



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Come and support the campaign to
Leave Radiata Plateau Wild!

**Join us at a rally on the afternoon of
Sunday 30th July, 1.30 to 2.30 pm
at Cahills Lookout, Cliff Drive, Katoomba**

We are seeking to have the Plateau purchased and come
under public ownership and be incorporated into the
Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

For information on the campaign and the rally go to [http://
bluemountains.org.au/leaveradiataplateauwild](http://bluemountains.org.au/leaveradiataplateauwild)

WINTER MAGIC FESTIVAL 2017

Thank you to
everyone
who came to
help on the
day ...
setting up/
manning our
stall ...
carrying our
banners ...
marching
for the
environment.



(Photos by Ian Watson)

Where Song Began and The New Nature: A talk by Tim Low

Co-sponsored by Blue Mountains Conservation Society and Science at the Local

Blue Mountains Theatre & Community Hub, Springwood

Sunday 23rd July 2017, 2.30 to 4.30 pm
(doors open at 2 pm)

Where Song Began: Renowned for its unusual mammals, Australia is a land of birds that are just as unusual. Tim explains how our birds came to be so extraordinary. The story of Australia's birds is inseparable from the story of Australia itself.

The New Nature: *Winners and Losers in Wild Australia.* Tim challenges conventional thinking about nature and conservation by showing that some native species are benefiting from human impacts and sometimes go on to cause environmental problems.

Admission is free and seating is on a first come first served basis – You can register at [https://
www.eventbrite.com.au/e/tim-low-science-at-the-
local-blue-mountains-tickets-34099801424](https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/tim-low-science-at-the-local-blue-mountains-tickets-34099801424) to help us get some idea of numbers attending.

'Western Sydney Airport Exposed' community forum

Sunday 23 July 2017, 1pm to 3pm
Nirimba Room, Blacktown City Council

Event Purpose: To provide an opportunity for the Blacktown and Blue Mountains communities to better understand and discuss the Australian Government's proposal to build the Western Sydney Airport at Badgery's Creek and the related issues and impacts.

Event Background: The 'Western Sydney Airport Exposed' community forum is inspired by the united view of the Mayors of City of Blue Mountains and City of Blacktown in opposition to the proposed Western Sydney Airport at Badgery's Creek, which has been approved on the basis of a grossly inadequate final Environmental Impact Statement and Airport Plan having significant impacts on the Western Sydney and Blue Mountains communities. Admission is free.

Register to Attend: To help us accommodate the level of community interest in this event, please register your interest in attending this community forum at [www.eventbrite.com.au/e/western-sydney-airport-
exposed-community-forum-tickets-35715470935](http://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/western-sydney-airport-exposed-community-forum-tickets-35715470935).

Further information: Follow the Facebook event at www.facebook.com/events/151258305421728 or check www.clearbluesky.info for further information and updates.

"Hut News", the newsletter of
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Maintaining Australia's Natural Wealth – Priorities for Terrestrial Conservation

The Australian Committee for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (ACIUCN) and partners celebrated World Environment Day 2017 with the release of the new Key Directions Statement *Maintaining Australia's Natural Wealth – Priorities for Terrestrial Conservation*.

This new Statement celebrates Australia's world class leadership in conservation. It recognises that with our environment continuing to face multiple critical threats, there is an urgent need to put a greater focus on broad, long-term, multi-party support for the protection of our environment, and to insist on this protection as a major national priority.

It presents a series of important policy recommendations: from strong action on climate change; revitalising the National Reserve System and connectivity principles; reforming environmental laws and strengthening support for science and Indigenous knowledge; to valuing nature as Australia's natural capital and a critical component of a strong national economy.

The Statement is the output of the 2016 *Science Informing Policy* Symposium held in partnership with the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas; the Fenner School of Environment & Society, Australian National University; the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy. It was developed with input from over 130 conservation professionals from governments, NGOs and academic institutions at the symposium.

Download from: <http://aciucn.org.au/index.php/publications/2017-terrestrial-wealth/>

Thank you to Bob Debus, former Minister for Environment NSW and one of the editors of the Statement, for drawing this document to our attention.

A lifetime fighting for the environment

Dr Geoff Mosley is one of Australia's most respected conservationists. In his recent memoir he writes about 'steady state economy' – as a way to resolve the current environmental crisis. Enjoy his passion for the environment and why he has spent a lifetime fighting for it.

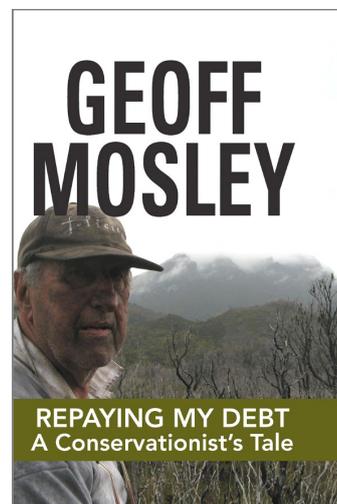
He tells of his early formative years spent in the UK's famed Peak District and his adventures abroad before eventually settling in Australia in 1960.

It was here in Australia that Geoff was to make his mark as a conservationist of both national and international significance. The Australian Conservation Foundation and Geoff's involvement with it from its earliest days is part of this detailed story.

There is also a personal story of a busy life with a growing family and the sacrifices made along the way. A tireless worker still, these pages also outline his message on how to save the Planet from the excesses of today.

ABC Radio National's BIG IDEAS has recorded a special hour long conversation with Geoff Mosley and RN's Gregg Borschmann.

Listen to the conversation; read a review of the book; purchase the book from the Colong Foundation for Wilderness shop. Go to <https://www.colongwilderness.org.au/news/2017/dr-geoff-mosley-book-launch-and-special-celebration> and follow the links.



