



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Whose home is it?

When we talk about an open cut mine proposal, we sometimes get bogged down discussing planning and approval processes. It can be easy to forget that Coalpac's plan to dig up 800 hectares of Ben Bullen State forest will destroy the plants and animals that live there.

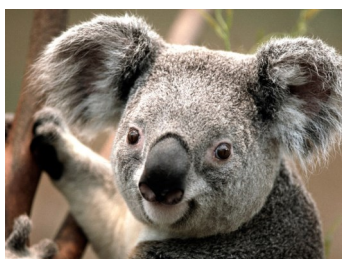
In this newsletter we highlight some of the birds and orchids found in the area scheduled to be stripped bare—just a few of the plants which make up this unspoiled natural bushland, and the animals (birds, mammals, reptiles, insects, etc) which make it their home.

This beautiful place is too precious to be dug up as a source of dirty coal. Other underground coal mines already supply the power stations near Lithgow. It's not needed! Please continue to support our campaign to stop open cut mining in the Gardens of Stone.

Like us on Facebook - 'Protect Gardens of Stone'



This Leopard Orchid (*Diuris pardina*), was photographed in the Coalpac area, bringing the total number of Orchid species recorded there to 36 species.



Koala Count. It's as simple as going for a bushwalk and having a look around.

Dr Grainne Cleary is part of the team who've developed *BioTag*, an app for SmartPhones to record the GPS location and details about any koalas spotted. After registering at www.koalacount.org.au and downloading *BioTag*, if you spot a koala, just snap a photo and answer the questions. You don't even need to be in range at the time. If you don't see any, that's valuable info too. You don't need a SmartPhone to take part—you can report manually on the website.

The *Great Koala Count* will be an ongoing annual event. The information collected may be used to investigate their use of habitats; identify areas of concern or promise for populations; monitor changes over time; and develop conservation strategies for this Threatened Species.

Most koala sightings in the Mountains have been on more fertile soils in the lower eastern areas and around the basalt capped peaks, but the results of the *Count* may change this. Grainne will also outline *Atlas of Living Australia* (www.ala.org.au), an amazing online data base of flora and fauna.

Dr Kellie Leigh will be discussing her research looking at koala diversity throughout the Mountains (www.scienceforwildlife.org). She's examining how koalas use the range of trees and how to manage and protect their population in a potential refuge from the increasing threats of the continuing growth of Sydney, diseases and climate change.

Kellie also is involved in using wildlife detection dogs to survey elusive threatened species such as koalas. Badger, her spotted-tailed quoll detection dog will demonstrate his amazing skill at finding quoll scats hidden in the park next door.

Find out much more about how to spot koalas and your opportunity to become a Citizen Scientist contributing to valuable research. Come along to the our general meeting at **Faulconbridge Hall** in Home St, just off St Georges Cres, close to Faulconbridge Station on **Sat 26th Oct at 10am**.

The *Great Koala Count* is happening from November 7-17th. Grab the family, head off to the bush and go out for the count! (Read more on page 7.)

Draft Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan PUBLIC EXHIBITION—*Call for volunteers!*

Blue Mountains City Council currently plans to exhibit the draft LEP for two months starting from late October 2013. As part of our public participation and information campaign, the Society plans to hold a series of street and market stalls and submission-writing workshops during the public exhibition period.

We need volunteers to help Landuse committee members staff the stalls and workshops. You don't need to have a detailed understanding of the draft LEP, just hand out the Society's printed materials, answer basic questions and direct people to the Society's online resources. There will be a presentation on the draft LEP at our General Meeting in November. Stall and workshop volunteers, Society members and other members of the public are encouraged to come. There is a possibility that funding will be available for an additional experienced community campaigner and stalls/workshop coordinator.

If you are interested in volunteering or coordinating, contact Angela Langdon at angela.langdon@bigpond.com or 4754 3787.

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**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT
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Nursery News

Orchids: Yes, we do grow and sell them. Thanks to generous donations of rock orchids (*Dendrobium* or *Thelchiton* sp.) by David Coleby and Pauline Evatt we had these for sale at the last Magpie Markets and they attracted a great deal of interest. We will have more of these rock orchids available at our Lawson nursery and at the markets in October. Various sizes and in state of blooming sell from \$5 to \$45 but hurry as they go quickly! Also in train are *Spiranthes sinensis* (Ladies' Tresses orchids) which should be ready for sale in December.

Holly: Just the mention of this word is enough to raise the ire of any member of an Upper Mountains Bushcare Group, but fear not—we are referring to the so-called "Native Holly", *Podolobium* (formerly *Oxylobium*) *ilicifolium*, also called the Prickly Shaggy-pea, and not the weed. Native Holly is an erect shrub, rarely above 2m high, with strongly veined shiny leaves with irregularly shaped 3-lobed margins bearing pungent points, resembling those of the weed species. It bears typical yellow pea-flowers with a red keel from Spring to early Summer. It is widespread along the coast and ranges in dry or wet sclerophyll forest on sandstone or clay. We have raised about 100 plants from seed and should have good specimens for sale by December although, as with all members of the pea family, there are sometimes problems with keeping them under nursery conditions. This is a new addition to our species list and an interesting plant for your garden, but don't expect any red berries!

The Nursery Manager: After nearly ten years in this voluntary position I have decided not to stand for re-election after March 2014. While the position has been demanding it has also been thoroughly enjoyable and satisfying but, for the nursery to continue its vital role in raising money for the Society, it is essential that a new manager be found before that date. We would welcome interest from any Society member and invite you to come and see our activities at either our Lawson or Blackheath nurseries. Please call me on 4787 6436.

Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager (kevinbell@eftel.net.au 4787 6436)



Podolobium ilicifolium (Crisp, M. http://www.anbg.gov.au/images/photo_cd/OF31S157946/089.html)

BMCS NURSERY PLANT SALES

Lawson Nursery –Wednesdays and Saturdays, 9am to noon. The nursery is located in the Lawson Industrial Area on the corner of Park and Cascade Streets, opposite Federation Building Materials (see the map on our website www.bluemountains.org.au).

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

Magpie Market, 3rd Sunday of the month at Lawson Public School, 9am to 2pm.

Tube stock \$2.50. Larger pots available.

Enquiries Kevin Bell 4787 6436, kevinbell@eftel.net.au

Climate change rated barely a mention in the campaign leading to the September 7 federal election, but Government cannot ignore it—it is not going to go away. The science proves it and the public wants action.

Below is a summary of recent media coverage on climate change issues.

Climate Commission axed (19/9/2013)

In its first full day in office, the Abbott government moved swiftly to abolish Labor-era climate change institutions, shutting the Climate Commission, and starting the process of axing other bodies. The commission was established by the Gillard government in 2011 to provide public information on the science of global warming.

Professor Tim Flannery, a former Australian of the year, said in its two years of operation the commission had become "a reliable, apolitical source of facts on all aspects on climate change".

"I believe Australians have a right to know, a right to authoritative, independent and accurate information on climate change," Professor Flannery said. "We have just seen one of the earliest ever starts to the bushfire season in Sydney, following the hottest 12 months on record. Last summer was the hottest on record, breaking over 120 heat records across Australia. As global action on climate change deepens, propaganda aimed at misinforming the public about climate change, and so blunting any action, increases." (Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/climate-warrior-an-early-victim-of-new-governments-axe-20130919-2u2me.html#ixzz2fZeOays227>)

In an interview on the ABC (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-09-20/david-suzuki-questions-abbot-governments-stance/4970500>) Environmentalist David Suzuki was asked about this:

"I'm very very sad. ... it's a very sad thing because we are living in very uncertain times. Populations of people are increasing continuously. Our demand on the environment and resources is increasing. Our pollution and destruction of ecosystems around the world is increasing. How are we going to navigate ourselves into an uncertain future if we don't use the best science available? That's what terrifies me. That we have people like the Abbott government now and in Canada we have an extremely right-wing government that is trying to shut down every avenue of information coming from science that in any way indicates climate change has to be dealt with seriously."

Interviewer: How do you explain the fact that science sceptics are winning the battle over, I guess, the majority of you who say, no, this is a really important issue:

"They are certainly winning the battle over the public's mind because literally hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on a campaign of saying climate change is junk science ... Whereas the vast majority of scientists are out there saying, we've got to do something about this. And money talks and the media respond to this. ...

"How are we going to manage our way into the future? It may be uncomfortable from a standpoint of economics but our survival could very well be at stake. And I say you need the best science possible. And I applauded the Australian Government for setting up that Climate Commission to inform Australians ... The problem is the interval between elections is too short. And Mr Abbott can focus on tiny short term economic issues while ignoring the elephant in the room which is that the biosphere is in deep trouble."

Climate Council launched (23/9/2013)

The Climate Commission, abolished by the Federal Government, has been relaunched as a community-funded organisation. Professor Tim Flannery said that thanks to enormous public support, it has been relaunched as the Climate Council. "We need a clear, credible and authoritative and independent voice in this area and there has never really been a more critical time for that voice than now." He said the council has raised about \$7,000 since donations started at midnight. "We had our first donation from James in New South Wales for \$15 at midnight. We've been raising \$1,000 an hour and that's through the night," he said.

Professor Flannery says he and his fellow former commissioners will volunteer their time to get the council started.

Environment Minister Greg Hunt told ABC Lateline that the public support for the Climate Council proves the Government should not have to pay for the body. "That's the great thing about democracy, it's a free country and it proves our point that the commission didn't have to be a taxpayer funded body," he said.

IPCC Report released (27/9/2013)

More than 600 scientists and researchers contributed to the fifth assessment Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, which is the result of almost seven years' work by scientists and policymakers. It is based on more than 50,000 contributions from around the world, and an exhaustive peer review process.

The report summary says the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has risen by 40 per cent since the pre-industrial era.

(Read the analysis of key findings and reactions at <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/ipcc-report-latest-climate-change-findings-20130927-2uj36.html>)

Call to abandon "Direct Action" (27/9/2013)

Greens leader Senator **Christine Milne** says the IPCC report leaves the Abbott government "no option but to abandon Direct Action and take urgent and serious measures immediately".

"On the first day of the new parliament, the Greens will move for the Abbott government to provide a written response to the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report and how it intends to respond to UN Secretary General's call for countries to bring strong pledges to a UN summit next year ahead of 2015 treaty negotiations and for that report to be tabled."



"We're in a giant car heading towards a brick wall and everyone's arguing over where they're going to sit".

—David Suzuki

Photo: <http://bradleydibble.authorsxpress.com/2012/05/23/david-suzuki-an-environmental-hero/>

The Road to Sustainability, with Ross Coster

TRANSPORT

We *must* reduce to *zero* our impact on the global atmosphere.

Stationary energy is the largest contributor to atmospheric impact by far, but transport comes second.

The vast majority of our transport fleet, from cars and motorcycles to trucks, trains and aircraft, all burn oil-based fuels. These fuels are finite (they will run out one day) and they produce all sorts of nasty pollutants when burned.

So how do we eliminate oil as a fuel source for transport?

The key is to electrify as much as possible of the vehicle fleet. Electric trains and trams are an obvious step here, and there should be a lot more such electrified systems put in place, including on long haul lines like the interstate links.

We also obviously need to build an electrified fast rail passenger network joining the major capitals, and I will never understand the people that think we won't eventually do this. Such a fast rail network would also dramatically reduce the fuel used by aviation, as most of our air kilometres are travelled between the capital cities.



