



# HUT NEWS

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*"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"*

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



## Walking in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area:

Looking west on the Lockleys Pylon trail near Leura. Monday Leisure Walk, 14 July 2025, Leader Angela. Photo by Marian Haire.

## September Koala Fest 2025 Awareness – Action – Conservation Saturday 13 September, 10am to 3pm Memorial Park, Kurrajong Village

Live bands ... environmental workshops ... local stores ... wildlife displays ... guest speakers ... all in honour of our beautiful bushland and the koalas that live in it.

## Blue Mountains Sustainability Festival

Saturday 6 September, 10am to 4pm  
Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, Katoomba

Speakers' forum, festival market, workshops, information stalls. Blue Mountains Conservation Society will have an information stall—please call by and have a chat. <https://resilientbluemountains.org/sustainability-festival/>

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.

## Blue Gum Forest & World Heritage

The 93rd anniversary of the saving of the Blue Gum Forest will be on 2 September. On that day, visit the Forest to remember how World Heritage listing all arose. Or maybe just visit Perrys and contemplate from there.

(Read more on page 2)

## Biodiversity Discovery Day

Saturday the 20<sup>th</sup> September, 10am to 2.30pm  
Blue Mountains Cultural Centre,  
Level 1, 30 Parke Street, Katoomba

Biodiversity Discovery Day invites our community to learn and celebrate the Blue Mountains unique plants, animals, and ecosystems.

This free event will have guided talks, educational stalls, talks from professionals and family-friendly activities where visitors will have the opportunity to learn about local conservation, discover how we can protect our native species, and how you can get involved and help your community.

This event will help in supporting our commitment to a healthy, and sustainable environment for the future generations.



Blue  
Mountains  
Water  
Skink.  
Photo by  
Ian Baird.

## BMCS NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

Native plant sales at the Blackheath Growers Market **Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2025** (8am to 12 noon). For enquiries and to place an order, please contact Nursery Manager [plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com](mailto:plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com)



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### Thursday Interpretive Nature Group

(TING): Christine Davies  
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**Plant Study Group:** Meredith Brownhill  
[mountains@westnet.com.au](mailto:mountains@westnet.com.au)

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](mailto:bmcs@bluemountains.org.au)

\* or **phone** 0490 419 779 (leave a message).



Joseph Bischoff's 1875 photo of the Grose River at Blue Gum. (State Library NSW)

## SAVING OF BLUE GUM FOREST 1932 - 2025 TO WORLD HERITAGE 2000 - 2025

**BACKGROUND:** Every year on 2 September a few people walk to Blue Gum Forest to commemorate the saving of the forest by bushwalkers in 1932. Millions visit National Parks but few know about the event that made it possible for them to enjoy nature and heritage in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and elsewhere.

From a place of local care by traditional people for 40,000 years to an international wild wonder by the year 2001 and beyond.

### The Journey to WORLD HERITAGE - timeline

- 1880s to present: Tourism - Enjoyment of mystery by many
- 1900 to present; Bushwalkers in the Wild
- 1914 Myles Dunphy journey, recognising Wild Places
- 1932 The saving of Blue Gum Forest kick-started the conservation movement
- 1934 Dunphy's Dream - Greater Blue Mountains National Park Proposal
- 1957-2021 National Parks created to Dunphy's Dream
- 1984 NPWS lays the groundwork for conservation management of the Greater Blue Mountains Area
- 1989 Colong Foundation for Wilderness publishes Geoff Mosley's book "Blue Mountains for World Heritage", initiating the campaign
- 2000 World Heritage Status for the Greater Blue Mountains

### Journey to Blue Gum Forest on 2 September to:

**A.** remember how the 1932 Saving of Blue Gum Forest kick-started the Conservation Movement.

**B.** appreciate that the Great National Parks would not be here if it wasn't for that Movement.

**C.** acknowledge the ancestors who gave us so much.

We will be heading down from Perrys Lookdown about 10am. You might do likewise, or perhaps walk down another way. Come together for a picnic and chat about ecology or historical events. Or simply find your own space.

If you can't tackle the walk into the valley, be at Perrys at 9am anyway. We'll be there. Bring a celebratory cuppa.

*Please note this is not a guided walk or organised event. The walk to the forest involves a strenuous 600-metre descent and ascent. Walkers must be self-sufficient and proceed at their own risk.*

**Wyn Jones**  
**Andy Macqueen**

# The sorry tale of mammal extinctions in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and some recent good news

Judy Smith and Peter Smith

In 2019 we wrote a book on the native fauna - 68 mammal, 254 bird, 74 reptile and 36 frog species - that had been reliably recorded within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (WHA) since European settlement<sup>1</sup>. Like the rest of Australia, the WHA's mammals have not fared well since European settlement – almost half (28 species) were threatened species. For nine native mammals, the only confirmed WHA records consisted of skeletal remains in owl deposits in Nettle Cave in Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve. These records resulted from a 1997 study by Deborah Morris and others<sup>2</sup>. The deposits, regurgitated prey items of owls, also contained introduced European Rabbit bones and so dated from after European settlement. The owls left a treasure trove. One species, the **White-footed Rabbit-rat** *Conilurus albipes*, one of Australia's largest rodents and once considered common in south-eastern Australia, is now presumed extinct, not seen anywhere since the 1860s. The other eight species - **Eastern Quoll** *Dasyurus viverrinus*, **Southern Brown Bandicoot** *Isodon obesulus obesulus*, a **bettong** *Bettongia* species, **Long-nosed Potoroo** *Potorous tridactylus*, **Broad-toothed Rat** *Mastacomys fuscus*, **Plains Mouse** *Pseudomys australis*, **Smoky Mouse** *Pseudomys fumeus* and **Hastings River Mouse** *Pseudomys oralis* - appeared to be extinct in the WHA but survive elsewhere in Australia, albeit with much contracted distributions, decimated populations and loss of genetic diversity.

