

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Issue No. 437
July 2025



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

2025 marks the 25th anniversary of the inscription of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area on the UNESCO World Heritage List. As a testimony to the love and respect we have for this amazing and unique land, we will take the time to understand, connect with and seek to protect it.

Ice Age shelter in the Blue Mountains

Today heralded a special day for residents of Dargan. Archaeologists released news of their research into four indigenous sites in the area. They found, principally, significant evidence of Indigenous occupation as far back as the Ice Age around 20,000 years ago. Over 300 Aboriginal artifacts were found at a site now known as Dargan's Shelter and located on private property.

The Shelter contains evidence of different Indigenous groups occupying or in transit over the mountains. This discovery has immense national significance as it represents the highest point of occupation in Australia by Indigenous people, on a site both above the snow line and 400 metres above the then tree-line at 1100 metres elevation. Temperatures were 7 to 8 degrees colder than they are today.

Details of the dig and find have been reported in national newspapers and the academic journal Nature, Human Behaviour. Read an article in The Conversation: <https://theconversation.com/ice-age-shelter-high-up-in-the-blue-mountains-reveals-aboriginal-heritage-from-20-000-years-ago-247358>

—Annelies Ammann, Dargan, 17 June 2025

Mining Pollution: Protect the Gardens of Stone and Sydney's drinking water Rally on 9 August in Katoomba

The Gardens of Stone Alliance will be holding a rally on protection of the Gardens of Stone area and Sydney's drinking water catchment in Katoomba on Saturday 9 August. The Society will send out more information through our weekly members emails and other channels as it is finalised. Please keep the date free.

BMCS Members Meeting

Thursday, 17th July, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Conservation Hut, 92 Fletcher St, Wentworth Falls

Socialise with fellow members and hear an interesting talk on Birds of the World Heritage Area. (See VP's report on page 2 and visit our website www.bluemountains.org.au—2025 Society Events Calendar)



Sunshine Wattle (*Acacia terminalis*), Blackheath, July 2023 (C.Davies)

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Oh Dear ... Deer in the BM World Heritage Area!

On Thursday evening 19th June, Andrew Cox, former CEO of the Invasive Species Council presented an excellent talk about feral deer in the GBMWA. Over the past year a group including Andrew and members of the Invasive Species Council has collaborated with Local Land Service (LLS) and National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to develop a plan to bring about a deer free WHA.

The plan is due for imminent public release and will be available for reading on internet sites. However, it already has the necessary endorsement of those involved in the planning process.

It will of course be costly in monetary terms but the in terms of the environment it is a proactive undertaking that will put the WHA ahead of a potentially devastating feral animal incursion. Small areas of the WHA are already suffering from deer predation and these areas will be priority target areas for deer removal. Much more of the WHA is deer free and the aim is to keep it that way and, long term, a monitored buffer zone around the WHA will be developed.

Deer are the ultimate herbivore, eating any vegetation they can reach. They are hard hoofed and tramp delicate Australian ecosystems, especially in rainforest areas and riparian zones, causing decimation of vegetation, erosion of creeks and streams and water pollution. Due to their agility, they are able to scour cliff faces of vegetation. They are an ecological disaster and threaten the very tenets upon which the GBMWA was founded.

The first allocation of money has been made to the plan and a coordinator will be employed to begin the implementation of this pioneering project.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society wishes to thank all involved for having the courage and foresight to develop this plan so quickly and so well.

—Jo Carroll, Events Coordinator

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

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Contact management committee members by phone: Please leave a message with your full contact details and reason for your call on 0490 419 779.

If you are a member of the Society and want to volunteer to help with the work of the Society, in any capacity:
email bmcs@bluemountains.org.au
or **phone** 0490 419 779 (leave a message).

Vice President's Message

As we move into the chilly mornings and early darkness of winter, I am reminded that, whilst my summer vegetable crop has ended with the last few tomatoes hoping a chance to ripen in the winter sun, winter is a crucial time for many Blue Mountains species. It is a period of abundance for birds feeding on the nectar of banksias, acacias, grevillea, correa, which are vital food sources for red wattlebirds, New Holland honeyeaters, eastern spinebills, and migratory birds such as white-naped honeyeaters, yellow-faced honeyeaters and silvereyes. Other birds such as bowerbirds, fairy-wrens, ravens, magpies and lyrebirds take advantage of winter's natural materials such as twigs, dry leaves, dried grasses, moss, and increased leaf litter, mulch and fallen bark to build nests and expand their habitat.

Winter in the Blue Mountains also attracts human visitors for hiking in the cooler temperatures and to enjoy the cosy atmosphere offered by accommodation sites. The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is continuing to run events relating to the 25th Anniversary of the World Heritage inscription, encouraging residents and visitors alike to reflect on the unique attributes of the region. The calendar of winter events includes a presentation on Birds of the World Heritage Area by Annette and Graham Cam on the 17th of July, guided walks in August including a bird walk around Glenbrook Lagoon and a special look at tree hollows at Mt Tomah Botanic Gardens.

In addition, the BMCS has been supporting the efforts of the NSW DCCEEW, to establish a Black Glossies monitoring program in the Greater Blue Mountains and continuing our advocacy work in areas such as invasive species threats to the natural environment, environmental reform, monitoring the latest proposal for the Wentworth Falls Wildlife ("Croc") Park and supporting the Gardens of Stone Alliance's monitoring of mine pollution in natural waterways.