High speed "bullet" train of Belgium (Microsoft)

If there was a fast rail link between Sydney and Melbourne, we do not need

a second airport in Sydney. Sounds good to me!

For private transport like cars, and for urban delivery vehicles like vans, we need to see a rapid and dramatic move from petrol and diesel engines to battery-powered electric engines. Electric engines are far more energy efficient, simpler to build, simpler to maintain and recycle, and far quieter. Battery technology has now evolved to the point where we can build very energy dense battery systems that can be simply recycled at the end of their lives.

Electric vehicles have the main flaw that they can only be used for short (100 to 250km) trips before requiring an overnight recharge. But think about it ... how often do you drive further than 250km in a single day? Most commuters drive 40-60km a day.

Recharging an electric car, using off-peak electricity, hopefully sourced from renewable generators, is incredibly cheap, in the order of a few dollars. This beats the \$30 you would pay for half a tank of petrol to do the same job. Electric cars have the other flaw that they are expensive to buy initially, but this will improve with economies of scale as we switch our vehicle fleet to battery-power.

Electric (battery) propulsion is not really practical for heavy vehicles like semi-trailers, so what do we do there?

We move as much as possible of our freight onto rail, which is more energy efficient, can be electrified using simple overhead catenary systems, and can be *much*

faster than trucks. This will involve building inter-modal terminals at several key locations, so we can easily move containerised freight off trains and onto trucks for local delivery.

For freight that just cannot be moved by rail (eg: groceries to the supermarket), we need an energy-dense liquid fuel that can be made sustainably.

Biodiesel is one candidate, as it can be made from waste oils, or from specially grown vegetable oils, but the conversion process is not ideal as it uses methanol from 'natural' gas as an input. Ethanol is another candidate, as in Australia we make this fuel mostly from wheat straw waste, but the ridiculous corn-based Ethanol used in the USA has given it a bad reputation.

Here in Australia, the CSIRO, one of the world's great research organisations, has proven a method of making liquid transport fuels from tea-tree oil. Tea tree has several advantages: it is an Australian native plant, it can grow in dry areas, it can grow in salty soils, and it will coppice (regrow) when cut. The plan is to plant tens of millions of hectares of dry, salt-scalded land with tea tree, harvest it periodically by cutting, squeeze out the oil, pyrolyse the waste for electricity (more on this next month), and 'crack' the oil into a liquid fuel. The carbon impact is actually negative (carbon is sequestered by pyrolysis), tens of thousands of jobs would be generated in rural areas, oil imports would be reduced to near zero, and the resulting fuel can be burned in the existing transport fleet.

The CSIRO research indicates that we could produce *all* of our liquid fuels from tea tree oil, with side benefits of lower unemployment, improved balance of trade, improved energy security and dramatically reduced greenhouse gas output. The resulting fuel would be about \$2 per litre, which doesn't sound all that outrageous at today's prices.

As always, these biofuel technologies are held back by resistance to change, and by vested interests who like selling us imported oil-based fuels.

Ross Coster (Ross@coster.com.au)



Harvesting tea tree

(www.clw.csiro.au/publications/general2003/revolution/options2.html)

The Gardens of Stone Visitors Map

\$7.50 plus \$1.50 postage.

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

Lower Blue Mountains – no longer a suburb of Sydney? Sue Morrison



Sue Morrison holding the petition to the Minister outside Roza Sage's office.

Issues regarding the NSW planning reforms and the Blue Mountains draft Local Environment Plan (LEP) were discussed with Roza Sage, Member for Blue Mountains, at a meeting on 16 September.

I briefly explained our concerns regarding the NSW Planning Bills and tabled the Better Planning Network's briefing note which summarises the key

issues, not least being the proposal in the new Planning Bill to limit the ability of the public to comment on the vast majority of developments. Mrs Sage gave no response to these concerns, although it is clear from comments made in the local press that she supports the proposed reforms.

We also outlined the Society's concerns about the draft *Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney*, which would facilitate urban expansion and increase urban densities below Faulconbridge. Mrs Sage stated that NSW Planning and Infrastructure had noted community concerns about designating the lower Blue Mountains as part of the Metropolitan Urban Area (MUA) and that the department is currently reviewing the MUA designation over the lower Blue Mountains. However, there has been no official announcement in the media about removing the MUA designation in the Blue Mountains. The Society also remains concerned in terms of the unrealistic and unsustainable target for new housing which has been imposed on the Blue Mountains under the Strategy.

While it is great to hear the department is taking note of community concerns, no firm commitment has yet been made and we need to carefully scrutinise the final document when it's released to ensure our concerns have been properly addressed.

We also presented Mrs Sage with the petition included in recent newsletters requesting Brad Hazzard, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, approve a minimum three month public exhibition period for the new draft LEP for the Blue Mountains.

Since the petition was launched in May we have collected just over 300 signatures. Mrs Sage agreed to forward the petition to the Minister.

Blue Mountains City Council has so far been unsuccessful in persuading the Minister to extend the currently proposed two month public exhibition period, which will coincide with the busy pre-Christmas period, so it's important that we continue collecting signatures. The petition can be downloaded from the Society's website www.bluemountains.org.au **Sue Morrison, Hands Off our LEPs! Community Campaigner.**

Don't raise Warragamba Dam

The proposal to raise the height of Warragamba Dam by 23 metres is unnecessary and environmentally damaging. The existing dam and auxiliary spillway provides the necessary dam safety. Installing new flood gates and improved flood monitoring would provide substantial flood mitigation at a saving of more than \$500 million. TAKE ACTION: SEND A MESSAGE TO BARRY O'FARRELL: Go to <http://www.dontraisethedam.com/take-action/send-message>

Bashing the environment—a party philosophy? Don Morison

"Even the humblest person is king in his own car". How much does this kind of thinking (here quoted from Prime Minister Tony Abbott's book "Battlelines") represent the approach of our Liberal Federal and State Governments to issues affecting the environment?

