



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

Blue Mountains Conservation Society
Monthly Meeting
SATURDAY, 27 August, 10 am
Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson

JUDY AND PETER SMITH

"Australia's Erub Island - at the coalface of climate change"

At our meeting on Saturday 27 August, Judy and Peter Smith will talk about the northern tip of Australia, Torres Strait, and particularly about one of its gems, Erub (Darnley) Island.

Erub is one of the eastern, volcanic islands of Torres Strait, at the tip of the Great Barrier Reef and close enough to New Guinea to boat over in a tinnie for morning tea and be back for lunch, tides permitting.

Much of Erub's original rainforest vegetation has been cleared and eroding soils are damaging Erub's much prized reef. As volunteers managed by Indigenous Community Volunteers, Judy and Peter have made a number of trips to Erub, working for Erub Island Council and with the wonderful Erub community, to try and get a tree planting program underway.

Erub is blessed with extraordinarily beautiful plants, animals, scenery, singing and dancing. The natural wonders are matched by the diversity of environmental challenges now facing Erub and the Torres Strait region: changing sea levels, weed invasion, erosion, isolation, dengue fever just to name a few. The people of Torres Strait are extremely vulnerable to sea level rises and are at one of the coalfaces of climate change impacts in Australia. Judy and Peter will share their impressions of 'island time' in this very different part of Australia.



Judy and Peter Smith are self-employed ecologists working mainly in the greater Sydney region. While the Blue Mountains are home, they thoroughly enjoy opportunities to work in distant locations where, as beginners, they scramble to re-learn the local plants and animals. As volunteers with Indigenous Community Volunteers, they have worked in a number of remote communities in the Kimberleys, the Nullarbor region and of course Torres Strait.

Be prepared for an inspiring talk and some great photographs. The Mayor of Torres Strait, Fred Gela, recently managed to get a video question onto the ABC's Q & A program - his question was directed to Julia Gillard. The gist of Fred Gela's question was who in Australia knows or cares about the fate of the Torres Strait Islands in the face of climate change, and what will be done to help them? We hope that Fred Gela and the Torres Strait Islanders will eventually get an answer that they are satisfied with.

Please note the changed venue. The meeting will be held at the Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson, on Saturday 27 August, starting at 10 am.

Visitors are very welcome.

Photo: Collecting seed

"Hut News", the newsletter of
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HUT NEWS EDITORIALS

The deadline for the next issue of Hut News
is **21 August 2011**

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Lachlan Garland 4757 1929

membership@bluemountains.org.au

PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

BUSHCARE GROUP

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare
Group meets second Saturday of each
month, 9am till noon. Tools and gloves are
available. Bring a drink, a snack and a hat.
New members are always welcome. Phone
Karen on 4757 1929.

Nursery News

Nursery re-opening: After the winter break, we will be opening again for sales at our Lawson nursery on Wednesday mornings and from September we will be there on Saturday mornings as well. Also, look for us at the Blackheath Community Markets on the first Sunday of the month and the Lawson Magpie Markets on third Sunday. We have kept our prices at just \$2.50 for forestry tubes and small (65mm) pots and we will have some more advanced plants in larger pots at various prices but still well below those of commercial nurseries.

Glass-house Devastation:

Along with much of Blackheath, our glasshouse in the National Parks works compound suffered considerable damage from the cyclonic winds on 5th July. Eighteen panes of glass were dislodged from one side and the front and smashed with two from the roof landing about 20 metres away and, fortunately, not decapitating anybody on the way. We do have spare panes left over from the initial installation and recovered from the old glasshouse but re-installation will take time and some new panes may have to be cut. Additional support of the aluminium frame is currently underway to strengthen the glass-house

because as soon as several panes are dislodged a weakening of the frame occurs, increased vibration follows and a chain reaction with loss of more panes of glass ensues. The shade cloth on the greenhouse also suffered tears but has been expertly repaired by nursery volunteer and seamstress, Kate Cowper (see photo). Through all this, the seedlings in the glass-house didn't seem to mind too much but we did lose eight trays in late June when one of the new 9v batteries, which had just been installed and controls one of the two irrigation systems, unexpectedly failed and allowed the trays to dry out on the heated bench. We have since re-sown all of these which sets us back about a month but we will still meet deadlines for contracts.

Contracts: Over 7 000 plants were taken by the planting contractor for the RTA in early July for re-vegetation along the highway at Wentworth Falls. We are sharing this contract with Wildplant and our share of the \$21 318.25 bill will be \$12 284.25. It was with some surprise and annoyance when the planting contractor wanted to return about 2000 of these plants owing to a "miscalculation" of the area required to plant. We refused to accept these returns, primarily because we had adhered to our part of the contract to supply the plants on time and also that our space was limited as we prepare for further stages of the contract. We now understand that the RTA is storing these plants for later use on the same site.

Featured Plant: This month it is *Bracteantha viscosa* or the Sticky Everlasting and formerly called *Helichrysum viscosum*, yet another name change as was lamented by Alan Fairley when he addressed the April monthly meeting. This is a multi-stemmed, small (40-60cm tall) perennial with sticky leaves which have a varnished appearance. It is a widespread species with bright yellow terminal flowers which can be dried and thus continues to give pleasure all year round. It makes an excellent rockery plant and we have good stocks ready now.

Kevin Bell. Nursery manager.





Join the **BIGGEST** community protest
in the history of New South Wales



Coal Seam Gas Mining *Defend Our Water*

Come to our Community meetings

7pm, Monday 15th August, Conservation Hut, western
end of Fletcher St, Wentworth Falls, and

7pm, Tuesday 16th August, Springwood Neighbourhood
Centre (near the Library), Macquarie Road, Springwood

Contact: Tara Cameron 0419 824 974

Coal Seam Gas (CSG) and Water Conservation

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is opposing
rampant CSG exploration and exploitation through Group
Membership of the Lock the Gate Alliance.

But CSG or Coal Seam Methane exploration is closer
than you think! It is already happening at Putty and
threatening the World Heritage Area. And another
company is drilling near Warragamba Dam, so....Bye
Bye Sydney Water Supply (to the tune of Bye Bye Miss
America Pie!)

The Water Conservation Committee (also known as
the Groundwater subcommittee) needs help to fight this.
If you would like to help the Society save your water
supply and tourist industry please contact Brian Marshall
4784 1148, or Lachlan Garland 4757 1929, or Tara
Cameron 0419 824 974.

MONTHLY MEETINGS: CAN YOU HELP?

