

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

HUT NEWS

Nature conservation saves for tomorrow



It's official - Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park

Jutting into Megalong Valley, it's easy to see why the formerly named Radiata Plateau had been part of the connection between Burrigorang and Katoomba for the Gundungurra (or Gandangara) and Darug people. They have suggested Ngula Bulgarabang as its new name and the NSW Minister for Environment, the Hon. Matt Kean announced it on Thursday 25.

In a moving address Auntie Sharyn Halls, representing the Gundungurra and local First Nations people, explained to the nearly 30 people present that the name can be translated as 'large wooded forest'. These days thousands of Radiata pines, planted in the 60s, populate large parts of the 300 hectares, explaining why it was formerly called Radiata Plateau. But as one employee of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has said, 'We couldn't have the place named after a weed'.

I was very proud to be part of the Society when Auntie Sharyn, the Minister, Member for Blue Mountains Trish Doyle, and Director of Park Operations in the Blue Mountains, David Crust all credited the Society for having achieved the reservation of the plateau.

As President Tara Cameron, says "The Society and local residents have campaigned for decades for the area to be protected. The tranquillity of the area and its endangered species are reflected in our campaign slogan of *Leave Radiata Plateau Wild*, and with NPWS's insight we look forward to achieving this."

The Blue Mountains Gazette and the Sydney Morning Herald were there and reported the event in their respective papers and again gave the Society a wrap (see the links below).

Our second Vice President, Alan Page and Bushcare Officer, Paul Vale were also present. Alan wisely took

the opportunity to invite the Minister to our celebrations in late November of the 20th anniversary listing of the Greater Blue Mountains as a World Heritage Area.

When Alan Page and I walked the wide tracks in some of this very pleasant area the day before, I found myself hoping that in its new status as a regional park under the management of NPWS, these sick looking pines might disappear.

While as a regional park, many more visitors may descend on the area, at least we can assume that Ngula Bulgarabang has been saved from future development.



NSW Minister for Environment, Matt Kean with Trish Doyle MP, Member for Blue Mountains and Auntie Sharyn Halls.

Blue Mountains Gazette (<https://www.bluemountainsgazette.com.au/story/6806791/once-was-radiata-plateau-now-ngula-bulgarabang/?cs=1432>) and the Sydney Morning Herald (<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/bipartisan-support-helps-give-battleship-peninsula-protection-20200625-p55653.html>)

Susan Crick



From the President

Welcome to another edition of Hut News. To begin, I would like to thank the many members who completed the survey about the Society a little while ago. The Covid 19 restrictions made face to face meetings impossible so we now are relishing the opportunity to get back into it, listen to people's suggestions and respond. So the Management Committee will hold a planning day in August to consider the feedback, ideas about how we work together and future directions.

Interestingly, while we have found the lack of face to face meetings challenging for some things, new ways of connecting remotely have had some positive results. The Nature Conservation Council is the umbrella organisation for environment groups in NSW and they hold an annual regional conference to connect people beyond Sydney. This year, the conference was held via Zoom and this increased attendance significantly. Members of the Society worked with the Colong Foundation and Lithgow Environment Group to run a workshop on Protecting the Gardens of Stone. This was well attended and a great way to get the message out about this campaign.

And great news. This edition of Hut News contains details of our bushwalking and activities program starting up again. The nursery has also continued to work and I would like to thank all of the volunteers who have kept this going under the tricky social distancing rules.

Catch up next month,

Tara Cameron

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Climate Action Flyer

You will notice that this month's Hut News includes a copy of a Climate Action flyer. Hopefully it will inspire you to consider changes you can make and actions you can take to address climate change. Perhaps you could also use the flyer as a conversation starter about climate action with your family, friends and colleagues.

The flyer can be downloaded from the BM Conservation Society website at <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/climate-change/climate-action-flyer-jun20.pdf> and hard copies are also available. If you have suggestions for distribution of the flyer, please contact Clare Power, Sustainability and Climate Change officer at sustain@bluemountains.org.au

We acknowledge Katrina Shields, Zero Emissions Byron who inspired production of this flyer.