It is now exciting to learn of recent evidence that Long-nosed Potoroos still occur in the WHA in Nattai National Park. These modern records are based on DNA identified in Dingo scats (NSW Bionet Atlas records, March 2024). We also recently learned of additional confirmed records (old jawbones) of both the Long-nosed Potoroo and Southern Brown Bandicoot found by Col Gibson in a cave in the south of Blue Mountains National Park around 25 years ago.

While efforts to reintroduce "lost" species are valuable, it needs to be remembered that animals introduced from other areas differ genetically from the original inhabitants. For example, the genetic makeup of the likely now extinct mainland Eastern Quoll differs from that of the surviving Tasmanian form. The demise of the nine Nettle Cave mammals can be attributed, at least in part, to introduced animals such as foxes. We commend efforts being made in the WHA to survey today's fauna and to manage introduced pests which prey on and compete with native mammals.



Long-nosed Potoroo jawbone,.  
Photographed by Col Gibson.



This illustration of the White-footed Rabbit-rat is included in Vol 3 of John Gould's 1863 publication *Mammals of Australia*. The illustrator was H.C. Richter.

## References:

1. Smith, J., Smith, P. and K. Smith. 2019. *Native Fauna of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area*. P & J Smith Ecological Consultants, Blaxland.
2. Morris, D.A., Augee, M.L., Gillieson, D. and J. Head. 1997. Analysis of a late Quaternary deposit and small mammal fauna from Nettle Cave, Jenolan, New South Wales. *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales* **117**:135-162.

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## FREE Carbon Accounting Workshop: Expressions of Interest Now Open

Are you a business or individual keen to understand and manage your carbon footprint? The Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan is offering a **free one-day online workshop** (expected October) to help non-experts learn the essentials of **carbon accounting**.

In just 5 hours, you'll gain practical tools and insights into:

- Understanding carbon footprints, emissions, and scopes
- Embedding carbon accounting into decision-making

- Navigating key policies and reporting standards
- Hands-on emissions calculation with real-world case studies

**Participants will receive:** Practical templates and resources; Certification of Carbon Accounting (University of South Australia); Tools to develop a carbon accounting system for your business.

### Register your interest now!

[leep@lithgow.nsw.gov.au](mailto:leep@lithgow.nsw.gov.au) / Ingrid on (02) 6354 9999.

**The date will be confirmed when enough interested people have registered.**

*Supported by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' Local Jobs National Priority Fund.*

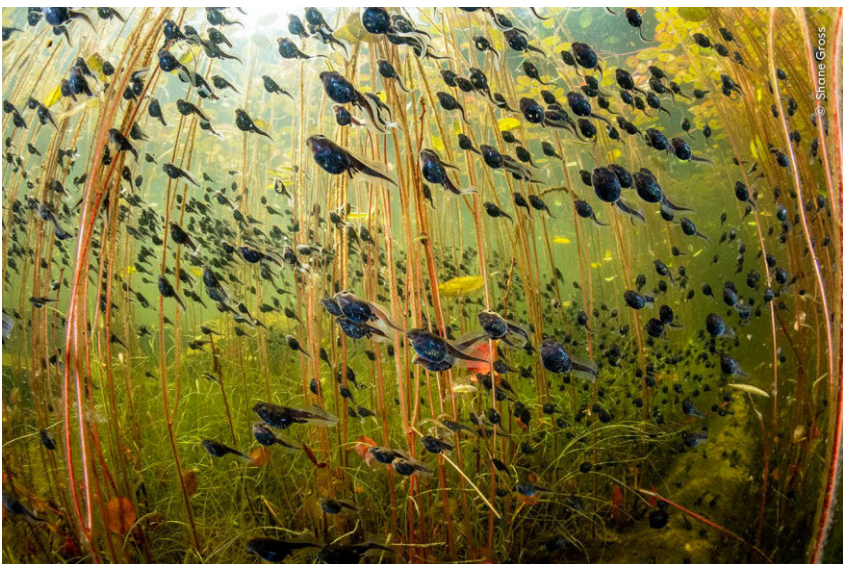


## Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition at the Australian National Maritime Museum until 19 October 2025



© Matthew Smith

**Matthew Smith (UK / Australia)**, Winner of *Underwater*, *Under the Waterline*, photographing a curious leopard seal beneath the Antarctic ice.



© Shane Gross

The world-renowned exhibition, now in its sixtieth year and on loan from the Natural History Museum in London, features exceptional images that capture fascinating animal behaviour, spectacular species and the breathtaking diversity of the natural world. Using photography's unique emotive power to engage and inspire audiences, the images shine a light on stories and species around the world and encourage a future of advocating for the planet.

This year's competition attracted 59,228 entries from photographers of all ages and experience levels from 117 countries and territories. Entries were judged anonymously on their creativity, originality, and technical excellence by an international panel of industry experts. Three Australian photographers were category finalists.

