

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Notice of Annual General Meeting

Blue Mountains Conservation Society's annual general meeting will be held at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, on Friday 26 March at 7.30 pm.

The business to be discussed is to receive reports from office bearers, receive the annual accounts, appoint an auditor and elect President and other office-bearers.

Following close of business, our normal monthly meeting will commence. The guest speaker will be Blue Mountains historian Jim Barrett.

Cox's River

At our monthly meeting on Friday 26 March, historian Jim Barrett will show slides of the Cox's River and its environs, including some historical photos from pre-Warragamba days. Jim Barrett has written nine books on the history of the Blue Mountains. A member of the Catholic Bushwalking Club, Jim walked in the valley of the Cox and its environs for forty five years. Below are some extracts from Jim's book "Cox's River", published in 1993.

'The telling of the story of the Cox is a de facto peep into the vast area of the southern Blue Mountains. The watershed of the Cox covers the area from Katoomba to Kanangra Walls, from the Jenolan Main Range to King's Tableland/Binlow Tableland... The Cox receives the waters of three lovely rivers which have their rise on or near the main divide - Harry's (or Jenolan River), Kanangra River and the Kowmung River.'

'The great variety and rugged beauty of these streams both complement and rival the relatively placid reaches of the Cox... It is the stretch of the river between Harry's and Kowmung Rivers which is still more or less in a natural and undeveloped state. Bounded by the Wild Dog Mountains on its left bank, and by the Queahgong-Guouogang massif and the Gangerang Range on its right, it is a haven for the naturalist and the bushwalker.'

Upstream of Harry's River the Cox's River passes through private property which is semi rural. Downstream of the Kowmung: 'Nowadays of course it forms the northern arm of Warragamba Dam, but whenever I think of the Lower Cox I see the valley as it was forty years ago, the long limpid reaches shaded by river oaks and river red gums, and the dancing white waters between the reaches contrasting with the yellow-red cliffs high above. And forty years ago the descendants of the original pioneers were still there, going about their business in a manner not greatly changed from their forefathers of more than a century before.'

The meeting will be held on Friday 26 March at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, and will commence at 7.45 pm, following the close of business for our Annual General Meeting. Visitors are very welcome.

Bushcare/Streamwatch Open Day:

Sunday, 21 March, 10am to 1pm

South Lawson Bushcare Group is conducting a Bushcare/Streamwatch Open Day on Sunday, 21 March, 10am-1pm. All welcome and bring the children.

Learn about our local flora and fauna from Richard Lee, BMCC Bushcare Officer. Laurie Strathdee will be conducting water sampling and insect collection sessions along Lawson Creek during the day. Site tours and revegetation demonstrations will also be held. See how the bush is being reclaimed.

Pop in any time or come for the whole session. A light picnic lunch and refreshments will be available.

Enter near the corner of Honour Avenue and Waratah St, Lawson, and walk forty metres down the earthen road track. Enquiries: Erst 4759 2058; Peter 4759 2578.

Autumn Plant Sale

Saturday 10 April, 9am to 1 pm.

The Society's Autumn plant sale will take place on Saturday 10 April 2004, outside the Conservation Hut at the end of Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls.

Most plants are either \$3 each or four for \$10. Supertubes are \$5 each. There will also be a few tree ferns in larger pots at \$15 each.

Come along, support the Society, and buy your native plants to help the environment. Enquiries: David Coleby, Nursery Manager, 4784 1395.

Council Elections

The Society's subcommittee has been hard at work writing media releases and ads for the Blue Mountains Gazette to educate the community about individual and party voting patterns on environmental issues.

The Society has a policy of political nonalignment, so we will just be presenting the facts which will speak for themselves. Much of our work has been lobbying council on environmental issues, often unsuccessfully with the current council.

The best thing we can hope for is that the community, which rates care of the environment as one of the most important priorities for Council, will look for candidates with real commitment when voting at the Council elections.

Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society Records

Three members of the Society responded to the request last year for volunteers to assist with the archiving of the records of the former Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society held in the Local Studies Section of the Blue Mountains City Library at Springwood.