Become a member

Contact Ross Coster
0418 462 576

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Management Committee meeting notes

- Proposed Gordon Falls upgrade - the Society will maintain a watching brief on this matter while the local group works with National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). However the Society will continue to push strongly for better track maintenance.
- The bushwalking program will begin again on Monday July 6 following relaxation of CoVID 19 restrictions. See the new program on page 10. And the web page <https://www.bluemountains.org.au>
- Volunteering at the nursery will recommence.
- In November the Society will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the World Heritage listing of the Greater Blue Mountains area. To be further discussed.
- Concern was expressed for the revival of Narrow Neck, particularly of some vulnerable Banksias which may not survive if another fire ravages the area within five years.
- The Society will hold a planning day in August.
- Membership renewals will now be mailed out following the recent break in notices of renewal.
- The Gardens of Stone Officer is waiting for reports from mining companies including the Angus Place mine extension. The Scientific Committee values swamps and advises the mines to avoid them.



Sydney Red Gum, Angophora costata

Big Red

Ross Bridle

A giant beside a winding track
 Standing midst a sea of leaves.
 Forty years of life or more
 Ending now - a lonely soul -
 But Nature neither cares or grieves.

Bark no longer red and smooth,
 Instead a robe now ripped and torn.
 That once-great canopy of green
 Now at the feet of this majestic form.

The longest drought - a dreadful toll.
 Blackened shrubs and branches shed.
 A landscape now in desperate need.
 Summer burned and moisture bled.

At crisis point came flooding rain.
 Big Red responds, red shoots adorn.
 Bushland shows a sea of green -
 And Nature's cycle is reborn.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society

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Climate Change - the long haul

Robin Mosman and Susan Crick

Robin Mosman, former President of the Society, contacted Hut News recently to draw attention to an article published in the July 2009 issue of Hut News.

In 2008 she attended, with approximately 2000 others, the National Climate Emergency Rally. They were disappointed with the turnout and in the following week the State Government announced a budget allocation of \$208 million for expansion of the state's second largest coal mine.

The Society was downhearted about their ability to influence government until they recognised that the change would take as much time and effort as other great social changes such as the abolition of slavery, the US civil rights movement and woman's franchise. Bill Moyer had written a book called *Doing Democracy* in which he described eight stages that such movements have endured before their goals were realised.

They took heart from the realisation that the movement for effective policies to address climate change were then merely in one of those stages, number 5 and kept going.

Robin suggests that we are now in or near stage 7, given recent events like bushfires and drought. With the advantage of hindsight we can see the stages the movement has been through and hope that she is correct.

Bill Moyer's stages are described as follows:

1. Normal times.

A critical problem exists that violates widely held values, but the power holders support the problem. The public is unaware of the problem and supports the power holders. There is a widely held belief that our governments will act in the best interests of all to deal effectively with this problem, viz global warming.

2. Failure of official policies.

Some members of the public become aware that government policies violate their widely held values. Some local opposition groups form. They start to do research, become better informed.

3. Ripening conditions.

.Recognition of the problem grows. More active local groups form. 20% to 30% of public opposes the power holder policies.

4. Take off.

A trigger event leads to dramatic non-violent action/campaigns. In Australia "An Inconvenient Truth" and the Stern Report were significant triggers. The problem is on the public agenda. Nonviolent actions are repeated around the country. 40% of the public oppose current policies.

5. Perception of failure.

The public see their goals unachieved as power holder policies remain unchanged. Despair, hopelessness, burnout. Movement seems at stalemate.

6. Majority public opinion.

Majority oppose power holder policies. The problem and policies are shown to affect all sectors of society. Mainstream citizens and institutions become involved. The problem is on the political agenda. Power holders promote the public's fear of alternatives (eg loss of jobs in coal industry). Re-trigger events happen, re-enacting Stage 4 (these are now most likely to be natural disasters, drought, bushfires, coastal inundation, food shortages).

