



Helicopters are back on the agenda!

The Society was disturbed to learn during December that the [applicants have resubmitted their proposal](#) to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, for commercial helicopter flights at Katoomba Airfield.

In November, the Society began a new phase of its *Katoomba Airfield* campaign, in earnest. We are calling on the NSW Government to uphold its original decision to reject the commercial lease application and have the site incorporated into the national park.

As Tara Cameron, President of the Society explained, “We’re deeply concerned about the process being adopted in its reassessment of the application. We’re also concerned about influence that the developer has on the outcome.”

“Community opposition to the venture was resounding. If the goal posts are now moved and the community voice ignored, as seems likely, the flaws in the process will undermine public confidence in their decision making process. It’s only fair to expect transparency.”

The Society has developed a dedicated campaign [website](#) and is actively encouraging all members of the community to [write to Minister Pavey](#) (Minister for Water, Property and Housing) to express their concerns about the process. We are also reaching out to prominent community and environmental organisations to alert them to the situation and garner their support.

Commercial development of the airfield will shatter the natural quiet and intimacy of the Grand Canyon, a mere 700m away. It would have a dramatic negative impact on eco tourism in the area and create a stark contrast to the tranquillity that visitors currently enjoy. It would also affect the numerous threatened and vulnerable species that call the area home.

The airfield is the last remaining national park inholding on the Blue Mountains ridge line. It was originally recognised for inclusion in the park in 1988, and again in 2000 when the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service expressed interest in having it incorporated. It still hasn’t been added.

Commercial flights have not operated from the airfield since 1995 when they were discontinued due to community opposition.

For more information and details as to how you can help please visit, www.bluemountains.org.au/airfield

Above: The Grose Valley from Anvil Rock

Below: Part of the Grand Canyon walk.

Photos by Ian Brown



About us

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society (BMCS) is an incorporated voluntary group of about 900 members helping to conserve the World Heritage Blue Mountains region. It was originally the Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society, formed in 1961.

We are governed by a management committee and much of our conservation work is undertaken by sub-committees and campaigns. We also have a native plant nursery, several bushwalking groups and a Bushcare group.

Visit us

www.bluemountains.org.au.

Facebook: Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Twitter: bmcnsnw

The Management Committee

There are 22 positions on the management committee and a full list of members occupying those positions can be found on the web page at

bluemountains.org.au.

The principals are:

President: Tara Cameron, taracameron4@gmail.com,
0418 824974

Senior Vice President: Madi Maclean,
gos@bluemountains.org.au

Second Vice President: Susan Crick,
susan@bluemountains.org.au

Contact us

- Call the Membership Secretary, Ross Coster on 02 4739 2987
- By mail at PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls, NSW 2782
- By phone at 02 4757 1872 (leave a message)
- By email email@bluemountains.org.au

Annual General Meeting 2021

The annual general meeting will be held on Wednesday 31 March at the Conservation Hut at 7.00 pm

All positions fall vacant and a new management committee will be elected for the year to March 2022.

Nomination forms and a list of positions will be available online next month.

Management Committee Monthly meeting, 23 January, 2021

The following is a summary of key topics and issues discussed at the normal monthly meeting:

- Planning day follow up; some activities have begun.
- Katoomba airfield campaign.
- Our position on climate change; currently being developed.
- The annual Mick Dark talk, jointly organised with Varuna and possible speakers.
- The Weather Diaries film to be shown at some public venues to be announced.
- Media release from BMCC about possibility of the proposed wildlife park at Wentworth Falls being declared a State Significant Development.
- Relationship with Leura Community Alliance
- Sunset meeting at the Hut on 26 February at 6.30 pm.
- The AGM on 31 March, 2021.