The rushed announcement by the Prime Minister and NSW Premier O'Farrell that \$13 billion would be spent on the "West-connex" motorway tunnel network was made before the new government could fully consider the state of finances and options affecting urban policy. It will certainly starve of funds any coordinated employment, public transport and land use proposals for Greater Sydney.

The governments are treating Greater Western Sydney as a WW2 style "stalag" that the inmates must tunnel our way out of. But many experts doubt that "West-connex" will genuinely reduce congestion, vehicle emissions and inaccessibility of jobs.

Leaving aside that Tony Abbott's sentence lapses from gender neutrality (person) to a masculinist term (king), how will anyone be able to feel like a monarch trying to commute through Sydney by car? The purpose of a transport system is to get from A to B, not to be a band aid over wounds created by ordinary people's sense of powerlessness.

When we realise that the main beneficiaries of Liberal transport policies will be consultants, merchant bankers and construction companies, perhaps we will feel even less empowered.

Clearly the environment is not going to be protected if the priorities of governments are to address epidemics of psychological inadequacy among the masses.

Whose home is it?



Gang-gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*) feeding on the fruits of Finger Hakea (*Hakea dactyloides*) in the Coalpac proposal area. The Gang-gang is listed as Vulnerable in NSW. Many 1000's of plants which provide a food source and nesting hollows for Gang-gang Cockatoo's will be destroyed by Coalpac.

Whose home is it?



Glossy Black Cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*) in a Blue Mountains Mallee Ash (*Eucalyptus stricta*) in the Coalpac proposal area. The Glossy Black Cockatoo is listed as Vulnerable in NSW. Its key food sources in the Central Tablelands are the Black She-oak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*), Scrub She-oak (*A. distyla*) and Dwarf She-oak (*A. nana*), many 1000's of which will be destroyed by Coalpac

Community-owned power and myths about windpower Sue Morrison

Blue Mountains Renewable Energy Co-operative Ltd was officially launched in August. The Co-operative is planning solar projects including a series of group buys of household solar PV systems as well as medium-scale projects on larger rooftops in the Blue Mountains. Eventually the community will be able to invest in installation of solar panels on business rooftops, providing affordable clean energy to local businesses as well as a financial return to investors.

At a recent meeting Member for Blue Mountains, Roza Sage, seemed to be in favour of solar energy – provided it wasn't propped up with government subsidies – but was less enamored of wind-power. Mrs Sage apparently "doesn't like the look of them" and has concerns about the health effects of wind turbines and the amount of energy used in their manufacture. I pointed out her own government's Office of Environment and Heritage has produced a booklet debunking the myths perpetrated by anti-windfarm lobby groups. . You can download it from the department's website: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/climatechange/represinctresources.htm>.

Mrs Sage indicated she would support any future grant application made by the Co-operative under OEH's community renewables funding scheme. The first round provided a total of \$411,000 to nine community groups for wind and solar projects across NSW

The Blue Mountains Renewable Energy Co-operative meets on the 2nd Saturday of each month in the Lawson library building opposite Lawson Bowling Club. More info: bmrenew.org or www.facebook.com/BMREnew. Email info@bmrenew.org if you'd like to be sent a membership form.



Coalpac – it is not too late! By Brian Marshall

An update was presented in last month's Hut News (Issue No. 307, p6). The article finished with a request for you to contact the Premier and others asking why the DP&I's report was taking so long, and why it was apparently dealing with a proposal which differs from the one placed on public exhibition?

The need still applies, so don't hesitate to make your views known¹:

- It is now September 30 and the DP&I's report has not yet appeared – what is happening behind the closed doors?
- The latest known modifications to the Coalpac proposal have finally (September 19) been posted on Planning's website², but the Society has not (yet) been granted the opportunity to meet Planning staff and comment formally on the changes.

There is little doubt that negotiations between Planning, OEH (Office of Environment and Heritage) and Coalpac have been working towards finding suitably adequate (**not that they are!**) Biodiversity Offsets to defray the damage inflicted by open-cut and highwall mining. It is totally unclear as to whether all other issues, such as destruction of pagodas and the associated unique landscape, the health and general amenity of the residents (including the schoolchildren) of Cullen Bullen, and the cumulative impacts on what remains of this still beautiful region, have been sufficiently resolved for Planning to salve its conscience.

The many issues have not been resolved to our satisfaction and never will be. Investment in coal is an investment in worsening catastrophic climate change³. Those so investing are outlaws against the rules of physics. **The unethical investment in the fossil-fuel industry must be superseded through systematic divestment by government, community-based organizations, ethical companies, and individual investors of all sizes⁴.**

¹ **Email** Premier O'Farrell (premier@nsw.gov.au) and copy it to Minister Hazzard (office@hazzard.minister.nsw.gov.au), and Chris Wilson - Development Assessment Systems & Approvals (Chris.Wilson@planning.nsw.gov.au); **or** by phone 02 9228 5239, 02 9228 5258 and 02 9228 6111 respectively.

² Go to http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=4332 and click on 'Revised Coalpac Consolidation Project' in the list of Attachments and Resources.

³ For information on Ken McKibben's talk go to: Colong Bulletin 251, *Climate Change thinker Calls for Divestment*, at <http://www.colongwilderness.org.au/resources/bulletins>

⁴ Get informed, visit and sign on at <http://gofossilfree.org/aus-banks/>, <http://350.org.au/>, and <http://350.org/>; and please find out why it is 350!