7. Success.

Large majority of the public oppose current policies and no longer fear alternatives. Power holders change policies but try to make minimal reforms, while movement demands real change (eg renewable energies to replace coal, energy efficiency, an end to coal exports).

8. Continuing the struggle.

Community leaders extend successes and oppose attempts at backlash, while promoting a paradigm shift in public perception.

So there's hope yet.

We Have To Talk About Tourism

Cathy Cavanagh

Tourism is one of the most polluting industries in the world.

'Holiday' is a benign word but the tourism industry has taken over the way we have our holidays and it is not benign.

Tourism has become industrial strength all over the world. Planes, cruise ships and bus loads of people disgorge at previously pristine locations where the inhabitants, prior to the visitors' arrival, seemed to be happy enough and able to conduct their own economies.

In the last few months during the Covid19 shutdown our skies have become clear. It has been an opportunity for people who live in popular tourist destinations around the world, whether they be wilderness such as the Blue Mountains or the old cities of Europe such as Venice or Prague to assess the damage that this industry does to the environment, the economy and the future of their children.

One premise that underlies the way we look at tourism is the neo-liberal agenda that everything has a price and can be exploited. More and more destinations have to be opened up to attract tourists and their money. A quick look and a ride mean major changes to once quiet residential locations and thrilling experiences of hanging in a cable car scar the once pristine and dignified vistas of nature.

Tourism doesn't have to be like this. There have been many excellent proposals and submissions by the Conservation Society and the Blue Mountains City Council.

Since the inception of the tourism sub-committee we have been examining these proposals and submissions. In coming months we will highlight and summarise some of these to remind us about the excellent work that has been done on policy in the area of tourism by the Conservation Society and local government.

Many of these proposals and submissions are about what we shouldn't be doing eg glamping or building viewing platforms in order to protect the environment.

Another part the sub committee's work will be to examine and report on **New Models** of tourism which allow tourists to enjoy, learn and participate in the environment and community they have chosen to visit.

The subcommittee welcomes feedback from interested members.



Leura Mall on June 7, Queen's birthday long weekend



Falls Road, Wentworth Falls on June 7, the Queen's birthday long weekend

The Deaths of Wombats

Cathy Cavanagh

This is the first of three stories about wombats, their struggle for survival and the projects that are attempting to protect them. These stories will appear in instalments in the next three issues of The Hut News.

Stories of wombats are firmly embedded in Australian culture. They feature in children's literature, in Aboriginal dreaming stories and long time favourites such as Norman Lindsay's *The Magic Pudding*. But the image of the cuddly wombat baby belies the reality of their struggle to survive in ever shrinking and fragmented habitats. Their habitat, which used to extend along the Great Dividing Range from Queensland through NSW to Victoria and South Australia and Tasmania is diminishing and threatened.

Stories about wombats that resonate at the present time are *The Death of a Wombat* written by Ivan Southall, illustrated by Clifton Pugh and current stories told by Anna Culliton, Wires volunteer, and artist from the Kanimbla Valley. *The Death of a Wombat* first appeared as a prize winning ABC radio play and was then published in 1972.

This was a time of great social and political change in Australia and one indication of a newly emerging nationalism was the flourishing of native plant groups and interest in conserving wildlife and habitat.

The Death of a Wombat is an imaginative word picture and an allegory set in rural Victoria in a time of a drought that led to the bushfire that resulted in the death of the wombat.

But ultimately it is a celebration of the wombat and all native wildlife. The animals are unique, Australian and, above all, wild.

The wombat trundles the sand away, using his nose as a spade. Then he lies on his side to dig, and mends his burrow. He makes a much better job of it than the impatient rabbit.

It is a strong call for nature conservation and protection in a more optimistic era and is well worth



Drawing by Anna Culliton

revisiting. The tough but fragile ecosystem inhabited by the wombat that Southall and Pugh portray is more urgently documented 50 years later by Anna Culliton in a world of human induced climate change, drought, a black summer of widespread bush fires, floods, human pandemic and political upheaval.

Anna's story will appear in the August edition of the Hut News.

