

HUT NEWS

Issue No. 318
September 2014



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 15th October, 7pm

As the first in a series of Society events leading up to the NSW State Election in March 2015, the Society is holding a public meeting.

The State of the State - an Environmental Perspective

Guest speaker: Kate Smolski, CEO of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW

Local candidates from the Liberal, Labor, and Greens parties will also be invited to attend and speak briefly if they wish.

At the Conservation Hut
Wentworth Falls.

Saturday, 25th October, 10 am

"Music of the Mountains" (Listening to Nature) – Jim Smith.

BMCS General Meeting.

Wentworth Falls School of Arts.

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.

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

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.

SEPTEMBER—BIODIVERSITY MONTH



Threatened Species Day, 7th September, commemorates the death of the last *Thylacine* (Tasmanian Tiger—*Thylacinus cynocephalus*) at Hobart Zoo in 1936. Events are held nationally throughout September—Biodiversity Month.

THREATENED SPECIES DAY—PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Sunday, 7 September

11 am to 3 pm

Mid Mountains Community Centre,
Lawson.

You will find a full program and more information on page 2.



GIANT DRAGONFLIES

Local biologist Ian Baird shares his passion for these beauties: <http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/wildlife/2014/08/giant-dragonflies-in-the-blue-mountains-nsw>

You can download Ian's thesis at <http://researchdirect.uws.edu.au/islandora/object/uws:11763>

Photos: Spotted-tail Quoll, Nakia Belmer; Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby, Ian Brown; Giant Dragonfly, Ian Baird.

Our Administration Officer, Wes Maley, is leaving the mountains.

Thank you Wes for your good humour, dedication and patience over the past years. You will be sorely missed. As well as taking on the administration role, Wes helped his wife, Anne, over several years to envelope and distribute the hard copies of Hut News. Thank you Anne Maley for all your help. We wish you both well in your new home, closer to your children and grandchildren.

The Society needs a new administration officer, or a team of people who can volunteer to take over various functions of the job. Please contact Alan Page (4784 1704, president@bluemountains.org.au) if you are interested in helping in any way and want to find out more.

"Hut News", the newsletter of
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**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT
ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS
20 SEPTEMBER 2014**

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Threatened Species Day – Problems and Solutions Sunday 7th September, 11:00am – 3:00pm Mid-Mountains Community Centre, Lawson

PROGRAM

- 11:00 **Introduction – Nakia Belmer**
Welcome to Country & a Darug perspective—**Chris Tobin**
- 11:15 **Debbie Andrew** – Regent Honeyeaters, Swift Parrot and Spotted-tail Quolls
- 11:45 **Judy Smith** – Greater Gliders
- 12:15 **Michael Hensen** – Hanging swamps incl. Giant Dragonflies
- 12:45 LUNCH (Bring lunch or buy in a local café)
- 1:30 **Michaela Jones** – Brush-tailed Rock Wallabies
- 2:00 **Wyn Jones** – Blue Mountains rare plants, including Wollemi Pine and Camden White Gum
- 2:30 Q&A discussion – Chaired by **Gregg Borschmann**
- 3:00 Finish

Speakers will highlight some of the attempts being made to prevent extinctions of Australia's fauna and flora, and to restore healthy numbers of threatened species and ecological communities in the wild.

Brush-tailed Rock Wallabies were once widespread across S-E Australia. They're now only found in small isolated pockets scattered along the Great Divide from SE Qld to Northern Victoria. *Michaela Jones (NPWS)* monitors the group living at Jenolan Caves.

Her colleague, *Debbie Andrew* is involved in the projects to restore habitat for critically endangered Regent Honeyeaters in Capertee Valley and Swift Parrots elsewhere. She's also studied Spotted Quolls for many years and seen how competition from feral predators is threatening their existence.

Greater Gliders are world-record holders, able to glide over 100m in search of fresh gum blossoms, buds & leaves. *Judy Smith* has noticed their numbers dropping throughout the Blue Mountains. She's looking at historical records and searching for gliders across the Mountains to determine why they're disappearing.

Wyn Jones, the botanist who identified the Wollemi Pine, will be speaking about his studies of rare plants in the Blue Mountains, and in particular, dangers to the vulnerable Camden White Gum from weeds, changed fire regimes, feral pigs, etc.

Hanging swamps are a key part of our Blue Mountains environment, a home to an array of unique plants and animals, such as the endangered Giant Dragonfly. They also act as the storage to keep our creeks & waterfalls flowing. *Michael Henson (BMCC)* will discuss their vital ecological role and how the swamps are threatened by human impacts such as developments, run-off and mining.

There will also be a stimulating Q&A panel, chaired by ABC journalist *Gregg Borschmann*, with the speakers discussing threats and strategies to safeguard various species. Join in the discussion and discover how we all might be able to contribute to solutions.

Come along for a fascinating day, learn more about conservation management of our precious environment or just pop in for a talk or two that particularly interests you. For enquiries contact-Gary Humble, BMCS Education Officer, Ph 47841648, Mob 0427 841078, gaz.humble@gmail.com
(Photo: Swift Parrot, Margot Foster)



**"Overpopulation in various countries has become a serious threat to the health of people and a grave obstacle to any attempt to organize peace on this planet."
Albert Einstein.**

The Gardens of Stone—a photographic journey with Hugh Speirs



Alice and Elaine lurk in the shadows in a crevasse in Pleasant View Canyon. Hugh Speirs.

One Coal Seam Gas threat removed

PELA 158 (Petroleum Exploration Licence Application), which covered an area from Capertee to Blackheath and down to Springwood/Winnmalee and across to Mount Wilson/Bilpin, including Gardens of Stone, Wollemi and Blue Mountains National Parks, **was refused** by the Minister on 20th August.

