



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

WE ARE THE BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY!

The Society held its Annual General Meeting at the Conservation Hut on Thursday 26 March. A lovely sunset greeted early-birds to the meeting.

Alan Page gave his report and last speech as president of the society, illustrated by photos of mountain scenes, plants and flowers, and faces of Society members engaged in their various activities on behalf of nature. After recalling our many achievements over the past year and acknowledging the outstanding contributions of many in the room, he looked fondly around the audience and concluded with "We are the Blue Mountains Conservation Society", which somehow seemed to say it all.

Bart Beech delivered an upbeat treasurer's report, reassuring us that our finances are in excellent shape. Sue Nicol invited people to get involved with the Nursery, a very successful part of the society's activities and a major fundraiser.

Don Morison was elected unopposed as next president of the society, and a new management committee was elected.

Office holders and their contact details are listed on page 2.

Thank you to outgoing members Angela Langdon, Brendan Doyle and Craig Linn for the work you have done for the Society. Welcome to Marilyn Kraus (2nd Vice President), Jasmine Payget (Environmental Education) and Madi Maclean (Gardens of Stone). And welcome back, Lachlan Garland (Land Use). Thank you to all the members of the former management committee who are staying on. Outgoing President Alan Page will continue as Website Manager.

The evening concluded with Ian Brown's photographic presentation of his trip to Greenland with Tom Williams. His photos were spellbinding with the stark beauty of the arctic landscape, and his stories of climbs up jagged peaks that rise out of the fiords enthralled his audience.

You can read the President's Report on our website: <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/aboutus.shtml>

Trish Doyle Wins Blue Mountains



The Blue Mountains electorate has voted for the environment.

(Page 5)



BATTY IN BLACKHEATH

A very hot day, up to 30 degrees; the threatening storm passed us by, then, as can happen so suddenly in Blackheath, the mist rolled in from the Grose Valley and the temperature dropped to a cool (and very damp) 15 degrees.

BUT, undaunted by the weather, hundreds of people came to the NPWS Heritage Centre in the Blue Mountains National Park for the 4th annual Blue Mountains Bat Night.

AND Bat Night was a HUGE success! Bat talks were given to a packed room, discovery ranger-led bat walks were booked out, the bat cave was flooded with children, and the bat tattoo and bat badge makers were kept working constantly. Mount Victoria Rural Fire Service volunteers did a brisk trade in sausage sandwiches. Estimates were around 500 people, far surpassing previous attendee numbers! We hope everyone had a good time and we want to make it even better next year.

CONGRATULATIONS to Bat Lady Marg Turton and THANK YOU to all the people who helped to make Bat Night happen. AND a very special THANK YOU to all the wonderful Blue Mountains children and their parents who cared enough about these furry creatures to join the throng.

Our thoughts were with the family of the late Gary Humble who did much to advance Bat Night — congratulations to Marilyn Kraus, Beth Rohrlach, Jasmine Payget and Dilshara Hill for continuing the BMCS role. (Photo: Bat Kids, Ruben and Willow)

"Hut News", the newsletter of
Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
 P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, 2782
 Phone 4757 1872 (leave message)
 Email: bmcs@bluemountains.org.au
 Web page: www.bluemountains.org.au
 Facebook: Blue Mountains Conservation
 Society Twitter: bmcsnsw
President:: Don Morison 8230 2116
president@bluemountains.org.au
Senior Vice President: Tara Cameron
 04198 24974 taracameron4@gmail.com
Second Vice President: Marilyn Kraus
 04025 51809 marilynkraus@hotmail.com
Treasurer: Bart Beech 4739 9947
bart.beech@schneider-electric.com
Administration Officer: Jeanette Robertson
sao@bluemountains.org.au
Bushcare Officer: Paul Vale
 4787 8080 04290 14454
bushcare@bluemountains.org.au
Environmental Education Officer:
Jasmine Payget
jasmine.marcia@gmail.com
Landuse Officer: Lachlan Garland
 04153 17078
lachlan.a.garland@bigpond.com
Meetings Secretary: Heather Hull
 4739 1493 hhull001@bigpond.net.au
Membership Secretary: Ross Coster
 4739 2987 04184 62576
membership@bluemountains.org.au
National Parks/World Heritage Officer:
Brian Marshall 4784.1148
briannamar@bigpond.com
Newsletter Editor: Christine Davies
 4787 7246
hutnews@bluemountains.org.au
Plant Nursery Manager: Sue Nicol
 4787.8887 nursery@bluemountains.org.au
Publicity Officer: VACANT
Sustainable Population and Climate
Change Officer: Peter Green 4751 9474
peter@pwgreen.id.au
Threatened Species Officer: Nakia Belmer
 04143 44741 bayern11@tpg.com.au
Website Manager: Alan Page 4784 1704
webmaster@bluemountains.org.au
Walks Convenor: Maurice Kerkham
 4739 4942
mauricekerkham@hotmail.com
Project Officer-Events: Rob Baigent
 4759 3104 rob.baigent@bigpond.com
Project Officer-Gardens of Stone:
Madi Maclean
mlhmaclean@bigpond.com
Bushfire Representative: Hugh Paterson
 4751.2303, mob 04275 12303
fmatter@bigpond.net.au

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT
 ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS
 18 APRIL 2015**

hutnews@bluemountains.org.au
 PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES
 Ross Coster

02 4739 2987 0418 462 576
membership@bluemountains.org.au
 or write to
 PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

Nursery News

Throughout March we held open mornings at our Blackheath Nursery, which is not normally open to the public. Visitors had the opportunity to see how the plants they see for sale at the markets are propagated and met the volunteers engaged in planting seeds, making cuttings and planting out seedlings. They were shown how seeds are extracted and the different techniques used to plant them and saw tiny seedlings beginning to germinate in the glasshouse. Everyone seemed interested and impressed and two visitors have joined us as volunteers. If you are interested in visiting the nursery, and couldn't make it this time, we hope to repeat the invitation again in the spring.

