

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



ELECTION TIME AGAIN!

At the Annual General Meeting of BMCS, to be held at the Monthly Meeting in the Conservation Hut on Friday 28 March, you will have the opportunity to elect a Management Committee for 2008-9.

This notice in the penultimate Hut News before the AGM gives you time to think about whether you wish to step up and influence the Society's activities. A list of positions on Management Committee will be found in the present Hut News. An update in Hut News for March will provide information on how to nominate and the estimated amount of time needed to fulfill the job. For additional information please feel free to contact anyone on Management Committee

Nominations may be lodged in writing before the meeting, or verbally at the meeting if you want to see what develops on the night. Although we have a very large membership (~940 equivalent members), relatively few members have sufficient time to commit to the Society's management. In consequence, there may only be one nomination (or not even that!) for each position and the process seems carefully stage-managed to ensure re-election of many of the outgoing Management Committee.

Please don't think that this is the case. The perceived 'stage-management' results from necessity rather than preference. I will try to explain.

As President, I am only permitted three consecutive years under the Society's constitution. My third year finishes at the March AGM so a new President must be elected. Some Management Committee Members (MCMs) want to relinquish office because of changed personal circumstances or, perhaps after many years, because they have had enough. Others may wish to nominate for a different position that either upgrades or downgrades the time-commitment, or perhaps provides a different focus for their energies. Regardless, we commonly find that, for at least part of the year, a few positions remain vacant, or are filled by individuals taking on more than one position; a recipe for rapid burn-out!

Management Committee therefore minimises the risk of having no one nominate beforehand or on the night, by trying to find at least one nominee for each position. **This measure is precautionary, not exclusionary.** Despite re-nominating MCMs providing 'corporate memory' and minimising disruption to the Society's activities, an injection of fresh blood is critical to the health of Management Committee.

Management Committee runs the affairs of the Society. It is responsible for the native plant nurseries at Blackheath and Lawson, organising and conducting bushwalks, engagement and advocacy in a wide spectrum of environmental issues within the context of the Blue Mountains, and informing membership via Hut News, the Website and Monthly Meetings. Submissions to governments, evaluation of development applications, promotion of new park proposals, protection of existing parks and engagement with the media are undertaken by MCMs and a few other members in a voluntary capacity, often using their specialist knowledge. With more assistance, the Society would and could achieve more.

The bottom line? You and your contribution can truly make a difference.

Brian Marshall

Is Climate Change chatter sidelining Sustainability?

The guest speaker at our next monthly meeting on Friday 29 February will be Gordon Hocking, NSW President of Sustainable Population Australia.

Gordon Hocking grew up on a Riverina Sheep Station where he experienced droughts and floods and developed a profound respect for the limits of ecosystems. He has been an environmental activist for many years, including serving terms as President of the Sydney Branch of the Australian Conservation Foundation and National President of Sustainable Population Australia. He was awarded the Centenary Medal for "service to the Community."

Sustainable Population Australia is an environmental group that lobbies for a healthy ecological balance, achieved through population size and consumption patterns that recognises ecosystem limits.

Graph of the world's population in billions.
(Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/science/aqa/evolution/humansrev2.shtml>)



MONTHLY MEETING

FRIDAY February 29, 2008. 7:30 pm
Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls.

Speaker: **Gordon Hocking,**

NSW President of Sustainable Population Australia

VISITORS WELCOME

HUT NEWS

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BMCS Bushcare

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare group works in the Blue Mountains National Park at Wentworth Falls on the 2nd Saturday of each month.



Tools are provided but bring morning tea, gloves and drinking water.

For more information, contact Karen on 4757 1929.

Caring for our unique bushland...

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY Can you help?

Come and help other BMCS members to clean up the Prince Henry Cliff Walk from Katoomba Falls to Echo Point.

The Prince Henry Cliff Walk was named after the youngest son of King George V who fleetingly visited Katoomba in 1934, later returning after WWII as our Governor General. The walk is an integral part of the Grand Cliff-Top Walk between Wentworth Falls and Katoomba.

SUNDAY, 2nd MARCH 2008

**Meet at 8.30am, for a 9.00am start
outside the Katoomba Falls Kiosk,
Cliff Drive, Katoomba**

to register and collect bag and gloves etc.

The day will provide an opportunity to work along side other Society members, young and old, in cleaning up one of the Mountains' most popular walking tracks. Contact the Society if you would like to know more!

Norman Harris

(A big thank-you to Norm, our Monday walks Coordinator and a keen bushwalk leader and bushcare volunteer, and to Adrienne Murphy of BMCC for her help in organising this site for the Society. -Ed.)

Great Gorse Weed Walk Autumn 2008

*All welcome and plenty of activities to
choose from!*

Come and join us for a day tackling Gorse in the Braeside catchment or help stop the invasion of weeds into our pristine Blue



Mountains swamps – home to the endangered Giant Dragonfly and Blue Mountains Water Skink.