Over the December-January period the Local Studies Section was a hive of activity as Sue Beevers, Peter Ardill and Liz van Reyswoud completed cleaning, listing and boxing the records that cover LBMCS activities from 1966 until its amalgamation into Blue Mountains Conservation Society in 1995.

These records include copies of LBMCS' 'Kalori' newsletter and the background to various environmental campaigns in the Lower Mountains and Penrith areas, including Glenmore Park, Regentville, ADI, Londonderry Waste Disposal sites etc.

The records are of considerable historical value to students and other researchers and could well be useful to members of BMCS as regards current and future campaigns. After all, the environmental issues dealt with then are pretty much the same as those that face us today, the differences being more in the manner of how relevant information was obtained and disseminated. Rarely, for example, do we now hand write letters etc. on foolscap paper!

If you would like to view the collection which is available at Springwood Library ask one of the Local Studies Librarians, John Low or John Merriman, by telephoning 4723 5044.

**"Hut News", the newsletter of
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Wilderness Seminar

**Sunday 28 March, 9.30am to 5pm
NPWS Heritage Centre, Blackheath**

The seminar will consider the need for a renewal and resurgence of wilderness activism, celebrating wilderness, and examine some of the criticisms of wilderness, and how they relate to the dedication and management of wilderness in the Blue Mountains.

Speakers include Peter Prineas, Haydn Washington, Bill Lines, Keith Muir, Wyn Jones, Mark Tredinnick, The Wilderness Society, and others.

The seminar is being organised by the Greater Blue Mountains Wilderness Network and registration is being handled by the Colong Foundation for Wilderness. Cost is \$20 (\$15 concession). To register either send a cheque to the Colong Foundation at level 2, 362 Kent St, Sydney NSW 2000 or email keith@colongwilderness.org.au advising of your intention to register.

Destruction of Tasmania's State Forests:

Jenny Rich.

A recent ABC TV Four Corners program outlined the appalling situation relating to Tasmania's government-owned State Forests. Under present forestry practices unique old growth forests are being destroyed, vital habitat for birds and animals is being destroyed by clear felling and burning, native animals are being poisoned with 1080 bait, streams are being silted up and polluted and too much water is being used on growing new plantations. Cities such as Launceston face future water shortages.

The remaining species-rich Tasmanian forests are being clearfelled for logs and woodchips and turned into monoculture plantations. Magnificent areas such as the Tarkine, Styx, Great Western Tiers, Eastern Tiers, North East Highlands, Ben Lomond and Tasman Peninsula are all under threat.

The Tasmanian Government has entered into a close commercial relationship with the timber company Gunns Ltd. Gunns buys most of the logs from State Forests at cheap rates, then produces woodchips and some sawn logs and sells them to the mainland and overseas, making large profits in the process. Gunns is the biggest native forest woodchip producer in the southern hemisphere. More native forests are exported as woodchips from Tasmania than from all other states combined. Companies such as the Commonwealth Bank and AMP are supporting this destruction by investing their funds in Gunns Ltd.

According to the terms of Tasmania's Regional Forestry agreement, State Forestry is self regulated and the State's forests are exempt from the Federal Biodiversity and Threatened Species laws. Breaches of the Forest Practices Act have not been prosecuted.

Both the State Labor government and the State Liberal opposition support the present practices, with 'jobs for Tasmanians' being the catchcry. The only opposition is coming from the Greens, Democrats and environment groups such as the Wilderness Society and ACF.

The logging industry is exempted from the Freedom of Information Act and this makes it hard to find out what is really happening.

We encourage you to write to MPs and Ministers in the Tasmanian and Federal Parliaments, demanding that action be taken to stop this terrible destruction. Another useful tactic is to find out if any of your superannuation or investment funds have been invested in Gunns, and if so, demand that your funds be withdrawn. Money talks! This destruction of Tasmania's forests is going to be a Federal Election issue.

Chris Mason of Blackheath is organising a Blue Mountains action group. Phone her on 4787 1366.

