

Living Near the BUSH

HOW TO SUPPORT NATURE IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS



Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Living Near the Bush

How to support nature in the Blue Mountains



A Blue Mountains Conservation Society publication

The Blue Mountains Local Government Area is situated on the lands of the Dharug and Gundungurra peoples. Blue Mountains Conservation Society pays its respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge First Nations Traditional Custodians and recognise their sovereign connections to land, water, skies, Country and culture.

Living Near the Bush: How to support nature in the Blue Mountains

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To view the online version of this book, scan the QR code below
or go to <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/LNTB/sewp/index.html>



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Foreword

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society has been active in the protection of the Blue Mountains since 1961, and its mission is to protect the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWH), to its full extent. The first edition of *Living Near the Bush* was published by the Society in 1998, just a couple of years before the November 2000 inscription by UNESCO of the World Heritage Area. The 1998 editorial team was comprised of Don Morison, Helga Esamie, Marion Hawley, Sue Morrison, Leilani Musgrave, Adrienne Murphy, Linda Thomas, Greg Wellham, Brian Walters and Ester Kasepuu. Society President, Imre Gahl, contributed the Foreword. The first edition was well-received by the community, as the information provided a valuable resource for those residents interested in looking after the natural areas that surround the Blue Mountains City.

The World Heritage Area is an internationally renowned destination for those seeking exceptional natural beauty set within spectacular landscapes, the peace and solitude provided by expanses of pristine wilderness, and a lifestyle close to nature. Publication of *Living Near the Bush* in 1998 was an important and wise step, as the ribbon of villages along the Great Western Highway runs through the Blue Mountains National Park, and there is significant potential for negative impact on the World Heritage Area.

It has long been a goal of the Society to revise the booklet, and now we are pleased to have done so! I thank all those who have contributed to the revision process and the new edition, including the Editor and Editorial team. They are members with a deep knowledge of the Blue Mountains and its natural world, and are devoted to caring for this exceptional place. Special thanks to Uncle Chris Tobin for editing Chapter One, and to Fiona Lumsden for sharing her wonderful artwork.

Every person who treads on land in the Blue Mountains is a steward of this land – everyone who lives here, works here, visits here or is just passing through. It is important to realise that all natural parts of the environment need to be protected, both those inside and outside the National Park boundaries. In this booklet, you will find practical details of simple things that we can do to minimize damage to our local native plants and animals, care for Aboriginal cultural heritage, and take on wider environmental responsibilities. We must take our stewardship responsibilities seriously, and work to leave the land better than we found it.

Thank you for taking the time to read this booklet!

Annette Cam
President 2023-2026
Blue Mountains Conservation Society



Rockwarblers at Mount Hay F. Lumsden

Chapter One First Nations cultural heritage

Over many thousands of years, the First Nations peoples of Australia have continuously maintained deep spiritual and custodial relationships with Ngurra, or Country. Today, Australian First Nations peoples from six language groups nurture close custodial relationships with regions of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWhA).

The Blue Mountains local government area is located within the Ngurra of the Dharug and Gundungurra people, and their communities. Dharug and Gundungurra communities have strong spiritual and cultural connections to the Blue Mountains.

Ngurra encompasses all physical, cultural and spiritual components of the landscape. This includes air, water resources, ridges, valleys and other landforms, all vegetation, animals, foods, medicines, rocks and their minerals. The spiritual landscape embraces cultural practice and special places, kinship, knowledge, songs, stories, art, spiritual beings, and people and communities.

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NSW) protects all First Nations cultural heritage in New South Wales. Cultural heritage can include ceremonial sites, tools, scarred trees, rock engravings and art galleries located throughout the natural landscape. It is an offence to damage or destroy any form of cultural heritage.

Here are some major ways in which local residents can support First Nations cultural practices and heritage in the Blue Mountains.

- ✓ When participating in a cultural event, please listen respectfully to First Nations Elders and other speakers.
- ✓ Observe cultural protocols appropriately, such as a Welcome to Country or a smoking ceremony.
- ✓ Always behave in a considerate manner at cultural heritage sites, as these are special, spiritual places.
- ✓ Please do not remove any items from a cultural site, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant.
- ✓ Applying chalk or sand to any cultural item, to enhance its appearance in a photograph, is disrespectful and damaging.
- ✓ It's a good idea to explain the importance of cultural sites to children.

Please report damaged cultural items and sites to the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW, 131 555). Acts of deliberate damage/vandalism should be reported to the police (131 444).

Thank you for supporting local First Nations cultural practices and heritage.



Australian King-Parrots F. Lumsden

Chapter Two Our local urban and bushland environments

Living Near the Bush looks at the ways in which residents of the Blue Mountains can contribute to the care of our unique local bushland and wildlife.

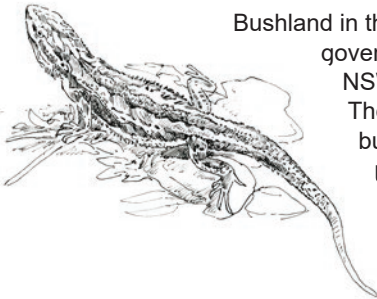
Before examining in detail the contributions that residents can make, let's take a closer look at our local environment, and see why it is so special.

The urban and bushland environments of the Blue Mountains

Urban settlement within the Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) Local Government Area (LGA) is focused on the Blue Mountains Range, a rugged, dissected plateau that carries the road and rail corridor extending from Lapstone in the east to Mount Victoria in the west. Currently, some 80,000 people live in approximately 35,000 dwellings (see Appendix One: Map of Blue Mountains City local government area).

Surrounding the zones of housing and commercial development is a vast area of dense vegetation – the bush. Blue Mountains LGA and its bushland extend northwards to Bells Line of Road and Mount Tomah, and southwards to the Coxs River and Lake Burragorang.

The natural setting for Blue Mountains bushland is comprised of deeply dissected plateaus, soaring escarpments and cliffs, numerous ridges and spurs, steep valleys, canyons, sparkling streams, spectacular waterfalls and plunging cascades. Cool rainforests, towering eucalypt forests, wind-sheared escarpment heaths, unique peat swamps and dense stream bank vegetation can be observed. These vegetation communities serve as home for an impressive range of animal species.



Bushland in the Blue Mountains is largely managed by government entities, particularly the BMCC and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). There are also substantial tracts of relatively healthy bushland located on private property, and these are protected by BMCC planning regulations.

The national parks managed by the NPWS are referred to as protected areas: they have been set aside to conserve native plants and wildlife, and geological and scenic features. Residents are encouraged to experience and enjoy these features via a range of activities that are allowed in the parks, including camping, nature study, picnicking and bushwalking.

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWA) and its special qualities

The impressive range of animal and plant species found in the Blue Mountains, and

the great diversity of eucalypt-based vegetation communities, inspired the development of a 1990s campaign to have these species, communities and a large area of regional bushland listed as a World Heritage Area, as defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). After a lengthy, well-supported campaign, inscription of the GBMWA on the World Heritage List was finally approved in November 2000.

The term, *Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWA)*, refers to eight protected areas that extend over some 1.03 million hectares of bushland. One of these protected areas, Blue Mountains National Park, is primarily located within the Blue Mountains LGA, and the remaining seven are located in adjoining local government areas (see Appendix Two: Map of reserves included within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area).

The GBMWA is particularly noted for its outstanding range of eucalypt tree species. Seven eucalypt species are listed as threatened, such as *Eucalyptus aggregata* and *Eucalyptus benthamii*. They require additional care and protection.

Ancient, primitive plant species grow in the GBMWA. Examples include the Wollemi Pine (*Wollemia nobilis*), one of the world's oldest and rarest trees, and the Dwarf Mountain Pine (*Pherosphaera fitzgeraldii*). Both of these conifers are threatened species.

The GBMWA is home to a rich array of animal species: kangaroos, wallabies, koalas, platypus, echidnas, wombats, reptiles such as snakes and lizards, approximately 265 bird species, 30 frog species, 120 butterfly species and 4,000 moth species (UNESCO World Heritage Convention 2025). Animals listed as "Threatened" include the Giant Dragonfly (*Petalura gigantea*) (see illustration), the Blue Mountains Water Skink (*Eulamprus leuraensis*), and the Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby (*Petrogale penicillata*).

