

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



40th Birthday Celebration

On 13 October 2001, Blue Mountains Conservation Society celebrated its 40th birthday, with a Birthday Dinner at the Conservation Hut. It was wet and misty outside, but there was a warm glow inside The Hut.

This was a wonderful opportunity for members to meet some of the pioneers of the Society and to say 'thank you' for the foundation they have laid down for us and future generations in caring for our beautiful Blue Mountains.

The evening started with Rex Gilroy's short 8mm film of the opening of the original Hut, taken by him as a young fellow of 18. The ceremony was attended by the Minister for Conservation.

Elizabeth Buki (one of the original members with her late husband John who was the first Secretary) made the journey from Gosford. Others came from near and far — Wilson Alcorn (from Mosman), Margaret Baker, Barry and Diana Barnes, Len and June Baxter, Bessie Bramsen, Ron and Robin Corringham (from Bingi on the South Coast), Mick and Jill Dark, Bert Davies, Wyn Jones, Reg and Dulcie Toseland, Annelie Wintzler, Bev Thompson.

Wilson Alcorn was President of the Society for some years from 1970. Wilson spoke with great warmth of the wonderful people he had met in the Conservation Society. (And it's still the same today!) He read a poem by his brother Graham.

Margaret Baker and Bessie Bramsen were members of the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society, which wasn't much younger than the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society when we amalgamated in 1996. Bessie still attends general meetings and in fact was at a general meeting recently on the night of her 94th birthday!

Jill Dark grew native plants at home for the native plant sales at the old Hut, and ran workshops to teach the others how to propagate native plants. Annelie Wintzler was a former Secretary of the Society. Bev Thompson looked after the Hut roster,

among other things.

At one period Reg Toseland kept the Society going by taking all three executive positions — he was President, Treasurer and Secretary all together. The next year Dulcie took on the President's job and Reg remained Secretary.

Wyn Jones started the Blackheath native plant nursery. Wyn spoke about the enormous contribution to the work of the Society by Winsome Gregory, who was too frail to attend, and read one of his poems. Ron and Robin Corringham helped get the Blackheath nursery going, and then Robin became nursery manager causing the nursery to expand and gained contracts to supply native plants to the RTA and other bodies. Len and June Baxter still walk with the Society. June regularly leads some of our weekend bushwalks.

So many others have contributed so much over the 40 years. Thank you all.

A quote from Reg and Dulcie Toseland in a thank you letter: "Elizabeth Buki was moved to tears with all the expressions of praise for the efforts of her husband John, and the handful of original helpers, attempting to raise some sort of interest for Conservation with both the children of the area, and the local community in particular."

The night was a stunning success! Denis Kevans sang "Moss's Gentle Fingers" and recited two poems. Jim Wallace did a great job as MC. Meredith Brownhill and members of the Society's Education Sub-Committee put up a lovely display, with early photos and history of the Society. The meal and friendly service provided by the cafe was superb. A wonderful book, the latest edition of "Native Plants of the Sydney District" by Fairley and Moore, donated by Fantail Books in Katoomba, was raffled and won by Warwick Mosman.

A special thanks and congratulations to members of the Management Committee who worked so hard to make the night a success, and especially to our President Robin Mosman who did much of the organisation AND made the delicious chocolate cake for dessert.

naturalist in the Science Communication Group at the Australian Museum. Martyn will present a slide show about "Invertebrates and frogs in the bush and your backyard". You are invited to bring along specimens of invertebrates for identification, but not frogs because of their sensitive nature. Bring a magnifying lens as well.

The meeting will be held on Friday 30 November, at the Conservation Hut, end of Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls, starting at 7.30 pm. Visitors are welcome.

This will be our last general meeting of the year. Martyn Robinson will speak

from 7.35 to 8.30 pm. After that there will be an extended supper and a chance for us to socialise and get to know one another better. Bring a plate of finger food and something to drink. Tea and coffee will be available as usual.

Notice of Meeting

A Special General Meeting will be held at the Conservation Hut at 7.30 pm on 30 November, preceding the normal monthly General Meeting. The sole topic of discussion will be membership fees. Details are included in the insert enclosed.

