



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



## The Gardens of Stone: In Focus

Society members have become very familiar with the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 campaign. We have lobbied politicians, written submissions, attended rallies and meetings, carried the banner, gone for bushwalks in the area and celebrated success in stopping the expansion of the Coalpac open-cut coal mine in Ben Bullen State Forest.

Now the campaign continues for the area to be reserved and protected as a State Conservation Area.

We want the world to know about the Gardens of Stone.

Gardens of Stone: In Focus is a photographic competition which will reveal the scenic grandeur and biodiversity of this magnificent area. This unique event will offer a series of bushwalks to take photographers to spectacular places, to help save the Gardens of Stone. There will be an exhibition later in the year. Read more on page 3.



**Pagoda Daisy**  
(*Leucochrysum graminifolium*)  
photo by  
Andrew Valja.

## WORLD HERITAGE—not Badgerys Airport!

The wrong airport in the wrong place. Blue Mountains Conservation Society is opposed to the Badgerys Creek airport because of its negative environmental impacts on our World Heritage National Parks. There will be a public meeting in the lower mountains in July. Date to be arranged.

Society bushwalks coordinator Jim Percy overlooks Carne Creek in the Gardens of Stone. Photo by Hugh Speirs.

## Blue Mountains Conservation Society—Area of Interest Map

The Society's mission is "to help conserve the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains and to increase awareness of the natural environment in general".

The BMCS Area of Interest map was prepared by volunteer Karen McLaughlin. It shows our area of interest and encompasses the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and adjoining State Conservation Areas and State Forests. Also shown is the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 Proposal and the proposed Western Sydney Airport site – the latter because of the undoubted environmental impacts the flight-paths will have on the GBMWA.

Members will receive a copy with this newsletter and you can find it on our website. Go to <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/aboutus.shtml> and click on the thumbnail image of the map.

## Winter Magic Festival

The Society will have a stall at the Winter Magic Festival on Saturday 20 June. Volunteers to help on the stall, for any length of time during the day, will be very welcome. Please contact Rob Baigent 4759 3104, [rob.baigent@bigpond.com](mailto:rob.baigent@bigpond.com).

## BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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"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](mailto:bmcs@bluemountains.org.au)

Web page: [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)

Facebook: Blue Mountains Conservation

Society Twitter: [bmcsnsw](https://twitter.com/bmcsnsw)

President: Don Morison 8230 2116

[president@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:president@bluemountains.org.au)

Senior Vice President: Tara Cameron

04198 24974 [taracameron4@gmail.com](mailto:taracameron4@gmail.com)

Second Vice President: Marilyn Kraus

04025 51809 [marilynkraus@hotmail.com](mailto:marilynkraus@hotmail.com)

Treasurer: Bart Beech 4739 9947

[bart.beech@schneider-electric.com](mailto:bart.beech@schneider-electric.com)

Administration Officer: Jeanette Robertson

[sao@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:sao@bluemountains.org.au)

Bushcare Officer: Paul Vale

4787 8080 04290 14454

[bushcare@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:bushcare@bluemountains.org.au)

Environmental Education Officer:

Jasmine Payget

[jasmine.marcia@gmail.com](mailto:jasmine.marcia@gmail.com)

Landuse Officer: Lachlan Garland

04153 17078

[lachlan.a.garland@bigpond.com](mailto:lachlan.a.garland@bigpond.com)

Meetings Secretary: Heather Hull

4739 1493 [hhull001@bigpond.net.au](mailto:hhull001@bigpond.net.au)

Membership Secretary: Ross Coster

4739 2987 04184 62576

[membership@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:membership@bluemountains.org.au)

National Parks/World Heritage Officer:

Brian Marshall 4784.1148

[briannamar@bigpond.com](mailto:briannamar@bigpond.com)

Newsletter Editor: Christine Davies

4787 7246

[hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au)

Plant Nursery Manager: Sue Nicol

4787.8887 [nursery@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:nursery@bluemountains.org.au)

Publicity Officer: Mellissa Opie

[Melissa.opie1@bigpond.com](mailto:Melissa.opie1@bigpond.com)

Sustainable Population and Climate

Change Officer: Vacant

Threatened Species Officer: Nakia Belmer

04143 44741 [bayern11@tpg.com.au](mailto:bayern11@tpg.com.au)

Website Manager: Alan Page 4784 1704

[webmaster@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:webmaster@bluemountains.org.au)

Walks Convenor: Maurice Kerkham

4739 4942

[mauricekerkham@hotmail.com](mailto:mauricekerkham@hotmail.com)

Project Officer-Events: Rob Baigent

4759 3104 [rob.baigent@bigpond.com](mailto:rob.baigent@bigpond.com)

Project Officer-Gardens of Stone:

Madi Maclean

[mlhmaclean@bigpond.com](mailto:mlhmaclean@bigpond.com)

Bushfire Representative: Hugh Paterson

4751.2303, mob 04275 12303

[fmatter@bigpond.net.au](mailto:fmatter@bigpond.net.au)

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT**

**ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS**

**16 JUNE 2015**

[hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au)

PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

**MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES**

Ross Coster

02 4739 2987 04184 462 576

[membership@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:membership@bluemountains.org.au)

or write to

PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

## Nursery News

### Correction:

In the March issue of Hut News I gave incorrect information to members about collecting native seed. Trish Kidd, Bushland Management Officer for Blue Mountains City Council, has pointed out that permits are required for native seed collection on all public land, including vacant Crown land. Permits can be issued by the local council, State Forests, Department of Lands, or other government body, depending on who owns or controls the land. There are also guidelines on how and when seed should be collected and skill and experience are required. Thank you, Trish, for this information.

We would love to hear from any private landholders, big or small, who may have native plants on their properties we could collect from.

### Nursery closed for the winter:

During the past month the nursery volunteers have been conducting our annual end of season clean-up before the winter break. This involves cleaning and sweeping the covered areas, washing and stacking pots, scrubbing out the glasshouse and getting rid of rubbish and unwanted material.