Are you able to come to our Saturday morning
monthly meetings and arrive half an hour early to help
set up and leave half an hour late to help clear up
afterwards? Please contact Lachlan 4757 1929 or
Christine 4787 7246.

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

NEW ART COMPETITION CELEBRATING THE BLUE MOUNTAINS ENVIRONMENT

Do you know someone who enjoys sketching some
wattlebirds feeding on a banksia in the backyard or
painting the morning mists rising from the cliffs? Who
can capture the golden light of an afternoon on a
gumtree after a storm has passed through or glistening
dewdrops hanging from a spider's web. Maybe you
know someone who can design a striking poster
celebrating the beauty of Blue Gum Forest or the need
to save the Gardens of Stone from destruction.

A new environmental art competition is being
planned for later in the year for artists, young and old
under the banner of ConSoc.

Gary Humble, Environmental Education Officer, is
organising a competition of painting, drawing,
photography and design celebrating the unique nature
of our mountains within schools and the wider
community.

The plan is to offer prizes for different categories of
artworks within schools and amongst the wider
community, with local exhibitions of entries culminating
in a regional exhibition of winning artworks.

Gary, a teacher in local primary schools, has been
speaking to teachers, Council officers and artists about
his plans for the competition and is looking for people to
assist with organising and running it.

If you or anyone you know would be interested in
helping to organise and stage this exciting event, please
contact Gary Humble on 4784-1648 or
gaz.humble@gmail.com

Moratorium on Marine parks

Shooters and Fishers' Party Marine Parks
Amendment (Moratorium) Bill was passed in the NSW
Legislative Council on 23 June. Once passed by the
Legislative Assembly, a moratorium on new marine
parks and sanctuary zones will be in place: for the next
five years; or until the Ministers for Fisheries and
Environment decide to lift the moratorium.

The State government's support for a moratorium on
new marine parks and sanctuaries is purely politically
motivated. (Read SMH article [http://www.smh.com.au/
environment/conservation/lib-back-shooters-marine-bill-
20110623-1ghml.html](http://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/lib-back-shooters-marine-bill-20110623-1ghml.html))

TAKE ACTION: Please contact the offices of the
**Premier, Minister for Fisheries and Minister for
Environment** and demand they explain why the
Coalition government has supported this Bill. You can
write to them at Parliament House, Sydney 2000, or:

Premier Barry O'Farrell, Phone: (02) 9228 5239
office@premier.nsw.gov.au

Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson
Phone: (02) 9228 5210
Email: office@hodgkinson.minister.nsw.gov.au

Minister for Environment, Robyn Parker (02)9228 5253
Email: office@parker.minister.nsw.gov.au

It would be great if you could cc NCC Marine
Campaigner, Paula Brown, on your correspondence.
Email: pbrown@nccnsw.org.au

Gas: worse than coal? Quite likely! Craig Linn

A new study from researchers at Cornell university has concluded that the use of natural gas obtained from unconventional sources such as shale formations is worse than both coal and diesel oil in terms of global warming. And, natural gas from conventional sources is not that far behind.

This analysis is particularly relevant to NSW and Queensland, as unconventional Coal Seam Gas (CSG) is the new boom industry. In nearly all respects CSG has very similar, if not identical, processes to those used for the shale gas considered in the study. Further, the first shale gas exploration well tests have just concluded "successfully" in the Cooper Basin in South Australia, so we've probably got a shale gas rush as well now.

The study findings throw cold water on the traditional view, previously held by many of us, that gas is a cleaner alternative to coal and oil. Using extremely conservative data and the latest figures for the global warming potential of methane, the study estimates that over "the 20 year horizon, the GHG [Green House Gas] footprint for shale gas is **at least 20% greater than and perhaps more than twice as great as that for coal** when expressed per quantity of energy available during combustion." Even over a 100 year timeframe the shale gas GHG footprint is still comparable to coal. These frightening results are due to the large amount of fugitive methane being released, and hence not combusted to CO₂, over the entire life cycle of gas as a fuel. Methane escapes during well completion, extraction, routine venting and maintenance, transport, processing, storage, and distribution. Methane is an extremely potent green house gas with a global warming potential now estimated to be 105 times that of CO₂ over a 20 year time horizon.

The study explicitly states in its conclusions that:

"The large GHG footprint of shale gas undercuts the logic of its use as a bridging [transition] fuel over coming decades, if the goal is to reduce global warming. We do not intend that our study be used to justify the continued use of either oil or coal, but rather to demonstrate that substituting shale gas for these other fossil fuels may not have the desired effect of mitigating climate warming."

Clearly the rationale and urgency for a rapid shift to clean zero emission renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, could not be clearer. Gas is just another fossil fuel, and no where near as clean as we once thought; like coal, we should leave most of it in the ground!

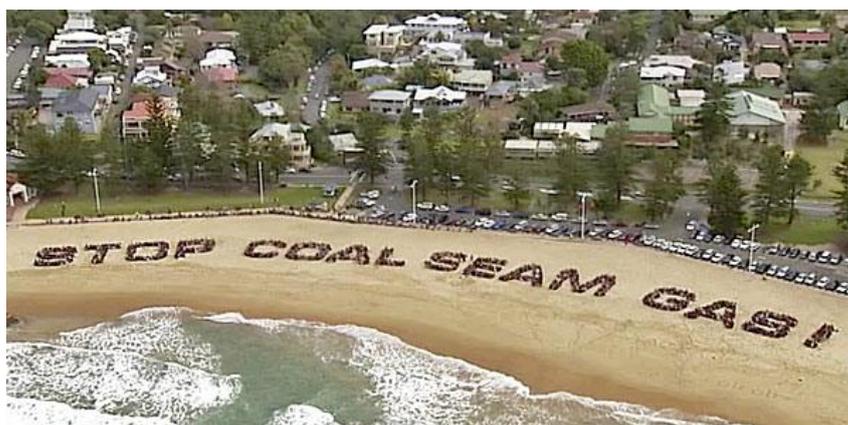
The actual study is thoughtful and well worth a read, and can be found at: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/e384226wr4160653/fulltext.pdf>

Background on the researchers and their publications can be found at: <http://www.eeb.cornell.edu/howarth/> and <http://www.cee.cornell.edu/people/index.cfm?netid=ari1&showDetails=1&tabtype=education>

So, is this relevant to the Blue Mountains? It most certainly is. Coal Seam Gas (CSG) exploration is now slated for the Warragamba and Putty areas – bringing the issue to our very doorstep. And as most ConSoc members will know there are many more problems with CSG than just its horrific global warming potential as discussed above. The more immediate potential threats include: a further drain on water (arguably our most precious resource); significant pollution of this very water; degrading of surface waterways; general contamination from chemicals in drilling and fracking fluids; irreparable damage to aquifers; and a "web work" of surface drilling rigs and pipelines that can severely compromise agricultural operations and wildlife in the area.

