



*Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.*

# HUT NEWS

*Nature conservation saves for tomorrow*



## 50 years of Society newsletters

The first newsletter of the Katoomba And District Wildlife Conservation Society was published in June 1970. It was printed as a three page foolscap document on a stencil duplicator, called a roneo or Gestetner machine. The charge for the newsletter was 10 cents. The Society's president was James Vaughan and its secretary was Isobel Bowden.

The newsletters, with monthly meetings were the principal method of communicating with members and were published quarterly for the first 25 years.

When Christine Davies became the editor in December 1995 the newsletter became a monthly publication and in the following year it was named "Hut News".

This issue, 50 years since the first, is number 381.

### The first three newsletters are now on our website.

I was warmed by many articles in these first editions. There's a story of children losing their biros only to find them later in a bower; and Mr. & Mrs Vanry and Miss Bowden on a camping trip at Bell coming across the Ground Mistletoe (*Atkinsonia ligustrina*). (Greta Vanry was a life member and founding member of the Society.)

And of course there was the converse - a planned fire trail from Mt Hay east to Mt Whitton (now Whitton Hill); and logging on the Boyd Plateau.

### **Breaking news**

We've just received copies of the early newsletters of the Lower Blue Mountains Wildlife Conservation Society. This Society was formed in October 1966 and merged with the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society in 1996.

These newsletters will also be scanned and added to our website. **Alan Page**

### **From former long term editor, Christine Davies**

When our society launched its first newsletter 50 years ago, it was 'for the members and by the members'. At the time NSW had a pro-development Government under the leadership of former Premier Robert Askin and it seemed that nothing was sacred.

There were monthly meetings and regular outings. Community activities included environmental education through the Conservation Hut and local schools. With other societies we campaigned to stop a large section of the Kanangra Boyd National Park being cleared for Radiata Pine plantations. We also fought against pollution in the Fish River and supported proposals for new national parks in the Budawang Range and Myall Lakes area.

Today we are over-exposed to electronic news and today's news is yesterday's news before tomorrow comes. But our little newsletter was written and read by members and distributed to visitors, passed on between friends and family, and carefully filed so that 50 years later copies can be read and we can learn about the history of our society and the people who fought for our legacy, the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

#### Activities of Members:

A small party of our members went on the week-end of 18 - 19 April with members of the WildLife Preservation Socy of Austr. to KANANGRA/BOYD National Park to view destruction to the Park caused by illegal logging. M. & B.Kaub have committed themselves to go a bit deeper into these matters and together with Mr. Mike Dunphy, Hon.Secr. of the Nat.Parks Ass., they are trying to influence the government about the desirability of having revoked a decision that roughly 5000 acres of the Park are being handed over to the Forestry Comm. of NSW for the planting of Radiata Pine. We hope that we can report on this matter in our next newsletter more extensively.



Tara Cameron

## From the President

I hope that this edition of Hut News finds you well and able to enjoy some time in nature. As our community addresses the issues associated with the spread of COVID 19, I am grateful that I am able to sit, walk and appreciate the wonder of the beautiful Blue Mountains. Autumn is a fantastic season to observe bird migrations and there seems to be plenty happening! My personal connection with the bush began, like so many of us, as simply playing in sandstone caves, progressing to bushwalking through rugged country, and then learning more about the plants and animals I passed. It has helped to sustain and nurture me during this period. I am sure that many of you will feel similarly. It is my hope that a greater appreciation of the value of nature may emerge from this challenging experience.

As a Conservation Society, we work to protect, conserve and advocate for the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains. Hence, in addition to enjoying and appreciating, I hope that people are also willing to advocate for the protection of the nature that sustains us. Advocating may be as simple as being a member of this Society, for which I thank you all. Over the next month, the Society will continue to work for nature by addressing issues such as proposals for Radiata Plateau, national parks and highway widening options. Thank you for your ongoing support and involvement.

Tara Cameron ©

## From the editor

Thank you to everyone who has contributed. As I'm sure Christine found, it's not always easy to accommodate every contribution with a limit of 12 pages but I will try.

And thank you to Valda Low who prepared the desktop publishing of the May issue, while I completed the editing in a rush to meet the deadline.

Please keep sending in your articles or maybe your thoughts as a letter to the editor. As you will see in the first article about the anniversary of the newsletter, this is intended to be a document by the members for the members. I hope you enjoy this issue.