Don't Forget the Prickly Plants: They have names like Prickly Moses, Needle Bush and Dagger Hakea and most people skim past them at the market stall. But please give them another look. They have many advantages for the native garden.

First, they are excellent at keeping off the four footed pests and two footed intruders. Second, they provide a wonderful refuge for small birds and at the same time many of them also have flowers rich in nectar for attracting birds. The air is laden with the scent of honey in spring when *Hakea teretifolia* is in flower and the slightly less prickly *Hakea sericea* comes in white and pink and is very pretty. *Hakea pachyphylla* is an Upper Mountains species with yellow flowers and eye-catching large, nobbly fruits. With even bigger fruits is *Hakea constablei*. Both these are likely to attract Yellow tailed Black Cockatoos whose powerful beaks are able to break open the fruits and extract the seeds. The Gorse bitter pea or *Daviesia ulicifolia* provides a splash of yellow and red 'egg and bacon' flowers.

Give them a go. We have all these species in stock.

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



Hakea pachyphylla

Australian National Botanic
 Gardens, Australian National
 Herbarium

www.anbg.gov.au

Photographer: M Fagg.

BMCS NURSERY PLANT SALES

Our nursery offers the home gardener, landscaper or large contractor a big variety of quality local native plants at economical prices.

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 - see map on our website
www.bluemountains.org.au).

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

Tube stock \$3. Larger pots available.

Discounts for bulk orders and large contracts.

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

Arboreal mammals in the Blue Mountains – how are they faring and where are the Greater Gliders? Judy Smith and Peter Smith

We are seeking your help.

In the Blue Mountains Local Government Area (LGA) the geology consists chiefly of Triassic sandstones. These sandstones produce sandy, infertile soils which support our very familiar and outstandingly diverse dry sclerophyll eucalypt forests and woodlands. Tucked amongst the sandstones are occasional basalt and shale caps, volcanic diatremes and pockets of alluvium which, in moister areas, produce more fertile soils that support taller wet sclerophyll forest. Common trees of these wetter forests are Mountain Blue Gum, Sydney Peppermint, Mountain Ash, Mountain Grey Gum, Brown Barrel, Blaxland's Stringybark, Manna Gum, Turpentine and Smooth-barked Apple. The wet sclerophyll forests support a richer fauna than dry sclerophyll forest, and the forests on the most fertile soils support the richest faunas of all, particularly birds and arboreal mammals.

In the past it has always been a great delight to go spotlighting in local patches of wet sclerophyll forest (Mount Banks, Mount Hay, Kedumba Valley, Toby's Glen, Murphy's Glen, Euroka Clearing, Sun Valley, Blue Gum Swamp Creek and Blue Gum Forest all come to mind) and, with not much effort, to find Greater Gliders and other arboreal mammals such as Sugar Gliders, Ringtails, even the occasional Yellow-bellied Glider. More recently we have been concerned that it is now taking a great deal of effort to find Greater Gliders, especially in the lower Mountains. Our concern has grown as the population of Greater Gliders in Eurobodalla Local Government Area was listed in 2007 as an endangered population under the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*, and as a preliminary determination has been made by the NSW Scientific Committee to also support such listing of the Greater Glider population in the Mount Gibraltar Reserve area (to the north of Bowral).

Late last year we applied for, and were pleased to be awarded, a 25th Anniversary Landcare Grant to enable us to undertake arboreal mammal spotlighting surveys in the Blue Mountains LGA. We are planning to now select areas where we know Greater Gliders have occurred in the past, become a bit nocturnal ourselves, and search these for Greater Glider and other arboreal mammals. We hope that we will be pleasantly surprised and be inundated by Greater Gliders, maybe even Spotted-tailed Quoll, Koala, Eastern Pygmy-possum, Yellow-bellied Glider and Squirrel Glider, all of which are threatened local residents. Regardless, our surveys will provide baseline data against which future trends can be measured. We will also investigate relationships between various habitat factors and the occurrences of arboreal mammals, comparing sites where Greater Gliders still occur with sites where they have disappeared. In this way, we will be seeking a better understanding of the likely reasons behind any decline.

And so to the "seeking your help". We would be very interested to hear from anyone with records of where arboreal mammals, particularly Greater Gliders, have been seen in the Blue Mountains, either recently or in the past. We are interested to know when the Greater



Gliders were last recoded at each location, but if you cannot remember we would still like to learn about your locations. We have wondered if Powerful Owls, maybe even Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, might be influencing the Greater Glider numbers so records of Powerful Owls would also be most welcome.

We have compiled a list of Greater Glider locations known to us. If anyone would like a copy, particularly if you would like to comment on or add to the list, or if you would just like to contribute records, please contact us at smitheco@ozemail.com.au.

Greater Glider photo from Queensland museum website: www.qm.qld.gov.au/Find+out+about/Animals+of+Queensland/Mammals/Common+mammals+of+south-east+Queensland/Marsupials/Greater+Glider#.

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.

Richard Stiles: Take a risk

Published in MJA InSight - Medical Journal of Australia <https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/8/richard-stiles-take-risk>



"We must be prepared to take more risks" — this is what Clive Hamilton, an Australian professor of public ethics, said to me when I asked him how should we respond to the threats of human-induced climate change.

Climate change represents the biggest evolving threat to human health.

Our backs are against the wall. If we want to survive in a stable and healthy world, we need to embark on a new social experiment — an experiment because much of what we face and what we need to face, is new territory for us.

