



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting will be held at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, on Wednesday 28 March 2018, starting at 7pm. (See Notice of AGM on page 2)

The AGM will be followed by ...

A short talk by Janine Kitson, Colong Foundation - "Legendary Photographer Henry Gold and the Blue Mountains".

Come along and support those taking responsibility for running the Society. You might have a question, or comments about the progress of our campaigns. Enjoy the talk and meet other members over supper. Visitors are very welcome.

Elect a new Management Committee

At our AGM on Wednesday 28th March we will elect a management committee for the year from 28 March 2018 to 31 March 2019. All positions will fall vacant. Some present committee members will not be standing. Are you interested in Publicity, Environmental Education or National Parks?

There are lots of other jobs to be done, on sub committees, helping with administration, campaigns, events and special projects. No experience is necessary, just a willingness to help the Blue Mountains environment.

With this newsletter, members will receive a page giving details of the duties and responsibilities of all management positions, or it can be downloaded at http://bluemountains.org.au/documents/aboutus/2018_duties_and_responsibilities.pdf Whilst our constitution allows for nominations to be received on the night of the AGM, we really need to be organised beforehand to ensure that there will be at least one nomination for each position.

Please contact Madi Maclean, Tara Cameron or Don Morison (contact details on page 2) if you want to discuss any of the positions or wish to be nominated. You can download a nomination form at http://bluemountains.org.au/documents/aboutus/2018_AGM_MC_Nomination_Form.pdf

COMING EVENTS (more information on page 3):

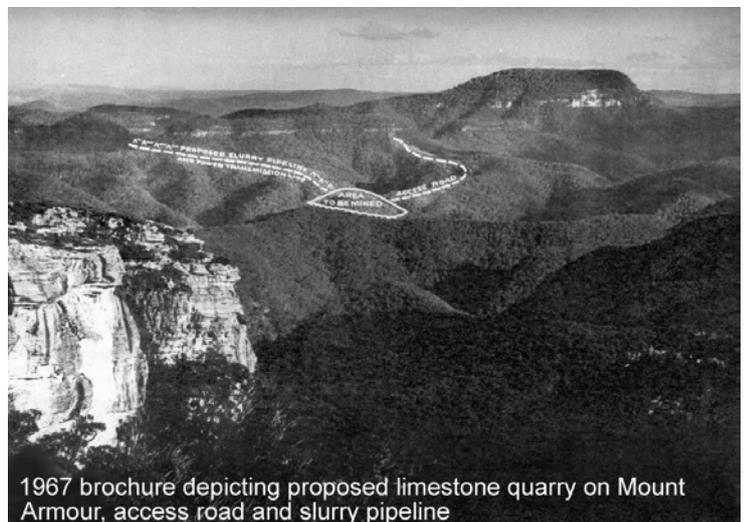
March 26 (Mon) Flooding the Blue Mountains: A Public Forum. The Hub, Springwood, 6.30 pm

April 5 (Thurs) Talk on Upland Swamps. Environmental scientist, Dr Ann Young, will talk about her new book on Upland Swamps. 6.30 pm, Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls

Legendary Photographer Henry Gold and the Blue Mountains

Following our AGM, at approximately 8.15 pm, Janine Kitson, Vice-Chair of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness, will talk about legendary wilderness photographer, Henry Gold OAM and his outstandingly beautiful photographs of the Blue Mountains. Learn about the role he has played as Honorary Photographer of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness and how his photographs have inspired many to love and protect the Blue Mountains wilderness.

(Photos by Henry Gold)



1967 brochure depicting proposed limestone quarry on Mount Armour, access road and slurry pipeline



2000 Blue Mountains WORLD HERITAGE LISTED

Protect the Gardens of Stone from destructive coal mining

<http://bluemountains.org.au/index.htm#gos>

In this video, NSW Greens MP Jeremy Buckingham stands on the precipice of the sandstone pagodas in the beautiful Gardens of Stone. The area is threatened by longwall mining. "As the age of coal comes to a close, we should not be risking such incredible areas."

"Hut News", the newsletter of
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The **DEADLINE** for the next issue
of HUT NEWS is
17 MARCH 2018

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Blue Mountains Conservation Society

1 March 2018

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given of the Annual General Meeting of the Society to be held at the **Conservation Hut, Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls at 7PM on Wednesday 28 March 2018**. Business will include receipt of reports, adoption of annual accounts, setting of membership fees, determination of structure of Management Committee, election of President, Management Committee members and other office holders and appointment of auditor.

Life Membership

Three members of the Society have been nominated to receive Life Membership of Blue Mountains Conservation Society. They are:

Margaret Baker
Heather Hull
Ross Coster

Life Membership is conferred upon Society members who have made a meritorious contribution to the work of the Society and to the Conservation cause.

You will be invited to vote on Management Committee's recommendation that Life Membership be bestowed on these three members.

**By order of the Management Committee
Blue Mountains Conservation Society.**

NURSERY NEWS

During the February markets, a large number of native plants have been sold and found their way to local gardens, earning the Society over \$2,000. This money is used to fund our campaigns.

We have a huge variety of plants ready to be put into the ground now. You will find us at Blackheath Community Market on the first Sunday of each month and Lawson Magpie Market on the third Sunday of each month until the winter break. In coming markets, some species of Acacia and Leptospermum will be on special, and there will be plenty of lilly pilly species for some native fruit in your garden—you can try making some lilly pilly jelly.

Thank you for all our volunteers for their wonderful work in growing these plants. If you are interested in coming along to our work days as a volunteer and learning how to propagate and grow native plants, contact our nursery manager Hugh Brougham 04079 55028 or nursery volunteer Sue Nicol 04571 40905, nursery@bluemountains.org.au

A SMALL PROTEST Christine Davies

I don't pretend to be a true "greenie". I enjoy some home comforts, use electricity and drive a car. I've been buying ethanol blended petrol for so long that I'd forgotten the reason. Not only is it four cents per litre cheaper, but I read on the internet that it reduces our greenhouse gas emissions and helps reduce our dependence on imported fuel – both very noble causes, but at what cost?