Even the traditionally conservative NSW Farmers Association has gone as far as to say that CSG represents a direct threat to food security. So its time to act. Over the coming months there will be considerable debate and anti-CSG campaigning by many groups. It is vitally important that all concerned people register their opposition to this destructive extraction process. So be the "someone" who does something about it: write to and/or phone your local member and other Parliamentarians, attend a rally, reject gas in your home and change to 100% accredited GreenPower electricity, or simply tell your friends about this issue.

Craig Linn, Project Officer – Food and Environment



More than 3000 people protest on beach at Austinmer in May 2011
Source: <http://www.stop-csg-illawarra.org/>

Welcome to new members

Elizabeth Oates, Katoomba

Jackie Maas, Hazelbrook

Margaret Moussa, Katoomba

Elaine Browning, Winmalee

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

'Like' us on Facebook: Blue
Mountains Conservation Society
Follow us on Twitter: bmcnsnw



Protect the Gardens of Stone

“Say NO to open cut mining!”



forest, other stunning rock formations and distant mining activity that would creep all the way up to the edge of the formations you are standing on, if the proposal goes ahead.

Visit the Gardens of Stone area under threat

At a recent BMCS meeting, Karen McLachlan showed a beautiful presentation that highlighted the natural beauty of the Ben Bullen State Forest and Gardens of Stone area under threat from Coalpac Pty Ltd's 'Coalpac Consolidation Project' proposal.

It would be an awful legacy for the new government to approve this proposal. Future generations would be totally reliant on captured images and footage to have any experience of what the area was once like.

We highly recommend taking friends and loved ones for a day visit to see exactly what is under threat. We've provided a map and information for those interested in knowing how to get to the easiest accessible viewpoint. The viewpoint is marked on the map here as 'camping and 4WD parking'.

If you do take the journey, we would love for you to share your pictures and experience with us by emailing justin.mckee@ethicalintegration.com

Travelling by car – 2WD and 4WD (refer to the map)

Gardiners Gap Trail, Ben Bullen State Forest, NSW comes off the Castlereagh Highway but is not signposted, it is an unsealed, dirt road only to be navigated by 4WD vehicles.

The entrance can be identified approximately 1.3km past the Mount Piper Power Station turn off, past the rest area and at the end of a cutting when travelling from Lithgow towards Cullen Bullen on the Castlereagh Hwy. It's dangerous and illegal to turn right onto it from this direction so drivers should continue on and take the right at the Invincible Colliery turn off, travel back down the highway to access the Gardiners Gap Trail.

Those with 2WD vehicles should travel only the first 50 metres and park then take the 60-90min walk to the viewpoint. 4WD vehicles will be able to take the 20min drive to the viewpoint. Once at the viewpoint marked on the map, it is no more than a 20 metre walk (through the bush to the west) until you are in an open area. Make sure you don't drive past the view point to the camping and 4WD parking area.

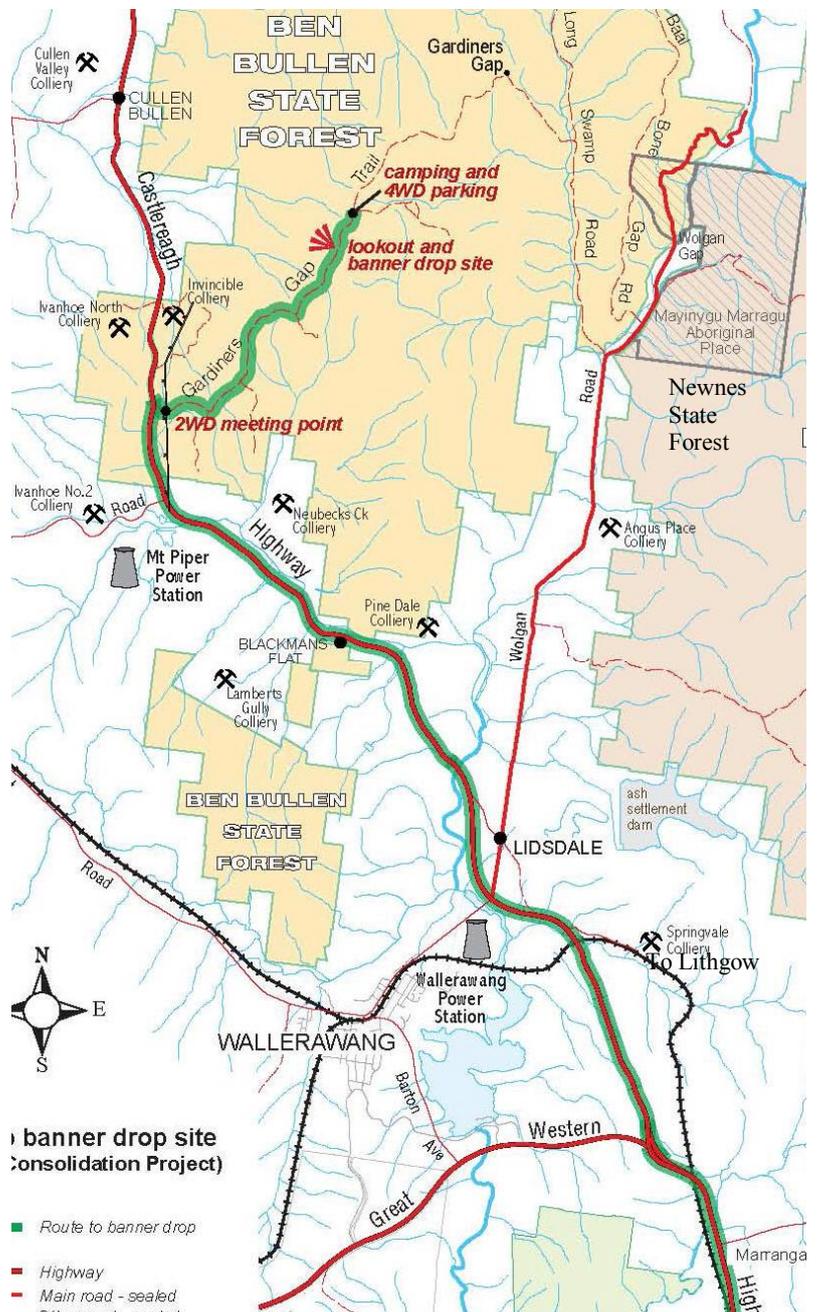
What you will see

The viewpoint we've identified is the easiest section of the sandstone rock formation under threat to access. You will be on the top of a horseshoe shaped section that is easy to walk around. You will have views of beautiful

What to Take with you

Take everything you need! There are no facilities and no water on site. Don't forget the obvious things such as food, water, first-aid kit, toilet paper, sun protection, weather protection gear such as rain jackets and hats, sturdy boots, camera, etc. There is reasonable phone coverage with the main service providers.