For the adventurous there are more remote weeding activities down in the Gorse Valley.

For a full program please contact
NPWS Ranger Vera O'Donovan
phone: 4787 3112

email: vera.odonovan@environment.nsw.gov.au

Left: Gorse Above: Montbretia



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED - Can you help for 3-4 Hours?

The NPWS and Gordon Falls Bushcare are seeking about 30 volunteers to help plant approximately 700 native seedlings in the Gordon Falls Reserve, as part of a bush regeneration program, on **Saturday 5th April, 2008**.

The seedlings have been raised at the Conservation Society's Plant Nursery by Kevin Bell and his team of volunteers, under contract from the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Meeting Place:- Cnr Gordon Road & Lone Pine Avenue, Leura

Date & Time:- Saturday 5th April, 2008 at 9.00am.

Transport from Leura Station is available by arrangement.

Morning Tea will be provided.

To register your interest please call Neil Stone at NPWS Blackheath on 4787 8877 (and to advise whether transport from Leura Station is required). In the event of rain, the event will be postponed to the following Saturday.

Norman Harris, for Gordon Falls Bushcare

Visit the BMCS website at: www.bluemountains.org.au

Letter of the Month—February 2008 After Bali - Where To From Here?

At Bali the new Australian government:

- Ratified the Kyoto Protocol
- Agreed to the Bali Road Map. This will launch formal negotiations to have a deal signed by 2009, with a long-term global goal for emissions reduction, and will include:
 - Agreements on how a country can cut its emissions by stopping deforestation,
 - Measures to transfer clean energy technology to developing countries,
 - Ways to help poorer countries where climate change is already happening.
- Played a vital role in keeping important scientific advice (from the UN's peak science body) on the need for the developed world to make deep cuts to its greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 in a secondary document, that will become part of the Bali road map. The US had previously succeeded in removing this information from the main text.

Minister for Climate Change Penny Wong played a pivotal role in the final negotiations and was widely praised by foreign delegations, officials and environmental groups.

However, as Guy Pearse says "Kevin Rudd deserves the Kyoto kudos, but as his Bali honeymoon dies down, we'll see just how serious Labor is about climate change" (Crikey 18.1.08).

Prior to the election, Labor committed to a 50% emissions reduction target by 2050. At Bali, Kevin Rudd refused to set a binding 20% by 2020 target until after he reviews the report by economist Ross Garnaut, expected by mid-2008, although he did commit to an interim target. We can expect him to be lobbied furiously by the Greenhouse Mafia to avoid this second binding target.

In the time between now and the Garnaut Report, the Federal Government could take immediate action to demonstrate its strong commitment by raising the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET), by which the Government tells power companies just how much renewable energy they must buy. This creates a market, which gives renewable energy industries the certainty they need to develop. It would cost the government nothing.

Finally, if you are considering signing up for Green Power, you might like to check out the credentials of the various providers at Green Electricity Watch before you make a decision. It is important to find a company that is offering 100% NEW green power – this will ensure that the source is wind, solar or biomass, not just existing hydro.

Send a short message to Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Minister for Climate Change and Water, cc the Prime Minister the Hon Kevin Rudd, making some or all of the following points:

Dear Senator Wong,

I would like to offer my congratulations on the success of your negotiations at the United Nations Climate Change summit in Bali. It was very encouraging to see Australia finally ratify the Kyoto Protocol, and join with the global community to grapple with the complex issues involved in dealing with climate change.

I note that prior to the election, Labor committed to a 50% emissions reduction target by 2050. At Bali, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd refused to set a binding 20% by 2020 target until after the report by economist Ross Garnaut. I await this report with high expectations of a speedy and effective response, as the pace of climate change is already exceeding the predictions of IPPC scientists.

In the interim before the Garnaut Report, as evidence of Labor's strong commitment, will your Government to take immediate action to raise the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET), to give renewable energy industries the certainty they need to develop? It would cost the government nothing but would send a very positive signal.

Contact Details: Post to Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600, or email:

Senator the Hon Penny Wong:

www.aph.gov.au/Senate/senators/homepages/contact.asp?id=00AOU

The Prime Minister the Hon Kevin Rudd:

www.pm.gov.au/contact/index.cfm?p=3

(This is the only way you can send emails to them)

Rosemary Lathouris and Robin Mosman

Petition calls for 'in danger' listing for the Blue Mountains

A petition lodged late last year with the World Heritage Committee states climate change poses a direct threat to the World Heritage-listed eucalypt forests of the Blue Mountains and urgent steps must be taken to protect it.

The petition signed by the Climate Action Network Australia, Greenpeace, the NSW Nature Conservation Council and Friends of the Earth calls for the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area to be listed as 'in danger' and for urgent action to reduce Australia's greenhouse emissions.

Legal co-ordinator for the Climate Action Network Australia, Phillip Freeman said "Our iconic Blue Mountains could turn black if we do not act quickly to limit the impacts of climate change".