The Society would like to thank our members, Stop CSG Blue Mountains and the thousands of Blue Mountains residents who signed the petitions and made submissions to have PELA158 rejected.

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Help keep Council's Environment Levy Angela Langdon, Land Use

If you are a Blue Mountains ratepayer you would have recently received a letter and survey to complete about future Blue Mountains City rates. The survey is called "**Resourcing Our Future**". The options contained in the survey are simple:

- Option 1: rates are increased to allow better service levels
- Option 2: rates are increased to allow current service levels to be maintained
- Option 3: the rate increase is minimal and service levels are reduced.

What many people do not realise is that the continuation of the current Environment Levy is only included in Options 1 and 2. **In Option 3 the levy is removed.**

If you vote for Option 1 or 2, you will be voting for the continuation of the Environment Levy. If you vote for Option 3 we suggest you hand write on the submission form the following comment "While I am voting for Option 3, I want the Environmental Levy to be maintained at the current level".

Why is the Environment Levy so important? It was introduced by Council in 2005, after community consultation, to fund projects which restore, protect and improve our local environment. The levy is an additional charge of \$43 per property (less than \$1 per week!). In 2012/13 a total of \$1,247,545 was spent on a wide variety of projects including water quality monitoring, weed control, supporting Bushcare groups, restoring bushland and wildlife habitat, maintenance of tracks and lookouts on Council managed bushland reserves, and environmental education.

The Society believes that the Environment Levy provides a significant pool of funds for vital environmental management and protection works within the Blue Mountains. Funds raised by the Levy are effectively quarantined and can only be spent on identified environmental programs. Importantly, the Environment Levy also enables Council to successfully leverage significant additional grant funding from State and federal governments (in 2013/13 this amounted to \$612,000 additional funds).

Make sure you vote for the environment by indicating your support for the Environment Levy in the Council's "Resourcing Our Future" rate survey. Responses are required by 15 September 2014.



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Coalpac and its 'coalpability' – now in the hands of the PAC Brian Marshall

In the Hut News for August, I asked whether anyone would rid me of this troublesome miner. Regrettably, no-one has obliged. Those who bet that the Department of Planning and Environment's (DP&E) assessment report would oppose the Coalpac Modifications have lost their money!

The DP&E's assessment on the Coalpac Cullen Valley and Invincible Modifications went to the PAC (Planning Assessment Commission) on August 6, 2014¹. The assessment report for the Modifications states²:

"...the Department considers the project to be in the public interest, and recommends that it be approved subject to strict conditions."

The Commissioners charged with making the PAC's determination are Mr Garry West (chair), Ms Donna Campbell and Mr Gordon Kirkby. Details of the Commissioners are on the PAC website (endnote 1 below).

The PAC has scheduled a public meeting for September 17 at Cullen Bullen. Details of how you can participate are provided in a separate article on this page: Planning Assessment Commission Meeting on Coalpac Modifications Proposal.

The DP&E's approval of the Modifications is outrageous. The DP&E previously rejected the Coalpac Consolidation Project (CCP), with feeble support from OEH (Office of Environment and Heritage), in the face of opposition by Treasury and the DRE (Department of Resources and Energy). It has now compromised its integrity by succumbing to those same pressures over Modifications involving a mere 9 million tonnes of coal.

Coalpac is 'coalpable' for originally persisting with the Coalpac Consolidation Project (only to withdraw it in the face of certain PAC rejection), and now coveting 'mickey mouse' quantities of coal despite the disastrous environmental outcomes. The DP&E is culpable for reneging on its once-principled position and accepting the self-serving, seemingly duplicitous arguments of Coalpac, its 'dedicated' consultants, and its governmental adherents.

Will the PAC stand-up for a unique land system, or will it too don the mantle of culpability by recommending the Modifications' approval, despite this damaging the unique landscape and opening the door for more open-cut extensions and the landscape's obliteration.

Let's be clear! If the Modifications are approved, this will be the thin end of the wedge. Coalpac and its likely beneficial owner (Hong Kong-based EnergyAustralia) will not stop until the previously rejected destructive potential of the CCP becomes an incremental reality.

¹ <http://www.pac.nsw.gov.au/Projects/tabid/77/ctl/viewreview/mid/462/pac/418/view/readonly/myctl/rev/Default.aspx>

² On Planning's website at http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=6446 and http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=6451

Planning Assessment Commission Meeting on Coalpac Modifications Proposal Brian Marshall

The Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) will hold a public meeting at **Cullen Bullen Progress Association Hall, 37-39 Castlereagh Hwy, Cullen Bullen on 17 September 2014 at 1.30 pm**, to hear any final points or submissions before making its determination.

If **you** wish to **speak at the meeting** on the DP&E's assessment and recommendation **you must register beforehand** by ringing Ms Rebecca Chungue on **(02) 9383 2112 by 1.00 pm Thursday 11 September**. You will only be allowed about 5 minutes as an individual or 10-15 minutes if you represent an organization. You should, at the meeting, provide the PAC with a hard copy of your oral presentation.

Should **you** wish to make a submission to the PAC on any aspect of the DP&E's assessment and recommendation but are unable to attend the meeting, send it by email to pac@pac.nsw.gov.au as soon as practicable.

Some points (there are many more than those listed below) to consider:

- The proposed Modifications fragment the unique landscape which the PAC (2012) and Department of Planning (2013) deemed of sufficient importance to reject the Coalpac Consolidation Proposal.
- The landscape is unique in its totality – removing parts, compromises this totality and renders it similar to those areas that have already been irreversibly damaged by mining and by clearing for farming purposes.
- Excising portions of the unique landscape by open-cut and highwall mining is akin to removing the valves from your heart whilst arguing that there will be no down-side!
- The unique landscape contains endangered and critically endangered ecological communities (EECs and CEECs), and poorly reserved vegetation types which cannot be offset on a like-for-like basis.
- The unique landscape is habitat for threatened flora and fauna species which will be destroyed by and/or inadequately buffered from open-cut mining.
- Destroying and in other ways compromising this unique landscape for 9 Mt of low-grade coal does not make sense, unless Coalpac intends to increase this tonnage by progressively seeking more extensions – death of a landscape by a 'thousand cuts'.