The **DEADLINE** for the next issue
of HUT NEWS is
15 JULY 2017

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President's Report

We have some exciting talks and events planned for the rest of this year. Tim Low, biologist and best-selling author of *Where song began* is at the Hub at Springwood on Sunday 23 July. The society has partnered with Science at the Local for this event. This is a great opportunity to hear Tim Low locally. Details on page 1 and on our website: www.bluemountains.org.au/index.htm.

We are currently developing this year's Mick Dark Talk for the Future which we co-sponsor with Varuna Writers Centre. This talk honours the generosity and legacy of Varuna's patron and BMCS life member Mick Dark. The talk aims to inspire community discussion of environmental issues of local and global significance.

In planning we also have a talk on the role of photography in environmental campaigns; a workshop on how to repower NSW with renewables; and a day of family-oriented nature activities. We are looking for members who could help with events on the day. Contact our Events Coordinator, Heather Coster, on Heather@coster.com.au to find out more.

The society's nursery is closed over winter but sales will resume at the local markets in August. You can learn more about native plants and how to propagate by volunteering at the nursery. Contact our nursery coordinator, Hugh Brougham, nursery@bluemountains.org.au

The society monitors and regularly comments on proposals that affect our area. In the last two months we have prepared submissions on the proposed changes to the NSW planning law; Council's strategic plan and its draft enforcement policy; and the proposal to raise Warragamba Dam which will impact on Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. We also made a presentation to the Planning Assessment Commission on the proposed Springvale water transfer and treatment project. These submissions can be found on our website under Campaigns.

We are always looking for people to contribute to this work through our multi-skilled sub-committees. In some of our current campaigns, people with specialist qualifications would be very useful and welcome. If you have a science, conservation, land management, citizen science, planning, policy background and a passion for the environment here in the mountains, please contact me.

Madi Maclean
0412 428 202
president@bluemountains.org.au

DON'T RAISE THE DAM

The NSW Government plans to raise the Warragamba Dam wall by 14 metres and an Environmental Impact Statement is in preparation. Raising of the wall is unnecessary and environmentally damaging.

In the Colong Bulletin, July 2017, (www.colongwilderness.org.au/files/bulletins/colong_267_web.pdf) Keith Muir writes:

Will Warragamba be Sydney's Lake Pedder?

Imagine the effect of raising the Warragamba Dam wall on the three million tourists who visit Echo Point, Katoomba. No longer spellbound by wilderness, those who look out see a scarred Kedumba Valley and dead trees, formerly a forest of nationally endangered Camden White gums. Degraded World Heritage sites are not on the tourist bucket list. ... The scarring damage and loss of ecological function of riparian communities will have a perimeter of hundreds of kilometres and be visually prominent. Park visitors will lose their favoured camp sites and be blocked in their travels by floodwaters. Many beautiful banks of the Nattai, Coxs, Kowmung, Nattai, Wollondilly and Kedumba rivers will be covered with unsightly sediment and weeds. Rare river bank vegetation communities will be killed. Beauty will be replaced by blight.

Keith goes through the reasons the dam wall should not be raised. There would still be floods and the risk to people and property will increase with population growth on the floodplain.

Long-term members of Blue Mountains Conservation Society might think they've heard this all before – well, they have. It will be up to environment groups to fight this proposal once again.

Take action. Send a message to Gladys Berejiklian. Go to <http://www.dontraisethedam.com/>

(Photo: Winter Magic parade 2017, credit Ian Watson)

VALLEY OF THE WATERS BUSHCARE GROUP

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets on the second Saturday of each month, 9am - noon. Tools and gloves are available. Bring a drink, a snack and a sunhat.

NEW MEMBERS ARE WELCOME.

Phone Karen 4757 1929.

Gardens of Stone Visitors Map

The Visitors Map is full of suggested walks and trips. It is in full colour, 60 by 85 cm in size, and covers the entire Gardens of Stone region at a 1:100,000 scale, making it ideal for planning your next trip to the area.

You can buy a map on the society's website at http://www.bluemountains.org.au/GoS_VisitorsMap.htm

WINNERS AND LOSERS Christine Davies

When was the last time you saw a Gang-gang Cockatoo?

I came to live in a home beside the National Park near Govetts Leap in 2000 and often walk in the bushland out the back. I would sometimes come across a small flock or a pair of Gang-gangs, their soft calls resembling the sound of a creaky gate, chewing the seeds of the wattle, eucalypt or hakea, whatever seed was on the menu that month. But I haven't seen them for some years.

A Google search located a Blue Mountains Gazette story (28/7/2015) which informed me that: The reporting rate of gang-gangs by members of Blue Mountains Bird Observers (BMBO) in the past 20 years has dropped by up to 70 percent. And it's happening all along the east coast, with a significant decrease of this small grey cockatoo. The NSW Government's Office of Environment and Heritage listed the Gang-gang as a vulnerable species in 2015. While it's hard to identify the exact cause, many of BMBO's members consider that competition for nesting hollows from sulphur-crested cockatoos and rainbow lorikeets had been the primary cause of the decline.

www.bluemountainsgazette.com.au/story/3240305/wheres-the-gang-gang-cockatoo/

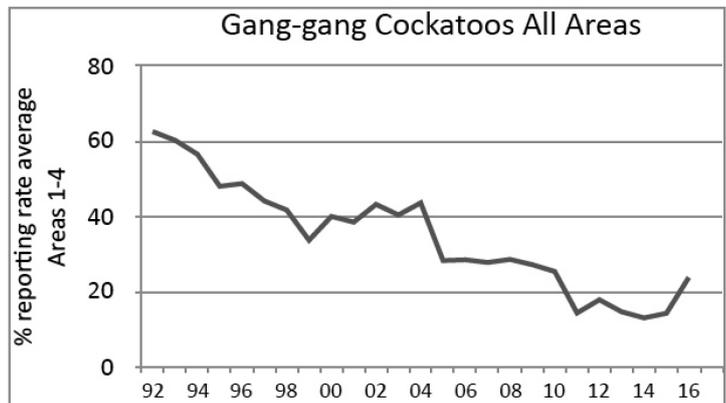
We do not get large numbers of Rainbow Lorikeets in Blackheath, but there are flocks of Sulphur-crested cockatoos. I emailed Carol Proberts to ask for more information. Her response is on the right.