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WEBSITE: www.bluemountains.org.au

FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/BlueMountainsConservationSociety/>

TWITTER: [bmcnsnw](https://twitter.com/bmcnsnw)

Discovery of viruses in Australian and Asian bats related to the koala retrovirus, known as KoRV.

Chris Whiteman

Australian and Asian bats are carriers of multiple gammaretroviruses, recent research has revealed.

These viruses are very closely related to the koala retrovirus, known as KoRV and depress their immune system in a similar way to HIV in humans. KoRV renders the koala susceptible to cancers and infections including chlamydia—a cause of infertility, blindness and kidney failure—and is estimated to infect the majority of Australia's koalas. The research was recently published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA*.

Bats represent 20% of all mammal species with over 90 species in Australia covering many different habitats. They are capable of long, sustained flight. Some species only feed on animal blood. Other species have diets that include more than just blood. They may eat nectar, pollen, fruit, birds, insects, frogs and lizards. They are an important carrier of viruses that infect humans and other mammals. Able to host whilst remaining unaffected by viruses deadly to other mammals including Ebola, Hendra and Coronaviruses, bats transmit viruses through their droppings and bodily fluids, putting animals that share their habitat, including the koala, at risk.

To identify KoRV-related viruses in bats, samples were collected from the east coast of Australia. Some of the 373 samples, including faeces, oral swabs, blood, and urine were collected from towns in New South Wales and Queensland, while 106 samples were collected from the Daintree rainforest in Queensland.

According to the Burnet Institute, co-lead author of the study, Burnet Research Officer, Dr. Joshua Hayward, said retroviruses like HIV are known for being transmitted between different species, and the presence of infectious KoRV-like viruses in bats raises concerns for other Australian animals which could become infected.

"This could explain how KoRV-related viruses originally got to Australia from South-East Asia in the first place, and it highlights the role of bats as really important reservoirs of viruses that can be transmitted to other animal species," Dr. Hayward said.

The newly discovered retrovirus, closely related to KoRV and named Hervey pteropid gammaretrovirus (HPG), was found to be capable of replicating in human and bat cells in laboratory cell cultures.

Dr Hayward further said "These viruses cause some nasty diseases—leukemias, lymphomas, and immunodeficiency—and while this particular virus can infect human cells in the laboratory, we don't know whether it can establish infection and cause disease in humans. It would be surprising given current knowledge of this class of retrovirus".

Koala populations are currently in severe decline and at risk from koala retrovirus (KoRV), which is closely related to HPG and whose origins remain unclear. The identification of bats as a source of diverse infectious retroviruses related to KoRV implies bats are a reservoir of KoRV-related viruses that could be transmitted to other mammalian species.

References:

- <https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/animals/bats/>
- Burnet Institute Credit: CCO Public Domain https://www.burnet.edu.au/news/1221_new_virus_in_bats_linked_to_aids_like_disease_decimating_koalas

Hut News Deadline

The **DEADLINE** for the next issue is

20 July 2020

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Blue Trail Village Scenes No. 3

Urban Bird Habitat in Lithgow

Don Morison (copyright, 2020)

Since its early coal mining days towards the close of the 19th century, Lithgow has developed as a scattered pattern of village environments, often with former industrial or mining sites in between. Many of these sites have recently been improved to make them more bird friendly and birds now find a tolerable habitat.

Water features in the Blue Mountains and Lithgow Local Government Areas support a variety of ducks, coots, grebes, swamp hens, moor hens, cormorants, darters and other water birds. The presence of reeds and other natural habitat surrounding the water features adds to the diversity of species.

Lake Pillans was created to store water for the Lithgow Blast Furnace which opened in 1913. Attempts to establish the lake as a bird-watching area have proceeded concurrently with the rehabilitation of the blast furnace ruins as a historic site. Flame robins have been noticed congregating in the blast furnace ruins and surrounds in winter while various water birds are usually visible in the lake reserve.

Over the summer of 2019-20, airborne embers created spot fires near the lake and rain storms washed away some of the walking paths and causeways. Nevertheless, the reserve is still accessible to visitors and the birdlife remains present.