Indeed, it may entail new territory for biological psychology. What are our species' capacities to modify our current behaviour in the light of a threat that is diffuse and extends beyond our own lives?

What are the social and regulatory changes that are needed to address this? These changes would not be minor. They would not be business as usual with a bit of green energy stuck on the side. Living sustainably is a full paradigm shift.

There's the rub.

The Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) comprises doctors and medical students committed to addressing ill health resulting from damage to the natural environment.

The main focus of the DEA's national conference — to be held in Sydney this year on 14-15 March — will be, appropriately, climate change.

I will be speaking at the conference about my experiences working literally at the coalface in Lithgow, a town in the NSW western coalfield district. Here the realities and complexities of any shift away from coal are direct and perceived as threatening.

In terms of the ABC of emergency resuscitation, responding to climate change is the airway. If we can't kick our carbon-burning habit, then most of the other agendas will be trashed — be they public health, social transformation, stable and flourishing cultures, a rich natural environment, technological utopias ... the dreams we dream.

But burning carbon is no easy habit to kick. It has offered us cheap industrial power and with that has come political power. We have many and vexed tensions to grapple with — social, political, globalist, economic ... the list goes on — if we are to shift away from our carbon dependency.

The climate scientists and environmentalists have pressed hard to get their concerns out into the public arena. Even a few politicians have stuck their noses into this dangerous wind.

But what about the medical profession? What are we doing?

By and large, I'd say not much. We are commonly more focused on individual care, on treating people's

immediate health issues.

Yet the health and social impacts of climate change will be massive. If we are seriously interested in the full picture of health, including intergenerational health, then this is an area that needs our serious attention.

Medicine does have a long tradition of trying to improve society more broadly using the prism of health. As a result of our dedicated care, we earn our place as a leading social stratum of professional respect and authority.

We need to use all our leadership capacities, all our creative energy, all our deep and broad social connectedness to make our contribution to the massive social shift that is required to address climate change. Multidisciplinary medical advocacy on this issue will have an impact, possibly a big one.

We need to act and influence *now*. The science — our Holy Grail — is suggesting we are fast running out of time.

For us, individually and collectively, to seriously engage with this threat will possibly bring us into new, challenging territory. I have been threatened at public meetings in Lithgow for daring to discuss alternatives to coal mining.

New territory can be threatening, but we must be prepared to take those risks.

If we don't, it's just going to get even riskier.

Richard Stiles, Monday, 9 March, 2015

Dr Richard Stiles is a rural GP/surgeon in Lithgow, NSW. He is a public advocate on the health and environmental effects of the coal industry and a member of Doctors for the Environment.

People power saves The Drip:

Mudgee wins 10-year campaign

The Great Dripping Gorge is a place of tranquillity and outstanding natural beauty. Tucked on the edge of the Goulburn River National Park near Mudgee, "The Drip" as the locals call it, has been under threat from coal mining for years. Until now.

In March 2015 the Coalition Government announced they would finally protect The Drip forever by adding it to the neighbouring national park.

This is a great victory for the powerful grassroots campaigners in the local community, the Mudgee District Environment Group and the Central West Environment Council who stood their ground for more than 10 years. This is a victory for our children's children.

Coal mining should never have been proposed in a place of such outstanding beauty. That is why we will continue to call for special natural places to be declared no-go zones for coal and coal seam gas. Some places are simply too precious.

Kate Smolski, Nature Conservation Council of NSW

Grandparents for Generational Equity

www.genequity.net

Go the website ... keep informed ... write letters ... tell your friends. Let's take some real action to help leave a world our grandchildren can survive in.

Trish Doyle Wins Blue Mountains Alan Page

A Blue Mountains Conservation Society member has been elected as the Blue Mountains state member of parliament.

Trish Doyle (Labor) had 58% of the vote (after preferences) when voting ended on election night. This represents a swing of over 13% from the 2011 election.

The combined vote of the two “environmentalists” in the campaign was nearly 60%. The environmentalists being Trish Doyle (Labor) and Alandra Tasire (Greens).

The Society congratulates Ms Doyle and looks forward to working with her on a range of Blue Mountains conservation issues and opportunities.

The Blue Mountains incumbent MP, Roza Sage's vote only fell by 4%. And the Greens vote held steady. Labor appears to have picked up much of Independent candidate Janet May's vote from the 2011 election, where she polled 17%.

The key difference in this election though was the allocation of Greens preferences, which were not given in 2011. Without these preferences the election would have been far closer.

The Society's Vote for the Environment Campaign

endeavoured to put both local and state environment issues on the agenda, and make people consider these when deciding who they were going to vote for.

Craig Linn was the heart and soul of the campaign.

Key activities in the campaign were -

- ◆ Candidates' meetings – one in October, and one in March. Ms Tasire and Ms. Doyle attended both; Mrs Sage attended neither.
- ◆ Over 70 environment decisions by the NSW Government – rated red, amber or green.
- ◆ A 24-question environmental questionnaire – responded to by all candidates.
- ◆ Nine Gazette ads, Glenbrook Cinema ad, various Hut News articles, and emails to members and supporters.

Both meetings were videoed by the talented Gary Caganoff and placed on our website.

We are unsure, of course, of the effect we have on the election, but we needed to highlight the environmental differences between the candidates. And this we achieved.

(The photograph of Trish Doyle, on page 1, was taken by Paul Vale at our October Candidates' Meeting.)

Living with wildlife: Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos Christine Davies

They just loved the seeds of the tall *Hakea salicifolia*, which grows near a Banksia, which grows over the bird bath, which stands in front of the glass door to my living room—these wonderful birds which are the emblem of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society. I hear the demanding calls of the young one and drop everything to go and watch them.