I observed the arrival of the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo on the Grose Valley side of Blackheath a few years after I came to live here. They were not here before. Intelligent birds with a sense of humour, the flock of about 14 played a game with the nesting magpies, 'buzzing' the nest and goading the male magpie into chasing them until he was exhausted. A cockatoo would slow down in front of him, keeping just out of reach, and then speed away. When the magpie rested on a branch, a cockatoo would fly past him from behind, slow down, and the chase would be on again. The magpies did not breed successfully that year.

Why have Sulphur-crested Cockatoo numbers increased so dramatically in a short time?

Is human activity the cause? Sulphur-crested Cockatoos have expanded their territory and been accidentally and deliberately introduced in new areas. In Western Australia they are a declared pest of agriculture and considered a threat to endemic species where competition for nesting hollows would occur.

We alter habitats to suit our purpose and find enjoyment in feeding the less shy, "friendly", native animals and there are environmental costs. There are winners and losers, and we can't blame the winners when the losers quietly fade into extinction. We may not notice, but our world becomes a duller place.



High 1992 62.6% (296 reports from 473 lists submitted)

Low 2014 13.2% (78 reports from 591 lists)

Information from Carol Proberts, 18/6/2017:

Mark Ley, past president of Blue Mountains Bird Observers, has graphed the declining reporting rate of Gang-gangs over the last 25 years, see graph above. This is from Blue Mountains Bird Observers records. Note that "All areas" refers to all BMBO reporting areas within the Blue Mountains (i.e. lower, mid and upper Blue Mountains combined). Mark also did graphs for each of these areas separately with each showing a decline, most marked in the mid-mountains (Area 3, Woodford to Bullaburra).

The connection between declining Gang-gangs and the increase of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos is only speculation but seems the most likely explanation. Gang-gangs don't appear to have any shortage of natural food in the mountains so it's much more feasible that competition for suitable nest hollows is the limiting factor.

The largest flock of Gang-gangs I've ever seen was a group of 40-50 in the Snowy Mountains near Cabramurra in 2012, an area where I've never seen Sulphur-crested. They were feeding on the seeds of Alpine Ash (*Eucalyptus delegatensis*). It's noteworthy that flocks this size were reported in Hazelbrook in 1992-4. These days the biggest numbers in the Blue Mountains are in the Mt Wilson-Mt Irvine-Mt Tomah area where they're undoubtedly attracted to the nut trees - but it may also be relevant that Sulphur-crested haven't yet become established in that part of the mountains.



This photograph of a male Gang-gang Cockatoo was taken by me at Blackheath in February 2009. He was very handsome with his scarlet-red head feathers and crest.



**NO WESTERN
SYDNEY AIRPORT
KEEP UP THE
CAMPAIGN ... TALK TO
FRIENDS ... CONTINUE
TO WRITE LETTERS ...
IT'S A BAD IDEA!**

Aviation is NOT Good For Us

All of the people enthused about the proposed Western Sydney Airport (WSA) seem to see endless growth in aviation in and out of Sydney as a good thing ... Jobs and Growth ... Jobs and Growth ...

But Sydney doesn't need another airport, 50% of passenger movements at Mascot are to and from East Coast destinations. We need High Speed Rail along the East Coast using trains we build and maintain here, not aircraft imported from overseas. HSR is eight times more energy efficient than a jet plane. We need to reduce flights at Mascot, to save everyone in Sydney from the insidious impacts of jet aircraft.

Because, let's get this straight, aviation is a nasty industry!

Jet aircraft are extremely dirty and noisy, and flying them over our World Heritage National Parks and over people's homes is not acceptable.

Planes run on jet fuel, cracked from oil, a depleting resource that we need to preserve, not burn as if it is endless. WSA will consume a billion litres of jet fuel per annum in 2030, and 8 billion litres in 2063, all of it cracked from oil (figures from Government's Environmental Impact Statement). There is no sustainable alternative fuel on the horizon for planes, just oil, extracted from places like the depths of the Gulf of Mexico, at massive environmental cost.

Jet fuel, when burned, produces carbon dioxide, oxides of sulphur and nitrogen, unburned fuel, soot and metal particles. CO₂ is a greenhouse gas and planes leaving WSA will generate 2.8 million tonnes of CO₂e in 2030, and 21 million tonnes in 2060, similar numbers to a coal burning power station.

PM2.5 particulates will rain down on suburban Sydney, the Blue Mountains and our precious National Parks. These particles will cause lung disease and heart disease.

Oxides of sulphur and nitrogen will accumulate in the pollution trap that is south-west Sydney, killing vulnerable people (yes the EIS admits there will be deaths).

Benzene is a by-product of spent aircraft fuel. Why should we be concerned about it? Benzene is a known carcinogen that causes leukemia. In the case of carcinogens, we don't know what is a safe level.