The Conservation Society is campaigning to have the beautiful Gardens of Stone region near Lithgow protected in a State Conservation Area. In February the Independent Planning Commission gave approval to Invincible, an open-cut coal mine in the Gardens of Stone region, so that it can start mining "nut coal", a poor quality coal which will be used to fuel Manildra's ethanol plant in the Shoalhaven region, 300 kilometres away by road.

Ancient pagoda formations will be damaged. Threatened species will be displaced. Do they have any value? Mining the coal, trucking it 300 km and burning it – how many greenhouse gas emissions? Which is the better of two evils?

Last week I went to the petrol pump and made a choice – unleaded petrol without ethanol. The petrol still cost the usual \$30. And I do believe the car is running better!

FLOODING OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS: A PUBLIC FORUM

GUEST SPEAKERS DR. BOB BROWN AND BOB DEBUS AM

WILDRIVERS.ORG.AU



When: March 26th 2018, 6:30pm (Monday)

Where: Blue Mountains Community Hub, 106 Macquarie Rd, Springwood

Who: Former Greens Leader Bob Brown and former Environment Minister Bob Debus in conversation on the flooding of the Blue Mountains' wild rivers by the raising of Warragamba Dam.

Register: <https://www.wildrivers.org.au/events/public-forum>

FREE PUBLIC FORUM

The Colong Foundation's Wild Rivers Campaign is convening a free public forum with Dr. Bob Brown and Bob Debus on Monday March 26, 6.30pm at The Hub, Springwood. The two Bobs will be in discussion with public and regional experts on the devastating impact raising Warragamba Dam will have on 65 kilometres of Blue Mountains' wild rivers.

All welcome - please register at

www.wildrivers.org.au/events/public-forum

Upland Swamps of the Sydney Region

Thursday 5 April, 6.30 pm at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls

The Society is pleased to host environmental scientist Dr Ann Young, who will talk about her new book on upland swamps.

Dr Young has researched the upland swamps for four decades. Thanks to scientists and conservationists, the upland swamps that lie on the sandstone plateaus around Sydney are listed as Endangered Ecological Communities.

These swamps record the climatic and fire histories of the region over the last 40,000 years or more. They are vital to the health of the water catchment areas for Sydney and the lower Blue Mountains because they supply clean water even during prolonged droughts, yet they are threatened by severe impacts from urbanisation, forestry and underground coal mining. Dr Young shows how important it is to protect these swamps.

This will be a great talk for people involved with bushcare or swampcare or anyone who is interested in our local environment.

Dr Young describes her book as a tribute to the researchers and environmental advocates who have worked to understand and protect the upland swamps. Copies of her book will be on sale.

BURRAGORANG THE LOST VALLEY

Robyn Collier is an Australian artist who has been painting professionally for over 40 years, visiting and painting the Burragorang Valley since 1973.

The Burragorang Valley – once a thriving rural community - was flooded in the 1950s to give a growing Sydney a more permanent water supply. Families were forced to leave their homes and farms to make way for what is now known as Lake Burragorang, which is contained by the walls of the Warragamba Dam.

Robyn was invited to visit the Burragorang Valley by The Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board in the early 1970s and was commissioned to paint a series of paintings featuring the catchment areas. These privileged visits into inaccessible lands of immense beauty provided inspiration for two major exhibitions in the 1980s.

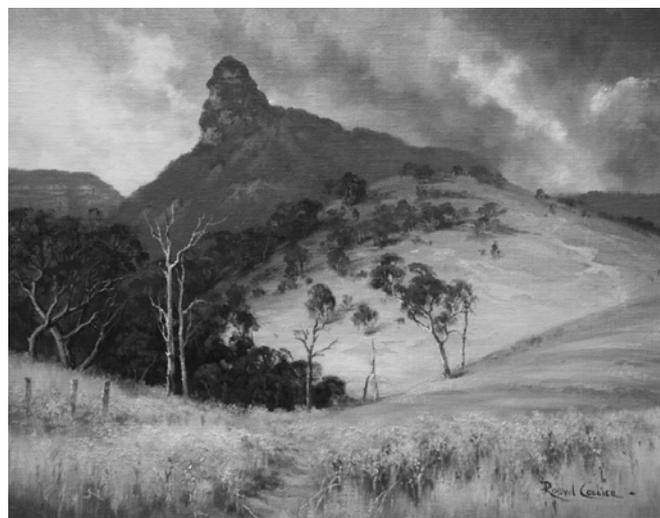
In 2014 Robyn was granted permission to re-visit the valley – now very difficult to enter under current Water NSW and NPWS policy – and during several visits over the past three years produced a series of new paintings for a final exhibition and book.

In the week following Robyn's final visit, the then Premier, Mike Baird announced the intention of the State Government to raise the Warragamba Dam wall by 14 metres. If this goes ahead as planned, it will destroy many of the sensitive areas Robyn has visited, along with causing immense damage to the Kowmung, Cox and Nattai Rivers.

The exhibition 'Burragorang The Lost Valley' and book launch will take place at Lost Bear Gallery, Lurline St., Katoomba on March 24th 2018 at 3.30 pm. Historian Jim Smith will officially open the exhibition and environmentalist Bob Brown will attend as special guest.

Members of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society are very welcome to attend.

Bonnum Pic in the Burragorang Valley, a painting by Robyn Collier



Leave Radiata Plateau Wild – we need your support

On the southern escarpment between Katoomba and Medlow Bath, Radiata Plateau, or Mt Elphinstone as it's often known, stands as the missing link in the Blue Mountains National Park. Often assumed to be protected, the community has been fighting against development on the Plateau for over 30 years, yet its future is still uncertain.

Last year the Society and local residents opposed two development applications for three new buildings on the untouched Plateau. This campaign was partly successful, with the Land and Environment Court approving only one of the new buildings.