The adults spent hours daily, picking and breaking open the Hakea nuts for a reward of two small seeds in each, then moved on to the Banksia. They effortlessly snip off the Banksia cones and demolish them. The bird bath fills with debris and there are pieces of Banksia cone on the ground beneath other Banksias in the garden. While the adults feed, the young one perches on a branch of a nearby Eucalypt, calling incessantly.

They are beautiful birds, distinctive with their black and

yellow colouring. The yellow feathers under the tail look like lace. The male has a pink ring around the eye and a grey beak. The female has a grey ring around the eye and a white beak. She has a larger patch of yellow on the cheek than the male. Their feet have large impressive claws for gripping branches and food.

The bird in both photos is the adult male. The pink ring highlights his eye.

Birds at the bird bath have been fewer with the presence of these large birds, the little ones coming when the cockatoos are not there.

As I write this, a flock of screeching Sulphur-crested White Cockatoos flies overhead. I worry that these invaders will compete with our black cockatoos.

Christine Davies, March 2015.



Is King Coal moribund?¹ Brian Marshall

Let's begin by acknowledging 'there's life in the old dog yet!' But for how long? The degree of resistance to coal's ultimate demise varies between and within coalfields as a function of coal-type, mining method, the principal market for the product, and the nature of contractual obligations whereby it costs more to close a mine than run at a loss. There are other factors but this will do for a start!

The prices for Australian coking and thermal coals fell through 2014, and are now about US\$110-120 and US\$61-62 per metric ton respectively. Mines closed (or, euphemistically, were placed on care and maintenance) in the Lithgow and Hunter regions, and also in Queensland. The downward trend has now flattened and, partly due to reduction in supply and the decline of the A\$ against the US\$, some believe the worst is over; others disagree!

Iron ore prices, loosely linked to coal, have similarly collapsed (now below US\$60/tonne) and higher-cost mines are at risk. Rio Tinto and BHP have concurrently expanded capacity and are accused of using a 'scorched earth strategy' to force smaller miners out of business. Not surprisingly, they reject the accusation in terms of 'market forces'; if Rio and BHP don't fill the demand, some other company or country will!²

The oil price is also plunging (now below US\$50 per barrel). This should be good news for coal and iron ore miners as they are heavy users of diesel, but if this is needed to keep a mine afloat, what would happen should the oil-price recover?

Optimists in all three industries believe export-linked market-prices will regain once-high levels based on the expanding needs of China, India and South-east Asia. They hope for a return to 'boom times' in which prices soar because demand outstrips supply, and the principal challenges involve the infrastructure-capacity to extract product and ship it. This utopian outcome reflects simplistic supply/demand beliefs; it largely disregards evolving factors which distort the supply/demand relationship.

Now focusing on coal: uncertainty about price shrouds the remainder of 2015, but more substantial price-gains are forecast in 2016-2017. Is this likely? The reality is that export-optimism is only justified to the extent that supply/demand distortions are within Australia's control. Let's examine this.

On the supply-side, higher-cost mines, operating at a loss or on narrow margins, have been or will be 'mothballed', taken over or liquidated. This reduction of supply should place upward pressure on prices, provided that companies with massive open-cut mines and big operating margins do not expand to meet the demand. Such altruism is rare, as noted above with iron ore.

In addition, new mega-mines are in the pipeline³. Their economic viability requires ongoing Chinese demand, and rapid expansion of the Indian and South-east Asian markets. Even if such optimism is justified (and there are reasons for thinking otherwise) the potential production from the Galilee Basin of around 300 million

tonnes per year would seriously dampen any upward pressure on coal-prices.

So, the Australian supply-side is one favouring large, increasingly efficient, open-cut mines at coal-prices which are unsustainable for the smaller, marginal or sub-economic mines. This is irrespective of the advantages conferred by cheap diesel and a low-priced A\$. As for Australia's domestic market, some coal is retained for coal-fired power stations, cement manufacture, and various niche industries. This may help a company retain workers and weather a period of low export prices, but export contracts are the principal source of income.

The demand-side for exported coal is rapidly changing. China hopes to maintain 7% growth, but its major construction phase has eased, it is prioritising domestic coal where practicable, and to combat pollution it is focusing on renewables. India is similarly prioritising domestic coal, is increasingly looking at renewable power sources to lift its people's living standards, and has a considerable nuclear energy program. Other countries in South-east Asia prefer cheap domestic coal where available, and see renewable power sources as making an increasing contribution to their populations' wellbeing.

The increasing emphasis on favouring domestic coal and renewable power generation in Australia's export-markets does not mean the markets will collapse. But the following seems certain: moderate demand for Australia's coal exports will continue while coal is needed to boost rapid growth in the importing countries; the level of demand will principally be filled by efficient low-cost producers and will not induce a return to 'boom times' prices; and, the ongoing scale of Australia's exports, to be dramatically worsened should the Galilee Basin be exploited, will prevent Australia from meeting its international emissions commitments, will destroy the Great Barrier Reef, and preclude keeping global warming below 2°C⁴.

Globally, "...over 80 per cent of current coal reserves should remain unused from 2010 to 2050 in order to meet the target of 2°C."⁵ This is radical, but unless coal is left in the ground, global warming will accelerate beyond 2°C with devastating consequences. Rather than approving increased exploitation in the Upper Hunter and the Galilee Basin, governments must take the initiative and reject all such proposals. Furthermore, despite the substantial short-term social impacts and potential legal tangles, governments must ensure that mine extensions are rejected and all currently closed coal mines are never reopened.

Leaving it in the ground must start now! If King Coal is not made moribund, then the environment and society as we know it will become so!

Brian Marshall.