Unfortunately, this impressive range of plant and animal species faces a number of threats, including climate change, invasive species, habitat fragmentation and bushfire (Blue Mountains City Council *Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2025-2035* https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/Biodiversity_Conservation_Strategy_Final_Adopted_September_2025.PDF)





Female Giant Dragonfly (Petalura gigantea) perched in a Blue Mountains Swamp I. Baird



A Blue Mountains Swamp complex located in a headwater valley, Mt Hay Range, consisting of a large valley floor peat swamp with adjoining valley side and hanging swamp areas surrounded by eucalypt forest. Grose Valley and escarpment cliffs in the background. I. Baird

Challenges confronting local bushland and the GBMWhA

The Blue Mountains urban places and their population of some 80,000 people are located in the heart of the bushland areas and the GBMWhA. This centralised, dense concentration of people and their houses, private gardens and properties, public parks, shops, businesses and roads generate a range of behaviours and environmental impacts that often damages bushland and native wildlife.

World Heritage status has provided a significant extra layer of protection for our local bushland. However, the environmental health of bushland and the GBMWhA is continuously challenged by

- loss of plant and animal biodiversity
- inappropriate use of fire
- unsustainable recreation and tourism activities
- spread of pest species including environmental weeds and feral animals
- human-produced climate change.

Damage can occur in a variety of ways. Here are three examples.

- Many urban gardens contain environmental weeds that escape into bushland and even the GBMWhA.
- Unsupervised dogs attack kangaroos, wallabies, koalas and other wildlife. Cats injure and kill smaller animals, including threatened species, such as the Blue Mountains Water Skink.
- Household cleaning chemicals, garden chemicals e.g. synthetic fertilisers, pesticides and rubbish can find their way into streams and bushland, creating pollution and environmental damage.

Can residents play a role in caring for our bushland?

There is no doubt that all levels of government and their agencies, including the NSW NPWS, business entities, and non-government organisations such as Blue Mountains Conservation Society (BMCS) have important roles to play in the management of our local bushland and the GBMWhA, and the control and remediation of damaging environmental impacts. For example, see the Blue Mountains City Council's *Biodiversity Conservation Strategy* (https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/Biodiversity_Conservation_Strategy_Final_Adopted_September_2025.PDF).

Local residents, too, can contribute to the reduction of actions that damage bushland. Approximately 35,000 houses occupy the towns and villages of the Blue Mountains. Virtually all residents live within walking distance of bushland and streams, and many enjoy bushland amenities directly from their gardens. If local residents were to adopt even some of the environmentally friendly practices outlined in this booklet, the environmental benefits would be enormous.

The remaining chapters of this booklet present the household practices and resident behaviours that unfortunately, and in most cases quite unintentionally harm bushland, native wildlife and the GBMWhA. The ways in which residents can voluntarily adopt bushland-friendly behaviours are carefully explained.

We hope that you find the material and suggestions presented in these chapters interesting to read, practical to apply, and worthy of adopting permanently.



Megalong Valley Bottlebrush
(*Callistemon megalongensis*) A. Page



Heath Banksia (*Banksia ericifolia*)
A. Page



Christmas Bells (*Blandfordia cunninghamii*) A. Page



Fish Bones (*Lomandra obliqua*) A. Page

Chapter Three Household waste, recycling, damaging impacts

Residing in the Blue Mountains involves living alongside an extraordinarily rich natural world. As this chapter illustrates, our bushland, wildlife and streams are not separate from daily life — they are part of it. Many of the household management choices that we make, often without much extra effort, can dramatically reduce damaging environmental impacts and help protect the landscapes and wildlife that we cherish.

Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) household waste services

BMCC provides each household with three kerbside bins:

- ✓ red (garbage including broken glass e.g. window glass),
- ✓ yellow (recyclable materials such as paper and glass bottles) and
- ✓ green (green garden waste).

For full details about collection days and bin size options, see

www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/bin-collection-service

It is very important to place the correct items in each bin. See

www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/bin-collection-service for advice on how to correctly use red, yellow and green bins.

Additional household waste services provided by BMCC

Many products used in households are capable of polluting streams and poisoning soils, if not managed correctly. Paints, oils, pesticides and battery chemicals are major concerns.

To address this issue, BMCC offers specialised domestic waste disposal and collection services:

- ✓ household chemical drop-off days available at council waste disposal centres (e.g. paints, batteries, smoke detectors, engine oil, pesticides)
- ✓ kerbside collection services for large, bulky domestic waste items (e.g. mattresses, old furniture)
- ✓ a household waste drop-off service available at council waste disposal centres
- ✓ kerbside chipping services for bulky green waste (e.g. tree branches, large pruned material).

For information about these services, see www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/BookedWasteService and www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/hazardous-waste/chemicals. BMCC also advertises its specialised waste collection services in the weekly local newspaper, *Blue Mountains Gazette*.

The environmentally healthy household

There are a range of positive household measures that residents can adopt, to help conserve local bushland and the GBMWA.

Reuse and recycle

- ✓ Choosing reusable shopping bags is one of the simplest ways to protect the native wildlife that shares our neighbourhood. Please don't use plastic bags, and minimise use of or don't use other plastic products. Birds and other wildlife often mistake plastics for food, and this frequently results in severe injuries and fatalities.
- ✓ Avoid excessive packaging. Reuse and recycle boxes, bags and other packaging.
- ✓ Recycle eligible bottles, cans and cartons at a Return and Earn facility. Earn ten cents for each returned drink container. To find return centres, see www.returnandearn.org.au Your BMCC yellow bin can also be used.

Kitchen and bathroom

- ✓ A good habit is to only pour water, detergent and soap down the kitchen sink! Oils, fats, grease, milk and food scraps can block sink plumbing and even cause overflows in sewer lines. Overflows of sewage can pollute and damage local streams and bushland. Protecting groundwater resources is also important (see <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/residents/waste-water-management/protecting-ground-water-and-public-health>). Compost food scraps. Place milk and solidified oils, fats and grease in a sealed container e.g. old milk carton, and dispose of in your BMCC red garbage bin.
- ✓ Only flush toilet paper, pee and poo down the toilet! Flushing wet-wipes, disposable nappies, tissues and other bulky items down toilets can cause blockages and sewer line overflows that pollute.
- ✓ Dispose of pharmaceuticals (prescription tablets, creams, lozenges, vitamins), including contraceptive pills appropriately. Follow disposal instructions on the pack or wrap and place in your BMCC red bin. Do not flush pharmaceuticals down the sink or toilet, as these products can adversely affect streams and wildlife, such as platypuses, if sewer lines overflow. Also, these products are not adequately processed by waste water treatment systems. Unused or expired prescription tablets can often be returned to the dispensing pharmacy. See <https://returnmed.com.au/>.

Cleaning

- ✓ Using phosphate free laundry and dishwashing detergents helps to minimise damaging chemical build-up in soil, streams and other water bodies, particularly if sewer lines overflow.
- ✓ When cleaning inside your home, try to avoid using cleaners that contain powerful chemicals. Over time, they can actually damage surfaces, including bath and bench surfaces, and floors. Conduct an online search and find biodegradable, phosphate free products. For example, vinegar and bicarbonate of soda clean many surfaces effectively, and are more nature friendly.
- ✓ Please minimise the use of powerful cleaning chemicals on external areas. Eventually, many of these chemicals find their way into local streams and bushland via stormwater flows.

Lights and noise

- ✓ Where possible minimise light pollution, particularly outdoors i.e. artificial household and garden lighting. Unnecessary lighting during the night can disrupt the behaviour of owls, bats, bandicoots, possums, wallabies and other nocturnal native wildlife. Please use low-intensity outdoor lighting and keep it close to the ground. Avoid white lights - use amber (low-CCT) lighting with little or no blue wavelength.
- ✓ Minimise noise pollution. As well as creating a more pleasant urban environment for local residents, eliminating noise pollution can also assist native wildlife. Excessive noise disrupts essential communications between animals, for example contact and alarm calls, and may result in avoidance of crucial habitat, such as feeding areas.

