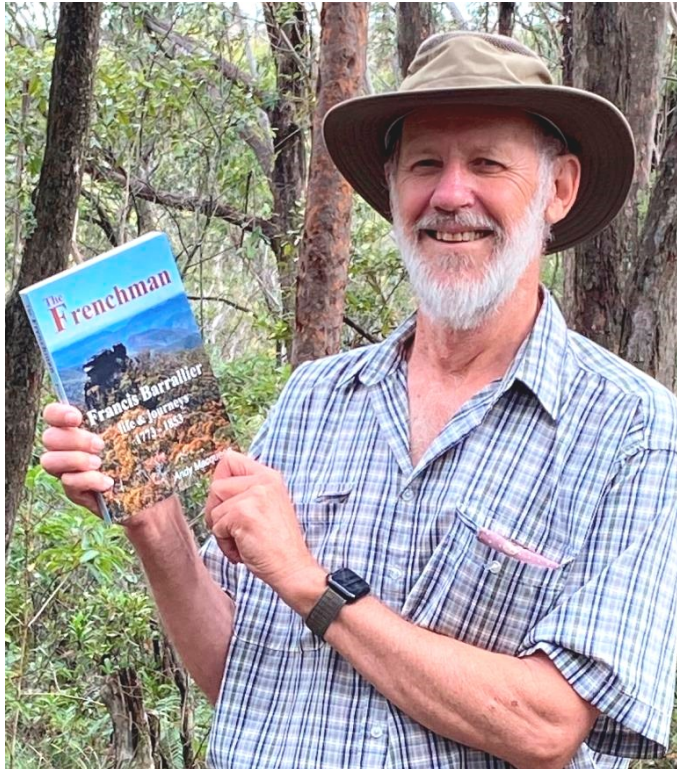




HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

Issue No. 424
May 2024



Members and friends are invited to a **GENERAL MEETING**

Thursday, 16th May, 7pm to 9pm
Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls
(end of Fletcher Street, in the National Park)

The Society's President, **Annette Cam**, will talk about what's going on in the Society. If you have any questions, please bring them to the meeting. You will be able to meet other members over a cup of tea.

And **meet Dylan McCarthy**. In February, 16 year-old school student Dylan launched a petition to ask the Federal Government to raise Australia's greenhouse gas emission targets. Find out what you can do.

Andy Macqueen will talk about his new book, "The Frenchman: Francis Barrallier, life and journeys 1773-1853" which was launched in March by Local Member for Blue Mountains, Trish Doyle. Alan Page will interview Andy. When did Andy first become interested in the history of the Blue Mountains? How does Andy go about exploring the landscape and the written records to research his books? Andy Macqueen will answer questions from the audience. **ALL WELCOME**

Photo: Andy Macqueen at a recent book launch.

Bat Night 2024

Blue Mountains Cultural Centre
Saturday 11 May 6 pm – 8 pm

Bat Night at the Cultural Centre is where you will discover the secrets of our enigmatic bats.

Meet a Flying Fox up close, learn about microbats, listen to ancient local Indigenous stories, find the treasure in the library and get arty in the craft cave.

With face painting, snacks from the Gallery Café and our gallery open free of charge, there will be something for everyone. Uncover the secrets of these misunderstood creatures and discover why they're such a vital part of our world!

Brought to you with help from our friends from the Australasian Bat Society, Blue Mountains City Council Healthy Waterways Team, Blue Mountains Conservation Society and Katoomba Library.

Don't forget to dress as a bat and embrace the magic of these winged wonders!

FREE event

https://bluemountainculturalcentre.com.au/public_programs/bat-night-2024/



Blue Mountains Conservation Society **NATIVE PLANT NURSERY**

We will be at the Blackheath Growers Market on
SUNDAY 12 MAY (8am to 12 noon)

For enquiries and to place an order, please contact **Nursery Manager, Paul Irwin:**
plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com

This will be your last chance to buy plants before the winter break.

Planting NOW while the ground is still warm gives the roots a chance to establish and, come spring, they'll be raring to go! We will have new plants for sale at the Growers Market in September.

Become a member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society

We are an incorporated voluntary organisation whose goal is to protect the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains www.bluemountains.org.au
You can join online at www.bluemountains.org.au/joining.shtml or phone 0418 462 576. Members can receive our monthly newsletter, Hut News, by post and online.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Darug and Gundungurra people, and pay respect to their elders past, present and emerging.

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is an incorporated voluntary organisation of more than 800 members. Our goal is to protect, conserve and advocate for the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

Read more: www.bluemountains.org.au

From the President ...

The AGM was excellent - thank you to everyone who was part of the organisational team, those who wrote and presented reports, to Ian Wright who gave an excellent presentation on the health of our waterways and to members for sharing the evening with us. A new management committee was elected and I welcome the new members and look forward to working with you.

My President's Report is on the Society website. It gives an overview of what the Society has been doing over the past 12 months. We have moved conservation of the Blue Mountains environment forward by working closely with BMCC, NPWS, many other environment groups and our members.

A special thanks goes to two members of our MC who have now retired. They are Paul Vale and Ross Coster.

Paul had been the Bushcare Officer on the Management Committee for the past decade, working across the Society, NPWS, BMCC, other bush regeneration groups and extending his interests to monitoring air quality of the local environment. He leaves ConSoc a richer place for his extensive involvement over many years. Of course, Paul remains a Society member and will continue to support the Land Use subcommittee and participate in Society activities.

Ross has also a long history of devoted work with our Society as Membership Secretary and on numerous campaigns. Ross has been an extraordinarily hard-working member of the Society, dedicated to the conservation of the Blue Mountains environment. The MC will be a poorer place for his departure. He has, however, set systems in place to ensure the continuance of record keeping for the Membership database and was granted Life Membership in 2018.

