

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

GENERAL MEETING

Wentworth Falls School of Arts
Sunday 1st June, 2 pm

Our Land, Our Water, Our Future

Communities across NSW are under siege from coal and gas. These industries are destroying our best farmland and special wild places, polluting and depleting our clean water and harming our health.

Nell Schofield from *Our Land Our Water Our Future* will be speaking at the next General Meeting of the Society at 2:00pm on Sunday June 1st at the Wentworth Falls School of Arts. Nell Schofield is the Sydney Campaign Coordinator with *Lock The Gate*, a national alliance that stands beside Australian communities in their fight against coal and gas. Best known for her lead role in the Aussie cult classic '*Puberty Blues*', Nell has worked as a TV presenter with CNN, Channel 9, ABC and Showtime.

Nell is currently working with several other environmental groups including the *Nature Conservation Council* and *Our Land Our Water Our Future* to get policy reform that protects land and water resources in NSW before next year's state election.

A speaker from Stop CSG Blue Mountains will discuss the current applications for CSG exploration licences of over 2700 sq km which cover the northern Blue Mountains and Wollemi National Parks and surrounding lands from Portland to the Putty Road.

Find out more about the great work *Our Land Our Water Our Future* are doing at www.landwaterfuture.org.au

Visitors are very welcome.

Varuna & Sydney Writers' Festival Blue Mountains Program 2014

The main program, featuring national and international authors, will be held at the Carrington on Monday 19th and Tuesday 20th May from 10am to 7pm.

This year's annual Dr Dark Memorial Lecture is to be given by **Professor Clive Hamilton: How do we adapt to a new climatic epoch?** A fascinating lecture from one of our leading commentators that you won't want to miss. (Monday May 19, 6 to 7pm at the Carrington). Read more on page 7.

On 25 May at the Cultural Centre, **Greg Foyster**, author of *Changing Gears* will tell **Gregg Borschmann** about cycling 6500 km down Australia's east coast. This will be followed by a Sunday morning bike ride from Katoomba to Wentworth Falls.

There are also free events - opening the festival at the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre on Friday 16th May will be an exhibition from Black and Blue of poetry and illustrations inspired by Mountain stories and legends, along with an exhibition of indigenous stories and artworks: 'Stories from the Mountains'.

More details, including the full program & how to book tickets, are on the website: <http://www.varuna.com.au/varuna/index/php/varuna-sydney-writers-festival>

Issue No. 314
May 2014



Badgery's Creek Airport

Blue Mountains Conservation Society, based on local and global environmental grounds, opposes the development of a second Sydney airport at Badgery's Creek.

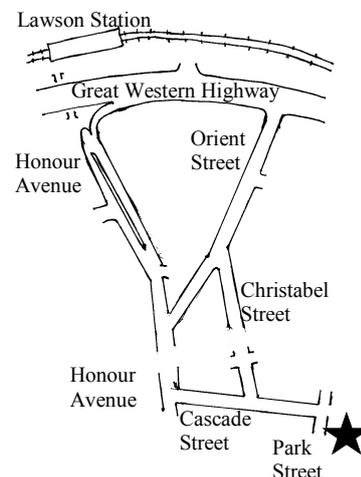
The impact of the Badgery's Creek airport on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area has not been assessed. See article by Keith Muir, Page 7.

Email databases

If you are a member and aren't receiving the occasional email from us, and would like to, email webmaster@bluemountains.org.au so we can add you to our Members Email Database. It may be that you have changed your email address, or have never provided an email address.

If you are not a member, but would like to receive campaign emails from the Society, go to our website www.bluemountains.org.au where you can add yourself to the Campaign Email Database. You will find the details in the top right hand corner underneath our Facebook link on our home page. You can "unsubscribe" at any time.

Native Plant Nursery MONSTER GARAGE SALE SATURDAY, 10th May 9 am to 1 pm Corner of Park and Cascade Streets, LAWSON



All proceeds go to help the work of Blue Mountains Conservation Society

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**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT
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24 MAY 2014**

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NURSERY NEWS

The Nursery volunteers are gearing up for the Monster Garage Sale. We have been preparing more plants for sale as we hope to sell our usual stock as well as many specials on the day. There will be a great variety of household goods and bric-a-brac, books, records and CDs, tools, etc, so come along and make this a great fundraiser.

We have had three new volunteers at the nursery who have been very welcome. **More are still needed**, especially at Blackheath where most of the propagation takes place. Come along and learn some new skills and, before you know it, you'll be hooked on plants!

Our nurseries will be closing at the end of May for a couple of months, mainly because it's too cold for the volunteers but of course plants slow down in the cold months and no one feels like gardening. So grab your plants now either at the Lawson Nursery or the Magpie Markets. We will reopen in August.

Feature plants: Callistemons or Bottlebrushes are always popular as garden and street plants. It is the long, colourful stamens which give the flower its bottlebrush look. In fact the name 'Callistemon' means 'beautiful stamen'. We have five species ready now at the Nursery.

The commonest is *Callistemon citrinus* with its long, deep red flower spikes. *Callistemon subulatus* is also red but has shorter flower spikes, narrower leaves and grows to one metre. *Callistemon rigidus* as the name suggests has stiff, narrow leaves. *Callistemon salignus* is a small tree with papery bark and creamy yellow flower spikes. *Callistemon sieberi* grows to 2-3 metres and also has creamy flowers. So there is one for every situation. They are found naturally in damp places and along creeks but do well in drier conditions.

Sue Nicol, Nursery Manager (nursery@bluemountains.org.au 4787 8887)

Photo: *Callistemon
citrinus*, source: [http://
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
Callistemon_citrinus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Callistemon_citrinus)



BMCS NURSERY PLANT SALES

Lawson Nursery, Wednesday and Saturday mornings,
9am to noon.

