meet Mt Vic Station CP 8.30 am. Bob 4757 2694. Approx 8 km, mostly off track. Grade 4. Map: Ben Bullen/Cullen Bullen.
- July 23 **Copeland Pass to Leura Forest.** Elevation change of about 250m. On track but some rough bits. Meet Wentworth Falls carpark 8.30 am. Emanuel 4757 1090. 6-7 km. Grade 3/4. Map: Katoomba.
- July 30 **Odin Head.** Leisurely introduction to off-track walking. Varied walk, great views. Bring protective clothing and 1.5 litres of water. Meet Wentworth Falls CP 8.30 am or Mt Vic Station CP 9 am. Hugh 4757 3145 after 8pm. 5-6 km, mostly off track. Grade 2/3. Map: Mount Wilson.
- Aug 6 **Walford Wall.** Spectacular views into the Grose. Meet Leura School, Mount Hay Road 8.30 am. Bob 4757 2694. 10 km, some off track. Grade 3. Map: Katoomba/Mt Wilson.
- Aug 13 **Wentworth Falls Undercliff and National Pass.** Early start beats the crowds. Meet Wentworth Falls rail car park 8.35 am. Bill 4758 8545. 8 km, many stairs up. Grade 3. Map: 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

- July 11 **Christmas in July Lunch.** 12.30, Everglades historic house, Leura. \$35 pp. BYO. Bookings and payment to Judith 4758 6310.
- July 18 **BUS TRIP to Kurnell Reserve.** Picturesque coastal views. Book and pay Keith 4736 1010, \$12 pp. Meet Civic Centre, Springwood 9.40. Leader: Norm 4784 1554. Grade 1/2.
- July 25 **Hard 8K walk—Wentworth Pass, Slack Stairs, National Pass.** Wentworth Falls Station 8.30 am. Car pool. Ros 4733 3880. Grade 3.
- Aug 1 **Lady Martin's Bath and Paradise Pool, Linden, then walk to Hazelbrook.** Steep track to pool but worth it. Meet Linden Station 9am. Kate 4759 1943. Grade 3.
- Aug 8 **Adeline Park, Faulconbridge.** New walk to delightful pool and falls. Meet Faulconbridge Station carpark 9am. Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 2.

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

- July 7 **Radiata Plateau.** Reasonably flat walk downhill through heath to breathtaking lookout. Meet Katoomba Station car park 9.30 am. Joan c/o 4782 1215. Grade 2.
- July 14 **Jack Evans Track, Glenbrook.** Descent to Erskine Creek. Meet Glenbrook Station carpark 9.30 am. Car pool. Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 2.
- July 21 **Christmas in July luncheon.** The Alex Hotel, Leura, \$26 per head. Meet at the hotel 12.30 pm. Ring Gail 4782 1215 to confirm attendance ASAP. No walk.
- July 28 **Minnie Ha Ha Falls, North Katoomba.** Creekside walk to lookouts and short descent to base of waterfall. Meet Katoomba rail station carpark 9.30am. Joan c/o 4782 1215. Grade 2.
- Aug 4 **Undercliff and Overcliff Track, Wentworth Falls.** Lots of excellent views from lookouts. Track uneven in places. If wet, track will be slippery. Meet Stockyard car park, Wentworth Falls Station, 9.30 am. Chris 4757 2864. Grade 2
- Aug 11 **Leura Cascades Round Walk.** Cliff-top walk to lookouts, views of falls and cascades. Meet cnr. Leura Mall and Megalong Street 9.45 am. Joan c/o 4782 1215. Grade 2.
- Aug 25 **BUS TRIP to Noble Canyon.** Attendance to be confirmed with Simone 4757 3416 before 14 July. Cost \$10. Bring lunch. Meet at the Council Depot, South Street, North Katoomba 8.30 am. Grade 2.

Welcome to new members

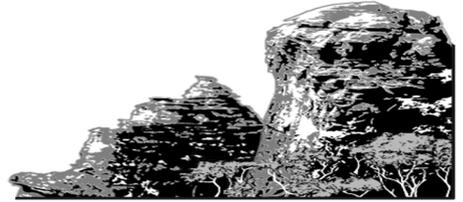
Margaret Murdoch, Lawson
Ron Newman, Wentworth Falls
Helen Campbell, Wentworth Falls
Andrew Wilson, Dargan
Anne McKenzie, Katoomba
Lita Ozols, Lane Cove

**The Greater Blue Mountains World
Heritage Experience**
www.worldheritage.org.au



Protect the Gardens of Stone

“Say NO to open cut mining!”



To: Local Member of Parliament

Your Name: _____

C/- The Blue Mountains Conservation Society
P.O. Box 29
WENTWORTH FALLS, NSW 2782

Address: _____

Suburb _____ P/Code: _____

Email: _____

Dear _____ MP,

Act to protect the Gardens of Stone from open-cut mining

I ask you to make representations to Mr. Bradley Hazzard, Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, calling on him to reject the 'Coalpac Pty Ltd Consolidation Project' proposal, Castlereagh Highway Cullen Bullen, NSW. This 'consolidation' involves extending open-cut and highwall mining into a large area of the publicly-owned Ben Bullen State Forest (BBSF), NSW and will impact the adjoining lands of the Gardens of Stone.

I am opposed to the development of the proposed Coalpac open cut mine because:

- If approved, the mine would scalp all biodiversity from 1088 hectares of mainly old growth forest and wildlife habitat in the BBSF and, turn its geodiversity into piles of waste rock.
- I support the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service wish to add BBSF to the conservation reserve system as a matter of priority; it is an area with outstanding natural values.
- Permitting this proposal would see the NSW Coalition Government privatising and liquidating a large part of public land, whereas I expect state forests to be protected from destruction in perpetuity.
- The Gardens of Stone's iconic and unique sandstone pagodas provide a safe haven for a variety of native flora and fauna; it is a biodiversity hot-spot. If approved, their features and stability may be threatened by partial or total collapse, compromising the region's tourism.
- Our iconic Lyrebirds use the sides of pagodas in this area to nest and raise their young. Mining will completely remove their food habitats.
- Habitats for the Regent Honeyeater, Tiger Quoll and Powerful Owl and at least 32 threatened native animals, five of which are listed under the EPBC Act, will be completely removed.
- The large open-cut will create significant dust and air quality issues which will directly affect local residents.
- The open-cut poses risks to the quality and quantity of westward-flowing surface water, and the quality of eastward-flowing groundwater.

I also ask you to make representations to the Hon Robyn Parker, Minister for the Environment, requesting that she takes the steps necessary to protect the region within a State Conservation Area.

Yours sincerely,

Signature

This section will not be forwarded to your local MP

Please complete and sign this letter and post it to us at the BMCS so we may deliver it to your Local Member of Parliament in person. To complete the sections near 'To' and 'Dear' simply write the name of your local Member, E.G.: Mrs. Roza Sage or Mr. Paul Toole. If you do not know who your local member is we can complete this for you.

Please tick this box if you do not wish to receive correspondence from BMCS about this letter.