This year the Subcommittees will continue the important work they do in writing submissions and monitoring what is going on across the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Presently, Land Use is focussed on the proposed housing reforms, which risk development in areas that will impact our sensitive bushland environment. The NP Subcommittee is focussed at present on the proposed commercial development of the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, the proposed extension of the Angus Place Coal Mine, and the impact of the flight paths from Western Sydney International airport on the GBMWHA.

This year also, we will complete the development of an overarching Strategic Plan to ensure we are providing the best strategies for the future of the Society. A second, crucial, focus will be on improving our communication with our members, our networks and the Blue Mountains community to ensure that we are engaging our members in conservation and in the enjoyment of our glorious bushland.

Please take a little time to share your own story of why you love the Blue Mountains - I would love to hear from you!

-- **Annette Cam, President**

Contributions for Hut News:

The deadline for the next issue of Hut News is **12 May**
hutnews@bluemountains.org.au
Enquiries to Christine 4787 7246

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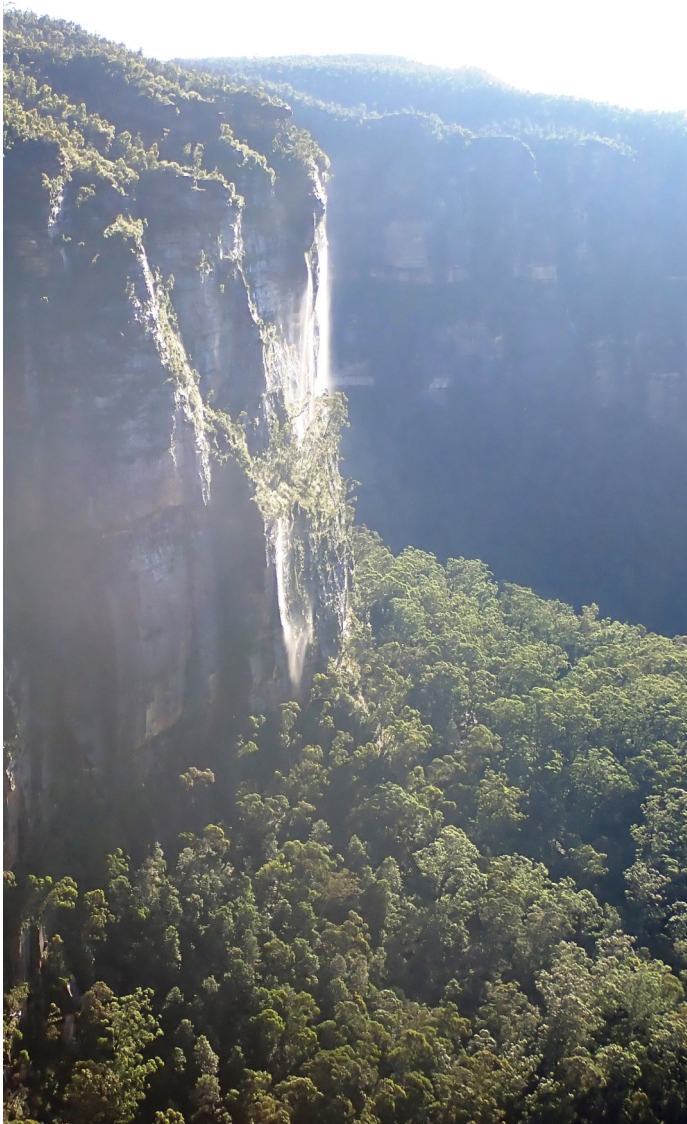
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hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

Plant Study Group: Meredith Brownhill

mountains@westnet.com.au

* *vacant – for more information, contact Alan Page at alanpage7@bigpond.com*



After the rain ... 6th April 2024

At Govetts Leap lookout, the first sunshine we had seen for days was spotlighting the water teeming down the cliff into the Grose Valley.

I cannot find the words, and my little camera can only begin to indicate the glory of the scene.

The sun is reflecting on the cliff-face between Govetts Leap and Pulpit Rock.

-- Christine Davies

It can be fun ... Join the Events Team!

Jo Carroll is our new Events Coordinator.

Members are invited to join Jo's Events Team.

If you have some time to spare, please contact Jo on jocarr2014@gmail.com (or leave a message on 0490 419 779).

Events can be fun for **everybody** if we have lots of helpers!

NSW Government proposed housing reforms put Blue Mountains environment at risk

The NSW Government's proposal to impose increased low and mid-rise housing around the town centres in the Blue Mountains will override the existing environmental protections in the *Blue Mountains Local Environment Plan (LEP)*. Many of these provisions, such as strict stormwater controls, are designed to protect the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains National Park.

There have been decades of work by the Council and community to ensure appropriate environmental measures are in place within our LEP which recognise, as a city within a national park, that the Blue Mountains is not just another suburb of Sydney. However, the NSW Government one-size-fits-all approach to increase low and mid-rise housing does not work in this unique landscape.

Not only the environment would be jeopardised, residents' lives could be put at risk too. The Blue Mountains is a highly bushfire prone area and higher density development, in urban land surrounded by bushland and with limited evacuation routes, would make bushfire safety even more challenging.

The Society recognises there is a housing problem in the Blue Mountains, including a lack of social housing and affordable rental properties. We share the community's concern over this. However, new housing needs to be environmentally sustainable, appropriate to the local area, diverse and affordable.

The Society is therefore launching a campaign, calling on the community to write to the Premier during May, demanding that the Blue Mountains LGA is excluded from the proposed housing reforms and instead requesting an assessment of housing requirements is undertaken in consultation with community and Council.

Where is more information about the housing reforms? You can find more information by going to the Society website where you find our submission on the housing reforms. www.bluemountains.org.au/housing-reforms-2024.shtml Blue Mountains City Council also has made a submission opposing the reforms. The Council submission can be found here: <https://bit.ly/4d0xZIB>

What you need to do: We need as many people as possible to write to the Premier airing their concerns and demanding that Blue Mountains is excluded from the reforms. A large volume of individual letters will ensure the Premier has a good understanding of how devastating this would be for Blue Mountains residents and the environment.