(Endnotes are on page 8)

JOIN Blue Mountains Conservation Society,
or renew your membership online.
www.bluemountains.org.au

Changing Values Alan Page

In the early 60s I was told by a high school teacher that the oceans were a “universal sink” – they were so vast that nothing we could do could affect them.

In the early 70s I climbed Ayers Rock.

In the early 80s the Society promoted a Three Sisters Climbathon – to raise money for the Franklin Dam Campaign.

We now know better.

We are affecting the oceans by greenhouse gases, over-fishing, farm run-off, industrial waste, dredging, nuclear accidents, plastics – to name a few.

I now have a deep respect for all cultures and their sacred sites. Uluru being one.

Even if Narrabeen Sandstone was not as fragile as it is, the Three Sisters is both a modern and traditional cultural site that needs to be protected.

Can you imagine a St Mary’s Cathedral Climbathon?

So what values do we have today, that in a few decades time will have changed.

It is easy to pick the obvious ones. I expect future generations will be horrified -

- that we would risk our water catchments and prime agricultural land by mining;
- that we didn’t honour the wealth afforded to us in our flora and fauna biodiversity and do more to conserve it;
- (conversely) that we didn’t do more to address invasive species.

These, to many of us, are self-evident.

I imagine that there would have been people at the time espousing contrary views to my earlier points. Where are these people today – are we they? I am comfortable with that—very comfortable. Alan Page.

Wild animals ... not pets Don Morison

Recently, NSW Senator David Leyonhjelm raised the familiar topic of keeping Australian native animals as pets. An argument is often posited that, if more people domesticated certain native species, it would reduce the chances of their extinction.



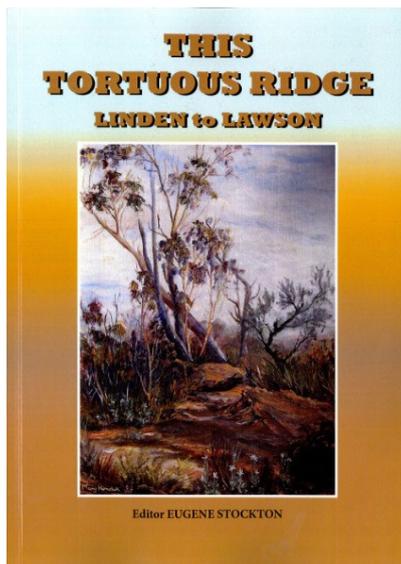
Yes, wild animals kept in captivity are technically alive. It must seem to many that we are very uncompromising if we want more for them than that. But, I feel that advocating captivity for such animals is a cop-out. It allows those who want to destroy the habitat of native species and to disrupt the ecological systems where they live to suggest such damage no longer matters.

At the global level, conservationists should resist this kind of trivialising of extinction. But there is an animal rights issue involved too. It is one thing to keep a cat or a dog in an artificial environment—many varieties of these animals have been bred for domestication over a long period. Even then, many dog owners risk cruelty by not selecting an appropriate breed for the domestic circumstances they are offering the dog.

Australian native animals have never been bred to be locked up. Whether an individual grows from infancy in captivity or has to be rescued and cared for in its adulthood is not the point. Wildlife organisations who are pro-conservation will try to prepare that animal for release into the wild.

Can we learn anything from having wild animals live with us? Probably not nearly as much as if we conceal ourselves (such as in a “bird hide”) in the animal’s own habitat and being patient in accumulating information.

I see no point in keeping wild animals in captivity. Don Morison. (Photo of Spotted-tailed Quoll by Nakia Belmer)



BOOK REVIEW

This Tortuous Ridge, Linden to Lawson is a wonderful new addition to the growing list of historical and informative books describing both the natural environment and the connection that people have experienced with the land.

The editor, Eugene Stockton is a well-known Blue Mountains archaeologist and Lawson resident; Stockton and the other contributors have provided a wonderful insight into this rocky and sinuous ridge of the central Blue Mountains.

The book includes an excellent insight of the fauna and flora, Aboriginal history, early white exploration along this section of the ridge, to historical buildings and the people of the central Mountains. Accounts of the many bushfires and how people have adapted to fighting and living with fire provide great reading.

The book is a passionate insight into this very special part of the Blue Mountains.

Produced by Allan Walsh of Hazelbrook, *This Tortuous Ridge* is a quality production similar to Walsh’s other books such as *Blue Mountains Dreaming*, *A History of the Blue Labyrinth*, *Wasteland*, *Wilderness*, *Wonderland* and *Sydney Rock* to mention only a few.

The book is \$40, 118 pp, colour and B&W and available at The Turning Page, Lamdha Books, Megalong Books, Gleebooks and the Blackheath Hub.

Review by Bruce Cameron.

**BLUE MOUNTAINS
CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc**

‘Like’ us on Facebook:

Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Follow us on Twitter: bmcnsnw



This "Blue Trail" is a collective description for sites in the western Blue Mountains that arouse natural or cultural interest or both. Most are only a short walk from roads or vehicular tracks. One day, a high quality walking path may link them.



A BLUE TRAIL: Natural and cultural experiences in the western Blue Mountains.

2. Edgar Church's gravesite and Pulpit Hill, Katoomba

Road builder William Cox is reputed to have completed the first Emu Plains to Bathurst Road in 1814 and 1815 without loss of life. Convict labour on the western road continued until 1844 and Edgar Church was a documented fatality in 1822.

John Low and fellow historians are satisfied that Church's remains have been identified near the summit of Pulpit Hill, a location with bushland probably similar today to that in the 1820s. Church was 25, had been transported from England in 1816 and may have hoarded his meagre rum ration and gone on a fatal bender before he was discovered dead in his tent.