The nursery is located in the Lawson Industrial Area on the corner of Park and Cascade Streets, opposite Federation Building Materials - see map on our website www.bluemountains.org.au).

Blackheath Community Market, 1st Sunday of the month at Blackheath Public School, 9am to 1pm.

Magpie Market, 3rd Sunday of the month at Lawson Public School, 9am to 2pm.

Tube stock \$2.50. Larger pots available.

Discounts for bulk orders and large contracts.

(Nursery will be closed June/July)

Enquiries Sue Nicol 4787 8887,
nursery@bluemountains.org.au

The Gardens of Stone—a photographic journey with Hugh Speirs



Saturday walk coordinator Jim Percy, near Jim Percy's Seat. Photo by Hugh Speirs.

Jim Percy's Seat refers to a natural seat-like formation on top of the cliff line, overlooking Carne Creek. Located 3.3km north east of Birds Rock Trig; Cullen Bullen Map, 415 106. For many years Jim has led walks for the Blue Mountains Conservation Society and the Sydney Bushwalkers. To honour Jim's involvement in bushwalking leadership this feature was named by Hugh Speirs when leading a Conservation Society walk, 3rd August 2013.

Jim, your many friends whom you've helped, encouraged, and organized so well for so long will join me in thanking you sincerely and in wishing you a 'happy retirement'! Good on you, Mate! Hugh.

What now for the draft Blue Mountains LEP? Angela Langdon, Land Use

The public exhibition period for the draft Blue Mountains LEP has closed. Council received about 600 submissions, significantly less than the 1405 submissions received when LEP 2005 was exhibited. This may reflect that the timing of the exhibition period was not conducive to effective public input, occurring as it did right after the devastating October 2013 fires and over the Christmas and New Year holiday period.

The smaller number of submissions may also reflect that in the draft LEP 2013 Council adopted a minimal change approach, incorporating the planning approaches and policies already in existence in LEP 2005 and LEP1991 into the new Standard LEP template mandated by the State Government. In contrast LEP 2005 was a ground breaking award winning LEP which adopted a significant new planning approach.

Council considered the next steps for the draft LEP at its meeting on 25 March 2014. It was resolved to undertake an analysis of the public submissions for consideration of Councillors. Council will then consider the issues raised in the public submissions in a series of monthly Extraordinary Council meetings commencing on May 15 and concluding in September. The meetings will address issues thematically. Importantly, these Extraordinary Council meetings will be open to the public and residents who made submissions will be advised in writing prior to the meeting relevant to their issues. Site visits by Councillors are also proposed. The Society supports this open and transparent approach adopted by Council to the finalisation of the draft LEP.

The Society spoke to the agenda item on the LEP at the 25 March Council Meeting and emphasised the need for

an ongoing community information campaign in regard to the finalisation of the draft LEP, including the need to promote the series of Extraordinary Council meetings. The Society also emphasised, in the interest of public accountability, the need to re-exhibit the draft LEP if significant changes are made, prior to the final sign off by the Minister of Planning.

All the public submissions to the draft LEP are now available on the Blue Mountains City Council website at www.bluemountainshaveyoursay.com.au/draftlep2013. The Society's detailed submission can be also found on our website www.bluemountains.org.au. We are conducting our own analysis of the public submissions, including what villages the submissions come from, what environmental issues have been raised, and whether the submission supported the issues and concerns raised by the Society. A report will be produced from this analysis and will be available on our website in the next 4-6 weeks. A summary will appear in Hut News.

BMCS Planning and Development Resource Kit

Do you want to take action on an environmental issue in your neighbourhood or the Blue Mountains more broadly?

Do you want information about the laws and procedures relating to development and environmental protection?

Find out what **YOU** can do! Go to the Planning and Development Resource Kit

www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml

Mulheran's work at Wentworth Falls celebrated

A very popular walk run by the society was Jim Smith's tour of the 19th century historic walking tracks at Wentworth Falls made by Peter Mulheran. Over 40 people turned up for this walk on 3rd December 2012.

If you missed this there is another opportunity to do this free guided tour. This is not an official Conservation Society walk but a community event to which everyone is welcome.



On Saturday, 17th May, historian Jim Smith is leading a bushwalk to commemorate the work of Peter Mulheran (1851-1936), who constructed about 10 km of tourist tracks at Wentworth Falls between 1880 and 1900. Mulheran arrived as an immigrant from Ireland in 1878 and soon began working as the ranger for the Wentworth Falls reserve trustees. Mr Smith said his tracks were beautifully designed to blend in with the escarpment environment and incorporated unique features such as



eight stone-walled lookouts and three wells of Celtic design.

To join this free guided tour of Mulheran's walking tracks, which will take about three hours, meet at 10 AM at the Conservation Hut, western end of Fletcher Street Wentworth Falls. Participants will receive a free comprehensive brochure about the life and work of Mulheran.

Photos: Breakfast Point Lookout showing one of the stone walls built by Mulheran ; Peter Mulheran in 1909

The myth of "unlocking" public lands Don Morison

As long as I can remember, there have been attacks on national parks, state forests and urban parklands. The attacks are usually made by people who are referred to by reputable economists as "rent seekers" – these are people who can personally or corporately enrich themselves if they are gifted pieces of public land by government.

A typical bid to appropriate a piece of national parkland may refer to "macho" bushwalking men or Amazonian women who, through carrying tents long distances in their backpacks, are the only individuals to whom much of our national parkland is accessible. I am sure that sometime in the past 40 years I have come across a few of these superhumans. Even if I hadn't, I wouldn't mind substantial tracts of land being dedicated to preservation of non-human species and scientific research, especially considering the species extinction in Australia since 1788.

However, I have derived great pleasure and inspiration from national parks without extreme exercise. So I must have been visiting similar bits of them to the ones enjoyed by millions of Australians with average fitness levels and time budgets.