Above. Flame robin (photo by Tim Collins - own work, CC By-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=28073886>)

Below. Blast furnace ruins and wood ducks in Lake Pillans Reserve

Below. A swamp hen at Lake Pillans



A Century on Track

Andy Macqueen

How do people first become engaged with the Blue Mountains and their natural wonders? In my case, the seeds were probably sown almost a century ago when my mother, age eight, started visiting the mountains with her own mother. They stayed at the Yabba Yabba guest house in Blackheath.

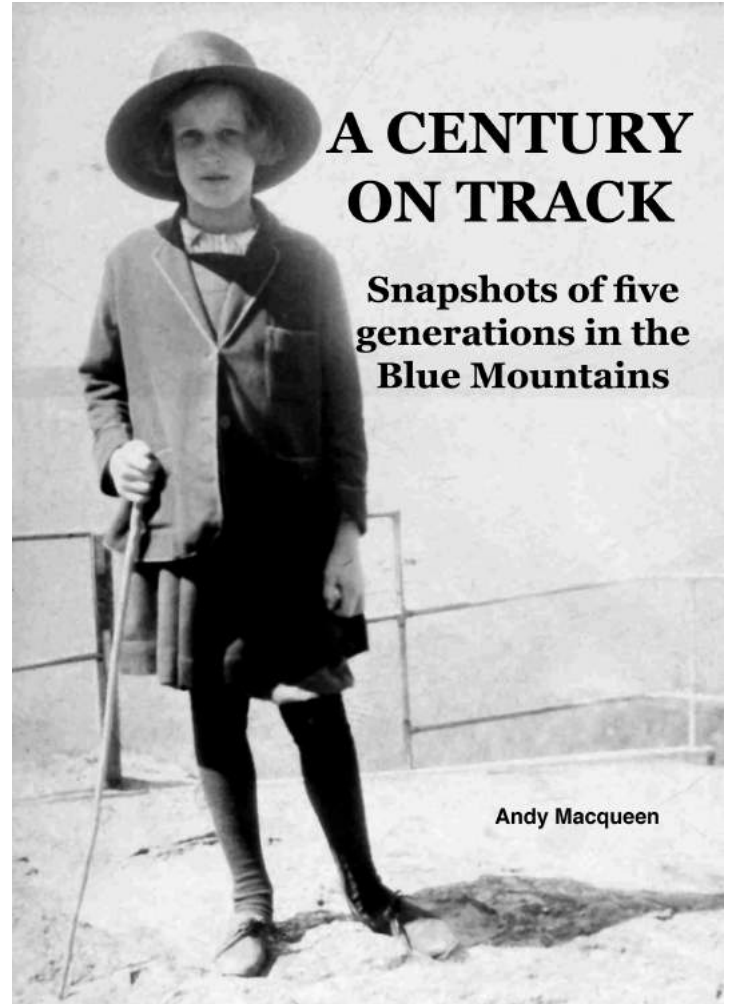
My family has a history in the mountains from that time, encompassing five generations through to my grandchildren. Photographs have been taken throughout, mostly of family members and friends on tracks and at lookouts. Also, my mother kept diaries from the time she was a girl. I'm fortunate to have both the photos and the diaries. By reference to the diaries, in most cases the photos can be properly interpreted even when they aren't well annotated or mounted in the albums.

For some years then, I've had a project on the boil to compile a pictorial account of our family's Blue Mountains engagement. The recent need to isolate has provided the perfect opportunity to bring it to fruition.

Countless other families have long attachments to the Blue Mountains. Gundungurra and Darug people have deep associations going back thousands of years. I thought that my own family's story, common-or-garden as it is, might be worth telling because of the associated photographic record.

The project started with lots of painstaking track walking to figure out the exact location where each photo was taken. Fortunately I got most of this done before many of the tracks were closed, firstly by the recent fires, then by the floods and now by Covid-19 regulations.

All that remained was to put it together. The result is a 60-page eBook (in pdf form) with 100 images and



supporting text, spanning from 1921 to 2019. The book is of course a family history and most readers will probably not care about that, but it may be of interest from the local history viewpoint, particularly as it applies to our amazing track network.