As all fuel to the airport will be delivered by trucks (no fuel pipeline!), an additional 67 trucks per day, rising to 540 trucks per day in 2063, will use the M5, M7 and the new M12 to get to the proposed airport, and then leave again, as will trucks carrying catering supplies. As all passenger transport to the proposed airport will be by car, taxi or bus (no railway line!), up to 10,000 additional vehicles will use the M4/M5/M7/M12 in each direction every day in 2030 - even more pollutants being pumped into the Sydney Basin and greenhouse gases being

pumped up into the atmosphere.

The proposed airport will destroy 5% of the remaining Cumberland Plain Woodland, a critically endangered ecosystem. Migration patterns for critically endangered bird life will be disrupted, sentencing them to extinction. Bats and birds will need to be culled in their tens-of-thousands, including in the National Park, to minimise impact with aircraft.

I repeat: Sydney doesn't need another airport, 50% of passenger movements at Mascot are to and from East Coast destinations. We need High Speed Rail along the East Coast. HSR is eight times more energy efficient than a jet plane. We need to reduce flights at Mascot, to save everyone in Sydney from the insidious impacts of jet aircraft.

We need to power our society with renewable energy, generated here, not imported as jet fuel.

What Can You DO?

Write to Urban Infrastructure Minister Paul Fletcher using our new easy-to-use e-mail form: <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/Campaigns/NoAirport/campaign-airport.htm>

Ross Coster, No Western Sydney Airport Subcommittee
nwsa@bluemountains.org.au

Gardens of Stone by Pete Drinkall

21 January 2017© (edited 14/04/2017)

*Lyrebird's song is drifting through the forest,
Copying sounds of others he has known;
He runs so fast, tail trailing behind him,
Through his domain in the Gardens of Stone.*

*Wedge-tailed eagle soars high above the valley,
Where ancient pines have forever grown,
Wombat is sleeping in his den among the tree roots
Hidden away in the Gardens of Stone.*

*Pagoda Daisy - bright as morning sunshine,
Growing where other flowers are unknown,
One of Nature's treasured small surprises,
Surviving here in the Gardens of Stone.*

*Highland swamps, if mining hasn't drained them,
Giant dragonfly clinging to a stone,
Mountain skinks chase each other in the swamp
grass,
Mid-morning mist in the Gardens of Stone.*

*Rainforest grows in gullies and in canyons,
Cascading ferns where wind has seldom blown,
Eucalypts reaching up to meet the sunshine,
Sentries on guard in the Gardens of Stone.*

*Silent places - where spirits seem to linger,
Sometimes you feel you may not be alone,
Cliffs and caves where others would have sheltered,
Mystical memories in the Gardens of Stone.*

Mystical memories ...in the Gardens ... of Stone.

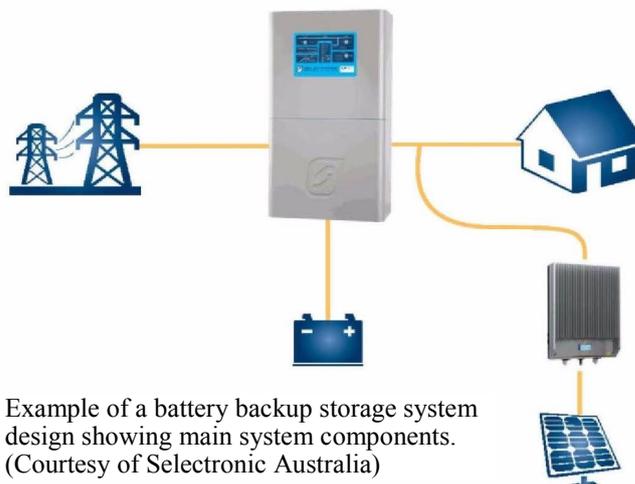
The Sustainable Home, by Gary McCue and Alex Bergmann

Differences between battery storage designed for self-consumption or battery backup.

As of July 2017, there are proposed electricity increases between 16 - 20% throughout NSW. This will have an impact on most households and battery storage may be an option. When choosing battery storage for your grid-connected home, there are two main system designs to consider.

Self-consumption battery storage systems allow for any solar PV energy that is not used at the time of generation to be stored in batteries. This stored energy can then be used outside of daylight hours to offset your electricity consumption. These systems can charge batteries from solar PV, wind or even with night time off-peak power when a battery top up is required. These types of systems are simpler to install, require less modification to switchboards and are often cheaper than their battery backup counterparts. However, in the case of a power outage (blackout), these systems will disconnect and you will experience the blackout like anybody else.

Battery backup storage systems also store excess solar PV energy in batteries which can be used at a later time to offset electricity usage. The battery backup systems will provide your home with limited electricity for power, lights and essential appliances even throughout blackouts. This feature is often the preferred option but it also comes at a higher system cost as these systems are more complex in design and require more changes to switchboards. The limited backup power can vary dramatically between designs. Some systems will allow backup of all household needs and others will provide only basic backup for lights and limited appliances.



Example of a battery backup storage system design showing main system components. (Courtesy of Selectronic Australia)

It is highly recommended for anyone looking at battery storage options to consider what they want from their system and to ensure that the proposed design reflects these requirements. Important considerations include self-consumption, protection from power outages (backup), length of payback period (ROI), system features (performance & consumption monitoring, viewing via internet/mobile apps), upgradability (can further batteries be added), battery capacity (how much energy can be stored in the battery bank), maximum power output (what type of devices or appliances can be used with the inverter during blackout), warranty period and most importantly potential savings in electricity cost.

This column is by local solar experts Gary McCue, with the Sustainability Guys in Blackheath, and Alex Bergmann with Energywise Living in Katoomba. Future columns will address further solar PV options and other sustainable home topics.