At Lawson we had a huge pile of pots in sizes that we no longer use which had been donated over the years. Unwanted plant pots are difficult to dispose of as they are not accepted at the average recycling

centre. One of our supporters found they could be recycled by taking them to the Nursery and Garden Industry depot at Rouse Hill. We really appreciate his contribution to our work. He brought a trailer which was loaded and a special trip made with the help of Lawson volunteer Tom Pogson. (Tom is in the photo, taken by Maria van der Sman.)

At Blackheath the glasshouse has survived hail and wind but is in need of straightening up and re-bracing before winter storms cause any damage. Seedlings need its warmth and protection to survive the winter. Other plants already potted out will spend the winter at Lawson.

### The nursery will reopen for sales in August:

Our volunteers will be at **Lawson Nursery**, Wednesday and Saturday mornings, 9am to noon, from 8<sup>th</sup> August, **The Magpie Market** at Lawson Public School, Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August, 9am to 2pm and at the **Blackheath Community Market**, Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September, 9am to 1pm. If you want to find out more or join us as a volunteer, please contact me.

Sue Nicol. Nursery Manager, [nursery@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:nursery@bluemountains.org.au)



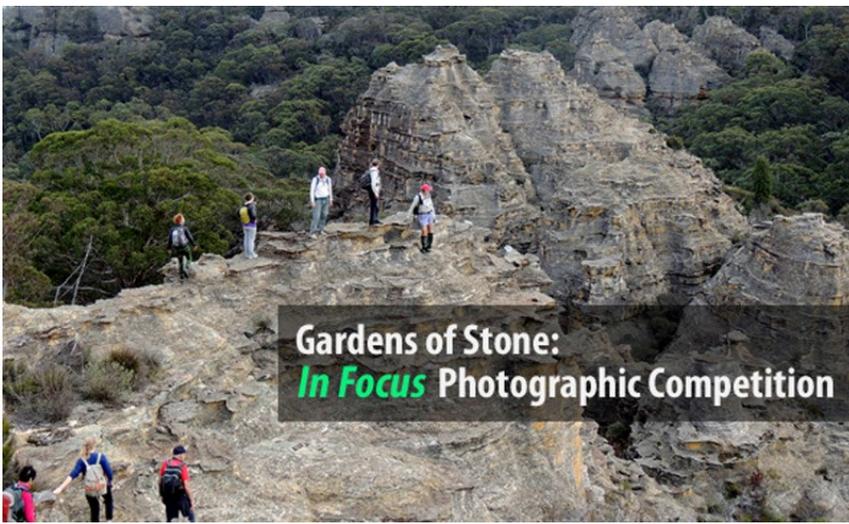
## BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

**WE WILL BE CLOSED DURING JUNE AND JULY.** Plant sales will resume in August.

We will have quality local native plants ready for sale at our Lawson nursery (from 8th August), Magpie Markets (16th August) and Blackheath Community Markets (6th September).

Tubes are only \$3 and we offer discounts for bulk orders and large contracts.

Enquiries: Sue Nicol 4787 8887, [nursery@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:nursery@bluemountains.org.au)



## Environmental groups under scrutiny

An enquiry, chaired by Liberal backbencher Alex Hawke, will assess whether environment organisations focus on “on-ground” activities or political advocacy and whether they should retain their tax deductibility status. A submission has been lodged by Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

The enquiry was announced in March after a number of Minerals Councils publicly agitated for the charity status of environment groups to be revoked following effective campaigns against threats to the Great Barrier Reef, the coal seam gas industry, and Queensland’s coal mining expansions.

Political correspondent Heath Aston (SMH 19/5/15) reports: *Legal academics have raised concerns around freedom of speech and the likelihood of a High Court challenge if the government tried to dictate that groups stick to “on-ground” activities and stay out of the political sphere as the cost of retaining their charitable status.*

*In a submission to the inquiry, six members of Adelaide University’s law school said any legislative change that weakens debate about matters of public importance “has the potential to weaken Australian democracy”.*

*“This participation has already been weakened after federal funding cuts to state and territory conservation councils and Environmental Defenders Offices,” they said.*

### A poem of the Himalayas ...

Now that I am old and tired  
 I climb your flanks with dented pride,  
 this matters not  
 nay not a jot.  
 For in my youth I strode with ease  
 your winding trails with robust knees.  
 Then I savoured all your pleasures  
 leaving me a host of treasures.  
 Mountains, mountains soaring high  
 piercing cloud to reach the sky.  
 Wave upon wave of terraced hills  
 show that your creator had the skills  
 to make me shed tears of pleasure  
 each time I paused to stare in leisure  
 at your pristine snowy peaks  
 so high above my leaded feet.

“Wandering amongst the Mountain Gods”  
 Phil Turnedge, 1980.

For 70 years conservationists have fought a campaign of epic proportions to save the Gardens of Stone on the western side of the Blue Mountains. Two coal mines and a giant coal power plant have been stopped. Unfortunately, many more mines have gone ahead.

The Gardens of Stone Alliance (Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Colong Foundation for Wilderness and Lithgow Environment Group) has now opted to use the power of photography to reveal the scenic grandeur and varied biodiversity of this natural wonderland and irreplaceable part of our national heritage.

If the Gardens of Stone was better known, it would all surely be protected! Superlative images and creative writing can help break the silence and stop the damage from coal mining. This winter, groups of adventurous photographers will capture its stories.

The Gardens of Stone region is only two hours’ drive west from Sydney, yet it is unknown to most Australians. This ‘pagoda’ landscape with its delicate rock sculptures is unique – its deep canyons, huge caves, luxuriant rainforests, glades of giant gum trees soaring into the sky and gently sloping dells of delicate wildflowers are home to many rare species of plants and animals.

By bringing the best photographers to the region to capture its beauty, its wonder will be shared.

The Gardens of Stone is a wild region, hard to penetrate without bushwalking skills, so experienced volunteer walk leaders will accompany participating photographers on journeys through this unique terrain.