The book is currently viewable and downloadable free at <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-2680243228/view>

New walks program

Keith Dorrian

To start the new Monday Walks Program (page 11) **from the 6th of July**, we have put together three walks as set out below. We also have a couple of other walks for later but need more walks **from 6th of August**. I am hoping to develop the program further after we start walking together.

Walking conditions

Following the NSW Government Guidelines to allow outdoor activities in groups of up to 20 people from 13 June, our bushwalk activities will recommence subject to the following conditions:

- Start date **from Monday 6th. July**
- Numbers
 - Maximum of 20 walkers including the leader.
 - Should more than 20 participants arrive a second (and subsequent groups) will be formed, each with a leader. If more than one group, such group(s) to depart at 15 minute intervals.
- Compliance/health
 - Social distancing to continue at 1.5 metres. If on tracks and another group is encountered approaching from the opposite direction, then our group(s) to move aside 1.5 metres to let opposite group pass.
- No sharing of water bottles, food or equipment unless absolutely necessary (e.g injury, ill health, providing first aid)
- All walkers to bring OWN hand sanitiser. Gloves and mask may be worn if walkers feel more comfortable.
- Walkers to refrain from joining groups if they have any signs of being unwell – no matter how mild.
- Sign-on sheet is to be completed solely by the leader with participant's name, bushwalk number, renewal date and emergency contact 'phone number. Participant not to sign. The leader is to read out the

Don't forget to bring your own hand sanitiser and practice social distancing. Also attached below are the walking conditions as set out by the Committee

See you then.

risk waiver incorporated in the sign-on sheet and have an acknowledgement by show of hands that all participants agree. The leader to sign off on the sheet that all participants agreed (under written statement).

- This format has been ratified by the insurer (via its broker) and Bushwalking NSW.
- Walk locations:
 - Only to be within the Blue Mountains and adjoining national parks and council reserves and on tracks or fire trails that are open. No city walks or bus trips to be undertaken until all restrictions are lifted.
- Walks will start from railway stations (excluding remote area walks) and program formulation should take this into consideration.
- Travelling/transport:
 - Either by public transport (again with social distancing) or by private car. Ride sharing and car pooling is strongly advised against. However, where remote area walks are undertaken this restriction may be eased but should be limited to two persons per vehicle (driver and one rear passenger in the back, seated diagonally). This practice for remote area walkers is at their own risk at contracting Covid-19.
- Plant nursery:
 - Some of the above restrictions also apply to practices at the plant nursery eg social distancing.

July 2020 Monday Walks Program

Date	Description	Meeting Place	Activity Leader	Grade
6/7/20	Florabella and Pippa's Pass , Warrimoo to Blaxland	Warrimoo station south side. 8.45 am start	Maurice 0402 783 or 4739 4942	2
13/7/20	Terrace Falls, Hazelbrook. Streams, forests and waterfalls. Some steep rough sections, steps and four creek crossings. Approx. 6 km.	Hazelbrook station carpark, south side next to vet clinic. 8.45 am start	Lyn Bevington 0432 352 850	3
20/7/20	Sassafras Gully/Magdala Creek Circuit. A forest walk following creek lines and gullies from Springwood. Some rough track with steep descent/ascent. 9 km	Springwood car park behind Westpac. 9.00 am start	Ros King 0417 261 465	3
27/7/20	Walk not yet decided			
3/8/20	Water Nymph Dell and Wentworth Falls Lake, Wentworth Falls. Rainforest and lake walk. Approx. 7 km.	Wentworth Falls station Stockyard car park 8.45 am start	Ros King 0417 261 465 or 4733 3880	2-3
10/8/20	Walk not yet decided			

Gardens of Stone Visitors Map

The Visitors Map is full of suggested walks and trips. It is in full colour, 60 cm x 85 cm, 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

Are you concerned about environmental damage or development activity in your neighbourhood?

The Society's Planning and Resource kit may help you.

Find it at <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml>

2020/2021 Management Committee

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