The Gardens of Stone—a photographic journey with Hugh Speirs



...the very rocks, it seemed,... Did writhe and twist to wreak their Wrath... Upon the Evil horde...'(Coleridge)

Look out for tree huggers Gary Humble

Who hasn't grown up reading about Blinky Bill or Bunyip Bluegum, seen a visiting celebrity cuddling a koala or nibbled a Caramello bear? But most people's actual encounters with real koalas are much rarer. Can you remember the last time you saw a koala in the wild?

Once common across much of eastern Australia, millions of koalas were slaughtered for the fur trade. By the 1930's they'd been wiped out across many areas, but in an early victory for conservation, public outrage over the loss eventually stopped hunting.

Unfortunately, koalas have a preference for trees growing in the same fertile soils that humans choose to farm and live on. The richer soils provide leaves with higher levels of nutrients favoured by koalas. Loss of habitat through land clearing, road kills, feral predators and diseases such as *Chlamydia* have taken further tolls on their numbers.

Now in addition to this range of threats, the *International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)* has declared koalas one of the top ten species most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. As temperatures continue to rise, it is estimated that almost 75% of eucalypt species will become threatened. Increased CO₂ levels will also reduce the nutrient quality of the leaves. The loss of feeding trees and poor diet will seriously affect koala populations.

However the wondrous variety of eucalypts and the

extensive area of cooler highlands through the Blue Mountains may prove to be a critical refuge for koalas. The continuous expanse of bush appears to have allowed their population to maintain a wide genetic diversity that should be more resilient to stresses and change.

Two exciting projects are investigating ways to protect them. The *Great Koala Count* is enlisting people across Australia to record where any koalas are (and where they are not) to get an understanding of their current distribution (www.koalacount.org.au). It will be an annual event where ordinary people can help scientists by just going for a bushwalk and reporting what they see or don't see! Over time researchers will be able to determine how koalas have responded to threats or changes.

Conserving Koalas Across the Landscape is a collaborative program being undertaken by researchers across the country looking at koala ecology, landscape use and genomics. Locally, Dr Kellie Leigh is identifying the species of gum trees favoured by koalas in the Blue Mountains, then using systematic surveys and satellite technology to identify & investigate their current and potential habitats to allow us to protect and manage wildlife better (www.scienceforwildlife.org).

Can you imagine Australia without koalas? Wildlife scientists can see that happening if we don't do what we can to ensure their survival. By taking part in the *Great Koala Count* you can help.

The aftermath: rampant greed, governmental arrogance and environmental mayhem! I now feel better!

Oscar Wilde stated that a sentimentalist sees an absurd value in everything, and knows the market price of nothing. I believe that the environmental movement is based on real environmental, social, heritage, and economic values rather than blind sentimentality. So, are we being 'heard'? And if we are not, then why?

The questions partly reflect sayings such as: George Bernard Shaw's "*A government which robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul*", and Mark Twain's "*If you don't read the newspaper you are uninformed; if you do read the newspaper you are misinformed.*" They were further stimulated by Gareth Hutchens' article: "*Lobby groups pull strings in halls of power*"¹.

The first saying gives rise to the 'winners-and-losers' syndrome expressed as 'what's in it for me?' Such unashamed selfishness is exploited by political parties and fanned by the media. Argument based on preserving the environment for future generations has little traction; people are concerned with 'now', rather than 50 years hence.

Conclusion: short-term self-interest dominates; people may hear but their reality is now!

The second saying covering all media has never been more true. News Corp made little attempt to provide unbiased coverage of Australian politics over the past six years. Fairfax Media damned the previous government with faint praise whilst giving the opposition's mantra disproportionate and uncritical coverage. In effect, despite its achievements, government and media failed to counter the 'Labor is on the nose' mantra and "*Anything you (Labor) can do, I (Liberal) can do better*"².

Conclusion: environmental messages don't sell product.

Gareth Hutchens emphasised the dramatic growth in Australia's lobby industry. The main lobby groups ('business/industry/mining') are well-funded, have full-time staff, and are **media savvy**. Their campaigns can bring government to its knees; even a campaign threat suffices! Their self-serving messages exploit the hip-pocket nerve, distort through hyperbole, and are arguably 'loose with the truth'.

Conclusion: they are certainly being heard.

Hutchens' article only mentions one 'environmental' lobby group, the Australian Industry Greenhouse Network (AIGN)³. But AIGN is more concerned with its members' profits within a changing environment, than with the environment itself. So no *bone fide* environmental organization received a 'guernsey'!

Conclusion: we are not even in the ballpark!

What can be learnt from this? The scale of envirogroups runs from local, through state and/or issue-dominated, to TWS, ACF and Greenpeace. Many run several diverse campaigns and subscribe through upward affiliations to broader concerns. This is operationally effective because the range of

environmental issues is broad; it is economically efficient because much is done by volunteers or poorly-rewarded (but dedicated) staff operating on shoestring budgets. Yet, disappointments far outnumber wins. Why?

- Volunteering has limits and paid help (even if affordable) is transient, so rare successes (the crumbs from the table!) become the norm, expectations are lowered, and complacency ensues.
- Companies employ professionals to prepare their reports, promote their views, and lobby government. Envirogroups typically use 'retiree' expertise and 'contacts'; the outcome can be piecemeal and amateurish.
- Money talks and big money talks louder: the deep pockets of 'business/industry/mining' lobby groups buy the attention of the media and voting public, and this galvanizes politicians. Envirogroups struggle for traction.

Conclusion: envirogroups must become more professional and media savvy to be heard. And that necessitates better funding and/or pooling of funds and expertise. A useful starting point, one requiring the suppression of egos, would involve rationalising groups and ensuring that individuals with specific strengths are not multitasking.