Plants, animals, foods

- ✓ If travelling overseas, please do not bring home unauthorised plants and foods, as they may prove to be environmentally dangerous. The Australian Government has placed restrictions on the range of exotic animals and animal products that may be imported. See www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/travelling/bringing-mailing-goods/unique-exotic-pets .
- ✓ Ensure that domestic pets, such as cats, dogs, birds or aquarium water and fish are not released or escape into local bushland or streams.

Are there any other bushland friendly household behaviours that you could adopt?
Thank you for considering our local bushland and wildlife, as you go about your daily household chores and activities.

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Laughing Kookaburra F. Lumsden



Waratah and pods F. Lumsden

Chapter Four Environmentally friendly gardening

The Blue Mountains is home to a vast natural garden, featuring cool rainforests, towering eucalypts, lush herbs and ferns, and sparkling streams and waterfalls. This chapter takes a look at how local urban gardeners can help to conserve our unique bushland, waterways and the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWA).

Manage environmental weeds

Introduced plant species that have thrived in the Blue Mountains and become difficult to control are known as environmental weeds. They infest bushland, and degrade the food resources and living spaces (or habitat) of native wildlife.

- ✓ Please remove any environmental weeds in your garden. Even removing flowers and seeds is helpful e.g. Agapanthus flowers and seeds.
- ✓ For advice on how to identify and manage environmental weeds, see <https://bluemountains.org.au/environmental-weeds.shtml>
- ✓ Some environmental weeds are categorised as Priority Weeds, because they spread rapidly and destroy large areas of bushland and agricultural resources. Please manage Priority Weeds appropriately. See the *BMCC Priority Weeds Handbook 2024* at <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/Priority%20Weeds%20Information%20Booklet%202024.pdf> and <https://weedsbluemountains.org.au>.

Choose non-weedy plants for your garden

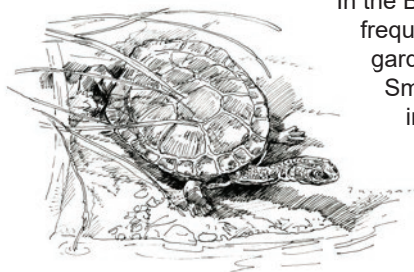
Many of the native plants that occur naturally in your area of the Blue Mountains make excellent garden specimens. They are attractive, well suited to local environmental conditions and support our native wildlife. Local native plant species can be purchased from:

- Blue Mountains Conservation Society Nursery, Blackheath Market (<https://bluemountains.org.au/nursery.shtml>)
- Katoomba Native Plant Nursery and Wildplant Rescue (www.wildplantrescue.org.au)
- Glenbrook Native Plant Nursery (<https://apsbluemtnsgroup.org/>)
- ✓ When choosing plants that are not native to the Blue Mountains (also referred to as introduced or exotic plants), consult the Australian organisation, Gardening Responsibly. This organisation offers lots of non-weedy plants to choose from (<https://www.gardeningresponsibly.org.au/>).
- ✓ Purchase introduced/exotic garden plants at local commercial nurseries that are bushland accredited by BMCC. Accredited nurseries undertake to not stock or sell BMCC listed Priority Weeds. See <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/bushland-nursery>.
- ✓ Avoid purchasing environmental weeds and their packeted seed from garden

centres, markets or online. Please do not share weeds and weed seed with neighbours and friends.

- ✓ For further detailed advice on garden planning, plant selection and how to develop an environmentally friendly garden in the Blue Mountains, see the BMCS Environmentally friendly gardening website at <https://bluemountains.org.au/environmentally-friendly-garden.shtml>.

Protect and support native wildlife



In the Blue Mountains, a wide range of native wildlife frequently visits our gardens, particularly those gardens and properties located close to bushland. Small, medium and large birds, arboreal mammals including Common Brushtail Possums and Sugar Gliders, ground-dwelling animals such as wallabies and antechinus, snakes and lizards, bees, wasps, insects such as dragonflies and caterpillars, and lots more, are potential visitors!

Here are some basic ways to support visiting or resident native wildlife. For advice on how to manage problematic wildlife behaviour, refer to Chapter Five.

- ✓ Plant a range of local native plant species. For detailed advice on how to develop an environmentally friendly garden that is welcoming to wildlife, see the BMCS website at <https://bluemountains.org.au/environmentally-friendly-garden.shtml>.
- ✓ Encourage beneficial insects, by planting insect-attracting plants like native Tea-trees.
- ✓ Avoid use of chemicals to control garden pests. For more information, see the section below.
- ✓ Be careful with the use of fencing wire that can harm wildlife visitors. Don't use barbed wire, as it traps and kills wildlife.
- ✓ Avoid use of bird netting. If essential, use densely woven bird netting that has holes too small to poke a finger through (less than 5 x 5mm), or use wildlife friendly netting recommended by WIRES (<https://www.wires.org.au/wildlife-information/wildlife-friendly-netting>). Do not use netting that has low visibility, a large net hole size or that is not properly installed and maintained, as it can injure and even kill wildlife.
- ✓ If needed, use a wire netting product that has holes too small to poke a finger through (less than 5 x 5mm). Ensure that snakes and other wildlife cannot become entangled in any wire or mesh barriers. Do not use loose mesh, as this frequently leads to entanglement.
- ✓ To protect any fruit growing in your garden, use individual, reusable fruit protection bags.
- ✓ Keep ponds shallow or net the opening to avoid drowning of wildlife. Cover the top of tanks.
- ✓ Supervise domestic cats and dogs, as they are quite capable of injuring and even killing local wildlife. See Chapter Five for more details.



Minimise or completely avoid use of pesticides

Commonly used pesticides are fungicides (to control plant moulds), herbicides (to control weeds), insecticides (to control unwanted insects) and rodenticides (to control unwanted animals).

The chemicals contained in synthetic and even some organic (e.g. Derris dust, Neem oil) pesticides are often quite dangerous, and can adversely affect bushland vegetation, streams and native wildlife. For example, careless, illegal use and disposal of pesticides have resulted in the mass killing of crayfish in the Blue Mountains. Snail, mouse and rat baits, even when placed inside a safety container, can kill wildlife that consumes the carcasses of poisoned animals. Eastern Blue-tongued Lizards are frequently killed in this way.

Choose, store and apply pesticides carefully. Follow label instructions. Try to consider alternative ways to manage problematic garden issues.

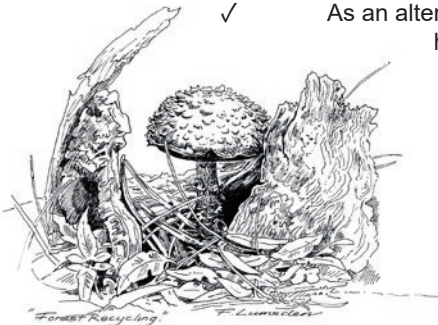
- ✓ A chemical-free garden containing lots of local native plants fosters the insects, such as ladybirds and lacewings, that consume aphids, scale and other garden nuisances.
- ✓ Companion planting can also help to control garden pests.
- ✓ Create a damp, sheltered outdoor space that attracts slugs and snails, and regularly remove them by hand. Beer/yeast also attract slugs and snails.
- ✓ To help manage rats and mice, clean up pet food and any other food morsels regularly. Seal gaps and holes that create habitat.
- ✓ Insecticidal soap and garlic sprays, home-made or available at garden nurseries, control unwelcome insects such as aphids.
- ✓ Conduct an online search and check for other environmentally friendly garden management suggestions.

Manage fertilisers carefully

Many bushland plants can be damaged or killed by fertiliser enriched stormwater runoff. Also, runoff encourages weed growth in bushland and algal blooms in streams.

- ✓ Where possible, position your vegetable patch away from bushland, to avoid runoff of excess water and fertilisers into natural areas.
- ✓ Use commercial fertilisers sparingly, or not at all.

- ✓ As an alternative to strong commercial fertilisers, use home-made compost or dense leaf litter mulch to conserve soil moisture and promote plant growth.



Re-use or recycle garden waste

Dumping lawn clippings, pruned material and other garden waste over the garden fence into bushland can result in the spread of environmental weeds.