Disclaimer: The Blue Mountains Conservation Society and all other parties and individuals associated will not be held responsible for liability claims, personal injury or actions related to this notice of information.



COMMENT

Carbon pricing, the hip pocket nerve and mental shutdown

Do you accept the evidence for global warming, irrespective of why? If no, stop reading; if yes, read on. Do you accept that there is a significant human-induced component? If no, or if you are uncertain, **it really doesn't matter**, because it is a human trait that when confronted with a threat we strive to mitigate it¹; if yes, the same applies.

I congratulate the Government and its negotiating team, the Greens and the various Independents in producing a carbon-pricing package. This at last shows that Australia is prepared to take some responsibility for its preeminent position in the per capita carbon-pollution stakes. Of course there is criticism: the carbon price is too low/high, there is too much/little compensation for households, the coal industry, manufacturers, and just about every special interest group with an axe to grind. But for me, three things are particularly notable: a clear path via incremental carbon-price increases (starting July 2012) to a full emissions trading scheme on July 1, 2015; a \$10 billion boost for the renewable energy industries; and an aim to reduce Australia's emissions by **at least 5%** of 2000 levels by 2020, and **80% by 2050**.

The package is politically courageous, and will become increasingly so as the legislation goes before the Lower House. The fear-mongering proponents of gloom, doom, lies and distortion are working to destroy the package and bring down the government. The risk of this happening is high, so the package's certainty, which is sought by realistic² *'Big Business'*, is being hijacked by unashamedly opportunistic and destructive behaviour. One man imbued with boundless negative energy is doing his best to destroy Australia's low-emissions future and undermine that of other countries. His message: vote me in and I will turn back the tide so that you can feel safe and comfortable! King Canute knew better!

Yet Abbott's simplistic and simple-minded messages³ are resonating with voters. If public opinion polls have any component of reality, a large majority oppose the carbon-pricing package and the Gillard government. Many of those who condemned the Rudd government for failing to persist with a carbon reduction scheme must now be eschewing Labor for negotiating a carbon-pricing package. What has happened?

The Rudd dismissal and Gillard's pre-election statement about 'no carbon tax' still reverberate in terms of credibility⁴. It doesn't seem to matter that circumstances changed in terms of a hung parliament, or that lying by omission, gross exaggeration, and differentiating between 'core' and 'non-core' promises are stock-in-trade for politicians. The Opposition has effectively exploited underlying distrust and this has been connived at by large sections of the media. A favourite saying is *'don't shoot the messenger'*, but the media indiscriminately presents claim and counter-claim by politicians and special interest groups irrespective of the contradictions, distortions and lies in their content. Customers deserve more integrity, but the media

regrettably promote conflict by "...trumpeting the claims of interest groups that are undocumented and untested. Some are motivated by partisanship, almost all by commercial advantage"⁵

Classical examples of lies, distortions and dissembling appear daily in newspapers. The Australian Coal Association (ACA) has already commenced an advertising blitz against the carbon-pricing package. ACA is also part of the Australian Industry and Trade Alliance (together with the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Australian Retailers Association, Manufacturing Australia, the Housing Industry Association and the Minerals Council of Australia) which has been established to fight the carbon tax. Its \$10 million campaign commenced with *"Carbon tax pain but no climate change gain"*⁶ It is gratifying to know that *'Big Business'* has our interests at heart, but I would see reducing Australia's 2000-level emissions by 80% by 2050 as a major achievement!

Abbott states that a *'carbon tax'* will be the death of the coal industry⁷. It is hard to reconcile this with Peabody Energy acquiring more Australian coal assets so as to boost output to 35-40 million tonnes per annum by 2014-15⁸. Peabody's CEO indicates that *"Pacific Rim growth"* is creating the early stages of a *"demand supercycle"* which will bolster demand for Australian coking and thermal coal and ensure its price will remain at near record highs. But irrespective of the dubious content of his scare-mongering statements, Abbott knows his 30-second media bites will be in the television news programmes and fanned by shock-jock radio. Perhaps this is why, when visiting the Hazelwood brown-coal high-emissions power stations, he renounced part of the Coalition's Direct Action Plan (to reduce 2000-level emissions by 5% by 2020) by stating that they would not be closed⁹. So much for his commitment to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions!

Tailoring statements to meet local fears is winning votes for the Coalition, so why isn't Labor capitalising on this lack of integrity? The simple answer is that they are trying, but are failing to make headway. Why should this be so? First, trust and credibility⁴: Gillard has been painted as devious, cold, incompetent and in the pocket of the Greens, whereas by having a touch of 'larrikin' and being a 'mate', Abbott is seemingly liked and trusted. Not surprisingly, Ross Gittins writes that *"Tony Abbott's gross misrepresentation of the carbon tax's effect on prices, employment and whole industries exceeds all records in effectiveness and dishonesty"*¹⁰. Second, a distortedly negative sound-bite requires '30 seconds', but explaining the degree of distortion and counteracting the simplistic message requires '30 minutes'; the media are not interested in protracted explanations and, as a generality, neither are viewers and listeners. Third, the package is complex in terms of how it will reduce emissions, compensate a majority of households and ensure behavioural changes, and how and why it will compensate some industries (including major polluters) and not others¹⁰. Many will have neither examined the full package¹¹, nor listened to detailed explanations, and are therefore open to hip-pocket scare mongering and other distortions. For example: "the

Continued on page 7 ...

... Continued from page 6.

package will cause massive job losses and cost-of-living increases"; the government's compensation tables are guides based on 'average cost-of-living impacts', but are you 'average'? Nine out of 10 households are to be compensated, so will you be unlucky?