Become a member

You can become a member by

- Contacting our Membership Secretary, Ross Coster on 02 4739 2987
- Emailing Ross at membership@bluemountains.org.au
- <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/joining.shtml> or scan this with your mobile:



Welcome to new members

A warm welcome to our new members who are as follows:

Jackie Lorax

Linda Farrell

Graham McLean

Ruth Williams

Jan Thornley

Morten Storaker

Elizabeth, Francesca and Larry MacDonald

Denise Holden

Beth O'Leary

There are 889 members.

Welcome to our new Publicity Officer, Rebecca Knight



We are thrilled to welcome Rebecca Knight to the role of Publicity Officer.

Rebecca has worked in marketing communications for 20 years and grew up in the lower Blue Mountains. Having led her own start-up digital agency in the past, she has since served as a member of the board of directors for numerous innovative start-ups in tech and has held senior marketing and digital roles for global organisations including Ernst & Young, SAP, Astra Zeneca and Johnson & Johnson.

As a consultant she has worked with companies including Optus, Coca-Cola Amatil and NRMA, as well as several not for profit organisations.

She holds a Masters degree in Professional Communication, as well as a degree in Psychology and started her career in journalism. Rebecca currently contracts for Ernst & Young globally as a digital transformation and enablement leader in the global Brand, Marketing and Communications team. She is passionate about the Blue Mountains, has previously volunteered for the Society and keeps busy with three young children at home. In her spare time Rebecca enjoys bushwalking and is also a singer/songwriter. LinkedIn: <http://au.linkedin.com/in/rjknight>

From the Editor

A new year seems a good opportunity to make some changes. This issue is particularly full because the December issue did not include member contributions. For that reason the Walks Program is printed on a separate page and enclosed with the mailed version of the newsletter.

Contributions seem to fall into two categories and so this issue reflects those. One is serious news and issues of general importance to the Society. The second includes members news, musings and activities. Sometimes the newsletter is a vehicle for members to

express themselves in poetry, stories and reports. So why not? Keep them coming.

For the November issue my editing of captions in an article about Xanthorrhoeas was incorrect in the printed version. The author, Christine Davies, has asked me to print her original captions and they appear on page 12.

Susan Crick

Sunset Gathering

Enjoy the view at sunset from the Conservation Hut with the delightful background of harp music and meet the management committee and other members of the Society. There will also be short talks about Society activities..

Date: Friday 26 February, 6.30 pm
Where: The Conservation Hut, 92 Fletcher St., Wentworth Falls

Due to Covid, numbers will be limited to 35. Please book your place at the following: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/blue-mountains-conservation-society-sunset-gathering-tickets-138198682981>

Some refreshments will be provided.

Are you concerned about environmental damage or a development related activity in your neighbourhood but don't know who to contact?

The Society's Planning & Development Resource Kit may help you.

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

One year later

Ian Brown



A year on from the devastating fires of last summer, what can we say? As usual, a mix of good and bad. The trauma continues, in both human communities and our bushland. Many people are still struggling to rebuild and recover. People are grieving for ecosystems in pain and we do not yet understand the long-term impacts. Meanwhile national carbon policy still flounders, but there have been advances in NSW. Federal and state bushfire inquiries have come and gone, so I suppose most people think that any problems have been identified and fixed. The government did adopt all of the NSW Independent Bushfire Inquiry recommendations, didn't they?

There have been funding boosts for more aircraft, red trucks and paid RFS and NPWS firefighters, as well as more mental health support for volunteers. These are all good news, but then a big fuss was made about empowering private landholders to clear 25 metres inside their boundary – a destructive step without the

flimsiest support from the inquiry (the government pretended otherwise). Along the way, a new provision was enacted to legally protect sites of 'intergenerational significance'. It is not clear exactly how this will work, but the wild Wollemi Pines have become the first declaration.

There is no sign of any changes to how fires are put out. Everyone has run a mile from questions about why the Mt. Wilson back burn went so wrong and became the destructive Grose Fire and whether fires like Gospers Mountain, Green Wattle Creek and Ruined Castle could have been extinguished when small.