Fairmont Resort unauthorised development now approved

As the Blue Mountains Gazette reported in August 2016, the Fairmont Resort was fined by Blue Mountains City Council for undertaking construction works for a boardwalk, viewing platform, adjacent toilet and an “eco-cabin”, without first obtaining development approval. The development is located just below the main resort building right on the boundary with the national park. Council issued a stop work order to prevent further construction and fined the Fairmont \$6,000.

Fairmont subsequently lodged a development application which we opposed on the grounds that it is located on highly sensitive land zoned E2 Environmental Conservation. The development application, we believed, failed to adequately assess the environmental impacts, including those on nearby Blue Mountains swamps and watercourses. We were also concerned about continued public access to the historic Gladstone Pass walking track as well as its heritage values.

The Society questioned in its submission whether parts of the development could even be approved in an E2 zone. New development is rightly very restricted in E2 zones, with only development defined as an *environmental facility* allowable. An environmental facility is defined in the Blue Mountains LEP as a “building or place that provides for the recreational use

or scientific study of natural systems, and includes walking tracks, seating, shelters, board walks, observation decks, bird hides and associated display structures”. We argued that the proposed cabin, which offered high quality overnight accommodation and hotel meals, was not an “environmental facility”.

Council has now approved the Fairmont development, which is no longer called an eco-cabin but a walker’s retreat. A number of important consent conditions have been imposed, including some to ensure the development complies with the definition of an environmental facility, including the following:

- the full bathroom in the cabin has been removed;
- meals cannot be served in the cabin
- the cabin cannot provide overnight accommodation;
- no vegetation can be removed to improve the view from the observation platform; and
- public access to the Gladstone Pass walking track must be maintained.

Despite these conditions, the Society remains concerned that the Fairmont development is totally inappropriate for the site and that the walkers retreat is still arguably not an environmental facility. The real issue in the long term is to ensure the “walkers retreat” at the Fairmont complies with the consent conditions imposed by Council and does not in fact become an “eco-cabin” as originally planned.



CLIMATE CHANGE CORNER Clare Power

I remember going to a talk at the Seymour centre in 2013 to hear one of my environmentalist heroes, Bill McKibben speak as part of his 'Do the Maths' tour. An influential author and activist, Bill McKibben is the founder of 350.org, a planet-wide, grassroots climate change movement, which launched the fast-growing fossil fuel divestment movement. It seemed an exciting idea at the time, and it's interesting to consider what a powerful strategy it has become as a citizen-based approach to climate change. In fact the divestment campaign in Australia has had a significant impact on the withdrawal of funding by major banks from the Adani mine project. However, Australia's big four banks invested three times as much in global fossil fuels as they did in clean energy in 2016, despite pledging to help Australia transition to a low carbon economy.

In basic terms, divestment means the withdrawal of money from where it had been previously invested. Divestment has been used successfully as a tool for change with, for example, the South African Divestment Movement being a major contributor to the dismantling of the Apartheid system. A University of Oxford report states "The outcome of the stigmatisation process, which the fossil fuel divestment campaign has now triggered, poses the most far-reaching threat to fossil fuel companies and the vast energy value chain. Any direct impacts pale in comparison".

Many of our institutions are investing in fossil fuels, yet to secure a safe climate 80% of all existing fossil fuel reserves must remain in the ground. Through our bank accounts and superannuation, as well as the investments of educational, religious and workplace institutions and local government many of us are also unwittingly contributing to fossil fuel expansion. By personally withdrawing our money from these investments, and encouraging our local institutions to do the same we can effect significant change as part of the global divestment movement. Divestment has become a core strategy in systematically challenging the political power of the fossil fuel industry, creating uncertainty about the long-term financial viability of the industry, and moving money away from dirty energy towards climate solutions.

Since its inception in 2012, well over 700 institutions and local governments alongside thousands of individuals representing over \$1.5 trillion in assets have pledged to divest from fossil fuels. High-profile pledges to divest include Norway's Sovereign Wealth Fund, the Episcopal church, the Church of England, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, World Council of Churches, the California Academy of Sciences, the British Medical Association, and [Newcastle, Australia](#), home of the world's largest coal port. There are now active campaigns underway at over 450 universities and hundreds more cities, foundations, churches and other institutions around the world. There are now ten NSW Councils that have divestment strategies and a further 17 councils elsewhere in Australia, as well as the ACT Government,

that have established divestment strategies.

When I looked into what Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) are doing in terms of divestment, I found that Councillors Brown and Hoare had moved a Motion, on 28 February 2017, titled 'Divestment of council investments in fossil fuel supporting financial institutions', which was carried by a majority of Councillors. The motion called for 1) Council to report on the proportion of its current investments that are with institutions that fund fossil fuel enterprises and 2) for Council to investigate and report on developing an investment strategy that gives preference to investing with financial institutions that do not invest in, or finance, the fossil fuel industry.

If you'd like to see BMCC develop a divestment strategy you are encouraged to contact all councillors and the General Manager. You can note that at the Council meeting on 28 February it had been agreed for councillors to be briefed on the feasibility of divesting from fossil fuels and ask when the matter will come to Council with recommendations for council to vote on.

There are also many resources available on divestment. Some of these are: Bank and superannuation comparison <http://www.marketforces.org.au/banks/compare>; <https://gofossilfree.org.au>; <https://globaldivestmentmobilisation.org>

Opposition to sale of Sydney Water land

Local residents and the Blue Mountains Conservation Society are opposed to the sale of land at 111 Mort Street, Katoomba, which was part of the former Sewage Treatment Plant site and is being offered for sale by Sydney Water as two lots.