Book tickets and plan your visit:

<https://www.sea.museum/en/whats-on/exhibitions/wildlife-photographer-of-the-year>

**Special exhibition ticket** (excludes vessels): Adult \$25, Family \$69, Concession \$20, Child \$15, Infant Free.

**See it all ticket:** Adult \$35, Family \$89, Concession \$30, Child \$25, Infant Free.

**Australian National Maritime Museum**  
2 Murray Street, Darling Harbour, Sydney  
Open 10am to 4pm daily

**Photo by Shane Gross (Canada). The Swarm of Life.** Every day, western toad tadpoles swim up from the safer depths of the lake, dodging predators and trying to reach the shallows where they can feed. An estimated 99% will not survive to adulthood. Those that do make it to adulthood face threats from roads, pesticides and herbicides, and the chytrid fungus.

## Citizen Science: Recording Bats in Your Backyard

**Author: Dr Joanna Haddock, Senior Threatened Species Officer, Saving our Species Program, NSW Government**

Bats are incredible – they make up 25% of all mammal species on the planet and are the only mammals capable of true flight. Only about 15% of all these bat species are flying-fox species, meaning that the rest are tiny, insect-eating microbats. In Australia, these amazingly diverse mammals roost in tree hollows, under tree bark, in caves, and even manmade structures.

Not everyone is aware of their plight, but insect-eating bats are in decline. Of the 34 species in NSW, 18 are listed as threatened and one is thought to be extinct. Insect-eating bats play a vital role in our ecosystem by eating insects like cockroaches, mosquitoes, and agricultural pests. It has been estimated that insect-eating bats are worth \$60 million in natural pesticide to the Australia cotton industry alone!

That's why the *Bats in Backyards* project came about, a citizen science project aimed at collecting landscape-scale and seasonal data with the help of NSW citizen scientists! This data will fill gaps in our current

knowledge, help us better target conservation actions, and help secure populations of threatened insect-eating bats in NSW.

*Bats in Backyards* is asking citizen scientists like you to survey insect-eating bats on their property by recording bat calls over three to five days using a bat detector device provided to participants.

The recordings will be analysed by scientists and each property owner will receive a full report detailing each bat species detected, their preferred habitat and food, and recommended actions for bat protection and conservation.

Citizen scientists involved in the project will contribute invaluable data to help scientists build a better understanding of threatened insect-eating bats and will help to inform their conservation.

Anyone with land, a house or even an apartment in the Blue Mountains can participate.

Every recording matters. Contribute yours.

Visit [www.savingourspecies.online/bats](http://www.savingourspecies.online/bats)

(Continued on page 5)



# Walking in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area



“The Window of God”. How poetic! We entered the track in a hard-to-find spot off the Bells Line of Road and walked along the Wongarra Ridge until we came to a spot on the right where we could scramble down a steep slope to have a glorious morning tea perched on the rocks around this well-named scenic spot. The *Acacia terminalis* was looking magnificent and some *Boronia* has started to flower as well. A stunningly beautiful day in the bush thanks to our leader Lyn.

—Marian Haire

Monday Leisure Walk on 21st July 2025 (21 people). Photo by Marian Haire.

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## CAMPAIGN UPDATE:

### Blue Mountains – *Still* not another suburb of Sydney HDA and what this means for the mountains

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is preparing a campaign in response to the proposed high-density, multi-storey housing development at 142–150 Narrow Neck Road, Katoomba. This would be the first development in the Blue Mountains to be assessed under the NSW Government’s new *Housing Delivery Authority* (HDA) “streamlined approval” process.

The HDA is tasked with meeting state housing targets. The HDA’s fast-track pathway, however, overrides critical environmental protections contained in the Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan (LEP) - protections specifically developed to help protect our unique area and the National Park.

The developer is seeking approval to deviate from the current zoning to build nine 4-storey buildings containing 266 apartments, along with commercial outlets, such as a restaurant. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is currently being prepared and will be placed on public exhibition later in the year.

#### Why this matters:

The Society supports appropriate housing development that complies with local planning rules and the LEP. The Narrow Neck Road proposal, however, and the HDA pathway it is using, would set a dangerous precedent for similar inappropriate housing developments across the Blue Mountains LGA.

#### Key concerns include:

**Inappropriate planning pathway** - The HDA is not suitable for developments in the Blue Mountains, where environmental protections under the LEP are critical.

**Bushfire safety** - We are already at high risk from bushfire. High-density, multi-storey housing increases evacuation challenges and puts more lives at risk.

**Environmental impact** - High-density development reduces pervious surfaces, increases stormwater runoff and degrades ecosystems and the ecological values that underpin the GBMA’s World Heritage status.

**Undermining decades of planning** - This proposal disregards 30 years of careful, locally informed planning work that created our LEP.

#### We are calling for the Blue Mountains LGA to be excluded from the HDA pathway.

We will be keeping members informed and mobilising community action shortly to ensure this inappropriate development does not proceed and does not set a dangerous precedent for the Blue Mountains.

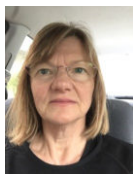
#### —Land Use Subcommittee

## Recording Bats in Your Backyard

(continued from page 4)

**About the author:** Joanna is a bat expert, with a PhD looking at the impacts of light pollution and urbanisation on insect-eating bats. She is passionate about the wellbeing of our natural ecosystem and recognise the responsibility we have to protect the environment and biodiversity.

The *Bats in Backyards* project is being delivered by the NSW Government’s Saving our Species program, in partnership with Western Sydney University and the NSW Department of Primary Industry.



## From the President

A brief update on recent Society work!

### Western Sydney International airport (WSI)

Western Sydney Airport Corporation (WSA) and GHD<sup>1</sup> have been contracted to devise and implement the Environmental Management Program (EMP)<sup>2</sup> to monitor the impacts of noise on the native animals in the GBMWSHA resulting from the aircraft movements at WSI. An EMP is a requirement of Minister King for the authorisation of the final flight paths.