The NSW inquiry said that it "must not be the end of the examination of the 2019-20 bush fire season... In some ways, this Inquiry will be a success if it is superseded because further research, that was not possible in the timeframe, can bring important new insights that will better inform our approaches to preparing for and responding to bush fires".

Neither of the inquiries could properly review fire operations. Not one scientific paper has yet been published on the subject. The government has never seen it as a useful line of research to support. Which methods worked the best? How effective were prescribed burns? Why did some back burns backfire?



Above left: Summer growth of satin everlastings, eucalypt seedlings and wallaby grass, Newnes State Forest (and proposed Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area).

*Above right: Mass growth of pink flannel flowers in burnt heath, Newnes State Forest (and proposed Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area).
Photos by Ian Brown*

What can we learn for next time? We don't know. And there will sadly be a next time.

The top two NSW inquiry recommendations called for a "timely and transparent" "central accountability mechanism" to "track the implementation of recommendations", and for the government to make a pre-season "public statement with an evaluation of the likely fire season risk and the effectiveness of the planning and preparation...". Neither has happened.

Meanwhile, out in the bush, we are witnessing an extraordinary flourishing in both burnt and unburnt areas. Christmas bells and grass-trees bloomed en masse on the high ridges, then fields of pink flannel flowers and wallaby grass. Ground orchids emerged in vast numbers. Down in Blue Gum Forest new saplings are already metres high. In the rainforests, sassafras and coach wood flowered as I've never seen before. On Newnes Plateau in the still unprotected Gardens of Stone, fields of *Diuris* and *Caladenia*

orchids have been followed by everlasting daisies, flannel flowers and *Lobelia*.

This display of nature's power and majesty is profound and inspiring, but must not blind us from other truths. Climate flip-flops may be more damaging than we can yet imagine. The current 'wet season' growth could be partly a reaction to the preceding drought. Many eucalypts that would normally recover have died because they were so water-stressed before the fires. Some plants have been locally eliminated. The floods that quenched the blazes caused massive erosion of denuded slopes and dumped sediment and weeds where they have never been. Lush growth in Blue Gum Forest includes many invasive species. Feral animals spread more easily through the fire-ravaged bush.

But somehow over the past year, people are finally talking not just about climate change, but about species extinction too, and water issues, and worse bushfires, even wars. Perhaps the fire-pandemic double hit has driven home that greater forces are at work. Soon we may see a wider recognition that these are all symptoms of a chronic global malaise that is entirely down to our usurpation of the biosphere. If we do not quickly grow humility and grant some dominion to the rest of nature, we will threaten our very civilisation.

The great musician Pablo Casals said that "The situation is hopeless: we must take the next step". The signs are growing that change is coming. We must increase the pressure on every front.

Ian Brown worked for 20 years in national park management, mostly in the Blue Mountains, and was involved in over 100 bushfires. After last season's fires he helped set up the Independent Bushfire Group, a volunteer collective which made detailed submissions to bushfire inquiries and continues to advocate for changes to how fires are managed.

We are proud that Ian is a member of the Society.

Regrowth of ferns and geraniums in Blue Gum Forest. Photo. Ian Brown



We do have to talk about ... Gas

Clare Power

What do native grains have to do with gas? Well, competing for the same land for one!

A recent study conducted by the University of Sydney with local indigenous groups and farmers in the Narrabri, Moree and Walgett region found that growing ancient native grains, or 'dhunbarbilla', is a commercially viable industry.

But wait, why else has Narrabri been in the news lately? Oh yes, the NSW government has recently approved Santos' Narrabri Coal Seam Gas (CSG) Project which will add an estimated 500 million tonnes of additional greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Among many other disastrous impacts, CSG mining will take massive amounts of water that could be used for farming and the environment and in the process threaten the integrity of the artesian basin in this area, as well as producing the by-product of solid waste, salt. Prime agricultural land that could flourish as a site for growing native grains will instead become a polluted wasteland. However, the battle to stop the Santos project going ahead is not over yet. Go to Lock the Gate or CSG Free North West for more information.