Despite the need to mitigate climate change, this inevitably compromising yet eminently practicable mitigation package is opposed by a Coalition which in part denies climate change and deems mitigation unnecessary; in part acknowledges climate change, but deems its Claytons package superior; and in large part doesn't care and will do anything to bring down the government. It is also opposed by 'Big Business' which acknowledges climate change and calls for certainty, but when confronted by a tangible package shows its true colours and spends \$millions to preserve its bottom lines and ideally preserve business-as-usual. And now it is being opposed by increasing numbers of voters who, irrespective of their feelings about mitigating climate change, either selfishly believe in the sanctity of their particular backyards, or are so confused and frightened by scare mongering and dishonesty that they pull up the drawbridge and go into mental shutdown.

By now you may be thinking that whereas the Society is meant to be apolitical this article is a diatribe against the Coalition and 'Big Business'. Well, in a limited sense you are right! But I see it as strongly advocating acceptance of a carbon-pricing package which offers some hope for humankind and the greater environment. If this package fails, Australia will truly have missed the boat and will go down in history as the country which squandered its environmental assets on the pathway to insignificance.

What can you do? Talk to your relatives, friends and contacts using traditional and social media methods and attempt to **dispel their uncertainties**. Why? Because based on current opinion polls, a fair number of them oppose the government's package and will vote for business-as-usual should an opportunity arise. **Now** is the time for Australia to come of age by being among the 40+ countries which have national carbon trading

There is hope....

At last we have a decision by our Government to put a price on carbon emissions from July next year.

It was interesting to note that the week before this announcement, Spain indicated that it had added another 50MW of **base-load** solar thermal power to their inventory bringing their total **base-load** solar power generating capacity to 432 MW, just slightly ahead of the USA (422MW). With the construction already underway, Spain will have nearly 3000MW of **base-load** solar thermal capacity by the end of 2013. In this wonderful country of ours we still have politicians and power generating industry chiefs saying that base-load solar power is not possible!

The global research director of GE, Mark M Little, recently stated that his company believes that in 3-5 years time solar generated electricity will be the most economical choice for electricity generation in the US. GE is currently building the largest solar cell factory in

schemes or carbon taxes, and the many countries which have renewable energy targets and are aiming to introduce carbon-pricing over the next few years¹².

Dr Brian Marshall

¹ e.g flood mitigation dams; levy banks; reducing man-made ozone depletion by banning halocarbon refrigerants; using sunscreens; restricting smoking; impeding beach and foreshore erosion; fencing backyard pools.

² Realistic in the sense that much of BB acknowledges an anthropogenic component of climate change, but given a 'business-as-usual' guarantee and only a 'Claytons' commitment to mitigation, BB would happily embrace 'do nothing' certainty

³ Even when he describes reducing emissions by 5% by 2020 as crazy, despite this also being Coalition policy, he seems to be Teflon coated; Phillip Coorey, *Abbott slams 'crazy' pollution target*, SMH July 19, News p4.

⁴ Tony Abbott has had several about-faces as a consequence of 'changed circumstances' – see endnotes 3, 6 and 9 – also refer to <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-07-22/abbott-defends-broken-promise/2805876/?site=sydney>

⁵ Ross Gittins, *Trust makes the world go round, honestly*, SMH Wednesday July 20 2011, Opinion p13; the emphasis in bold is mine.

⁶ Phillip Coorey, *Abbott falters with second gaffe on taxing pollution*, SMH Thursday July 21 2011, News p8.

⁷ <http://australianconservative.com/2011/06/bad-news-carbon-tax-spells-death-for-the-australian-coal-industry-tony-abbott-says/>

⁸ Brian Robins, *Peabody cashes in on soaring coal demand*, SMH Thursday July 21 2011, Business Day p24.

⁹ Lenore Taylor, *Coalition U-turn on power station closures*, SMH Thursday July 21 2011, News p8.

¹⁰ One of the best, concise analyses is in a letter by Tony Doherty – see under *Carbon tax: the good, the bad and the 'convince me'*, SMH Friday July 22 2011, Opinion p10.

¹¹ <http://www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au/clean-energy-future/our-plan/>

¹² <http://www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au/why-we-need-to-act/what-others-are-doing/#content00>

the US for production of low-cost thin-film solar panels.

(See www.smartplanet.com for more information on both these items.)

Beyond Zero Emissions have put a tremendous amount of engineering and economic work into their 'Zero Carbon Australia' plan (www.beyondzeroemissions.org). They demonstrate that Australia could in ten years time have all stationary energy produced from renewable resources. The plan is quite conservative in that it relies only on established technologies of wind and solar power generation. The total cost of generating and distribution infrastructure is high - \$370 billion, but this represents only about \$8 per week for every household over the 10 year construction period. With the skills and construction capability developed in this process we would have boosted our manufacturing capacity and would be in an excellent position to help other countries wean themselves off fossil fuels. Rob Baigent.

Jenny, a fellow bushwalker and keen birdwatcher, and I spent most of July on a wonderful journey—to the Flinders Ranges and along the Oodnadatta Track to Lake Eyre, then driving along the Murray River from its mouth at Goolwa to Albury, with a side-trip to Mungo National Park. Trees of the inland and Murray, the magnificent River Red Gums, and the prolific birdlife were features of the trip: flocks of corellas and ibis, parrots, birds of prey, emus, many species of water bird, and more.

In the Flinders Ranges, honey-eaters were feeding on red flowering gums. A little bird perched at the top of a branch, sipped the nectar from a flower, and then lifted its head and sang. The lovely song of the Singing Honeyeater!

We flew over Lake Eyre, a large colony of pelicans visible even from 800 metres up. Like Lake Eyre, the Murray River is full of water, and the bird life was fantastic.

At Wentworth, No. 10 Lock on the Murray, birds perched on the walls of the lock waiting for fish to pass through. A White-faced Heron dived and came up with a fish in its beak. Another White-faced Heron was staring intently into the water and, right in front of it, a Whistling Kite swooped from a tree and flew away with a fish in its talons. The Heron cried such a plaintive cry. He sounded so frustrated.

At dusk at Koondroon, where a little creek flows into the Murray, we saw three birds—a Great Egret on the bank, a Pied Cormorant on a dead branch and a Nankeen Night Heron in a tree—all staring at the water looking for fish and, from our viewpoint, close together. Our motel was by the river and the early morning reflections were marvellous.

At Echuca we went on a paddle steamer. The riverbank there is badly eroded with trees fallen into the river, perfect perches for cormorants and Nankeen Night Herons (in daylight) and, almost invisible with their camouflage, Bitterns pretending to be sticks.