Our submission on the Society website highlights the environmental impacts the reforms will have and can form the basis of your letter.

Sending your letter: Your letter can be lodged online at: <https://bit.ly/3xDBsq9> or mail to Hon Chris Minns GPO Box 5341 Sydney NSW 2001

-- **Land Use Subcommittee**
landuse@bluemountains.org.au

THE MONSTER THAT ATE THE WORLD

Why we need to talk about the tourist industry

-- Opinion by Paddy Cavanagh

There's a huge elephant blundering around the earth's living room. He's stomping all over the place and all our antique crystal and precious Ming Dynasty porcelain is crashing to the floor – shattered to pieces. Irreplaceable.

But few want to talk about the tourist INDUSTRY and its increasingly devastating impact on climate change, the environment, and social and cultural amenity in those areas it operates in.

Instead we sip our cafe lattes or cappuccinos and blithely browse all those seductive advertorials in the weekend paper's Travel Supplements planning our next overseas adventure.

Isn't the spin seductive!? All those exciting destinations are tempting us to enjoy adventure, something unforgettable, picturesque, captivating, extraordinary and enriching. A last chance to see a black rhino before it goes extinct, or an arctic glacier before it crashes into the sea.

For those with more basic tastes and a sweet tooth, once you finish that long-haul flight to Europe you can hop a train to the very best cake shop in Sweden; or to the home-made delights in a worker's café in a back street of Porto; or baklava from a pastanesi in Istanbul.

There's more. You can do it all with carbon offsets. Pay the two buck donation to the airline of your choice and they will, they assure you, plant a tree somewhere. Do the math on carbon emission for that train trip and your tourist adviser will assure you that, since you're not using a car for this leg of the journey, your entire holiday will not just be relaxing but planet saving.

We need to keep our BS detectors fine-tuned so that we might assess the claims in the same way that we do with the claims of any environmentally destructive industry. For the truth is that the environmental impact of the industrial scale tourism of the past 50 years is increasingly on a par with that of other industries that we don't hesitate to criticise.

Tourism's impact on climate change, the environment and social and cultural amenity can be seen throughout the world.

In Europe, this is most evident in Venice where the local citizens have been swamped by tourists for years. Belatedly, authorities have realized the impact of this on increasingly regular flooding and the damage that the wake of cruise ships, even at their slowest speeds, is having on the foundations of buildings and infrastructure along the canal banks.

Similar environmental problems resulting from tourism can be seen in quite different geographic/cultural locations. Thus, since the development of tourism in the late 20th Century, the small rural town of Hoi An in Vietnam, despite gaining some economic benefits, has experienced increasing levels of traffic, noise and air pollution. The town's tranquil small town atmosphere quickly disappeared and young people have been drawn away from traditional crafts and skills. The introduction of motorised tour boats on the river had intensified riverbank erosion and resulted in damage to the wetland flora and fauna.

In cities like Florence, Prague, Barcelona, Amsterdam and London, there have been increasing community objections to the industry's environmental destructiveness and negative impact on the local economy and social amenity. Indeed, since early 2023, Amsterdam has conducted a *Stay Away* campaign which succeeded in reducing tourism from Britain by 22%. Not least among the negative impacts of industrial scale tourism in all these locations has been the impact on housing affordability with the exponential increase in short-term tourist accommodation.

The rise of anti-tourism protests is encouraging. But is it too little too late? For, today not even the most remote corners of the world are immune from the damage wrought by the tourist industry.

Sadly, most of us are now aware of the impact of *last chance, bucket list* adventure tourism on Mount Everest - litter strewn across its slopes and microplastics found in snow samples at many sites on the mountain and as high as 8,440 metres.

The fragile continent of Antarctica is marketed as a last chance to see virgin wilderness before it disappears. A record 105,331 tourists arrived in the 2022-2023 season. The environmental footprint of these numbers is obvious and depressing.

Of course, none of this could ever happen in Australia, could it. And certainly not here in the Blue Mountains. After all, UNESCO has given us World Heritage Listing haven't they?

Complacency is always cosy. But we are mugs if we think this way.

Our governments are not just dilly dallying about the environmental impact of coal and gas mining. They are also playing pea and thimble tricks with us about the impact of tourism.

Thus, just last year the Tasmanian government quietly rezoned part of the Walls of Jerusalem National Park from being a *wilderness zone* to being a *self reliant recreation zone*. The rationale, as almost always economic - to allow the construction of an eco resort accessible by helicopter so that those wealthy enough can enjoy this pristine environment while feeling virtuous. Federal Environment Minister, Tanya Plibersek, was expected to give a decision on this proposal last November.

Closer to home perhaps we should be more concerned about the Local Council's embrace of the local tourist industry. Despite encouraging noises about the impact of the industry on the availability of accommodation for locals, the basic rationale for the Katoomba Master Plan is clearly based on the naïve belief that tourism is a benign industry that can be expanded exponentially.

That damned elephant is still raging through the living room. Can anyone see it?

“The Frenchman” and Andy Macqueen

At our general meeting on Thursday 16th May, Andy Macqueen will talk about his new book, “The Frenchman”.

In 1802, over a decade before Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson, a French exile named Francis Barrallier was sent to find a way across the Blue Mountains. It was the only official attempt ever made. Barrallier failed, but he did make three interesting “excursions” into Gundungurra country, the longest one finishing near Kanangra Walls.

“Excursion” is the word that the long-accepted translation of Barrallier’s journal uses. However, a revised translation reveals that he actually used the term “incursion”, which rather invites us to ask questions about the whole undertaking and Barrallier’s perspectives about what he was doing.