In response, the Society launched the **Leave Radiata Plateau Wild** campaign in July 2017 to bring the plight of the Plateau to the attention of the community, and to ensure that the Plateau was purchased by either the State or Commonwealth Governments and included in the Blue Mountains National Park. The campaign has successfully garnered broad community support and captured the interest of local, state and federal politicians.

A major community rally was held last July at Cahill's Lookout. A short video of the rally, capturing the energy of the crowd as well as the large banner unfurled by climbers on the Plateau's cliffs, can be seen on the campaign web page at <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/leaveradiataplateauwild/updates.htm>

At the rally, Mayor Mark Greenhill expressed Blue Mountains City Council's commitment to protecting the Plateau. Council subsequently passed a resolution unanimously supporting the Plateau becoming a part of the national park.

Our local state member Trish Doyle MP has been very supportive of the campaign, seeking a meeting on our behalf with the NSW Minister for the Environment. The Society has also had very positive meetings with local federal member Susan Templeman MP as well as the Hon. Tony Burke MP, Commonwealth Shadow Minister for the Environment and Water, to brief them about the campaign.

We have had support from the broader conservation movement with the NSW Nature Conservation Council voting to write to the Federal Minister for the Environment, the NSW Minister for the Environment and the Premier of NSW requesting that the Plateau be moved into public ownership.

Social media has been central to our community reach



L-R: Susan Templeman MP; Hon. Tony Burke; with Society President Madi Maclean handing over community letters in support of protecting Radiata Plateau

with lots of interest on the campaign webpages, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. You may have also seen the **Leave Radiata Plateau Wild** signs around the Blue Mountains, including the one at Explorer's Tree (pictured below).

Liaison with the owners of Radiata Plateau continues. While one building has been approved for the Plateau, as yet no building works have proceeded and the Plateau remains untouched and undeveloped.

To highlight the Plateau's unique and significant values, we will soon be launching on the campaign web page the first in a series of short videos. The first video celebrates the Plateau's importance to local residents, as well as the area's significance for bushwalkers and rock climbers.

You can help us protect Radiata Plateau

- **Find out more** - go to the campaign webpage at www.bluemountains.org.au/leaveradiataplateauwild/
- Send a **letter** to the Minister for the Environment go to <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/leaveradiataplateauwild/what.htm#email>
- Get **social** and help spread the word via **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **Instagram**
- **Join our mailing list** to be kept up to date with campaign progress
- **Make a donation** to help support 'Leave Radiata Plateau Wild'
- If you are not already a member, **Join Blue**

Mountains Conservation Society

(www.bluemountains.org.au) to help to conserve our precious local environment



No such thing as flight 'paths'

When the Western Sydney Airport draft EIS was released, we were all horrified by the proposed flight paths. They included a 'merge point' over Glenbrook, as well as flight paths over Blackheath, Katoomba, Lake Burragarang, and the Wollemi, Grose and Kanangra-Boyd Wilderness areas. You can see these nice neat 'paths', combined into one image, here: <http://bluemountains.org.au/campaign-airport.htm>

The flight path maps generated a heap of local angst, and resulted in a pop-up anti-airport group named RAWSA (Residents Against Western Sydney Airport). We network well with RAWSA and NoBCA (No Badgerys Creek Airport) based in Blacktown.

In the final EIS, the airport proponents removed the 'indicative' flight paths and told us the flight paths would be developed *after* the airport construction started, and would avoid homes and wilderness. This felt at the time like classic bait-and-switch tactics. Show us a horrible outcome, get us all angry, then remove the main point of contention, thus deflating the anger. This didn't work of course, and we are still campaigning hard to stop this nightmare project.

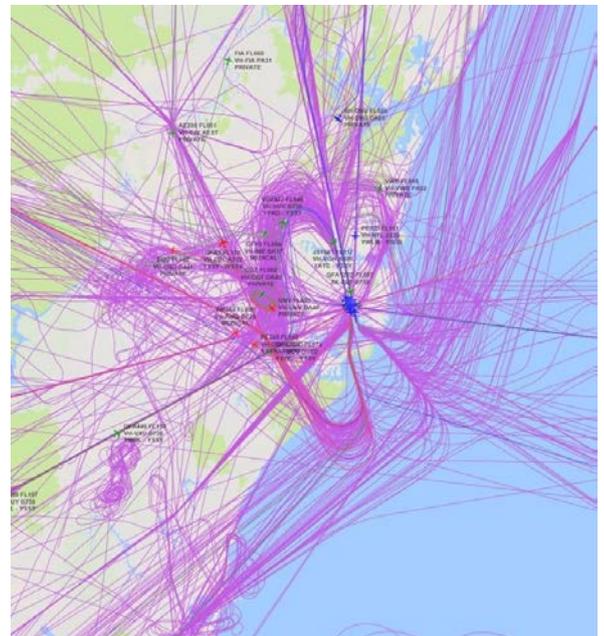
Why didn't it work? Because there are no such thing as 'flight paths' and there never were.

When a plane is on approach to an airport, it needs to spend the last few kilometres on a predictable path, following beacons and instrument landing systems to 'hit' the runway.

When a plane takes off, this is not what happens. Planes take off into the wind, turn, and head for their destination. Given there are hundreds of destinations, the 'paths' look more like spaghetti.

The image in this article is of aircraft movements in Sydney (at Mascot and Bankstown) for a single day up to 5pm. Move this pile of flights west 35km to Badgerys Creek, and you get the idea. You can generate your own similar image at <http://adsb.16right.com/map> by turning on "Show Today's Flights".

Western Sydney Airport will 'use' the suburban areas of Western Sydney, as well as the World Heritage listed national parks of the Blue Mountains, as a huge area of approach and depart airspace. The noise, fine particulates, metals, toxic gases and unburned fuel will rain down on us, and our precious bushland, 24 hours per day.



There will be no 'quiet' locations, no places left untouched, all areas will be affected.