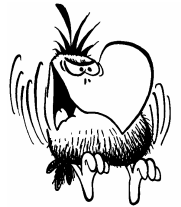
Scrapbook

Would a member be interested in taking responsibility for keeping a scrapbook of Society activities and photographs? [Meredit 4782.4823](mailto:Meredit@4782.4823).

Weeds of the Month

Gorse and Broom are flowering now in the Upper Blue Mountains bright yellow flowers seen growing by the highway and the railway, in disturbed ground, invading bushland along polluted water courses.

They will soon set seed - huge numbers of seeds which



last up to 35 years in the soil.

Gorse and Broom are noxious weeds, which means that they must be fully and continuously suppressed and destroyed. The longer they are left, the more difficult they are to remove.

If you have gorse or broom on your property or in the adjoining bushland, it is essential to act **now** to remove them. If you need advice on how to do it, contact your local bushcare group or Blue Mountains City Council's bushcare officer.

About Invertebrates & Frogs

General Meeting, Friday 30 November

In our backyards and in the bush is a hidden world, inhabited by hordes of tiny animals, sometimes fierce, often bizarre and colourful, always fascinating to watch — the invertebrates. Some of these are the butterflies, crickets, cicadas, moths, assassin bugs, mantises, and all sorts of other weird and wonderful creatures.

Martyn Robinson, the guest speaker at our general meeting in November, is a

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Save the ADI Site

The extensive woodlands which once covered Western Sydney's Cumberland Plains have been cleared, first for farming, more recently for housing. Only six percent of the original Cumberland Plains Woodland remain. The largest intact representation of this important woodland has been protected as Commonwealth Department of Defence land, the ADI site at St Marys.

When the ADI site was no longer needed for defence purposes, here was a rare prize! — 1,545 hectares of heritage listed Cumberland Plains bushland, containing over 50 species unique to the area, and open space between St Marys and Penrith and a breath of fresh air for the congested Western Suburbs! It had to be preserved! — but the Federal Government decided to sell this public land to private developers.

1200 people attended a protest rally and unanimously demanded the protection of the whole site as a new Regional Park and Nature Reserve, and a new political party, the Save the ADI Site Party was launched.

At present the ADI site is Western Sydney's primary reservoir of Cumberland Plain woodland biodiversity. The imposition of an 8,000 lot housing development on the site will fix that!

At present the ADI site has a major mitigating effect on air pollution in Western Sydney and the mountains.

Traffic congestion from 16,000 more cars on the M4 and feeder roads will fix that!

The Save the ADI Site Party was formed in response to the failure of both Government and Opposition to conserve the site in toto and will be standing candidates in the seats of Macquarie (Robert Warren), Lindsay (Geoff Brown), Chifley (Barbara Bates) and Bennelong (Noel Plumb) on November 10.

Election Promises Are Thin on the Ground!

Election promises to protect the environment are always thin on the ground and candidates for this election have not promised us much ground cover either!

The questionnaire of candidates and their answers is included in this Hut News. Our survey of candidates is a very necessary strategy to discover just what action candidates intend to undertake for the environment if elected.

Due to electoral commission constraints, names of some candidates were not released in time for our survey. However the questionnaire has been successful in that all the candidates for Macquarie and Lindsay who were surveyed have responded. The need for consolidation of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area is also now publicly established and has received considerable support.

The majority of candidates have answered YES to our request for them to seek \$12 million for World Heritage Consolidation. Liberal Candidates for Macquarie and Lindsay have given qualified answers to this question.

It is disappointing that Labor Candidates and the Liberal Candidate for Lindsay have not been able to give a direct answer to voting against a second airport in the Sydney Basin.

What to do with this questionnaire and answers? Pin it up at work on the noticeboard, give a copy to friends and take it to the polling booth. Make your vote count for the environment!

Threatened Species and Water Week

(14th - 20th October)

Imagine if you were small enough to see the creeks around here as enormous, flowing oceans. The life beneath one of these creeks would be as extra-ordinary as the life an astronaut might see when travelling on another planet.

Below the surface of anything is where the numbers and diversity of living creatures multiplies. A good example of this was proven in a study done by a Macquarie University researcher. In this study at least 4620 different species were found in one, very average, backyard. Within the aquatic world, the situation would be the same.