Eucalypt forests in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area are among the most fire-dependant forest ecosystems in the world and that more frequent and intense fires as a result of climate change threaten the survival of many species.

"Climate change will increase temperatures and lead to more wildfires. If this happens, the natural beauty and scientific value of the Blue Mountains will deteriorate and this threatens its status as a World Heritage Area," Mr Freeman said.

An 'in danger' listing would result in a program of corrective measures being developed and implemented, including a plan to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

The petition calls for Australia to introduce a price on carbon emissions, commit to reducing its greenhouse emissions by at least 30 per cent by 2020 and increase its renewable energy target from 2 per cent to 25 per cent by 2020.

The petitioners requested that the World Heritage Committee send a mission of qualified observers from the relevant Advisory Bodies or other organisations to visit the property, evaluate the nature and extent of the threats and propose the measures to be taken.

The petitioners also recommended action to review and reformulate Management Plans and Wildfire Risk Management Plans for the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage area as well as greater levels of Monitoring and Reporting Climate Change impacts on the Area.

**Keith Muir,
Colong Foundation for Wilderness**

Research has shown that raising the price greatly affects consumers' appreciation of a product. Volunteers were asked to assess wines said to cost \$US5 to \$US90 a bottle; but all were the same cabernet sauvignon! On tasting, the \$US90 wine was ranked best and the \$US5 wine worst¹. In other words, a consumer's judgement is affected because the brain is inclined to believe that expensive wines **should** taste better.

The cost-quality perception is particularly apparent in the case of tap water versus low-price bottled water versus high-cost bottled water imported from Italy or France. All the water tastes about the same, yet many still pay from \$500/kL for 'local' bottled water up to \$5,000/kL for the imported product², while Sydney tap water is <\$1.85/kL³. The survival of a bottled water industry in any country with a high-quality domestic water supply is a clear indication that people have more money than sense and/or that governments are failing to charge commercial bottlers an appropriate price for abstracted water.

Although householders may be concerned about money wasted on commercially bottled water and the size of the quarterly bill from Sydney Water, funds-management firms are gearing up to create wealth from water and its various ancillary services. This is possible because fresh water is scarce. It comprises ~2.8% of the world's total water and (excluding the ice caps and atmospheric water) is represented by groundwater and surface water (~0.58% and ~0.02% respectively of the world's total water)⁴. There is little doubt that, with expanding industrialisation, climate change and (perhaps most of all) population growth, demand is increasing exponentially and supply is lagging⁵. Estimated world use rose from ~600 to 1500 km³ per year between 1900 and 1950, and from 1500 to 4000 km³ per year between 1950 and 2000⁶. Over the next 50 years to 2050 (when the world's population is expected to rise from the current 6 billion to 9-10 billion) demand for water could easily double to 8000 km³ per year.

To address the worldwide water shortage, the UN-backed World Commission on Water estimated in 2000 that an additional \$US100 billion per year were needed^{5,6}. Yet at current rates of investment in the US, it would take 900 years to replace the ailing infrastructure⁵. Not surprisingly, as with Sydney and much of Australia, conservation of supply by **environmentally sound** recycling, an increasing dependence on **environmentally suspect** groundwater abstraction, and augmentation of supply by **environmentally unacceptable** desalination feature in many water supply plans⁷. The cumulative result is that conserving, treating, recycling and distributing water have become 'big business' and carry significant investment potential⁵.

Unlike oil, water is not a commodity traded directly on an exchange. Exposure to 'water' must therefore be achieved indirectly through equities⁵. Two such organisations operating in Australia are Credit Suisse and the Belgian KBC investment-banking group⁸. Both have global expertise in eco-type funds involving water, alternative energy and climate change^{5,9,10}. I shall focus on the KBC investment-banking group that offers the KBC Global Water Fund, a unit trust investing in a portfolio of water-related companies selected by KBC Asset Management (KBCAM)⁹. KBC, the tenth largest bank in the European Monetary Union, manages \$2.4 billion in water mandates as at

30 September 2007¹¹.

More than 225 companies listed on stock exchanges around the world are involved in some aspect of the water industry¹². KBCAM excludes those involved with *inter alia* bottled water and reviews the remainder from the viewpoints of (a) the amount of revenue derived from water activities (at least 50%); and (b) 'socially responsible investment criteria' relating to environmental impact, nuclear energy, human rights, military involvement and good corporate governance practices¹². To date, only 90-100 companies have passed the screening process^{5,12} and also met the financial objective of being likely to outperform their competitors over a two-year period¹³.

Does this mean that you as an investor should have exposure to 'water'? At this stage I sound the retreat and say discuss it with your financial advisor. However, a Lonsec research report concludes that the KBC fund is a good way to gain exposure to the water sector¹⁴, whilst the head of equities structured products for Credit Suisse says: "If the water story moves forward, and if you believe that money needs to be spent on infrastructures and services, then companies in the basket should win contracts and their prices should go up"¹⁴.