Meanwhile, in our fossil fuel crazed country, the ACT is phasing out the use of gas, while the Federal Government is promising a gas-led recovery. This is in direct contradiction to the advice by leading Australian scientists who wrote to the Chief Scientist in August, 2020 pointing out that a gas-fired future – “is not consistent with a safe climate nor, more specifically, with the Paris Agreement. There is no role for an expansion of the gas industry”.

This was followed by a run of articles with titles such as '4 reasons why a gas-led economic recovery is a terrible, naïve idea'; 'The 'gas-led recovery' isn't economically or environmentally prudent'; 'Critics say Scott Morrison's new power plan is a recipe for 'gas-fuelled climate collapse' and 'Australia must place

climate action at centre of coronavirus recovery, chief UN economist says'

Some of the main points from these articles are that:

1. Gas is actually a high emissions fuel. If Beetaloo Basin (NT) alone is opened up this will create 114 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually — almost a quarter of Australia's current total yearly emissions.
2. Gas is not a necessary transition resource because of the unprecedented increase in renewable technology and storage capacity.
3. Natural gas primarily consists of methane. It is estimated that over 20 years, methane traps 86 times as much heat in the atmosphere as carbon dioxide.
4. Unconventional gas projects damage forests, wildlife habitat, water quality and water levels because of land clearing, chemical contamination and fracking.
5. Fossil fuel demand is decreasing rapidly across the globe and Australia could end up with many stranded assets through investing in gas infrastructure.

We need to stay vocal on this issue. The evidence is against a 'gas-led recovery' and for a renewables future.

As Elliott Harris, UN chief economist states: “What we've seen in this COVID crisis is that governments are indeed capable of really ambitious, rather unorthodox, extremely important and even massive interventions... I can think of no stakes that are higher than the climate crisis that we are living in right now.”

Wanderings and wonderings

Ramblings

Alan Page

I recently spent some time with the many offspring of two Newnes Plateau Banksias (*Banksia penicillata*). These banksias don't regrow after fire. Their countless progeny are similar in number to the Heath-leaved Banksias (*Banksia ericifolia*) that we lost on Narrow Neck, whereas the number of seedlings I've encountered near burnt *Banksia cunninghamii* is barely a handful.

I ran into four brumbies at Bungleboori in Newnes State Forest. One was clearly a stallion. I've heard that there are several dozen thereabouts.

Among the many wildflowers that have benefited from the recent rains are Trigger-plants (*Stylidium* sp.) I don't think I've been on a bush walk in the last month or so without seeing quite a few. The trigger is called a column. It is released when touched by an insect which is then covered in pollen.

Like many, I was looking forward to a display of Pink Flannel Flowers (*Actinotus forsythii*) this summer and have not been disappointed. They appear the summer after bushfires and are mostly found on exposed ridges - frequently with burnt Heath-leaved Banksias. I was concerned that they may be picked or trampled on, but the profusion of them in many locations in the



Burnt Newnes Plateau Banksia cones among regenerating seedlings.
Photo: Alan Page

Upper Blue Mountains and Newnes will assure their survival.

One of the highlights at this time of the year is seeing Old Man Banksia cones (*Banksia serrata*). To me it's a bit like a rainbow that indicates that the storm has passed, but in this case it indicates that the bush is fine, thanks for caring.

The Wonders Of The Wild

Ross Bridle

Off the beaten track today,
Lured by a path obscure.
Winding through the shrubs and ferns,
My plans gave way to some less sure.

Now far from urban sprawl and sound,
The bush aglow in evening light,
And midst this scene an ancient Gum,
A kindred spirit from first sight.

