



WOLLONGONG: Valuable currency

Just a leaf! Thousands blow in here from the trees in the nearby parks of this windy city - or on the escarpment.

What tree is this? (leaf 10cm long plus stalk)

What has munched on it or otherwise holed it?

How much good will it continue to do on the ground and in the soil?

I know leaves feature prominently in welcome to country, so our indigenous people recognise their importance. All animals draw useful breath because of them. They cool our place. What else?

Keep breathing! (Geoff)



SPRINGWOOD: Bloody Noisy Miners!

At the retirement village where I live, lovely old trees remain but the gardeners trim everything else back, even when it's not needed. Consequently there are no smaller birds, only Noisy Miners which chase the other birds away.

Stepping outside this morning, I see an Eastern Rosella on the ground, a Crimson Rosella nearby ... a Noisy Miner in the shadows, on its own, waiting for reinforcements? The Eastern Rosella took off, closely followed by the Crimson Rosella (they could have been together), into the blue gums (Eucalyptus deanei) across the way (photographed).

Maybe they had an escape plan. (Ron)



WENTWORTH FALLS: Blessed be the track makers

I first walked the Undercliff Track at Wentworth Falls 50 years ago, when we started coming to the Mountains every Easter with another family, who also had small children.

We wanted to walk it every year, but all too often it would be impassable if there had been much rain in preceding months.

Now, thanks to the wonderful efforts of our mountains track makers, this is what it looked like the day after the most recent deluge. (Robin)

BLUE MOUNTAINS WALKING TRACKS: a connection to the past

As bushwalkers who love the Australian natural environment, we are among the luckiest people in the world. We can choose to live in or visit a city within the magnificent Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and, as an added bonus, we can explore a network of walking tracks which is unique in Australia's history.

"Blue Mountains walking tracks" was listed on the NSW State Heritage Register in 1999 and in 2017 the overall complex was listed as of National significance. These tracks were planned and constructed for recreational purposes, at first by wealthy landowners and later by community based trusts who administered grants from the NSW Government. The peak of trustee track building occurred in the period 1890 to 1910. The Overcliff/Undercliff Track, pictured above, was built during that time.

There is not a full record of the names of the citizens who took on voluntary roles of managing local recreational reserves and planning the construction of walking tracks, lookouts, and other visitor facilities. Many hundreds of residents carried out these tasks. Very few of them have received recognition of their dedicated work.

Up until the late 1930s, walking through the natural

scenery was the main tourist attraction. Each town's tourism industry operated independently and in competition with the other towns. This led to a proliferation of tracks, many built by volunteers.

Track users have left behind written records, photographs and memories recording emotional and spiritual experiences on the tracks. This continues today and we can feel a connection with walkers of the past.

Time and climatic conditions have eroded the tracks and they received little maintenance for many years.

In the 1990s, Blue Mountains historian Dr Jim Smith was contracted by NPWS to conduct the Blue Mountains Walking Track Heritage Study. This study led to the nomination and acceptance of the tracks as being of both State and National significance.

Now the tracks are being restored to balance modern capacity and safety requirements with a heritage feel.

Track makers – NPWS and Council – are working to improve the tracks and replace worn stonework and other structures.

Thank you to Jim Smith for information provided.

(Christine and Don)

BLACKHEATH: The Grand Canyon

Observe the beauty of the ferns and the Coachwood trees through the wet rainforest. Appreciate the magnificent stonework on the tracks and stairs.

Walking through the Grand Canyon is always a world class experience.

(Katriona)



The Grand Canyon Walking Track

The first published indication that a walking track was planned through Blackheath's Grand Canyon was in the Mountaineer, 28 June 1901, when it was announced that the trustees of Evans Lookout had "every hope of a track being made right through connecting Evans Lookout with Walls Cave". The work was eventually completed in November 1906 by contractor Thomas Williams with the expenditure of £77. During the official opening by NSW Premier JH Carruthers, on 16th February, the trustees lobbied for additional funding to make the track safer. Grants for improvement of the Grand Canyon pathway, totalling £79, were received by May 1907. This made a total expenditure of £156 on the track to that date.