European Wasps



Bee

Wasp

The European wasp *Vespula germanica* is native to Europe, North Africa and temperate Asia. It first reached Tasmania in 1959, where it soon became well established. However, it was not until 1977 that the European wasp was first recorded on the mainland, probably having hitched a ride on a plane or ship. In March 2003 there were many reports about European wasps in the Blue Mountains.

Each European wasp nest is started by a single queen in the spring after the queen has emerged from hibernation. Workers are more aggressive during the autumn as the nest prepares for winter but may cause problems at any time of year. Workers normally fly 50-250m from the nest in search of food during the day. They will scavenge anything containing protein or sugar, such as exposed meat, salads, soft drink, beer, cordial and sandwiches as well as nectar, dead insects and garbage. Wasps may enter open drink cans and, if swallowed, may sting the mouth or throat, blocking the airway. Vibrations or sudden movement may disturb European wasp workers and provoke attack.

Are European wasps a threat to our wildlife? I haven't been able to find out. Most animals which don't belong pose some sort of a threat through predation or competition—and European wasps are aggressive! They can be a threat to us if accidentally swallowed or provoked. If they turn up uninvited at your Autumn picnic or BBQ it's best not to annoy them by trying to swat them or wave them away.

The best way to control European wasps is by destroying the nest – **if you can find it!** Sneak up on the nest at night, wearing appropriate clothing (body fully covered). Carry a torch covered with red cellophane which won't attract the wasps. Direct a stream of Surface spray or dust into the nest from a safe distance. AND try not to disturb the nest and avoid unnecessary vibrations! (I think I'd opt for "Plan B" and get a qualified pest controller to do the job!)

There have been tests in South Australia using chemical baiting (the insecticide fipronil) which the workers carry back to the nest and feed to the wasp larvae.

Blue Mountains City Council has a leaflet from the Department of Agriculture where you can find more information. *Christine Davies.*

(references: www.museum.vic.gov.au; www.moir.vic.gov.au/animals; and University of Adelaide/SARDI website about chemical baiting)

**Membership Enquiries
Contact Elizabeth van Reyswoud
Phone 4757.2694
Email: mcreysw@bigpond.net.au
Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782**

New Plant Species Found at Blackheath

It seems incredible that a previously unknown native plant species can be found less than one kilometre from Blackheath station and right next to a popular walking track. But that is what has happened.

In November 2001, photographer and wildflower author Alan Fairley observed a clump of unusual leaves on a wet rock wall on the Centennial Glen track. A small specimen was taken and grown on in wet soil in a pot and in November 2003 it flowered.

As the flower seemed very unusual, Alan took it to the Sydney Herbarium where, after some debate and misidentification, it was agreed that it was a new species of Bladderwort (*Utricularia*). It will be formally described and named as *Utricularia porrecta* in a forthcoming edition of *Telopea*.

The plant is unusual in a number of ways. It has not been observed flowering in situ, but a few dead flower stems were observed in December 2003. In cultivation it sends up delicate stems bearing 3 to 5 flowers, light mauve with purple markings. They have a remarkable appearance, with two conspicuous "rabbit ears" (2-lobed upper petals) and a long curved horn-like spur beneath the flower, directed forward (porrecta) and upwards. Another remarkable feature is that it belongs to a section of Bladderwort (*Calpidisca*), previously known only from Africa and Madagascar. This new species is the first record of this section occurring in Australia.

As only one population is known, any deterioration of the water quality of Centennial Glen Creek as the result of pollution from Blackheath settlement would be a significant threat.

New Book on Rare Plants of Greater Sydney

Members may remember a talk given in October 2002 by Alan Fairley to Blue Mountains Conservation Society on his research into rare plants of the Sydney and Blue Mountains district. Alan advises that the results of that research will be available as a book in April 2004.

It is called *Seldom Seen – Rare Plants of Greater Sydney* (New Holland Publishers, RRP \$29.95). As well as photographs and descriptions of 210 rare species, there are fascinating stories about their discovery and naming, how some plants thought extinct were rediscovered, facts about species conservation and biographies of principal collectors and botanists who made significant contributions to the discovery of rare plants, including Conservation Society members like Isobel Bowden.