Nothing to write to your local member about, but this article does show that business will always find ways of creating wealth (whether it be water and its various ancillary services and infrastructure, or carbon trading, or climate change generally) and enabling 'investor' participation. As recalled by Simon Hoyle, "...where there's muck there's brass..."⁵.

Now, if only the State Government would recognise this truism and adopt full-scale indirect potable recycling of effluent and stormwater^{15,16} rather than persist with desalination!

- 1 SMH, 16/01/08 p5, article from the Los Angeles Times
- 2 www.choice.com.au/viewArticleAsOnePage.aspx?id=104793
- 3 <http://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/files/Media%20Release%20%20IPART%20Releases%20Final%20Sydney%20Water%20Prices%20Determination%20-%20%202%20September%202005.PDF>
- 4 <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/Water/GroundWaterBooklet.pdf>
- 5 Simon Hoyle, SMH, 24-25/11/07 p47, Water: the great untapped liquid asset
- 6 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3747724.stm>
- 7 <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/Water/water-links.html> and download "The 2006 Metropolitan Water Plan - A Critical Review"
- 8 I emphasise that I hold no financial interest in either the parent organisations or their products
- 9 <http://www.investaustralia.gov.au/News/2007/a2a173Art3.htm>
- 10 https://www.ords.com.au/products/PL100_SP.pdf
- 11 <http://www.financialstandard.com.au/index.php?tradenevspace=1&id=11659>
- 12 http://www.liontamer.com.au/Investments/funds/investor_process.shtm
- 13 <http://www.liontamer.com.au/aboutus.shtm>
- 14 Reported in 5 above
- 15 <http://www.choice.com.au/viewArticle.aspx?id=105654&catId=100285&tid=100008&p=1&title=Recycled+water+mythbuster>
- 16 <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/Water/WaterViews2007-1.html>
- 17 <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/Water/GrdwaterSMWP-DesalHN-070627.pdf>

BLUE MOUNTAINS SWAMPS ARE HAPPY!

Abundant rain has helped the swamps but water restrictions remain in place and the need remains to conserve groundwater and keep the watertable up. Do you know when the next drought will occur and how the effects of climate change will impact on the Blue Mountains? Please help us to anticipate and minimise adverse impacts!

Is there a property using bore water near you? Would you help by taking note of "bore water in use" signs when walking in your neighbourhood? The groundwater subcommittee is compiling a list of bores to gain a better picture of the extent of domestic groundwater extraction in the Blue Mountains. We share our information with Council and the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

Please email addresses to Lisa Scott-Smith (lisa.scottsmith@gmail.com) or phone 4734 8542 or 4784 2834. Thankyou in anticipation and a big thankyou to all who responded to our last appeal.

Lisa Scott-Smith, Groundwater Subcommittee

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Phil Koperberg, Member for Blue Mountains,

invites you to participate in the

2008 Blue Mountains Environment Summit

Saturday 23 & Sunday 24
February, 2008

Katoomba High School
Martin St, Katoomba

Keynote Speaker: Dr Mark Diesendorf, sustainability specialist

Take this opportunity to advise your Member of Parliament on legislative action needed to address climate change and the environmental priorities of the Blue Mountains.

Conference papers and registration information will be available shortly. Enquiries may be directed to Annie Hearn at the Office of Phil Koperberg on 4751 3298 or email to

I recycle Plastic, but what does that actually mean...

Did you know that the Katoomba Waste Management Facility takes in about 28,000 tonnes of garbage each year? According to Blue Mountains City Council, 16% of that amount could have been recycled in some way. Plastics are of course one of the major problems.

According to Clean Up Australia the average family can accumulate 60 shopping bags in just 4 shopping trips; which works out at 6 billion shopping bags each year. Of these 3.3 billion or more are the flimsy supermarket type bags. Apparently if tied together in a chain that's enough to circle the world 37 times. No wonder Federal Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, wants to ban plastic bags by the end of the year.

The idea of no plastic bags gives me the vision of less green house gas emissions and a cleaner environment, but

A Naturalist's Sunday

Sunday was unexpectedly fine, after so much rain, and our trip to Mount Hay proceeded as planned. We had heard on the grapevine that *Actinotus forsythii*, the Pink Flannel Flower, was in flower and that *Petalura gigantea*, the Giant Dragonfly, was hatched and flying.

The swamps and heaths out around Mt. Hay are green and recovering after the last fires in 2006 and much to our joy we saw many *Actinotus forsythii* in flower. They were found growing in the thin layers of soil covering rocks along the ridge top, exposed to the fiercest mountain weather.

A female Giant Dragonfly landed near us and the bird watchers spotted about five more, of undetermined gender, flying up high over our heads

at Butterbox Point. Soaring strongly and zigzagging in the air, we guessed they were hunting for insects and several flew out over the Grose Valley, which was fascinating.