Beautiful but deadly: The Sundew, (*Drosera spathulata*) is beautiful when you look at it closely. Try looking through a magnifying lens (you might also see tiny insects stuck to the leaves).

It grows where the soil is damp and leached of nutrients. The droplets are very sticky and trap the insects they attract. The insects are absorbed by the plant and provide the nutrients which are missing in the soil. Cleverly, *Drosera* species grow their flowers on long stems, away from the sticky leaves, and the pollinating insects do not get trapped. Christine.

Nursery News Sue Nicol, Nursery Manager

The winter break at the nursery did not mean that work stopped, just sales. The Lawson volunteers organised working bees to catch up on much needed maintenance and Blackheath stalwarts kept an eye on the watering and made emergency repairs when wind damaged the glasshouse.

The Nursery volunteers returned to a very cold start to work at the beginning of August, but they are made of tough stuff and the weather did not deter them. At Blackheath we had twelve people, some of them new volunteers, and the wintry conditions were ignored as we were warmed by Gluwein at morning tea! The first Sunday market at Blackheath was chilly and customers were a bit scarce and the first Magpie Market was cancelled due to rain. We are looking forward to Spring and a burst of new growth in plants, and customers eager to buy them.

Plant of the month: *Melaleuca hypericifolia*. Melaleucas are paperbarks and some are tall trees often seen in street plantings. However not all of them are trees and not all have papery bark. *M.hypericifolia* is a spreading shrub with arching branches and lovely orangy red

bottlebrush-like spikes which are bird-attracting. Like most Melaleucas it prefers damp sites and in the Mountains it can be found along tracks around damp cliff faces eg. at Wentworth Falls, but it grows well in many mountain gardens. We have plenty of them at Lawson Nursery ready for planting now.



Photo: *Melaleuca hypericifolia*, Photo: Brian Walters
Source: <http://anpsa.org.au/m-hyp.html>

The New 10/50 Bushfire Vegetation Clearing Law

The NSW Government has introduced new legislation, known informally as the **10/50 Vegetation Clearing Act**, which came into effect on 1 August 2014. This new law provides owners of properties, deemed at risk from bushfire, the entitlement to remove trees and other vegetation within certain distances of their homes **without the need to seek any sort of formal approval**.

The new laws allow people to:

- Clear trees on their property within 10 metres of a home; and
- Clear underlying vegetation such as shrubs (but not trees) on their property within 50 metres of a home.

NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) has developed a **10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice** to define what clearing activities will be permitted under the new law. For instance you cannot clear on steeply sloping land under the Code and therefore permission is still required.

An on-line mapping tool on the RFS website (**10/50 Vegetation Clearing Entitlement Areas**) indicates what areas are deemed high fire risk and therefore where the Act applies. In the Blue Mountains, the new Act applies to nearly all residential areas.

The Society is very concerned that the rules as outlined under the Code are not well understood by the community. There has been no public education campaign on the Code before its release, the Code is complex and information is hard to find.

The Society has already had reports from concerned members that clearing has occurred in breach of the Act and the Code, e.g. tree removal greater than 10 metres from homes.

Unfortunately it is also very unclear what government agency undertakes compliances and ensures that residents clear vegetation consistent with the Act and Code. The Society is attempting to clarify this and more information will be available in the next Hut News.

The Society is concerned that the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Act and Code was a rushed response to last October bushfires. There was very little public consultation prior to the new Act and Code being introduced.

The implications of introducing an entitlement to clear trees without some type of approval has clear risks in terms of native vegetation in residential areas, especially where the rules are not well understood by the community. Pittwater Council for instance estimated that if everyone in their local government area took up the entitlement, 55% of the tree canopy would be lost¹ – a similar if not a worse scenario is likely for the Blue Mountains

The Society supports effective bushfire risk reduction strategies and there is emerging evidence from the October bushfires that in terms of minimising the risk of losing your home in a bushfire, a key strategy is retrofitting your home and maintaining it, in order to address ember attack.

A recent CSIRO study into the October 2014 bushfire blaze found it had a “similar rate of house destruction as the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria, despite relatively benign fire conditions”¹. The report concluded that there was little evidence of direct flame contact or radiation damage on homes. “As such, losses were predominantly due to ember attack”. Justin Leonard, a CSIRO expert on bushfire housing design, “advocates a hierarchy approach where residents tackle primary risks first”. For instance, there is little point felling nearby trees if homes remain vulnerable to a rainstorm of embers often emanating from hundreds of metres – if not kilometres – away. If ember attacks aren’t addressed, “it’s a bit ridiculous to focus on vegetation clearing”, Leonard said.

¹ Peter Hannam, SMH, 16/8/2014 “Tackling fire on the home front”. Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/tackling-the-fire-threat-on-the-home-front-20140815-104dd5.html#ixzz3BGYCrBnJ>

Birdwatchers make a big splash

Congratulations to all those who took part in the first national Bathing Birds survey!