The existing flights from Mascot and Bankstown will also still happen, using altitude to overlap airspace, so the noise we all experience now stays, and a whole extra layer, at a lower altitude, gets added. When a plane is at half the altitude, the noise level *quadruples*. So much for our peaceful lifestyle!

We all need to be writing letters to our politicians of all political persuasions telling them this is not OK, this project must not happen. Letters are more effective than emails, but if you want the easy way, go here: http://www.nobca.org.au/email_politicians.htm

Ross Coster, Convenor, No Western Sydney Airport Subcommittee
nwsa@bluemountains.org.au

Heather Hull—Life Member Nominee

Heather Hull has made a long and distinguished contribution to voluntary organisations with Blue Mountains Conservation Society receiving a most generous share of her efforts. In 2015, we celebrated what a number of very hard working women had contributed to the regional environment movement in our "Women Pioneers of Conservation" seminar. All of the women honoured at that time were already deceased but a new generation continues the tradition with Heather Hull at their forefront.

Like so many of her sisters in conservation, Heather has never been known to seek glory or the limelight. She has developed the skills she has offered us in tandem with caring for a family and, until a few years ago, undertaking full time paid work. For quite a number of years, Heather lived in a tiny village far along the railway line to Broken Hill. She has certainly demonstrated to us how flexible one individual can be.

Members like Heather Hull are the backbone of any voluntary organisation. Heather is a long-time member of our management committee and the land use subcommittee. She is always willing to volunteer and help—manning our stalls and information tables at festivals and other events, representing the Society at meetings and protests, carrying our banner in the parade, organising supper at Society meetings, carrying the message about our campaigns to others.

Bushwalking with Heather is an inspiring experience because she never ceases to marvel at the impressiveness of the natural landscape and is always grateful to the track builders and others who help us to enjoy it.

Where the Raven Lives

On a headland above a valley
we sit and watch the drifting
shadows
of the clouds, and the mountains,
not blue, but softly grey
stretch out forever
mountain beyond mountain

Christine Davies
Castle Head, Katoomba
April 1998

Margaret Baker – Life Member Nominee

Margaret has had a lifelong passion for geological history and environmental interpretation that was particularly fostered by her Newcastle family's holidays in the Blue Mountains in the 1960s and a teenage encounter with ancient Antarctic Beech trees in Queensland. The outrageous proposal to flood Lake Pedder in Tasmania was a pivotal moment that ensured her early involvement in conservation issues. Consequently, after moving to western Sydney she joined the Upper and Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Societies in the late 1970s (before their merger).

In 1980 Margaret co-authored the first submission against the Penrith Lakes Scheme and, as Vice-President and then President of the LBMCS, was involved in attempts to protect stands of the rare Faulconbridge Mallee Ash from residential development, and in the campaign for the Local Environmental Plan 1991 that saw large areas of the Blue Mountains protected from development. She represented the LBMCS in the long fight that stopped the proposed Londonderry Regional Waste Depot in 1992. From the early 80s Margaret co-authored books on Blue Mountains plants and birds used by many for identification and to gain an understanding of the need to conserve the region's biodiversity.

In 1984 Margaret became a teacher of Outdoor Guiding and Geography at the Katoomba College of TAFE and in 1995 formed the Environmental Studies Unit at the new Blue Mountains campus and was appointed its first Head Teacher. Providing instruction in a diversity of courses including Outdoor/Interpretive Guiding, Bush Regeneration, Natural Resource Management and Conservation and Land Management, Margaret contributed for almost 30 years to many students gaining outstanding environmental expertise.

Now in "retirement" Margaret continues to be actively involved in the Society through the Land Use sub-Committee. Her outstanding knowledge of natural systems and their connecting linkages has provided for skilled analyses of the consequences of proposed developments in many Society submissions, including the evidence recently presented during the Land and Environment Court hearing about the Radiata Plateau developments, the St Columbas subdivision and the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice.

Margaret continues to provide voluntary native plant identification tuition to community groups, manages a Citizen Science biodiversity project and provides environmental talks at local conferences. Margaret and husband Mark's personal commitment to the environment extends to having a Biodiversity Conservation Covenant over their bushland property at Winmalee.

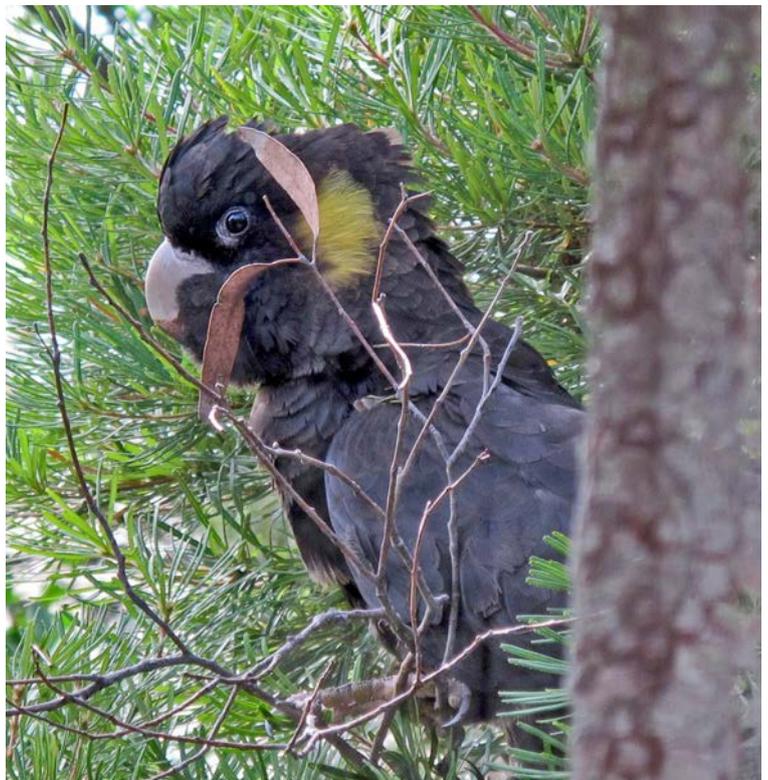
Wild Life in Blackheath Christine Davies

It has been a long hot summer, even in Blackheath, and seems to have been a good breeding season for the birds. Among the juveniles I have seen in the garden and heard nearby are Eastern Spinebills, New Holland Honeyeaters, an Eastern Yellow Robin, Red Wattlebird, Crested Pigeons, Crimson Rosellas, Magpie and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo—and, on the very last day of our summer, a Grey Shrike Thrush feeding a small skink into the wide-open beak of its appreciative youngster.