The proposed monitoring program is only measuring **noise levels** in various locations in the Blue Mountains NP. This is partly to compare the actual noise levels from aircraft with the modelling (which is shown on the WSI noise tool). In discussion with WSA and GHD, the Society is suggesting the inclusion of other areas of importance, including Burragorang State Conservation Area and close areas in Cumberland Plain Woodland.

Missing are plans to collect data on the native animals that are in the NP either before the airport is operational or once flights start. The EMP is intended to identify and monitor “**impacts on environmental values**”; this cannot occur if no data is being collected on the native animals.

I have written to WSA and GHD to express the Society’s concerns about these matters and emailed a copy to Ms Templeman MP and Hon Catherine King. The Society will continue to push for an adequate EMP to be devised and implemented.

### Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area

Separately on this page is an item about the “Rise Against Coal” event at Katoomba on 9 August. A very successful event – thank you to the organisers and those who participated!

NPWS has been working on the improvements to roads and public visitor facilities, as well as regeneration of the previous pine plantation areas. At a recent meeting with David Crust, Director, Blue Mountains Branch, we expressed our concerns about the clearing of *Veronica blakelyi* to provide walking tracks near the Lost City lookout. *V. blakelyi* is currently listed as an endangered species in NSW.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, the NPWS officers working in this SCA, report that there has been an increase in the occurrence of this species in many areas of the SCA, particularly in areas of disturbed soil and fire affected areas. It is being recorded in the regenerating areas of past pine plantations as well as along some of the roadsides. We are hoping to have an ecologist with expertise in the species present at a future members’ meeting in 2026.

### 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations

The Society is supporting the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute (BMWHI) with a symposium to highlight and share issues affecting our World Heritage Area. The Symposium will be on 28 November, 2025.

On 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2025, there will be a formal ceremony open to the public, at the Blue Mountains World Heritage Centre, Blackheath, NSW.

Look out for more about this in future editions of Hut News and on BMWHI website<sup>4</sup>.

—Annette Cam, [president@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:president@bluemountains.org.au)

### References:

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ghd.com>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wsiflightpaths.gov.au/conditions/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://threatenedspecies.bionet.nsw.gov.au/profile?id=10217>

<sup>4</sup> <https://bmwhi.org.au/25yearsofworldheritage>

## Calls to halt Blue Mountains coal destruction

The *Rise Against Coal* community meeting on Saturday 9 August was held at Katoomba Civic Centre and organised by the Gardens of Stone Alliance and Young Nerve. It was followed by the Hardcore for a Cause Protest Concert later that day. Prominent speakers were: Dr Ian Wright, Associate Professor, environmental science, Western Sydney University; Trish Doyle, NSW MP for Blue Mountains and Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change, Energy and Environment; Mark Greenhill, Mayor, Blue Mountains City Council; Sue Higginson, Greens member of the NSW Legislative Council.

The Katoomba meeting heard how dozens of rare swamps have been destroyed and Sydney’s drinking water supply polluted by vast volumes of mine wastewater. Mine water required to be contained in Thompsons Creek Reservoir is instead being discharged without consent into the Cocks River. ‘This is the worst water pollution site in Sydney’s drinking water catchment that I’ve seen in 30 years in my science’, said Dr Wright.

The 125 participants unanimously passed a 4-point motion at the end of the meeting calling for a halt to the damage caused by the coal industry in the Gardens of Stone region.

Parliamentary secretary for the environment and state member for Blue Mountains, **Trish Doyle, Member for Blue Mountains**, told the meeting that she absolutely supports the motion and agreed to present it to the Minns government. Blue Mountains Mayor, **Mark Greenhill**, also backed the motion and agreed to ‘bring a Mayoral minute to council, supporting your resolution here today and supporting a parliamentary inquiry as you ask us to do.’

### Meeting resolution

*To stop the damage caused by the coal industry in the Gardens of Stone region, this public meeting calls for the NSW government to deliver:*

- *An immediate halt to water pollution and nature and heritage destruction;*
- *A NSW Parliamentary Inquiry to correct regulatory failures and prevent further damage caused to this sensitive region by the coal industry;*
- *Protection of Sydney’s drinking water catchment through Labor’s promised river health laws;*
- *A coal phase-out and rehabilitation plan that secures the health of rivers, nature and the community.*

## 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](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml)

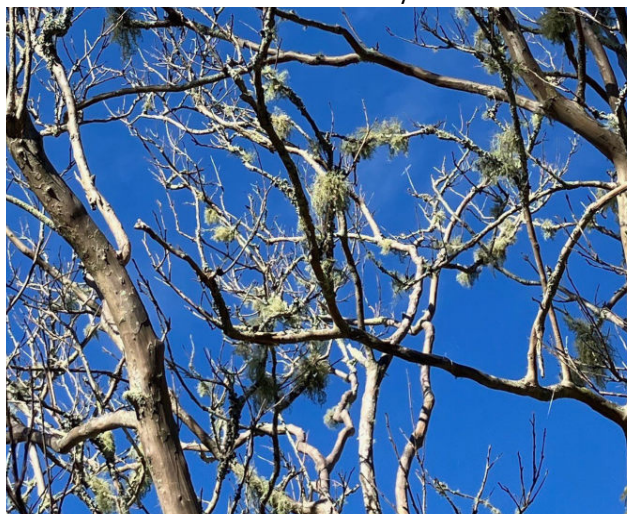


# Spanish Moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*)

responds to our warmer, wetter conditions.