Walking near, I sat in awe,
The Elder, and me the child.
A sense of oneness with this new-found friend,
Together, sharing the wonders of the Wild.

A gentle breeze disturbed the scene,
A rush of scented air.
"Breathe in those many hues of green", it spoke
"And breathe out those many cares."

That breeze it brushed my clouds away,
All fears, those doubts, those dreads.
No longer turmoil in my world -
Just peace and calm instead.

A pilgrim now, I must return,
Despite weather or the season.
This peace and stillness of the Wild
A priceless balm.....A voice

Spring in Minnehaha Falls Reserve

Meredith Brownhill

The Plant Study Group were very happy to resume field trips after the long break from bushfires and Covid-19 last year.

In November 2020 we went to Minnehaha Falls Reserve on Yosemite Creek in North Katoomba, to study spring flowers. The creek has a water quality rating of 'good', not the top rating, and it is in the Grose Valley Water Catchment.

We started the day by looking at the large swamp system along three creeks flowing into the reserve and noted their importance in assuring water quality. Sedges were flourishing after all the rain, *Grevillea acanthifolia* was in flower as were the white flowering *Epacris* sp. and *Leptospermums* or tea-trees.

During morning tea – we hadn't walked very far and we never do, a lengthy discussion occupied us about the renaming of the scribbly gums. *Eucalyptus racemosa* is now the new name for *E. sclerophylla*.

Eucalyptus mannifera ssp. *gullicki* Alluvial woodlands sheltered lovely flowering shrubs such as *Boronia microphylla*, *Conospermum tenuifolium* and *Thelymitra* orchids with their buds still closed on this cloudy morning. *Kunzea capitata* was pretty with pink flowers. *Diuris sulphurea* looked fresh and bright wearing its sulphuric yellow petals and sepals.



Hibbertia sp. Photo: Helen Yoxall

A scattering of *Hibbertia* ssp. with yellow flowers, has been a challenge to identify. It is likely to be identified as a new species, as its taxonomy is being revised by the State Herbarium of South Australia.

Ambling down the main muddy track through the swamp, with books under our arms, we became engaged in a long process of studying swamp sedges. They are essential habitat for the endangered giant dragonfly and the Blue Mountains water skink.

The creek bank beside us had some very nice holes probably used by crayfish, water dragons and skinks. Bright yellow *Sphaerolobium minus*, and *Bauera rubioides* pink flowers were very pretty. This much trampled track is in need of a board walk to protect flora and fauna.



Plant group members, back row from left to right: Don Cameron, Meredith Brownhill, Sue Nicol, Lesley Gersen, Helen Yoxall
Front row: Alison Hewitt, Robin Murray. Photo Margaret Baker

Overlooking Minnehaha waterfall is a forest of young Blue Mountains Ash, or *Eucalyptus oreades*. Their tall thin trunks are crowded together and they are the same age as they are recovering from bushfire. These trees do not have epicormic growth.

The group decided that the abundance of flora and fauna species makes Minnehaha a very special place, warranting high conservation protection, especially with its indigenous cultural heritage.

If you would like to know more about the educational activities of the BMCS Plant Study Group then please see our webpage and ring our coordinator Helen Yoxall on 47517704. <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/psg/index.shtml>

Opinion

Badgerys Creek airport - the undisclosed agenda against trees and wildlife

Don Morison

A major series of documents – a Concept Plan for the “Aerotropolis” - is on display on a State Government website for comment until 26 February 2021. <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Plans-for-your-area/Priority-Growth-Areas-and-Precincts/Western-Sydney-Aerotropolis/Have-your-say-on-the-precinct-plans>

These documents are studded with photographs showing trees, even in parts of the airport surrounds slated for concentrations of human activity, such as the environs of public transport access points. The “Western Sydney Parkland City” slogan coined by the State Government is mentioned often.

By contrast, recent media enquiries have failed to obtain any clarity from the airport planners on how the massive development of “green” employment hubs and residences is compatible with preventing collisions with bats and birds affecting client aircraft.