The land contains Blue Mountains Swamps which are listed as a vulnerable ecological community under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. It adjoins Council-owned community land which then adjoins the Blue Mountains National Park, providing an important bushland and wildlife corridor. We are concerned that any future re-development will negatively impact on the environmental values of the site, and the nearby creek.

Parts of the lots are E2 Environmental Protection under the Local Environmental Plan 2015 which restricts any development, with the remainder zoned E3 which allows residential and other re-development. The Society and local residents have argued that the lots, or at least the high conservation value parts, should be retained in public ownership and managed by Council as a bushland reserve. The Society wrote to both Sydney Water and Council requesting postponing the sale of the land until further negotiations can occur, and questioning the process to finalise the zonings over the lots.

Council has replied that an error in process resulted in the removal of the 'deferred' zoning status of the lots of the LEP 2015 mappings. However, Council is satisfied that the land use zoning is legally correct and provides environmental protection over the portion of the property with environmentally sensitive land and it would not consider purchasing or managing the site.

We are disappointed with the outcome for the site, especially as the Society and residents did not have an opportunity to comment and engage on the spilt zoning applied to the lots.

landuse@bluemountains.org.au



Jean-Francois DuCroz releasing a devil with GPS collar:
Kyler Abernathy, National Geographic

We who were camping in the Tarkine with the Bob Brown Foundation over Easter had the exciting opportunity to meet up with Channing Hughes and his team from the University of Sydney, who were researching the Tassie devil in our area, the Frankland River. As you may know, this carnivore is under threat from a deadly facial tumour which has been spreading rapidly throughout the population. Until recently it had not percolated through to Tasmania's northwest, but the researchers are now finding some individuals with these horrible lumps on their faces. However the conservation effort is taking a hopeful turn.

Several carloads of us found Channing and team out in the forestry roads, where they were checking traps. He had just released a devil from a trap which it had been lured into with a fragrant piece of pademelon. (A pademelon is like a kangaroo but terrier-sized and very cute.) We did not see the devil but smelled it - the stink! Channing was engaged in cleaning the trap in preparation for the next night. He told us that the tumour is very unusual, because it is a cancer that is transmittable. The devils bite each other on the face, especially in the mating season, or if they're scrapping over some carrion. The cancer cells then carry over and lodge in the competitor's face. By contrast, when devils are being handled by people they go into a kind of torpor. They're so passive that researchers can open their mouths (no doubt pegging their noses first) and fiddle with their teeth. Some of these little guys are fitted with GPS tracking devices and 'devilcam'.

We were keen to see a devil for ourselves so we followed the team around as they checked their traps. That morning there were no more devils. Channing had told us that a vaccine has been developed for the tumour and it is working. I was traveling in our guide Jef's car, and he told us what is happening on Maria Island, where he works. It is functioning as a grand devil experiment. The devils were not a natural part of the island fauna, neither were the feral cats. Devils were introduced to Maria Island, both vaccinated and unvaccinated, with GPS collars and without. Jef says, "The devils were released on the northern end of the island and quickly established themselves down to the southern end." They have outcompeted the cats who now reside in

extremely steep and rugged areas on the eastern side of the island. "GPS trackers and remote cameras are evidence of this". Isn't this great news? A bushwalker who'd been on Maria last year told me of the numbers of devils scavenging around campsites. There are also eastern quolls on the island, and they form part of the native predator mix. But there is a down side for the island. Two years after the devil release, penguin numbers plummeted. They are now surviving "on the south end of the island where steep granite cliffs by the water offer refuge from devils," says Jef.

The second day of devil-hunting yielded two treats for the little boys at our camp. They saw a trap containing a devil, and later on another trap contained a mother devil with a baby in her pouch.

Channing told us that their program, the Carnivore Conservancy, is linked with universities, both here and overseas, and zoos. There is an international effort going on. In our region, the sanctuary at Secret Creek near Lithgow is partnering with the devil breeding program at Barrington Tops. They have just begun to provide a "retirement package". Two months ago they took charge of two females who've done their breeding duty.

By the time you read this, the wedge-tailed eagle breeding season begins, which means a ban on logging in the Frankland River coupes. The devils and their dinners have a reprieve until February 10th, 2018.

You can read more about the Carnivore Conservancy at: www.carnivores.co

Springvale mine appeal hearing

On 31 May the NSW Court of Appeal heard the Springvale Mine case against allowing the mine to discharge its very salty and polluted mine water into the Cocks River and Sydney's main drinking water supply.

Last year conservation group, 4nature, took court action against Springvale mine, part-owned by Centennial Coal, in the Land and Environment Court. The laws to protect Sydney's drinking water supply state that a development cannot be approved unless it will have a neutral or beneficial effect on Sydney's drinking water supply. However, last year the judge found that the approval for Springvale's discharge full of toxic metals and salt was valid. 4nature decided to appeal this decision.

The court's decision showed that the law to protect Sydney's drinking water is very weak. This is not what the parliament intended when it made the law. These laws were a response to the *Cryptosporidium* infection of Sydney's water supply in 1998 which had Sydney residents boiling all their water before drinking it for weeks. See the Sydney Water Crisis: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1998_Sydney_water_crisis

In the all-day appeal hearing in May this year, the three judges were very engaged with the issues. They asked a lot of searching questions about the mine and its discharge. Their decision will be announced at a future date which could be months away. You can learn more and support 4nature at www.facebook.com/4nature.org

Warrumbungle Wanderings Ross Coster



In late May, my wife Heather and I went for a trip to Coonabarabran to bushwalk and to see the stars. The walks in the Warrumbungles were wonderful, very different to here in the Blue Mountains, dry creek beds, igneous rocks, completely different vegetation.