Many of the plants discussed in the book are Blue Mountain species, and the unique combination of history and botany will make this book an absorbing

armchair read. Anyone interested in further information should contact Alan Fairley on email afairley@ozweb.com.au

Walk Against Want

Sunday 21 March, Wentworth Falls

Each year Oxfam-Community Aid Abroad holds a Walk Against Want to raise funds for disadvantaged communities around the world. An environmentally sustainable mud stove can be bought for an Ethiopian woman for only \$15 so that they reduce their reliance on charcoal and firewood for cooking. \$40 funds environmental education for a school in Ethiopia to encourage young people to adopt sustainable farming practices.

Our Walk will be held on Sunday 21 March—a choice of two walks, one about 6km and the other 10km, starting at the Wentworth Falls picnic area at 9am, walk to the falls, along the Overcliff track to the Conservation Hut and back to the picnic area.

We are inviting walkers, marshals and sponsors to join us in increasing awareness in the Blue Mountains for disadvantaged communities around the world. Contact Simone on 4751 3549 or Sue on 4782 4240 for further details.

Eco-friendly Communities

"Waste not, Want not!" is the title of free, practical and informative workshops focusing on eco-friendly and sustainable living within our community. Three of these workshops will be conducted at the Lower Mountains Neighbourhood Centre, 33 Hope Street, Blaxland, between 10 am and 12 noon.

Topics: Thursday 11 March, "Being Water Wise"; Thursday 25 March, "Waste watchers"; Thursday 29 April, topic to be determined by interested participants of both/either sessions.

Mountains Mobile Minds are providing child care and bookings are essential. Phone 4739.1164 for more information and bookings.

Quoll Club Newsletter

The Quoll Club is an environmental club for children under 16, run by Blue Mountains Conservation Society. There are monthly walks for pre-school children under 6, and we advertise activities for older children and plan to organise some of our own on an irregular basis.

The monthly newsletter has nature notes, puzzles, word games, quizzes and competitions. Membership of the Quoll Club is free to children, grandchildren and friends of Society members provided the newsletter can be posted to the same address with Hut News, otherwise it costs \$10 per annum.

If you would like to receive a copy of the Quoll Club newsletter please contact our Membership Secretary (contact details are at the bottom of page 2) and advise the name/names of the Quoll Club members you would like to nominate.



Training Course for New Volunteers

NSW Wildlife Information Rescue and Education Service is a volunteer organisation dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation and release of sick, injured and orphaned wildlife. Blue Mountains Branch is now looking for volunteers to help in this valuable and rewarding task.

You have to be over 18, with a commitment to the wildlife which does so much to enhance the unique and diverse environment of the Blue Mountains.

The next general training course will be held in Glenbrook over 3 days: Saturday 8 May (half day), Saturday 15 May (full day), Saturday 22 May (full day). Cost is: single \$88, family \$114.

For more information or to register phone WIRES 4754.2946.

Members' Forum

Members' Forum will be the name of a new regular column to appear in Hut News and on the BMCS website.

This is an opportunity for members to provide feedback or ask questions and receive responses from members of the management committee.

Tell us what you think! Are you enjoying the bushwalks? Are your new native plants in trouble? Would you like advice on land use issues? Would you like help with writing an article for Hut News or the Blue Mountains Gazette?

Write to Samantha Stevens, Publicity Officer, PO Box 595, Katoomba 2780, email belbeach@bigpond.net.au or phone 0425 316 953.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Annual General Meeting: Friday 26 March 7.30 pm, at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. (see page 1).

Monthly Meeting: Friday 26 March, 7.45 pm, following AGM (see page 1)

Management Meeting: Saturday 20 March, 9 am, Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson. Members are welcome to attend as observers.

Bushcare: Saturday 13 March. Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets at 9am on the 2nd Saturday of every month. Tools are provided. Bring morning tea, gloves and drinking water. Contact Karen 4757.1929.