What I fear is that these are the same bits coveted by the rent seekers. It's much easier to turn a bit of national park into a private resort for the wealthy if it already has good road access. Some of the same people who are ignoring climate change impact on Australian snowfall want to greatly expand downhill skiing infrastructure in accessible parts of New South Wales and Victoria's snow country.

Even if the goal of "unlocking" national parks or state forests is for logging or mining, the developers will surely examine the road-accessible sections first to see if rapid upfront profits can be achieved.

So the real impact of the "unlocking" campaign across mainland states and Tasmania will be to alienate natural areas currently used by the public, locking out ordinary people who currently use them as a recreational, inspirational or spiritual resource.

COALPAC

Despite being rejected last year, Coalpac now wants to open cut and high-wall mine 315 hectares of the precious Ben Bullen State Forest in the Gardens of Stone.

By the time you read this, submissions will have closed. Outrageously, the initial submission period was for only three weeks - and spanned Easter, Anzac Day and school holidays. It was extended at the last moment by four days and closed on 2nd May.

Despite this, we hope to have achieved enough submissions for the proposal to go before a Planning and Assessment Commission.

Thank you to all members who responded to our emails and made the effort to wade through the awkward submission process.

The wonderful pagodas and the biodiversity of the Ben Bullen State Forest must be fully protected from open cut mining in a state conservation area for nature conservation, recreation and tourism.

Reintroducing extinct animals? Christine Davies



On 13 April (then) Environment Minister Robyn Parker announced the NSW Government's intention to return to our National Parks, mammal species that have been extinct in this State. The NSW Government is conducting a registration of interest process as the first step in working with non-government partners.

(www.environment.nsw.gov.au/

[savingourspecies/extinct.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/savingourspecies/extinct.htm)). Animals chosen will be of the "cute and cuddly" variety (little furry animals which are attractive to the human eye) — for example Bilby, Numbat, Golden Bandicoot.

But, why did these animals become extinct in the first place, and what has changed to increase their chances of survival now?

In the last 200 years, hundreds of species have become extinct in Australia including at least 50 bird and mammal, 4 frog and more than 60 plant species. It is likely that other species have disappeared without our knowledge. Many other species are listed as endangered or vulnerable — more than 310 species of native animals and over 1180 species of native plants are at risk of disappearing forever.

In NSW, 25 mammals are listed as extinct while over 50% of surviving mammal species are listed as threatened.

During the past three years, the NSW Government has been accused of exacerbating threats to our native species — repeal of land clearing legislation, grazing in national parks, horse riding in wilderness areas, cuts to marine park protection, removal of environmental protection to promote development, logging of koala habitats, resumption of duck hunting ... the list is long and keeps growing.

Under this proposal, private conservation organisations will establish and manage fenced, predator-free, areas covering up to 12,000 hectares in our national parks "to give the selected species the best chance of re-establishing viable populations in the wild".

Thousands of hectares of our national parkland fenced off and managed by private conservation organisations? These animals are being successfully bred in private sanctuaries outside national parks.

While the same threats remain and over 50% of surviving mammal species in NSW are struggling, there is little chance that these reintroduced species, which have already succumbed once, will ever survive outside electric fences. What is the rationale behind this proposal?

We need to fix the problems, protect habitat and biodiversity, conserve what is left ... and then we can think about reintroducing locally extinct species.

VALLEY OF THE WATERS BUSHCARE GROUP

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

The importance of the CSIRO

The CSIRO is Australia's chief agency for scientific research, responsible for discoveries like the development of the polymer bank note, the invention of the insect repellent in Aerogard and the flu drug Relenza as well as one of the biggest discoveries of the digital age, wi-fi.

CSIROpedia <http://www.csiropedia.csiro.au/display/CSIROpedia/Home> explores some of CSIRO's greatest innovations and discoveries across the decades. It focuses on achievements that have been recognised by major honours and awards or research that has had significant commercial outcomes or benefit to society: Achievements in Astronomy and Space, Climate Change, Energy, Environment, Farming and Food, Health and Wellbeing, Information and Communication technology, Manufacturing, Materials, Minerals and Mining, Transport and Infrastructure.

The CSIRO receives 60 per cent of its money from the Abbott Government, which is said to be considering a big cut to the organisation's annual revenue of as much as \$150 million. That's around 20 per cent of its annual budget of \$750 million.

In a Comment article in SMH, 20/4/2014, Will Grant, Luke Menzies and Upulie Divisekera write: "**Funding CSIRO is vital if we want to future proof our world.**" An extract:

"How has CSIRO benefited ordinary Australians? Hundreds of concrete examples have been thrown up by twitter users under the hashtag #thankcsiroforthat: Wi-Fi, solar cells that can be printed like bank notes; ultrasound technology to look at babies before they are born; soft contact lenses; self-healing polymer topcoats for aircraft: inventions you and your family use and rely on, inventions we'll use in the years to come.

When you look through the history of CSIRO, there is no question Australia has seen a massive economic gain. From the outset, CSIRO operated as a translational research facility, future proofing an isolated and drought-prone continent. We can look at a long list of companies that have emerged from CSIRO to see such benefit.

CSIRO is fundamental to our ability to deal with the conditions of life on our arid island continent. They've created biocontrol programs for plant and animal pests that help us here and abroad. They're tracking biodiversity and the health of our forests and oceans, enabling the ecologically – and economically – sustainable management of fish stocks.

Annually CSIRO invests more than \$150 million in health-related research, tackling infectious disease, obesity, early detection of cancer, medical imaging and a raft of others."

Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/funding-csiro-is-vital-if-we-want-to-future-proof-our-world-20140420-zqwym.html#ixzz308WwDRwS>

OCEANS OF PLASTIC

THE search for wreckage from the missing Malaysia Airlines flight has revealed vast amounts of floating plastic rubbish.

The California-based 5 Gyres research group recently completed the first global estimate of rubbish volumes in the world's oceans, ranking the Indian Ocean the third worst behind the North Pacific and Atlantic.