This is because lawn clippings often contain weed seed. Pruned material may include seeds and other plant propagules that

- ✓ have the capacity to establish root systems and grow.
- ✓ Green waste can be placed in a compost heap, mulch pile, or in your BMCC green bin. But if concerned about weed seed and propagule spread, the safest practice is to place waste in your BMCC green bin.
- ✓ Under appropriate conditions, certain weed seed can be safely composted. But if unsure, and to ensure thorough disposal of weed seed, the safest practice is to place seed in your BMCC green bin.
- ✓ Be sure that green waste is well decomposed, before using it as garden mulch.

Conserve bushland and other natural assets

All bushland in the Blue Mountains is owned or managed, usually by public entities, including the BMCC and the NSW NPWS, or by private landowners, companies and other organisations.

- ✓ Be careful to not inadvertently encroach on bushland, streams, reserves and national parks. Encroachment is illegal and often damages native bushland and wildlife habitat.
- ✓ Conserve natural bushland located on your property. Clearing natural bushland can result in costly erosion, environmental weed spread, damaged wildlife habitat and loss of shade and soil moisture.
- ✓ Consult the BMCC before lopping trees or clearing your own bushland, as regulations and enforcement procedures may apply. See <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/trees-and-vegetation-on-private-land> and <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/do-you-need-assistance-after-a-natural-disaster/clean-up-and-clearing-land>
- ✓ See Chapter Eight for additional advice about clearing or burning private bushland.

Use bush-friendly landscaping materials and techniques

There are a variety of ways to landscape around your home in an environmentally friendly manner.

Collecting bush rock and bushland plant species, such as ferns, orchids, or attractive flowers damages native wildlife habitat and seriously impairs the future ability of these plants to recover from disturbance, including bushfires. Collected plant species may become locally rare or even locally extinct. Also, unauthorised removal of natural materials (timber, bush rock, stones, complete plants, flowers, seed and soil) from public and privately managed lands is theft and illegal.

- ✓ Around the home, maintain the natural landscape as much as possible, including natural vegetation. Avoid “cut and fill” work.
- ✓ If landscaping, use artificial stones and rocks and other manufactured landscaping materials.
- ✓ If landscaping, use recycled sandstone, quarry offcuts, new or recycled bricks and recycled hardwood.
- ✓ When consulting landscapers, check the source of all landscaping materials, and insist on using material that has not been removed from local bushland.
- ✓ Try to minimise or even reduce the extent of external concrete and asphalt

surfaces around your home. Concrete and asphalt are major sources of damaging, chemically enriched stormwater runoff into local streams. This process encourages environmental weed growth, and degrades stream water quality. Where possible, use rainwater tanks and create strips of vegetated land (or buffers) that will absorb stormwater runoff.

- ✓ Visit the local native plant nurseries listed above and enquire about plant availability. At Wildplant Rescue Native Plant Nursery, Katoomba, some quite hard to get plant species are available as potted “rescue” plants.

Happy gardening! Thank you for taking the time to consider the well-being of our local bushland and native wildlife. Remember, the advice offered here is not definitive. An online search may produce additional environmentally friendly gardening advice.

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Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*) D. Page



Boronia (*Boronia pinnata*) A. Page



Drumsticks (*Isopogon anemonifolius*) A. Page



Kanooka (*Tristaniopsis laurina*) A. Page

Chapter Five Local wildlife, domestic pets and feral animals

Native wildlife

A vast array of native animals inhabit our local bushland and the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWH).

Approximately 52 mammal, 63 reptile, 265 bird and over 30 frog species live in the GBMWH, along with an estimated 120 butterfly and 4,000 moth species (UNESCO World Heritage Convention 2025). Native animals that may be regularly encountered include birds of all shapes and sizes, possums including the Common Brushtail Possum, gliders including beautiful Sugar Gliders, wallabies, wombats, bandicoots, flying foxes and bats, lizards including Blue-tongued Lizards and other skinks, many kinds of snakes, native Bush, Swamp and Water Rats, antechinus, frogs, turtles, and countless numbers of insects and other invertebrates!



The book, *Native Fauna of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area* may be of interest to residents who would like to learn more about our local wildlife (see References, Further reading/Chapter 5).

Please do remember that in New South Wales all native birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals, and their eggs and young, are protected from any form of harm (*Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 NSW*). Dingoes are not protected by the act and are managed via government regulations. All animals living in NSW national parks and reserves are legally protected (*National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 NSW*). *The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (NSW)* outlaws acts of cruelty to animals. Many native wildlife species living in the Blue Mountains are formally listed as ‘threatened’ under NSW and/or Commonwealth legislation.

Living co-operatively with native wildlife

As discussed, the closer a property is to bushland, the greater the likelihood that native wildlife will come to visit, or even take up residence! Houses, sheds, leafy gardens and thriving vegetable plots all constitute potential living space for many native animals. Keep in mind that the natural resources available in your backyard may be assisting a parent to rear offspring, or helping distressed wildlife cope with drought or fire ravaged bushland. For advice on how to support native wildlife in your garden, refer to Chapter Four.

- ✓ Please do not feed native wildlife, including birds. Feeding often creates many of the problems that arise between people and wildlife, including aggressive behaviour towards humans, territorial disputes with other animals, illness, unwelcome visitation and occupancy, dependency upon humans for food, and spread of disease. Feeding one bird species only is still problematic, as it may

- ✓ attract other bird species, with possibly unwelcome consequences.
- ✓ Do not try to domesticate, tame or handle healthy, wild native animals. Induced tameness can leave wildlife vulnerable to trapping and other ill-intentioned acts, and accidents. Handling can result in serious injury to wildlife and people. See the section below on WIRES.

Managing wildlife behaviour

Wildlife visiting a garden can provide much joy, satisfaction and interest for residents, especially if juveniles are being raised. However, wildlife can be a source of inconvenience and even alarm at times, particularly if encountered unexpectedly. Try to respond in a calm and considerate manner. Please remember that native wildlife and other animals utilise intelligence, experience pleasure, pain and fear (sentience), and carefully rear and protect their offspring.

There are many innovative ways to manage unwelcome wildlife behaviour. For those residents experiencing a range of problems, the recently published book, *Living with Wildlife* may be a worthwhile purchase (see References, Further reading/Chapter 5). Here are some common problems, and potential solutions.

- ✓ Be tolerant of minor damage created by visiting native animals, such as digging, defecating or occasional raids on vegetables and fruits.
- ✓ Some magpies swoop people, but usually only during the spring nesting season, to protect chicks. Stay calm if swooped, temporarily avoid the area, and if necessary, wear a hat and protective eyewear. Do not act aggressively, as magpies have keen memories, and aggression may result in additional and even future, targeted swooping.
- ✓ Where animals like lyrebirds, bandicoots or wombats are digging and causing extensive, ongoing damage to vegetation, vegetables and even structures, it may be necessary to construct a permanent barrier, using wire or steel weldmesh. Use a wire product that has holes too small to poke a finger through (less than 5 x 5mm). Ensure that snakes and other wildlife cannot become entangled in any wire or mesh barriers. Do not use loose mesh, as this frequently leads to entanglement.
- ✓ Many residents are quite tolerant of possums living in their roof cavity. However, possums can be noisy, smelly, and a nuisance. Possums are nocturnal, so if concerned about these issues, the best management approach is to locate the possum entry/exit point, and seal it after the possum has left in the evening. Do not trap and relocate the possum, as this is likely to be fatal for the animal.
- ✓ Collisions between birds and windows are common. Try marking large expanses of glass with colourful stripes, using tape or water colour paint. Using decorative window stickers may also help.
- ✓ Birds also attack their reflections in glass, often during breeding seasons. A light soap or mud wash applied to windows will help with management of this



usually temporary problem.

- ✓ Snakes may not be welcome backyard visitors for many people. Remember though, that pythons, such as the Carpet Snake, are non-venomous, and help to control rats and mice around the home. They are also interesting to observe. However, always keep a safe, respectful distance from all snakes, and do not attempt to handle them. As a first management step, if you are concerned about their presence, try to reduce attractions, such as prey like mice and rats that visit and feed on pet food and compost heaps. Be aware that ponds and other water resources, wood piles and other easily accessible garden storage areas attract snakes. As with possums, relocation can result in snake fatalities, however for persistent, unwanted venomous snakes, consult WIRES and engage a reputable, licensed snake catcher (see WIRES below).
- ✓ Sulphur-crested Cockatoos can also be unwelcome property guests. Never feed or tame them! They do not require feeding, and feeding often encourages unwelcome visitation and subsequent mischief and damage. Where they are causing damage around a home, try to create a wire barrier, or make it difficult for them to perch by installing a trip wire. Persistence is required!
- ✓ Quolls (and foxes) enjoy a feed of chicken, so ensure that chook enclosures are sturdy and secure. Steel mesh and deeply buried walls may be best practice, as quolls (and foxes) are determined predators. Free range chooks require constant supervision.