Clean Up Australia Day: Sunday, 7 March.

Bushcare/Streamwatch Open Day: Sunday 21 March, at Lawson (page 1)

Walk Against Want: Sun. 21 March, at Wentworth Falls (page 3)

Wilderness Seminar: Sun. 28 March, at Blackheath (page 2)

Autumn Plant Sale: Sat. 10 April, 9am to 1 pm, Conservation Hut (page 1)

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Bushwalking Group: Details of bushwalks and other activities are on Page 4.

BMCS Multi-Day Activities

Wombeyan Caves (27-29 April)

Heritage Caves tour, Junction and Fig Tree Caves Tours, Marble Quarry, Kanangra Walls, etc. Only upper berths in cabins (or tent or caravan sites) are still available. If you would like to book an upper bunk berth in a cabin or a tent /caravan site or be put on a cancellation waiting list for a lower berth, please ring 8230 2116 and leave your phone number and postal address ASAP.

Everyone who has booked for the Wombeyan Caves trip will receive a detailed itinerary and communal meal roster in late March.

Green Cape Lighthouse Keepers' Quarters (staying 1/2/3 August 2004) and Mallacoota Log Cabins (staying 4/5/6 August 2004).

Maximum numbers 12 – not expected to exceed \$40 per person per night. Activities may take place in: Beach, coast and rainforest walks, Ben Boyd National Park, Croajingalong National Park, Mount Imlay, Nadgee, boat ride along the wild shores of Mallacoota Inlet. Bookings from those staying whole 6 nights only at this stage. Send \$40 (Australian Post Money Order preferred) to Don Morison, PO Box 170, Katoomba 2780.

Welcome to New Members

Christopher Chatwin, UK
Marlene and Martin Vaughan,
Wentworth Falls
Martin Bouman, Ermington
Debbie Dunn, Woodford
Julie Pyne, Mt. Victoria
Mark Ptolemy, Hazelbrook
Jennifer Wigan, Wentworth Falls
Trish and David Hammill, Dubbo

Capertee Tree Planting

(from Carol Proberts)

The next Capertee Valley tree planting will be held on the weekend of 17-18 April 2004. This is part of an ongoing project to replace habitat for the endangered Regent Honeyeater and other woodland species. Decisions have been made about the site to be planted and site preparation is well underway. All we need now are willing volunteers to get the plants into the ground.

The 2003 tree planting weekends were a huge success with about 120 people attending on each of the two weekends in April and August. This April we will be planting 5000 trees on a single property along the Glen Alice to Rylstone road in the north-western section of the valley. This will bring the total number of trees and shrubs planted in the valley since 1994 to over 57000!

Accommodation options range from camping at Glen Davis or on a local property, to staying in one of the cottages available throughout the valley (expected to be around \$25 per night).

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING GROUP

Our Bushwalking Group provides a range of activities. Membership of the bushwalking group is available to members of the Society. For further information contact the Activity Leader/Coordinator (listed) or Bushwalks Conveyor Bob van Reyswoud 4757 2694 (phone/fax), email mcreysw@bigpond.net.au Membership details are on page 4. **Cost of insurance and affiliation fees for bushwalkers is \$12.50 per member.**

Pre-School Walks, for parent/grandparent/carer with children under 6 years.

Short, easy walks, approx 1 hour, 1st Wednesday of every month, starting at 10.30am. Bring a snack and a drink. Contact Liz Riley 4787.6637 for more information or if the weather is doubtful.

Apr 07 Wentworth Falls Lake. Meet at the playground on Sinclair Crescent.

Monday Leisure Walks: Usually 'Short Day' walks of 3-5 hours suitable for walkers of average fitness. Graded Medium, i.e. can include some short rock scrambles or some short sections off-track. Bring morning tea and lunch, plus carry at least 1 litre of WATER, 2 litres on warmer days.

Mar 08 Tesselated Pavement, Mt Irvine. Interesting rock formations. Meet 9.15am Mt. Victoria Rly Stn. ☎ Jock 4758 6346. BBQ.