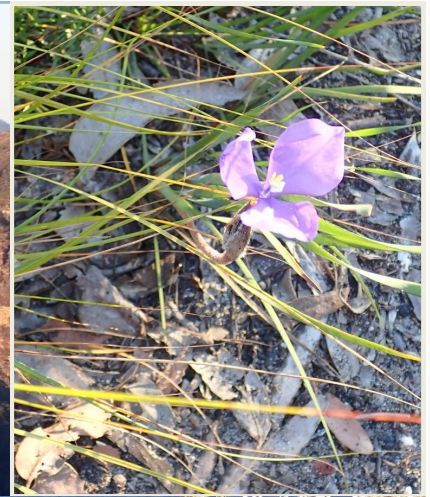
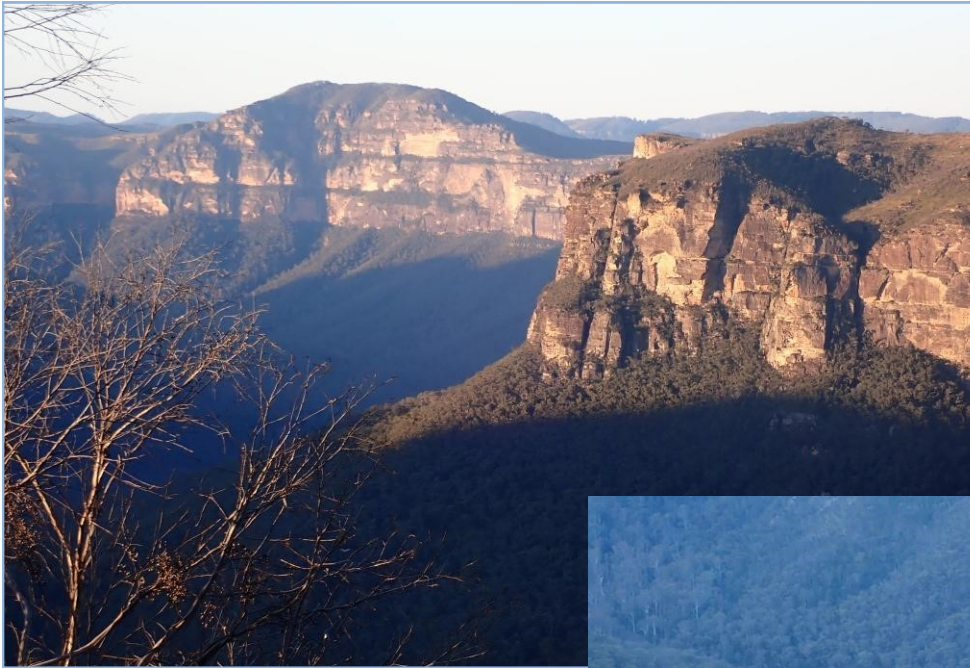
The Greaves Creek dam, opened in November 1941, cut off the upstream section of the track to Walls Cave and visitors thereafter entered or exited at Neates Glen.

Between 2008 and 2017 the National Parks and Wildlife Service carried out a major reconstruction of the track

costing \$4.8 million. As part of this project, over 3,000 large sandstone steps, most of them lowered from over 2,000 helicopter trips, were positioned by hand. The £156 it cost to make the track in 1906-07 would be the equivalent of about \$19,000 today. Williams had to cut his steps from boulders in the creek bed and from the canyon walls. As this is now considered environmentally unacceptable, the NPWS was committed to the huge expenditure of bringing in stone blocks. Many of these came from the demolition of buildings in Sydney.

Completion of the rebuilt track was celebrated on 28 October 2017. At this time it was calculated that more than 90,000 people used the track every year. By 2020 the number of visitors was estimated at 200,000 per annum.

(Source: The Grand Canyon walking track Trustees, by Jim Smith, Blue Mountains Historical Society, Hobby's Outreach, August-September 2021)



NEAR MEDLOW BATH: Point Pilcher sunset

Anticlockwise from top right: the highlighted bloom, the golden cliffs, a humble Xanthorrhoea

As the afternoon sun farewells this lip of the Grose Valley, a translucent Patersonia headlines the act. If I had kept my notes from Margaret Baker's 1990s outdoor guides lectures, I could write about the Banks Wall and Burramoko Head layers within the Narrabeen sandstone formations on the face of Mount Banks. But I'm happy just to call this scene the golden cliffs.

The final sunrays put a humble Xanthorrhoea spike in the spotlight and, surrounded by a chorus line of its colleagues, it takes a bow on behalf of all the attractions of Medlow Bath. (Don)



GLENBROOK: The quietest frog

The terracotta frog, made by Jenny, is the quietest frog in her garden and doesn't keep her awake at night (as those in the pond sometimes do).



Citizen science project – Australian Museum PUT OUR FROGS ON THE MAP

The Blue Mountains is home to around 20 species of frog and there are over 240 known species Australia-wide. Some species are flourishing, like the Striped Marsh Frog. But others have declined dramatically since the 1980s, and four have become extinct.

FrogID is a national citizen science project that is helping us learn more about what is happening to Australia's frogs. All around the country, people are recording frog calls with nothing more than a smartphone.

Croaks, whistles, bleats and barks – every frog species makes a different sound! By recording a frog call with our app, FrogID, you can discover which frogs live around you and help us count Australia's frogs!

If you want to learn more about frogs in the Blue Mountains (and throughout Australia) visit www.frogid.net.au or download the free FrogID app. <https://www.frogid.net.au/>