Co-founder Marcus Eriksen has traversed and studied all five sub-tropical gyres - large systems of rotating currents - travelling on a ship from Perth to Mauritius, where he saw heaps of floating garbage including fishing nets, bottle caps, disposable cutlery and buckets.

"He said the rubbish came from commercial ships losing and dumping gear overboard, dense coastal populations and catastrophic events such as tsunamis and hurricanes. Sailing from Tokyo to Hawaii 18 months after the 2011 tsunami, he saw tatami mats, shoes, toothbrushes and half a fishing boat. Rubbish also flowed from big river mouths such as the Nile, which runs through developing countries where there is little or no waste management, Mr Eriksen said.

Mr Eriksen said rubbish moved around in the southern hemisphere between the South Pacific, South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean gyres via the Southern Ocean.

Source: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/latest-news/mh370-search-highlights-indian-ocean-trash/story-fn3dxiwe-1226884181607>



AUSTRALIA'S DIRTY BEACHES

CSIRO researchers have spent two years surveying Australia's entire coastline, counting rubbish on sections of sand and sea every 100 kilometres, and found the most remote beaches are the dirtiest. Lead researcher Dr Denise Hardesty says the rubbish did not float in from polluted oceans abroad. By using ocean current data and examining the items, researchers could tell much of the mess fell from the hands of ordinary Australians.

The CSIRO study estimates more than 150 million pieces of rubbish litter Australia's sand and shores. And more than three quarters is plastic. This has a disastrous effect on some 600 marine species who consumed "plastic food".

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-11/australia-dirtiest-and-cleanest-beaches/5382134>

Photo: A red-footed Booby on a polluted beach in Australia.

(CSIRO: Dr Denise Hardesty)

DEBUS RETURNS TO THE FRAY Don Morison

Retired Federal and State Minister Bob Debus is maintaining a keen interest in environmental issues, especially here in the Blue Mountains where he served as our local parliamentarian.

Mr Debus made stirring speeches at "No Hunting in National Parks" rallies in 2013. The strength of that campaign spurred the review that saw the abolition of the Game Council of NSW. The fallout helped to greatly restrict the role of amateur hunters in National Park management.

More recently, Mr Debus has written for the newly founded "Saturday Paper". He pointed out that both Labor and conservative governments have contributed to the setup of environmental agencies and regulation but that bipartisanship is currently disappearing.

His article refers to three foundations of environmental betterment over the past 30 years, "scientific research, environmental regulation and political consensus", and a "toxic cocktail of influences" that is now working to undermine them all.

Mr Debus is particularly concerned about the Abbott and Hodgman (Tasmanian) governments attempt to delist Tasmania's World Heritage forests. A limited amount of space was allocated to Mr Debus' article and the Tasmanian issue raises a number of implications that he did not deeply explore in this text.

Federal Liberal party ministers are currently trumpeting their support for freedom of speech but at the same time its Tasmanian ministers are advocating what Mr Debus describes as "draconian new criminal laws to control forest protest". The Tasmanian Liberals are also seeking a legislative prohibition on consumer boycotts which have, in the past, curbed environmental vandalism by entrepreneurs in Tasmania. Surely they risk an international backlash against Tasmanian and Australian business in general.

The most disappointing aspect of the Debus article is that the list of attacks on the environment is so long that he only feels able to refer to each of them briefly. The weakening of the Environmental Defender's Office is a standout.

The original article appeared in "The Saturday Paper" on April 12, 2014.

<http://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/opinion/topic/2014/04/12/abbott-governments-offensive-against-nature-conservation/1397224800#.U1mcBLmKCpo>

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

Badgerys Creek Unsuitable for an Airport

By Keith Muir, Colong Foundation for Wilderness

The Federal Government has played down the massive impacts arising from this proposed airport. It seeks to spread the aircraft noise impacts more widely so that none of western Sydney's two million residents can escape the shifting patterns of flight paths.

The noise generated by such a new airport will affect millions currently unaffected by this activity. Of course local objections arising from a Badgerys Creek airport will divert aircraft noise to the unsettled areas near Sydney – its national parks. Our wonderful national parks, the “lungs of Sydney”, will become congested with aircraft noise.

The proposed airport will eventually result initially in tens of thousands growing to hundreds of thousands of aircraft movements a year. Maximum use will be made of airspace to the west, threatening the peace in the Blue Mountains wilderness. On take-off, aircraft will crawl up into the sky over the Blue Mountains, spreading a lawn mower equivalent racket (69-79 decibels) over these pristine areas. This is going to significantly detract from a visitor's experience of nature during any visit to the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, which is a major national and international attraction receiving over three million visitors a year.

The proposed Badgerys Creek Airport would result in potentially severe and unacceptable noise impacts on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, Burragorang State Conservation Area, Bents Basin State Conservation Area, Kanangra Boyd Wilderness, Nattai Wilderness and Grose Wilderness.

The Federal Government has completely failed to address impacts on the Blue Mountains national parks and residential areas. No noise modelling has been undertaken for the area. But while it was recognised that impacts from aircraft overflights would occur, the impact on park visitors 24 hours a day, every day, is considered to be so unimportant as to not merit consideration.

The southern Blue Mountains, arguably Australia's most popular wilderness areas, has been completely overlooked by environmental assessments, despite Commonwealth legislation obligations to protect World Heritage Areas.

Extract of an article by Chris Hale, Lecturer, Department of Infrastructure Engineering at University of Melbourne, 17 April 2014. The Conversation (<http://theconversation.com/trains-planes-and-automobiles-how-our-cities-get-the-mix-wrong->)

The world has moved on from jet travel

The Sydney airport saga is intriguing for its outdated ideas. Sydney “can't do without” a second, 24 hour airport, we are told, to relieve current congestion and plan for future population needs. Prime Minister Tony Abbott announced a \$3 billion road package to accompany the announcement.