Despite the brisk mornings, I continue to walk (and think) in nature every morning as the busy-ness of the natural world occurs around me in the winter season. Passing a low growing banksia, I am constantly taken aback by a red wattle bird who lies in wait to blast me with her raucous call. It is then that I become energised for the day ahead.

—Annette Sartor, Senior Vice President
education@bluemountains.org.au

Ongoing environmental advocacy by your Society

As members will recall, in November 2024 the Society wrote to federal Minister for the Environment, Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, to express support for her plan to develop with the states a Threat Abatement Management Plan for garden escapees (environmental weeds). The Society has now written to newly appointed federal Minister for the Environment, Hon. Senator Watt, to urge him to continue development of the Threat Abatement Management Plan. The Society has also communicated with Senator Watt about the government's postponement of planned environmental reforms, including replacement of the ineffectual *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The Society expressed its desire to see these important reforms implemented as soon as possible.

—BMCS Bushcare Officer

Correction: June Hut News (page six) featured a photograph with the caption: *A rambling Banksia spinulosa and its array of flowers offers vital nectar during the cooler seasons (P Ardill 2025)*. Correction: the pictured banksia was *Banksia cunninghamii*. Many thanks to Roger Lembit for botanical advice.

Join Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Join online at www.bluemountains.org.au - Membership, or phone 0418 462 576. Members may choose to receive our monthly newsletter, Hut News, by post or online (you need to tick the box for a postal copy).

Rights of Nature Laws : Western, Indigenous and Local Perspectives

In April, the Total Environment Centre hosted the Rights of Nature – Mother Earth Day Webinar entitled 'Earth Laws, the Rights of Nature, and Indigenous First Laws'. Whilst the Rights of Nature laws are gaining momentum globally in response to the decline in biodiversity and the climate crisis, the notion of 'Rights' is very much a legal concern, stemming from Western thinking. In this context, rights are legal, social and hierarchical entities and described in relation to who/what has rights, who can enforce them, and what is the impact of having rights. In Western legal tradition human rights dominate, with nature treated as human property for ownership and exploitation¹.

In contrast to Western law's individualistic and property-centric view, Indigenous Australian laws are founded on a relational ethos. At the presentation, Dr Mary Graham (*Kombumeri* Person from the *Yugambeh Language* speaking people)² spoke of the First Nations law (rules, customs and expected behaviours) and lore (creation stories, spirituality and beliefs that guide understanding) emphasising the dynamic, reciprocal ongoing relationship between people and country. The land is seen as a living entity that is nurturing and supports all life and is protected by Indigenous governance systems that are community-based and focus on the principle of ecological stewardship viewing land and sea as sacred and integral to identity and culture.

Indeed, the concept of Earth Jurisprudence (Thomas Berry) invites us to recognise that Nature is, and should be, the source of human laws, ethics and how we govern ourselves. Therefore, one way of thinking about the Rights of Nature laws is by considering nature not as an object for exploitation, but a legal entity with inherent rights. Under these laws, ecosystems would be granted legal personhood, meaning they could have rights that are enforceable by law, much like a human or corporation.

There is a growing number of examples of enacted Rights of Nature laws in local communities around the world including New Zealand (Treaty of Waitangi), The Americas, Africa, South-East Asia, England and Europe. In Australia, the recognition of "Rights of Nature" is primarily seen in local government initiatives and state-level symbolic motions. The Yarra River in Victoria is a notable example of a river being recognized as a living entity with its own rights and the Yarra River Protection (*Wilip-gin Birrarung murrum*) Act 2017 acknowledges the Traditional Owners' custodianship and unique connection to the Yarra River by integrating Indigenous knowledge into environmental governance. Local councils such as the Shire of Augusta Margaret River, WA and the Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) have incorporated Rights of Nature principles into sustainability governance processes however, as yet, it is unclear if the BMCC considers the Rights of Nature in formal decision-making processes.

Over the past year, the Blue Mountains Conservation Society has been supporting a project involving Kindleshill School aimed at addressing ongoing heavy metal contamination from the abandoned Canyon Colliery into the headwaters of the Grose River. To acknowledge the Rights of the River as a living entity that feeds water into the Hawkesbury Nepean River and Sydney Basin, Kindleshill has been advocating to end the contamination while highlighting community recognition of the cultural