Lake Mulwala is a ghastly sight, with the standing skeletons of hundreds of dead trees. But almost every tree had a Sulphur-crested White Cockatoo on it, nesting in its hollows. And we were told that the trees were left in the dam to provide habitat for fish to breed.

We stopped beside the road near a little swamp in a pasture, just short of Yarrowonga. Birds there included Pacific Herons. And there were two birds, about 100 metres away, flying together, back and forth, close to the ground, along and in front of a low ridge (dune).

Jenny noticed that the Herons looked slightly different to the ones we had seen previously, so looked up her book. The birds were in breeding plumage. Meanwhile, still, the two unidentified birds flew back and forth along the dune.

Eventually they came towards us and landed among the other birds at the swamp. They were Pacific Herons. Then two birds took off again. We don't know if it was the same pair—flying together, back and forth, close to the ground, a wonderful aerobatic display. A courtship dance? Christine.



ASPECTS OF WILDERNESS

An exciting exhibition of oil paintings by artist Robyn Collier

1st September - 13th September
at
THE LOST BEAR GALLERY-LEURA
(behind the Old P.O.)

This exhibition features paintings from our wonderful Australian Wilderness in some of its many exciting aspects

New population of *Persoonia marginata* found

In April volunteers from Lithgow Environment Group found a previously unrecorded population of 800 *Persoonia marginata* plants in Ben Bullen State Forest. Samples sent to the NSW Herbarium have been formally identified. *Persoonia marginata* is listed as Vulnerable under the TSC and EPBC Acts. The other main population occurs in Clandulla State Forest, about 50km to the north.

The excitement of finding a large new population of a threatened species was soon tempered however, by the news that many of the plants are within an area of Cullen Valley Mine that has approval to be mined. The company has been asked to prepare a Species Management Plan, but we have been advised that under the current NSW Threatened Species Legislation these plants may not be saved, and it will be the mining company and Department of Minerals & Energy who will decide their fate, not the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH).

LEG has yet to receive a satisfactory response from the OEH as to why this Vulnerable species was not identified in the original Environmental Assessment for this proposal, and what action will be taken to ensure more rigorous flora assessments are undertaken by this and other mining companies in future.

Needless to say we wonder what other developer in NSW could get away with failing to identify a Threatened plant species in an Environmental Assessment, on public land that does not belong to them, clear to within 127 metres of the population which would have been destroyed had volunteers not been so vigilant, and then still be probably allowed to destroy the plants? Yet the mining industry continues to call for further 'relaxation' of the regulatory and approvals process, and more 'certainty' for investment? Chris Jonkers.

Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

The stillness of the night was pierced by a sudden descending, screeching whistle. Often described as being like a falling bomb without the concluding explosion, it's a sound which usually belongs in the deepest, darkest forest gullies and can only indicate one thing - the Sooty Owl. It's a sound which is sure to send shivers down the spine, and I've been lucky enough to hear it on more than a dozen occasions, the last two times within the past week - first in a remote gully in northern NSW, and then five nights later at north Wentworth Falls.

Large and dark with big black eyes, the Sooty Owl is seldom seen. By day it roosts in tree hollows, or occasionally caves, and by night it hunts in dense forest, haunting the tops of tall trees. Sugar Gliders and Ringtail Possums are typical prey.

Though far from common, in recent years there seem to be increasing records of Sooty Owls throughout the Blue Mountains. Is this because the owls are becoming more numerous, or because there are more birdwatchers around to recognise and report them? Perhaps it's a bit of both. There is a well-known pair at Jenolan Caves where remains of prey accumulated on the cave floor indicate they have been occupying the same cave for tens of thousands of years.

Larger than the Sooty Owl, and much more likely to be seen, is the aptly-named Powerful Owl. At more than 2 feet (60 cm) in length, it's the largest owl in Australia. Like the Sooty, it's a resident of Blue Mountains forested gullies (where it requires a suitably large tree hollow for nesting), but is sometimes seen hunting possums around urban areas, or roosting by day in a leafy tree. Each pair have a home-range which can be over 1000 hectares. Most recently I saw one in the Sydney Botanical Gardens where it sometimes spends the day in a huge fig tree near Government House.

Powerful Owls often roost clutching the remains of prey - a possum or glider, large bird or flying-fox, to be consumed the following night. A few years ago, I arrived home to find a big parcel on my doorstep with a note from a friend attached: "Found this in the Megalong Valley under power lines, think it was electrocuted." I carefully opened the parcel to find a beautiful Powerful Owl, in perfect condition (apart from the fact that it was dead), and still clutching in its talons the hind quarters and tail of a Greater Glider. Sadly, flying with the long tail of the glider hanging down resulted in it touching two wires at once and being electrocuted. It now inhabits the Australian Museum.

There is currently a breeding survey of Powerful Owls in the Sydney Basin and birdwatchers are asked to report any sightings between June and September (see www.birdsinbackyards.net/surveys/powerful-owl.cfm). Their call is a deep, slow, far-carrying 'whoohoo!'.
Seeing or hearing any owl, especially one of these two mysterious denizens of the forests, is an experience never forgotten.

Carol Proberts origma@westnet.com.au

Powerful Owl. Photo by Trevor Quedsted.

Membership Application Form

(Use capitals please—even for email address)

Name(s) 1.
2.
3.

Address:
..... PC

Phone(s)

Email

MEMBERSHIP FEES (please circle one item)

Single \$30 Concession (Senior/Student) \$20
Household \$35 Concession (Senior/Student) \$25
Corporate (open to negotiation) \$100

Bushwalkers only: (\$20 per walker per annum) \$.....

Donation (tax-deductible) \$.....

Send my copy of Hut News by
Please tick box mail internet only

TOTAL AMOUNT INCLUDED \$.....

Note: All fees include GST at the relevant rate.
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; Web or database management; Plant nursery assistance; Bushcare; Publicity/photography; Water quality/sourcing studies; Society administration.

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.

ENQUIRIES: Phone (02 4757 1872
Email: membership@bluemountains.org.au

Please cut out and forward this form with your cheque or money order to:
Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls NSW 2782



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.