Spanish Moss in a tree in a garden in the Lower Blue Mountains. Photo: Christine Stickley



A footpath Crepe Myrtle showing Spanish Moss taking multiple holds too high to easily remove, in the Lower Blue Mountains. Photo by Christine Stickley.

You might have heard a discussion on radio recently about Spanish Moss, also known as “Old Man’s Beard”, being of concern in some of Sydney’s northern suburbs. When the weather is warmer and wetter, conditions are suitable for the spread of this plant which is native to tropical and sub-tropical regions of America. The plant is already a problem on Lord Howe Island “where it threatens its unique World Heritage ecosystems.” Likewise, Willoughby Council has noticed that the “rapidly growing weed is threatening native trees and bushland across the area”.

Whilst the plant is not on the list of State, Regional or Local Priority Weeds in the Blue Mountains, it is officially recognised as a weed by the Department of Primary Industries.

“Spanish Moss is also a weed in Queensland and some Pacific Islands.” Parts of or whole plants are spread by people, wind and birds, who can find it suitable for nesting material. Even the smallest wisp of a stem can stick to a branch, dead tree or fence and grow. Small, fluffy seeds are likewise spread. An epiphyte, the plant finds its nutrients from the air, and hangs from tree branches in large long clusters.

When Spanish Moss gets into the taller branches it becomes very difficult to curb its growth and spread. Branches may fall under the weight of the epiphyte. Thick growths of the “moss” can prevent photosynthesis for the host plant due to shading, leading to its death. Eventually large clumps can smother the plant which particularly affects “turpentine, brush box, lilly pilly” and bottlebrush but also other ornamental species such as maples and crepe myrtles. As the growth reaches high into the tree canopy, the clinging, recognisable grey-blue strands become more difficult and costly to remove.

Willoughby Council is “asking residents to check their trees and gardens for signs of Spanish Moss and remove it where safe to do so.” They are also training their bush care workers in recognition of and response to the plant, running a public education program and advocating for state-level regulation of Spanish Moss, with a review of its classification.

—Christine Stickley (References are on page10)

## Sacrifice of a species

Politics and human suffering have overshadowed news of the plight of the Maugean Skate, being driven to extinction by salmon farming. The Maugean Skate is estimated to have been on Earth for more than 60 million years. It is found in only one place on the planet, Macquarie Harbour, on the west coast of Tasmania.

Wars may come to an end, but the loss of the Maugean Skate will be irreversible. How can we convince the Albanese Government to stop supporting the salmon farming industry?

Read “The extinction of decency” <sup>1</sup> (The Saturday Paper, 16/8/25, by Alistair Allan, a campaigner for the Bob Brown Foundation). Go to the Bob Brown Foundation website<sup>2</sup> where you can find out more and “Take Action: Urge Australia’s Prime Minister to remove fish farms from Macquarie Harbour and protect the Maugean Skate from extinction!”

The closing message in the Saturday Paper article is: **“The best thing we can do to help this unique, ancient creature, which happens to call one harbour in Australia home, is to stop buying farmed salmon.”**

—Christine Davies

References: <sup>1</sup> <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/2025/08/16/murray-watt-and-the-salmon-industry> <sup>2</sup> <https://bobbrown.org.au/>

## Create a haven for native creatures

Conservation Volunteers Australia have an initiative called “Nature Blocks” that’s a way you can transform your space into a haven for native species, be it birds, reptiles or insects. It’s as simple as planting some native plants and connecting with nature.

This is a great family activity and something that can be done in a small space. You can read all about it at <https://conservationvolunteers.com.au/what-is-a-nature-block/> There’s a phone app you can download to take you through all the steps and help you create a little bit of paradise.

Have fun with the kids or grandkids on this one! When you’ve had a go why not write to the Hut News editor and tell us about your experience. Send some photos to share with our readers.

—Elizabeth Howard

## Hut News Trivia - Question 16

Do birds have a sense of smell?

The answer can be found on Page 11.

# **Journey to Urunga (Yurruun-Ga – long white sands) Regeneration of a wetland**

When Marilyn moved from the Blue Mountains, we didn't lose a friend but gained a great holiday destination with an excellent local guide. The Thursday Interpretive Nature Group (TING) has visited twice since then, with accommodation in cabins at Riverside Resort.

The Urunga Boardwalk is very popular with visitors and locals. Along the way Marilyn showed me where the Kalang and Bellinger Rivers converge and flow into the Pacific Ocean together. Clouding of the clear water indicated the presence of a sand ray (a stingray which buries itself in sand for camouflage and hunting).

Yurruun-Ga is in the country of the Gumbaynggirr people who have occupied the mid north coast, from Nambucca to the Clarence River and west to the Great Dividing Range, since Yuludarla or The Dreaming. Gumbaynggirr language is part of a living culture, in a place that spans 80km of beaches, headlands, rivers, estuaries, creeks, mountains and flood plains.<sup>1</sup>

Marilyn took us to Urunga Wetlands. For Australia's Indigenous people, wetlands have always been an important source of food and water and have cultural significance. But in early European history, wetlands were often seen as impediments to development and sources of disease. It is unlikely that the Urunga Wetlands survived unscathed during 100 years of European settlement prior to 1969.

In 1969, an antimony processing plant began operations beside the wetland. The story is told in the Urunga Wetlands Fact Sheet at <https://www.crownland.nsw.gov.au/whats-happening/projects/environmental-projects/urunga-wetlands>

The processing used large volumes of water and, over five years, generated 16,000 tonnes of waste rich in heavy metals. Melaleuca trees, which had dominated the wetlands, were severely impacted by pollution. When the company walked away, in 1974, no cleanup or remediation was done and the site was eventually sold to a private owner. High levels of the chemicals remained in the water and soil.