Already there are signs, however, that we need to take greater care of our water. Threatened species are an indication of this. If a species is threatened, there is a chance that we may lose it forever

because very few of them remain. If numbers are dropping in a population of species then there is a chance that that population may decrease to such limited numbers that they then become endangered — with extinction.

There are two threatened species that I would like to name that are local to the aquatic world of the Blue Mountains. One is a plant, one an animal. One lives in spectacular Blue Mountains' waterfalls; the other can be found in swamp areas — or soaks — that exist throughout this area.

Both species are endangered with extinction. Both are threatened by decreasing water quality.

The Dwarf Mountain Pine (*Microstobos fitzgeraldii*) is a very restricted species that can only be found in the spray zones of upper Blue Mountains waterfalls. This makes it unique! A pine, native to Australia, that selectively grows underneath waterfalls. For thousands of years the Dwarf Mountain Pine has enjoyed a constant shower of pristine water, making its branches droopy — it would be a tragedy if in only 200 years, our impact on water quality caused this dinosaur of the plant species to decline into extinction.

The Blue Mountains Water Skink is the other threatened species currently dependent upon water quality in the Blue Mountains. The Skink is about the size of a Banana — with similar colourings to a really ripe one — brown and yellow. It only lives in the swamp areas between Newnes Plateau and Hazelbrook; nowhere else in the world can it be found.

Another threat we need to think about is weeds. Weeds threaten not only the Blue Mountains Water Skink, but also the Dwarf Mountain Pine. Weeds compete for water and space with our native plants; this in turn means there is less food for our native animals, and less chance of biodiversity.

Weeds can dramatically change entire aquatic worlds. They change the plants that grow on water banks and the ones that grow beneath the water's surface. They also change the type of animals living in and out of the water — because of the big change in food that is available! All in all, there is a huge change in biodiversity, and therefore a greater chance of threatened species.

In this article, pollution and weeds have been the bad guys in the story of an aquatic world. The bad guys are trying to run the Dwarf Mountain Pine and the Blue Mountains Water Skink out of town. Luckily, we have caught the bad guys in action — and just in time. **Remember the NO pollution rule, and that no weeds are the only good weeds!**

For more information please contact Xuela Sledge, Threatened Species Community Programs Facilitator, NPWS, Phone: 47873104 or email: xuela.sledge@npws.nsw.gov.au

Membership Enquiries
 Contact Elizabeth van Reyswoud
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 Email: ereyswoud@hermes.net.au
 Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

'THE CONSERVATION HUT IS BOTH OUR JOY AND OUR TASKMASTER'

In 1973 the President of Blue Mountains Conservation Society (then named Katoomba and District Wildlife Preservation Society) wrote these words in the March newsletter - . He went on to list the positions needing to be filled in order to maintain the Society's self-appointed task of opening the Hut as a kiosk and tea room for weary bushwalkers and other visitors every weekend, every public holiday and every day of every school holiday, using it as a vehicle for increasing conservation awareness.

They needed a Hut roster, a supervisor and band of workers to man it during the hours they undertook to have it open to the public; a curator to look after the exhibits and arrange their presentation; a Hut supplies supervisor to check, order and pick up stock or arrange for its delivery; a librarian to look after the growing stock of books and record borrowings. The Hut had to be cleaned, and prepared for meetings, and someone was needed to supervise all this, and the maintenance of a regular supply of firewood. Extra hands were needed at working bees — for gardening, painting, carpentry, clearing and cleaning. Then there was the clerical work, and for the newsletter, an editor, contributors, typist, duplicator operator and somebody to organize its putting together, addressing, sealing, stamping and dispatch. An outings convener was needed to organize the monthly bushwalk, and lastly — but most importantly to them — members were needed who were willing to talk about conservation at other societies' functions and in the schools. All this before any mention

of president, treasurer or secretary!

And they had already spent years renovating the almost derelict building they rented from the Council.

They propagated native plants in their backyards — the ones who knew how to do it taught the others at workshops held at the old Hut — and they sold the plants at the Hut, and at street stalls. **They ran the tea rooms for 30 years — every weekend, public holiday and every day of all school holidays for 30 years.** Then they used the money they had raised to buy threatened environmentally sensitive land and give it back to the National Park - \$6,000 for a hanging swamp in Wentworth Falls, \$40,000 for an inholding in Kanangra-Boyd National Park. Last but by no means least, they campaigned tirelessly for the preservation of the bush they loved, and some of their campaigns are legends.