Andy Macqueen recently produced a new biography of Barrallier, entitled “The Frenchman”. It will be the second time he’s talked to the Society about Barrallier: the first time was in November 1994, after the appearance of his first book, “Blue Mountains to Bridgetown”. Since then much more has come to light about Barrallier and his undertakings.

In his talk, Andy will focus on some pertinent cultural and environmental aspects of the mountains expedition. He will also tell us something of the personal journey that has led to his new book, starting with a bushwalk back in 1965.

Andy is well known as a Blue Mountains bushwalker, conservationist and author, and has been a member of our Society for some 30 years. He believes it is necessary to walk country before writing about it. Copies of his books will be available for sale at the meeting.

The Society has a new Management Committee

All the names and contact details are on page 2 of this newsletter.

Members are elected at the AGM and may serve until the following AGM. Then individuals CAN renominate. That is why we have some familiar faces.

There are three new faces:

Jo Carroll, Events Coordinator

Annette Sartor, Education Officer (see page 10)

Peter Ardill, Bushcare Officer.

You will learn more about Jo and Peter in future editions of Hut News.

And there are two vacancies - read more on page 10.

Badgerys pinup, John Bradfield – politicians only ever listened to him a little Opinion by Don Morison

There have recently been rumblings which sound like excuses to pour even more vast quantities of taxpayer funds into Badgerys airport and its surrounding proposed growth centres. This would also accelerate the damage to flora and fauna habitat, the atmosphere and the hydrology caused by these now struggling projects.

A long time line:

- 1920s – Engineer John Bradfield lays out a rail-based development plan for Greater Sydney, including a northern beaches railway and more compact development of other suburbs, but only the Harbour Bridge and some small other sections are ever implemented.
- 2010s – A new airport at Badgerys Creek is approved and touted to cause an economic bonanza. The private sector is given a chance to participate, and declines.
- Recently – It’s decided to name the focus of the anticipated growth centres after John Bradfield. The first runway will be ready 2026-ish but enthusiasm from airlines and businesses to fill the Bradfield location is not gathering momentum.

My thoughts now go to Avalon Airport, near Geelong, which was once mooted as Melbourne’s second airport. After 40 years of manoeuvring and handwringing, only two scheduled air service providers land at Avalon – about eight times a day between them.

A great deal of stress could be avoided, including about flight paths, if Badgerys were left to settle down into the relatively minor role, which is all it is likely to achieve during the 2020s. That would involve massively cutting and postponing public subsidy of the airport and associated projects. Many politicians would lose face. Many



Linden - a community that could be highly vulnerable to any heavy use of Badgerys Creek Airport. Image: C.Davies.

vested interests would be disappointed, but the alternative for the general public is far worse.

Much of the destruction of habitat and hydrology could be put on hold. Road projects could be left unfinished for a few years. The private metro line, stretching south from St Marys, could operate to only some of its stations and the rest could wait.

Doubters should go to Waverton on Sydney’s North Shore and contemplate the modest drill marks in the sandstone on the north side of the station. These were the beginnings of John Bradfield’s Northern Beaches Railway, whose abandonment has led to 90 years of more air pollution, dredging and damaging waterways, skewed development and political wrangling. At Bradfield in Western Sydney, the late Dr Bradfield risks remaining a symbol for politicians who make dreadful decisions.

The Intergenerational Transformations Series Series Coordinated by Don Morison

New era for abandoned or surrendered pets

In the new financial year, it is expected that Blue Mountains City Council will organise the full return of the Mort Street, North Katoomba, animal shelter. Dr David Burrell is a veterinarian who has played a decades-long role in educating veterinary assistants within NSW TAFE as well as operating a private veterinary practice. He is a keen conservationist and long-standing member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society. Here he answers Hut News questions about the new phase of the Mort Street site.

Hut News: Dr Burrell, you once said the reason for a Blue Mountains shelter was to prevent domestic animals roaming abandoned where they could harm native animals. Can we refocus on that?

Dr Burrell: Harm from abandoned animals will be most reduced if shelter management coordinates closely with Council rangers or others authorised to trap potentially abandoned animals. Those trapping them should have protocols to rapidly determine whether any trapped animal is microchipped and can reasonably be returned to its owner or needs to be accommodated in the shelter. Publicity should encourage the public to report potentially abandoned animals. There needs to be a protocol for occasions any non-domestic species, such as foxes, are trapped.

Hut News: Many are deeply attached to their domestic pets. What special challenges exist in convincing those who have to surrender pets that their pets will be humanely treated and, if at all possible, sensitively rehomed?

Dr Burrell: It is most important that all rehomed animals be desexed. There are older and less healthy animals with high care needs. Blacktown Council Pound has recently been operating under a no-euthanasia policy and has been accommodating over 350 dogs and cats that are not able to be rehomed. Costs need to be considered.

Hut News: Blue Mountains Council now needs to revitalise a shelter facility that has been run for decades by the RSPCA. What are the challenges?

Dr Burrell: It is vital to balance engagement of good quality management with tight control of the budget for such a publicly funded facility.

Hut News: How will qualified vets and on-site volunteers fit into the new structure?

Dr Burrell: Volunteers have a proud history of supporting the Katoomba Animal Shelter. The shelter manager will have a demanding position that will include both the legal and budgetary constraints of managing the shelter as well as coordinating volunteers. Council may need additional help from cat and dog registration fees in meeting the costs.

The role of qualified veterinarians in the shelter needs to be carefully planned. One veterinarian may be able, for instance, to desex a large number of dogs and cats during a single visit, if they have a well-trained volunteer or two to assist them.

A Threat to Biodiversity

One strain of Myrtle rust was first detected in New South Wales 14 years ago. Eradication efforts failed and it is now found in most mainland states of Australia. It is of particular concern to bushcarers and bushwalkers.