Elsewhere, we also saw four different species of jewel beetles, glistening in green with red wing tips, and six large and handsome native cockroaches, trimmed in yellow. Several species of butterfly were seen, some of which we identified as Swordgrass Brown, Macleays Swallowtail and others which we are still working on.

The orchids in flower we found were *Orthocerus stricta* and *Cryptostylus subulata*.

It was a wonderful day with fellow naturalists, which exceeded all our expectations.

Robin Murray

what else does reprocessing/recycling plastic mean for me –

The High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) plastic is found in these flimsy supermarket type bags (as well as milk and juice bottles) and Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) found in soft drink bottles are the commonest types of plastics that can be reprocessed. I guess we are all familiar with the Δ symbol on some of the products we buy that can go in our local recycle bins at present. Numbers Δ 1 PET, Δ 2 HDPE; Δ 3 V (Vinyl) found in cordial and juice bottles...; and Δ 5 PP (Polypropylene) found in yoghurt and sauce bottles...

As in everything in life there are exceptions to every rule: those supermarket plastic bags are made from the recyclable HDPE, but they need to go to a central collection point rather than residential recycling bins. They are available, but this has meant that a mere 10% get reprocessed.

Those tougher plastic bags from those more exclusive clothing shops are made from Low Density Polyethylene (LDPE, Δ 4) and unfortunately at present BMCC

SWIMMING WITH SNAKES

This time last year, it was very hot. On a day that promised heat but not furnace, a friend and I set off to walk to the Nattai river very early in the morning. But a furnace began to develop. When we got to the river, and found the biggest waterhole, we stayed beside it all day waiting for the cool of early evening. We were in and out of it all day, just as the red-bellied black snakes were.

Liquid on liquid
the red-bellied black
swimming the river

It's shocking how effectively they can swim – and underwater, for half a swimming pool's length. Though at least when there was a big splash, they had the good sense to leave the pool. In the afternoon, when the sun struck the brown water and turned it to gold, I saw that there were tiny frogs swimming with us as well.

Little frog
on my hand
when will you depart?

The snakes worked up and down the river bank, sending everything in their path fleeing –water dragons raced up trees, ducks flapped, we exited fast. They would poke their heads into tiny crevices, searching for a meal. Only at that point did they seem vulnerable, had we needed to eat them.

One quick strike –
the frog's legs flail
snake slowly swallows

Diana Levy

isn't able to recycle these as well as a few other types of plastic. But it's often surprising what can be reprocessed rather than chucked in the bin - even some plant pots!

So what are the finished products of this reprocessing?

PET plastics can be remade into fabric, insulation for sleeping bags and sports jackets, furniture, carpets, overhead transparencies, erasable wall planners, business cards, computer bags...

HDPE on the other hand can become irrigation pipes, garden hoses, kitchen drainage boards, buckets, doghouses, plastic trays for greenhouse plants...

V becomes loose-leaf folders, mud flaps, traffic cones...

PP can become car battery cases, rakes, funnels, bicycle racks...

The list is amazing! If you are as fascinated as I have become www.corporaterecycling.com.au is an interesting site.

**Susan Girard,
Climate Change Subcommittee**



Streamers flew and poppers popped at the Consoc Nursery Christmas Party held at Blackheath on 18 December. Volunteers and partners from both Blackheath and Lawson gathered for a celebration BBQ after another highly successful year. The Nurseries together raised more than \$18,000 towards BMCS operating funds, a major contribution, acknowledged at the function by Consoc President Brian Marshall.

In 2007 a conspicuous contribution of \$3582 came from the monthly Lawson Magpie Markets, an initiative skilfully managed by Bill Tocher. In recognising Bill's contribution both at the Markets and also at Lawson Nursery with a gift of Andy Macqueen's 'Back from the Brink', (above) our Nursery Manager, Kevin Bell, forecast strong ongoing major contract and community plant sales in 2008.

So confident was he, and so delighted with their work throughout the year, that Kevin promised all volunteers new workplace agreements at double their existing salary! So, if you would like to

join this happy and productive group give Kevin a call on 4787 6436. No plant propagation experience is necessary, just a willingness to work in a pleasant environment.

Kevin also made special mention of the skill and constancy of his two octogenarian helpers, Imre Gahl and Astrid Evans.

Joan Gahl, the effervescent custodian at Blackheath, responded with a gift to Kevin from the group of some 1000ml of a clear, colourless, white grain liquid distillation flavoured with *Juniperus communis*. He was gin-gerly urged not to waste this accelerant on the tube stock!

Ron Withington

Nursery News

Kevin Bell

Both our nurseries are open again after the holiday break and we have a tremendous variety and quantity of plants to offer you. Our Blackheath nursery is open Tuesday mornings from 8.30am to noon and our Lawson nursery on Wednesday mornings at the same time. If these times don't suit, we will be at the Magpie Markets at Lawson on Sunday 17th February (and thereafter every 3rd Sunday of the month) from 8.30am until 1.30pm. And remember, as a member of the Society you pay only \$2 per plant (a 20% discount) and there are additional bargains each week.