¹ Gareth Hutchens – <http://www.smh.com.au/business/lobby-groups-pull-strings-in-halls-of-power-20130816-2s26d.html>

² With apologies to Irving Berlin

³ The membership includes fossil fuel and power companies – see <http://aign.net.au/membership/current-aign-members>

Night Robin Christine Davies

My grandson Brodie was using the computer at 11pm and heard irregular tapping on the screen doors. He thought someone was there but didn't see anything. He heard tapping again and crept to the kitchen door and saw a little bird looking at him through the glass, an Eastern Yellow Robin.

We have robins living in the garden. I imagine that this robin was roosting near the house, saw insects attracted by the light, and came for a pre-midnight snack.

I emailed Carol Proberts who replied, "I've never heard of robins doing this but some other species have been known to hunt at night under artificial light. Many birds are quite opportunistic."

Whose home is it?



36 orchid species have been recorded in the Coalpac area. These include the Waxlip Orchid (*Glossodia major*), and 100's of Pink Fairy Orchids (*Caladenia carnea*).

Orchids and birds in the Coalpac area were photographed by Chris Jonkers and Julie Favell, Lithgow Environment Group.

Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

Some birds just inspire admiration, even though they don't have colourful or showy looks or a sublime voice. The humble Willie Wagtail is surely in this category. Well known and loved across Australia, their bold black and white plumage is matched by an even bolder personality. They seem to be fearless, especially when defending a nest - attacking much larger threatening birds, and even animals such as dogs. Their white eyebrow, normally inconspicuous, flares out becoming big and bright when the bird is aroused, agitated or angry. At the same time, the rattling alarm call "*chikka-chikka-chikka...*" pours from its mouth as if it were letting fly a string of obscenities at the intruder.

At other times they seem better described by their more musical call: "*sweet-pretty-creature*" (which is sometimes heard throughout moonlit nights). Nimble and graceful, they spread their tail into a fan and swing it from side to side, darting after flying insects, including many butterflies. As the shadow of the tail moves across the ground, it disturbs insects into flight and they become the Willie's prey.

But the Willie Wagtail isn't really a wagtail. True wagtails are related to pipits and wag their long tails up and down (not side to side like the Willie), and are quite rare in Australia. The Willie Wagtail is really a fantail, closely related to the familiar and agile Grey Fantail and the beautiful, rainforest-dwelling Rufous Fantail.

Despite its widespread abundance (is there a farmhouse in the country that doesn't have a resident one?) the Willie Wagtail is not often found in the dense forested habitats of the Blue Mountains. It prefers open country so keep an eye out for it in the parks and playing fields of our area. At this time of year you might also find the small cup-shaped nest, neatly bound with cobweb and often placed in ridiculously exposed locations. It's no wonder they have to be aggressive in its defence!

Of course the Willie Wagtail isn't the only small bird that can appear to be fearless around humans. Have you ever had a bird land on your head and try to pull your hair out? I was recently shown a short video clip, taken on a Blue Mountains Bird Observers walk at Glenbrook, of a White-eared Honeyeater landing on the head of one of the walkers and tugging at her hair. Apparently this went on for half an hour, with the bird repeatedly returning to this woman's thick crop of lovely grey hair. White-eared Honeyeaters are notorious for doing this when nesting, but it's the first time I've actually seen it happen. Human hair must make a wonderful nest-lining material!

Carol Proberts, origma@westnet.com.au Twitter: @carolproberts



Willie Wagtail on its nest on a rotary clothesline in the Capertee Valley.
Photo by Carol Proberts

Membership Application Form

(Use capitals please—even for email address)

Name(s) 1.
2.
3.

Address:
.....PC

Phone(s)

Email

I/We agree to support the aims and objectives of the Society as set out on reverse side of this membership application:

Please sign if named above.

Signature(s) 1.
2.
3.

MEMBERSHIP FEES (please circle one item)

Single \$30 Concession (Senior/Student) \$20

Household \$35 Household Concession \$25

Corporate (negotiable)

Membership (circled above) \$

Donation (tax deductible) \$

Bushwalkers: please add

\$20 per walker per annum. \$

TOTAL AMOUNT \$

Note: All fees include GST at the relevant rate.

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; Web or database management; Plant nursery assistance; Bushcare; Publicity/photography; Water quality/sourcing studies; Society administration.

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

or pay online at www.bluemountains.org.au

JOIN Blue Mountains

Conservation Society,

or renew your membership online.

www.bluemountains.org.au

BUSHCARE GROUP

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

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.

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 at <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml>

Down the Wallaby Track: a backward glance, with John Low
will return soon.

THE COLOUR YELLOW

A short story by Jo Newman, August 2013

I was suddenly aware I was not alone, having been preoccupied with the refurbishment of my vegetable garden. It didn't startle me with a fright but rather surprise and delight. Spring was in the air, the wattles were in full bloom, daffodils were nodding their approval of such an unseasonably warm day, and so were my visitors. Not one, but a family of three, beautiful – Eastern Yellow Robins.

They had been watching my every movement from afar, for some time I suspect, as I barrowed and toiled new soil into my overworked vegetable patch. When the time was right they opportunistically flew in for the strike. There went my worms; and here I was hoping they would be at least surviving until my new seedlings had hit ground level. It was not to be. Even when something juicier was spotted such as a tasty white slug, off they retreated with their find to the forest floor to devour their prize in the privacy of their own quiet corner. This went on for some time. As I stopped still, my yellow friends would return time and again, scanning every movement – perched on the vertical spade or clinging sideways to a nearby tree trunk – and drop to my feet as if to say: "hi, and by the way thanks for the feed".