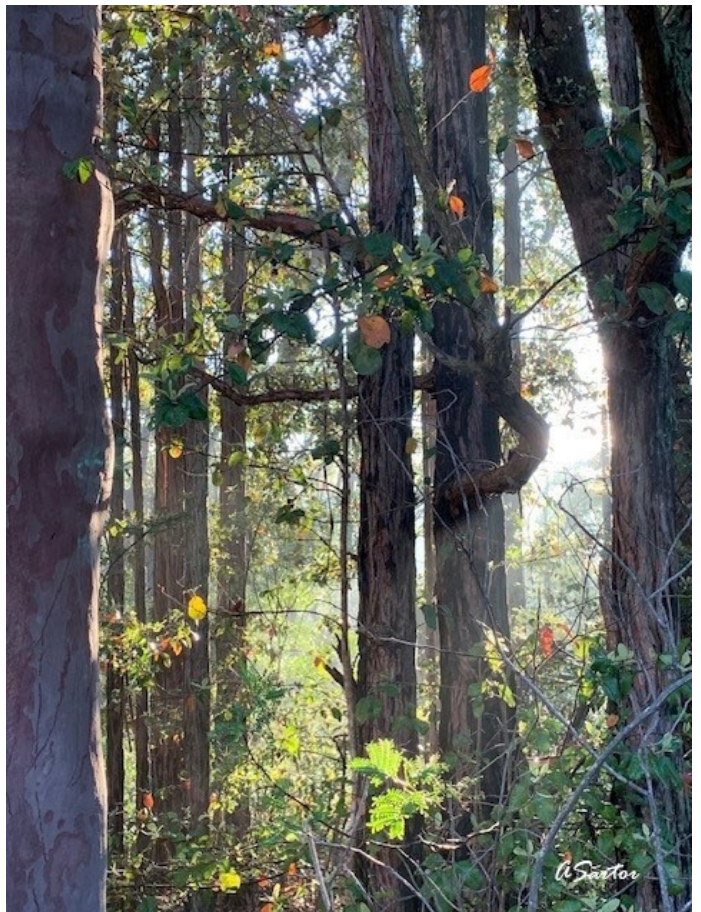
significance of Bulgamatta (the Grose Valley) in its World Heritage context. The project is called "Connect to Protect" and brings educators, artists, storytellers, scientists and local families into collaboration in Caring for Bulgamatta with special gratitude to Dharug Elders, Chris Tobin and Lex Dadd, and Dr Ian Wright for their ongoing involvement. The Hawkesbury-Nepean River Initiative is another example of a community-driven project to protect the river system through collaborative management which integrates scientific monitoring and Indigenous water law recognising the spiritual and custodial connection to water as integral to the land's health and the community's wellbeing.

While Australia has made some progress in recognizing Rights of Nature at the local and state levels, there is still a need for federal legislation to fully enshrine these rights. The Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA) has been actively advocating for the recognition of Rights of Nature at various levels such as proposed amendments to the Australian Constitution and local laws to enshrine the Rights of Nature. However, we as democratic citizens can also be advocates in this space.

—Annette Sartor (Senior Vice President and Education Officer, BMCS) and Lynn Daniel (Assistant Principal and High School Coordinator, Kindleshill School)

¹ Dr Michelle Maloney Co-Founder and Director of the Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA), and Co-Founder and Director of Future Dreaming.

² Dr Mary Graham (*Kombumeri* Person from the *Yugambeh Language* speaking people) and Adjunct Professor of University of Queensland, (Director of Future Dreaming)



The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area — at a Crossroad

Joel Dalberger, CEO of Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute, in conversation
with Annette Cam, President of Blue Mountains Conservation Society

AC: *Thank you for agreeing to this interview. As CEO of the BMWHI, how long have you been in this role?*

JD: Since July 2024. It's been rewarding — working with many incredible people and passionate partners to protect and enhance the values of this remarkable World Heritage Area.

AC: *In your recent article “A Future on the Brink: Energy, Policy, Conservation and the 4°C Reality”, why have you used these words?*

JD: We are at a crossroad. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the World Heritage listing of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWH) which is a cause for celebration. Our future is shaped by accelerating impacts of climate change, anthropogenic consumption, development and difficult choices about energy sources. How will we respond to the near-certain reality of a 4-degree warmer world¹ within our lifetime? The conservation outlook is of significant concern², and decisions made today will determine whether we adapt to preserve our precious nature or surrender to a more unknown and potentially volatile future.

AC: *Now that we have a majority Labor Federal Government, how should the energy policy be shaped?*

JD: Australia's energy policies have long been at odds with the urgent need for decarbonisation. The commitment to net-zero emissions by 2050 is undermined by policy inconsistency and continued fossil fuel investment.

It is fortunate that nuclear power plants are currently off the agenda. Extending fossil fuel energy options would have used large amounts of water for cooling the power plants—water the Australian environment cannot spare.

Commitment to renewables not only aligns with our climate goals but also leverages Australia's abundant natural resources to deliver cleaner, more resilient, and economically sustainable energy solutions.

AC: *What does a 4°C warmer future mean for the Greater Blue Mountains Area?*

JD: The climate science is unequivocal. We are on track for a 4-degree Celsius temperature increase within a generation. The implications are profound -- increasing frequency and intensity of natural weather

events, bushfire risk, geo-hazards of landslips, all of which directly impact wildlife, ecosystems and our communities.

AC: *What do you consider are the greatest risks?*

JD: Bushfires will become more frequent and more intense, like the Black Summer bushfires of 2019-2020. These catastrophic mega-fires could become regular events. They will fundamentally alter ecosystems and threaten species. This will decimate the very reasons for the declaration of the World Heritage Area.

AC: *Are there other disasters you see increasing with this level of climate change?*

JD: Yes. Increased temperatures will also disrupt rainfall patterns, deplete water resources and impact ecosystems and human communities which rely on these environments.

Flora and fauna are already under extreme stress and will struggle to adapt. We face the loss of species found nowhere else on Earth.

AC: *The Blue Mountains National Park, which forms part of the World Heritage Area, is the most visited National Park in NSW. Do you see adverse impacts of rising temperatures on tourism?*

JD: Tourism is an economic cornerstone of the region. It will be fundamentally altered. More frequent disasters deter visitors. A degraded natural environment will erode its branding and appeal.

AC: *There is some local concern that tourism itself may degrade the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Area. Is it possible to have tourism that contributes in a positive way to the natural environment? How can that happen?*

JD: Absolutely. It's about striking the right balance. Tourism can support conservation—through education, funding, and encouraging stewardship.

AC: *UNESCO lists as one of the factors affecting the World Heritage Area, the construction of Western Sydney International (WSI) airport and the flight paths. What do you see as potential concerns from this development?*

(Continued on page 5)



Image: Snow falling on the Central Tablelands. View from Hargraves Lookout Blackheath (C Davies)

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area — at a Crossroad

(Continued from page 4)

JD: The airport and its flight paths will increase noise and potential pollution risks in sensitive areas. It's critical that these risks are monitored and managed transparently and in line with our conservation obligations.