WIRES: injured, ill and distressed wildlife

WIRES ((Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service) offers assistance for distressed and injured native wildlife, and provides emergency/ flood/fire animal advice too. They may also be able to help with problem wildlife behaviour. See <https://www.wires.org.au/branch/blue-mountains> or phone 1300 094 737.

Domestic pets

Pets play important, often emotional roles in the lives of their owners. However, pet owners should always be aware that their pets may be capable of harming wildlife. Wildlife and feral animals can also harm pets.

- ✓ Please supervise your pet cat/s at all times. An exterior, fully enclosed exercise and play area connected to the interior of a house is best practice cat housing, and prevents pet cats from wandering in local bushland. Domestic cats regularly prey upon native animals. In fact, it has recently been estimated that more native animals are killed per square kilometre by



Australian pet cats in residential areas than are killed per square kilometre by Australian feral cats in natural environments, and there is no evidence that pet cats significantly control introduced vermin, such as mice and rats (Legge et al., 2020). Domestic cats are also preyed upon by foxes, and wild and domestic dogs, so ensure the safety of your cat by keeping it fully housed at your home. Roaming cats can also acquire infections from other cats or wildlife. For detailed advice on pet cat management, see <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/animals/keeping-cats-safe>.

- ✓ Pet dogs must also be closely supervised. Yards should be adequately and securely fenced, as dogs have been known to escape and harass, injure and kill wildlife such as lizards, snakes, wallabies, wombats, koalas and kangaroos. Dogs must be walked on a leash, except when enjoying a BMCC authorised off-leash area. Please clean up dog faeces in your yard or when out walking, as faeces can wash into bushland, gutters, drains and streams. Public open spaces, bushland and streams cannot be used as unauthorised off-leash areas, as this causes environmental damage and is illegal. Also, the scent and noise of cats and dogs in bushland can disrupt the natural behaviour of native wildlife, including feeding behaviour. For detailed advice on pet dog management, see <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/animals/dogs-blue-mountains>
- ✓ Livestock, such as horses, goats, cattle and sheep, are capable of causing considerable environmental damage. Overstocking can lead to soil erosion and damage to bushland and streams. Use appropriate fencing to protect environmentally sensitive areas, steep slopes, streams, native vegetation and threatened ecological communities, such as local swamps. For detailed advice on the management of hooved animals, see <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/residents/animals/hooved-animals>



- ✓ In NSW, beekeepers who own European honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) must register with the NSW Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development. See <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/bees>. They should comply with the Australian Honey Bee Biosecurity Code of Practice. See <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/bees/biosecurity-code-of-practice>.
- ✓ Report unsupervised dogs and roaming livestock to BMCC, at <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/report-an-issue>
- ✓ Please do not release domestic pets into bushland.
- ✓ Do not release fish, turtles, yabbies and other aquatic pets into natural waterways.
- ✓ Contact Blue Mountains Animal Care Centre (BMACC) at <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/animal-care-centre> if you can no longer care for your pet.
- ✓ To adopt a homeless domestic animal contact Blue Mountains Animal Care Centre (BMACC) at <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/animal-care-centre>.

Feral animals

Also referred to as pest or invasive animals, ferals are animals that have been introduced to Australia and live in a wild, undomesticated condition. Common examples include feral cats, feral goats, feral pigs, feral deer, foxes, feral horses, rabbits, introduced mice and rats, and birds such as the Indian Myna.

Tragically, foxes and feral cats have been responsible for the extinction of many native Australian animal species, and this threat is ongoing. Feral animals such as pigs and dogs can be extremely aggressive towards native wildlife. Feral animals have destroyed First Nations cultural heritage items, native vegetation, stream banks, waterholes, wetlands, and agricultural resources.

- ✓ Do not engage with feral animals if they enter your property or are encountered in natural areas. They may become aggressive towards people and domestic pets.
- ✓ The humane management of feral animals is the responsibility of NSW government authorities.
- ✓ Alarming concentrations of feral animals should be reported to Greater Sydney Local Land Services at <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/dpi/biosecurity/report-a-pest-or-disease>
- ✓ Sightings of unusual animals should be reported to the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development at <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/dpi/biosecurity/report-a-pest-or-disease>, or by phoning 1800 680 244.

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Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo Newnes F. Lumsden

Chapter Six Recreation: safety, minimal impact, access facilities

This chapter focuses on bushwalking, a popular form of local recreation. Please keep in mind that many of the safety and environmental tips and principles presented here can be applied to other recreation pursuits, such as swimming, canyoning, climbing and biking.

The Blue Mountains region offers plentiful opportunities to undertake a variety of walks, from short, relatively flat and gentle strolls, through to physically demanding bushwalks with limited or no signage or a defined track to follow.

Safety

Here are some basic bushwalking safety tips. Please note that this list is not exhaustive.

- ✓ Weather conditions may change rapidly, so before commencing a bushwalk, or any other substantial outdoor recreation activity, check the local forecast. Sudden drops in temperature, and severe storms and large hail that produce dangerous flash flooding of creeks and canyons can occur.
- ✓ Check bushfire ratings and do not walk while dangerous conditions prevail.
- ✓ Provide family, friends or local authorities with details of your walk.
- ✓ Walking with a supportive bushwalking group or companions is good practice, particularly if you are a new bushwalker. See Chapter Ten for a list of local bushwalking groups.
- ✓ Pack appropriate clothing and equipment for your walk, including enclosed footwear, a hat, water and food and a fully charged mobile phone.
- ✓ Carrying a First Aid kit is recommended. Be familiar with CPR procedure and the correct method for treating snake bites.
- ✓ Carefully check the distance of the planned walk. Allow plenty of time to complete the walk during daylight hours.
- ✓ Do not attempt to cross flooded creeks and rivers, as floating debris can be dangerous, and drownings have occurred. Water levels often subside quite quickly after storms, so wait until it is completely safe to cross.
- ✓ Do not enter canyons if storms are forecast or are occurring, or if a canyon is flooded, as drownings have occurred.
- ✓ Download and store the Emergency Plus app on your mobile phone. See www.emergencyplus.com.au.
- ✓ Check track availability before commencing a walk, as they can be closed for maintenance or repairs. For safety reasons, comply with signage indicating a track closure.

For detailed advice on bushwalking safety, see

- Bushwalking NSW at www.bushwalkingnsw.org.au
- NPWS at <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/safety/bushwalking-safety>

- NSW Police Force Think Before You Trek site at https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/safety_and_prevention/crime_prevention/outdoor_recreation.

Long or strenuous day walks, multiple day walks, and walking in wilderness and remote areas

Taking a personal locator beacon (PLB) on an intensive bushwalk ensures that emergency services can be contacted if required. PLBs can be either purchased or, for a 'one off' walk, hired free of charge from the NPWS Blue Mountains Heritage Centre in Blackheath (between 9am and 4pm daily), or either Springwood or Katoomba police stations (after hours).

Note: A PLB may also be referred to as an EPIRB (Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacon).

Minimal impact

Help to conserve the natural environment by implementing minimal impact principles during bushwalks and other recreation activities.

- ✓ Always use existing tracks. Try to use existing camping sites.
- ✓ Stay on the track rather than widening it, for example when walking along muddy, wet sections.
- ✓ Avoid walking in sensitive environments such as hanging and/or peat swamps, or near waterholes and springs.
- ✓ Leave native vegetation, wildlife, and other natural objects such as fallen branches and rocks in situ.
- ✓ Pack it in, pack it out: carry out all rubbish! Do not bury rubbish, even food scraps, as they may not decompose, and can be uncovered by animals or flowing water.
- ✓ Don't light camp fires, as they consume natural resources, disturb wildlife and can be unsafe and even illegal, especially during the annual bushfire season. Use electric torches and fuel stoves.
- ✓ Keep soaps, detergents and other pollutants out of streams and other natural water resources.
- ✓ Observe the access conditions applying to WaterNSW Protected Areas and Special Areas. See <https://www.waternsw.com.au/water-services/catchment-protection/protected-and-special-areas>
- ✓ Use vehicles carefully. Avoid damaging bushland and widening tracks. Try to park in designated parking areas.
- ✓ Observe and comply with all signage relating to dogs.