Susan Crick

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## School Strike 4 Climate focuses on the need for a just and green recovery

The School Strike 4 Climate couldn't go ahead as planned but that didn't stop our committed strikers. Instead they organised an inspiring four hour online rally. See the link below.

As before there was a strong focus on 'a just transition' and the impact of climate change on First Nations people.

A Just Transition is about a host of strategies that will enable whole communities to become thriving economies with dignified, productive and ecologically sustainable livelihoods, democratic governance and ecological resilience. It is a principle of the Paris Climate Agreement.

It had not escaped the speakers' notice that the world has been able to respond rapidly to the Corona virus pandemic. Governments, business and communities have made drastic changes quickly and previous excuses for inaction on climate change have been shown to be simply not valid.

Many nations are seizing the opportunity to make a 'green recovery' that responds to the urgency of climate change and recognises the concept of a just transition. Both New Zealand and Scotland have established Just Transition Commissions to ensure that those who work in high carbon industries are not left behind in the transition to low carbon economies. And the European Union has adopted a Green Deal that says that there will be no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050 and economic growth will be decoupled from resource use.

The 'Deal' intends to 'protect the health and well being of citizens from environment-related risks and impacts' and 'At the same time, this transition must be just and inclusive. It must put people first, and pay attention to the regions, industries and workers who will face the greatest challenges'.

Meanwhile in Australia the CFMEU and ACTU and many environmental organisations and segments of industry are calling for a just transition within a plan for emissions reduction. Actions by industry and State Governments for a clean energy future are consistently hindered by a lack of national policy and

commitment due to the political stranglehold preventing any climate change action by the Federal Government.

And the Government's plan for a 'gas fired recovery' is anything but green. Gas is a non renewable resource and will cause more greenhouse gas emissions, more fracking on indigenous land in environmentally sensitive areas and agricultural land. It will also mean more gas mining off our coastline.

It means we are not grasping this opportunity created by the pandemic for a green and just recovery.

**Clare Power ©**

See <https://www.schoolstrike4climate.com/>

## Reports

### Management Committee

On Saturday May 16 the management committee met (with the help of Zoom). The following is a summary of the decisions of that meeting:

- Examine the Gordon Falls lookout upgrade through the Landuse Subcommittee and follow up with National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).
- Hold a meeting with NPWS about walking track upgrades, access issues and matters such as Radiata Plateau (through the NPWS officer and National Parks subcommittee).
- Form a new subcommittee to develop and promote a Society position on the environmental impacts of tourism.
- Develop a document that outlines the environmental impacts and concerns of the various Great Western Highway options. This can be used to liaise with other community groups and government.

### Gardens of Stone report

- Proposed Angus Place Mine Extension The Angus Place mine extension would destroy many of the remaining swamp systems in the Newnes Plateau, risk draining the Wolgan River and Falls and degrade the outstanding beauty of Gardens of Stone area above. The proposal also sought to mine until 2053 to supply the nearby Mount Piper

Power Station. Yet power station owners say its economic life is much shorter.

Several thousand objections to this proposal were lodged during the public exhibition of the Environmental Impact Statement for Angus Place. Environmental groups also submitted their objections to the proposal and their concerns with the impacts on this spectacular natural area.

This is the first stage of the project assessment. The Society has asked that the proposal be referred to the Independent Planning Commission and a public hearing.

The Gardens of Stone Alliance groups will also continue to promote *Destination Pagoda*, which offers an alternative tourism economy for the Lithgow area based on the natural beauty of Newnes Plateau and the whole of the Gardens of Stone area. The Gardens of Stone Alliance is made up of Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Colong Foundation for Wilderness and Lithgow Environment Group.

- Centennial Coal has vastly underestimated greenhouse gas emissions in its mine proposals by up to 97%. See <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/we-stuffed-up-coal-miner-admits-to-submitting-wrong-emissions-data-20200508-p54r6i.html>
- Keith Muir, Director of the Colong Foundation retired in April. Thank you Keith.

## Tourism policy to be developed

The air is cleaner, the roads are quieter and you can find parking in your own town. While we constantly hear about the benefits of tourism some of us wonder if the price is too high. A city within a World Heritage Area has more responsibility than usual to manage the juxtaposition and to ensure one does not exist at the expense of the other.

Cathy Cavanagh, the Society's Environmental Education Officer has proposed a subcommittee to develop a Society policy about tourism. The policy would serve as a basis for the Society's future decisions associated with tourism and its impacts. Elizabeth Howard (Treasurer), and Susan Crick (Editor) will join her.