Down the Wallaby Track — a backward glance, with John Low **THE FLYING PARSON**

On the afternoon of Monday 29 December 1930 a small De Havilland 'Moth', its undercarriage already temporarily repaired with wire at Parkes, flew into a storm over the Blue Mountains. With visibility reduced to nil and his aircraft pounded by heavy rain and wind, the pilot, on his way from Wilcannia to Sydney, was forced to consider his options. Even in good weather the country below was not the kind to offer solace to flyers in an emergency. Reducing height, he nevertheless held his nerve and, despite the thick mist, brought the plane down in Hartley Vale, in a paddock beside the old Mt York Farm boarding establishment (aka Collits' Inn). At the sound of its engine, the guests rushed out to see the machine emerge from the mist and "flutter along the ground and, as the undercarriage buckled underneath, turn over on its nose".

The pilot who "scrambled out, disappointed at his accident, but quite undismayed" was a remarkable man. Based at Wilcannia, the Rev. Leonard Daniels was a Church of England clergyman working with the Bush Church Aid Society, his parish stretching to the South Australian and Queensland borders. English born, he was both pilot and mechanic, having learned his skills in the RAF during World War I. When he moved to Australia in 1922 and was appointed to Wilcannia the thousands of miles he motored over treacherous roads in all weather gave him plenty of time to reflect on the possibilities of air travel for an outback clergyman. Friends and supporters in England responded and money was raised to purchase and send a plane to Melbourne where he collected it in December 1927. It revolutionised his ministry and he soon became widely known as 'the flying parson', his pioneering example a source of inspiration to the infant 'flying doctor' service.

Accompanied by his equally remarkable wife Emily, both having suffered only minor bruising, the Rev. Daniels promptly hitched a ride to Sydney in a guest's motor car. Little did either realise that, two years later, they would be back to cement a far more permanent connection to the region. On 15 April 1932 the 'Flying Parson' was inducted as rector of St Paul's Church of England in Lithgow and he and his wife spent the next nine years in the parish before moving in 1941 to St Stephen's Church of England at Kurrajong. Retiring in 1959, Leonard Daniels survived his wife Emily (d.1966), dying in a retirement village in Castle Hill in 1981 at the age of 90.

Several reminders of our adventurous early, pre WWII aviators exist in the Blue Mountains, with three parks in Katoomba bearing the names of Kingsford Smith, Hinkler and Melrose. Perhaps we can now (at least unofficially) declare that strip of paddock under the Mt York ridge as 'Daniel's Field' and add further stimulus to reverie for those descending Cox's Road and making their pilgrimage to the first inn erected (c.1823) west of the Blue Mountains.

John Low (johnlow@iprimus.com.au)

Environment & Spirituality - What's the Connection?

A Public Forum, presented by Blue Mountains Interfaith Group will be held on Saturday 20 August, 2pm to 4.30 pm, at the Mavis Wood Hall, Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson. The Forum explores the connections and responsibilities between Spiritual Traditions and the issues currently threatening our Environment and Ecosystem.

What changes do we need to make as individuals and as a community?

Guest speakers will be **Lyn Stanger**, Welcome to Country, discussing Indigenous Spiritual Connections to Land; Professor **Mark Diesendorf**, UNSW - Institute of Environmental Studies, Teacher, Researcher & Consultant in the Interdisciplinary fields of Sustainable Energy, Energy Policy, Sustainable Urban Transport & Ecology Economics, discussing Scientific & Ethical Perspectives; and **John Seed**, Founder and Director of Rainforest Information Centre, a project of Annamalai Reforestation Society, Mt. Arunachala, India, discussing spirituality and practical environmentalism. Question & Answer session will conclude the afternoon.

Gold Coin Entry includes Refreshments. Enquiries: Alison Croft 4757 4394 or Jessica Yuille 4757 3686.

PROTECTION FROM – AND FOR – CATS

I confess: I am a cat lover. I know many readers of Hut News will shudder at this, but please read on. It would be more accurate to say that I am an animal lover, and a longtime supporter of WIRES, so it was largely for this reason that I decided I had to do something to protect native wildlife - if I was to continue to have a cat as a companion. As someone who lives alone, I find it a comfort to come home to a friendly animal in the house.

My last cats were elderly and had long ago ceased any tendency to wander and/or hunt, so the problem of attacks on wild life had not arisen. Then one day, a small black and white cat arrived on my doorstep. She was microchipped and proved to belong to a family some three kilometres away. When she turned up here again after being returned to them, they suggested I keep her.

She'd clearly been used to roaming far and wide and finding her own food, as she was glossy and well fed. I soon found out the source: she started to bring animals into the house: birds, bush rats, even a possum. It was horrifying to contemplate what she might be doing when I tried but failed to keep her shut in at night.

Drastic action was needed, and if getting rid of the cat was not an option, the best solution seemed to be some form of permanent enclosure which would allow her space to run around and play.

The internet proved a valuable source of information. Googling 'cat enclosure' revealed a wide range of local companies offering this service. My choice of someone to build the enclosure was based on two main criteria: price, of course, but also aesthetics. With a largely native garden, I want to avoid an ugly metal construction or the kind of thing you might see in a zoo. My choice came down on Chris, a solo operator whose website (catmeshenclosures.com.au) carried pictures of some timber-framed enclosures which seemed relatively inconspicuous. Usefully, he directed me to another enclosure he had built nearby that I could inspect.

I had been racking my brains about where an enclosure could be sited, but Chris was able to see the best place straight away. He suggested enclosing a section of the north-facing side garden, which would allow the cat plenty of sun and space. He used the carport frame and the timber batten underneath the guttering to attach black netting made of extremely strong, cat-proof polyethylene. At the other end are a timber frame and metal-framed door, also covered with netting, allowing easy access to that section of the garden and to my rotary clothes line. A cat door was cut in the weatherboards at the side of the house. The whole thing is pretty unobtrusive: even the black netting is hardly noticeable.

I was of course anxious about how the cat would react to being enclosed. At first she prowled around the enclosure, attempted to climb the netting, and wailed at the doors of the house intermittently. After a few weeks, however, she seems to have settled down. Cats are very adaptable: their main concern is their own comfort, and she has plenty of that.

My advice to anyone considering an enclosure:

* Do your research, compare designs and prices, ask to see actual examples of their work. Some of the more established companies are very expensive. Shop

around. But don't expect an effective job to be cheap.

* Think carefully about its impact on your house and garden (for example, I needed to allow passage for a wheelbarrow through the enclosure)

* Understand that you will have to open doors with great care and avoid visitors and tradespeople inadvertently letting the cat out!

Another important benefit of the enclosure is that it protects the cat herself: from being run over or stolen, and from attacks from a neighbouring cat. All in all, greater peace of mind for me! **Gil Appleton.**

Wolgan Falls

Six brave bushwalkers turned up for our Saturday walk to Wolgan Falls. The weather was cold, misty and raining, but by the time we reached Blackfellow Hands track, the rain had stopped. The trail was difficult to negotiate due to holes as deep as a metre or more.