In early February, driving near Crookwell, our vehicle was bombarded by plague locusts. On examining one of the casualties I saw that they have pretty yellow wings like a butterfly, hidden when they are still, which they use to fly short distances. Two weeks later, at home in Blackheath, I was mystified by a small unusual sound in the national park. When I found some individuals on the quarry road I realised the sound was locusts jumping. They did not appear to be flying and were not in such huge numbers, but otherwise acted in a similar way to their cousins in Crookwell.

At the same time as these signs of summer, there were signs that autumn was on the way. As February progressed, there were unusual birds travelling through and visiting the garden. Leaves on the deciduous street trees began to change colour.

It is always a thrill when Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos arrive to feed. Chewed up pieces of Banksia cone cover the paths and driveway. It's not until you see them close up that you realise what big birds they are. I photographed this bird through a window on 23 February.



VALLEY OF THE WATERS BUSHCARE GROUP

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets on the second Saturday of each month, 9am - noon. Tools and gloves are available. Bring a drink, a snack and a sunhat. NEW MEMBERS ARE WELCOME.
Phone Karen 4757 1929.

Blue Mountains and Western Sydney people – are we just road blocks for the State Government? Don Morison

Every day, the list of issues on which our State Government is clashing with majority opinion in the Mountains and Western Sydney seems to lengthen. Our parliamentarians and councillors constantly need to defend our region against bad State Government decisions. These disputes focus on major impacts on the natural environment.

Commuter transport is a central concern. Effective public transport is vital to stop air pollution and protect natural areas, urban parks and the built environment from expressways and car parks. Major toll revenue diversion to public transport improvements could help the environment and household budgets and give us less stressful lifestyles.

Unsurprisingly, MPs like the Blue Mountains' Trish Doyle are unhappy that the toll-collecting rights for the West Connex, which mountains people and "westies" heavily contribute to, might be sold off to fund a widely opposed Northern Beaches tunnel.

What of the train service? The State Government's rejection of new carriages that fit the tracks from Springwood to Lithgow could exacerbate environmental dislocation, sacrifice of heritage buildings and construction delays for no service improvement. If new trains run to the upper mountains, it is not guaranteed they will have "air curtains", or any technology to stop cold air rushing in through doors that open directly into the main carriage. And there could be fixed direction

seating with no choice about which way you face and hardly any toilets.

A Freedom of Information Report obtained by a transport activist group points to an expensive taxpayer-funded public relations exercise to gloss over the new Blue Mountains trains being much less comfortable than the old.

Badgerys Creek airport needs a whole article to itself each month to document its risks. But let's at least acknowledge Badgerys Creek airport and West Connex as the proud parents of the huge convoy of spoil trucks that could run through the mountains for years because the NSW Government has yet to find a dumping place other than a group of old sand quarries near Bell for all the spoil yet to be created by those projects' excavations. Restoration of disused coal and sand mining sites in Bell district has been inadequate but these convoy proposals would further harm the environment and residential amenity.

Speaking of trucks, after jeopardising the Gardens of Stone, "nut coal" extracted from the recently approved coal mine near Cullen Bullen will be trucked to the Shoalhaven district to aid ethanol manufacture.

One could go on about developments that could be approved if Blue Mountains Council is suspended. But it's not going to make us mountains and western Sydney people seem any less obstructive. Maybe we'll just have to be road blocks for a long time.



Blue Mountains MP Trish Doyle draws attention to the benefits of public transport at a rally in February. Photo by Tom Harris-Brassil

BMCS NURSERY PLANT SALES

We offer the home gardener, landscaper or contractor a big variety of quality local native plants at economical prices.

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

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

Tube stock \$3. Discounts for bulk orders.

Enquiries: Hugh Brougham 04079 55028

nursery@bluemountains.org.au

Gardens of Stone Visitors Map

The Visitors Map is full of suggested walks and trips. It is in full colour, 60 by 85 cm in size, and covers the entire Gardens of Stone region at a 1:100,000 scale, making it ideal for planning your next trip to the area. You can buy a map on the society's website at

www.bluemountains.org.au/

[GoS_VisitorsMap.htm](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/GoS_VisitorsMap.htm)

Ross Coster—Life Member Nominee

Ross Coster joined the Management Committee as Membership Secretary in 1995. Our membership was 350 people. When he left the committee five years later there were 850 members.

Ross spent his first year or so on the committee changing membership over from a card file system to a modern database system, using a software system he developed for us and which is still used today. He developed and maintained our first website. He helped establish our Investments Committee and has been a member of that committee continuously since its inception.

During the 1990's he chaired the National Parks and Water Cycle subcommittees. He monitored and influenced the rollout of the Upper Blue Mountains Sewerage Scheme, sitting on a Sydney Water committee for nearly 10 years. He also represented us on the committee that designed a new regional environmental plan to protect the Sydney drinking water catchments after a water contamination scare in 1998.

In 1999 Ross left the Management Committee to pursue his business interests, returning as Membership Secretary in 2014 when he retired. His plan was to stick to that role, but that plan came unstuck - the Commonwealth Government announced the proposed Western Sydney Airport.

As convener of the No Western Sydney Airport sub-committee, Ross has travelled to Parliament Houses in Sydney and Canberra, to meetings with dozens of politicians across Western Sydney, and closely liaised with several other No Airport groups. He also represents the Society on the Mayoral Reference Group opposing the proposed airport.