**Gardens of Stone: In Focus** will give photographers a rare experience to capture the best of this region through their camera lens. Whether professional, non-professional, or junior photographer, all participants will have a chance to exhibit their photographs in the exhibition.

**The Gardens of Stone: In Focus** photographic competition will offer bushwalks to spectacular places, creating a unique event that will help save the Gardens of Stone.

The competition starts on 3 June with weekend day walks for registered competitors between 20 June and 12 July. To give everyone a chance of being exhibited, the competition is open to professional, non-professional and junior photographers.

The In Focus exhibition will be staged at a prestigious venue in Sydney on a date to be announced.

For more information go to [www.colongwilderness.org.au](http://www.colongwilderness.org.au)  
 email [info@colongwilderness.org.au](mailto:info@colongwilderness.org.au)  
 or phone (02) 9261 2400.

## Labor announces climate action

Shadow treasurer Chris Bowen has committed the Australian Labor Party to putting a fully formed carbon pricing policy before voters at the next election.

“We continue to believe firstly that climate change is real, secondly, that it’s caused by humankind; and thirdly, the best way of dealing with it is a price on carbon. We continue to believe that, and that will be reflected in our detailed policy that we announce and seek a mandate to implement” he told the National Press Club in his post budget speech on 20 May 2015.

## Amateur hunters hospitalised

Bullets were recently discharged into the shoulder of a teenage boy and the back of a middle aged man as amateur hunting took place near Mount Buller Victoria and Jugiong NSW respectively.

Amateur hunting needs to be banned on public lands such as Newnes State Forest and Jenolan State Forest where a series of “near misses” have been reported.

## Bird Hides Sylvia Beamer

Having experienced bird hides in both UK and Australia, maybe you twitchers would be interested. Hides in Australia and UK are basically the same construction. In UK, the hides I used were in bird sanctuaries. They had shutters with adjustable props on the windows, which means cold winds can be shut out and viewing can be done on the other wall.

Many hides in UK have a black/white board where enthusiasts can write a date and time, naming a rare bird spotted. Consequently, word goes out and people travel miles to come and see for themselves. As each person sees the bird they also add time etc. Many come with cameras and tripods which helps to fill the hide. It can become quite crowded. Some hides have electric points that are used for recharging batteries. One bloke said that, on cold days, he plugs in a heater. Home comforts! Camaraderie is the same in both countries, a sharing of spotting experiences.

Here in Australia, the best hide I know is my home. Looking through the window, any day, anytime, I see birds. Is your home a hide? Sylvia.



The birds were far away on 8 May 2014 at Pitt Town Lagoon. The three “twitchers” standing beside the bird hide are Interpretive bushwalkers Jenny, Helen and Sue. Photo by Carol Proberts.

## Badgerys Creek Airport - Not needed or wanted! Ross Coster

I found a letter in the archives (condensed below) that opposed Badgerys Creek Airport in 1999. Now we need to campaign again in 2015 against a bad idea that we don’t need or want.

The Badgerys Creek airport proposal is classic ‘Boosterism’ from another time, build it and they will come. More freight, more tourists, more people, growth, employment, the same old ‘growth is the only way’ rhetoric.

Chew up all the land in sight for more tarmac, terminals, warehouses, offices, roads, all for growth. Pollute the air in the basin with burned avgas, generate noise 20km in every direction at ‘offensive levels’, 24 hours a day, all for growth.

Here we go again. Sigh! Ross Coster

*Date: 08-Jun-1999.*

*To:- John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia, John Anderson, Federal Minister for Transport, Senator Robert Hill, Federal Minister for the Environment. Cc: Kerry Bartlett, Member for Macquarie, Jackie Kelly, Member for Lindsay*

### **Opposition to Proposed Badgerys Creek Airport.**

*I write to further voice our opposition to the proposed airport at Badgerys Creek.*

**Impact on National Parks and Tourism:** *Aircraft moving to and from the proposed airport at Badgerys Creek will travel at relatively low altitude over vast areas of National Park, Wilderness areas and proposed Wilderness areas (all now World Heritage Listed). The effect on animal species in these areas is unknown and needs to be thoroughly researched. The effect on people will be obvious. The effect on tourism may well be catastrophic.*

**Sydney’s Drinking Water:** *The recent (1998) water contamination scare is a stern warning that the drinking water catchments must be protected. Dramatically increasing overflights of the Sydney Drinking Water Catchments can only increase the risk of water contamination.*

**Blue Mountains Resident Amenity:** *Many people who move to the Blue Mountains do so to get away from the noise and bustle of living in Sydney. We undergo significant hardship through lengthy commuting to work, significantly lower standards of services, poor access to shopping and poor transport infrastructure. Yet we gladly pay these prices for a better, quieter, cleaner place to live. The proposed airport at Badgerys Creek will affect our lives through increased noise and airborne pollution.*

*In summary, we oppose the proposed Badgerys Creek Airport on grounds of impact on: The (World Heritage Listed) world-class tourism resource of our National Parks and Wilderness areas; The Sydney Drinking Water Catchments; Residential amenity.*

*We urge your Government to abandon plans for the Badgerys Creek airport ... (signed) Heather Coster, Vice President, Blue Mountains Conservation Society.*

## Fossil Fools Robin Mosman

The United Nations top climate negotiator Christiana Figueres, speaking at a recent conference in Melbourne, warned that Australia would need to diversify its economy as the world grapples with global warming. She said that Australia had previously benefited itself and the world from large fossil fuel endowments, but that point in history had come to an end. "The science is very clear, there is no space for any new coal" she said (Sydney Morning Herald 5.5.15).

If the world is to limit global warming to less than the internationally agreed goal of two degrees centigrade, the Climate Council has stated, more than 90 per cent of Australian coal would need to be left unburnt.

However, the chief economist of the federal Department of Industry and Science Mark Cully stated in a recent speech that the resources boom, now entering the production stage, is set to last far longer than the earlier stages of the mining boom "barring major policy adjustments", due to ever-increasing demand from the emerging economies of Asia.