Individual submissions highlighting this contradiction would influence this project.

In a May 2020 document, a State Government consultant, referring to principles for protecting aircraft from bats and birds and other promises to increase the tree canopy in development zones, states that “some of these principles contradict the landscaping objectives and principles developed for the Western Parkland City particularly in areas that support the key government commitments”.

Bureau of Meteorology data shows Badgerys Creek has a mean January daily maximum of 30.3 degrees C and 17.5 degrees C for July, slightly cooler than Penrith Lakes. If urban development near the airport has to proceed without increases in the tree canopy, hundreds of thousands of new residents and workers

will find treeless open space to be unusable on most days. The creation of urban development would mean Badgerys Creek temperatures will probably rise more each year than would be attributable to regional climate change.

One result would be massive additional numbers of people trying to use open space accessed through Penrith and Blue Mountains local government areas. Where shade and elevation are achievable, open space is more usable. There has been much discussion about allocating more funds to improve open space in Penrith and the Blue Mountains for the growing number of users. So far, little has been accomplished.

Let’s all make submissions and expose the inadequacy of current policy.

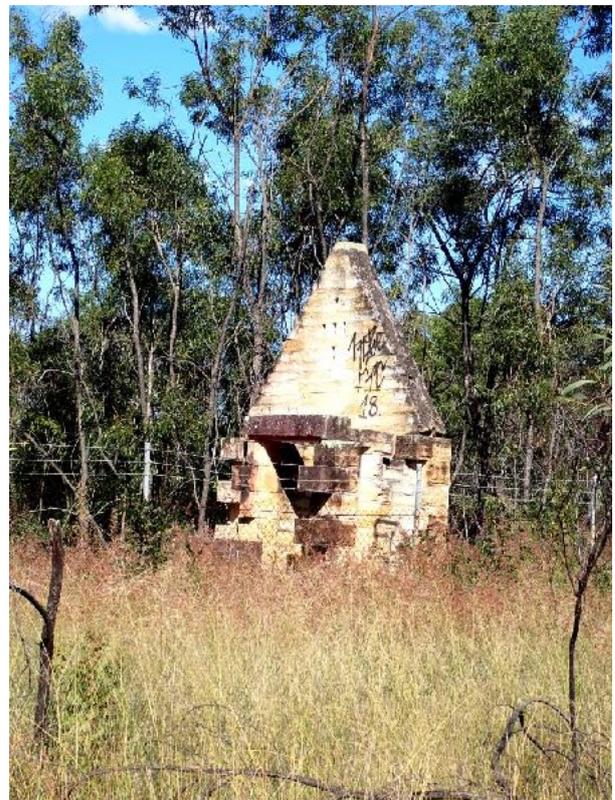


Photo: Open space on the fringe of Penrith and the Blue Mountains, blighted by weeds, graffiti and neglect. Photo: Christine Davies

Prongdogalong Herbert the First meets a brown snake - a children's story.

Mary Dolittle

Prongdogalong Herbert the First lived with his owner, Joe, in a little wooden house at the edge of the bush. He was a small, gentle dog with long floppy ears and brown short fur. His back was straight and he held his head high as his mother had taught him.



He always tried to do the right thing. Joe, his owner, loved him for that and often whispered in his ear "You're the best dog in the world, Prongdogalong Herbert the First".

Prongdogalong and Joe loved to walk in their patch of bush. It was next to a national park but Prongdogalong would never go into the national park. He knew that was the exclusive home of the bush animals.

There were often grey kangaroos and swamp wallabies grazing in the clearings and Joe said that at night quolls came out looking for food in the undergrowth. High up in the trees there were possums and sometimes they could see koalas.

And then there were the snakes and lizards. Lizards were fun but early in his life he learned from Joe that snakes are important in the bush and he must be very wary of their ability to kill. Joe said that they defend themselves when necessary but if he didn't frighten them by being too close, they would just slither away.