We parked the cars near the Spanish Steps and started walking, and arrived at our morning tea stop about 11am, on a beautiful pagoda, with wonderful views. Unfortunately it began to rain, so morning tea was cut short.

After some searching we found the slot down, only to realise that I had forgotten to bring the tape. Courageously we clambered down the notorious tree wedged in the slot and all managed to make it to the bottom.

We followed the GPS to the Falls but ended up 20 metres above them. We decided to go further down and after some searching, found the ledge that took us to the Falls. Most of the ledge has been washed away, there were several landslides and the ground near the falls are unstable. It is dangerous there now, new landslides could happen at any time. (I won't be going there again).

On the return, we decided to go via Bungleboori picnic ground and arrived back at Wentworth Falls at 4.30pm in time for a well deserved coffee. Bob van Reyswoud. *(Photo: Clambering down the slot.)*



BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING ACTIVITIES

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. The BMCS Bushwalking Guide which explains the numbered grades can be found on the Society's website www.bluemountains.org.au or can be posted on request. For more information call Maurice Kerkham 4739 4942 email mauricekerkham@hotmail.com or write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782. **Late changes to the program will be published on the website.**

SATURDAY WALKS: Usually a full day longer walk at a faster pace. Before attending ring the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Jim Percy 4758 6009 or email jp34@tpg.com.au

- Aug 13 **Wentworth Falls Undercliff and National Pass.** Early start beats the crowds. Meet Wentworth Falls rail car park 8.35 am. Bill 4758 8545. 8 km, many stairs up. Grade 3. Map: Katoomba.
- Aug 20 **Baal Bone Point.** Sensational scenery. All day at good pace. Some harsh undergrowth, scrambling. Min 2x4WDs necessary. Bring protective clothing, 2 litres water. Hugh 4757 3145 after 8pm or 0423 309 854. Party limit 8 (wilderness area). Book in as early as possible. 9km, all off track, grade 4/5. Ben Bullen map.
- Aug 27 **Terrace Falls and Lawson Cascades.** The falls are a good sight. Turn off GWH – traffic lights at the Lawson pub. Bill 4758 8545. Meet Lawson Neighbourhood Centre car park 9.15 am. 8km, Grade 2/3, Katoomba map.
- Sep 3 **Goochs Crater via Wollangambe River.** A new adventurous way into the Crater. Walks starts at Newnes Junction. Bob 4757 2694. W/falls Stn CP 8.30 am or Mt Vic Stn CP 9am. 9km, some off track, grade 3, Lithgow/Wollangambe map.
- Sep 10 **Victoria Falls to Burra Korang and return.** Spectacular scenery and a classic Blue Mountains walk. Liz 4754 4966. Meet Blackheath Station CP 8.30 am. 8km, all on track, Grade 3, Mt Wilson map.

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 Judith Dyer, 4758 6310, judithbushwalker@hotmail.com

- Aug 15 **City walk, Cremorne to Taronga Zoo wharf.** Meet Central Station 9.30. Tera 4751 3303
- Aug 22 **Darks Common, Lapstone Zigzag historic walk.** Meet Glenbrook commuter car park 9.30. Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 2.
- Aug 29 **The Panther Track and Hassan's Walls.** Ridge walk and amazing views. Meet Lithgow Station 9.30. Judith 4758 6310. Grade 2.
- Sep 5 **Porter's Pass, Blackheath.** Historic track built 1886, soaring cliffs. Meet Blackheath Station 8.45. Mary 4757 4569. Grade 2.
- Sep 12 **City walk. Rail to River walk, Chatswood.** Surprising walk through bush and beside creeks. Meet Central Station 9.30. Heather 4739 1493. Grade 2.

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS: Walks of 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 Gail Schwedler 4782 1215 platypusprotected@yahoo.com.au

- Aug 18 **Witches Leap, Furber Steps, Boardwalk, Katoomba.** Return via the Scenic Railway or Cableway. Take lunch. Meet Katoomba Rail Station Car park 9.30 am. Joan c/- 4782 1215. Grade 2
- Aug 25 **BUS TRIP.** Contact Simone 4757 3416.
- Sep 1 **Tesselated Rocks, Mt.Irvine.** Level walk to fascinating rock formation. Car pool, bring lunch. Meet Mt.Victoria Rail Station 9.45am. Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 2.
- Sept 8 **Katoomba Cascades to SilverMist.** Cascades and clifftop walk with wonderful views. Meet Katoomba Station car park 9.30 am Joan c/- 4782 1215. Grade 2.

Vale Ron Wheeler

Ron Wheeler, a long-time member of the Conservation Society, died on the 21 July, aged 84. He was a foundation and life member of Wentworth Falls Rural Fire Brigade and a member of the Historical Society. He was a great conservationist, recycling anything that might be future use and never threw out anything unless it had fallen to bits.

A keen bushwalker and track clearer, I have known Ron to go on an advertised walk a couple of days beforehand and clear overgrown vegetation. He also liked to look after Bruce's Walk near his home and kept it open.

Ron knew a lot about trees and native plants and was always ready to provide the names and point out interesting things that we were passing. As a resident of Wentworth Falls for 60 years he knew a great many people and could tell stories of families, houses and businesses over the years. What a wonderful wealth of knowledge, some of which he has passed on to others. I only wish he had written a book. He will be missed. **Judith Hill.**

Ron was a splendid walker who always patiently encouraged beginners to enjoy and to know his beloved mountains. His mustard pullover, worn summer and winter, was never too far ahead on the track.

Over many years he led the Saturday Bushwalkers on delightful walks, explaining their history and the odd signs which we so easily would have overlooked. Ron was a wealth of information and he entertained us all with his stories and dry wit.

Several years ago Ron introduced "Early Morning Saturday Walks in Summer" where many walkers, myself included, realized that walking in Summer could be extremely pleasurable, as long as we were back on the top of the mountain in time for lunch, a laugh and a well earned rest.

As Ron increased in age, his health suffered but he never complained, gradually easing into Monday and then Thursday walks. When he turned eighty, each group provided him with a birthday cake and sincere congratulations. Ron joked that he did not deserve this fuss, but we knew otherwise.

Ron was an old fashioned gentleman of great integrity who will be sorely missed. Our condolences go to his family, particularly to wife Hilda, to whom he was devoted.

Alice Terry, Saturday CONSOC Walkers