Cully predicts that Asia's consumption of resources will grow by volumes that far outweigh whatever is happening in rich Western countries (Sydney Morning Herald 2.5.15). He sees Australia playing an important role in meeting this increased demand for both steaming coal and natural gas, becoming the world's largest exporter of both.

There seems to be no concern by the Abbott government that, although a global export leader in iron ore, coal and natural gas, Australia's range of exports has become even less diversified than it was before the resources boom.

Deep within the Federal Government's recently released Energy White Paper there is an admission that 'there is a growing long term risk for our fossil fuel export industry in an emissions constrained future' but the Abbott government continues to steer our economy into increasing dependence on the export of fossil fuels, recklessly gambling with the future survival of Australia and its people.

The Australian Labor Party's Annual Conference is happening in July. If you care about climate change, please write a letter to:

The Hon Bill Shorten  
Leader of the Opposition  
Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600  
or email at <http://billshorten.com.au/contact>

Ask that the Party adopt the Climate Change Authority's recommended pollution reduction targets, and a target of 50 per cent electricity production from renewable sources by 2050.

## Impressive inaugural speech

Blue Mountains Conservation Society has written to Member for Blue Mountains, Trish Doyle MP, to congratulate her on her inaugural speech in the NSW Parliament.

In the speech, Trish spoke of her own experience and made references to the Blue Mountains environment and the opportunities, economic and otherwise, that its uniqueness offers to citizens. You can read it in Hansard: <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/hansard> - Speaker Doyle, Ms Trish - 13/05/2015 Inaugural Speeches.

## Living with Wildlife: A Lawson Python

Christine Davies

After the Society's management meeting in May, some of us adjourned to Ben Roberts Café for lunch. On the way to the café we had noticed the activity of a pair of Masked Lapwings and some Australian Magpies on the grassy area across the road from the pub car park. Somebody came into the café and told us that a large snake was there, being attacked by the birds.

It was a beautiful Diamond Python. The birds flew away when we approached. I stood guard and blocked the snake's escape while Don Morison phoned reptile handler, Alan Lobb, and drove to pick him up from Hazelbrook. The python wandered around on the grass for a while and then climbed into a shrub and was content to stay there.

Alan arrived and removed the python from the shrub, but was in no hurry to leave. He put the snake on the grass and during the next half hour several people came over to look. Alan said it's good to talk to people and give them a bit of education and they understand that this is just another native animal and not to be feared, but to be treated with respect.

Eventually we managed to get Alan and the snake into the car and back to Hazelbrook and returned to the café to eat our lunch. One young boy was brave enough to touch the snake, while it was being held, to feel its smooth scales. And a woman came into the café thrilled that, under Alan's instruction, she had been able to hold the snake.

Alan would check that the snake had no injuries and would soon release it into bushland in the Terrace Falls area. The photo of Alan Lobb holding the Diamond Python was taken by Natalia Zajaz of Ben Roberts Café.



### The Gardens of Stone Visitors Map

\$7.50 plus \$1.50 postage.

Buy the map online ([www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au))  
or write to BMCS, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782  
with your cheque or money order.

## Bruce's Walk Jim Smith.

The article in the May issue of *Hut News*, about Bruce's Walk, brought back memories from 30 years ago. Bruce's walk originally went between Lawson and Mt Victoria, and was the longest tourist walking track constructed in the Blue Mountains. (The Six Foot Track is longer but was constructed as a bridle trail.) It is also the only walking track funded and constructed by the New South Wales Railways Department. It was opened on 21 November 1931, but forgotten after World War II.

Bruce's Walk still appears from time to time in the Society's walks programme, and in that of other organisations such as the National Parks Association. If you have not done it before it would be worth joining one of these trips. It is only possible to do this walk now because of the work of four men who spent a lot of time and energy finding and re-clearing it. Only one of the four is alive today to tell the tale.

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society has some significant associations with this walk. It was first mentioned in the Society's newsletter in August 1978. Blue Mountains City Council ranger and secretary of the Society, Wilson Alcorn, wrote:

*When bushwalking, I have often come across stone steps leading nowhere, which are apparently part of what was once Bruce's Walk. I know nothing of its history as I've only been a few years in the Mountains. If anyone could enlighten me or tell me of a book on the Walk I would be most grateful to hear from them. It may even be possible that some group is trying to rebuild it and I would like to be involved.*

In the February 1979 issue Wilson said he had been given information about the track, including a copy of the original guidebook. After summarising information from the guide, Wilson wrote "it now remains to explore this walk which I hope to do in the not too distant future."

Unbeknownst to Wilson Alcorn and others in the society, retired surveyor Dick Rushton had become involved



Ald David Lawton cuts the ribbon to open Bruce's Walk at Bullaburra on 24 May 1986. Wilf Hilder is on the left of the photo. Photo by John Falloon.

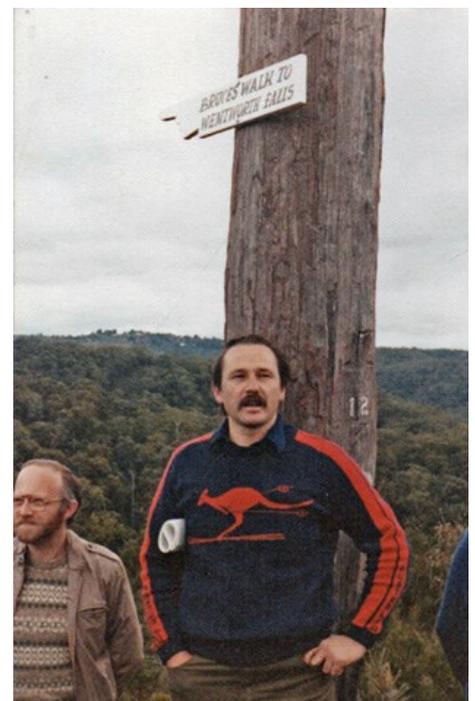


80-year-old Dick Rushton at the opening of Bruce's Walk. Wilf Hilder is to the right and David Lawton and Jim Smith to the left. Photo by John Falloon.

in trying to relocate the remains of the track. He had also found a copy of the original guidebook, and set out, aged in his mid-70s, to see what he could find. In February 1980 he led a group of over 20 members of the society on the section between Bullaburra and Wentworth Falls. The person who wrote up the walk commented in the March 1980 newsletter: "it's a great pity that this very beautiful track could not be restored to its former condition, it would make a most useful addition to the walks available to tourists and residents alike."