Ross has personally letterboxed thousands of homes both in the Blue Mountains and in Western Sydney, handing out No Airport flyers and spare copies of Hut News. He has written dozens of articles for Hut News on sustainability, greenhouse and of course the proposed airport. He edits and sends out the weekly 'e-blasts' to members and campaigns lists. He is currently part way through a comprehensive rebuild of our membership software system, designed to move us to e-mail receipts and better handling of modern complex families with multiple surnames.

Ross is a tireless worker for the Society over more than 20 years and is an obvious candidate for Life Membership.

Threatened fauna of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area:

Heath Monitor *Varanus rosenbergi*

Judy Smith

There are three species of monitors (goannas) resident in the World Heritage Area: the Lace Monitor *Varanus varius*, Gould's Goanna *V. gouldii* and the Heath Monitor.

The Lace Monitor, easily the largest of the three, is widespread and common. At home on the ground and in trees, it is the goanna of camping grounds that is bold enough to search tents for food. The other two species are rarer, more elusive, and usually keep to the ground. Gould's Goanna inhabits the drier, more northerly parts of the WHA. The Heath Monitor occurs at scattered locations and reaches its northern limit along the southern escarpment of the Hunter Valley. Apparently, the Mount Riverview ridgeline was, before the houses appeared, a good place to find Heath Monitors.

The Heath Monitor is the only one of the three which is threatened - it is a Vulnerable Species in NSW. When seen in the bush it has a bright, speckled appearance. It frequents shrubby dry sclerophyll forest on sandstone ridges and plateaus which, covering three-quarters (73%) of the WHA, is the most common habitat in the area. And yet, the Heath Monitor is a threatened species. It shelters in burrows (which it digs), hollow logs or rock crevices. It requires terrestrial termite mounds in which to lay its eggs, possibly the availability of termite mounds is a limiting factor.

The three goannas can be distinguished by the differing yellowish patterning on their face, limbs and tail. Records of the Heath Monitor in the WHA are few, maybe they are more abundant than we think because they are sometimes mistaken for small Lace Monitors?



Lace Monitor (up a tree and showing the banded arm pattern) and Heath Monitor (speckled arm pattern).

Photos by Peter Smith.

Readers of Hut News are invited to send a poem inspired by the Blue Mountains, maximum 20 lines. Poems can be emailed to Brendan Doyle brendan049@gmail.com or posted to Poets' Corner at 5 Lurline Street, Wentworth Falls 2782.

On the edge

I have become
a fringe dweller
in the country of my birth,
have no desire
for watching sport,
noisy chatter,
celebrity culture.

I want to
waste my time,
follow ribbons of ideas
picking at their tangles,
learn the secret
of belonging
on the earth,

to ride
bird-shaped
corridors of song,
curl inside their hollows,
feel bright wings
lift my dreaming hours,
unravel.

A poem by Michele Fermanis-Winward,
from her latest collection **THE EUCALYPT
DISTILLERY**, published by Ginninderra
Press and available from their website or from
Gleebooks Blackheath.

Volunteer Power

The Thursday Interpretive Bushwalks have been part of the Society's bushwalking program for nearly 20 years. They are leisurely walks with lots of time to stop and look at birds and plants and other wonders of our native bushland along the way. Sometimes the Blue Mountains are left behind for the city where we visit pockets of remnant bushland and/or learn about the interesting history of Sydney and suburbs. Sometimes it involves a three or four day trip away to coastal and inland locations. The walks are organised and led by volunteers who appreciate the natural environment and want to encourage others to do the same. When somebody loves and understands their natural surroundings they are more likely to want to protect them.

Participants in the Thursday Interpretive Bushwalks walk regularly with the group on Thursdays during term time with, usually, no walks in school holidays. Casual walkers are not catered for and so the program is not advertised in Hut News or on the website. A large number of Society members have participated over the years. At the time of writing there are several people who have been regular walkers since the walks began or not long afterwards. The Thursday Interpretive Bushwalks continue to cater for all members of the walking group and time and distance have slowed many people down. Nowadays the walking group is sometimes nicknamed "The Thursday Dawdlers". Those who require faster, more difficult walks are catered for elsewhere in the bushwalking program (see page 12).

Walkers are required to pay an annual bushwalking insurance fee and to follow the Society's bushwalking guidelines. You can read these on the Society's website, www.bluemountains.org.au There is by necessity a number limit and a waiting list.

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact me: Christine Davies 4787 7246 hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

You can become a member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society

- **Post** this Application Form with your cheque or money order to: Blue Mountains Conservation Society, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls, NSW 2782, **OR**
- **Join online** at: www.bluemountains.org.au

(Use capitals please—even for email address)

Name(s) 1.
2.
3.

Address:
.....PC

Phone(s)

Email

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

Please sign if named above.

Signature(s) 1.
2.
3.

MEMBERSHIP FEES (please circle one item)

Single \$35 Concession (Senior/Student) \$25
Household \$40 Household Concession \$30
Corporate (negotiable)

Membership (circled above) \$

Donation (tax deductible) \$

Bushwalkers: please add
\$20 per walker per annum. \$

TOTAL AMOUNT \$

Send my copy of Hut News by
Please tick box mail internet only

Would you like to be involved in any of the following activities or working groups? (Please underline):

Land use/development issues; Environmental Education; Threatened species issues; Website and social media; Plant nursery assistance; Bushcare; Publicity/photography; Water quality/sourcing studies; Administration;

ENQUIRIES: Phone 02 4757 1872

Email: membership@bluemountains.org.au

BMCS Planning & Development Resource Kit

Do you want to take action on an environmental issue in your neighbourhood or the Blue Mountains more broadly?

Do you want information about the laws and procedures relating to development and environmental protection?