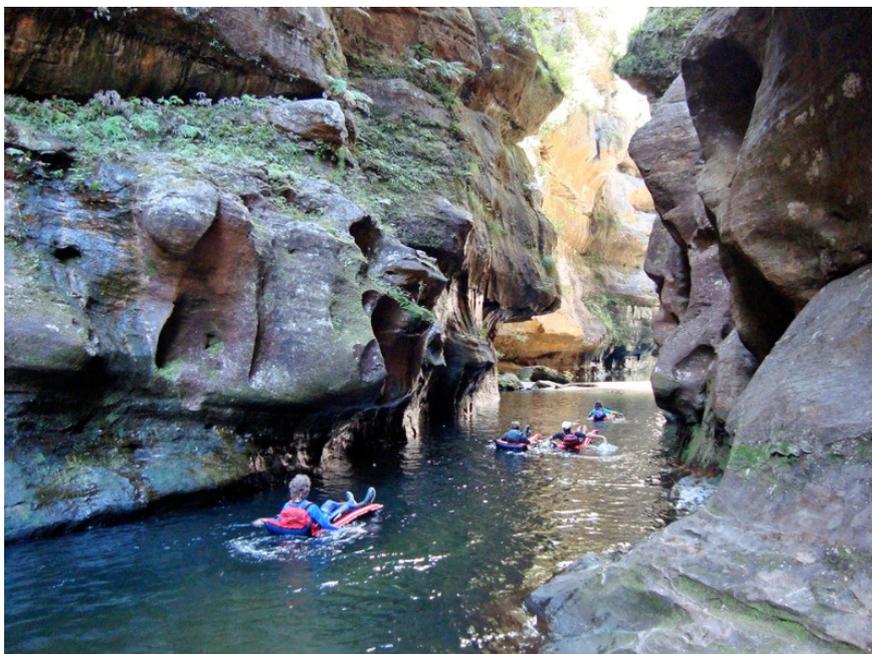
Grainne Cleary, one of the organisers, praised Blue Mountains people for making a significant contribution to almost 2000 participants around the country who kept an eye on who was using birdbaths in their backyards. Almost 50,000 birds were spotted having a drink or a splash during July. BirdLife Australia will be using the information to keep track on which types are using birdbaths and how gardening habitats affect birdlife. The study will be repeated in January then twice annually in the future to maintain an ongoing record.

Three suggestions from Birds in Backyards:

- Plant, plant, plant! Drop into the ConSoc nursery and see what stock of local native plants we have. Lots of layers (even if they are pruned and 'neat' looking), especially shrubs, are great for many of our smaller native birds that struggle in suburbia.
- Big flowering hybrid Grevilleas look amazing but attract larger and aggressive birds like Noisy Miners and Wattlebirds. Don't plant your entire garden with them – instead look for small, local Grevilleas.
- Install and maintain a nest box for hollow-nesting species. Pick one for the bird you want to attract and be sure to keep watch for invaders (and be prepared to remove the nesting material of introduced birds if they try to take over).

Grainne will be up here in the Mountains on Nov 1st for the launch of the Great Koala Count. She and Dr Kellie Leigh will be explaining about how to join in the Count by going for a bushwalk and keeping your eyes up in the trees. Postponed last year because of the bushfires, the meeting at Faulconbridge Hall will also be a chance for kids to meet Badger, Kellie's dog trained to safely find quolls and other elusive wildlife for surveys. (Photo: Red Wattlebirds having a splash and spruce up in my yard.)

Gary Humble.



Blue Mountains Wild River - The Wollangambe

Our meeting at the Wentworth Falls School of Arts on Sunday 17th August attracted a crowd of 169 people (a full house).

Andy Macqueen entertained us with a presentation of the Wollangambe's history and geography. Andy also spoke of "creative" cartographers, overly-keen bushwalkers and li-lo adventurers. He told us that the Aboriginal place name "Wollangambe" probably initially belonged to Mount Irvine. Alan Page gave a presentation on coal.

Dr Ian Wright then presented the Wollangambe's state of health. This was based on water sampling at different sites over many months and is described in detail in the paper that has just been presented at a conference. Blue Mountains Conservation Society and the Colong Foundation for Wilderness provided funds to pay for the laboratory tests.

In summary, the Wollangambe River is being polluted by water discharged from the Clarence Colliery. The levels of zinc and nickel, the water temperature, salinity and the pH change significantly from above to below the mine discharge point. Similarly, the wildlife in the water decrease significantly.

Ian's presentation – although depressing – was given in a light and humorous fashion and proposed clear actions that need to be taken to address the situation. The main course of action was to ensure that the EPA establishes an appropriate EPL (Environmental Pollution Licence). Currently several of the variables that should be a condition of the licence are not included – such as nickel, salinity and macro invertebrate; while others have maximums way too high – such as zinc and pH.

People arriving were able to see a wonderful slideshow of images by Ian Brown and others, including the photo at the top of this page by Hans Peter Dietz.

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

Blue Mountains City Council is continuing to review the public submissions made to the Draft Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2013 via a series of Extraordinary Council Meetings. As part of our campaign for an environmentally sound LEP, the Society has been reviewing the relevant Council Reports and attending the Council Meetings to speak in support of key provisions.

So far Council has stood firm and provisions in the draft LEP aimed at protecting the environment have not been diluted or removed (with one exception). Council has in some instance adopted or at least positively responded to a limited number of amendments the Society suggested in its formal submission to the draft LEP.

Pressure from some commercial and business groups to remove the R6 "leafy streets" zone and increase medium density housing development near the town centres has not been supported by Councillors to date. Councillors are standing firm that the draft LEP is a translation of existing planning rules and zonings. Calls for major changes such as re-zonings to increase development opportunities are being opposed. Highlights of the last two Council meetings are outlined below

17th July Extraordinary Council Meeting

At this meeting, Council considered issues in relation to Part 6 of the draft LEP. This section of the draft LEP is particularly important because it contains many of the localised environmental protection provisions transferred across from existing LEPs. Council voted to make some minor changes to the localised environmental provisions, generally leading to improvements in these clauses. The one exception was that Council voted to remove a new provision aimed at protecting groundwater resources. However, the fight to retain the Part 6 clauses is not over yet. As many of these clauses are Blue Mountains specific, they are at a high risk of being disallowed once the Draft LEP goes to the Department of Planning and Environment and the Minister for final approval.