Following long-standing concern by the community, environmentalists and Bellinger Shire Council, the Environmental Protection Authority declared it a remediation site. Ownership of the site was transferred to Crown Lands. A \$10 million remediation program, including the removal of 224 tonnes of antimony, arsenic, lead and mercury from the environment, began in 2011.

In 2017, the site was opened to the public. Facilities include 450 metres of sealed footpath surrounding the park and 150 metres of boardwalk over the wetland. TING first visited the Urunga Wetlands in October 2023. We admired the reflections in the still water. Waterlilies were flowering. We saw swans, cormorants and many other birds. The boardwalk was comfortable to walk on and we were pleased to learn that a large number of plastic bags had been diverted from landfill to build the plastic decking.

Our second visit to the Urunga Wetlands was during May 2025. We saw fewer birds, which may have been seasonal. There was a much denser spread of waterlilies than there had been 19 months earlier. A Eurasian Coot was seen swimming among the waterlilies. Can diving birds become entangled? Waterlilies are not a natural part of a wetland environment in NSW and can become a problem as they multiply.

We can only imagine Yurruun-Ga Wetlands as it was in the distant past. A precious ecosystem became a "barren wasteland" and is now a valuable community space. We are reminded that, while there are those who seek to destroy the natural environment for profit, there are more of us who care. Maybe one day people like us will be able to stop the destruction.

—Christine Davies

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.coffscoast.com.au/indigenous-culture/>



Urunga Wetlands, October 2023 (C Davies)

## **A Photograph of Two Bower Birds**

The female stands at the twiggy threshold  
Thoughtfully peering out  
The male with his purple pupils down  
Hopes to dispel her doubt.

His feet are among the numerous trinkets  
Coloured blue and gold  
That prove he is a worthy mate  
This female has been told.

And yet she reflectively hesitates  
Her next steps represent  
Either rejection of him or  
Commitment and consent.

Her act at his colonnade of twigs  
Constructed with such care  
May leave this suitor and herself  
Joined in a breeding pair.

No wonder she looks serious  
In this most sweet of scenes  
All of nature is sustained  
By transmitting our genes.

The camera holder snapped them  
In this instant of choice  
So many thousand words conveyed  
By this one picture's voice.

Don Morison  
15 August 202  
(Notes on page 9)



## Council has released the 2025 Blue Mountains Waterways Health Snapshot: how did your local stream score?

Each year, BMCC Aquatic Systems Officers assess the health of approximately sixty Blue Mountains waterways.

The recently released 2025 report revealed that 57% of Blue Mountains waterways achieved *Good to Excellent* health ratings. However, 43% of waterways only achieved *Poor to Fair* ratings (<https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/waterquality>).

How is the health rating of each waterway calculated? A health rating is determined by the score obtained from analysis of the waterbugs (aka aquatic macroinvertebrates) that are found, via sampling, in each waterway. Certain waterbug species (e.g. Stonefly nymphs) are very sensitive to pollution, and so their presence in a waterway indicates a healthy aquatic environment. When detected, sensitive waterbug species contribute high points to a waterway's score! Other bug species (e.g. Freshwater worms) are more tolerant of pollution, and while their presence is certainly desirable, they attract lower points.

However, it is important to remember that a range of factors can influence a waterway's annual health rating. For example, periods of intense, heavy rainfall that produce raging, polluted stormwater surges and heavy sediment flows can temporarily decimate the waterbug population in a stream, and affect the annual health rating.

Accordingly, if you are interested in the health of your local waterway, it is important to examine long-term health data and trends. To access this data, make use of Council's excellent, user-friendly *Waterway Health Explorer* tool. The Explorer stores long-term health data for approximately sixty Blue Mountains waterways. View the short *Waterway Explorer Explainer* video before diving into the data. The Explorer and video are available at <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/waterquality>.

Children may find the *Waterway Health Explorer* tool handy for school projects.

Are you concerned that your local waterway is consistently recording low health ratings? BMCC welcomes enquiries about waterway health, so get in touch and find out about how your local waterway or catchment is being managed ([council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au)). BMCC and NPWS Bushcare groups often undertake waterway management work, so joining up is a practical way to help restore waterway health (<https://bushcarebluemountains.org.au/>). To learn about community waterway monitoring program, Streamwatch, see <https://www.greatersydneylandcare.org/streamwatch/>.

Of course, if you think that additional resources should be allocated to waterway rehabilitation, then let the responsible entity know!

—Peter Ardill, BMCS Bushcare Officer and Streamwatcher, Greater Sydney Landcare Network

The Satin Bowerbird, with iridescent blue-black mature males and speckled green females, is widespread in the Greater Blue Mountains. The poem on page 8, "A Photograph of Two Bower Birds", was inspired because the lens of Keith Horton captured an image he entitled "The Blue Bower" which is on display at the National Maritime Museum in Pyrmont until October 19 in the Bird Behaviour Section of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition.

(You can see the photo at the exhibition or online at <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/wpy/gallery/2024-the-blue-bower> See also page 4 of this newsletter for more information about the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition.)