Find out what **YOU** can do! Go to the Planning and Development Resource Kit www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community organisation working to achieve the preservation and regeneration of the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

The Society believes that World Heritage status provides an opportunity for local community members to become custodians of the unique biodiversity and scenery of the Blue Mountains.

The Mission of the Society is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains.

The Aims and Objectives of the Society are to:

- Disseminate and foster an understanding of the ideals of Conservation.
- Promote the need for ecological sustainability.
- Protect the natural environment—flora, fauna, habitat, water, land and air.
- Actively oppose those human activities which degrade or destroy the natural environment.
- Repair the adverse effects of human activities upon the environment.
- Encourage the love of the natural environment by conducting a regular program of bushwalks.
- Increase the pool of expert knowledge about the natural environment, through meetings, excursions, research and other activities.
- Provide information to the public on matters of Conservation, especially through the Conservation Hut at the Valley of the Waters, Wentworth Falls.
- Maintain close and friendly relations with like-minded groups.

A BEQUEST: Please remember us in your Will.

The Law Society of NSW recommends the following wording: "I bequeath the sum of \$... to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc. for its general purposes and declare that the receipt of the treasurer for the time being of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society shall be complete discharge to my executors in respect of any sum paid to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society".

A tribute to Jack Austin (1927-2017) by Jim Smith.

Jack Austin was trained as a radio technician, with one of his early employers being the Eric Anderson company. In the 1960s he moved to the electrical department of Hoffnung's store and learned to service the early television sets. He became a scoutmaster, sometimes bringing his boys to the Blue Mountains for bushwalks. He and his wife Val moved to Winmalee in 1978 when he obtained a job preparing printing plates at Mission Publications of Australia (MPA) in Lawson. He would often take MPA staff, and other youth and church groups, on bushwalks. In 1980 he moved to Woodford. I first met him in 1986 when he joined the Outdoor Guides Course at Katoomba TAFE. During the course, like another MPA staff member, Heather Mollenhauer (1929-2010), he became very interested in the Blue Mountains history subject and joined the Blue Mountains Historical Society. He and Heather both also joined the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

Another member of the Conservation Society, Grace Bayley, had been keeping diaries of her bushwalks since 1923. When I read her diary, I urged her to publish it as a book. This appeared in 1993, and was titled *Take It Slowly*. I wrote the preface for this delightful volume. Grace walked regularly with a group of mature aged friends who called themselves 'The Gentle Ramblers'. Jack Austin joined this group in April 1993 and helped plan and lead many of the walks. As they gradually became more adventurous, the name of the group was changed to 'Jacktrackers'. Jack began to wear a red top so the group could more easily follow him in the bush. Grace gave him the name 'Telopea' because he could be 'seen from afar' (the meaning of the species name of the Waratah, *Telopea speciosissima*.)

Grace continued to write up the group's walks in her diary and produced a manuscript of the Jacktrackers' walks during the period 1993 to 1995, when she left the Blue Mountains to live in Gerringong. Unfortunately, she decided not to publish this second volume, but I have a treasured copy. Jack Austin took over the production of the annual Jacktrackers diaries, with bound books published in 1997 and 1998 in very limited numbers. The four volumes of diaries, by Grace and Jack, are a marvellous resource, packed full of environmental and historical information. In the early decades of our Conservation Society, the leaders of our walks nearly always provided an account of what was seen and done for the newsletter. I always enjoyed these stories and they form a valuable record. Perhaps it would be good to revive the custom of writing accounts of the Society's walks for 'Hut News'.

Heather Mollenhauer wrote this appreciation of Jack's leadership skills.

"Jack combines two of his great passions, history and bushwalking, and as a result walks are all the more interesting. So, the Jacktrackers, on their weekly Thursday walks, greatly benefit from his vast knowledge, and particularly of his remarkable sense of direction, so that, even in a trackless area with no identifying landmarks, he always knows the way, so the joy of exploring and finding new places holds no fear but great satisfaction.

Jacktrackers have every confidence in Jack as a leader. He is so thoughtful and helpful in making sure everyone negotiates creeks and difficult areas, he carries a rope which is used at times to scale steep slopes."

I did a couple of walks with Jack. One was when he wanted to find the then very rarely visited 'Rookery Nook' cave used in the 1930s by Eric Lowe and his friends, including Eleanor and Eric Dark. I had been shown this by Ben Esgate. Another of our walks eventuated when I asked him to show me the 1820s 'Jacob's Ladder' track at Mount Tomah. Read more in April Hut News.

47. BUSH HOSPITALITY, Middle Arm District and Elsewhere

Tourism, one of the most successful industries in the world, is largely about the impressions visitors receive when they travel far from their usual beat. Even in Australia, where the natural landscape is one of our most outstanding assets, the human factor in tourism is important. Much of Australia is sparsely populated. You might be lucky enough to occasionally meet an interesting local in the flesh. But if you wander along the western flanks of the Blue Mountains, you are sure to notice the signs of human life.

Take the Middle Arm “Stock Reserve” sign. In one of his best songs, in support of retaining travelling stock reserves, John Williamson wrote that “We have a right to make a campfire on the road”. And so in the Middle Arm Reserve, in a beautiful patch of Eucalypt forest, we apparently do. The sign mentions what we don’t have a right to do, including dumping, motorbiking and woodcutting, restrictions which will surely improve the experience of the peace-loving traveller. If there’s a total fire ban, better stick to scrumptious salads and iced tea. It’s still uplifting to see corridors of bush down the sides of a country road because the stock reserves are still there.

I was not courageous enough to wander past the paddock gate and find out what information the “Mount Rae Tourist Information Centre” was actually offering. I interpreted their sign as laconic Australian humour-speak for “don’t bother us”. I did wonder if they have had Japanese or South Americans holding on to their English translation phrase books and seeking genuine tourist information from them.

The Devils Hole track sign in Cliff Drive, Katoomba, looks like it’s seen better days. But it’s also seen worse days. In the 1990s, when it was affixed to the metal pole at the right of the photograph, it used to regularly disappear altogether. Perhaps somebody, in a far past period, didn’t want visitors there at all. At least this week, you can find the Devils Hole track if you want to.