The Warrumbungles themselves are the remains of a giant shield volcano, 50km in diameter, that went cold and quiet about 15 million years ago. The volcanic rocks have formed many amazing tors and blades, including the famous Bread Knife. The track up to the Bread Knife is quite incredible, paved in many places (to prevent erosion of friable soils), with lots of excellent bridges across the dry creeks, and well-constructed steps on the steeper sections, and climbs about 500 metres from the parking lot.

If you get the chance, do yourself a favour and go walking in the Warrumbungles, a truly beautiful part of NSW.

Stellar Wonderings

While we were in town, we also visited the Diprotodon (an extinct giant wombat) exhibit at the Information Centre, Siding Spring observatory (a 16 tonne telescope inside a 500 tonne dome that spins!) and Warrumbungle Observatory, a private Observatory with a 20 inch telescope that you get to look through.

Coonabarabran has very dark skies (thanks to Council light pollution regulations) making it perfect for Observatories. We observed Saturn and its moons, Jupiter and its moons, the Omega cluster in Crux (a ball of 10 million stars), and the Sombrero Galaxy.

It is amazing to think that the photons from the Sombrero Galaxy that hit our retina left there 30 million years ago, and are twice as old as the extinct Warrumbungles volcano. We are small and insignificant in the grand scheme. Whatever harm or good we do here on Earth, the stars (and perhaps inhabitants) of the Sombrero will never know and do not care.

Photos: (top) Heather Coster, Ross Coster (taken by Ross & Heather) (below) The Sombrero Galaxy, courtesy Hubble Telescope.



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 \$35 Concession (Senior/Student) \$25

Household \$40 Household Concession \$30

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

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".

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.

Henry Lawson in the Blue Mountains Celebrating the sesquicentenary of Henry Lawson's birth



On the first Thursday in June 2017, Blackheath Folk celebrated Henry Lawson's birthday with an evening of songs, poetry and a story reading at the Ivanhoe Hotel, Blackheath. Many of Henry's poems have been put to music by a number of people. It was a memorable evening.

Henry Lawson was born at Grenfell, NSW, now a historic town and well worth a visit. The magnificent tree in the photograph, a "sugar gum", was planted by Henry's daughter Bertha in 1924, "to commemorate the spot where her father Henry Lawson was born on 17th June, 1867".

A Fragment of Autobiography, by Henry Lawson:

"I had a dreamy recollection of the place as a hut; some of my people said it was a tent, on a good frame—for Father was a carpenter, but Mother tells me that he built a little bark room in front, lined with 'scrim' papered with newspapers, with a white-washed floor and mats, a fireplace in front, by the side of the door, and a glass door! - relic of the rush, I suppose. The tent was the same that I was born in, on the Grenfell goldfield, some three years before, and had been brought back to Pipeclay."

"I was on a scaffold, kalsomining or painting a ceiling at the Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institution, Sydney, on New Years Eve, eighteen-eighty-eight, when my brother brought a telegraph from Mount Victoria to say that my father had died that morning. He had just completed a row of cottages called the Sanatorium, and was working on his old friend Mr Rienits' school—'The School', Mount Victoria. ... I reached Mount Victoria by the midnight train when bonfires were blazing and rockets going up. ... I painted the cottages where Father had left the painting unfinished, did one or two other jobs on the Mount, and, there being no work there, and things in Sydney being very bad, I went steerage to Western Australia and struck Albany while the new town was being built, and shortly after responsible government had been granted."

(Henry Lawson's father, Neils Larsen, is buried in the little cemetery in Hartley Vale, below Mount York.)

Six-armed ecosystem engineers remedy farming woes from the ground up

The problem:

There are 28 million cattle in Australia, producing 280 million cow pats a day that can take months, and sometimes years, to break down.

Our native dung beetles co-evolved with our native marsupials and are quite happy to bury their small and hard pellets underground. But with the enormous wet and sticky pats produced by cows, our native beetles don't stand a chance.

Cowpats are an issue because they suffocate the grass beneath and inhibit plant growth; upset the nutrient balance and cause nutrient run-off; act as a spawning ground for flies, with one large patty producing 3,000 bush flies in just one fortnight – remember the Aussie salute!

The solution:

In the 1960s the CSIRO, in the Australian Dung Beetle Project, gradually introduced 45 dung beetle species to Australia, from Africa and the Mediterranean. Each beetle rollout was tailored for a particular farmland habitat, rolling dung into their preferred soil type. Over the last 50 years, other unique species of beetle have been introduced.

The latest application will be the National Dung Beetle Database which will perform a targeted and heavily monitored release of the beetles in specific locations around the country. The NDBD will house the data for beetle numbers and efficacy, and will feed back in to inform future deployment of beetles.

An extract from an article by Jesse Hawley, CSIRO Blog, <https://blog.csiro.au/six-armed-ecosystem-engineers-remedy-farming-woes-from-the-ground-up/>

Subscribe to the CSIRO blog: <https://blog.csiro.au/>



39. RAILWAY RELICS, Mount Rae and Bowenfels

Railway history provides a sobering study for those contemplating massive outlays on new transport infrastructure (which seems to be a favourite preoccupation in the current era). It is interesting to reflect on the huge challenge for past governments in bringing some railway services into operation, even those that proved short-lived.

Mount Rae was on the Taralga line, in the hilly tablelands south of the Blue Mountains. This section of line was to provide all-weather access to the then expanding town of Taralga, however it proved so expensive to build that a higher freight charge than applicable to the rest of New South Wales needed to be levied on the line. The first train ran to Mount Rae in 1926 but passenger and freight demand soon declined with only two trains per week running after 1930 and the regular service concluding in 1954. Later the tracks were removed and most of the railway corridor land freeholded.