The subcommittee will draw on the Society's submission of 2019 to Council about the Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement. Many recommendations in that submission refer to the impacts of tourism and the manner in which they could be prevented or managed.

Cathy brings a wealth of experience in some of the world's tourism hot spots such as Bali and has seen first hand the damage that can be done. Elizabeth brings her determination to make a meaningful contribution to Earth's problems and Susan has worked at the interface with the community and tourists in many environmentally based organisations including the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The subcommittee will report regularly about progress to the Management Committee and to members.

## National Parks Officer report

The Society has sent a submission about Ngula Bulgarabang (Radiata Plateau) to National Parks and Wildlife Service. It says that due to the high natural and cultural values of the plateau, the Society believes the area should be a national park, either as part of the Blue Mountains National Park or be reserved as a new national park.

If the NPWS were considering a regional park reserve category, to allow for a wider range of uses, the Society would only support such a classification under a range of conditions.

The submission has been acknowledged by NPWS and we await further decisions. See our website <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/submissions-2020.shtml>



# Flora and Fauna Monitoring Program

## A Citizen Science project

The Flora and Fauna Monitoring Program began in March 2019 and will develop a long term (50 year) record of any changes in the local vegetation and fauna in the region of the urban/bush interface. The results are stored on the CSIRO Atlas of Living Australia data base and will be used to monitor the impact of climate change, tourism and urban development on ecosystems at the urban-bush interface of the Blue Mountains National Park and will inform decisions about conservation issues associated with the parks.

Three flora sites (photo points) were chosen for recording long term changes in vegetation and two fauna sites were equipped with cameras triggered by infra-red movement detectors (camera traps). The five

sites were all within easy walking distance from the Conservation Hut. See Figure 1

We simply take pictures of vegetation at the photo points and use camera traps for sighting larger animals such as wallabies, foxes, cats and lyre birds. We then validate the sightings and load the photos onto the Atlas.

The three photo points are all in dry sclerophyll forest communities on ridge lines. We've added to the flora sites to include examples of hanging swamp, temperate rain forest and Blue Mountains heath plant communities. Rob Smith and Jan Allen both previously botanists at the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden at Mount Tomah and Wyn Jones, formerly an ecologist with National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) assisted with these additions.



Figure 1 – Flora and fauna monitoring sites

The two fauna camera traps were located on walking tracks. Figure 2 is a frequency analysis of the results from the camera located on a side track of the Short Cut track between the Conservation Hut and Wentworth Falls Lookout carpark. The track dates back to 1943 and runs along the urban-bush fence line.

It proved to be a good choice as a monitoring spot and was particularly active with macro fauna. Foxes, apparently without any shame, were using the site as a place for courting and dining and indeed one fox ate a possum right in front of the camera.