Note: dogs are prohibited in all national parks but may be permitted – if held by a secure lead – in council bush reserves. Check the relevant website prior to walking, and any signage, if unsure.

Toileting

Apart from some of the more popular lookouts or picnic areas, there are usually no toilet facilities located along tracks and trails.

To create an environmentally friendly toileting site,

- ✓ select a private spot well away from sensitive areas (~100 metres), such as campsites, caves, canyons and water resources including streams and swamps,
- ✓ with a lightweight plastic trowel dig a toileting hole at least 15cm deep, in which to deposit and bury faeces and paper,
- ✓ wash hands after toileting, and
- ✓ place used items such as personal hygiene products, tissues and disposable nappies in a secure carry bag and either dispose of them in a bin or at home.

Managing plant diseases

Unfortunately, plant diseases such as *Phytophthora cinnamoni* are spreading throughout our local bushland, and causing extensive damage.

To avoid spreading disease, before a trip ensure that shoes and other equipment are free of all dirt and scrubbed clean.

Clean all gear thoroughly at the completion of a trip.

After each clean, spray a solution of 70% methylated spirits and 30% water on all gear. Keep a spray pack handy. For further information and advice, see <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/conservation-programs/fighting-invasive-phytophthora>

Accessible lookouts and tracks

There are quite a number of accessible lookouts and bushland tracks in the Blue Mountains. See <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/ACCESSIBLE-BLUE-MOUNTAINS-1.pdf> Popular walks are:

- Blackheath – Fairfax Heritage Track. NPWS Heritage Centre, Govett’s Leap Road, Blackheath. Featuring beautiful views of the Grose Valley and Bridal Falls.
- Katoomba – Three Sisters walk at Echo Point, Echo Point Road, Katoomba. An important First Nations cultural heritage site. Spectacular views.
- Glenbrook – Glenbrook-Lapstone Zig Zag and Top Points Lookout. Carpark at Knapsack Street, Glenbrook. Featuring Knapsack Viaduct and views over the Cumberland Plain.

Other forms of recreation

As mentioned, many of the above safety and minimal impact principles apply to other forms of bushland recreation, such as swimming, canyoning, climbing, abseiling and biking. Always seek professional safety guidance, ensure that recreation operators are appropriately licensed, and check recreation site conditions in advance with recognised authorities, such as the NSW NPWS.

Have a great time! Please try to leave the bush in the same or an even better condition than you found it.



Superb Fairy-wrens and Greenhoods F. Lumsden



Pink Flannel Flower F. Lumsden

Chapter Seven Report pollution and environmental damage

An important way that residents can help to maintain the quality of our local bushland and streams is to report pollution and other forms of environmental damage.

Examples of pollution and environmental damage

Pollution and environmental damage can take many forms. Some forms of pollution are quite obvious, but others are more subtle and harder to identify.

Here are some common examples of pollution and damage that should be reported.

- A thick, dark oil slick extending along a stream bank and floating on the water.
- People illegally removing bushland rock or native plants and animals from bushland, nature reserves and national parks.
- Concerning numbers of injured or dead wildlife e.g. many dead fish or crayfish floating in a stream.
- A car, or large amounts of construction or household rubbish dumped in bushland, a stormwater channel, or beside a road.
- Unauthorised clearing of bushland or inappropriate construction work in bushland, public reserves or national parks e.g. unauthorised bike tracks.

How to respond

For all pollution and environmental damage events take details, don't delay, enquire and report!

- ✓ Take details: make a mental or written note of the location, the type of damage and its extent. Take photos on your mobile phone.
- ✓ Don't delay: as soon as possible, report the event.
- ✓ Enquire: if unsure about which authority to contact, phone the NSW Environmental Protection Authority's environment line and ask for advice: Ph: 131 555 (available twenty-four hours) or check the NSW Environmental Protection Authority's web page at <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/Reporting-and-incidents/Report-pollution>.
- ✓ BMCC can also offer advice and assistance (Ph: 4780 5000).
- ✓ Report: contact the relevant authority by phone or website and report the incident that you have encountered.

Guidelines for reporting common pollution events and environmental damage

1. Pollution incidents that are immediate emergencies.

- ✓ These are incidents that have major adverse impacts on humans and the environment, including fires emitting toxic fumes, and chemical and oil spills. If you observe a major pollution incident that presents an immediate threat to human health or property, call 000 and report.

2. Pollution and environmental damage that are not immediate emergencies.

These events can include concern about dead or injured wildlife like wombats or crayfish, suspicious clearing of bushland, and dumped cars, rubbish and other materials.

- ✓ An oil spill in streams and lakes should be reported to Fire and Rescue NSW (Ph: 000).
- ✓ Other forms of pollution in streams and lakes should be reported to Blue Mountains City Council (Ph: 4780 5000) or the NSW Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) (Ph: 131 555).
- ✓ Report fertiliser, pesticide and herbicide pollution to EPA (Ph: 131 555).
- ✓ Report roadside rubbish on highways to Roads & Maritime Services (RMS) (Ph: 131 700).
- ✓ Report roadside rubbish on local roads to BMCC (Ph: 4780 5000).
- ✓ Report illegal rubbish dumping in local parks and private property to BMCC (Ph: 4780 5000).
- ✓ Report all other dumped rubbish, such as household items, tyres, green waste or construction waste (e.g. bricks and timber) including in national parks, to the EPA (Ph: 131 555) or at RID online:
<https://ridonline.epa.nsw.gov.au/>
- ✓ Suspected illegal bushland clearing can be reported to BMCC (Ph: 4780 5000), the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and the EPA (Ph: 131 555).
- ✓ Concerning wildlife kills can be reported to BMCC (4780 5000) and the EPA (Ph: 131 555).
- ✓ For other concerns about wildlife, contact DCCEEW (Ph: 131 555), WIRES (Ph: 1300 094 737) and RSPCA Cruelty Call Centre (Ph: 02 9770 7555).

Reports to BMCC can also be lodged online:
<https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/report-an-issue>

3. Cultural heritage items.

- ✓ Vandalism to First Nations cultural heritage items should be reported to the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW, Ph: 131 555).
- ✓ To report damage to other cultural items, contact the BMCC (Ph: 4780 5000) or Heritage NSW at 02 9873 8500 or
heritagemailbox@environment.nsw.gov.au.

Remember, when unsure about which authority to contact, consult Environment Line (Ph: 131 555). This is a twenty-four hours service.

Thank you for considering these important pollution and environmental damage reporting details.

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Chapter Eight Preparing for, reporting and managing bushfire

Bushfires often occur in the Blue Mountains. All residents, and particularly those living in or near bushfire prone areas, should be alert to the serious personal and property threats posed by bushfires.

The official *Bush Fire Danger Period* extends from 1 October to 31 March, but this can vary on a regional basis, to reflect local conditions. In fact, bushfires can occur at any time of the year. They are more likely to develop, spread quickly and be dangerous when hot, dry and windy conditions prevail.

Know your risk and prepare a plan

How close to the bush do you live? Land located within 100 metres of bushland is considered to be bushfire prone. However, it is important to be aware that during a bushfire other land can also be threatened, as wind-blown embers may start new fires downwind and over long distances. Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) has mapped local bushfire prone areas. See <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/property-search> select *View Our Interactive Maps* and select menu item *Bushfire Prone Land*.

For a comprehensive range of information about bushfires and their management, see the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) website, at <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/>. For essential facts about how bushfires start and behave, see <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/fire/fire-facts>.

All property owners and occupants in the Blue Mountains should be prepared for bushfire events. Everyone, including children, should know what to expect and what to do if a bushfire is nearby, and threatens.

It is important to prepare a bushfire plan. For advice, see <https://www.myfireplan.com.au/> and https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/36597/BFSP-Complete.pdf.