In their spare time, they bushwalked for the love of it.

These were the people who started the Blue Mountains Conservation Society 40 years ago. They were on the cutting edge of the revolution which is turning around the attitudes of white Australians to their environment, teaching them to see its unique beauty and value. All of us who love and value the Blue Mountains today owe them a debt of gratitude, for what they were able to save and for opening our eyes to the wonder of what was around us.

National Repair Package

In our Federal election questionnaire, candidates were asked to support the National Environmental Repair Package developed by the Australian Conservation Foundation and National Farmers Federation. This question refers to a joint report released last year by ACF and NFF. The report, entitled "Repairing the Country", costs the repair

of Australia's degraded land and water systems at \$64 billion, and outlines the range of actions needed to arrest salinity, land and river degradation and biodiversity loss.

The plan involves \$3.7 billion a year in public investment over 10 years and \$2.8 billion a year from private investment. This might sound a lot but compared to other portfolios of Commonwealth expenditure it is not much compared with the \$18 billion pa for Defence or the \$23.8 billion pa for Human Health (according to the 1999/2000 budget papers).

Some of the facts which demonstrate why drastic changes are needed include:

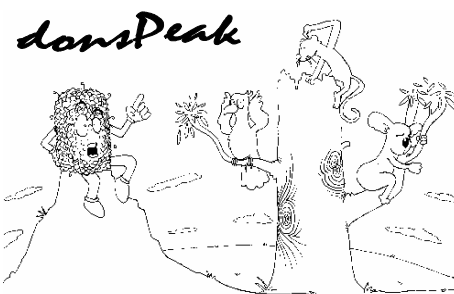
- Over half a million hectares of native vegetation is being cleared a year
- Salinity already affects well over two million hectares
- In the last 200 years 20 species of mammals have been declared extinct and 97 plants (with a further 3,329 categorised as rare or threatened)

The Repair Package proposes a range of actions needed to bring about this repair as well as financial investment. National targets are proposed for land, soils, rivers, vegetation and biodiversity. Implementation is proposed at regional and catchment level.

This Plan represents a health insurance policy for the environment; a policy that will save money in the longer term. However the longer the delay in implementing a serious nationally coordinated approach to repairing the land, the costlier it will be, and the more unlikely will be our success.

The problem won't go away if it is ignored. Now is the time for national leadership.

**"THERE IS A FAMOUS SAYING THAT WHEN ONE IS ON THE BRINK OF DISASTER THE ONLY PROGRESSIVE STEP IS BACKWARDS."
" (VINCE SERVENTY)**



Party Records Speak Volumes

Both major parties make promises about the environment. Unfortunately, when in government, neither party's record matches the promises. They simply do not spend enough on protection of air, water, forests, nor do they heavily penalise those who degrade them.

No matter which major party wins government, the real significance of legislation affecting the environment is likely to be determined by bargaining in the Senate. There are two minor parties whose senators have a **proven** track

record of making this process deliver for the environment whenever they hold the balance of power.

Vocally Challenged?

Forests Minister, Wilson Tuckey (a former publican) has derisively criticised ACF president Peter Garrett for being a former (sic) rock singer who employs lawyers and economists to advise him on Australia's environment. Readers are invited to submit their own lists of which occupations so thoroughly warp one's perspective that their veterans should never be allowed to have anything to do with conservation!

Suppressing a Murmur

There are two locations in Blue Mountains town centres which are both accessible to the public and command spectacular views of Blue Mountains National Park, underscoring the concept of our 'City Within a World Heritage Area'. One is the western stretch of Leura Railway platform, the other is the School of Arts site (or Westpac carpark), a section of publicly owned land at Springwood.

No plans are known for flogging the

Leura rail airspace, but local developers have long had their eyes on the Springwood site. The story of attempts to have a public square on this site contains more plot development than the Old Testament. Nevertheless, the developers keep trying to undermine the idea.

Recently, a columnist in the Blue Mountains Gazette, 'Mountain Murmurs' (which happens to be a non-gender specific collective) lent its weight to the developers' latest ploy. 'Mountain Murmurs' should not be misled into undervaluing this irreplaceable vantage point.