A Native Indoor Plant

One doesn't usually associate native plants, apart from ferns, as being suitable for indoors but we have a spectacular one available now. It is *Plectranthus parviflorus* or the Cockspur Flower, whose large leaves are light green on the upper surface and deep purple underneath. Pretty bluish-mauve flowers are borne on long, leafless stems at different times of the year.

Several of our members have had these by a bright window for years and they have proved hardy.

We have some advanced specimens in larger pots for just \$3.50 for members.

Our State Flower

It is, of course, the Waratah, and hardly needs any recommendation as its brilliant red flowers are a wonderful sight in the bush in Spring and Summer. The common name derives from Aboriginal dialect and means 'red flowering tree' while the scientific name *Telopea speciosissima* is derived from Greek "telopos" meaning "seen from afar" and the superlative form of the Latin word "speciosus" meaning "showy". It is usually a single or few-stemmed plant until after fire when it regenerates from a lignotuber into a multi-stemmed bush. It likes a well-drained soil and tolerates partial shade. Avoid fertilizers with a high phosphorus content. Its beauty was appreciated by early botanists and artists and was one of the first plants to be collected for cultivation in Europe. The early English naturalist, James Edward Smith, described it as the "most magnificent plant which the prolific soil of New Holland affords us". The first artistic representation was an engraving by James Sowerby in 1793 in England based on sketches of a live plant in NSW and dried specimens in London. It has lent its name to numerous suburbs and towns, to two small islands close to Antarctica, to various commercial products and even to a Super 14 Rugby team. We have around 70 lovely specimens of this spectacular plant at the usual bargain price of just \$2 for members. Hurry as stocks won't last!

Return of Tubes

We sell most of our plants in standard forestry tubes and we have had reports from members that they are not accepted by the local recycling company and many end up as landfill. Thus, we are urging you to return them to us so we can re-use them after washing and sterilization. Council and the National Parks service have routinely returned them to us from contract work but individual customers have generally not responded to our earlier requests. So, as an incentive we will give you 10c (they cost us about 15c each) towards your next purchase for each tube returned. It's good for you, good for us, and good for the environment.



Telopea speciosissima Waratah
(Photo: Australia National Botanic Gardens)

A Trip to the Seventh Kingdom

It was Meredith Brownhill, through her promo in *Hut News December 2006*, who got me thinking about enrolling in the 2007 TAFE Course, *Recognition of Native Plants*. And so I did, and now is the chance to report back to Consoc members on how it all went.

I am no longer a young undergraduate, in fact I could be styled as way past leaf and bloom and simply a nut well into seed. So it was certainly eerie on enrolment to be haunting the halls of academia some half-century after graduation, nostalgically dodging the table-tennis balls in the common room café and bound for a very different discipline from my civil engineering of old.

But the interview with the teacher was reassuring. She was none other than Margaret J. Baker, keen, calm and with confidence born of many years of teaching, and of course the author with Robin Corringham of the publication I had spotted in Megalong Books, *Native Plants of the Blue Mountains*. Not one to take herself too seriously, Margaret remarked that she had been in the game so long that current students were coming up to her with second-hand stories, quotations and opinions, that she herself had generated several student generations before. Most importantly, she told me that there were no examinations, that the project work required some industry but was not impossible and that (relief!) no one had failed the previous course!

I should note here that I have been the sort of bushwalker and gardener who is inclined to devour or dig the territory, always with the route planned, always with a timetable, always looking at the macro image and the distant view. But since my time with Christine, Muriel, Don and Co. on the Consoc Thursday Interpretative Walks, and since planting in my native garden, I had been training myself to slow down and “smell the flowers”. In doing that, my ignorance of matters botanical in the company of experts had become an irritation no longer to be tolerated...

And so to work. Eventually equipped with a student identity card, a password for the library and computers, a hand lens, a 15cm plastic ruler and the inevitable booklist, I arrived to meet my classmates. First shock: in Semester 1, I was to be one of just two males in a room of some eight ladies, and then, in Semester 2, following the defection of my friend Norm Harris, I was to be the token male of the company. Boldly, I soldiered on, the classmates, all much more savvy in the world of plants than I, ever friendly, tolerant and always helpful. Nothing to fear, men!

So what did we do, what did I learn and what have I retained?

Margaret's technique is to issue full topic notes for filing, but the classroom lessons roam freely across and beyond the printed material, and student participation is encouraged. She began at the beginning with the Archaea, the 'Ancient Bacteria', and quickly advanced through the Seven Kingdoms of living organisms to arrive at the realm of the Plantae: liverworts, mosses, ferns, conifers, and hooray, flowering plants. I discovered that our studies would involve the classification, the external features, the internal structure, the functions, activities and processes, and the relationships of plants and trees with their environment – and all that is called botany!