Dick then set out to find the section between Wentworth Falls and Medlow Bath. Three years later he had succeeded in his quest and his efforts were written up in two articles in the *Blue Mountains Echo* in August 1983. Dick did a magnificent job in

(continued on page 7)



Jim Smith, standing in front of the power pole, beneath one of the newly installed 'finger posts', greeting some of the 118 people who came to the opening of Bruce's Walk. Photo by John Falloon.

## Bruce's Walk Jim Smith (continued from page 6)

finding the main sections of the track and its associated lookouts. However, surveyors think in straight lines, and Dick had joined the sections of track that he had found with straight 'shortcut' connections. Bruce's Walk originally had over a hundred zigzag bends, and the majority of these had been missed by Dick.

Wilf Hilder and myself decided to build on Dick's good work and find every metre of the old track and open it up more to its original width, as Dick had only cut a narrow line with his brushhook. This we succeeded in doing, spending 30 man-days between January and May 1986 clearing the track between Bullaburra and Wentworth Falls. This section was opened by Alderman David Lawton on 24 May 1986. On 13 September Alderman Lawton opened the section between Wentworth Falls and Medlow Bath.

Lloyd Jones wrote two delightful articles, illustrated with his drawings, about Bruce's Walk in the Society's newsletter (January and April 1987).

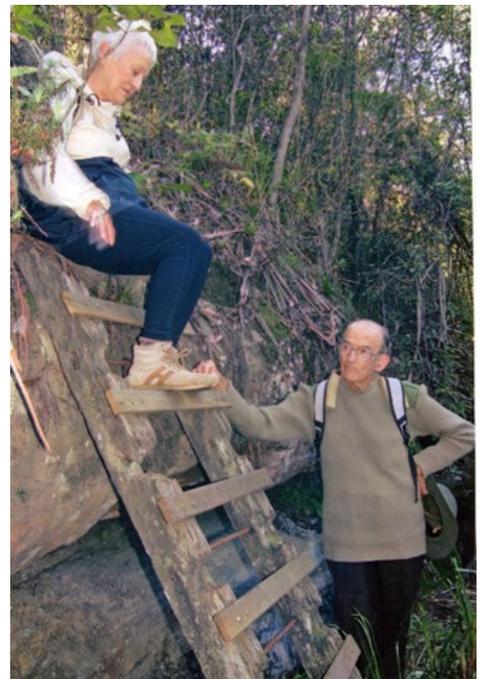
The most recent chapter in the history of Bruce's Walk began when society member Ron Wheeler 'adopted' the section between Bullaburra and Wentworth Falls. In the 1960s he had found parts of Bruce's Walk in the gully below Lawson View Road, Wentworth Falls. There are three major gullies along this section of the walk, and Ron, beginning in 2005, and aged in his late 70s, would set out alone to work on one gully per day, between 8 AM and noon. His wife Hilda was told not to call for search and rescue until after 1:30 PM. For example, in

November 2006 he spent ten mornings clearing the track and installing new treads on the old ladder at Wilson's Rest and building a new smaller ladder to replace one destroyed by bushfire. Ron's work was remarkable considering his age and poor health. He never asked for help from anyone with his self-appointed task of caring for Bruce's Walk. He had suffered from leukaemia for much of his life and had arthritis in his shoulders. Dick Rushton was suffering from Parkinson's disease during the time he relocated Bruce's Walk. It is sobering to think that these two men, both in their late 70s, and with major health problems, both devoted so much time and energy to Bruce's Walk. It appears that no one has stepped forward since Ron's death in 2011 to take his place.

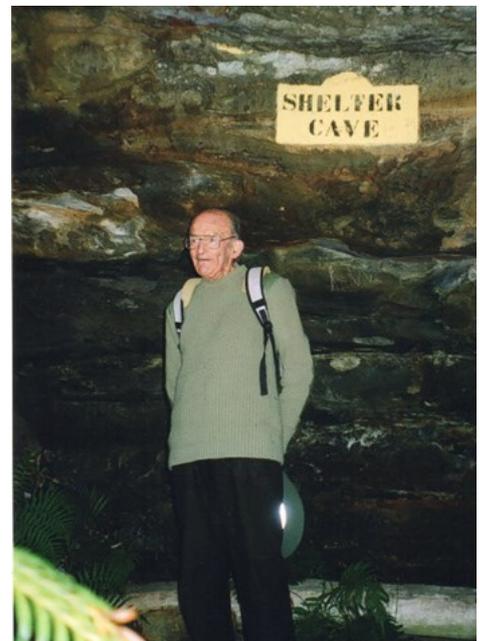
Some people are put off the walk because they think they will be under power lines the whole way. In fact you are hardly aware of the power lines on the track, apart from at the tops of each ridge. The section between Wentworth Falls and Medlow Bath, for various reasons, was less used and I'm not sure of its present condition or how well it is marked. Bruce's Walk has been assessed as an item of state heritage significance. Some sections are on private property and could be vulnerable to being fenced off in the future.

It is sad to reflect that those great lovers of the Blue Mountains bushland and historic walking tracks, Wilson Alcorn, Dick Rushton, Wilf Hilder and Ron Wheeler are no longer with us.

Jim Smith.



Ron Wheeler, with Annemarie Hekman on the ladder which Ron repaired at Wilson's Rest. Photo by Andy Gardiner.



Ron Wheeler stands beneath an original 1931 painted sign on Bruce's Walk. This was on a walk he led for the Blue Mountains Conservation Society on 28 July 2007. Photo by Jim Smith.