For the Society, the most important matter to come before this meeting was the application of subdivision controls to the E2 Environmental Conservation zone (the old Environmental Protection zone in the existing LEPs). The Society in its submission argued for controls on E2 land which would effectively prevent further subdivision of these environmental sensitive areas, through imposing a minimum lot size of 40 hectares on E2 land in private ownership. The great news is that Council recognised this was an issue, and Councillors voted to defer a decision on subdivision controls on privately owned E2 land to a later meeting in order to consider further options.

14th August Extraordinary Council meeting

This was the first Council meeting dealing with submissions related to local site specific issues, from the Mt Irvine to Medlow Bath. The Society spoke on two key issues, including the need for further work on vegetation verification and mapping to correct mistakes in future amendments to the LEP. The other issue was to urge Council to apply consistently and robustly the criteria adopted by Council to decide whether or not to zone land E2 Environmental Protection, to ensure transparency and equity.

There was a significant contingent of Society members and Bushcare volunteers in the public gallery. Two people from Blackheath Bushcare groups spoke on specific blocks in their local area, particularly supporting the instances where Council staff recommended zoning Council owned community land containing swamps to E2 Environmental Protection or mapped land previously not recognised as environmentally sensitive. These recommendations were all adopted unanimously by Councillors and without public opposition.

It was clear that the local residents addressing the Council Meeting, including to support the recommendations, had an impact as Councillors heard the voice of the community directly. The short but passionate presentations from the bush-loving residents, prompted a short speech from the Mayor Mark Greenhill strongly supporting Bushcare volunteers and the bush and this will be on the council record. What a blast!

Other things of interest that were made clear for the first time – Council cannot of its own accord change the zoning of Crown Land without referring the matter to the State government. This explains why a lot of the recommendations the Society made in their submission in regard to Crown Land, including re-zoning as E2 environmentally important land at Lawsons Long Alley, will be deferred until this consultation has taken place.

It has also become clearer as the process has gone on that only obvious "errors" in mapping and zoning will be considered by Council. However, it seems possible that some of the Society's recommendations may be acted upon in the future once the giant hurdle of getting the new LEP finalised and approved by Dept of Planning and Environment and the Minister has been achieved.

The next phase

- There will be at least two more Extraordinary Council Meetings dealing with site specific local issues. The first will address submissions in relation to Katoomba, Leura and Wentworth Falls. This will be held on 4th September. At least one if not two more meetings will then address site specific issues in the lower mountains.
- It is critically important that Councillors at the meetings hear the concerns of local residents and community groups directly. The Society is urging residents and community groups who have environmental concerns in regard to sites in their local area to attend the relevant Council Meeting and speak. You don't have to say much or speak formally (in fact your limited to 3 minutes) just speak passionately about your issue or area. If you made a formal submission to the Draft LEP in regard to your local area, you will be informed directly by Council via a letter or email of the details of the Council meeting when your local area is being considered.
- Council staff indicated that they believe that the draft LEP will now be finalised and ready to submit for approval to the Department of Planning and Environment and the Minister in November 2013. This means the final approval of the LEP will be considered by the NSW Government very close to the March 2015 state election. The LEP will therefore highly likely to be a key election issue for the local community.

“Frugal is the New Sexy!” Diana Levy

It's one thing to recognise that our carbon-fuelled lifestyle is headed for global warming disaster. And another to know how to move away from our addiction to all that marvellous energy that we can simply dig out of the ground. Leigh Davison read the Club of Rome's report “The Limits to Growth” in 1972 and was utterly persuaded by its argument. He was a Maths Ph.D. student at UNSW at the time and the mathematics of the study were incontrovertible. He realised that he wanted to act on its findings, and live a life that was simple and sustainable. Decades after he began this experiment in living, he presented “**Reflections on thirty-five years of trying to live sustainably**” to a group of buddhists* in Camperdown.

I first met Leigh in 1978, in Hawaii. In September 1979, back in Australia, he and his wife Ellen bought shares in a 102 hectare community in the northern rivers region, on Terania creek near Lismore. It was a time when intentional communities were being set up all around the area, as an expression of the ‘back to the land’, alternative lifestyle movement. The pioneers of Dharmananda, as their community is called, had specific buddhist values. It is one of the very few that has survived and thrived, and has been examined and studied often. The values it began with were respect for the land, respect for each other, food self-sufficiency, no dope and no dole. They have a strong work ethic on Dharmananda. Part of their schtick is creative leisure - to have fun while meeting basic needs. Every Friday is a community work-day and Saturday morning is garden morning - this builds community cohesion.

Leigh and Ellen had very little money. “*We had a freedom from choice.*” Their first task was to build a home. With his engineering background, Leigh designed a small post and beam house which could be built by two people. Their water supply comes from a spring in the steep hill behind them. This water also runs their power supply, a 12 V micro-hydro system.

On the Power Point slide, Leigh displayed a facetious sign:

YOU ARE NOW ENTERING LISMORE
COMPOSTING TOILET
CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

They learnt much about sanitation and waste management on Dharmananda. They wanted to not only manage the human health and environmental health part of the waste cycle, but also recover and use the resource. The NSW Department of Health was antagonistic to the idea of a composting toilet, but changed their tune in 1991. What goes into the top of Leigh and Ellen's toilet comes out down the bottom as compost, usable on the gardens. Their grey water grows fabulous bananas—it runs straight out into the banana patch below the house.