It’s a big continent and looking for the signs is one of the rewarding parts of traversing it. Perhaps we should produce a special guidebook in multiple languages attempting to explain the eccentricity and twisted humour of the things modern Australians write onto our landscapes.

(Photos by Christine Davies)



This “Blue Trail” is a collective description for sites in the western Blue Mountains that arouse natural or cultural interest or both. Most are only a short walk from roads or vehicular tracks. One day, a high quality walking path may link them.



BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc: BUSHWALKING ACTIVITIES

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. The BMCS Bushwalking Guide which explains the numbered grades can be found on the Society's website www.bluemountains.org.au or can be posted on request. For more information call Maurice Kerkham 4739 4942, mobile 04024 02783, email mauricekerkham@hotmail.com or write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782. **Late changes to the program will be published on the website.**

SATURDAY WALKS: Usually a full day longer walk at a faster pace. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. If you are a new walker to Saturday walks, before attending contact the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Harold Thompson harold.thompson@bigpond.com 6355 1762 or mobile 0409 010 737

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

- Mar 10 **Medlow Bath to Blacks Ladder.** Leader: Harold 0409010737. Meet at Wentworth Falls Car Park, 8.00am. 7km. Gr3, map Katoomba.
- Mar 17 **Oronga Gully.** Leader Harold 0409010737. 8km, Gr3/4. Map Mt Wilson. Contact leader to book in.
- Mar 24 **Bald Head & Bennetts LO.** Some off-track. Leader Alice & Lotti 47393086, Meet at Blackheath Stn. Car Park, 8.00am, 8km, GR3, Map Mt Wilson
- Mar 31 **Porters Pass.** Leader, Eddie 47842691. Meet at Blackheath Stn Car Park 8.30am, 7km, Gr3, map Katoomba
- April 7 **Walford Walls.** Leader, Bob 0408947325. Meet at Mt Hay Rd. 8.30am. 10km, Gr3, map Katoomba
- April 14 **Rarely visited spurs on Mt Banks.** Some off-track, Leader Emanuel 0419773906. 8km, Gr3, map Mt Wilson. Contact leader to book in.

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS: Short Day walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of an average fitness. Bring morning tea and lunch and adequate water. The Group Co-ordinator is Keith Dorrian, 4736 1010, 04111 62345, keithdor53@hotmail.com

- Mar 12 **Radiata Plateau, Katoomba.** Great views into Megalong Valley. Meet Katoomba Station car park 8.30 am. Car pool. Maurice 4739 4942 or 0402 402 783. Grade 2.
- Mar 19 **Florabella Pass and Pippas Pass,** Warrimoo to Blaxland. Meet Warrimoo Station south side 8.45am. Leader Maurice 0402 402 783 or 4739 4942. Grade 2.
- Mar 26 **Little Zig Zag and Reinits Pass,** Mount Victoria. Meet Mount Victoria Station 8.50. Car pool. Tracy 0434 362 611. Grade 3.
- Apr 2 **Warragamba River.** Stunning river views. Short but hard. Meet Glenbrook Station, eastern car park, 9.30 am. Car pool. Fare \$7. Maurice 0402 402 783 or 4739 4942. Grade 3.
- Apr 9 **Sailors Bay Creek,** Castlecrag foreshore and Burley Griffin. Meet Central Station, top of escalators, 9.25am, for train to North Sydney at 9.50am to meet Jane. Jane Boyd 0403 470 101. Grade 2.

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS: Walks 2-3 hours conducted at a leisurely pace to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, adequate water and lunch if noted. Group Co-ordinator is Beverley Thompson, 4757 2076, denfenella12@bigpond.com

- Mar 15 **Goochs Crater.** Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Keith 0411 162 345. Car pool \$5 AWD preferred. Take lunch. Grade 2/3
- Mar 22 **Berghoffers Pass, Mount Victoria.** Constructed 1907-1912 as an easier grade than Victoria Pass. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50am. Leader Doreen 6355 2371. Car pool. BBQ lunch at Doreen's. Bring meat to barbecue and a plate to share. Grade 2
- Mar 29 **Deidre's Walk, Bullaburra.** Walk along fire trail to rocky outcrop. Meet Bullaburra Station north side 9.30am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 1
- Apr 5 **Leura Cascades to Echo Point.** Meet cnr Mall and Megalong Street, Leura 9.30am. Leader Christine 4757 2864. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2
- Apr 12 **Braeside Walk to Evans Lookout, Blackheath.** Waterfalls, creeks and Grose Valley views. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9.45am. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2

MIXED FLOCKS OF BIRDS—Graham Alcorn, March 1974

With the main breeding season over, it is not unusual from now on through the Autumn to see mixed flocks of small, insect-eating birds. Do they join forces for an hour or two, or for a long period?

On three occasions over a three week period last May and early June, my backyard was visited by a flock of Buff-tailed Thornbills, accompanied each time by one male Scarlet Robin, one Yellow Robin and some Striated Thornbills. So it seems this interesting assemblage knocks around together. On the last visit they were joined by a female Scarlet Robin and two Brown Thornbills. ...

As the feeding habits of each species in these mixed flocks are different, it would seem that they do not compete for the available insects and may even help one another, one species, in the course of its feeding, stirring up insects the other wants. Anyhow, their cheerful visits are a delight, and an added pleasure is the knowledge of the great number of insects they are demolishing in my garden.

SOURCE: Sipping the Nectar, the "Bird Notes" of Graham Alcorn.

An extract from Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society newsletter No 16, March 1974.

Society Bushwalks on facebook:
Visit <https://www.facebook.com/bmcslongerbushwalks/>

Welcome to new members

Freda Moxom
Elizabeth Northey
Alan Northey
John Daniel
Jenny Gill
Margaret Spirey

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

www.bluemountains.org.au

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