In your bushfire plan, consider the following points. What will you do,

- ✓ when fire threatens your local area and property?
- ✓ when total fire ban days are announced?
- ✓ during the bushfire season?
- ✓ to be better prepared for fire in the future?

Revise, check and practice your plan each total fire ban day.

Prepare

- ✓ All homes and other buildings should be well maintained e.g. replace broken cladding and roof tiles.
- ✓ Regular garden maintenance reduces bushfire hazards around housing. Prune, thin and mow garden vegetation.

- ✓ So that they are less likely to burn, keep plants watered.
- ✓ Obtain bushfire sensitive landscaping advice. (See References/Chapter 8/ Further reading).
- ✓ If planting local native plants, choose those that are less flammable. See https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/Best_local_natives_for_bushfire_prone_areas.pdf.
- ✓ If making use of exotic plants (i.e. not local native plants) regarded as fire resistant, ensure that they are not environmental weeds. See <https://bluemountains.org.au/environmental-weeds.shtml> and <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/weed-management/priority-weeds-list>
- ✓ Keep flammable materials like bushes, dry grass and woodpiles away from buildings.
- ✓ Block ember entry points e.g. under the house.
- ✓ Install fine metal mesh screens on windows and other glassed areas, to protect glass from wind-blown debris and embers.
- ✓ Remove leaves and twigs from gutters.
- ✓ Remove branches and other vegetation overhanging housing.
- ✓ Near the house, remove very flammable plants: those with dense foliage, fine leaves and high oil content e.g. Bottlebrush, Melaleuca and other paperbarks, Tea-tree, Turpentine. Exotic plants that have high oil content can also be highly flammable e.g. conifers. High, thick patches of grass are often very flammable. Always obtain permission from BMCC to remove trees or native plants. See <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/trees-and-vegetation-on-private-land>.
- ✓ Wherever possible, retain plants that are less flammable, to conserve native wildlife habitat.
- ✓ Make use of the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Scheme, but only if your property is located in a 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Entitlement Area. See <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/1050-vegetation-clearing>.
- ✓ Install rainwater tanks and a firefighting pump. Buy hoses that reach around the house.

For further advice, consult the NSW Rural Fire Service/Prepare Your Home website, at <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/prepare-your-property>.

Keep informed

- ✓ Become familiar with the RFS fire danger ratings and bushfire alert levels, available at <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/>.
- ✓ Become familiar with the RFS website, including the current incidents information (<https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/>).
- ✓ Keep informed about local weather and daily fire danger ratings. Download the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) app (<https://www.bom.gov.au/bom-weather-app>) or go to the BOM website (<https://www.bom.gov.au/>).
- ✓ Read NSW NPWS information on the management of bushfire in national parks at <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/publications/living-with-fire-in-nsw-national-parks> and <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/about-npws/managing-fire-in-parks>.
- ✓ Download the Hazards Near Me app and set a watch zone (<https://www.nsw.gov.au/emergency/hazards-near-me-app>).

- ✓ Keep a battery powered radio. In an emergency tune to ABC 702 AM, the official emergency broadcaster.
- ✓ Or go to the ABC emergency website <https://www.abc.net.au/emergency>

Prevent and report bushfires

Bushfires pose a serious threat to residents and their property. If bushfires are too frequent or too intense then native vegetation communities and local wildlife may not recover (<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/bushfires.shtml>). Timely, accurate reporting of bushfires to fire management authorities can significantly help with their control.

- ✓ To report bushfires call 000 (triple zero).
- ✓ There are strict controls on burning in the open. For details, see <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/permits/open-burning>.
- ✓ During the Bush Fire Danger Period a permit from the RFS must be obtained for open burning in rural areas. See <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/BFDP>.
- ✓ A permit must be obtained at all times from Fire and Rescue NSW for open burning near a building. For details, see <https://www.fire.nsw.gov.au/page.php?id=200>
- ✓ Be careful when using power tools and machinery near bushland, especially on hot, windy days, as sparks have been known to cause bushfires.
- ✓ Consider joining your local RFS brigade (<https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/volunteer>).

Arson, including creating a bushfire, is a crime. Report any form of suspicious behaviour to Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000. See <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/prevent-bush-fire-arson> for details.

Cigarettes can start bush and grass fires that endanger residents' lives and harm wildlife. To report cigarette tossers, see <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/cigarette-form> for details.

Residents with enquiries or concerns about bushfire issues should contact the NSW Rural Fire Service or a local RFS brigade.

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Chapter Nine Resident engagement with climate change

Climate change is a scientific and practical reality, but there are many ways in which local residents can contribute to its positive management. If adopted, many of the environmental lifestyle suggestions already mentioned in this booklet will help to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and facilitate climate change adaptation by residents and local wildlife. For example, creating an environmentally friendly garden supports native wildlife stressed by climate change induced global warming.

Practical ways to manage climate change

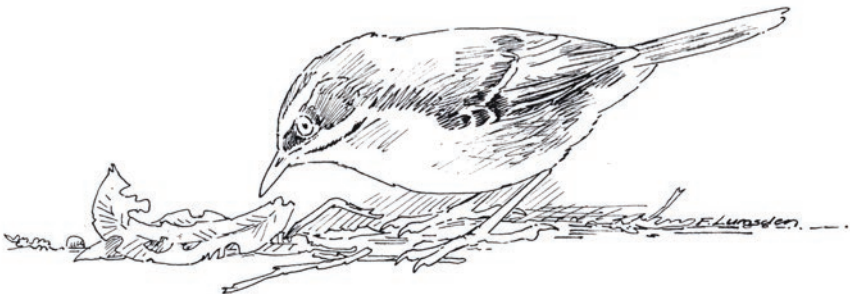
For local residents who are keen to engage with climate change, here is a list of activities that will positively contribute to its mitigation.

- ✓ Plant a tree or two, or three! Trees store carbon and cool urban areas by creating valuable shade. Local native trees are best, and are available at the native plant nurseries listed in Chapter Four. Choose tree planting sites carefully.
- ✓ Compost kitchen scraps and garden waste. Composting reduces landfill waste and resultant methane emissions. Ensure that household compost heaps are well aerated, to reduce emissions. Using home-made compost improves soil quality, and this enhances carbon absorption. For advice, see <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/composthub>.
- ✓ Grow your own fruit and veggies. Make use of permaculture techniques and principles in your garden. Growing produce locally reduces transport emissions. But manage garden produce plots carefully, avoid wasteful overplanting, and please don't use fruits, vegetables and herbs that have weedy tendencies! For information on environmental weeds, see Chapter Four.
- ✓ Assess your personal consumption levels. Consider buying less. Purchase second-hand and recycled items. Reducing personal consumption cuts energy demands and transport emissions.
- ✓ Swap some clothes! Clothes swapping is a fun way to reduce waste, save money and refresh your wardrobe. Plus, the clothing industry is a big contributor to climate change, due to its high levels of waste, pollution and resource consumption. Blue Mountains Parents for Climate Group conducts regular clothes swapping sessions. See https://www.parentsforclimate.org/blue_mountains
- ✓ Create an energy efficient house. Try double glazing windows, insulating roof cavities and under floorboards, sealing gaps in windows and doors, testing appliances for energy leaks, using blinds and curtains for heat control, and installing led lights and heat pumps. For inspiration, see <https://renew.org.au/resources/how-we-can-help/>.
- ✓ Electrify your home. Replace gas appliances with green electric energy, such

as solar panels and batteries, or GreenPower, and help to cut carbon dioxide emissions. For transitioning advice, see <https://renew.org.au/resources/how-we-can-help/> and <https://www.greenpower.gov.au/>

- ✓ Think about switching to a more ethical superannuation fund and/or bank, that invests in energy efficient, sustainable products and projects, rather than outdated fossil fuel infrastructure. For responsible investment advice, see <https://www.responsibleinvestment.org/>.
- ✓ Join a bushcare group, and contribute to nature restoration! Bushcarers restore degraded vegetation communities by creating healthy, carbon storing bushland. Healthy bushland and streams offer respite for local wildlife stressed by climate change extremes. See Chapter Ten for BMCC and NPWS bushcare groups.
- ✓ Support the Blue Mountains City Council's Community Net Zero Plan by helping to restore planetary health, aspiring to zero waste practices and transitioning towards carbon neutral living. See https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/CCS-0224-25%20Community%20Net%20Zero%20Plan_FA_0.pdf

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Chapter Ten Join a local environment group

A variety of Blue Mountains environmental organisations work to restore, protect, study and conserve our native plants and animals, waterways and other natural resources. They all rely on volunteers, and welcome new recruits!