This locality appears to have come to attention as a site for historical tourism in the Sydney Morning Herald in

1876. But the nearby "Explorers Marked Tree" and the crude stone graves which are visible today could be inventions of tourist promoters – there is no firm evidence to link them to the period between 1813 and 1844.

The vegetation on Pulpit Hill includes the common Upper Mountains ridgetop vegetation community of *Eucalyptus piperita* and *E. sieberi* as well as very yellow *Banksia spinulosa*, *Lambertia formosa* and various *Leptospermum* species. Most prominent are the *Eucalyptus oreades* – a great range of tree ages within this species are visible around the flanks of Pulpit Hill.

The proposed shared path for pedestrians and cyclists between Katoomba and Medlow Bath runs near one of the most impressive corridors of elderly *Oreades*. It is to be hoped this corridor will be treated with respect during construction. Don Morison.

Photos: corridor of *Eucalyptus oreades* (Corinne Gaston); one of the "headstones" now found on Pulpit Hill (Christine Davies).

Is King Coal Moribund? (continued from page 6)

Endnotes:

¹ Few references are included. The fully referenced article may be obtained from either the Hut News Editor or the article's author.

² <http://www.smh.com.au/business/mining-and-resources/rio-and-bhp-launch-strong-defence-of-expansion-plans-20150310-13zz9f.html>

³ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-15/mining-companies-still-upbeat-about-the-future-of-galilee-coal/6316880>; <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/revealed-major-new-coal-mines-planned-for-the-upper-hunter-20150227-13ki4a.html>

⁴ <http://350.org/the-most-insane-coal-project-in-the-world/>

⁵ <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v517/n7533/full/nature14016.html>

Welcome to new members

Maria Fitzgerald, Katoomba
 Toni-Lee Farlow, Blackheath
 Hugh (Jock) Shimeld, Katoomba
 Irene Halstead, Wentworth Falls
 Deborah Horsfall, Wentworth Falls
 Andrew Horsfall, Wentworth Falls
 Gail Harrison, Glenbrook
 Bill Harrison, Glenbrook
 Craig Hubbard, Blaxland
 Janka Orelova, Wentworth Falls
 Bernard Wende, Wentworth Falls
 Pamela Anne Briant, Wentworth Falls
 Julianne McWhirter, Wentworth Falls
 Carolyn Dobson, Emu Plains

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

THE CRACK IN THE EARTH

Had you been living in Blackheath during the years of the late 19th and early 20th centuries you would almost certainly have come into contact with the venerable Anglican clergyman and social reformer, Francis Bertie Boyce, whose keen enthusiasm for the region found expression both in his home 'Boscobel' in Hat Hill Road and in one of those early treasures of the Mountains – a small guidebook, published in 1887, encouraging people to seek out places of local interest and beauty, many of which had clearly touched him personally. One of these was the Mermaid's Cave, full of ferns, lichen-covered rocks and trees and the sound of water, a place he said "to make us think we were indeed amongst the mermaids".

The 'cave', really a rock enclosed gully, has long been a popular summer refuge, moist and cool, on the winding descent off Shipley Plateau into the Megalong Valley. Its entrance down a thin path between two rock walls may well have reminded its unknown name-giver of a similarly narrow doorway to another Mermaid's Cave opening to the ocean beneath the haunted Dunluce Castle on the coast of County Antrim, Ireland. Indeed, since the name first appeared on a map in 1882 and Rev. Boyce sang its praises, the Mermaid's Cave at Blackheath, like its legend-laden namesake, has certainly intrigued many a creative imagination.

In the mid 1980s I well remember coming around a bend on my way into the Megalong and finding myself suddenly in the weird edge lands of a Mad Max adventure. From behind huge semi-trailers parked on the narrow verge children clad in animal skins were darting across my path and disappearing into the trees. Scenes from *Beyond Thunder Dome* were being filmed in Mermaid's Cave; it had become the 'crack in the earth', the hideaway of a band of feral children and a place of refuge for Max.

Some years later, in 1993, I had the pleasure of speaking at the Blue Mountains launch of Libby Hathorn's novel, *Valley Under the Rock*, a story for young adults set in the Megalong Valley. Climbing "down the steep narrow steps between chasms of mighty sandstone" into "the huge amphitheatre of rock, draped with a curtain of water, overhung with startlingly tall trees [and] dappled miraculously with a play of light from the afternoon sun", a picnic at Mermaid's Cave becomes important to the narrative. This "bush cathedral", with its quiet beauty and intimations of forgotten history going back deep into Aboriginal time, impacts on the young contemporary characters and the mysteries of family and youthful affection they are dealing with. While probably out of print by now, it's still a story worth chasing up.

Mermaid's Cave may no longer be quite as popular as it was in earlier days but its aura of romance continues to beckon and, perhaps, in the cool shell of its interior you will still hear the siren whisper of Rev. Boyce's mermaids.

John Low (grizzlybear3au@yahoo.com)

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.

In all things of nature there is something of the marvellous. Aristotle

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

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 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.

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".



Did Baby Froggy come back? Jenny Miller

The Tawny Frogmouth can be seen during the day from my bathroom window, on and off since early October, at first daily and then less frequently. In mid March a female was spotted on another branch. She was slightly browner than the male.

I wonder if he is "Froggy". A few years ago I heard a racket outside my bedroom window and found a baby Tawny Frogmouth on the ground, being harassed by a Pied Currawong. He made his way under the fence and into the courtyard. I asked Carol Proberts what to do and she said he should be sitting on a branch. So I put him on a branch opposite the sunroom window where I could keep an eye on him and covered the pond so he wouldn't fall into it if he fell off the branch.