But Japan's Kansai airport serves a population of some 25 million. Greater Tokyo, with nearly 35 million residents, gets by just fine with two airports. London has three airports - but it services a mega-region of Southeast England with a population of more than 20 million.

The federal government seems to have ruled out the idea of executing a detailed airport study - and infrastructure minister Warren Truss has repeatedly refused to table specific figures on a Western Sydney airport's passenger numbers.

So far, there is little detail on what the new airport's mix of freight and domestic travel will be, or how it will service international air routes.

The Badgerys Creek announcement effectively says “enough” to the idea of high speed rail connections between Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra.

Yet investigations into the future of high speed rail in Australia have consistently demonstrated that HSR would capture a huge chunk of travel between Sydney and Melbourne, or between those cities and Canberra.

This would mean one airport is enough for Sydney (leaving aside where that airport is located). Inter-city east coast travel would largely shift to fast rail, while that single Sydney airport could focus more on international connections.

The Sydney thinking is trapped in the 1970s - when jet travel was the grand new thing. But since then, the world has moved on. And high speed rail travel is now the preferred option for journeys within countries.

Earthmasters, by Professor Clive Hamilton (Published on 28 February 2013)

What if there were a magic bullet to fix our ailing planet? What if it meant seizing control of Earth's climate? Clive Hamilton investigates the huge risks of reaching for desperate measures to save the planet, explains the science accessibly and uncovers the worrying motives of those promoting them. While Washington, London and Canberra fiddle, the planet burns. It has become painfully clear that the big democracies won't take the hard decisions to halt climate change.

Climate scientists now expect the worst, and they're considering a response which sounds like science fiction: climate engineering. This means large-scale manipulation of the Earth's climate using grand technological interventions, like spraying sulphur compounds into the upper atmosphere to reduce the amount of sunlight reaching the planet, or transforming the chemistry of the world's oceans so they soak up more carbon.

The potential risks are enormous: disrupting the food chain, damaging the ozone layer, the loss of monsoon rains in Asia – the list goes on. It is messing with nature on a scale we've never before seen, and it's attracting a flood of interest from scientists, venture capitalists and oil companies. See more at: <http://clivehamilton.com/books/earthmasters-playing-god-with-the-climate/#sthash.HMpz0tV1.dpuf>

Professor Hamilton will present the Dr Dark Memorial Lecture at the Veruna Sydney Writers Festival. See page 1.

Memories of the Wran Era, by Don Morison



Neville Wran, 1926-2014

In the early 1970s, the government of Sir Robert Askin seemed to have little time for environment and heritage in New South Wales. To facilitate activities of mates who had helped enrich him, Premier Askin was trying to bulldoze an above-ground expressway through Ultimo and Glebe. The fourth oldest building in Sydney and many terrace houses, then providing low-income housing, were in its path.

One day in 1974, I was torn between studying for my uni exams and joining the protest to save the buildings. I hated making choices – I ended up sitting in the gutter opposite the first line of targeted houses while I read a philosophy book by Immanuel Kant. In the houses were a few dozen picketers. The TV camera crews were becoming bored with us when a car pulled up and out stepped Neville Wran.

The then Opposition Leader was imposing, his dark suit contrasting with the informal garb of the protesters. He spoke very seriously about the issue and, when he was elected Premier in May 1976, he saved the Glebe houses.

As Wran consolidated his leadership, the extent of environmental challenges in Australia became clearer. Since the early 1970s, “alternative” lifestylers had been moving to communities like Nimbin, in northern NSW. The Wran Government would have to decide how much of the northern NSW rainforests – sought after by loggers – would be incorporated in National Parks.

A young Hayden Washington – still a prominent environmentalist – led a group of us on a long bushwalk from the Putty Road to a breathtaking gorge on the Colo River. We were in the heart of the proposed Wollemi National Park. Back on the Putty Road, a plaintive sign lyricised: “You can use Colo crown land free. If National Parks come, you’ll pay a fee”.

But the Putty Road rednecks never became poets laureate. Nor did they have to pay for day use of Wollemi National Park. The Wran government saved the Wollemi and large areas of the northern rainforests.

Inspired by these successes, by 1982 many NSW environmentalists had travelled to Tasmania to protest against the Gordon below Franklin Dam. Between them the Wran State Government and the Hawke Federal Government saved areas that would be at the core of several of Australia’s most important World Heritage Areas.

Mount Wilson rainforest Christine Davies

The interpretive bushwalkers’ last walk for Term 1 was at Mount Wilson—the Waterfalls Walk—a delightful rainforest walk from the picnic area near Chimney Cottage down to the Waterfall Creek. This is a true rainforest: sassafras, giant coachwood, corkwood, tree ferns.

The waterfalls are viewed as you walk up Waterfall Creek. The first waterfall is like a little grotto with moss-covered rocks. It was a wonderful place to sit on a hot day, but a landslide last year has closed that part of the track. You then follow the stream up to the bigger falls where the water trickles or tumbles, depending on the recent rainfall, down a basalt cliff.

Another feature of this walk near Easter is the great variety of fungi—and we were not disappointed. People who visit Mount Wilson to see the gardens are often unaware of the presence of this beautiful rainforest—the original vegetation of Mount Wilson.

Urban Disbelief: Planners struggle to comprehend impending surge

Peter Green

Conservationists are alarmed at the inexorable growth of the human footprint and the consequent loss of ecosystems and their contained flora and fauna. Valuable farmland disappears too, and Sydney is no exception. We now have a superb visual presentation of this destructive phenomenon.

The animated maps at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLzYZm159uzQNc7H5UCCXHx4c4TKdCeaNt> reveal in 60 seconds how cities have exploded in size over the last 130 years or more, and the rates are accelerating. These new animations cover many of the world’s major cities, and are an incredible reminder of just how quickly the world’s major cities are expanding. They were created as part of NYU Stern’s *Urbanization Project*.