How special this moment has been in bringing life and colour into my own space and tranquillity. The colour yellow symbolises such life and optimism. We are regularly reminded of it at this time of year, not only with the advent of Spring – a season in itself displaying the bursting of new growth – but it is also a sign of hope when we see the sale of charity daffodils assisting in the fight against cancer. How important it is to cherish and hold onto experiences such as I have described when our media can be overrun with such tragic and negative images. These memories nurture and nourish us and build resilience. A lot can be said for the Eastern Yellow Robin with its charm and ingenuity in bolstering us and driving us forward for the next possible challenge around the corner. (Photo by Jenny Miller))



Corridor of weeds.

"The broom, the broom, the bonnie bonnie broom
The broom o' Cowdenknowes
Fain would I lie in my ain country
Tendin' my daddie's ewes ..."

This Scottish folk song goes back to the mid 17th century. But the plant which may have brought tears to the eyes of a homesick native Scot can bring tears to the eyes of a 21st century Blue Mountains bushcare volunteer for a very different reason.

Blue Mountains City Council employed its first bushcare officer in 1992. There are now over 60 bushcare groups and over 350 active volunteers. Council now has seven bushcare officers employed to resource, train and co-ordinate these groups.

But running through the mountains is a corridor of weeds. In the upper Blue Mountains at present this railway corridor is just full of flowering Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*).

Scotch Broom is classified as a noxious weed. On private land, Blue Mountains residents are required to prevent its spread.

The Broom pods eject seeds up to 4m from the plant (up to 6000 seeds per plant per year). And the seeds are believed to survive 70 years or more in the soil. And the railway is at the top of the ridge. And the seeds can be washed downhill by water. Christine.

Sydney Rock was long recognised as a prominent landmark along the highway. Brian Fox in his Blue Mountains Geographical Dictionary records its recognition as early as 1882 and its being named Sydney Rock in guide books and newspaper reports from 1903. It was regularly listed as a tourist feature, which commanded a fine view of Sydney and of the intervening bushland.

Sydney Rock overlooked a precious pocket of bushland. A few acres had been cut off between the Great Western Highway and the railway for almost 150 years, isolated from the timber cutters, grazing and bushfires that have regularly ravaged the bush of the Blue Mountains. This relict pocket of bushland had shown a remarkable diversity of plants.

The re-routing of the road and railway north of Sydney Rock would leave redundant not only the old cutting, but also railway property to the east and south. In the abandoned railway cutting the stratification of Hawkesbury Sandstone could be seen overlying Narrabeen Shale/Sandstone. There are no other easily accessible places in the Blue Mountains where geological stratifications showed clearly the contact between the Narrabeen Sandstone Series and the overlying Hawkesbury Sandstone. Also railway heritage items such as the remains of the 1866 stone arch bridge could be observed.

Commencing in 2008, with a proposal by Fr Eugene Stockton to preserve the Sydney Rock area as an educational reserve, many local residents tried to save this area with letters and appeals.

It was proposed that this small area, dominated by Sydney Rock and rich in railway heritage features, be turned into a reserve. Sydney Rock could be restored to its former prominence and part of the cutting be left exposed to show its 1867 and 1902 faces. It was recommended that the western facade of the 1902 bridge and the 1867 masonry abutment at its base be left to view.

Botanists Judy and Peter Smith completed a brief survey of this area in 2007 and found 118 plant species across 47 plant families, some of the species found were of special conservation significance and interest. In the abandoned railway cutting to the south of Sydney Rock 36 plants of the rare Cliff Teatree, *Leptospermum rupicola*, were found growing. At Lawson this plant is at the eastern end of its distribution in the Blue Mountains.

Also growing at Sydney Rock are vulnerable species like the Mossy Geebung *Persoonia acerosa* and *Dianella tenuissima*, which was not described until 2006 by G. W. Carr who noted it as "a remarkable new species from the Blue Mountains". It is a taxonomically isolated species with no known close relatives. Another interesting species growing in the area is *Philothea hispidula x myoporoides*, an uncommon hybrid between *Philothea hispidula* and Native Daphne *Philothea myoporoides*.

BUT, with the completion of the road widening works at Lawson most of the old railway cutting was filled in with a mixture of basalt, rubble and lime by contractors working for the Roads and Maritime Service of the NSW State Government.

The railway heritage items dating back to 1866 have

been buried. The Narrabeen Sandstone Series overlying Hawkesbury Sandstone can no longer be seen and only about a dozen of the rare Cliff Teatree, *Leptospermum rupicola* remain. The area is now infested by many weeds, particularly in the old railway cutting, where they have grown after the RMS carelessly filled the area with contaminated material.

The future is not certain for the community of plants on and around Sydney Rock.

The in-fill of the cutting, being rubble from elsewhere covered with lime and straw, has destroyed many mycorrhizal associations necessary for the growth of native plants in this area. The future of this area is a concern with the potential exposure to exotic diseases such as *Phytophthora cinnamomi* and Myrtle Rust which are now present in parts of the Blue Mountains.

Whilst the rock itself may survive for many years to come, having escaped the ravages of the RMS, it is a different story for the surrounding plant habitat. The road widening has had an enormous impact on this area with many plants lost and the proliferation of weeds. Around the rock, rampant weeds such as blackberries and ivy are growing.

Decisions need to be made on who maintains this area for the future. Realistically, Sydney Rock and its environs should be maintained as an educational and historical reserve, or is this too difficult for a society which has spent millions of dollars on road widening.

Recently a book, "**Sydney Rock – On the Ways to the West**", edited by Eugene Stockton, has been released. Very informative chapters with photographs, about the geology, history and flora of the Sydney Rock area. Copies of **Sydney Rock - on the Ways to the West** are available direct from the publisher, Blue Mountain Education and Research Trust (02) 4759 1034 or e-mail: olon@tpg.com.au at \$15 a copy plus postage and handling.