## Renewable Energy and Energy Storage

Recent announcements from Tesla Motors about battery storage systems will almost certainly be a game changer, and battery technology is evolving at a bewildering pace. The public will need to become familiar with terms like 'prosumer' and 'smart grids', and off-grid systems are already happening. Energy retailers are starting to see the writing on the wall, and some are already changing.

This link <http://www.australianenergystorage.com.au/> is worth a visit. The exhibition is free; others might wish to pay to attend the conference. Those with an interest in renewables might like to visit <http://reneweconomy.com.au/> and subscribe (free) to their daily newsletter 'The Parkinson Report'.

## 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.

## Welcome to new members

Mellisa Opie, Blackheath  
Heather Threlfall, Glenbrook  
Wendy Wing Yee Au, Valley Heights



The Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute is supporting local research on dingoes and their researcher has made a short film about some of his findings. The researcher is Daniel Hunter and he is doing his PhD on dingoes in the Blue Mountains.

**Two films will be shown at the  
Fairmont Resort Blue Mountains  
on Saturday, 13 June 2015  
from 4:30 PM - 8:00 PM**

The two Australian natural history films are -  
***Battle in the Bush* and *Where Do Eagles Dare*.**

The filmmakers will introduce their films with a short speech and both will be available to answer questions at the conclusion of the second film, which will be at approximately 7:30pm.

Tickets are a set price (\$20) for individual seats and any profits made will go to the filmmakers, both of whom are self-funded individuals, and the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute, who have helped organise the event.

Buy tickets at: <https://www.stickytickets.com.au/26474/where-do-eagles-dare-battle-in-the-bush-screening-leura.aspx> (spaces are lower case underscore)

## Poets' Corner

Does living in the Blue Mountains, or even just coming here for bushwalks, bring out the poet in you? Does this unique part of the world make you feel more alive? Do you respond to the moods of nature and the seasons, the wind and the weather, by writing poetry? Perhaps it's the smaller things that inspire you - the little wren that visits, the first spring wildflowers, a lyrebird in the mist ... or the mood that comes upon you with the first blasts of winter.

Would you like to share your work, inspired by the Blue Mountains, with others?

Readers of Hut News are invited to send a poem, maximum of 20 lines. Each month, the Poetry subcommittee will choose one or even two - if they're shorter or in haiku form - to be published in Poets' Corner.

Poems can be emailed to [brendan049@gmail.com.au](mailto:brendan049@gmail.com.au) or even posted to Poets' Corner at 5 Lurline St Wentworth Falls 2782.

It's over to you.

Brendan Doyle.

### Wolgan Walk, 14-16 December 2014 Sierra Classen and Alex Allchin

Centennial Coal claim their proposed Springvale mine extension, currently before the Planning Assessment Commission, will cause insignificant damage to swamps and streams. Colong Foundation Board members, Sierra Classen and Alex Allchin, went to investigate for themselves. Here is their report about what they discovered on their Newnes Plateau walk last year to the Wolgan Falls in the Gardens of Stone reserve proposal.

As we approached what is known as the Wolgan 'headwaters' [a western arm of the Wolgan River] we came upon infrastructure that included dams and environmental testing equipment. We could see the creek was in varying stages of decline. We knew we were now walking above a longwall mine.

Most of the creek bed was dry and dead. The vegetation looked poisoned. We walked through some swamps downstream but these upland swamps were dead too. The soil felt cooked dry. The dead grasses and bushes felt skeletal, the landscape cringing and crumbling.

Further along we sighted numerous boreholes and survey markers. Opening one of the borehole caps we were able to see what appeared to be a measuring instrument to track water table depths.

We were aware that we were now walking through what was effectively a dead zone. We saw forlorn and hopeless attempts to reconstruct the intricate and complex dynamics of an upland swamp. Instead of natural wonders we saw abandoned 'swamp construction sites' - layers of loose sand, gravel, hessian fabric, sandbags, broken sticks and branches. Half hidden tools and supplies swathed in black plastic were carelessly discarded. We then followed a deformed creek, buckled and cracked by



the upsidence of an underground mine.

We were relieved when we finally came to the healthy headwaters of an eastern branch of the Wolgan River where the water was again flowing, apparently fresh and healthy. We then came upon an expansive upland swamp, beautiful and working perfectly naturally. The contrast between the mined and unmined streams was stark.

We camped in an ideal spot sheltered by tall gum trees and pagoda stone formations. The next morning we climbed up the beautiful pagoda laced cliffs. We felt exhilaration when we finally sighted the view of the Wolgan Falls and the vivid colours of the Wolgan Valley.

Photo: Sierra Classen inspects a dead swamp in the 'headwaters' of the Wolgan River. Nine years after being ruined by longwall mining there is still no sign of recovery.

## Blue Mountains Koala Project Alice McGlashan

When you think of the Blue Mountains, do you think of koalas? A common reaction is that they are not around in the area. Historically they were, in numbers large enough that attracted hunters from the fur trade back in the late 1900's.

Following the 2013 bushfires in the Blue Mountains region of New South Wales, koalas were spotted in parts of the Mountains where they had not been seen for decades. Driven out by the ferocity of the fires, the death toll on the region's koala and wider wildlife population will never be known. However, the fires did alert us to the presence of koalas in the region, plus the fact that we don't really know how many there are, where they live, or what food trees they use. So we don't know how to protect them from future fires and other threats.

Koalas are federally listed as threatened species across most of their range, including NSW. Conserving the remaining populations is critical. Local NGO Science for Wildlife is working to find the Blue Mountains koala populations.

The Blue Mountains is a potentially important area for conservation of the species for a couple of reasons. Firstly, the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area is a massive protected area of over one million hectares and one that may serve as a refuge for koalas under climate change modelling, which shows their habitats out west becoming less and less suitable. At the same time koalas are constantly losing their coastal habitats to human development.

Secondly, koalas are very fussy eaters and only chomp on a few species of eucalyptus in each area. The Blue Mountains has an incredible diversity of eucalypts, spread over many different soil types and microclimates, which means the koalas have a lot more choice than in other areas. Learning about what they eat here could tell us more about why they prefer some tree species and not others.