‘Particularly striking is the growth in the latter half of the 20th century, in which many cities increased their built-up area by more than 10 times,’ said Patrick Lamson-Hall of the project.

Cities require more urban land per person, meaning total growth in the city area is much greater than population growth. The expanding colours on the maps represent the expansion of ‘urban land,’ or land developed for residential, commercial and public use, typically at the expense of farms, natural areas and biodiversity. The sordid treatment of the ADI site at St Marys is a case in point. So, the next time someone comments about the beauty (and stupidity) of endless growth, don’t let such an obtuse comment stand uncontested.

Blood Bird

We sat on a rock where the banksias flower
watching the honeyeaters
darting and flitting among the blooms,
brush tongues sipping the nectar.

‘What’s that small bird with the bright red head?’
asked Bob, leaning back on his elbows.
‘Red bills, red brows, red rumps, red breasts,
all these in the Upper Blue Mountains,
but no small bird with a bright red head,
not one’, said I, the expert.

‘Well, there it is’, said my friend Bob,
and there it was indeed.
Deep in the tree above our heads,
softly singing a whisper song,
the brightest jewel of all its kind,
a Scarlet Honeyeater.

Graham Alcorn.

Loose Feathers, with Carol Probets

The sight of mist filling the valley or the Phantom Falls gliding silently over Narrow Neck, the trees and cliffs bathed in the clear golden light of dawn, makes getting up early worthwhile. Added to that is the fact that birds are usually most active in the early morning. You'll see many more birds if you go out before breakfast than during a lunchtime walk!

Recently I went to Evans Lookout just after sunrise, before any tourists or bushwalkers arrived. On the ground under a she-oak at the main lookout was one of the most stunning little birds you could ever imagine - a Beautiful Firetail. More solitary and elusive than the familiar Red-browed Finch which gathers in flocks at seeding native grasses, the Beautiful Firetail is a well-named bird. Its body feathers are finely barred black-and-white, with a black mask, an eye-ring of the palest blue, and its bill and rump the most vivid crimson red. Like many finches, its full beauty only becomes apparent when seen close-up. On this morning it was feeding on fallen seeds from *Allocasuarina littoralis*.

Allocasuarinas, or she-oaks, are useful trees for birds. Thornbills glean insects in the fine, pine-like foliage - the same foliage which whispers in the breeze. The fresh seed cones are demolished by Glossy Black-Cockatoos, which feed exclusively on the seeds within. The older cones open up over time, allowing finches to pick the seeds out with their pointed bills, or they fall out providing easy pickings for birds on the ground.

The small birds we call finches and firetails in Australia belong to the family *Estrildidae*. Their broad conical bills are perfectly evolved for seed-eating. While most Estrildid finches are warmth-loving, tropical species, the Beautiful Firetail is a cool-climate bird. It's at home in the swampy heathlands and forests of the Blue Mountains and further south including southern Victoria and Tasmania.

Early morning isn't always the best time to see birds - there are some exceptions. Soaring raptors like eagles and hawks which make use of thermals are most likely to be seen in the middle of the day and throughout the afternoon. Migrating Yellow-faced and White-naped Honeyeaters, such a feature of autumn in the Blue Mountains, tend to reach their peak numbers during mid morning before slowing down about 11am, though this pattern can vary with the weather. In winter, early rising becomes less important as most birds take longer to get going on frosty mornings. Seems they're not so different to us.

But it's the Rockwarblers at Evans Lookout that have the most surprising habits. These charming little birds with a distribution limited to the Sydney sandstone region, seem to wait until the carpark is full of cars before making an appearance. They then happily forage under and between the vehicles, dodging the feet of tourists as they come and go! It can be fascinating to learn the daily routines of birds.

Carol Probets, origma@westnet.com.au, Twitter: @carolprobets



Photo:
Beautiful Firetail,
Carol Probets

You can become a member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society

- Post this Application Form with your cheque or money order to: Blue Mountains Conservation Society, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls, NSW 2782, **OR**
- Join online at: www.bluemountains.org.au

(Use capitals please—even for email address)

Name(s) 1.
2.
3.

Address:
.....PC

Phone(s)

Email

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.

MEMBERSHIP FEES (please circle one item)

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

Household \$35 Household Concession \$25

Corporate (negotiable)

Membership (circled above) \$

Donation (tax deductible) \$

Bushwalkers: please add
\$20 per walker per annum. \$

TOTAL AMOUNT \$

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; Website and social media; Plant nursery assistance; Bushcare; Publicity/photography; Water quality/sourcing studies; Administration;

ENQUIRIES: Phone 02 4757 1872

Email: membership@bluemountains.org.au

JOIN Blue Mountains
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www.bluemountains.org.au

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.

Bright Mite

Take note of the Spotted Pardalote
If you can see high in the tree.
Black, white, red and gleaming gold,
This bright mite sings with a bell-like note,
'Be quick, be quick, or you won't see me,
High in the tree, high in the tree'.

Graham Alcorn.

Down the Wallaby Track: a backward glance, with John Low OLD MAN EMU

On a rock platform in Ticehurst Park at Faulconbridge an Aboriginal rock engraving holds the memory of a long vanished inhabitant of the Blue Mountains. Three emus are portrayed, possibly in the course of being hunted. There are tracks depicting movement and one emu lies in a prone position. Evidence of the emu's importance to the local Aboriginal people, this rock art site is a powerful reminder of loss - on multiple levels.

Among the First Fleeters the emu (or 'cassowary' as it was called) was, said Watkin Tench, "the bird which principally claims attention". It was shy, fast and difficult to shoot and its flesh tasted like beef. In 1790, in the wake of exploration by Tench and fellow Marine officer William Dawes, a survey party "saw three Cassowaries" in the vicinity of the Nepean ford and Emu Plains was christened.