The Vampire Strikes Back (Seen in "Batnews")

'Want to go into BAT for WomBATS and BATTallions of other species affected by fighter flights over the Blue Mountains from BATstown Airport. Then bring your droppings and play a joke on the DingBATS aboard this fighter plane. If these joyflights don't like it, let them take a SaBATical, join the defence forces, and taste being **real** ComBATants. *Don Morrison.*

PERHAPS

Sometimes in the bush -
sunlight on leaves,
soft small winds of spring,
thrust and bloom of that season,
skill of a nesting bird weaving,
territorial proclamation of her mate
in crystal cadence,
dew spangled spider web, butterfly,
bright beetle, scent of leaf mould,
glimpse of a wallaby —
sometimes in the bush, thresholds.
Thresholds of splendour, of some
great truth?
Perhaps, perhaps ...
Graham Alcorn, December 1991.

Calico Bags for Christmas

The Society's calico bags with the message "14 million plastic bags go to landfill in Australia each day" will make great Christmas presents. They cost \$5 each. You can buy them at our November general meeting, or at the Conservation Hut cafe or Fantail books, Katoomba.

Magpie Christmas

The song of the cicada is a distinctive sound of the Australian summer. Most Australian cicadas take at least two years to develop and some probably take several more years. When they are ready, the cicada nymphs emerge from their underground homes, climb up the closest tree, moult one last time, and the males sing to attract a mate.

But what happens when somebody moves the tree?

We moved into our home in McLaren Crescent almost two years ago. There was a large conifer in the front garden. It made a nice Christmas tree. We decorated the lower branches with tinsel and coloured balls, then in March cut the tree down.

The Blackheath summer came early this year, with the emergence of cicadas in the first week of October, lots of them in my front garden. But where was the tree?

Instead of a large conifer to provide shelter from predators, they found some metre-high scribbly gums, a variety of small native shrubs, native grasses, and two hungry magpies!

The cicadas won't be singing in my garden this year — but the magpie family are doing very nicely. *Christine Davies.*

Welcome to New Members

Lean Sainsbury, Lawson
Ian and Susan Ernst, Mosman
David Warren, Lawson
John and Glenda Wylie, Blackheath
Jenny Cantwell, Warrimoo
Chris Klein, Warrimoo
Martin and Patricia Cantwell, Chatswood
Clara Hali, Blackheath
Margaret Garrett, Wentworth Falls

Kids Club:

Michael Sutton, Glenbrook
Jonathan Creagh, East Blaxland
Britanny & Loesje Fletcher, Glenbrook
Lauren McKechnie, Emu Heights

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Nov 24 (Sat)** **Management Meeting**, 9 am, Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson.
Nov 30 (Fri) **General Meeting**, at the Conservation Hut, 7.30 pm. "Invertebrates and frogs in the bush and your backyard", Martyn Robinson, Australian Museum, 7.30 to 8.30 pm. Bring a plate of finger food and a drink for extended supper afterwards. (See Page 1)
Dec 02 (Sun) **Blue Mountains City Council BUSHCARE PICNIC at Megalong Reserve**. 12 pm onwards.

QUOLL CLUB (Activities for 12 and under - contact Jessica 4788.1200)

BUSHCARE (Tools provided — bring morning tea and gloves.)

- Nov 09 (Fri)** **Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group**. (2nd Friday of every month) Contact Karen on 4757.1929 for the meeting place. (following Friday if wet).

BUSHWALKS:

Monday Leisure Walks: *Usually half day walk unless noted, leisurely pace.*

- Nov 05** **Birdwood Gully**. Allan 4739.2767. Springwood Stn 9am. Easy. BBQ.
Nov 12 **Lithgow Zig Zag & Viaduct View**. ☎ Ron 4757.1526. Train to Zig Zag Station arr. 9.16am, leaves Wentworth Falls 8.29, return 3.05pm. Be in the last carriage. Medium day walk. Take lunch. Also Train Museum visit.
Nov 19 **Bus Trip to Jenolan Caves** (walk on final section of Six Foot Track). Bus leaves Katoomba Depot at 8.30. ☎ Bill 4759.1692 for bookings. Lunch at Caves House or bring your own. Opportunity for cave inspection or other walk in afternoon.
Nov 26 **Undercliff/Overcliff and Rocket Point**. ☎ Bill 4759.1692. Wentworth Falls Station 9am. Easy. Cafe or BYO.
Dec 03 **Kings Tableland**. ☎ Norah 4757.4058. Wentworth Falls Station 9am. Easy. BBQ.
Dec 10 **Darwin's Walk to Kings Tableland**. ☎ Kees 4759.1958. Wentworth Falls Station 9am. Easy. BBQ.
Dec 17 **Evans and Christmas Party at Tarana Hotel**. ☎ BillG 4759.1692. Bus leaves Katoomba 8.30 am. Easy. Arrange pickups with Bill.

"Getting to Know the Blue Mountains Walks"

on **Wednesday and THURSDAY from November 21**. (Half day, easy/med)

- Nov 07 (Wed)** **Pope's Glen**. ☎ Bill 4759.1692. Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9am. Easy. BBQ.
Nov 14 (Wed) **Forgotten Walk No1**. ☎ Allan 4739.2767. Faulconbridge, St Georges Cres, opposite church, 9am. Easy. BBQ.
Nov 21 (Thu) **Pierces Pass to Grose River and return**. ☎ Bill 4759.1692. Mount Victoria Station 9am. Car pool. Long walk, take lunch. Medium.
Nov 28 (Thu) **Historic Glenbrook, Zig Zag, Bridge**. ☎ Jock 4758.6346. Car park near Glenbrook Cinema 9am. Medium, half day. Lunch at cafe.
Dec 05 (Thu) **Woodford Dam**. ☎ Jock 4758.6346. Great Western Highway, cnr Winbourne Ave, Hazelbrook, 9 am. Easy. Take lunch.
Dec 12 (Thu) **Sassafras Gully** (from Springwood Avenue, cnr Homedale Street — Meet there 9am). ☎ Bill 4759.1692. BBQ after
Dec 19 **Portal Lookout and Euroka Clearing**. ☎ Allan 4739.2767. Glenbrook Station carpark 9am. Easy. BBQ and picnic. Last walk in 2001.

Weekend Bushwalks: *Bushwalkers are requested to phone the contact before 8 pm the day before the walk. The walk may be cancelled if fewer than 4 walkers register, or if other circumstances make conditions unsafe.*

- Nov 03 (Sat)** **Govett's Leap to Junction Rock**. ☎ June 4787.7312. Blackheath Station 9.30am. Medium. Hard climb out. Bring lunch.
Nov 10 (Sat) **Mt Wilson to Wollongambe River**. ☎ June 4787.7312. Mt Vic Station 9.30am. Medium. Bring lunch and swimming togs.
Nov 17 (Sat) **Pulpit Rock**. ☎ Don 4787.6447. Blackheath Station carpark 9.30 am. Medium. Bring lunch.
Nov 24 (Sat) **National Pass, Wentworth Pass**. ☎ Matthew 4782.4218. Conservation Hut 9am. Medium, hard climb. Long day, bring lunch.
Dec 01 (Sat) **Walls Ledge, Centennial Glen, Porters Pass**. ☎ Mary 4787.6918. Blackheath Station carpark 9.30 am. Medium. Bring lunch.
Dec 09 (Sun) **Nellie's Glen, Bonnie Doon Lookouts**. ☎ Jim 4784.3305. Gearins Hotel Katoomba 9.30am. Medium. Bring lunch.
Dec 15 (Sat) **Weekend Walkers and Friends CHRISTMAS PARTY at Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens**. Meet Mt Victoria Station 10 am for car pool. Self catering. All invited.

Walks are generally Easy to Medium Grade, unless otherwise noted. **Easy:** Mostly good surfaces, but some rough or steep sections. Suited to people of average fitness. **Medium:** Includes rough or steep sections, some of which may require clambering over natural obstacles. Suited to people of better than average fitness, but discuss with the contact if in doubt. **Hard:** We occasionally arrange a walk considered most suited to experienced and very fit walkers but it is conducted at a moderate pace. Always discuss with the contact if the walk you would like to do is Medium/hard or Hard, before attending. **If this is your first walk**, or you are in any doubt, discuss with the contact or Bushwalks Convener Bill Graham 4759.1692.