Myrtle rust is a disease caused by an exotic fungus. It threatens trees and shrubs in the Myrtaceae family of plants.

Myrtaceae is the largest plant family in Australia and includes native plants such as tea tree (*Melaleuca* spp) and eucalypts (*Eucalyptus*, *Angophora* and *Corymbia* spp) and it often dominates localised areas.

Severe outbreaks can lead to a complete shift in localised biodiversity and ecosystems. Many animal species rely on plants in the Myrtaceae family for food and other resources. These species could also be greatly impacted by the spread of myrtle rust.

Myrtle rust was first detected in Australia on the central coast of New South Wales in 2010. When eradication efforts were unsuccessful, the disease spread from commercial properties into native bushland.

Myrtle rust is now found in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory. It has also been detected in the northern part of Western Australia.

Myrtle rust reproduces and spreads through its spores. The spores can be spread on clothing, hair and skin, infected plants, equipment, insects and animals, and via wind dispersal. This makes it very hard to control and almost impossible to eradicate from natural settings.

Any activity in the bush has the potential to spread invasive species, including environmental restoration activities such as weeding and revegetation. Further information can be found in the Arrive Clean, Leave Clean guidelines. www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/invasive-species/publications/arrive-clean-leave-clean

Currently, only one strain of myrtle rust exists within Australia. However, other strains are present overseas. These close relatives of myrtle rust could have devastating impacts on Australian plants if they were to enter Australia.

Source: Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.



Blue Mountains
Animal Holding
Facility, April
2024

A tribute to Les Coyne - former Society Secretary and Treasurer



Les Coyne represented the Blue Mountains Conservation Society on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Nomination Committee. In a phone call in 1998, he received the great news that the nomination had been successful!

Les and Mary Coyne.

Photo supplied by Michael Coyne.

Les Coyne came along to the Society when it was having a difficult time. That was in 1994. Les saw what was needed and quietly set about building a team to make it happen. Les inspired us and enthused us and steered us in the right direction. A group of strangers who, in the real world, might not have anything in common became an effective team and good friends. At our monthly management meetings, we all had ideas and opinions, but Les always spoke last and logic prevailed. After the meetings we all lunched together in a café. We organised and attended monthly members meetings and lots of other social activities.

Don Morison reflects: "One day, Les joined our bushwalking group for a walk that included Mount Victoria cemetery. It is one of our true bushland graveyards. While most participants wanted to examine all the plants closely, Les stood at a distance, reading the inscriptions on the tombstones as well as studying the plants. Les was a man who held both spiritual connection with the environment and the spiritual sensitivities of his fellow humans of all faiths in great reverence."

World Heritage Nomination protagonist, Joan Domicelj AM, reflects: "When I was offered a coordinating role in the preparation of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Nomination, panel members were pleased that the Blue Mountains Conservation Society was represented by someone like Les. Les displayed a calm manner and precision in his thought processes. He was always constructive and to the point.

"Les was one of those most effective in helping the group adapt when Premier Bob Carr and Minister Bob Debus changed the schedule for the preparation of the nomination from 15 months to three months. After that high pressure period, there was more time for socialising and it became even clearer what a likeable and friendly person Les was at the personal level. He was always very active and doing lots of things.

"One of my overriding memories of Les is that he was a strategic thinker and a person who could present

his colleagues with an overview of things to help them understand a situation."

Ross Coster contributes: "I met Les Coyne in the mid 1990's. He was in the process, mostly through his own efforts, of saving the Blue Mountains Conservation Society from disappearing. He re-organised the files, recruited a new Management Committee, re-wrote the constitution, re-arranged the finances and modernised the technology.

"Les visited me three times during this period before I suggested to him that maybe I should join the Management Committee as Membership Secretary. Clever man our Les – made me think it was my idea! We worked together on that Committee for five years, occasionally growling at each other, but building a friendship along the way.

"Les and I, along with the Treasurer Bart Beech, formed the Investment Sub-Committee, and moved the Society's money into Ethical Investments. The reorganised and financially-secure Blue Mountains Conservation Society now goes from strength-to-strength on the back of Les Coyne's effort.

"Les taught me to limit campaigns to the battles that can be won, or to quote Les: 'don't chase every sheep in the paddock'."

Vale Les Coyne, (1940-2024)

Blue Mountains Conservation Society 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.shtm

Repairing degraded nature: exciting new restoration initiatives!

-- Peter Ardill, BMCS Bushcare Officer

The practice of nature restoration is flourishing in the Blue Mountains and recent national and global restoration initiatives offer further encouragement for local bushcarers.

In February 2024, Europe took a vital step towards enacting nature restoration legislation when the European Parliament approved the Nature Restoration Law (NRL). The NRL provides for the restoration and conservation of 90% of degraded European ecosystems by 2050. As most, European ecosystems are considered to be in poor condition, the NRL is an important environmental initiative.

After the February 2024 vote, parliament member and advocate for the law, César Luena, said: "I would like to thank scientists for providing the scientific evidence and fighting climate denial, and young people for reminding us that there is no planet B, nor plan B."

To become law, the NRL must also be adopted by the Council of the European Union. But overcoming this hurdle, scheduled for May, is no certainty. The powerful agriculture sector is a major opponent of the NRL.

The NRL initiative reflects international engagement with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 and European endorsement of the 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, a United Nations conservation treaty. Australia is a signatory to the treaty and this obligation is influencing the Albanese government's current reviews of the national Strategy for Nature and the largely discredited *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Will the revised Strategy for Nature and proposed Nature Positive laws result in effective restoration and conservation of Australian nature? Federal and state environment ministers agreed in November 2023 that the Strategy for Nature will target restoration of Australia's numerous degraded ecosystems and

management of invasive feral species. Implementation of these objectives will, hopefully, be facilitated by the federal government's new *Nature Repair Act 2023*. The Act establishes a nature repair market that enables corporate funding of restoration projects. However, there is a concern that establishment of the market will see governments relinquish their responsibility to fund restoration projects. Also, will cash-strapped corporations enter the market during economic downturns?