Sydney Rock, Lawson

(Photo: Blue Mountains City Library, Local Studies Collection)

**BLUE MOUNTAINS
CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc**

'Like' us on Facebook:

Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Follow us on Twitter: bmcnsnw

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 email mauricekerkham@hotmail.com or write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782. **Late changes to the program will be published on the website.**

SATURDAY WALKS: Usually a full day longer walk at a faster pace. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. If you are a new walker to Saturday walks, before attending contact the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Jim Percy—phone 4758 6009, email jp34@tpg.com.au Check www.bluemountains.org.au for updates.

Saturday Walks driver reimbursement: *In an effort to ensure that car drivers are adequately compensated for the use of their vehicles a driver reimbursement policy applies* (Check www.bluemountains.org.au Saturday Walks page for details)

- Oct 19 **Neates Glen, Grand Canyon, Beauchamp Falls, Horse Track to Evans Lookout –Leader Warren** 4787 5403, 0428 962 460-Meet at Blackheath Stn C/P-8.15am-12-Km-Gr 3. Map **Katoomba**
- Oct 26 - **2 Caves 3 Creeks and Pisgah Rock** Attic Cave to Monkey Ropes Creek to Lincoln Creek to Erskine Creek upstream to Dadder Cave and return to Pissgah Rock and Track out - Some rough track and possible scrambling and creek crossings-**Leader Karen** 4751 9695-Meet at and other details - Contact Leader---Map - **Penrith**
- Nov 2 **A Crossing of the Blue Mountains of NSW 2013', Day 6, Blackheath to Mt Victoria** via Kanimbla Valley below the escarpment and the historic tramway-Leader **Jim** 4758 6009 - Meet at Blackheath Stn CP -08.15 - 9Km- Gr 3/4-Map **Katoomba/Mt Wilson**
- Nov 9- **Lambs Creek** (west of Blackfellow hand trail) Limit 10 - Get in early-Leader **Bob** 4757 2694-Meet at Contact Leader—7Km-Gr 3/4-Map **Cullen Bullen**
- Saturday walkers Crossing of the Blue Mountains of NSW 2013** – For the full program, click on the following link if reading Hut News on line. Or copy <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/bm-crossing-2013.pdf> into your browser

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS: Short Day walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of an average fitness. Bring morning tea and lunch and adequate water. The Group Co-ordinator is Keith Dorrian, 4736 1010, keithdor53@hotmail.com

- Oct 21 **The Gully Walk, Catalina Park.** "Historical walk in Katoomba" Meet top of stairs (near coffee shop) -Katoomba Rail Station 8-30am. Judith 4758 6310. Grade 1.
- Oct 28 **Rigby Hill & Walls Lookout.** Spectacular Grose Valley views. Meet Mt. Victoria Rail Station 9.50am. Car Pool; fare \$5 Liz 4754 4966. Grade 2.
- Nov 4 **Sculptures by the Sea** "Bondi to Clovelly or Coogee" Meet Top of Escalators Central Station 9-30am. Keith 4736 3610. Grade 1/2.
- Nov 11 **Nepean Gorge & Lookouts.** "Lovely views of Nepean" Meet Glenbrook Station Car Park 9-30am. Car pool Fare \$5 Ken 0423 450 200. Grade 2
- Nov 18 **BUS TRIP. Kanangra Walls.** "Waterfall & Ridgetop Walk". Fare \$12. Book & pay Tony 9625 3985. Meet rear Westpac Springwood 8am. Pick ups along the way. Maurice 0402 402 783. Grade 2.

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS: Walks 2-3 hours conducted at a leisurely pace to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, adequate water and lunch if noted. Group Co-ordinator is Beverley Thompson, 4757 2076, roybev12@bigpond.net.au

- Oct 17 **October Ridge, Mount Wilson.** View beautiful wild flowers and rock formations. Car pool \$5. Take lunch. Meet Mount Victoria Stn 9.50am. Grade 2. Beverley 4757 2076.
- Oct 24 **Bronte to Bondi** or vice versa to view Sculptures by the Sea. Take lunch. Meet top of escalators Central 9.30am. Chris 4721 4309. Grade 1
- Oct 31 **Bus trip to Kanangra Walls \$12.** Book and pay Barrie 4782 9235. Take lunch. Meet Council Depot South Street North Katoomba 8am sharp. Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 2
- Nov 7 **Red Hand Cave Glenbrook.** Aboriginal hand stencils. Car pool. Take lunch. Meet Glenbrook Station Car Park 9.30am. Keith 4736 1010. Grade 2
- Nov 14 **River Cat from Parramatta to Quay, ferry to Neutral Bay and May Gibbs House.** Bring lunch or fish and chips at Quay. Meet Parramatta Station north side 9.00am. Narelle 47512467. Grade 1



Whose home is it?

Southern Boobook or Mopoke Owl (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*) in an Inland Scribbly Gum (*Eucalyptus rossii*) in the Coalpac proposal area.

It is a nocturnal species that detects its prey by listening and watching from a suitable tall perch. How will it hear its prey above Coalpac's noise 24/7? How will it find a tall perch when Coalpac remove them all? Where will it find nesting hollows to raise its young?

Fines for creek pollution

A Blue Mountains pest company was fined \$10,000 and an individual pest controller \$5000 for damage caused to Jamison Creek in Wentworth Falls in July 2012. Their actions inadvertently decimated the crayfish population in a 2km section of the creek. They were also ordered to pay the creek clean-up fees of more than \$13,000 and a portion of Blue Mountains City Council's legal costs.

Bushwalkers notified council of dead crayfish on Darwin's Walk and after lengthy investigations by Blue Mountains City Council it was found that excess pesticide administered at villas in Wentworth Falls had found its way into the creek 700 metres away via a stormwater drain.

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