One sunny and warm spring day Joe and he went for a morning walk. The wattles' fluffy yellow flowers

and pink boronias lined the tracks. A kookaburra laughed and watched them from a branch above and magpies sang their morning chortle as if to celebrate the day.

Suddenly Joe tripped over a stone. Then he saw a brown snake sunning itself on the track. Joe knew brown snakes are the second most deadly snake in Australia. He froze. He was too close to the snake and it reared its head looking as if it would strike. Prongdogalong barked.

"Stay. Shh." said Joe in a firm voice. "Now back boy". They both slowly moved back a metre and then stood very still.

Prongdogalong could feel his heart beating very very fast. He was frightened and could feel his legs shaking. What could he do? He believed that his job was to look after Joe but, as always, he did as he was told.

The world stopped. Even the birds seemed to be silent. No breeze rustled the trees. Prongdogalong desperately wanted to bark again or growl but he knew he was forbidden. The snake stayed in striking position.

After what seemed a very long time, ever so slowly it lowered its head. Another minute passed. It held its position on the ground and Prongdogalong could now see its tongue, flicking in and out of its mouth as if to try to work out what was going on. Prongdogalong's nose twitched too, trying to smell the snake. Joe was just still, very very still.

At last the snake turned and moved away into the undergrowth, as if to say it had made a mistake.

"Phew" said Joe and he and Prongdogalong finally breathed. "That was a close one, my boy."

Prongdogalong barked, happy that Joe and life were normal again. Joe gave him one of his favourite liver treats from his jacket pocket and said "You are such a good dog Prongdogalong Herbert the First."

Other stories

Delightful ditty

Ross Coster

I found the following delightful and amusing item in the Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society newsletter number 19 of 1974.

“The Conservation Bogey

We have decided to run a competition for a short skit or song and dance act, to be performed at our monthly meetings. Send in your entries to the Newsletter. You can't win, of course, as the Editor is the sole judge, and he has dashed off a little something to set the ball rolling. We publish herewith the winning entry:

Title: The Conservation Bogey
 Costume: Green cloak, green hat, green mask, Green Ban sign, beard.
 Dance Routine: Boogie woogie improvisation
 Tune: The Chatanooga Choo Choo
 Curtain Rises: The bogey enters furtively, and after a series of menacing gestures, sings:

Mister beware, here comes the Conservation Bogey.
 He'll take all your land, he won't understand.
 Mister take care, because he's awful mean and roguey.
 He won't let you mine, or lay a pipe line.
 Yesterday he made his way right down to the Rocks.
 He's always very willing to save historic buildings.
 Boo-hoo boo-hoo, he's gone to Wollomooloo.
 Mister, watch out, here comes the Conservation Bogey.
 He won't let pines grow upon Boyd Plateau.
 You should give him a clout, because he's oozy and he's ogey.
 He'll preserve all the swamps, all full of mugwamps.
 He wants to keep the population just as it is.
 Stop aerial ignition is one of his ambitions.
 Ooh-aah, ooh-aah, he might come to Katoomba.
 The Conservation Bogey, the Conservation Bogey,
 The consecrated, concentrated, Conservation Bogey
 Man!”

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

World Heritage Listing and John Howard

Ross Coster

In 1997 two representatives from our Society were invited to an announcement by then Prime Minister John Howard. The event was held at The Conservation Hut on an amazing day, with the phantom falls operating, dumping cloud between the Megalong and Jamison Valleys over Narrow Neck, plainly visible from The Hut. Les Coyne and I attended for the Society, as did dozens of other invitees from other organisations.

John Howard spoke well, working the room, using the rostrum and dual microphones like an expert, talking about the Natural Heritage Trust that he was launching, a bucket of money from the partial sale of Telstra going into environmental projects. Environment Minister Robert Hill also spoke, appearing very nervous and uncomfortable.