AC: *The Aboriginal people have long been custodians of this land. Should we listen more to their stewardship practices?*

JD: For First Nations people, Traditional Owners and Custodians, the Blue Mountains are more than a landscape—they are an intrinsic part of culture, identity, and ongoing connection to Country. As we push toward a 4-degree warmer world, Indigenous knowledge systems and stewardship practices become more vital than ever.

If we are to shape a resilient future, First Nations voices must lead conservation efforts, ensuring that the solutions we pursue are grounded in deep, place-based wisdom.

AC: *This year, the IUCN will release its 2025 Conservation Outlook, providing an updated assessment of the GBMWhA's status related to key areas of monitoring and evaluation of conservation and management practices. What do you expect the outlook to contain?*

JD: I'm looking forward to reading the report! I expect significant concern to remain, reflecting the continued and mounting pressures we face. The global conservation community is not standing idle. In October, the IUCN's World Conservation Congress (WCC) will convene to shape a broad future vision for global conservation. The largest gathering of nature conservation experts, leaders and decision-makers, it will help shape global priorities for nature conservation and climate change for the coming decade and beyond.

AC: *What about at the local level – what can we do?*

JD: We need to be investigating critical knowledge gaps, supporting improved conservation practice and collaborating for stewardship at the regional scale. Efforts from across the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWhA) and beyond will be showcased at the upcoming 2025 GBMWhA Symposium in November. Coinciding with the 25-year anniversary of World Heritage listing, the Symposium

represents our opportunity to reflect on where we have come from and chart a course forward.

AC: *What do you consider the most effective way to move forward?*

JD: We must not allow ourselves to drift further into crisis. We must galvanise efforts to:

- Advocate for urgent policy shifts that ensure support for renewables over nuclear and fossil fuel dependencies.
- Strengthen conservation protections that resist encroachment and safeguard ecological integrity.
- Engage Traditional Owners as leaders in shaping long-term conservation strategies.
- Develop a unified vision that aligns with global conservation efforts and the IUCN's 50-year roadmap.

AC: *Have you a final "call to action" to share about how we might preserve this unique landscape that brings joy to so many people?*

JD: We need to define a resilient future! Will the Greater Blue Mountains become a case study in conservation resilience or a cautionary tale of ecological decline? The decisions we make now will shape the next 50 years, determining whether we hand future generations a thriving World Heritage landscape or a fragmented and degraded remnant of what once was.

Collaboration, advocacy, and bold action are our only options. The world is watching, and history will judge how we responded at this critical juncture. The future is not written—it is up to us to define it.

References:

¹TURN DOWN THE HEAT: why a 4°C warmer world must be avoided (2012, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank)

²IUCN CONSERVATION OUTLOOK 2020: Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area Site Assessment Report (IUCN, 2020)

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.shtml

EMAIL FAILS: Members, we are continuing to experience regular email sending fails to older email addresses, particularly to: **aapt, bigpond, exemail, iinet, internode, netspace, optusnet, ozemail, smartchat, tassie, telstra, tpg, and westnet** addresses.

Can you please make sure you have whitelisted our sending domain "**bluemountains.org.au**" in your email settings. If you don't know how to do that then type this question into your search engine: "*whitelist an email domain in 'xxxx'*" replacing xxxx with your provider eg; *bigpond*, or consult your email provider directly.

We do like to keep you informed about our activities so being able to actually get an email to you is very important to us.

—**Andrew Solomon, Membership Secretary**

membership@bluemountains.org.au

Hut News Trivia - Question 14

Why are Acacias commonly called "wattles"?

Western Sydney Airport

This is a summary of information on our website www.bluemountains.org.au where you will find links and addresses.

The mid-June release by the Federal Minister of "Authorisation of Preliminary Airspace and Flight Paths" mentioned:

- * No curfew
- * No long term operating plan
- * No cap on flight numbers

(A link to the report is on our website.)

The report does recommend the establishment of an environmental monitoring program but there are no details of how it would be implemented. The Society recommends that such a program must be conducted by an independent body to ensure that it is scientifically rigorous, comprehensive and long-term. Anything less risks simply supporting a view that unlimited noise has no impact on the natural environment nor the wildlife it contains.

Please read our submissions and write to Minister King demanding that this environmental monitoring program be independent and scientifically rigorous.

Preliminary flight paths: Planes will fly day and night over the Blue Mountains wilderness areas of the GBMWA. The noise will diminish the wilderness experience of people in the World Heritage National Parks and impact fauna.

WSI Master Plan: Also released during the past month is the WSI Master Plan which is open for public comment until 2 September 2025. There is a link on the page where you can share your feedback.

When Opportunity Knocks

When an area has been burnt, some plants may begin to regenerate. Many native plants require fire and the subsequent heat to release seeds into the soil. The smoke and ash then stimulate germination.

A hazard reduction burn was recently completed in April, adjacent to the Brahma Kumaris Blue Mountains Retreat Centre. The burnt area soon started to recover, with regrowth evident including that of Gahnia plants, Grass Trees and unfortunately Agapanthus. This burn presented a great opportunity for members of the Brahma Kumaris Landcare Group to access and remove the exposed patch of Agapanthus that had been thriving in thick undergrowth. The Agapanthus is considered a weed in the Blue Mountains as its dense growth can smother and outcompete native plants.