Here is a list of local environmental clubs and organisations, and their activities. They provide opportunities for meeting like-minded people, and sharing conservation ideas and actions.

- Advocacy, campaigning, education @ Blue Mountains Conservation Society <https://www.bluemountains.org.au>
- Advocacy, campaigning, education @ Lithgow Environment Group <https://www.lithgowenvironment.au/>
- Advocacy, campaigning, education @ National Parks Association <https://npansw.org.au/npa/join/volunteer/>
- Bird watching, including data collection @ Blue Mountains Bird Observers <https://bmbo.org.au/>
- Botany/plant study, including data collection @ Plant Study Group Blue Mountains Conservation Society <https://bluemountains.org.au/psg/index.shtml>
- Bushcare @ Blue Mountains City Council <https://bushcarebluemountains.org.au/>
- Bushcare @ Lower Mountains National Parks and Wildlife Service e: npws.hawkesburynattai@environment.nsw.gov.au
- Bushcare @ Penrith City Council <https://www.penrithcity.nsw.gov.au/waste-environment/environment/bushland/bushcare-groups>
- Bushcare @ Upper Mountains National Parks and Wildlife Service e: npws.uppermountains@environment.nsw.gov.au
- Bushwalking @ Blue Mountains Conservation Society <https://bluemountains.org.au/bushwalking.shtml>
- Bushwalking @ Springwood Bushwalking Club <https://www.springwoodbushwalker.org.au/website/public/index.php>
- Bushwalking @ Upper Blue Mountains Bushwalking Club <https://ubmbc.org.au/>
- Conservation volunteering @ National Parks and Wildlife Service <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/conservation-and-heritage/volunteer-programs>
- Native plant nursery @ Blue Mountains Conservation Society Nursery <https://bluemountains.org.au/nursery.shtml>
- Native plant nursery @ Glenbrook Native Plant Reserve and Nursery <https://apsbluemtnsgroup.org>
- Native plant nursery @ Katoomba Native Plant Nursery and Wildplant Rescue Service <https://www.wildplantrescue.org.au>
- Rescuing and rehabilitating injured native wildlife @ WIRES <https://www.wires.org.au/wires-bluemountains>

Please note that this list is not exhaustive. There are quite a few specialist environmental groups operating in the Blue Mountains, and the surrounding area. An online search may turn up some interesting options.

Planning to join a local environment group? We hope that you have a great time!

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New Holland Honeyeater F. Lumsden

Afterword

The President and Management Committee of Blue Mountains Conservation Society trust that you enjoyed reading this booklet, and found it informative.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our unique Blue Mountains environment and the ways in which we can help it to thrive, for the benefit of current residents and future generations of Australians, and to secure a bright future for our truly magnificent native wildlife.

As well as being intrinsically valuable, interesting and beautiful, thriving bushland and healthy streams provide us with a stimulating environment in which to work, play and relax. Accordingly, every effort made by residents and households to minimise environmental damage is important, no matter how small.

Please help to spread this vital message, by sharing the booklet and its ideas with family, friends and neighbours.

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Acknowledgements

A number of Blue Mountains conservationists contributed their considerable talents, time and energy to the development of *Living Near the Bush* (Second Edition). They reviewed text, kindly supplied illustrations and photographs, provided many helpful suggestions and unstintingly shared personal experiences, knowledge and insights.

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Thank you also to those who chose to keep their valuable contributions anonymous. It was always a pleasure to work with you.

The map, *Reserves included within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area* was supplied courtesy of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW Government.

The map, *Blue Mountains City Council Ward Boundaries and Local Government Area* was supplied courtesy of the Blue Mountains City Council.

The graphic designers at Design Heroes, Katoomba, were unfailingly patient, skilled and helpful.

Peter Ardill
Editor

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Resources for children and young people

Exploring nature is a constructive way for children and young people to develop their social, learning and environmental skills. The following list is not exhaustive! An online search is sure to reveal additional interesting material.

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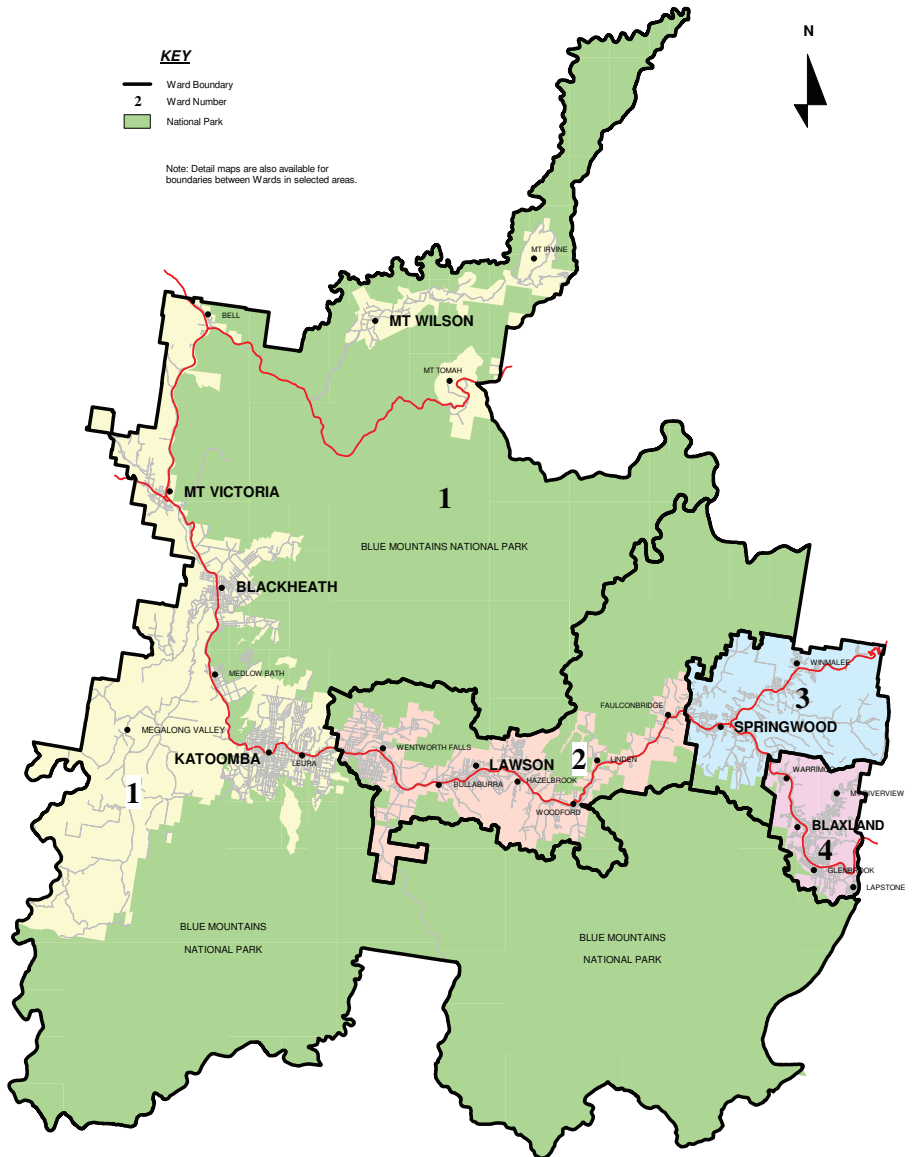
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Appendix One: Map of Blue Mountains City Council Local Government Area

City of Blue Mountains

Ward Boundaries



KEY

- Ward Boundary
- 2** Ward Number
- National Park

Note: Detail maps are also available for boundaries between Wards in selected areas.

DISCLAIMER:
While considerable care has been taken in the preparation of this information the City of Blue Mountains and its data suppliers accept no responsibility for errors or omissions in the data represented.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society

The Mission of the Society is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains and to increase awareness of the natural environment in general.

Enquiries, constructive feedback and new member applications are always welcome.

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