Leigh talked about the history of the land, which had been used for dairying and bananas but was run-down when the group bought it. To keep the growth down in the early days, they bought a couple of cows. This has developed into a key part of their protein intake, and they (and the bull) are part of the nutrient pathways. Leigh and Ray get up early every morning to hand-milk the cows (jerseys). The community, which has grown, makes two or three cheeses every week. The gardens at Dharmananda are located down by the creek where the soil is richer. Everyone can harvest any mature crop, but each person looks after only one crop. Carol Perry, one of the pioneers, is a whiz at growing carrots. Dharmananda now has a tractor and nine implements. Leigh said that 1 litre of diesel could accomplish the work of one strong man over three weeks!! This means that it is a fantastic resource that we should be using frugally, instead of with gay abandon. Leigh emphasised that frugality does not mean austerity, but it has a time horizon of hundreds of years.

There are three criteria by which to judge the success of a transition community: that it is based locally (not global), that it's carbon footprint is low (using renewables) and that it's resilient, with strong social cohesion.

Leigh was asking himself the question, how does Dharmananda score? He ran through his analysis and I was interested to see that he gives it an 8 out of 10 for resilience. That is something to be proud of. People tend to focus on the tangible aspects of intentional communities such as food production and housing,

Welcome to new members

Robyn Tinker, Katoomba
Rob Miller, Katoomba
Helen Boynton, Katoomba
Susan Hayes, Glenbrook
Ros Pickering, Glenbrook
Ken Pickering, Glenbrook
Monica Hayes, Leura
Susan Morrison, Manly Vale
William Moon, Manly Vale
Zohar Edelshtein, Hazelbrook
Ravian Budde, Hazelbrook
Aiyana Budde-Edelshtein, Hazelbrook
Neriya Budde-Edelshtein, Hazelbrook
Maggie Maybury, Glenbrook
Taylor Coyne, Springwood
Carol Isaacs, Leura
Phill Isaacs, Leura

perhaps because they are easier to see. When one sees the power of the local movement against CSG at the Bentley blockade, this is how social cohesion manifests. A number of highly effective movers and shakers have been nurtured at Dharmananda. The Multiple Occupancy movement itself has bred some very positive qualities like independence, the ability to act in accord with the values expressed above.

There were many questions afterwards, and I asked Leigh, “*What have you learned about conflict by living there?*” His answer was succinct: “*You learn that your point of view is only one among many.*”

Bill McKibben of 350.org says it is important to build a movement that is creative and hopeful. Yes - “*You've got to dream it first,*” said Leigh.

If you'd like to see a video of Leigh's talk, it is on the web (download it before viewing), you can find it on: <http://1drv.ms/1kjSff9>

* At the Dharma Gaia Forum - this was created this year as a means to look at the buddhist response to the climate crises we are headed for.

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.

Loose Feathers, with Carol Probets

September is when we start to see many of the summer migrants, and one of the first to arrive is the Sacred Kingfisher. Just 21 cm in length and weighing about the same as an average apricot, this turquoise beauty spends its winters in New Guinea, Indonesia and northern Australia. In spring it flies back to its breeding areas in eastern and southern Australia, each pair most likely returning to the very same tree.

'Kingfisher' is actually a bit of a misnomer. About two thirds of the world's 90 species of kingfisher don't fish to any significant degree. The Sacred is one of this group, known as 'tree kingfishers' (as opposed to the smaller group of 'river kingfishers' which are the real fish-catchers). It hunts prey such as cicadas, earthworms, spiders, crabs, frogs, lizards and, occasionally, fish, using a watch-and-pounce technique from a branch. The drier open-forests or woodlands are its usual habitat in Australia.

Possessing such beauty it's no wonder the Polynesians regarded it as sacred (the reason for its common name) and believed it to have power over the waves and the ocean.

Most of the books don't adequately portray the incredible variation in its plumage. The colour on its back and wings varies from a rich vivid blue to a dull blue-green (with the male brighter and bluer), and its breast varies from buff to white depending on the time of year (the buff feather tips become worn off over time, thus making it appear whiter). This can result in it being misidentified as the more blue and white Forest Kingfisher (which doesn't occur in our area). The Sacred lacks the white wing spots of that species.

This group of woodland-dwelling kingfishers that don't often fish has a much larger and more well-known member: the Laughing Kookaburra. Unlike the Sacred Kingfisher, the kookaburra is sedentary, remaining in the same area year-round. Despite this, many people seem to notice them only at particular times of year. This might be due to local movement or the fact that they sing more in spring. The 'song' of course is the famous laugh, often performed by a whole family group as a territorial advertisement.

In the Blue Mountains we also have one member of the river kingfisher group. The gem-like little Azure Kingfisher - intensely blue with an orange breast - patrols the edges of rivers and lakes where it skims across the water snatching fish. You'll see it sitting quietly in the shadows beside the Nepean and Cocks Rivers and occasionally at Wentworth Falls Lake. It takes flight in a swift blue flash. Blink and you'll miss it!

What a sensational group of birds the kingfishers are.

Carol Probets

origma@westnet.com.au Twitter: *@carolprobets*

Photo: Sacred Kingfisher, by 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 Conservation Society, or renew your membership online.

www.bluemountains.org.au

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc

'Like' us on Facebook: Blue Mountains Conservation Society

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.

Back to the Leard Blockade Robin Mosman

Warwick and I are home after taking a group of silver-haired elders from the Blue Mountains Conservation Society to the Leard Blockade.

The plan was that our obvious super-respectability and elder wisdom would look impressive on Facebook, and hopefully add weight to opposition to the clearing of the Leard Forest for coal mining.