I noticed the *Petrophile pulchella* (Cone-sticks) seeds had been released from the cones and had scattered under and around the burnt shrubs. This was my first time observing seed distribution from a plant after a fire. Hopefully, we will see Conesticks sprouting in this area in the near future.

Pictured is our first load of Agapanthus removed from the burn site. After three hours all the Agapanthus had been taken away. A



A tranquil scene witnessed by the Monday Leisure Walkers on 2nd June, at Katoomba. "The valley was covered in cloud giving the appearance of a lake." Image by Marian Haire. Read the walk description on page 11.

Please look at the guidance for writing submissions on the Society's website.

If you have questions, our President Annette Cam's email address is president@bluemountains.org.au



very satisfying result.

Brahma Kumaris Landcare Group works on a beautiful bushland property located in Leura. For further information see: <https://bushcarebluemountains.org.au/groups/>

Happy weeding from Ian Power and the Landcare Team.

Images: (Top L) Seeds of *Petrophile pulchella* scattered in the ashes.

(Top R) Burnt and recovering agapanthus

(Above) First load of agapanthus removed from the burn site.

Letter to the Editor

Concerns about biosecurity issues at Western Sydney airport

On 17 December 2015, Blue Mountains Conservation Society made a comprehensive submission to the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development - Submission on Draft Environmental Impact Statement Proposed Western Sydney Airport. See <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/submissions/submissions-2015.shtml> This submission covered many issues including the impact of aircraft noise on the GBMWAH.

I am concerned that the Society now only mentions aircraft noise as an issue regarding Western Sydney airport. I am especially concerned that biosecurity issues are not being mentioned as areas of concern with regard to the airport which is a green field site next to a World Heritage area. The airport will be a major road freight hub for Sydney and NSW. What assurances has the government put in place to prevent pests and disease escaping to the Blue Mountains World Heritage national parks? Will enough trained biosecurity officers be in place by the time the airport opens?

Will the government impose self-regulation by industry as they have done in the past with intentions to place more responsibility on industry to manage biosecurity risks? Will road freight be inspected for pests and disease before leaving the airport area with imported goods, especially with regard to large quantities of imported cut flowers, fresh food/produce and wooden items? All potential vectors for pests and disease. How will food items confiscated from passengers be destroyed? Can the government guarantee that dangerous bacterial diseases such as Xylella, which is Australia's number one priority plant disease and has no cure, can be prevented from escaping from the airport. What procedures are in place to prevent this disease, which can infect over 700 native plant species, from spreading to the GBMWAH? See <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/plant/identify/xylella>

These biosecurity issues as well as others were mentioned in the society's 2015 submission but now appear to have been forgotten, with aircraft noise being the only issue mentioned.

—Chris Whiteman

Hut News Trivia - Question 14 ANSWER

"Wattle" is an old English word meaning *interlaced rods and twigs*.

In the early years of the European settlement in Australia, shelters were constructed of flexible sticks woven together and plastered with mud, a technique known as "wattle and daub" and the wood most commonly used came from a plant now called *Callicoma serratifolia* which became known as "Black wattle".

Callicoma has *Acacia*-like flowers but is not closely related to *Acacia*. However, because of the similarity in flowers, the term "wattle" eventually became associated with all Australian acacias and, even more confusingly, "Black wattle" is also applied to some *Acacia* species.

(Source: *Australian Native Plants Society*)

Environmental weeds and their impacts

Asparagus Fern (*Asparagus aethiopicus*)

Asparagus fern (or Ground asparagus) is a State priority Weed, and must be continually suppressed. Indigenous to Africa, the plant is a popular ornamental species, but has been declared an environmental weed in many countries. In the Blue Mountains, Asparagus fern particularly infests the Lapstone to Springwood area.

As the accompanying photograph illustrates, the weed forms extensive, dense thickets that smother indigenous grasses, shrubs and herbs. Even potted Asparagus fern plants pose a threat to local bushland, because the berries and seed are consumed and then dispersed by birds. Underground stems (rhizomes) also enable plant spread.

Removal of all tubers and roots with a mattock is the most thorough management approach. Check for regrowth. For further advice, consult <https://weedsbluemountains.org.au/weeds/ground-asparagus/>

Local fern, *Blechnum nudum*, is far more attractive than Asparagus fern! Or try Blue Flax Lily (*Dianella caerulea*), and enjoy its bright blue flowers and berries.



Asparagus fern thicket, Lapstone (P Ardill 2025)



Details of leaves and berries

Do you want to learn how to make a bird friendly garden for our feathered friends?

Birdlife Australia has some good resources that you may find useful. The information is relatively basic but essential if you want those birdies and other critters to visit.

There is a set of six short videos available on Youtube <http://bit.ly/3G3pKtt> And there is a free online course that you can access at <https://birdlife.org.au/habitat-gardening-for-birds-online>

The course goes for four hours but is divided into sections that you can leave and come back to. It covers the importance of habitat, features of a bird habitat garden, bird ID, how to put it all together into a functioning garden, as well as some other interesting info.

Even if you already have birds in your garden there may be some additional information here that could help you upgrade your current set up.

Go on, give it a go! Have some fun creating habitat for our feathered friends and all the other critters that may also take advantage of a new or revitalised space.

—Elizabeth Howard

Two walks at the Gardens of Stone's "Lost City"

A rainy cold day in April 2008 with friends—Cathy Cavanagh

The physical journey of driving through Lithgow to the Gardens of Stone is to journey in time from an era of Australia's first attempt to manufacture steel in 1901 to the vast and timeless site of ancient rock formations.