Margaret gave us a comfortable start, 'the parts of a flower', stuff I had learnt in Grade 5, when preparing plant pressings for the annual visit of our Nature Study Inspector, Miss Rowntree. (Really). But we speedily advanced to the Blombery diagram depicting the complex characteristics of the root, stem and leaf of a typical plant. At this point I was still keeping up rather well, and for the first and only time during the course thought I could show off. I produced a blow-up colour version of the diagram for my classmates: one suitable for posting on the toilet door for regular study and revision.

Greater in-depth plant study followed and in no time we were to meet Carl Linnaeus, fortuitously on his 300th birthday, and become acquainted with his original system for naming plants. From there we were soon to begin a study of the principal families and genera native and prominent in the Blue Mountains: including Mimosaceae, Myrtaceae, Casuarinaceae, Ericaceae, Proteaceae and Rutaceae. We were introduced to the microscope and to PlantNET (FloraOnline) to assist with identification of samples brought into class. But then it was off to the great outdoors on field excursions, locally in our own cars, and then further afield in small bus transport provided by TAFE. Interspersed with classroom lessons we visited Kings Tableland, Wenty Lake, Hargreaves Lookout, Furbers Steps, Martins Lookout, Else-Mitchell Park, Glenbrook, Lawson, Hartley, Mt Tomah and Sun Valley. We were required to identify plants, recording their characteristics with sketches or photos, initially with a great deal of assistance from Margaret, but later with growing self-confidence as she introduced us to the black art of KEYING.

Keying is the skill I was hoping to develop! It involves the progressive identification from family to genus to species, using prompts provided by such publications as Fairley and Moore, Les Robinson and Carolin & Tindale, calling for study of flower, leaf, bark, fruit and habitat and ending hopefully with a beautiful photo in Fairley and Moore or indeed in Margaret's own publication referred to earlier.

In Semester 2 we covered a great deal of geology, geomorphology and lithology, with more field trips, to provide greater understanding of soil types and the distribution



A Proteaceae, *Xylomelum pyriforme* (Woody Pear), seen here not in open forest, woodland ridges and slopes, but as a magnificent tree on a Glenbrook nature strip! An almost exotic encounter.

of plant communities, while at the same time giving us another string to our bow, the ability to recognise rock types where they outcrop off the track or in roadside cuttings.

The climax was the preparation of our very own herbariums. We chose 15 desirably unfamiliar plants within a community of our own selection, and brought them to class for identification. We constructed our own press from materials provided and were supplied with mounting papers. The results were submitted for assessment. At this point, I sought and received permission to vary this routine by providing mounted photographs in lieu of pressings. My argument was that my work for Miss Rowntree had never been other than messy, and that importantly, all my future 'field work' would essentially comprise photos with accompanying samples. My results seemed okay, but on the final 'show and tell' day, it was obvious that I had denied myself the perfectly wonderful permanent record of the whole course that my classmates achieved!

From the plant recognition course, firstly I learnt not to be afraid of the Latin names, to speak them with confidence if not with accuracy. Indeed I came to prefer to say such things as *Xylomelum pyriforme* (see below) instead of Woody Pear. I learnt to name many more plants than before. I do not expect to remember and retain all that I have learnt, BUT I do now know where to look for help. Most significantly, I have mastered the basics of Keying, and am fairly confident that this skill can really develop with frequent practice. This is a TAFE course that I can heartily recommend to all wishing to enhance their BM bushland experience – just some 330 dollars very well spent. But hurry, Margaret was making grim noises of retirement any day soon.

Goodness, here comes the postman. First delivery after Christmas. From TAFE – a Transcript of Academic Record. Great jumping *Jacksonia*, for the Units of Recognising, Collecting, Observing and Reporting plants – Student No. 328475154 is assessed as 'COMPETENT'!

Ron Withington

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING GROUP

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. The BMCS Bushwalkers' Guide, which explains the Grades (#), and the Spring Program can be found on the Society's website www.bluemountains.org.au or will be posted on request. For further information contact Walks Convener, Christine Davies on 4787 7246, email bushwalks@bluemountains.org.au, or by mail at PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.

Before attending a bushwalk, please discuss the walk with the leader or group co-ordinator (listed below). This is essential if this is your first walk or you are unsure of the classification.

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS: 'Short Day' walks of 3-5 hours, for those of average fitness. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. Co-ordinator: Norm Harris (4784 1554).

Feb-11	BUS TRIP to Palm Beach (2) <i>Walk to Barrenjoey Lighthouse. BBQ lunch. Fare \$12 when booking.</i>	Bob 4787 6584	BMCC Depot, South St, Katoomba	8.30am
Feb-18	Waterworks, Lithgow (2) <i>Walk through forest to dam for a swim. Lunch at Workers' Club.</i>	Bob 4787 6584	Mt Victoria Station	9.00am
Feb-25	Walls Cave, Blackheath (2) <i>Huge overhang.</i>	Heather 4739 1493	Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre	8.45am
Mar-3	Leura Forest, Leura (3) <i>Closed forest walk.</i>	Norm 4784 1554	Leura Station commuter carpark	8.30am
Mar-10	Mark Foy's Track, Medlow Bath (3) <i>Another way into the Grand Canyon.</i>	Norm 4784 1554	Outside Hydro Majestic, Medlow B.	8.30am
Mar-17	Manly to North Head (2) <i>Historic Sydney.</i>	Heather 4739 1493	Central Station, top of escalators	9.30am

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS: Walks conducted to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, lunch if noted & adequate water. Group Co-ordinator: Simone Bowskill (4757 4316, simbow@tpg.com.au).