Here in the Blue Mountains we are no strangers to the threat of coal and CSG mining of course. Over the last four years the Society, and hundreds of its members, have put in more than 20 detailed submissions to do with the expansion of existing mines here and the establishment of new ones, 8 in 2014 alone, including a CSG exploration licence covering virtually the whole of the Blue Mountains World Heritage National Park.

We've also fought threats to our own threatened species, and against inappropriate land clearing. And of course the threat of increased intensity and frequency of bushfires exacerbated by global warming is also a huge concern. So we have some idea of what they're up against at the Leard.

Because of our advanced years, knees and backs etc, we did it the easy way, staying in Narrabri in cabins at a caravan park and driving the half-hour out to the camp each day.

They'd organised a busy day for us – they don't call it a working camp for nothing! We started with a lively and fascinating induction that gave a vivid picture of the history of the issues surrounding the mine, and of the camp. Then we had an NVDA (non violent direct action) training workshop, followed by a great lunch.

Then it was back to work to discuss and plan our action, which was to take place the next morning. We were initially slightly shocked to learn that we'd have to be out at the camp for a 5.30 start, but soon we got into the activism spirit of things and started to feel quite excited about it all.

Later in the afternoon Clive Heywood Barker took us up onto the top of a steep hill that looked across the plains to the slope where we could see Whitehaven's Maules Creek mine under construction about 10 kms away.

After dinner we headed back to Narrabri to get ready for a 4.45 start next morning. By 5.30 we were at the camp, and the young folks joined us. First a van full of them drove off in a different direction to act as a decoy to the Whitehaven security guards. We then drove off to another point in the forest - yes, this time we actually got into the forest! - where we lurked for a while until a message came through that we should go - fast! - to the point where we could barricade. We arrived to see a truck being slowed by the young decoys, then grabbed our signs and rushed over to make our line, stopping the truck and after a while 18 vehicles of mine workers and security guards.

We stopped them for 2 hours. Then we heard that the police were on their way from Narrabri. We decided not to wait and risk a fine for obstructing traffic, not wanting (CONTINUED on page 11)

A BEQUEST

Please remember us in your Will.

The Law Society of NSW recommends the following wording: "I bequeath the sum of \$... to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc. for its general purposes and declare that the receipt of the treasurer for the time being of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society shall be complete discharge to my executors in respect of any sum paid to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society".





Photo: Lachlan Garland and Robin Mosman.

Quote from Berthold Brecht

Our forces were slight. Our goal
Lay far in the distance
Clearly visible, though I myself
Was unlikely to reach it.
So passed my time
Given to me on earth.

ANOTHER CONVOY

Anyone interested in joining another group to visit the Leard Blockade can contact Robin on 4757 1354.

DUNPHY'S KOWMUNG ADVENTURE

Join this Historical event which is so important for both Bushwalking and Conservation - for more details see page 4 of this HutNews. Enquiries to: Tara Cameron 0419 824 974 taracameron4@gmail.com or Jim Percy 4758 6009 or jp34@tpg.com.au

Friday, Sep 26

Dunphy Wilderness Walk Launch, Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, Katoomba, 10am start.

Celebratory Walk, Katoomba to Old Ford Reserve, Megalong (8 km, Grade 3 – maps Katoomba and Hampton). Meet 11.30, BM Cultural Centre. Option to walk back to Katoomba, **OR**

Celebratory function and campfire at Old Ford Reserve, Megalong (map Hampton). From 3 pm. Basic BBQ dinner provided. Buses will depart Old Ford Reserve for Katoomba at 6 pm, 8 pm and 10 pm, **OR**

Camp overnight at Old Ford Reserve.

Saturday/Sunday, Sep 27/28

Celebratory Walk, Old Ford Reserve, Six Foot Track, camp at Cox's River (6 km, Grade 2.) Walk back to Katoomba (14 km, Grade 3 – maps Katoomba and Hampton).

Sunday/Monday, Oct 5/6 (Labour Day Long Weekend)

Celebration Camp and dinner at Wooglemai Environmental Education Centre, Sheehys Creek Rd, Oakdale (map Burratorang). The last Adventure Team arrives and we celebrate the journey. Camp or stay in a cabin. BYO for BBQ.

Back to the Leard Blockade (continued from page 10)

to make a donation to the police department, so took our signs and drove off back to the camp.

We were all so impressed by the young activists' professionalism, and especially touched by the fact that they had brought chairs for us to sit in while blocking the road, in case it had taken a lot longer for the police to come and we had been there for a few more hours. They in turn spoke of being impressed by our calm clarity about what we were doing - the wisdom of age, perhaps!

After lunch we went off to the barn for a workshop run by two clinical psychologists who were visiting from Melbourne to offer a variety of workshops for camp participants. We all gained some real insights into our various journeys in environmental concern and action, and left more hopeful and committed than we were at the beginning.

Then it was time to say goodbye. We were all on a bit of a high driving back, not that we thought what we'd done was really going to change anything, but just that we'd done *something*. We weren't just sitting around wringing our hands about climate change and the degradation of our land, we'd made a start to doing more. Three of the group spoke about how they were seriously considering divesting their investments from the big banks; all of them spoke about committing to talk to and engage more people in a variety of ways, about these issues that are so vital to us here in Australia, and to the rest of the world..

Two have already said they'd like to go back to the Leard blockade and bring others with them. Somehow you can't be in that environment and not be impressed and influenced by the commitment and determination of those young activists, who are putting everything they've got into this war against Big Coal and its political pawns. We all feel so motivated now to start taking action ourselves, in whatever way we can.

If anyone reading this feels inspired to go to the Leard Blockade, my advice is, *just do it!* You'll never regret it.

Berghofer's Pass

An easy walk on a rainy day. Diamonds of moisture on gum leaves. Patterns in the variously coloured sandstone, with layers of shale, infiltrations of ironstone, and coverings of lichens and mosses. Pink *Epacris reclinata*, purple *Hardenbergia*, three species of orchid flowering (one of these normally flowers in summer!). Glimpses of Hartley Valley with mist clinging to the surrounding hilltops.