As you pass through Lithgow, the relic of the Blast Furnace Heritage Museum on the dirt road was quiet and, again, an experience of moving through a cathedral and its sentinels, but a natural one. Each turn, an introduction to walls of pagoda-like structures.

Quite a contrast to Bungleboori camping ground. It was a playground for four-wheel drives, dirt bikes, motor

bikes, pee wee bikes, Ivan Milat-style utes. Dirt bikes skittered past us, up on one wheel showering water and mud. Groups of men prepared themselves for the next onslaught into the bush.

As we walked to the Lost City, convoys of utes and big four-wheel drives and motorbikes thundered past, forcing us into the trampled bush. The lookout and steep cliff was protected by a barrier, a huge slab of sandstone where the vehicles turned, shuddered and roared back to the camp.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Then, for a brief quiet interlude, we stood and faced the valley, the breathtaking rocky formations of the ancient landscape.

June 2025—Don Morison

It's a mild overcast winter's day at the Lost City Lookout on the Lithgow side of Marrangaroo Creek's imposing gorge as it carves its way through the southern part of the Newnes Plateau. The hundreds of natural sandstone sculptures known as pagodas make one understand how the Lost City was named. Although some areas seem to have not regained their complement of Lyrebirds since the 2019 fires, on this day the presence of numerous male Lyrebirds can be noticed. Maybe some are still just practising but there are many who have learned the basic skills of mimicry and they're around the Plateau and deep towards the canyons, keeping up a chorus to delight the visitor. The NPWS restoration includes steps down to a track leading to an enthralling wet gully.

Over a ridge to the west, a balloon of greyish discharge from Mount Piper hangs beneath the clouds. Even in the midst of these totally natural pagoda masterpieces, one is reminded that Mount Piper will probably be the last coal-fired power station in NSW.

It's also reassuring to think that the relatively recent idea to turn it into a reactor for generating electricity by nuclear fission is unlikely to ever be realised.

Now that our Society, Wilderness Australia and the Lithgow Environment Group have campaigned so hard for so long to increase protection for the Gardens of Stone, some issues remain outstanding. Globally and locally, many conservationists would like new privately run accommodation infrastructure to be prohibited in areas under guardianship of National Parks administrations. Unfortunately the management plan for Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, as currently written, would not preclude private cabin development.

One of the most striking things about visiting pagoda sites is the beauty of the sandstone. Even where there appears to be an amount of black staining, perhaps from the bushfires of recent decades, they are among the most imposing of landscapes. The fragile projections near the summits of some of them and the erosion around the base of the columns makes them delightful for photographers and artists.



(Left) Members of the Conservation Society's Thursday Interpretive Nature Group make their way up the steps newly crafted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Marrangaroo Creek gorge area of Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area. A small sample of the area's pagodas can be seen in the background.

(Below) Some members stayed at the lookout and were delighted to be joined by this Scarlet Robin.

Images by Christine Davies.



Note: More photos from the reconstructed Lost City walk are on page 12.

TING WALK IN LAWSON

As our regular walkers get older, favourite walks like the South Lawson waterfall circuit become too difficult for some. Don designed an enjoyable walk where most of the group could see two of the waterfalls on the circuit, Adelina and Cataract, without much change in elevation. The short track to view Cataract Falls was a bit steep and eroded, but well worth the effort. Then a longer, flatter walk through pleasant bushland along a fire trail and an optional side trip to view Adelina Falls. In between, for morning tea, we found a picnic table and celebrated my birthday with cake and sparkling white wine. Traditionally, this happens when a TING walker has a "big O" birthday but, at any age, it is a fun thing to do.

Phillip and I admired a beautiful tree, *Angophora costata*, aka "Smooth Barked Apple". Why has it been given that name? Look up at the lovely twisted branches! They were thought to be similar in form to those of an apple tree. On the Blue Mountains range, *Angophora costata* is rarely found at a higher altitude than Wentworth Falls. The bright golden Sunshine Wattle was delightful.

On the wooden bridge just above Adelina Falls, Don told the group that the area south of Lawson is part of the Blue Labyrinth system of small intricate valleys which spans the Glenbrook and Bedford-Erskine Creek catchments. There are dozens of small, beautiful cascades and waterfalls which eventually reach the Nepean-Hawkesbury through Bedford and Erskine Creeks. Smooth sandstone boulders and rainforest fringe plants such as *Callicoma serratifolia* make the riparian zones of these waterways very attractive.

Cathy found some mistletoe flowers on the track. There are 70 native species of mistletoe in Australia – this one was a species hosted by Eucalypts. A large number of native fauna species feed on the nectar and fruit of mistletoes. Cathy tested a flower and found it to be very sweet.



TING, photo(s) supplied by Katriona Herborn

The fruit of the mistletoe is a berry. I learned about the mistletoe in 1989, in the Katoomba TAFE Outdoor Guides Certificate Course. Jim Smith gave his students some seeds to hold. They were very, very sticky. The only way to remove the seeds from our hands was to wipe them off onto something else. The seeds are coated with a sticky material called viscin. When the berry is eaten by a bird such as the Mistletoe Bird, the seed passes through the bird's body and probably has to be wiped onto the nearest branch. When the seed touches a branch, it sticks tenaciously. The viscin hardens and attaches the seed firmly to its future host. The plant, a small shrub, gets water and nutrients from the tree and energy from the sun with photosynthesis.