Fortunately, Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Blue Mountains City Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service fund a range of volunteer nature restoration projects in the Blue Mountains. Join up and combat climate change! See <https://www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au/>; <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/bushcare.shtml>; <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/volunteer-activities/prince-henry-cliff-walk-bushcare>

References:

Bell-James J. (2024) "Australia must lead the world on nature restoration through ambitious interpretation of international law" *The Conversation*

Anon. (2024) "Nature restoration: Parliament adopts law to restore 20% of EU's land and sea" *European Parliament News*



An early Australian arid zone nature restoration project 1936
Source: Peters Collection State Library South Australia
B77568/86

Adelina's Mailbag



Mysticarion porrectus or Golden semi-slug

Dear Adelina,

In response to your enquiry about the snail in April Hut News. I photographed the same species of snail at Coachwood Glen, Megalong Valley and identified it as *Mysticarion porrectus* or Golden semi-slug. -- Sue Nicol.

Mysticarion porrectus is a tree-dwelling snail in the family Helicarionidae. It is endemic to Australia. This species occurs in and near rainforests at high altitude in eastern Australia. It is associated with Gondwana cool temperate rainforests.

The shell of this snail species is very thin and transparent, so the brightly coloured internal organs are visible through it. The shell is too small for the soft parts to completely retract into. This gastropod is what is referred to as a "semi-slug". Through the course of evolution, the shell has become reduced in size and thickness. This phenomenon of shell reduction has occurred independently across a number of different families. (Source: Wikipedia)

Lithgow after the fire The healing journey continues ...

-- Julie Favell, Lithgow Environment Group

In Lithgow, the healing journey started after the 2019/2020 Gospers Mountain fire. The mountains around Lithgow were engulfed in flames, habitat was gone, the bush was silent. The people of Lithgow wanted to "do something". Many people phoned the Lithgow Environment Group (LEG) for help.

Andrew Lothian's company, Biodiversity Monitoring Services (BMS) had been monitoring native fauna on the Newnes Plateau. Andrew had installed artificial nesting hollows or 'possum tubes' prior to the 2013 State Mine fire to support the endangered Eastern Pygmy Possum. The tubes were destroyed in the 2013 fire, replaced and had been wiped out again. So began LEG's Eastern Pygmy Possum project.

LEG approached the Lithgow Women's Shed and connected them with Andrew. In March 2020, a training and education program began and, despite the interruption by Covid, the women of the Shed were able to build 100 tiny possum houses. Fifteen of these tubes were installed on Newnes Plateau in June 2020.

Nov 2021: The Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area (GoS SCA) was declared. This held up LEG's Eastern Pygmy Possum project while Newnes, Ben Bullen and Wolgan State Forests were handed over to National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW. In May 2022, the Gardens of Stone SCA was gazetted.

Jul 2022: LEG was successful in obtaining a small grant from Lithgow City Council. Eight-year-old Leo Williams donated the proceeds of his lemonade stall.

Oct 2022: LEG, Andrew Lothian and GoS SCA project met at GoS SCA Long Swamp trail.

Nov 2022: LEG kicks off an education information night, at the Lithgow Transformation Hub (UWS Lithgow Campus), inviting guest speaker Andrew Lothian, local fauna ecologist. Andrew was able to share that, over 10 years monitoring, 51 vulnerable or endangered species, including the Eastern Pygmy Possum, had been recorded in the GoS SCA.

Dec 2022: LEG founding members, Chris Jonkers and Julie Favell, Andrew Lothian and NPWS project officers scoped out locations for tube placements. NPWS determined LEG as the first volunteers for Gardens of Stone Guardians.

Jan 2023: 10 passionate locals heard the call from LEG, rallied to support LEG and NPWS project officers. Andrew Lothian's first tube placements in GoS SCA western area on Long Swamp trail.

Jun 2023: LEG's 20 dedicated volunteers roll up their sleeves, sharing their own stories of Gospers fire with Andrew Lothian and NPWS officers, on a nature walk and inspection of tubes and recording findings. No EPPs identified, but a Yellow-footed Antechinus scat was identified.

Nov 2023: Canberra Institute of Technology lecturer Blake Canackle made contact with LEG to bring 25 students, over 2 days, to inspect placed nest tubes. Chris and Julie shared knowledge of native flora field work.

2024: LEG's project assisted with a supporting donation from Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

What you can do to help: LEG is seeking volunteers to join their committee. Founding members will share their extensive knowledge, mentoring to enhance its ongoing work in the field. There are no membership fees to join, but donations welcome.

LEG will celebrate 20 years in 2025. More about LEG on facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/LithgowEnvironment/> and website <https://www.lithgowenvironment.au/>
Contact: lithgowenviro@gmail.com



Eastern Pygmy Possum - Andrew Lothian



Volunteers EPP placements, Long Swamp trail
GoS SCA Jan 2023

BIRDS

Birds are rushing
through my trees
having some sort
of tiff
yelling at each other
behaving like humans

-- Rosemary Lewis

About the Management Committee ...

At our Annual General Meeting (which this year was held on 27th March), members vote to elect a group of members who have volunteered to work together as our Management Committee (MC) until the next AGM.

Nathalie Verellen (left of photo) is the Society's Sustainability and Climate Change Officer. In the following paragraphs, Nathalie describes her journey to the Blue Mountains and becoming a passionate environmentalist.

"I grew up in Belgium, we had a big garden with lots of trees and I loved playing outside and going for walks in the forest. In 1996 I went travelling in Africa and met my Aussie husband, fast forward 3 years and we found a nice little house in Hazelbrook. We decided to move to the Blue Mountains because we used to go camping up here and we both loved the beauty of this wild place. With so many stunning walks, there are unlimited possibilities to explore the area.