Though emus in the coastal regions soon fell victim to the gun and dog, they were still surviving in the less accessible terrain of the Mountains when Gregory Blaxland camped near present-day Springwood in May 1813 and had his sleep interrupted by one "on the other side of the gully calling continually in the night". During the next couple of years explorer George Evans, road builder William Cox and Governor Lachlan Macquarie all remarked upon the abundance of emu in the newly discovered country west of the Mountains.

From this time on, however, the record traces clearly the emu's retreat before the advance of settlement, with colonial observer and naval surgeon Peter Cunningham forecasting in 1827 their demise as a species, "possibly spoken of hereafter ... as part and parcel of traditionary (sic) history". Even on the Bathurst Plains where Evans had found large flocks and declared them "numerous" in 1813, their numbers soon declined; so significantly that Charles Darwin (1836) was constrained to lament that "the emu is banished to a long distance", a view reiterated three years later by Louisa Meredith who, while staying with her sister in Bathurst, wrote that "now these noble birds have become unknown, except in the almost untrodden districts of the interior".

In former times visitors to Echo Point would sometimes play a 'spot the emu' game, seeing who could first locate the shape of an emu in the weathered sandstone wall of Kings Tableland. Known to the Aboriginal people, the indigenous importance of this feature is attested to by the survival of a legend - "The Crushing of the Emu" - one of two emu legends collected in the 1940s by journalist and bushman Frank Walford from Gundungurra man Jimmy Shepherd (see Jim Smith, *Legends of the Blue Mountains Valleys*, Den Fenella Press, 2003).

Best viewed "lit by the westering sun", further weathering has made the figure more ghostly and difficult to decipher but with good eyes and a bit of imagination you might see what Walford himself saw - a large bird gazing "backward over its left shoulder, as though disturbed by some noise in the lower reaches of Kedumba Valley". Another reminder of what's been lost!

John Low (grizzlybear3au@yahoo.com)

Welcome to new members

Caroline Druce, Woodford
Owen Thompson, Woodford
Annabel Murray, Katoomba
Patricia Whitehead, Blackheath
Leonie Stanberg, Merrylands

*The poems in this issue of Hut News are from Graham Alcorn's book of poems, **The Bird Baths of Umbigumbi**. They may have been published before in Hut News, but I hope you enjoy them as much as I do. Christine.*



Photo from Birdlife Australia.

Windy Day, Blue Mountains

Over the trees around my house
 Fifty huge birds are playing,
 Soaring and swooping about in the gale,
 Yellow tails splaying;
 Screeching and screaming with much ado,
 Fifty great jubilant Black Cockatoos,
 Showing the rest of us what they can do,
 The big exhibitionist clowns!

Graham Alcorn.

Native plants that are weeds Christine Davies

In early April, one of our Interpretive Bushwalks was at Wentworth Falls on the recently restored Den Fenella track. Arriving at the Wentworth Falls Picnic Area we met a friend, a NPWS Discovery Ranger, who was there to meet a group of 150 school children and to take them on the track we had planned to walk on. It was time for Plan B.

While waiting, our friend showed us a weed tree growing in the Picnic Area, masquerading as a native. Near it was a wonderful selection of mushrooms – some edible, one of the walkers told me, but I took their word for that.

Crested or Cape Leeuwin wattle (*Paraserianthes lophantha*, previously *Albizia lophantha*) is native to south-west Western Australia. It has been observed spreading in every major roadworks over the last decade in the Blue Mountains, and is being found growing further into the bush.

The specimen we saw was in seed and was more than likely planted there. You can find a Fact Sheet at: http://keyserver.lucidcentral.org/weeds/data/03030800-0b07-490a-8d04-0605030c0f01/media/html/Paraserianthes_lophantha_subsp_lophantha.htm

Photos: Leaf and seeds of *Paraserianthes lophantha*.



The Tables Turned

The Emu and the Painted Snipe
 And other species of this type,
 Behave in a manner that could vex us
 Men, reversing the role of sexes.

For instance, it's of no avail
 Courting a Painted Button Quail,
 Before you've considered what to do
 The female Quail is courting you.

When she's laid the eggs she'll leave you,
 Caring not that this might grieve you.
 Alas, they'll never understand us
 Men—they're polyandrous.

Graham Alcorn.

**BLUE MOUNTAINS
 CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc**
 'Like' us on Facebook:
 Blue Mountains Conservation Society
 Follow us on Twitter: bmcnsnw

High-speed rail linking Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane would reduce carbon emissions and provide a profitable and popular service.

A report by climate change think tank Beyond Zero Emissions (BZE) found that a 1799km high-speed rail system could be built between Melbourne and Brisbane, via Canberra and Sydney, within 11 years at a cost of \$84bn. The project would generate \$7bn of operating revenue in the year 2030, despite tickets being cheaper than air travel, which would mean the scheme's initial outlay would be repaid by 2040.

According to BZE CEO Dr Stephen Bygrave "the research shows that high speed rail can reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport, in addition to the regional development and economic benefits previously identified."

A network of 21 high-speed rail stations would connect regional centres and mean that 60 per cent of Australia's population would live within 50km of a high-speed rail station. This would have a significant impact upon air travel, with trains capturing 65 per cent of the Melbourne to Sydney and Sydney to Brisbane market. Greenhouse emissions from transport would be reduced by 150 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent over 40 years of operation.

Read more: <http://econews.com.au/news-to-sustain-our-world/high-speed-rail-possible-sooner-and-cheaper/>

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc: 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. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. If you are a new walker to Saturday walks, before attending contact the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Jim Percy—phone 4758 6009, email jp34@tpg.com.au Check www.bluemountains.org.au for updates.