How do you find koalas in one million hectares of rugged bushland? That's where you come in! Science for Wildlife is taking a 3-step approach, and the first step is collecting community reports to map where they are likely to be. If you see a koala, please report it. You can also get active and go looking for koalas, and check for potential habitats - **attend a koala spotting workshop** to learn where they are likely to be, what to look for, and even how to identify koala scats.

Based on the koala sighting information, the next steps involve systematic ecological surveys of likely habitats, using new methods including koala detection dogs to confirm koala numbers at different sites. Then research into selected populations to see exactly what the koala eat, how far they move. That information will be shared with land managers, rural fire services and community groups to protect and restore koala habitats.

Koala spotting workshop information:  
Alice McGlashan [agil7727@uni.sydney.edu.au](mailto:agil7727@uni.sydney.edu.au)  
Mobile: 04 399 47623

Learn more – [www.scienceforwildlife.org](http://www.scienceforwildlife.org)



### 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](http://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](mailto:membership@bluemountains.org.au)

Photos:

(top) Student researchers tracking koalas in the Bilpin area;

(left) Koala scratch marks on trunk of *Eucalyptus punctata*.

## 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".

## Loose Feathers, with Carol Probets

As the days get colder and we pile on coats and scarves, one resident of the forests is coming into his element. On the chilliest winter mornings his voice echoes around the valleys; he's arguably the most incredible songster and mimic in the bird world - the Superb Lyrebird.

June-July is when the male lyrebird's display is at its peak. Often (but not always) using a low mound of scratched-up earth as a stage, he raises his long tail feathers over his head in a shimmering silver cascade. In an effort to attract females he pumps out a stream of mimicked bird calls - Gang-gang, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Pied Currawong, Eastern Whipbird, Kookaburra, Golden Whistler and Pilotbird are some of his most commonly-mimicked sounds. He can imitate the bill-clapping of the Red Wattlebird, a whole flock of rosellas calling simultaneously, branches creaking, and a spinebill's wingbeats - all using his voice. One bird I've been watching at Mt Victoria regularly mimics more than 20 different bird calls.

Interspersed with this mimicry is the lyrebird's own territorial call. This is the loudest part of the song - it can be heard more than a kilometre away - and generally consists of a series of loud whistled notes, with considerable geographic variation. There are also chopping, whirring, galloping, twanging, "clonk clonk" and clicking notes, which accompany the display and provide the "rhythm section" to which the bird dances.

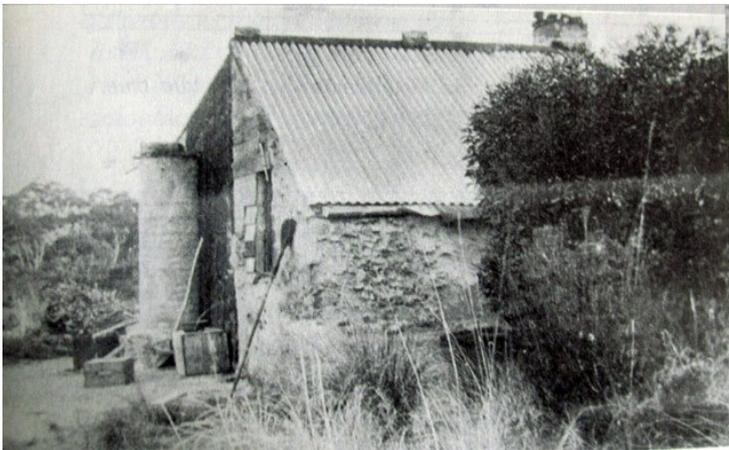
These notes can sound quite mechanical and are probably the origin of some of the stories which abound of lyrebirds imitating modern or artificial sounds such as axe blows and forest machinery. While there is no doubt that lyrebirds have the physical ability to mimic any sound at all (remember the David Attenborough footage of what was actually a captive-raised lyrebird mimicking a camera shutter and motor-drive), the reality is that they learn their song from other lyrebirds and therefore, in the wild, mimicry consists almost entirely of natural sounds.

Because of this it takes some time for a new sound to find its way into the lyrebird's breeding song. For example, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos have greatly increased in the Blue Mountains over the past 30 years, before which they were rarely seen here. So far, I have never heard a lyrebird in the area mimic them. If you have, I'd love to know - please email me!

**Carol Probets.** [origma@westnet.com.au](mailto:origma@westnet.com.au) Twitter: [@carolprobets](https://twitter.com/carolprobets)



**Male Lyrebird.** Photo by Carol Probets, Katoomba, 2014.



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

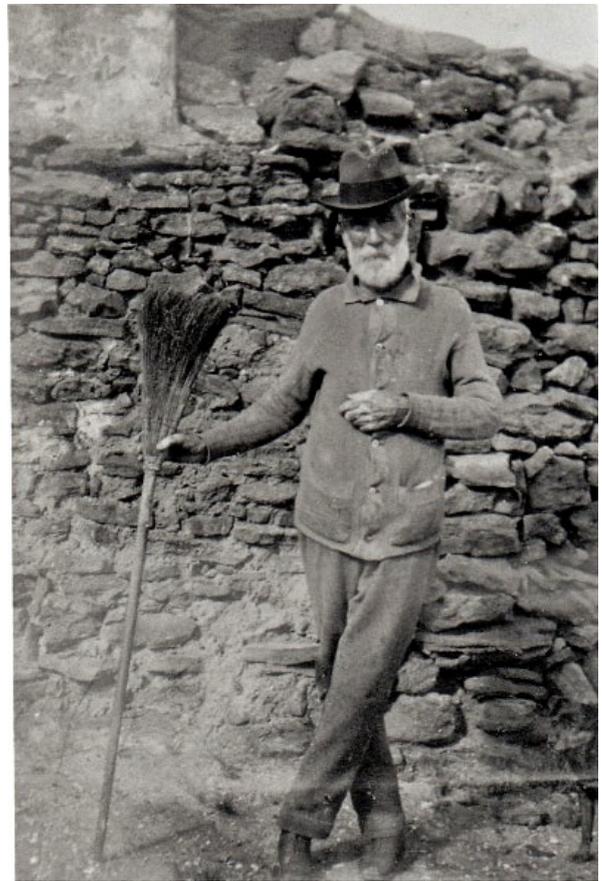
#### 4. Site of William Murphy's Hut, Hat Hill