"In 2019 we went for a 3 month holiday around Central and North West Australia, this trip was a turning point in my understanding of the effect of Climate Change. Central Australia had just gone through devastating bushfires and the Kimberley was going through one of their worst droughts. Coral bleaching at the Ningaloo Reef was very evident.

"Upon my return, Extinction Rebellion was doing mass protests and I decided to join. I have since joined a blockade of Port Botany gas terminal, joined the Newcastle Coal Port Blockade three times and I have been involved in the fight to try to stop Santos who are planning to develop 850 gas wells in the Pilliga. These actions led me to become more passionate about protecting our environment and eventually I joined the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

"Extreme weather events have greatly affected the state of the Greater Blue Mountains and the BMCS is a great Society fighting to protect our national park. I don't have a professional background in environmental issues but I am learning a lot from very knowledgeable members of ConSoc. I am still finding my way how to fulfil this role. I enjoy finding ways to fight to better our environment and hold all levels of government to account." (Nathalie Verellen)



Annette Sartor (right of photo) is our new Education Officer. Annette has been a long-time resident of the Blue Mountains and is passionate about education.

Originating from rural NSW, she established her ecological roots growing up on a farm and followed through by studying ecology at university.

Whilst teaching science in secondary schools, Annette worked as a part-time Discovery Ranger for Blue Mountains NPWS, has taught sustainability at TAFE and currently works in higher education to promote an understanding of the intersections between the social, cultural, and environmental elements of living sustainably. She is enthusiastic about supporting the incredible work of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

(The photo of Nathalie and Annette was taken by Alan Page at the AGM)

WANTED: Members to fill Casual Vacancies on the Management Committee

The Society's Management Committee is able to appoint members to fill casual vacancies until the next AGM. This is part of our Constitution.

We have two vacancies. They are:

- Publicity Officer
- Threatened Species Officer

What can you do to help?

Initially, please contact Alan Page to discuss your ideas. alanpage7@bigpond.com

Autumn to Winter

Still, the golden glow on sandstone walls.
Parrots chatter overhead,
Those distant hues of blues and greens,
Gumleaf trails to tread.
But there comes a certain softness now.
Greening dampness after rain,
A mellowing of light and shade,
Mountain's mildness once regained.
That cooling breeze marks season's change.
Such relief from summer heat.
A lighter spirit in the bush,
With summertime's retreat.

©Ross Bridle



BUSHWALKING:

Enjoy the bush, learn about the Blue Mountains natural environment and find out why bushwalking has been a popular pastime in the Blue Mountains for more than 100 years. Our bushwalking convenor is Doug Nicholls dougnicholls@bigpond.com, phone 0455 850 735.

Walks are graded and generally suitable for walkers of average fitness but may vary in degree of difficulty. Participants need to be aware of their own capabilities and can discuss with the bushwalking convenor, group coordinator or leader.

Underneath is a brief summary of walks and leaders for this month. **Check our website <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/bushwalking.shtml> for detailed walks program and program changes.**

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS: Short day walks 3-5 hours. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. Coordinator: Melanie Lawson 0431 214 687.

melanielawson@outlook.com.au

May 6 **Wentworth Falls via Charles Darwin walk** 7km Gr3. Lyn 0432 352 850

May 13 **Sun Valley Circuit** 7km Gr3. Ian ph 0487 021 021

May 20 **Lost World** 6.2km Gr3. Lyn 0432 352 850

May 27 **Fortress Ridge Trail** 7.4km Gr3. Melanie 0431 214687.

TUESDAY FITNESS WALKS: 'Medium Day' walks suitable for walkers of average fitness, 3-5 hours. Bring morning tea/lunch/adequate water. Coordinator: Phill Cox (0415 449 174 mrpacox@hotmail.com)

May 7 **Birdwood Gully – Madoline Glen – Lomatia Park** G2/4K, Peter 0247513870.

May 14 **Long Angle Creek and Fitzgerald Creek** G2/6K (100 m ↓, 90 m ↑), Doug 0455850753. May 21 **Bald Head,**

Blackheath G2-3/6.5K (300 m ↓↑), Sharon 0404622515.

May 28 **Birrabang Ridge** G1/3K, Maurice 0402402783.

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS are 2-3 hours and are conducted at a leisurely pace. Coordinator: Beverley Thompson (4757 2076 denfenella12@bigpond.com)

May 16 **Undercliff Pass, Wentworth Falls.** Beverley 4757 2076. Gr2

May 23 **Blue Gum Swamp, Springwood 5kms.** Angela 0427 133 327. Gr2

May 30 **Evans Lookout to Braeside Walk, Blackheath.** Tracy 0434 362 611. Gr2

Jun 6 **Darwins Walk, Wentworth Falls, Wilson Park to Fletcher Street.** Beverley 4757 2076. Gr2

Jun 13 **Kedumba Pass to Cleary Memorial, Wentworth Falls.** Beverley 4757 2076. Gr2

SATURDAY WALKS: Usually a full day, longer walk at a faster pace. Coordinator Harold Thompson 04090 10736, Harold.thompson@bigpond.com).

May 4 **Lions Head to Kedumba Valley.** Harold 0409010737, Gr3, 12km. Map Jamison.

May11 **Fortress Ridge to Fortress Canyon.** Harold 0409010737, Gr3, 10km. Map Katoomba

May18 **Mt Banks to Edgeworth David Head cliffs.** Harold 0409010737, Gr3, 10km. Map Mt Wilson.

May25 **Thor Head Mine to Asgard Head.** Geoff 0497638033. Gr3, 8km. Map Mt Wilson.

Jun 1 **Jinki Ridges.** Harold 0409010737, Gr3, 8km. Map Mt Wilson

Jun 8 **Goochs Crater .** Harold 0409010737, Gr3, 10km. Map Wollangambe.