He stayed literally in the exact spot for over a week and the parents came at night. Sometimes I could see one of them in a nearby tree during the day. One day I found a small snake (dead), about 15cm long, on the ground under his branch. Obviously the baby couldn't swallow it whole. I cut the snake into pieces and fed them to the chick. After some time "Froggy" started moving around, finally onto other branches, the fence and then disappeared. I made a storybook for my granddaughter with the photos I had taken.

Photos: Adult Tawny Frogmouth, taken by Neil McGlashan, March 2015. A very cute baby Frogmouth, "Froggy", taken by Jenny Miller, December 2009.



Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

Sometimes, walking through the bush with your eyes on the ground can reveal much about what's in the trees above. A carpet of fresh *Allocasuarina* "chewings" (she-oak seed cones methodically chewed into small pieces) tells me I'm at a recent feeding site of the Glossy Black-Cockatoo. And hearing crackling like the sound of a small campfire indicates the birds are feeding above right now. It's a great trick for finding a bird which is uncommon, localised and hard to spot in the dense foliage.

Further along the track I notice ragged pieces of *banksia* and *hakea* seed cones littering the ground. There's only one bird in the area with a powerful enough bill to demolish such large woody cones: the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo. The cracking sound they make when feeding is louder and heavier than that made by Glossies. At other times they rip small branches off trees or chunks out of tree trunks to remove wood-boring moth larvae. Cockatoos need some protein in their diet and the resulting destruction has been attributed by some to unruly children or yowies!

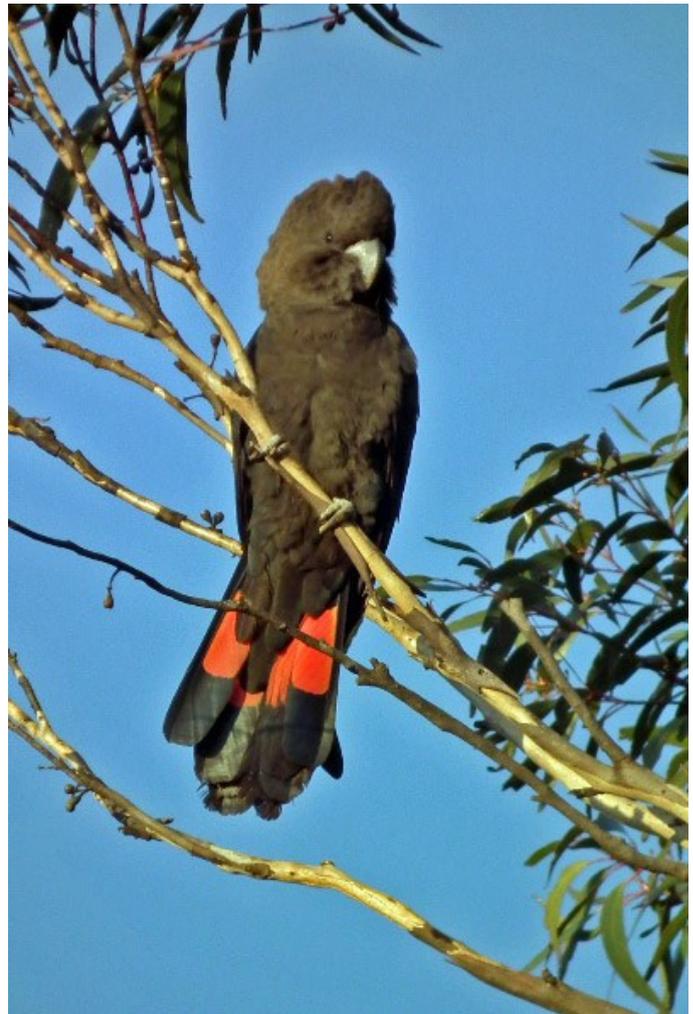
The smaller Gang-gang Cockatoos can tackle seed capsules like *Callitris* (native cypress) and *Petrophile* (conesticks) but will also spend large amounts of time feeding on soft fruit and small eucalyptus seeds. Next time you find yourself under a shower of gumnut pieces, look up and you might just find a family of Gang-gangs.

Take some time to watch any of these cockatoos feeding. They bite off their favoured seed cone or fruit and hold it in the left foot while extracting the seeds or biting into the flesh. That's right, nearly always the left foot.

Crimson Rosellas, on the other hand (or should that be foot), are mostly right-footed. Rosellas eating eucalyptus seeds are revealed by a softer, rhythmic cracking which sounds to me a bit like fingernails clicking.

Perhaps the most remarkable sign of any feeding bird in our area is the extensive digging of the Superb Lyrebird. Forever raking the leaf litter with its powerful feet, the lyrebird leaves a trail of uprooted seedlings, aerated soil and decomposing mulch.

A recent study* in Victoria showed that lyrebird activity can help to suppress bushfires. They do this by inhibiting seedling growth and accelerating decomposition of litter, reducing fuel load by an average of 25%, thereby making



Glossy Black Cockatoo (male), photographed by Carol Proberts.

fire less likely or intense. This in turn ensures an environment more suitable for the lyrebirds themselves. Lyrebirds really are ecosystem engineers which can benefit humans and other species!

Carol Proberts, origma@westnet.com.au Twitter: [@carolproberts](https://twitter.com/carolproberts)

* Nugent, D.T, Leonard, S.W.J, and Clarke, M.F. (2014) Interactions between the superb lyrebird (*Menura novaehollandiae*) and fire in south-eastern Australia. *Wildlife Research* 41: 203-211

THE BLUE MOUNTAINS: GRANDEUR & INTIMACY An exhibition by IAN BROWN

7 MARCH TO 27 APRIL
9.30 AM TO 5 PM DAILY

The Blue Mountains BOTANIC GARDEN
Mount Tomah

This is Ian Brown's first major solo exhibition. He has put together a selection of 30 diverse works from the Blue Mountains, two-thirds of which have never been exhibited before. Exhibited works will be for sale, along with smaller prints.