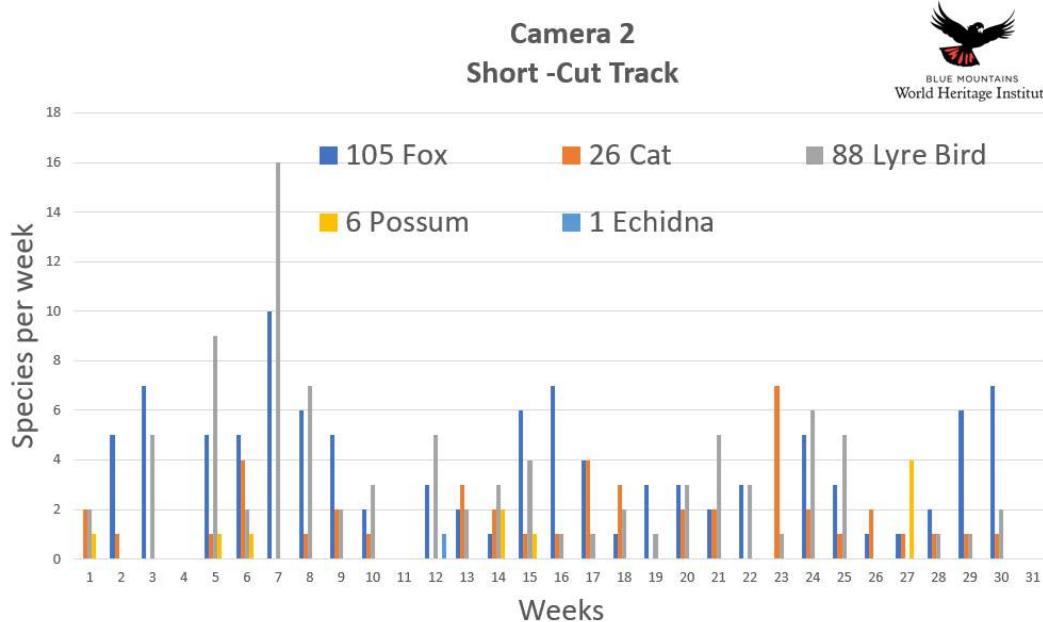


Figure 2 Frequency analysis of macro fauna passing Camera 2

The overall program is administered by the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute whose Director is Professor John Merson. It is sponsored by Scenic World (as part of their Environmental Program), Blue Mountains City Council, NPWS and the P.L. Hagl Foundation. The Wentworth Falls group, consisting in volunteers from the Society, is one of four groups contributing to the program. The other three are staff members of Scenic World, local residents at Blackheath and Cranbrook School at Wolgan Valley

The program stopped last December with the outbreak of the Ruined Castle fire and now courtesy of COVID-19 but we intend to be up and running again

in June. If anybody would like to join us for a leisurely walk in the bush, service the cameras and analyse the results over a cup of coffee please contact Richard at [richardlowson@yahoo.com.au](mailto:richardlowson@yahoo.com.au).

**Richard Lowson©**

## Wildlife rescue - it's not over yet

Thank you to all those who helped our wildlife survive after the fires. If you were involved or know places where seed was put out, we need your help now. It is a good time to check if there have been any seeds germinating and spreading into bushland. Bare, burned open ground is an ideal place for plants to grow – natives and weeds. Wildlife need bushland to recover, not exotic invasions.

While following up some 'feeding stations' for native animals, we found a number of weeds growing from the bird seed. At the end of April we found some dense patches of seedlings which were already producing seed; these were barley, oats and annual ryegrass. There were also sunflowers and millet which had germinated but were not yet seeding.

If you know of any feeding stations please keep an eye on them, check for germination and weed these out before they spread. Remember to take a weed bag with you to take away all seeds. You should only need a knife to weed out the seedlings. If you need a hand to identify the seedlings, contact us at [lyndal.sullivan@gmail.com](mailto:lyndal.sullivan@gmail.com).

**Lesley Sammon and Lyndal Sullivan©**



*Above: An oat seedling is not a native and should be removed.*

*Below: Lesley removes weed seedlings from a former feeding station*





A mainland she-oak skink.

## What animal is that?

There are over 400 native fauna species in the Greater Blue Mountains excluding invertebrates (insects, spiders, butterflies, etc.).

The Society has developed a webpage to help identify any new bird or lizard or frog that you see in your garden or in the bush. An example is this mainland she-oak skink which at first glance looked like a snake. By the way it's always best to be cautious with any animal; they may see you as a predator or worse, their lunch.

[Our new webpage](#) also includes advice and several sources to help you identify so called 'creepy crawlies' since [96% of Australia's fauna are invertebrates](#).

They first is Judy and Peter Smith's [Native Fauna Of The GBMWHA](#). This is a detailed checklist divided into mammals, birds, reptiles and frogs and includes the GBMWHA reserve where they have been observed and how recent that recording is. This is supported by a must-have book of the same name – available directly from Judy and Peter, or book stores.

The second is the [Blue Mountains Fauna Inventory](#). This is presented as a large document (36MB) that you can download – it's effectively an eBook. It provides images and descriptions of animals found in the Blue Mountains City Council area. Maps of where the animals have been observed is also included and the number of observations.

If your wily wildlife still evades you or you seek confirmation, there are two Facebook sites that may be able to assist. [Blue Mountains Fauna Group](#) and the [Blue Mountains Butterflies, Bugs and Insects](#).

Other sources provided on the webpage include Blue Mountains Bird Observers, Birdlife, Australian Museum and a link to some feral animal websites.

A warning though; while some personal websites may be able to give you leads, they also may have incorrect information.

Finally please treat our wildlife with respect and kindness – after all we are their guardians.