Jun 15 **Pisgah Rock to Dadder Cave.** Harold 0409010737, Gr3, 8km. Map Penrith

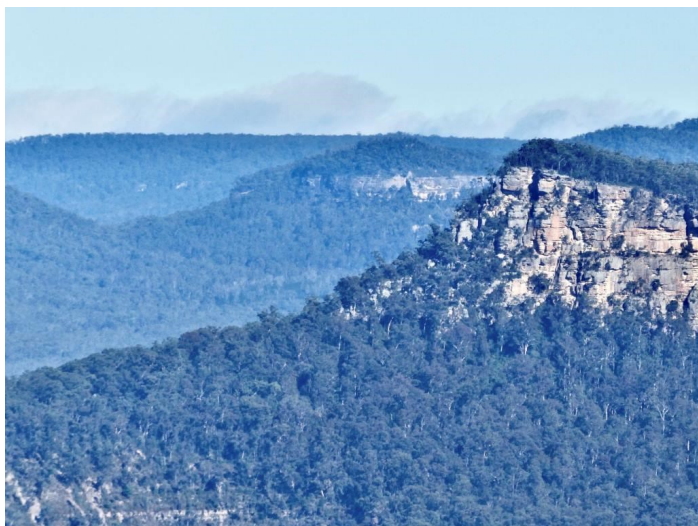
Visit the Saturday walks facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/bmcslongerbushwalks?fref=nf>

The first record of Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies or “warrings” -- Andy Macqueen

On 12 November 1802 Francis Barrallier tried unsuccessfully to climb Tonalli Peak, which towers above the Burratorang Valley. In a letter back to Governor King he included the following account (as translated):

“It is under that impenetrable wall that one of my servants killed a sort of kangaroo which lives in various caves which are scattered here and there. One of the two natives who accompanied us having seen another one in a hole near him wanted to grab it by the tail but the animal, having taken advantage of his having had to bend forward, jumped over his head and was about to fall down a precipice 90 [?] feet high when it balanced on a rock as skilfully as any wild goat would in our part of the world. Leaping from rock to rock it came passing near me as it climbed back towards the top, hiding so effectively that we never found it again.”

Barrallier had more to say about the incident in his journal, saying at one point: “The warring is a kangaroo of a smaller species than the ordinary kangaroo. It possesses the same characteristics, and its only habitat is the mountains. It is of a dark reddish brown colour, with small stripes on the head.”



He was undoubtedly describing the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby (*Petrogale penicillata*). Once very common, the species is now declared vulnerable. The word “warring” he learned from his Aboriginal companions; at another point he spelt the word “warrain”.

Image: Tonalli Peak, where Barrallier encountered rock wallabies amongst the cliffs. (Andy Macqueen)

A page for keen nature observers of all ages ...
What to look for in May in the Blue Mountains

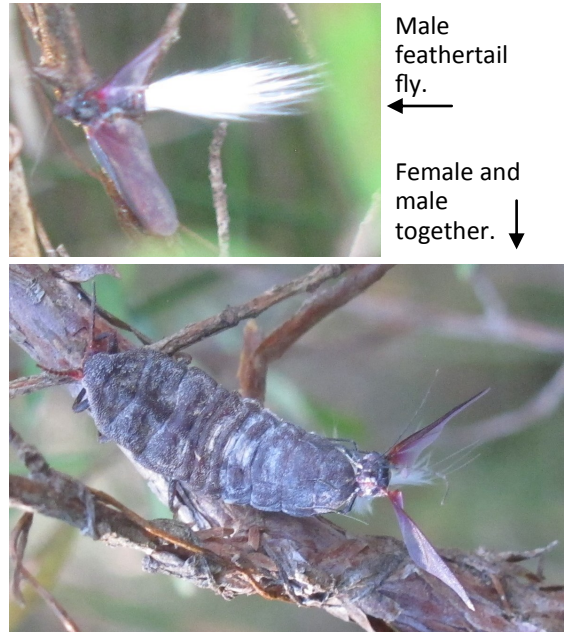
A feather-tailed fly!

May is the month when you might spot this little creature flying around. The Bird of Paradise Fly or *Calipappus australis* takes to the wing, having spent its larval stage underground, feeding on the roots of plants.

You will rarely see the female of the species, and she is very different in appearance to the male. This is called sexual dimorphism. The female is much larger than the male, about two cm in length, and has no wings. (Google "*Calipappus australis* insect" to find out more.)

The photos were taken by Christine Davies near Fitzroy Falls in the Southern Highlands of NSW, in May 2012.

-- *Adelina*



Banksias ...

Many Banksias are at their best in late autumn and early winter. The Banksia in the photo is called the Hairpin Banksia (*Banksia spinulosa*) because of the hooked styles which come in a variety of colours.

Banksias provide food for a variety of birds and other animals during the autumn and winter months. Honey-eaters reach into the flowers with their long beaks to gather the nectar.

Banksia ericifolia flowers in profusion in the heathland. If you go to places like Kings Tableland, Minna Ha Ha, Shipley Plateau and Narrow Neck, as you approach you might hear *hundreds* of birds. There will be flocks of little honeyeaters and Wattle Birds flying among the shrubs, calling excitedly and feeding on the sweet nectar of the Banksias. Photo by Sue Nicol.



Cryptandra amara

During May you might come across this pretty little shrub which is flowering now in parts of the upper Blue Mountains.

Flowering mainly occurs from May to September, but flowering began in April this year.

The flowers are white, often with a touch of pink. It grows on shallow, often rocky soils and is endemic to Eastern Australia. In Tasmania it is listed as endangered. Photo by Sue Nicol.

? What did you see in the Blue Mountains - in your garden or during your favourite bushwalk - during May? Was it something that wasn't there last month? Please tell Hut News! Please send your stories, photos or drawings to Adelina at hutnews@bluemountains.org.au or post to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.