Fish of Air

Wheeling, soaring, circling,
swooping on sickle wings,
out of the storm clouds come the Swifts,
swimming in the wind.

The boundless air is their ocean,
it's fronts and pressure systems
their tides and currents.

A nightly cliff face to cling to
and launch into the dawn,
a rock ledge to glue a nest to
is all they need of the earth.

Graham Alcorn.

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, mobile 04024 02783, 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)

Apr 18 **Pagoda Country**— see why the pagodas of the Gardens of Stone are worth protecting. **A new Garden on each trip - you won't be disappointed.** Get in early for your place – party limit of 8 as wilderness area. Leader **Hugh** -Ring on 0423 309 854 for details

Apr 25 **Anzac Day LWE - Jinki Gully loop** – via the Jinki Gully Track established 1880 – 1907 traces of many tracks in this secluded gully - parts could be scrubby, suggest gloves and gaiters. Leader **Jim** 47586009-Meet at Mt Vic Station Carpark - 8.00am - 8Km - Grade3/4 - Map **Mt Wilson**

May 2 **Pagoda Country**— see why the pagodas of the Gardens of Stone are worth protecting. **A new Garden on each trip - you won't be disappointed.** Get in early for your place – party limit of 8 as wilderness area. Leader **Hugh** -Ring on 0423 309 854 for details

May 9 **Glenbrook to Springwood** via Duckhole St Helena Crater turn-off, Lost World, Bunyan Lookout to Martins Lookout. Leader **Bart** 4739 9947 Meet at Glenbrook Station Carpark -8.00am - 20Km Grade 3 - Map **Springwood**.

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

Apr 13 **Pierces Pass to Grose Valley.** Descent into Grose Valley. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50 am. Car pool fare \$5. Ros King 4733 3880. Grade 3.

Apr 20 **Numantia Falls and Victory Track, Faulconbridge.** Faulconbridge Station, south car park, 8.50 am. Ken 0423 450 200. Grade 3.

Apr 27 **Prince Henry Cliff Walk, Leura to Katoomba.** Leura Station car park, 9.20 am. Judith 4758 6310. Grade 2.

May 4 **Linden to Hazelbrook via Paradise Pool.** Linden Station (short platform), 8.55 am. Kate Litchfield 4759 1943. Grade 3.

May 11 **Bus trip to Illawarra Fly, Robertson.** Treetop walk. Lunch at Robertson pie shop. Bus fare \$12. Book and pay Tony 9625 3985. Entrance fee also. Meet Springwood car park, behind Westpac, 7.45am. Maurice 4739 4942 04022 02783. Grade

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, denfenella@optusnet.com.au

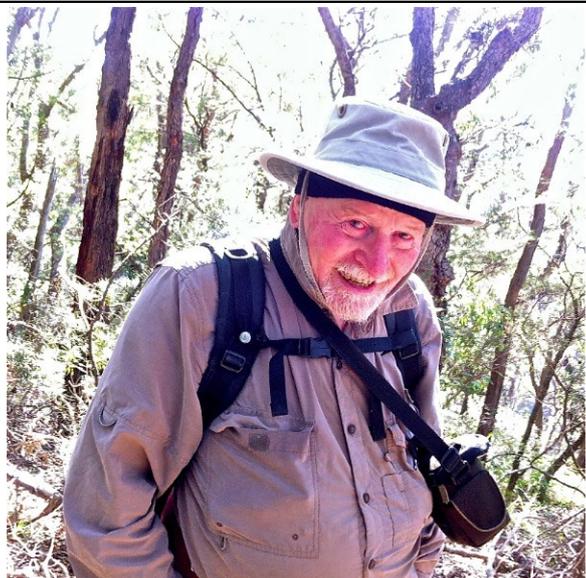
Apr 16 **Adeline Park, Faulconbridge.** Walk to creek and waterfall. Meet Faulconbridge Station Carpark 9.00am. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2.

Apr 23 **Circular Quay to Cremorne Point with ferry back to Quay.** Meet top of escalators Central Station 9.30am. Leader Rose 9420 2103. Take lunch. Grade 1

Apr 30 **Hornes Point, Mount Victoria.** Barbecue lunch at Doreen's so bring some meat and a plate to share. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Doreen 6355 2371. Car pool. Grade 2

May 7 **Popes Glen to Pulpit Rock, Blackheath.** About 7ks with no significant hills. Glorious views of the Grose Valley. This walk is dedicated to the memory of our mate Phil. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 8.45am. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Car pool \$5. Take lunch. Grade 2

May 14 **Nepean River Walk Emu Plains.** Easy 7k walk along the river with lunch at O'Donoghue's Pub. Meet Emu Plains Station south side 9.30am. Leader Chris 4721 4309. Grade 1



Vale Phil Turnedge

It is with sadness and sorrow that I learnt on 7 March of the death of a bushwalking legend in the Blue Mountains, Phil Turnedge. Phil died doing what he loved most—walking in his beloved Blue Mountains bush. Recently honoured with Life Membership of the Springwood Bushwalking Club, he was also an active walker and leader with the Blue Mountains Conservation Society where we first met.

Phil often referred to himself as "GoF" (geriatric old fart) but he was probably better known simply as "Phil T". His sense of humour was second to none; always making his colleagues laugh. Some of his classic one liners were "nice walk, shame about the company", "almost a pleasure seeing you again" and "I have a shower every Friday, even if I don't need it."

Rest in Peace good old friend; you will never be forgotten.

Maurice Kerkham, Walks Convenor.