We had lunch at The Henry, Blue Mountains Hotel, in Lawson. The village of Lawson was originally named "Blue Mountain". A table in the dining room had been booked for 22 people. Our lunch was well underway when the other group arrived, all men, wearing uniform caps and a small pack on their backs.

Ron finished his lunch and decided to go and talk to the other group and find out where they were from. They offered him a seat and he eventually came back and told us that the name of the group is "TOFS", or "Touring Old Farts Inc". Members come from anywhere in NSW. During their excursions, usually by train or bus, they learn about the history of the places they visit. Today they had been on a guided tour of the town, led by a local historian. As we left they were engrossed in listening to a talk by their guide.

It was a mild day after the cold long weekend, with beautiful cloud patterns. A lovely day to be out in the bush with friends.

—Christine Davies, 12 June 2025.

New TING walkers welcome! Enquiries to Don on 8230 2116 or 0423 495 941.

THE KING by Denis Kevans

The falcon drank at the mirror-pool
On the ledge, high in the air,
While the swirls of water spun their cloth
Far down on the turrets bare;

And I stood alone as I sang my song
To the evening's rushes of red,
And what did I see as I moved to go
By the bones of the gravel bed?

He sat alone like a king of stone,
And he gazed at the gleaming pool,
And he dipped his head and he splashed the pearls
Of water into the cool.

He eyed me without moving his face,
Without moving a feather so trim,
And I stood and I gazed at the falcon of stone,
For the king of the Mountains was he.

Then he lifted off with a sheer disdain,
And he fell through the liquid air,
And the breeze that adjusted his sails again
Carried him here and there.

He never looked back, nor right nor left,
Just journeyed upon his way;
And I cherished the moment in the mountain pass
When I met the king that day.

Published in Upper Blue Mountains
Conservation Society Newsletter,
January 1989.

What are feral predators eating?

(Annette Cam summarises an article from *The Conversation*)

Dingoes are frequently blamed for killing and eating live-stock and are often shot or poisoned to prevent them from killing sheep and cattle. Feral cats and foxes are also killed to protect native wildlife. Some people claim that keeping dingoes in the ecosystem helps control both feral predators (such as cats and foxes) and feral herbivores, such as rabbits.

Scientific research conducted recently in the Big Desert-Wyperfeld-Ngarkat semi-arid mallee region of Victoria and South Australia shows an unexpected story of what these predators eat.

In a recent study, Deakin University researchers Rachel Mason and Professor Euan Ritchie (published in *The Conversation* May 11, 2025) examined the scats left behind by dingoes, foxes and cats. The study area is a continuous ecosystem of 1 million hectares of native mallee bushland surrounded by crop and livestock farming areas. Farmers say that protecting the dingoes in the Victorian-managed section of the park results in lost livestock.

Whilst the work was focused in Victoria-SA, there are implications for management of dingoes in other areas in Australia as well.

How do the predators' diets differ?

The study results are summarized below.

Dingo Diet consisted of:

- 2 per cent livestock
- 60 per cent kangaroos and wallabies
- 15 per cent bird species (excluding emus)
- 11 per cent emus
- 5 per cent rabbits and hares
- 6 per cent house mice
- 5 per cent other prey

Fox Diet consisted of:

- 7 per cent livestock
- 14 per cent kangaroos and wallabies

- 8 per cent bird species
- 9 per cent small native mammals
- 11 per cent rabbits and hare
- 16 per cent house mice
- 12 per cent reptiles
- 13 per cent invertebrates
- 2 per cent echidnas
- 9 per cent other prey

Cat Diet consisted of:

- 15 per cent bird species
- 12 per cent small native mammals
- 52 per cent house mice
- 8 per cent rabbits and hares
- 6 per cent invertebrates
- 5 per cent other prey

The results show that livestock was not a major part of the diet of any of the above predators, but that foxes consumed more livestock in their diet than did dingoes. The dingo diet was dominated by kangaroos, wallabies and emus which made up more than 70 per cent of their diet volume. Cats and foxes consumed more than 15 times the volume of small native mammals compared with dingoes, including threatened mammals.

The authors of the study stress caution in interpreting the data. Analysing scats cannot tell if the predator killed or scavenged their prey, nor if they killed animals but did not eat them. When the research was done, there was good rainfall in the area resulting in abundant prey in the mallee reserve. During times of drought, prey may be less abundant and so livestock may become targeted.

As the authors make clear, there is value in similar studies being conducted in other areas across Australia, and it is important that such leads to evidence-based approaches by governments to allowing native carnivores and other wildlife to coexist.

You can read the full article in *The Conversation*:

Farmers fear dingoes are eating their livestock but predator poo tells an unexpected story. Link: <http://bit.ly/4557E10>

Pampas Grass an emerging threat?

Distinguished nature restorationist, Alan Lane, enquires about the origins of the Pampas Grass infesting the GWH between Blackheath and Lithgow (Letter to the Editor, *Hut News*, June 2025).

Clues may be found in an article on Pampas Grass penned by Andrew Cox in May 2024 (<https://invasives.org.au/invasive-species-threats/pampas-grass-rebound/>). At the time of writing, Andrew was CEO of the Invasive Species Council, so can be trusted to know a thing or two about environmental weeds.

In his article, Andrew elaborates on the initially successful management of Pampas Grass in NSW from the 1970s. However, and much to his horror, he observes that the wretched stuff has thoroughly infested a major trucking and railway transport hub near Botany Bay and can be regularly sighted growing along the Sydney rail corridor. Does this information help, Alan?