Feb-14	Little Zig Zag, Darkes Common, Bluff L'out (2) <i>Walk in the lower mountains.</i>	Maurice 4739 4942	Glenbrook Stn carpark	9.30am
Feb-21	Mt Wilson Cathedral of ferns +other delights (1) <i>Walk in cool rainforest.</i>	Marie 4787 1257	Mt Victoria Station	9.00am
Feb-28	Three Brothers below Hydro, Medlow Bath (2) <i>Walk on tracks and old firetrails to see natural and man-made features.</i>	David 4757 3416	GWH at the Hydro Majestic	9.35am
Mar-6	BUS TRIP to Dunns Swamp (2) <i>NPWS area with bushwalks, rock pagodas and dam. Bring lunch. \$12, bookings essential.</i>	Simone 4757 3416	Bus depot, South St, N. Kat	8.30am
Mar-13	Leura Forest to Scenic Railway (2) <i>Car pool to Solitary Restaurant. Descend to valley and walk to railway.</i>	Maurice 4739 4942	Cnr Leura Mall, Megalong St	9.45am

WEEKEND WALKS: Usually full day, longer walks at a faster pace. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. Before attending, contact the leader or Group Co-ordinator, Jim Percy (4758 6009, jp34@tpg.com.au).

Feb-16	Wollangambe Canyon (2) <i>Short walk to a swim in the cool canyon waters surrounded by sandstone cliffs.</i>	Meredith 4782 4823	Mt Victoria Station carpark	9.40am
Feb-23	Victory Track to Numantia Falls (3) <i>Walk the Victory Track to Numantia Falls then continue to Springwood for afternoon tea. Distance: 8km.</i>	Liz 4754 4966	Faulconbridge Stn carpark	9.00am
Mar-1	Lawson to Went. Falls (Bruces Walk) (3) <i>Crossing of the Blue Mountains of NSW - Day 4 (postponed from Dec 1). 11km. all on track, 3 creek crossings.</i>	Jim 4758 6009	Lawson Stn carpark (N side)	8.00am
Mar-8	Fortress Ridge and Darks Cave (3) <i>Historic walk with great views. 8km, steep descent and ascent. (Car pool to drive to start of walk.)</i>	Ros 4733 3880	Leura Public School	8.30am
Mar-15	Golden Stairs to Mt Solitary (3) <i>Steep steps down and up the Golden Stairs and scrambling climb up sections of Mt Solitary. 10km.</i>	Bill 4758 8545	Outside Gearin's Hotel, Katoomba	8.00am
SUNDAY SPECIAL	Mar-2 Palm Beach (2) <i>Train, bus and walk to the lighthouse with a swim at the beach to make your day. Walk distance approx 5km. (The 7.05am train from Mt Vic arrives at Central at 9:30am, meet at top of escalators at Central Intercity platforms).</i>	Bill 4758 8545	Central Station (details below)	~9.30am

Membership Matters

Did you know that to vote or stand at the AGM election in March, you need to be a financial registered member of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society. That means your membership must be current and we need to know your name (even if you are part of a household membership). If in doubt please contact me by no later than March 18.

Several members have asked me why they have both a general membership number and a bushwalker number. Your membership number (which is less than 2500) is related to the payment of annual membership fees. This number appears on

the top left of your Hut News envelope label or renewal form label. The only time you are required to know this number is when paying fees over the internet. Bushwalker numbers (which are four-digit numbers starting with 5) are issued only to those who bushwalk with the Society. This is the number you are required to give when filling in the walks attendance sheet prior to a walk. The purpose of this number is to identify you, in a short hand fashion, as a member of the bushwalking club.

If you have questions regarding your BMCS membership, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Ilan Salbe,
Membership Secretary

Welcome to our new members

Janelle Worsman, Wentworth Falls—
Hugh Speirs, Wentworth Falls—Lesley Redmond, Mt Victoria—Peter Green, Faulconbridge—Margaret Joy Winton, Meadowbank—Wendy & Len Fisher, Blackheath—Gisela Franciska Kolb, Katoomba—Janet Mays, Leura—Ken Bromilow, Blackheath—Brendan Doyle, Mosman—Catherine Vaubell & Peter Spring, Blackheath—Natasha Winters, Woodford—Alan Pope, Mt Riverview—Lyn Smith, Potts Point—Warren & Barbara Crighton, Blackheath—Michelle Rix, Springwood—Terry Nielsen, Leura

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

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