Bowenfels, on the still operational line from Lithgow to Bathurst, was a serviced station for much longer (1869-1974). To connect it with Sydney, the then Chief Engineer of the NSW Railways, John Whitton, had to complete construction of the Great Zigzag, one of the most significant international engineering achievements up until that time. Until 1874, Bowenfels was the only railway station serving the Lithgow Valley. The now much larger settlement of Lithgow did not exist then. But Bowenfels' life as the rail head for western NSW was brief. By the time Whitton retired, he had extended this line to Rydal, Bathurst, Dubbo and, finally, Bourke.



Fortunately, the impressive station building and station master's residence at Bowenfels are still in good condition. The station building has served as Greater Lithgow's tourist information centre prior to the construction of the intriguing "miner's lamp" building. Now both the old railway buildings need new incarnations.

These histories of fast-tracked construction and short operational lives leading to substantial obsolescence should be noted by those who would risk the environment and the health of public finances on huge but dubious transport projects such as new motorways and airports.



Images (clockwise from top): An old wooden signboard in the outdoor section of Taralga Museum is all we could find of Mount Rae station.; Eucalypts revegetate a railway embankment at Mount Rae, without trains since 1954; The 148 year old station remains one of Bowenfels best buildings - Intricate stone block construction facing the rails at Bowenfels (Christine Davies); Bowelfels Railway Station (Winston M. Yang - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bowenfels_railway_station)



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 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 Harold Thompson harold.thompson@bigpond.com 6355 1762 or mobile 0409 010 737

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)

- Jul 8 **shinrin yoku Fortress Ridge, Mt. Hay**, 9 kms, Map Katoomba. Grade 2-3 "forest bathing", also known as silent mindful walking, or dawdling and idling, silently. Diana 0432 619 305 diana.r.levy@gmail.com Meet Mt. Hay Rd opp. school, 8 a.m.
- Jul 15 **Blue Gum Forest via Pierces Pass:** Leader Mike 47573660. Meet at Wentworth Falls CP at 8.00am. 14km. Grade 3. Map Mt Wilson.
- Jul 22 **No walk nominated.** Walkers should meet at Wentworth Falls CP at 8.00am, choose a walk and leader on the day.
- Jul 29 **Gardiners Gap.** Leader Harold 0409010737. Meet at Blackheath Stn car park 8.00am. 6km. Grade 3. Map Cullen Bullen
- Aug 5 **Gardens of Stone.** A new adventure of discovery – off track, part exploratory, wilderness area so party size limited. Dependent on 4WD availability. Book early. 5km., Gr 3. May be scratchy so protective clothing necessary. Leader: **Hugh** hue.s@optusnet.com.au 0423 309 854 after 8pm.
- Walkers preferring on-track/longer walk** should meet at Wentworth Falls. CP at 8.00am, choose a walk and leader on the day.
- Aug 12 **A Mystery walk.** Leader Bob 0408947325. Meet at Wentworth Falls CP 8.30am. Bring morning tea, lunch and your sense of adventure.

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, 04111 62345, keithdor53@hotmail.com

- Jul 10 **Darks Cave, Leura.** Historic walk. Meet Leura Station car park 8.20 am. Car pool fare \$5. Eddie 4784 2691. Grade 3.
- Jul 17 **Hanging Rock, Blackheath.** Magnificent rock formations. About 16 km. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 8.40 am. Marie Giddins 8784 2034 or 0427 390 645. Grade 3.
- Jul 24 **Manly to North Head.** Coastal walk to North Head Sanctuary, 10 km. Meet Central Station, top of escalators 9.25 am. Ros King 0417 261 645. Grade 2.
- Jul 31 **Six Foot Track, Megalong Valley to Coxs River and return**, 15k. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 8.40 am. Car pool \$5. Chris Smith 4784 6979. Grade 3.
- Aug 8 **Water Nymphs Dell, Wentworth Falls.** Followed by optional walk around lake. Meet Wentworth Falls car park 8.45 am. Kate Litchfield 4759 1943. Grade 2.
- Aug 14 **Coxs Road and Lockyers Line of Road, Mount Victoria.** Historic roads. Meet Mount Victoria Station 8.50 am. Car pool. Eddie Roberts 4884 2691. Grade 3.

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, denfenella12@bigpond.com

- Jul 13 **Blaxland to Lennox Bridge and Glenbrook Lagoon.** Meet GWH at bottom of steps from railway 9.40am. Lunch at Blaxland Tavern or take your own. Leader Bernie 4739 6009. Grade 2
- Jul 20 **Lockyers Road, Mount Victoria.** Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2
- Jul 27 **Christmas in July, Royal Hotel, Springwood.** Contact Beverley 4757 2076 to book. Meet at hotel at noon.
- Aug 3 **Birrabang Ridge, Bells Line of Road.** Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Car pool \$5. Take lunch. Grade 2
- Aug 10 **Porter's Pass, Blackheath.** Historic track built in 1866. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9.45am. Car pool. Take lunch. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Grade 2
- 17 Aug **Upper Mountains Lookouts.** Short walks to ten lookouts. Meet Blackheath Station south side 9.45am. Car pool \$2. Take lunch. Leader Maurice 4739 4942 or 0402 402 783. Grade 1

Visit <https://www.facebook.com/bmcslongerbushwalks/>

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

Welcome to new members

Lyn Hartwig	Richard Holz	Kate Penson
Florence Lee	Merran Maclaren	Matilda Penson
Sally Ann Wade	Narelle Proctor	Luella Chilton
Susan Lucey	Jessie Bear	
Susan Holz	Bart Penson	

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

www.bluemountains.org.au

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