Poor waterway health: eroded, collapsing stream bank Gordon Creek Leura NPWS. P Ardill 2025



Fair waterway health: sandy sediments destroy waterbug habitat Lawson Creek Lawson. P Ardill 2025



Excellent waterway health: intact vegetation, minimal sediment Sassafras Creek Faulconbridge. P Ardill 2025

**Join the Society:** Blue Mountains Conservation Society is an incorporated voluntary group of over 800 members. Our mission is to help protect, conserve & advocate for the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains. Find out how you can help preserve our beautiful World Heritage Area. [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)



## Volunteer Coordinators Network – Meeting for Nursery Coordinators

As nursery manager for the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, I recently attended the **Volunteer Coordinators Network** meeting for Nursery Coordinators at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability. Hosted by North Sydney Council and organised by Local Land Services (LLS) and the Department of Primary Industries, the event brought together nursery coordinators and volunteer managers from across Greater Sydney.

A highlight of the meeting was a presentation from the **Botanic Gardens of Sydney** on the **Myrtle Rust National Action Plan**. Myrtle rust thrives in warm, wet conditions and primarily affects coastal and rainforest ecosystems. Scientists are identifying naturally resistant plants in affected areas and sequencing their DNA to find resistance genes. Seed from these plants is being collected to grow more resilient stock. While the Blue Mountains has mostly avoided outbreaks due to its cooler climate, a small case was detected at Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens.

The **LLS update** covered both pest animal control and biosecurity threats:

- Cane toad surveillance in Kenthurst has been ongoing since 2021, centred around a large wholesale nursery. Around 70 toads were found initially, but none have been recorded since November 2024.
- In the Megalong Valley, control programs have led to the culling of feral pigs, red deer, goats, and wild dogs. Deer are of particular concern as they move further into the mountains. Control efforts are also active in Western Sydney Parklands, Macarthur, Kurrajong and The Hills Shire. Thermal drone surveillance is used to track populations and assess control effectiveness.
- A biosecurity update focused on two major threats:
  - The **Brown Marmorated Stink Bug**, not present in Australia but a high-risk pest that threatens hundreds of plant species.
  - **Fire ants**, already established in parts of Queensland, were recently found as far south as Tweed Heads. These invasive ants pose serious ecological and health risks, with movement controls in place for soil and plant material.

The day wrapped up with a tour of North Sydney's volunteer-run nursery. It was a valuable opportunity to connect, share knowledge, and see another successful nursery operation in action.

—**Bronwyn Murphy**  
BMCS Nursery Manager

## Arrive Clean - Leave Clean - In All Natural Areas

Phytophthora Dieback is rampant in the Blue Mountains.

Dieback Working Group Inc (WA) is organising a national conference on dieback diseases, scheduled for 23 - 25 September at Murdoch University Perth. Attend online or in person. Great website too: <https://www.dwg.org.au/>

What can you do to help stop the spread of Phytophthora Dieback in the Blue Mountains?

Keep shoes and all other walking gear clean. Stick to tracks and paths when bushwalking.

## Environmental weeds and their impacts

**Cootamundra Wattle (*Acacia baileyana*), an iconic Aussie wanderer**



Cootamundra Wattle, Lapstone. P Ardill 2025

Distinguished environmental campaigners of the 1920s and 1930s, Walter Froggatt and David Stead, were extremely pleased that Cootamundra Wattle was being grown in gardens across Australia. The promotion of Australian plant species was one of their major campaigning themes. Little did they realise that this attractive Aussie wanderer would one day be listed as a major international and Australian environmental weed!

Well established throughout the Blue Mountains, Cootamundra Wattle presents as a tall shrub or small tree. Flowering occurs in winter-spring. The prolific flowers are a deep, bright yellow. Foliage is a distinctive blue-grey colour.

Cootamundra Wattle can penetrate healthy, intact bushland, and hybridises with local wattle species. Dig or pull out, or fully saw the trunk near ground level and then completely cover exposed tissue with undiluted Glyphosate (aka cut and paste method). Seeds are dispersed by birds and insects, so watch out for seedling emergence.

Replace with locally indigenous species such as *Acacia terminalis*, *Acacia obtusifolia* and *Acacia longifolia*, all regularly available at the Conservation Society Nursery Blackheath, Wildplant Rescue Nursery Katoomba, and Glenbrook Native Plant Reserve Nursery. For further information, see <https://weedsbluemountains.org.au/weeds/cootamundra-wattle/>

— **Peter Ardill BMCS Bushcare Officer**

**Spanish Moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) responds to our warmer, wetter conditions.**

(Continued from page 7) References.

Blue Mountains City Council, *Weed Management, Priority Weeds List*, <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/weedmanagement/priority-weeds-list> accessed 6 August 2025.

Department of Primary Industries, *Spanish Moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*)*, <https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/SpanishMoss> accessed 6 August 2025.

Willoughby City Council, *Council takes action on invasive Spanish moss*, <https://www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/Council/News-and-media/Willoughby-City-Council-takes-action-on-invasive-Spanish-moss> accessed 6 August, 2025.





## 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](mailto: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](mailto:melanielawson@outlook.com.au).

All walks are Grade 3 unless indicated otherwise.

Sep 8 **Bus trip – Fitzroy Falls East and West Rim Tracks** 9 km approx. Contact Paul to book and pay 0414 266 351. Leader Melanie 0431 214 687

Sep 15 **Narrow Neck lookout to Golden Staircase to Furber Steps via the Landslide** 6.8km Leader Lyn 0432 352 850.

Sep 22 **Taronga Zoo Wharf to Neutral Bay Wharf** Approx 7kms. Leader Maree 0427 390 645.

Sep 29 **Wilkinson Hill and Jinki Ridge from the Bell Road.** 6km approx, Leader Wayne 0407 643 512

Oct 6 **No walk scheduled due to Public Holiday**

**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](mailto:mrpacox@hotmail.com))

Sep 2 **Sea Cliff Bridge, Coalcliff.** Grade 2 Easy 4km. Doug Nicholls 0455 850 753. Long day on the trains.