The Society has recently pursued the weed infested condition of the Blue Mountains transport corridor with Transport NSW. The NSW Government commissioned the Independent Biosecurity



Commissioner to assess the current NSW environmental weed management program, and the Society made a submission to that process.

To summarise, massive reform of the current environmental weed management program is needed, and the Society will continue to pursue that goal.

— BMCS Bushcare Officer

Image: Pampas Grass in Sydney—from the train window.

Source: Invasive Species Council.



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 850 753.

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.

Please check our website for detailed walks program and program changes. <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/bushwalking.shtml>

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.

All walks are Grade 3 unless indicated otherwise.

Jul 14 **Lockley Pylon** 7.8 kms, 160m ascent/descent.

Angela 0427 133 327

Jul 21 **Wongarra Ridge and Window of God** 6km approx.

Lyn 0432 352 850

Jul 28 **Grand Canyon** 6.3km. Lois 0427 184 165

Aug 4 **Butter Box point and Mt Hay**, ~6 km, 290m ascent/descent Marian 0411 658 562

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)

Jul 8 **Frederica Falls - Empire Pass - St Michaels and Fairy Falls**, G3/6.5K, Sharon 0404622515.

Jul 15 **Kamay NP Kurnell** G2-3/7K, Doug 0455 850 753.

Jul 22 **Christmas in July Dinner** Carrington Hotel (Private Function), Sharon 0404 622 515 / Helen 0402 818 186.

Jul 29 **Bowtells Swing Bridge, Coxs River, Megalong Valley**, G3/12.6K, Ian 0412 757 902 / Roger 0449 902 774.

Aug 5 **Wetlands of Bicentennial Park**: G2/8K, Julie 0466 964 815 Ian 0412 757 902.

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

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

Jul 10 **Greenwich Point** 3km. Maurice 0402 402 783. Gr 1

17 **Asgard Swamp and Thor Head, Mount Victoria**. Tracy 0434 362 611. Gr 2

July 24 **Christmas in July, Wilson Park, Lawson**. Meet 12 noon. Bring a plate to share. Beverley 4757 2076. Gr 1

July 31 **Valley Heights Fire Trail, circuit walk from station, steep descent, ascent**. Ros 0417 261 465. Gr 2

Aug 7 **Darwin's Walk, W.Falls**. Beverley 4757 2076. Gr 2

Aug 14 **Malabar to Maroubra 6ks**. Maurice 0402 402 783 Gr 2

SATURDAY WALKS: Usually a full day, longer walk at a faster pace. Coordinator Harold Thompson (0409 010 737, Harold.thompson@bigpond.com)

Jul 5 **Dry Canyon (Nobles)** Harold 0409 010 737, Gr 3, 6km. Map Cullen Bullen.

Jul 12 **Hurley Heights** Harold 0409 010 737. Gr 3, 13km. Map Katoomba.

Jul 19 **Bald Head Trig to Bungleboori Ck**, Harold 0409 010 737. Gr 3, 10km. Map Lithgow.

Jul 26 **Fortress Ridge**, Harold 0409 010 737. Gr 3, 10km. Map Katoomba.

NOTE TO ALL BUSHWALKERS: Meeting places and times are not given because sometimes there are changes to the program. Please check with the walks leader.

Furber Steps, Katoomba Monday Walk, 2 June 2025

Starting at Katoomba station, 10 members set off on a cool day to walk down into the valley using the Furber Steps. We stopped at the top, middle, and bottom of Katoomba Falls, which were flowing beautifully after the recent rains. The valley was covered in cloud giving the appearance of a lake. We also stopped at Witches Leap, Rainforest Lookout, and Queen Victoria Lookout – all offering beautiful views.

Just as we started to descend the Furber Steps, we heard an unusual birdsong which appeared to be on the steps ahead of us. Then a male Lyrebird turned the corner and was right before us. He was being chased by another one. They scaled the cliff to avoid us, but we got a good view. We also met an octogenarian who was doing his daily training. He passed us on the way down and stopped to chat on his way back up. It was his sixth time running up and down the stairs that day, and he does it six days per week. He is dedicated to his fitness, and it shows.

We had morning tea on the boardwalk of Scenic World and then headed back up the way we had descended. It was a lovely morning and everyone was happy with their achievement.

—Marian Haire, Monday Leisure Walks

(Image by Marian Haire)



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

SUPERB LYREBIRDS

The hills and valleys are ringing with lyrebird song. ENJOY!

ACACIA (wattles):

Yes, some wattles flower in the winter!

Can you find wattles flowering in the bush near you?

Sunshine wattle (*Acacia terminalis*) – June to August; Sydney golden wattle (*Acacia longifolia*) – August/September. I'm sure there are others. Perhaps a few flowers on little wattles with prickly leaves ("Prickly Moses").

John Williamson wrote a popular song about the Cootamundra Wattle which flowers in July. But, unfortunately, the Cootamundra Wattle is an environmental weed in the Blue Mountains. You will see it growing beside the highway at Woodford.

If you see Cootmundra Wattle growing in natural bushland you could tell Council or NPWS.

—*Adelina*



Sunshine wattle (*Acacia terminalis*) and cliffs and pagodas in a gully in the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area (GOS SCA). There are about 78 species and subspecies of *Acacia* in the State Conservation Area.



Don is standing beside an unidentified wattle which is very common in the GOS SCA. It promises to be very beautiful when its buds burst open in July or August.

This is a prickly wattle which was flowering in the GOS SCA during June.

Images by Alethea Morison.
June 2025



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