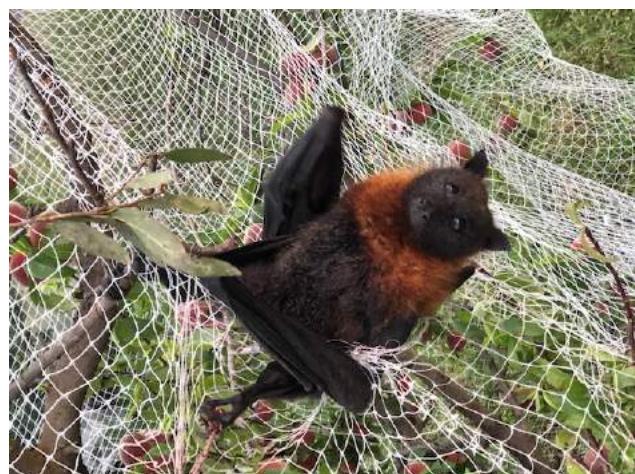
**Alan Page©**

## A death trap for flying foxes

### Netting on Trees

One of the most common WIRES callouts about flying foxes is a request to rescue them from netting on fruit trees. It's not only flying foxes; possums, birds and snakes are also frequently caught in netting.

WIRES continues to advocate for wildlife friendly netting to be used. If you can get a finger into the hole in netting, wildlife can get in. Mesh netting is the best. The netting needs to be brought up under and attached to the trunk so the animals cannot get under the netting.



The grey headed flying fox is a threatened species and unfortunately most netting callouts lead to us having to euthanise the animal. Flying foxes flap their wings, becomes stressed and often get abrasions and wing damage.

Their wings often heal easily but if there is significant damage to the trailing edge or large enough holes, then this may not be possible.

Stressed flying foxes caught under netting will also try to bite the netting to find a way out. Nylon netting can damage gums, cause teeth loss and this can mean euthanasia is necessary. The animals also get twisted when they panic and then nylon netting rubs against legs, toes etc. Below is a photo of a flying fox I rescued from netting. It lost two of its toes in the struggle.

There were also significant wing damage and broken bones.

Domestic fruit trees are actually a very small percentage of the flying fox diet. They more commonly eat native flowers and fruits but drought has led to a depressing increase in these callouts because so many don't survive netting injuries.

**Tracy Burgess, WIRES ©**



## The upside of Rona

I live in a slice of paradise in Glenbrook. It is 5,800m<sup>2</sup> of bush at the end of a 280 metre driveway accessed from a cul de sac and next to Mount Sion Park.

From here I can walk to Glenbrook Lagoon, Glenbrook station, Jelly Bean Pool in the Blue Mountains National Park, Lennox Bridge, Elizabeth's Lookout on the top of Lapstone monocline, Knapsack Gully Bridge, or perhaps the Lapstone Hotel for a beer. But there are downsides.

The highway is a constant rumble in the distance, only quiet in the small hours around 3am. Electric trains

sizzle along the tracks and freight trains growl their way up the hill to Blaxland. We hear fireworks at Penrith Panthers and the Penrith Regatta Centre, and Penrith lights up the nights.

Worst are the aircraft. Helicopters seem to use my house as a beacon, light aircraft buzz over like dragonflies and the big planes out of Mascot scream overhead. We don't need an alarm clock when the 6.19 am A380 wings its way to Dubai each morning.

Then along came 'Rona', the COVID-19 virus.

Suddenly my slice of paradise became clean, quiet, dark and peaceful and I wanted to live here forever.

The highway was quiet for 24 hours a day, helicopters disappeared, the 6:19am A380 was no more and light aircraft are a rarity. The glow of Penrith faded, the air became clearer, the sky a deeper blue.

The view from Elizabeth Lookout, in the past covered in murky brown smog, now revealed the Harbour Bridge, Centre Point, North Sydney, St Leonards, Chatswood and Hornsby, all plainly visible.

The most unexpected change was at night. Stars were brighter and twinkled for the first time in years, their different colours easy to discern.

What do we do to the air in Sydney to make it so awful? Is it just the million+ cars burning their dinosaur juice that cause the smog, making the stars dull and lifeless and blotting out the view of Sydney CBD.

But now, as Rona restrictions are slowly removed we can hear the difference. The Highway is busier, the helicopters are returning and the air over Sydney looks brown again. When international travel is allowed again, the A380s will scream over my house at 6:19am.

Covid 19 has had its upside. It has shown me how wonderful living in a quiet, clean, dark place can be. I will miss it.

**Ross Coster©**

## Blue Trail Village Scenes number 2

John Whitton Memorial Place, Emu Plains

John Whitton pioneered access to the Blue Mountains when he was the Chief Engineer of NSW Railways from the late 1850s to 1890. His major achievements include the Zig Zag viaducts (Lapstone and Lithgow) and the original Hawkesbury River bridge at Brooklyn. And yet a cairn in memory of him stands in a currently sadly neglected, weed-infested reserve.