Sep 9 **Bridge to Bridge River Walk.** Grade 1. Lunch at O'Donaghue's. Peter Powell 4751 3870.

Sep 16 **Brooklyn Two Walks.** Mangrove & McKell Parks, Brooklyn. Both walks short and easy. Grade 1. Train. Robyn Hine 0409 127 012

Sep 22 **Rigby Hill & Walls Lookout.** Grade 2, 6km. Maurice 0402 402 783.

Sep 30 **Camden Bike Track (Elizabeth Macquarie Reserve).** Gr 1. Easy 5km (flat, cement). BUS TRIP. Book and pay Maurice Fare \$15. Margaret Tiden 0416 849 506, Marek Bowman 0412 347 478

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

Sep 11 **Pool of Siloam and Lyrebird Dell, Leura.**

Ros 0417 261 465. Grade 2

Sept 18 **Fletcher Lookout, Undercliff Pass to Denfenella Track and back to picnic area, Wentworth Falls.** Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2

Sept 25 **Glenbrook Lagoon, Mt Sion Park and Lennox Bridge 6ks.** Maurice 0402 402 783. Grade 2

Oct 2 **Ngula Bulgarabang, Katoomba.** Meet Katoomba Stn 9.30am. Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2

Oct 9 **Adeline Park Reserve, Faulconbridge.** Leader Ros 0417 261 465. Grade 2

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

Sep 6 **Fortress Ridge.** Harold 0409 010 737. Grade 3. 10km. Map Katoomba.

Sep 13 **Lost City West.** Harold 0409 010 737. Grade 3-4, 7km. Lithgow.

Sep 20 **Victory Track.** Harold 0409 010 737. Grade 3, 10km. Map Springwood.

Sep 27 **Holts Heaven.** Harold 0409 010 737. Grade 3, 10km. Map Wollangambe.

**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.

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

## This Moment, This Place.

May we never take for granted  
The beauty of this land  
As no artist can do justice  
To art by Nature's hand.

That landscape there before you  
Is lost in random glance,  
But to look again with artful eyes -  
Now galleries of Nature's art perchance.

The multitudes of light and shade,  
The many hues of green,  
The ancient shapes and forms of stone -  
All brushstrokes, rarely seen.

Forget about the trials of life -  
Explore the bushland, sit and ponder.  
And on the walk be mindful -  
Each moment - of the beauty "over yonder".

© Ross Bridle.

Published in Hut News, September 2020.

## Hut News Trivia Question 16 Answer:

Yes, some birds have a better sense of smell than others. Birds do have nostrils called nares which can be seen on a bird's beak. They don't have the same nose structure as mammals but instead smell through their nares which also transport air into their respiratory

system which consist of breathing sacs (as birds do not have lungs in the same way that mammals do), odours are likely sensed by olfactory nerves and carried to the brain. Birds more generally use their powerful sense of sight and hearing.

The image of a King Parrot shows a nare on the bird's beak - photographed at Hazelbrook by Chris Whiteman.



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

**Wildflowers:**

***Woollsia pungens*** is an erect, prickly shrub. You will find it in heath and woodland. Flowers can be white or pink. Sometimes, on a warm day, you will notice its sweet perfume before you see the flowers. Photo at right by Geoff Dernee.



**Reptiles:**

In the spring, as the days become warmer, snakes and lizards will become more active. Reptiles do not hibernate in the same way that mammals do. Instead, they undergo a state called brumation. Brumation is a period of dormancy that reptiles enter during colder months, characterized by reduced activity and a slowing down of their metabolism.

**Birds:**

In September, migrant birds return – e.g. Rufous Whistlers, Sacred Kingfishers. The southern honeyeater migration peaks. Satin Bowerbirds display, mate, lay eggs. Kookaburra calls increase. Channel-bill Cuckoos arrive.

A Grey Butcherbird arrived in Blackheath around the middle of August. He appears to be calling for a mate. He has a rich melodious song.



Laughing Kookaburras are believed to pair for life. The nest is a bare chamber in a naturally occurring tree hollow or in a burrow excavated in an arboreal (tree-dwelling) termite mound. Photo by Christine Davies.

—*Adelina*

Thank you to Sue Nicol and Helen Yoxall who pointed out errors on page 12 of August 2025 Hut News. It appears that Adelina managed to sneak the page past our exceptionally competent Hut News proof readers. She is very contrite.

A corrected August 2025 Hut News can be found on the Society's website:

[www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au) - Click on to Publications - Hut News archives - 2025.

Hut News archives contain every newsletter published by our Society and its predecessors: Katoomba and District Fauna and Flora Protection Society 1961-1962; Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society 1962-1983; Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society 1983-1996; Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society 1966-1996. The two Societies merged in 1996. Blue Mountains Conservation Society 1996-present.

**The Spring equinox  
23 September 2025**

The term equinox refers to the date when the Sun appears to be positioned directly above Earth's equator. This happens twice each year, once in late September and again towards the end of March. Day and night are roughly equal in length for most places on Earth around the dates of the equinoxes. In September, following the equinox, the Southern Hemisphere starts to become more tilted towards the Sun which causes days to be longer than nights in the Southern Hemisphere for the following six months. The astronomical definition for the beginning of spring aligns with the spring equinox.

**? What did you see in the Blue Mountains - in your garden or during your favourite bushwalk - during September? Was it something that wasn't there last month? Tell Hut News!** Please send your stories, photos and drawings to Adelina [hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au) or post to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.