After the speeches, John Howard worked the room, shaking hands, meeting people. When he got to me I was a bit awestruck, and just introduced myself. My colleague Les Coyne took the opportunity to ask Mr Howard to support World Heritage Listing for the Blue Mountains National Parks, refusing to let go of the PM's hand until he agreed!

We had a cuppa with Mr Howard later in the day, and outlined what we needed him to do to achieve listing. The sometimes stalled process went ahead, the NSW and Federal Governments supported the bid, Joan Domicelj produced the nomination document, and the rest is history.

Les Coyne was pivotal during the period, writing many letters and meeting with politicians to push the process along. We can't claim to have achieved the listing alone, there were many people involved, but that moment, watching Les shake the PM's hand and the commitment he gave us, was one I will never forget.

Announcements

'The Weather Diaries'

Special screening for members

On Tuesday March 2nd the Society will screen the climate change film *The Weather Diaries* at Mt. Vic Flicks. It will be followed by a Q&A session.

The Weather Diaries is a mother's meditation on the future for her aspiring musician daughter in the shadow of the twin threats of climate change and mass extinction. It's an intimate chronicle of, on the one hand the darkly cataclysmic effects of climate change and on the other, the development of Drayton's daughter from child to adult.

The film strikes a hard-won balance of optimism and pessimism, fear and hope, melancholia and illumination.

The director Kathy Drayton, and her musician daughter Imogen (Artist Lupa J), will be attending a Q&A after the screening, with the Society president Tara Cameron.

Tickets will be available for purchase in the coming weeks from Mount Vic Flicks and Fanforce websites.

The Weather Diaries

Tuesday March 2nd, 6.30 pm
Mt. Vic Flicks, Mount Victoria

To watch a preview of the film visit: <https://fanforce.com/films/the-weather-diaries/>

Or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=05jxrb5pOU>

Vale Wes Maley

Members of the Society were sad to hear of the passing of Wes Maley recently. Wes worked as the Society's Administration Officer during 2013-2014. He was a committed worker and well remembered for his sense of humour and acumen. Wes helped to sort out the office and continued our filing. He was always willing to get involved with other activists and was a great helper on our stalls also. A true gentleman. The Society sends condolences to Wes' family.

Tara Cameron

Sad loss of Richard Lowson

Our sympathies also go to the family of Richard Lowson who died on 20 November last year. Richard was keenly involved in the Flora and Fauna Monitoring Program and sent many informative articles for publication in Hut News. His last email to me regretted not being able to make his November contribution due to a recent stroke. The Society will miss his great contribution to the Flora and Fauna Monitoring Program and I will miss his extremely interesting accounts of its results.

Susan Crick

Congratulations to Chris Yates - Sustainable Schools NSW Teacher of the Year 2020

At the end of 2020, past Society Education Officer, Chris Yates was awarded the Sustainable Schools NSW Teacher of the Year. This recognises Chris' work over many years in education and reflects his passion for the environment. In the mid-2000s, Chris worked at Katoomba High School and co-ordinated a committed student group. They wrote a monthly newsletter called Strobos, co-ordinated the 'Drink Tap Water' campaign and spread the message at events like Winter Magic. Chris later moved to Sydney where he continued his work at Ryde Secondary College. We send him our congratulations for his achievement!

Tara Cameron

Erratum (see Editor's note on page 3)

The following are Christine Davies' original captions but a shortage of space means the photographs to which they apply cannot be included.

1. Xanthorrhoea flower spikes adorn the already magnificent Grose Valley view from New Point Pilcher Lookout, Medlow Bath.
2. Xanthorrhoea are plentiful in some areas on the outskirts of Blackheath on the Grose Valley side of the Blue Mountains ridge. Many have developed multiple crowns and put up multiple flower spikes. The Xanthorrhoea in the foreground has **eight** flower spikes.