Saturday Walks driver reimbursement: *In an effort to ensure that car drivers are adequately compensated for the use of their vehicles a driver reimbursement policy applies* (Check www.bluemountains.org.au Saturday Walks page for details)

- May 10 **Crossing of the Blue Mountains of NSW 2013/14.** Day 6 Blackheath to Mt Victoria - off track may be involved. Postponed from November 2013-Leader Jim 4758 6009 - Meet at Blackheath Station Carpark 8.20am 9Km –final route is not decided may be Gr 3 or 4 Contact leader nearer the event. Map Mount Wilson.
- May 17 **Govetts Leap – Junction Rock – The Horse Track to Evans Lookout-** 500M descent and ascent and a few creek crossings (no wet feet). Spectacular views during the descent. A classic mountains walk. Leader Warren 4787 5403 or 0428 962 460. Meet at Blackheath Stn C/P 8.15am. 10 Km. Gr 3. Map Katoomba
- May 17 **Gardens of Stone.** A short, slow walk. Gr 3/4 exploratory. 4WDs necessary. Walk full, but cancellations may occur: please ring Hugh after 7pm. 0423 309 854.
- May 24 **Newnes township and the oilworks remains, see our industrial past.** Leader Bob 4757 2694. Meet at W Falls Stockade car park 7.30am. 6 km all on track with one creek crossing. Gr 1 to 2. Map Ben Bullen and sketch map.
- May 31 **Lions Head – Great views into Kedumba Valley along Lions Head Ridge.** Leader Diana. Meet at Wentworth Falls Stockade CP 8.00am. 7 Km. Gr 2/3. Map Jamison
- May 31 **Gardens of Stone.** A short, slow walk Gr 3/4 exploratory 4WDs necessary. Walk full, but cancellations may occur: please ring Hugh after 7pm. 0423 309 854.
- June 7 Queens Birthday LWE. **Zorros Canyon and more.** Leader Emanuel 4757 1090 or 0419773906-Contact Leader after 7.00pm for details.
- June 14 **Crossing of the Blue Mountains of NSW 2013/14, Day 7. Mt Victoria to Mt Blaxland.** Bus transport will be required, cost \$12 pp. Postponed from December 2013. Leader Jim 4758 6009 – Please ring to book your bus seat. Meet at Mt Victoria Station carpark 8.15am. Walk distance approx 12 Km. Maps Mt Wilson/Hartley
- June 14 **Gardens of Stone.** A short, slow walk, Gr. 3/4 exploratory. 4WDs necessary. Walk full, but cancellations may occur: please ring Hugh after 7pm. 0423 309 854.
(Check with the leader first, then the BMCS website (www.bluemountains.org.au) for updates)

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 Keith Dorrian, 4736 1010, keithdor53@hotmail.com

- May 12 **Bus Trip \$12 - Dharug National Park, Mill Creek Circuit Wisemans Ferry.** 8km round walk. Meet Springwood Car Park behind Westpac 7-45am. Book and pay Tony 9625 3985. Leader Francoise Matter 0438512301. Grade 2/3.
- May 19 **Darwins Walk – Tablelands Rd and back** via Rocket Point and Little Switzerland and back to Wentworth Falls Car Park. Meet Wentworth Falls Car Park 8-45am. Leader Kate 4759 1943. Grade 2.
- May 26 **Mt Piddington to Hourne's Point.** Meet Mt Victoria Station 8-45am. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Grade 3
- June 2 **Horseshoe Falls, Hazelbrook.** Meet Hazelbrook Shopping Centre, bottom Car Park 8-45am. Leader Ken 0423.450.200. Grade 2.

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS: Walks 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 Beverley Thompson, 4757 2076, roybev12@bigpond.net.au

- May 8 **McMahon's Lookout Wentworth Falls.** Unending views across Lake Burragorang. Take lunch. 4WD pool \$5. Numbers limited unless more people volunteer their 4WD. Contact leader if you can. Meet Wentworth Falls Stockyard Car Park 9.30am. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 1
- May 15 **Little Zig Zag Mount Victoria.** Circuit along track constructed in 1877 for access to Kanimbla Valley. Car pool. Take lunch. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Rosemary 6355 2292. Grade 3.
- May 22 **Birdwood Gully and barbecue, Springwood.** Car pool. Bring meat to barbecue and a plate to share. Meet behind Springwood Civic Centre 10.00am. Leader Narelle 4751 2467. Grade 2
- May 29 **Den Fenella, Breakfast Point and Short Cut Track, Wentworth Falls.** Features forests, waterfalls and breathtaking cliff-top views. Car pool. Take lunch. Meet Wentworth Falls Stockyard Car Park 9.30am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2
- June 5 **Red Hand Cave, Glenbrook.** The track to the cave was most likely used by the Darug people for thousands of years. Car pool. Take lunch. Meet Glenbrook Station Car Park 9.30am. Leader Keith 4736 1010. Grade 2.
- June 12 **Numantia Falls, Faulconbridge.** Walk down Victory Track to falls seeing rainforest and creeks. Take lunch. Meet Faulconbridge Station south side 9.30am. Leaders Maurice 4739 4942 and Lindsay 4751 6640. Grade 3.

Interpretive Bushwalks, Term 2

May 1 Blackheath, May 8 Pitt Town Lagoon, bird walk. May 15 Wentworth Falls, Nature Trail. May 22 Oberon, Fish River Dam and environs, May 26-30 Canberra/Yass Trip, June 5 Woodford, Wilson Park. June 12 Bilpin, June 19, Glenbrook, Lapstone Zigzag. June 26 Winmalee, Blue Gum Swamp.
Walks are at a leisurely pace. Duration of activity 3 to 5 hours. Usually grade 2. Contact Christine for a full program: phone 4787 7246 or email hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

The Gardens of Stone Visitors Map

\$7.50 plus \$1.50 postage.

Buy the map online

(www.bluemountains.org.au) or

write to BMCS, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782 with your cheque or money order.