Berghofer's Pass, opened in 1912, was constructed to cater for the early motor cars which were not powerful enough to climb the steep Victoria Pass. A feature of the road is the excellent drainage work which has enabled the road to withstand decades without maintenance.

There were lots of little plants growing in the aftermath of the October 2013 bushfire, some recent rock falls and, in places, prominent cracks in the sandstone walls.

Christine Davies.

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

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)

- Sep 13 **Mt York Historic Walks** - Lockyers to Lawsons Leader-**Warren** 4787 5403. Meet at Mt Vic Stn CP 8.30am Gr3
Maps **Mt Wilson/Hartley**
- Sep 20 **Lions Head Pass Kedumba Valley Road** to Kedumba Pass Steep and scrambly 150M descent –Leader **Harold**
9600 8005. Meet at Wentworth Falls Station Stockade CP-8.00am-16Km-Gr 3-Map **Jamison**
- Sep 26-(FRIDAY) **Dunphy Wilderness Walk Launch.** Katoomba Cultural Centre-10.00am start. Depart 11.30 for walk to
Megalong. See page 11 for more information on this Historic event
- Sep 27-(SATURDAY) **Megalong Crossing to Coxs River** and return-Leader **TBA** Contact Jim 4758 6009-Meet at Old Ford
Reserve Megalong Road 9.00am-12Km-Gr3- Maps **Katoomba /Hampton**
- Oct 4 (Sat LWE) **Bungleboori Creek** bushfire affected country.4wd preferred-Leader **Harold** 9600 8005-Meet at W Falls Stn
Stockade CP-.8.00am -7Km-Gr3.Map **Wollangambie**
- Oct 5 (SUNDAY) and Oct 6 (MONDAY—LWE). **Celebration Camp and dinner at Wooglemai Environmental Education
Centre, Sheehys Creek Road, Oakdale** - See page 11 for more info on the conclusion to this Historic event.
- Oct 11- **Wentworth Falls to Leura** via Kedumba Road, Sublime Point Ridge and Fern Bower Track 650M down and 600M up
Join in and be part of this soon to become **Classic Walk**-Leader **Chris** 4784 2385- Meet at Wentworth falls Stockade CP -
7.30am-15Km –Gr 3/4-Maps **Katoomba/Jamison**

ADVANCE NOTICE: Snowy Mountains in summer. 11th to 17 January 2015. A variety of bushwalking experiences above and below the tree line. Accommodation in Perisher Valley at Cooma Ski Club Lodge—cost \$15.00 per person per night. Expressions of interest required by the end of October in order to reserve a sufficient number of rooms. Contact Warwick Mosman 4757 1354, rwmosman@bigpond.com

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

Sep 14 and 15 Two walks in the Lane Cove National Park (part of the Great North Walk) and optional stop over at Lane Cove Tourist Park.

Walk 1: Sunday, North Ryde Fairyland Circuit, approx. 7km. Mainly a mix of shaded bushland and open parkland with some road walking.

Walk 2: Monday, Roseville Station and Lane Cove River to Tourist Park, approx. 9 km. From Roseville, through bush to the Lane Cove River. Views of sandstone rock formations, the river and the Blue Hole. Back to North Ryde Station via tourist park.

(For more details contact Judith 4758 6310 or 0419 780 640, judithbushwalker@hotmail.com or go to our website.)

- Sep 22 **Mt Kuring-gai to Berowra** walk along Cowan Creek and its 5 separate bays. 9km circuit. Ascent 215m. Descent 230m. Long day. Meet Strathfield Station 8.34 am. Then 8.52 am to Hornsby. Then 9.05 to Mt Kuring-gai. Françoise Matter 4751 2303 or 0438512301. Grade 3.
- Sep 29 **Asgard Swamp, Thor Head and Mine**, Mount Victoria. Bring torch. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.45 am. Car pool. Tracy 0434 362 611. Grade 2.
- Oct 6 **Tempe to Bexley North via Wolli Creek.** Meet Central Station, top of escalator, 9.10 am. Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 2.
- Oct 13 **Hazelbrook to Linden via Woodford Lake** with lunch stop at Kings Cave. Some road walking. Meet Hazelbrook Station, top of stairs, 9am. Leader Kate 4759 1943. Grade2.

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

- Sep 11 **Rigby Hill.** Views of Grose Valley. Car pool \$5. Take lunch. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Rosemary 6355 2292. Grade 2.
- Sep 18 **Spit Bridge to Manly.** Magnificent harbour views. We will take a detour to Crater Cave. Take lunch. Meet top of escalators Central Station 9.30am. Leader Phil 4787 5560. Grade 2
- Sep 25 **Bus trip to Rylstone.** Town and river walk with the chance to see a platypus. Book and pay Chris \$12 4721 4309. Meet rear Westpac Bank Springwood 8am sharp. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 1
- Oct 2 **Lyrebird Dell Leura.** Some ascents and descents on good track. Car pool. Take lunch. Meet cnr Mall and Megalong Street Leura 9.30am. Leader Chris 4721 4309. Grade 2
- Oct 9 **Stonehaven Pass/Cliff Edge Walk Wentworth Falls.** Wander along these two delightful walks constructed by Peter Mulheran in the 1890s and recently renovated by Jim Smith and friends. Car shuffle \$5 for return journey. Take lunch. Meet Stockyard Car Park Wentworth Falls 9.30am. Leader Phil 4787 5560. Grade 2
- Oct 16 **October Creek Mount Wilson.** Check area burnt in last year's bushfire. Car pool \$5. Take lunch. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2