The memorial is next to a car park accessible from Glenbrook via Mitchells Pass Road or from Emu Plains via the old highway. The area has been a popular place for exercise and fresh air for householders during the recent crisis. A few hundred metres further is the Knapsack Viaduct, one of the most beautiful of Whitton's sandstone structures. It is beside the bicycle route from the new foot/cycle bridge across the Nepean to the Glenbrook tunnel area.



Above: John Whitton 1867-1870 Sydney and Melbourne Photographic Company

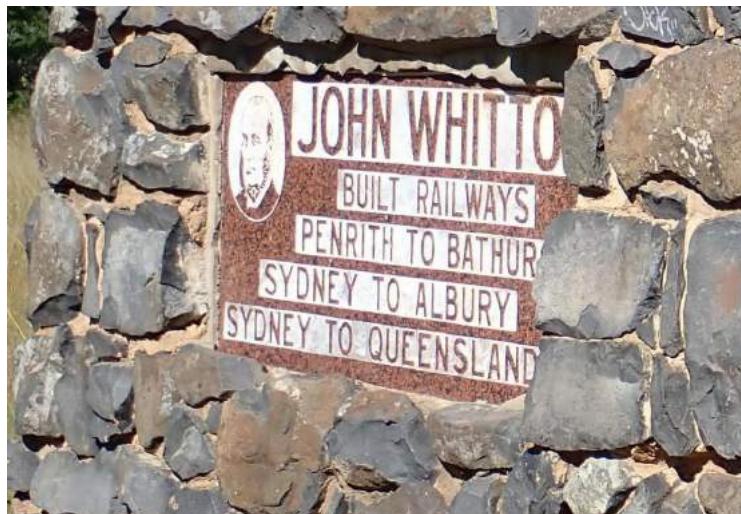
Above right: Inscription on memorial

Right: Ruins of level crossing gate keeper's cottage near Whitton memorial

The John Whittington Memorial Place virtually adjoins Knapsack Park. With significant input from the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Blue Mountains City Council has put a huge effort into planning this park.

The Memorial Place is part of the so-called Western Sydney Parkland City. It is time it was planted with native vegetation as a tribute to the beautiful region that Whitton opened to the eyes of the world. It certainly deserves better than the layers of weeds, graffiti and State government bureaucracy that presently bedevil it.

**Don Morison ©**



## Vale Jack Mundey (1929 - 2020)

Sadly, legendary unionist and environmentalist Jack Mundey, Builders' Labourers Federation union leader recently died, aged 90.

Jack Mundey is best known for stopping Sydney's inner city heritage from being bulldozed for high rise, by leading union strikes. They became known as the 'Green Bans' in the 1970s.

BMCS says "Thank you Jack Mundey" for standing in solidarity with us, as part of the Gardens of Stone Alliance (Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Lithgow Environment Group and Colong Foundation for Wilderness) in calling for the protection of the Gardens of Stone.

This photo shows Jack Mundey, aged 88, holding the sign "Retired Unionists Value Gardens of Stone"

outside the Lithgow office of Mr Paul Toole, Member for Bathurst on 5 December, 2018. He is with members of the organisation he founded in retirement, the Combined Retired Union Member Association (CRUMA) who came to celebrate two of Lithgow's most significant environmentalists – Vern and Joyce Moffitt – who were also passionate advocates for the protection of the Gardens of Stone and the union movement.

**BREAKING NEWS:** Judy Mundey, Jack's partner, has told Janine Kitson, BMCS member, that she has accepted an offer from the NSW Coalition (Liberal & National Party) Government to hold a State Funeral and commemorate Jack's legacy to the state. The NSW Government will announce the date of this State Funeral when COVID-19 restrictions ease.



### Activity pad prepared by Society members

These original illustrations were prepared as activity pads for children to colour in. They were commissioned by the Blue Mountains Conservation Society for distribution in tourist information centres, cafes, and places where visitors congregate.

Their purpose is to introduce children and their carers to the native flora and fauna of the Blue Mountains. A bilingual environmental message accompanies the illustrations. This message has been translated and written in Chinese calligraphy created by Xueyi, a Chinese artist who teaches calligraphy at the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre. The drawings of rare and endangered and common species of

flowers and birds were created by the artist Kara Cooper from 'Mount Vic and Me' and Cathy Cavanagh. The activity pads have also been distributed to schools and libraries in the Blue Mountains.

# 2020/2021 Management Committee

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