Mar 15 Evans Lookout to Bridal Veil Falls and Return. Clifftop walk. Magnificent Views over Grose Valley. Meet 9.15am B'heath N'hood Centre. ☎ Nora 4757 4058.

Mar 22 Bus Trip: The Barren Grounds, Illawarra Escarpment. Circular Walk, views over coastline, bird watching. Fare \$10 when booking. Meet 8 am BMCC depot, South St, Katoomba. ☎ Laurel 4784 1554 for other pick-ups.

Mar 29 Gooch's Crater, Wollangambe. Wilderness walk among pagodas. Meet 9.15am, Mt Victoria Rly Stn. ☎ Alan 4739 2767.

Apr 05 Collier's Lookout, Blackheath. Wonderful Blackheath scenery. Meet 9.15am Blackheath Commuter Car Pk. ☎ Mary 4787 6918. BBQ.

Thursday Pleasure Walks: *These easy to medium grade walks are conducted to suit the walkers on the day. Times given are approximate. Slower walkers are catered for and on longer walks there is an option of a slower group to complete a section of the walk. Phone the contact for any enquiries about the program, starting times and transport issues. NOTE: Walks to commence at 10 am unless stated otherwise.*

Mar 11 Eureka Clearing, Glenbrook. Walks along creek and to lookouts from Eureka Clearing in BM National Park. Meet Glenbrook Station. ☎ Simone 4757 3416.

Mar 18 Echo Point to Katoomba Cascades. Prince Henry Cliff Walk, easy grade with some steps, spectacular views. Car shuffle if required. Meet Gearins Hotel, Katoomba. ☎ Joan 4782 2218.

Mar 25 Newnes Plateau Bus Trip. All day to visit Wolgan Valley. View Canyon and Glow Worm Tunnel. Bring lunch and torch. **All seats now taken.** Meet 8 am at Bus Depot South St North Katoomba. ☎ Simone 4757 3416.

Apr 01 Wentworth Falls. Exploratory walk from Tablelands Road to Rocket Point on bush tracks and fire trails. Meet WWF Station carpark. ☎ David 4757 3416.

Apr 08 Birdwood Gully, Springwood. Gradual descent and ascent on bush track with some steps to Birdwood Gully. Car shuffle if required. Meet at Springwood Station, entrance to commuter carpark. ☎ Marie 4787 1257.

Weekend Bushwalks: *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 Bob van Reyswoud 4757.2694.*

Mar 6 (Sat) Overcliff/Undercliff, Slacks Stairs, Wentworth Pass. Hard, steep descent. Swim in pool below waterfall. Meet 9am Wentworth Falls Station carpark. ☎ Meredith 4782-4823. Bring swimming costume.

Mar 13 (Sat) Ruined Castle. Meet Gearin's Hotel, Katoomba. 8.30am. Medium/hard. ☎ Bill 4758-8545.

Mar 20 (Sat) Bellbird Point, (Megalong Valley). Meet Blackheath Station, 10am. Car pool. Easy. ☎ Judy 4787-1191.

Mar 27 (Sat) Thor Head. Meet Mt. Victoria station 9am. Medium/Easy. ☎ Ron 4757-1526.

Apr 3 (Sat) Leura to Katoomba via Pool of Siloam, Prince Henry Cliff Walk, Leura Forest, Furber Steps or Scenic Railway. Medium. Long Walk. Meet Leura Station 9.30am. ☎ Dave 4735-2027.

The Saturday night dinner will provide the chance to socialise and will cost \$25 for those who wish to attend. The weekend is an opportunity to not only contribute to a very successful and worthwhile environmental project, but also to visit different parts of this spectacular valley which is a stronghold for a number of declining woodland birds and

other wildlife.

We ask that intending participants register as early as possible to help us organise accommodation and catering for the Saturday night dinner. For registration or further information, contact David Geering, Regent Honeyeater Recovery Co-ordinator, on Freecall 1800 621056 or email david.geering@npws.nsw.gov.au