William Murphy, who led a hermit-like existence in the Hat Hill area early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was a contemporary of Sid Bellingham, whose 1899 journal, "Ten Years with the Palette, Shotgun and Rifle on the Blue Mountains NSW" was recently republished with a commentary by historian Jim Smith. Both men were pioneers in persuading the white occupiers of NSW to study and appreciate the native animals. They provided a counter-balance to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century "Acclimatisation" movement which sought to replace the Australian ecology with European flora and fauna.

Bellingham made a living from guiding shooting parties and expressed some bemusement when uncontrolled hunting drove some species out of settled areas or into local extinction. Murphy, on the other hand, mildly threatened local fauna by feeding it but generally encouraged his fellow residents and visitors to value the creatures for their own sake.

The legend of William Murphy owes much to the renowned balladeer of the NSW countryside, Jim Low (now of Mount Riverview). Extract from a Jim Low lyric:

*"There's food for all creatures – the Gang Gang and quail  
Brown wallabies and possums and the willy wagtail  
The old man smiles broadly, his teeth displayed  
As he stares at the sanctuary his kindness has made."*



Today, the site of William Murphy's hut can be found a short distance from the Hat Hill carpark on the Perry's Lookdown road. The hut stood in a typical patch of species-diverse Upper Blue Mountains heathland. Examples of the *Proteaceae* family proliferate, including *Petrophile pulchella*, *Isopogon anemonifolius*, *Hakea dactyloides*, and *Lambertia formosa*. There is also *Platysace linearifolia* and various *Eucalypts*.

Photos: The stone hut. Mr. Murphy. (courtesy of Blue Mountains Historical Society).

A rock formation on the ridge near Hat Hill—"Hen and Chicken Rock".



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.

## 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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:jp34@tpg.com.au) Check [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://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](http://www.bluemountains.org.au) Saturday Walks page for details)

- June 13 **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.
- Jun 20 **Faulconbridge Ridge** to Faulconbridge Point and Lookout. Some exploratory to the Grose River. Leader Diana 04326 19305. Meet at Faulconbridge Station Carpark 8.00am. 14Km. Grade 3/ 4. Maps Springwood/Kurrajong.
- Jun 27 **Mount Solitary – from Golden Stairs via Ruined Castle.** A Blue Mountains Classic. Leader Warwick 4757 1354. Meet at Wentworth Falls Stockade Carpark 8.00am. 18Km. Gr 3. Maps Katoomba/Jamison.
- Jul 4 **Bungleboorie Creek.** Spectacular Blue Mountains country. Leader Harold 9600 8005. Meet at Wentworth Falls Stockyard Carpark 7.30am. 6 Km. Grade 3. Map Wollangambe.
- Jul 11 **Florabella Pass - Warrimoo to Blaxland via Pippas Pass.** Leader Karen 4751 9695. Meet at Warrimoo Post Office Shop 9.15am. 6Km. Grade 2/3. 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](mailto:keithdor53@hotmail.com)

- Jun 8 **Empire Pass and Dante's Glen,** North Lawson. Meet Lawson Station 8.40 am. Ken 0424 450 200
- Jun 15 **Duck Hole, Glenbrook.** Large pool on Glenbrook Creek. Meet Glenbrook Station car park, 9.30 am. Walk from station. Liz Stark 4754 4966. Grade 2.
- Jun 22 **Waterfall circuit, Mount Wilson.** Possible extension to Wynne's Rock Lookout. Meet Mount Victoria Station 8.50 am. Car pool, fare \$5. Maurice 4739 4942, 04024 02783. Grade 2.
- Jun 29 **Dee Why to Manly.** Great coastal and beach walk. Train, bus and ferry. Meet Central Station, top of escalator, 9.30 am. Keith 4736 1010. Grade 3.
- Jul 6 **Dargan Dam.** Historic steam train water supply. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50 am. Car pool, fare \$5. Maurice 4739 4942, 04024 02783. Grade 2.

**THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS:** Walks 2-3 hours conducted at a leisurely pace to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, adequate water and lunch if noted. Group Co-ordinator is Beverley Thompson, 4757 2076, [denfenella@optusnet.com.au](mailto:denfenella@optusnet.com.au)

- Jun 11 **Bell Perimeter Trail.** Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Car pool \$5. Take lunch. Grade 2
- Jun 18 **Great North Road Wisemans Ferry.** Bus trip. Book and pay Amanda \$12 4751 5061. Meet Springwood Carpark behind Westpac Bank 8.30am. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. Take lunch. Grade 2.
- Jun 25 **Lockleys Pylon, Leura.** Best views of the Grose and Mounts Hay and Banks. Meet cnr Leura Mall and Megalong Street, Leura 9.30am. Leader Keith 4736 1010. Car pool \$5. Take lunch. Grade 2.
- Jul 2 **Hyde Park, Hartley.** Easy walk to River Lett. Barbecue lunch at Doreen's. Bring meat and a plate to share. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Doreen 6355 2371. Car pool. Grade 1.
- Jul 9 **Little Zig Zag, Mount Victoria.** Circuit along track constructed in 1877 for access to Kanimbla Valley. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Rosemary 6355 2292. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 3.
- Jul 16 **Euroka to the Nepean River, Glenbrook.** Four kilometres return. Meet Glenbrook Station Car Park 9.30am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Car pool \$5. Take lunch. Grade 2.

### Grandparents for Generational Equity

[www.genequity.net](http://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.

JOIN Blue Mountains Conservation Society,  
or renew your membership online.  
[www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.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](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml)