



# HUT NEWS

*"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"*

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## Introducing the Gardens of Stone Alliance Campaigner

Hello Hut News readers! My name is Steph, and since late last year I've been working as the Gardens of Stone Alliance campaigner, a role generously funded by the Blue Mountains Conservation Society. I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself, outline what the role involves, and share a little about where the campaign is heading in 2026.

The Gardens of Stone Alliance brings together community groups, conservation organisations and individuals who are deeply committed to protecting the



spectacular Gardens of Stone area from ongoing threats, particularly from coal mining and related regulatory failures. My role is to help knit together the Alliance's advocacy, media and political engagement, and to make sure our concerns are being heard clearly and consistently by decision-makers.

In January, I had the opportunity to join Madi McLean as well as other Alliance members Julie Favell, Chris Jonkers and Keith Muir to visit sites important to the campaign. I learned how Chris and Julie monitor salinity in waterways affected by wastewater from nearby mines and saw the vast expanses of countryside occupied by waste materials resulting from the operation of Mount Piper Power Station. A walk around Thompson's Creek Reservoir showcased stunning views of Newnes Plateau – but also revealed the shocking impact discharges of dirty water from the dam are having on the environment. It was an invaluable excursion with my four knowledgeable and experienced campaign companions.

A major focus of the campaign is the long-running damage caused by coal mining in the Lithgow area – endangered swamps have already been lost due to Centennial Coal's underground mining operations. Our current concerns include the unresolved impacts from legacy mines like Angus Place, ongoing risks to the World Heritage Area and Sydney's drinking water from polluted water flowing into rivers, as well as serious questions about how approvals, compliance and rehabilitation are being handled by government agencies.

Continued on page 3.

## Sculptures in Springwood

The Blue Mountains Mosaic Collective recently held its exhibition at the Braemar Gallery in Springwood. A well-attended and joyous event was held on Saturday, 29th November, when Susan Templeman, MP, opened the exhibition, followed by a talk by Alan Crooks about the aims of and opportunities for members of the Conservation Society.

A donation of \$640 was made to the Society from the sale of a number of artworks made around the theme of *Grounded*. Our gratitude is extended to the artists, Pip Enever, Robyn FitzRoy, Gill Green, Kim Hallam, Vicki Jackett, Andrea Ketterling, John Mathews, Galia Menin, Christine Stickley, Pat Watson, Xanthe Wells, Linda Weiss, and Sally Zylberberg who created the work for sale.

As part of the exhibition, two Glossy Black Cockatoo feathers were created by Caitlin Hepworth in stainless steel

and mosaiced in richly coloured glass and they now stand in Braemar Gallery's Public Sculpture Garden.

*The Bonded Pair; Allo'ed Ground on the Cusp* represents a male and a female of these magnificent birds, who mate for life. The bird's primary food source, specifically the Allocasuarina or She Oak, is under threat from the pruning of trees at the wrong time of year, by removal of the trees or destruction of their habitat. The ancient call of the Glossy Black Cockatoo, with its distinctive red or red, orange, and yellow tail feathers, can still be heard in areas across the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, as it has for millennia.

The Public Sculpture Garden is always open in Macquarie Street, Springwood, on the lawns outside Braemar Gallery, and is well worth a visit.

—Christine Stickley



Artist Caitlin Hepworth, with her sculpture, a female tail feather of the Glossy Black Cockatoo, *The Bonded Pair; Allo'ed Ground on the Cusp*. Photo by Jim Stewart.

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You can contact management committee and subcommittee 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).

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

## Join Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Find out how you can help preserve our beautiful World Heritage Area.  
<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/>

### Sunset Gathering

Thursday 19 February, 6.30 pm  
The Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls

You are invited to join us and, weather permitting, share one of the best sunset views to be had in our beautiful Blue Mountains. Talk to old friends and meet new friends. Exchange ideas with like-minded people. If you are not already a member, find out more about the Society. Meet some of our volunteers who keep the Society running. Find out about current campaigns and other activities and how you can be involved.

There will be light refreshments. To assist with catering, please register at <https://events.humanitix.com/sunset-gathering> or by leaving a message at 0490 419 779 indicating your attendance. The Conservation Hut is in the Blue Mountains National Park at the end of Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls.

## A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, 11 April, 2PM start  
Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson

**Our ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will start at 2pm,  
followed by GENERAL MEETING with a guest speaker,  
Eilish McMaster**

At the AGM the Society will elect a new management committee. If you want to find out more about volunteering with the Society please leave a message at [bmcs@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:bmcs@bluemountains.org.au) or 0490 419 779. Our guest speaker, Eilish McMahon is a Scientific Officer at Sydney Botanic Gardens. (more information in March Hut News).



### From the President

For me, a new year is less a time for making resolutions and more a time for reflecting on what's important in life.

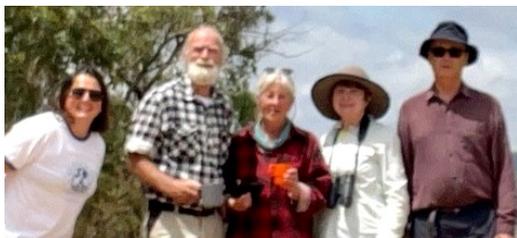
The rather wild end to 2025 and beginning of 2026, with confronting domestic and international events and raging bushfires has provided much to occupy one's attention. At times like this, the ordinariness of the rhythms of the natural world becomes more precious and our ability to spend time in the natural world more special.

As I write in mid-January, the constant begging and squawking of the recently fledged King Parrot young – from dawn to dusk – accompanied by the ever-patient parents is certainly enough to distract me from any world-weary concerns! A young Kookaburra is practising his calls and is so far off the mark that I needed to see "what IS that bird outside my kitchen!"

There is joy in still hearing Gang-gang Cockatoos as they fly over the bush behind my house and the migratory Black-faced Monarchs, calling all day from the edge of the bushland as they swipe up the little grey moths that are so plentiful at this time of year.

2025 was a year of celebration of our World Heritage inscription; 2026 will allow us to again focus on what is important to ensure that we are worthy stewards of this beautiful place. Part of this stewardship is reminding ourselves why the Blue Mountains matters – make sure you take the time to get out and savour this magical land!

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



## Introducing the Gardens of Stone Alliance Campaigner (continued from page 1)

Much of this work involves translating technical material into clear, public-facing arguments while also supporting fruitful legal and policy efforts led by Alliance members (more on this in a future edition!).

Another important part of my role is coordination: supporting the Alliance's joint submissions and media releases and helping ensure that local knowledge and community voices remain central to the campaign. I'm very grateful to BMCS for making this role possible, and I'm looking forward to continuing to work alongside Alliance members to protect this extraordinary landscape.

Photo caption (page 1 and above): I meet members of the Gardens of Stone Alliance. (L-R) Steph Lentz, Chris Jonkers (Lithgow Environment Group), Julie Favell (Lithgow Environment Group), Madi McLean (Blue Mountains Conservation Society) and Keith Muir (Wilderness Australia).

## Not “A Park With a Hole in the Heart”

I had the opportunity to visit Boyd Plateau on New Year weekend and that prompted reflection on the past contest for the plateau. Most of the plateau was State Forest in the mid 1970s, surrounded on three sides by National Park. When the Forestry Commission of NSW announced plans to clear the plateau of native forest and plant it with pines you can imagine the alarm that caused conservationists and bushwalkers. Conservation organisations led by the Colong Committee mounted a concerted campaign against having “a Park with a Hole in the Heart”. It forced the government to hold an inquiry into whether pines should be planted but the terms of reference didn't allow consideration of the value of the plateau as a National Park. The inquiry found against planting pines and to our great relief the Minister for Lands announced the state forest land would be incorporated in the adjoining National Park.

Lying at more than 1000m elevation and forming the watershed between the Kowmung and Coxs river systems the plateau is a starting point for many bushwalks into the Kanangra Boyd wilderness. Mostly granite, with a montane forest and woodland cover, plus a number of swamps, the plateau supports plant species rarely, or never, found in the sandstone areas that we are more familiar with. My visit involved easy strolls through beautiful forests and woodlands along a couple of the many fire trails. I visited Mumbedah Swamp and followed the foot track to spectacular Morong Falls.

Flora of particular interest to me included:

- *Boronia deanei*. A plant we associate with Newnes Plateau swamps that is also present on Morong Creek.
- *Epacris rhombifolia*. A tall bushy Epacris found at Luthers Creek.
- *Ozothamnus rosmarinifolia*. A tall shrub that grows at Mumbedah and Belarah Swamps.
- *Persoonia acuminata*. A low spreading Geebung which was in flower at the time and so more noticeable than usual. It seemed to be quite widespread.
- *Pultenaea polifolia*. A prostrate pea that forms a mat of wiry stems and tiny leaves in grassy woodland.
- *Crowea exaltata* ssp. *obcordata*. A rare subspecies of the more common Crowea. I didn't see it on this visit but have in the past near Budthingeroo Creek.

There are a number of opportunities for pleasant easy walks on closed or little used fire trails such as Whalens Trail and I recommend the 8 km return walk to the spectacular Morong Falls. To get to the start requires a 7.5 km drive in along Morong Creek and Morong Falls fire trails.

The story of the Boyd Plateau is a reminder of the hard campaigning that is so often required before these special places are reserved and that we shouldn't take them for granted.

Ian Olsen



Images: A cascade above Morong Falls; Hyacinth orchid (*Dipodium* sp.) on the track to Morong Falls.



## A REPORT CARD ON THE KEDUMBA VALLEY ESCARPMENT (Opinion by Don Morison)

### Introduction to the series:

2025 and previous years have seen damage from nature and human actions to the Kedumba Valley escarpment, the most significant interchange between Blue Mountains townships and the World Heritage Area.

How have Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service reacted? What more is needed?

### PART 1. Jamison Creek Catchment and Lincoln Rock

The series of localities near the upper Cataract of Wentworth Falls, near the Lincoln Rock Lookout and in between constitute a complex and significant environmental management challenge for Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Visitation has grown during 2025 for reasons including the welcome completion of the Charles Darwin Walk restoration and the less welcome internet promotion of Lincoln Rock.

In between the Charles Darwin section of the Grand Clifftop Walk and the Lincoln Rock car park lie the often overcrowded stepping stones above Wentworth Falls, the spectacular view from Rocket Point and a network of intriguing historic walking tracks built by the highly accomplished 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century track builder, Peter Mulheran, and others.

BMCC has closed access to Lincoln Rock and announced urgent safety works and a medium-term plan for that location for which public submissions will be called in April. Tourist buses had been banned earlier but this was deemed insufficient.

The Hut News team visited Lincoln Rock prior to January's full closure and found evidence of widespread toileting and other environmental damage to bushland nearby. The longer-term planning of Wentworth Falls is equally worth prioritising. BMCC and NPWS need to cooperate on longer term plans of management for all the locations from Lincoln Rock to this major waterfall.

Image: Temporary closure has been needed at Lincoln Rock while, just to the north, welcoming signage leads the way to the fully restored Charles Darwin Walk. (Photo by the Hut News Team)

### Social media and damage to bushland

Lincoln Rock is not the first Greater Blue Mountains natural area location to be seriously compromised by social media or irresponsible hard-copy publications. Nor will it be the last.

Should laws be changed to clarify that publishers and platform operators can be held liable in civil law for damage caused by their content? Should it actually be an offence to encourage behaviour or entry into places causing harm to humans or the environment?

—The Hut News Team

### An exhibition at the Gang Gang Art Gallery, 206 Main St, Lithgow CRADLE OF CONSERVATION Hands on Heritage Exhibition opens Friday to Sunday, 10.30 to 4.30 pm until 28 February



Photo supplied by Wyn Jones.

A story of celebrating place by people. See how the road to recognition started with a small community of bush people early last century, as an idea and the saving of Bluegum Forest in 1932.

The movement grew over many decades, as did the National Parks of the Blue Mountains. Now people from everywhere can connect with this place of The Gum Trees where more than 100 species thrive, providing the umbrella for tens of thousands of other life forms. Art provides the magnet for personal and community relations to nature, and a commitment to the natural world. The Banners became a symbol of personal connection to place, and celebration of World Heritage Status for the Greater Blue Mountains. Several generations of people hand printed and signed these banners, showing the passing of knowledge and the message of common values to look after country.

Curated by **WYN JONES** – Ecologist, Artist, Poet and Humanitarian.



**Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage  
2000-2025: A transcript of a speech by  
Society President, Annette Cam, at Govetts  
Leap on 29 November 2025**

*Haydn Washington in 2015 wrote:*

“The sheer scenic grandeur of the Greater Blue Mountains has been recognized since humans first arrived in the region.”

“Here are the deep Jamison and Megalong Valleys, and the mighty sandstone gorges of the Grose, Wollangambe and Colo Rivers, with rock piles, rapids and deep serene pools. Here are the serene, closed drainages such as Thirlmere Lakes and the Mellong Swamps. Here are the tessellated sandstone pavements of Mount Irvine and Kings Tableland, looking like close-fit Inca stonework. Here are the high basalt caps of the northern Blue Mountains with their broken scree slopes and columnar basalts.”

*The National Parks and Wildlife Service Strategic Plan for the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area in 2009 notes:*

“The wild and rugged landscapes, diverse flora and fauna, and opportunities for solitude and quiet reflection are attributes that promote inspiration, serenity and rejuvenation of the human mind and spirit. Such feelings are valued by individuals and society ... and these have promoted a sense of place for all Australians who then want such places protected.”

Add to this the recent discoveries at Dargan Shelter on Dharug country, the oldest ice-age elevated occupied site in Australia, in use for over 20,000 years and with outstanding archaeological values, identifying stories of an ancient landscape.

These are the tangible and intangible aspects of this country that have sustained the Aboriginal peoples of this land for over 20,000 years and now sustain us, the newcomers, as well.

At the BMWHI Symposium yesterday, the Chair of the Australian Heritage Council, Bob Carr, spoke about the environment as a “cause”, not a job, for him when NSW Premier. Conservation he said “is a conversation with the future.” He raised the crucial importance of the voluntary conservation movement with its agitation, persistence and stubbornness when working with sympathetic politicians to achieve their conservation goals.

This is exactly what happened over many years to secure the protection of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. I won't attempt in my 5 minutes to mention all the people who worked so tirelessly to achieve this goal. There are others present here today who are immensely more qualified to do just this – those who were there and who were part of the journey. People such as Keith Muir, Bob Debus, Joan Domicelj, Wyn Jones and others. It is a fascinating story in itself.

Myles Dunphy had an idea for a single Greater Blue Mountains National Park in the 1920s. The Colong Foundation's then Honorary Secretary Alex Colley's idea in the late 1980s was to nominate the Blue Mountains as a World Heritage site, and he then commissioned Geoff Mosley to compile a proposal – in 1989 Geoff published this as a book “Blue Mountains for World Heritage”.

Over the following decade an array of conservationists, bushwalkers, scientists and experts advocated continuously, providing the necessary data for the World Heritage nomination. Your Blue Mountains Conservation Society was one of these groups.

They provided environmental education at public stalls and events, including photographs and petitions, slide shows and talks, they raised funds to buy back land in order to protect it. They rang and spoke with politicians and bureaucrats when things stalled, they spoke with them at public meetings and they wrote many, many letters. All these actions served to keep the momentum going. They sat on the various World Heritage Committees that were formed during this period.

This activity culminated in the World Heritage Protection being declared on 29 November 2000. It is a legacy that protects the Greater Blue Mountains Area and the outstanding universal values for which it has been preserved.

**So what of this World Heritage Area now?**

Is this nomination just a discrete “badge of honour”, something we are proud to have done and now move on? Or do we consider it a tool to keep achieving better protection for this magical place? As a tool, we can argue for better protections against the many threats to its integrity – a warming climate, inappropriate development, being “loved-to-death” by too many visitors in the wrong places, excessive and intrusive aircraft noise from poorly designed flight paths, invasive species, loss of habitat.

As a tool, we can work to include additional areas of protection and areas that will provide refugia for species escaping higher temperatures. Fill in the gaps in the map. More protected areas incorporated into the World Heritage Area will provide greater integrity. We can work to stop the adverse impacts of coal mining on the waterways that flow into the WHA such as in the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area and ensure better planning laws. We can involve our communities, our businesses, our schools, our governments in developing a better understanding of how to protect this place well into the future. We can do this if we want to.

The Blue Mountains is a magical place. You cannot walk out into these wild areas without being inspired by a sense of awe, something that keeps drawing you in to discover more and more secrets.

Geology, chemistry, physics and biology – when you consider the life story of Earth, you learn that things have

**(Continued on page 6)**



## Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage 2000-2025 (continued from page 5)

always changed and always will change. Our choice is clear. One of the Outstanding Universal Values of the Area is the evolution of plant life, in particular the eucalypts and of course, the communities that live with them. What we must do is protect it as best we can, to ensure that this place will continue its evolutionary journey uninhibited.

Given the world's excessive energy use and its inability to wean itself off fossil fuel emissions, and our guaranteed warming climate, what hope is there for this magical place in an uncertain world?

There are two things that give me hope:

**Firstly**, Aboriginal people have lived in Australia as custodians for at least 60,000 years. They have lived through incredible changes – the Great Barrier Reef's present structure formed around 9,500 years ago. They witnessed that. The last ice age began 30,000 years ago and peaked around 20,000 years ago. Aboriginal people lived through that and were in this country then, as seen at Dargan Shelter. The ingenuity of Aboriginal people and their ability to adapt, listening to country and walking together throughout these extreme changes gives me hope for people into the future.

## Environmental weeds and their impacts Ox-eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) *Quo vadis: Whither goest thou?*

Ox-eye daisy is a perennial herb. A rosette of ground-level, dark green leaves supports a long stem and distinctive flowers featuring white petals and a yellow seed centre.

This weed is becoming well established throughout the Mountains. In the upper Mountains, there is concern that it is spreading from road edges via stormwater culverts. Ox-eye daisy is impacting Popes Glen Creek, Blackheath, and there is a risk that it will eventually infest local Blue Mountains Swamps, a protected ecological community.

Although individual specimens are attractive, the plant forms dense colonies that eventually exclude local native vegetation. Spread is primarily via seed, and seed production is prolific. Seed has reasonably high viability.

Best management practice is to completely lever or dig out the root and rhizome network of each plant, using a trowel or mattock. Place flowers in a BMCC green bin, to prevent seed spread. Bin or thoroughly compost the roots and attached leaves. Follow-up treatment is essential, as soil stored seed is likely to germinate.

### — BMCS Bushcare Officer

Images: Ox-eye daisy flowers (P Ardill)

Detail of Ox-eye daisy leaf (M Nugent)



**Secondly**, pollen from a particular species of tree that lived in south-eastern Gondwana began appearing in the fossil record 91 million years ago, along with its leaves and other structures. The pollen disappeared from the fossil record 2 million years ago and so of course, the species had become extinct.

Or so we thought until in 1994, David Noble a NPWS officer, discovered living specimens of this “dinosaur tree” in a remote canyon in the Wollemi NP. The discovery shocked the world. This of course, is our Wollemi Pine.

This species has survived ice ages with the accompanying glacial and interglacial periods. Cooling climates and warming climates. And it is still here. Hanging on where it can in a refuge in a canyon. This gives me hope that the GBMWSHA will continue to evolve and will continue to ‘hang on’.

Thank you for inviting me to speak today on behalf of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

As an individual and as the Society, we also acknowledge the traditional owners of this beautiful country – both here where we stand and also the custodians from the six language groups across the entire Blue Mountains World Heritage estate.

Thank you also to the NPWS for organizing this event, for the speakers who acknowledge the importance of this historic occasion and the members of the public who show such passion to ensure its continued preservation.

**Annette Cam**

**President, Blue Mountains Conservation Society**

## BMCS NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

Native plants will be on sale at the Blackheath Growers Market on **Sunday 8th February (8am to 12 noon)**. Gift certificates (\$10, \$20, \$50) are available at the market or by email.

For enquiries and to place an order, please contact Nursery Manager, Bronwyn Murphy [plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com](mailto:plantnurserybmcs@outlook.com)

The deadline for March Hut News is **12 February**.  
[hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au)

## The joy of learning to observe nature

As a newcomer to the Blue Mountains, I turned up at Wentworth Falls on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> February 1989 to meet fellow students for the first bushwalking component of the Outdoor Guides Certificate Course and our leader, Jim Smith. I did not know that my life was about to change.

During the next four months we walked on Saturdays in all weathers (mostly rain). We kept a diary of what we were learning and what we were observing. My first diary records our bushwalks, the flora and fauna, the various ecosystems, local history, geology, encounters with indigenous artefacts and the development of lasting friendships.

The course was for two years. I learned to love the Blue Mountains. I learned to observe nature. I learned that almost every answer leads to another question. There is always more to learn.

There is no better place to study nature than in the beautiful Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. You can start in your garden or in a nearby bushland reserve. Record what you see and look for changes.

I believe that people who learn to understand and appreciate the natural environment are more likely to want to protect it. We can encourage others to observe and learn.

— Christine Davies

Underneath are some extracts from a book recently purchased. It also has some good instructions on how to make simple drawings.

### Some extracts from “Keeping a Nature Journal: Deepen Your Connection with the Natural World All Around You” by Clare Walker Leslie.

(Clare Walker Leslie) When I began my first nature journal, back in 1978, I knew very little about nature ... I bought a blank book, found a pen, and began writing and drawing to remember what I was learning ... Some 40 years and 55 journals later, I can return to those early pages and remember the excitement and joy of discovery. I love going back through my journals, looking for patterns and changes – changes to my own life and the life of nature around me, as well as the ongoing consistencies as the seasons revolve, one after the other, year upon year.

Everyone can do it. You don't need to know anything about nature, anything about drawing, anything about writing, anything about what to use or how to draw to start nature journalling ... All you need is the curiosity to say to yourself “What is happening out in nature right now, right here, right where I live”, and then find out ... Begin with very simple questions, like “Are there clouds in the sky?” “Can I hear a bird?” “What's the weather doing? What plants do I see?”

### Hut News Trivia: Question 19

Possums you might find in your garden are the Brushtail Possum and the Ringtail Possum. They are both nocturnal. Where do they shelter in the daytime? The answer is on page 11.

## HIGH PATHOGENICITY Avian Influenza H5N1– UPDATE January 2026

Chris Whiteman

It was confirmed in November 2025 that samples taken from dead southern elephant seals on Heard Island indicated mortality caused by (HPAI) H5N1 Avian Influenza. Heard Island is an Australian territory 4,000 kilometres south of Perth. This marks the first detection of (HPAI) H5N1 on an Australian Territory, although it is a long way from the mainland. The samples were tested at the CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness in Geelong. Of interest is that no unusual deaths were seen in penguins or other seabirds; though scientists remain vigilant as the virus spreads globally and poses a threat to all wildlife. Further research and monitoring are ongoing via expeditions, including a planned visit to the island in early 2026, to assess impacts and potential spread. Experts emphasize continued focus on biosecurity and preparedness for the virus's potential arrival on the Australian mainland.

H5N1 Avian Influenza continues to be a major concern overseas with millions of birds being destroyed with the disease spreading to mammals including dairy cows. Some deaths of humans working with infected animals have been recorded.

Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea and Pacific Islands are the only areas remaining free of the disease.

The following is a link to information about H5 Bird Flu compiled by the Australian Government. <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/campaigns/birdflu>

### What if I find sick or dead birds?

The most obvious sign of (HPAI) H5N1 virus is sudden death in several birds. Other signs can include weakness, tremors, paralysis, difficulty breathing, lack of co-ordination, blindness and trembling.

If you see three or more sick or dead birds in a group, report it to the Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888. This will put you in touch with your state or territory's biosecurity authority.

Do not handle the birds (or mammals). Provide as much detail to Biosecurity authorities as you can, including if possible: GPS reading or other precise location information; photographs and/or videos of sick and dead birds; species identity if known and estimate of numbers affected.

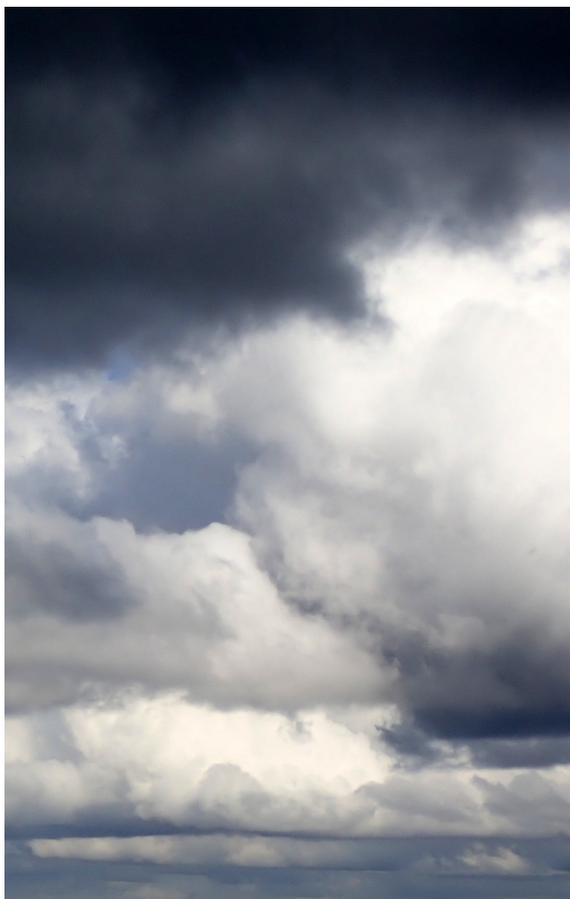
## All natural environments are interrelated

The waters of the Pacific Ocean and Sydney Harbour may seem a long way from the Greater Blue Mountains but a recent populist campaign by tabloid media has implications for all native species. Populist “influencers” are demanding that sharks be culled to protect from risk humans who engage in entirely avoidable behaviour.

Many native species can cause harm to humans if humans fail to learn enough about the species to carefully choose the timing and behaviour related to visiting natural areas. This includes endangered species.

All environmentalists should take an interest in how to educate people about harmful conflicts with nature and non-lethal means of reducing risks to humans from native creatures.

— The Hut News Team



### When the Southerly Comes

In the recent heatwave, I was reminded of this poem by Henry Lawson which became a song. Or surely it was written as a song. Just listen to the rhythm in the words.

The East Coast and Sydney and even the upper Blue Mountains was baking and the ABC News kept telling us that the Southerly Buster was coming. At long last it was definitely due to arrive to bring relief—at 10PM.

In the upper Blue Mountains we don't get the wind when the Southerly Buster hits Sydney. Somehow the air is pushed up through the Grose Valley, the temperature drops and there is a welcome mist. It is such a joy to wake up to a cool morning and overcast sky. I don't care if it rains for a week!

Sydney was very different when Henry Lawson wrote this poem.

Bubonic plague and the "Spanish Flu" epidemics affected Sydney early in the 20th century. The contests between the environment and deadly harm to humans that Lawson described were very real. Now the 21st century scourge of global warming and possibly chronic aircraft pollution and noise create new frontiers in the battles to maintain some of history's finest living spaces for plants and animals including humans.

— **Christine Davies, January 2026**

Cloud photo taken from the lookout at Govetts Leap.

## The Southerly Buster Henry Lawson, 1909

There's a wind that blows out of the South in the drought,  
And we pray for the touch of his breath  
When siroccos come forth from the North-West and North,  
Or in dead calms of fever and death.  
With eyes glad and dim we should sing him a hymn,  
For depression and death are his foes,  
And he gives us new life for the bread-winning strife —  
When the glorious Old Southerly blows.

*Old Southerly Buster! your forces you muster  
Where seldom a wind bloweth twice,  
And your 'white-caps' have hint of the snow caps, and glint of  
The far-away barriers of ice.  
No wind the wide sea on can sing such a poean  
Or do the great work that you do;  
Our own wind and only, from seas wild and lonely —  
Old Southerly Buster! — To you!*

Oh, the city is baked, and its thirst is unslaked,  
Though it swallows iced drinks by the score,  
And the blurred sky is low and the air seems aglow  
As if breezes would cool it no more.  
We are watching all hands where the Post Office stands —  
We are watching out hopefully too —  
For a red light shall glower from the Post Office tower  
When the Southerly Buster is due.

The yachts run away at the end of the day  
From the breakers commencing to comb,  
For a few he may swamp in the health-giving romp  
With the friendly Old Southerly home.  
But he never drowns one, for the drowning is done  
By the fools, or the reckless in sport;  
And the alleys and slums shall be cooled when he comes  
With the weary wind-jammers to port.

Oh softly he plays through the city's hot ways  
To the beds where they're calling 'Come quick!'  
He is gentle and mild round the feverish child,  
And he cools the hot brow of the sick.  
Clearing drought-hazy skies, up the North Coast he hies  
Till the mouths of our rivers are fair —  
And along the sea, too, he has good work to do,  
For he takes the old timber-tubs there.

'Tis a glorious mission, Old Sydney's Physician!  
Broom, Bucket, and Cloth of the East,  
'Tis a breeze and a sprayer that answers our prayer,  
And it's free to the greatest and least.  
The red-lamp's a warning to drought and its scorning —  
A sign to the city at large —  
Hence! Headache and Worry! Despondency hurry!  
Old Southerly Buster's in charge

*Old Southerly Buster! your forces you muster  
Where seldom a wind bloweth twice,  
And your 'white-caps' have hint of the snow caps, and glint of  
The far-away barriers of ice.  
No wind the wide sea on can sing such a poean  
Or do the great work that you do;  
Our own wind and only, from seas wild and lonely —  
Old Southerly Buster! — To you!*

## Bridal Veil Waterfall, Blackheath

The Bridal Veil Waterfall at Govetts Leap has a single drop of 180 metres. Water flow is maintained in dry times by the presence of Blue Mountain swamps. These unique and endangered ecosystems play a vital part in maintaining the water flows in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area's creeks and waterfalls by storing water and slowly releasing it over time.

The lookout at the end of Govetts Leap Road, overlooking this scenic vision, was fittingly the location for celebrations of the 25th anniversary of World Heritage declaration and many World Heritage events prior to that.

Image: **Bridal Veil after rain, 20/1/26 (Christine Davies)**

## Narrow Neck Road: A Critical Phase for the Blue Mountains

The proposed high-density development at 142–150 Narrow Neck Road, Katoomba continues to be a major concern for the community and for the long-term integrity of local planning protections.

The proposal seeks to rezone land to permit nine four-storey buildings comprising 266 apartments, along with commercial uses, under the NSW Government's Housing Delivery Authority (HDA) 'streamlined approval' pathway. This fast-tracked process was designed for urban growth areas, not in bushfire-prone, environmentally sensitive land in World Heritage environs, like Narrow Neck Road.

Our campaign has two clear goals: stopping this inappropriate development due to environmental and bushfire risks and traffic constraints; and prevent the HDA pathway from undermining local planning protections across the Blue Mountains. We are calling for a formal exemption of the Blue Mountains LGA from the HDA pathway, as it was achieved for the low- and mid-rise housing reforms in 2024.

The developer has until Monday 23 March 2026 to lodge an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which will then be publicly exhibited, giving us and the broader community the opportunity to make submissions.

The Society will host **three community information meetings in February** in Katoomba and Springwood. These meetings will outline the proposal, explain how the HDA process works, clarify expected timeframes and provide guidance on preparing an effective submission. Watch for details in our regular e-news and via social media.

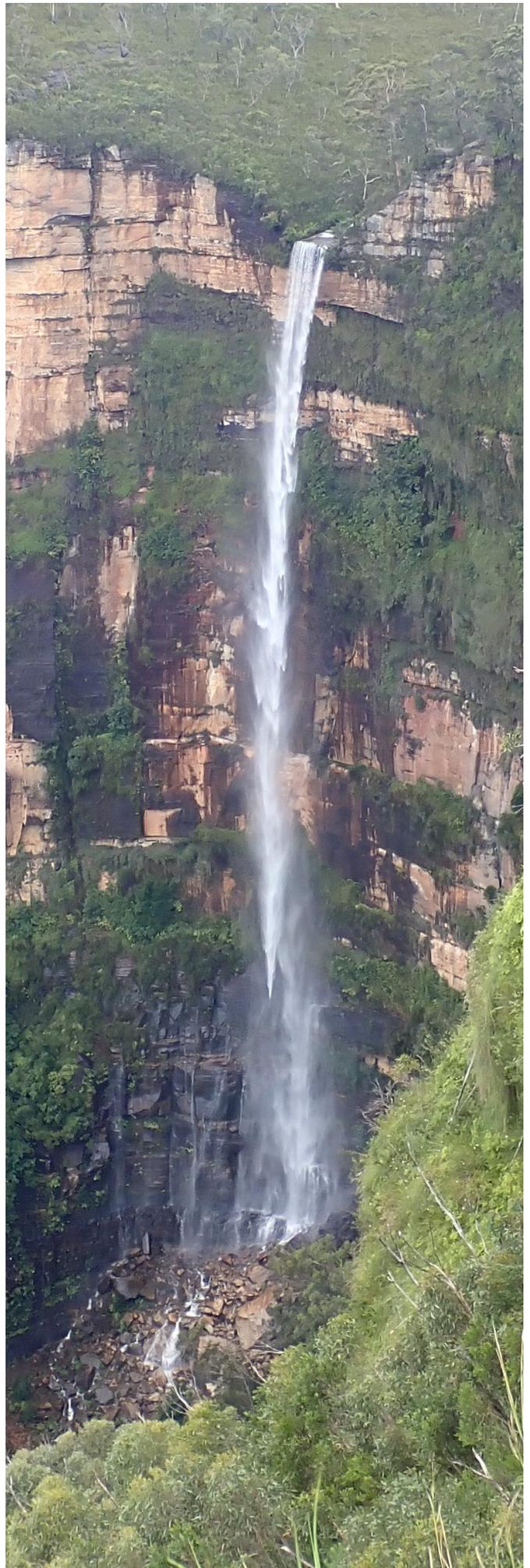
### What you can do now

- Stay informed by signing up for campaign updates
- Attend a Society community information meeting in February (Katoomba and Springwood)
- Talk with neighbours, friends and local groups about why the HDA pathway is unsuitable for the Mountains
- Be ready to make a submission when the Environmental Impact Statement is exhibited after 23 March 2026
- Contact local and state representatives to support exempting the Blue Mountains LGA from the HDA pathway

More information and updates:

<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/campaigns/Not-another-suburb-of-Sydney.shtml>

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



## In a summer garden

A bit of essential tidying up in the summer garden has revealed some recent activities. The remains of the Red Wattlebird's nest from August and the more delicate December nest of the Eastern Spinebill. A ringtail possum's drey in one of the Banksias. A bromeliad in a pot provides a home for a little frog, with its own personal pool of water at the base of the leaf.

Summer flowers include *Banksia serrata* and *Melaleuca hypericifolia*. The nectar of this *Melaleuca* is a favourite with the juvenile spinebill who has yet to achieve his full adult plumage. There are lots of little birds which are not here at other times of the year.

Cicadas are said to be the loudest insects in the world. In the summer garden, when the weather is fine, cicadas sing at dusk until it is almost dark. An individual in the Banksia tree next to the living room is particularly loud. We call him Pavarotti.

**Christine Davies**



The bromeliad leaves hold little pools of water. A perfect home for a little frog in a summer garden. I wonder why the frog sits in the sun on a hot day. Could it be to catch insects?



This straggly shrub, *Melaleuca hypericifolia*, continues to flower throughout the summer. The nectar-feeding birds love it!

A dead tree is still useful. Left: Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos enjoy the Banksia and Hakea seeds at any time of the year, but this time they were just passing through. The cockatoo on the right is a juvenile. Right: Kookaburras in the same tree.



### 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)



## 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.

Feb 9 **Empire Pass** 7.15km, 271m ascent. Lyn [0432 352 850](tel:0432352850)

Feb 16 **Pool of Siloam, Gordon Falls and Leura Cascades** 8 km approx, 110 m ascent. Marian 0411 658 562.

Feb 23 **Taronga to Balmoral Beach** 7 kms, 320 ascent (many stairs but not hard), harbour views. Angela 0427 133 327

Mar 2 **Fortress Ridge trail** 7.4km, 360m ascent/descent.

Melanie 0431 214 687

Mar 9 **Terrace Falls and Adam's Lookout at Hazelbrook** 6km, 240m ascent and descent. Lyn 0432 352 850

**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))

Feb 10 **Cripple Creek, Blaxland**, G1-2/5K, Lynne 0407 498 397, Roger 0449 902 774.

Feb 17 **Henly Point – Gladesville**, G1-2/5-6K, Imma 0422 313 828, Anna 0403 711 457.

Feb 24 **Cooks River. Dulwich Hill to Strathfield**, G1-2/9K, Peter McBride, 0400 447 245.

Mar 3 **Bridge to Bridge walk, Penrith**, G1/7K, Peter Powell 02 4751 3870.

Mar 10 **Walk: Victory Track - Sassafras Gully Track**, G3/7K, Doug Nicholls 0455 850 753.

**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))

Feb 5 **Hyde Park, Hartley**. Chance to swim in the River Lett. Tracey 0434 362 611. Gr 2.

Feb 12 **Birrabang Ridge**. 3km. Maurice 0402 402 783. Gr 1.

Please check the website or contact Beverley for the rest of the Thursday walks program.

**SATURDAY WALKS:** Usually a full day, longer walk at a faster pace.

A new Coordinator is being sought for this group. In the meantime, please check the website or contact Doug Nicholls for information [dougnicholls@bigpond.com](mailto:dougnicholls@bigpond.com)

**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.

## Thank You Harold Thompson

Harold Thompson, who has been the convenor and main leader for the Saturday Walking Group of the Society for some time, has decided to retire from that position, 2025 being his last year.

Harold has introduced numerous walkers to magical places, forgotten caves and pools, hidden paths, amazing vistas and some incredulous weather. It is difficult not to come away from one of Harold's walks with a greater appreciation of the area we live in.

Harold will be acknowledged as one of the leading walkers of Blue Mountains Conservation Society. Almost as famous is Harold's rucksack. Over the years some of the following has emerged, beside the usual first aid kit (for which I am grateful), spare water for fellow walkers, meters of climbing tape, various spares, duct tape, to mention some. The full contents is a closed secret, what isn't a secret is its weight. From past and present walkers, a sincere, thank you Harold. You have given us a great deal of pleasure.

— **Geoffrey Samson**

## How can I help wildlife during a heatwave?

### Provide water but not food

Source: RSPCA.

Leave bowls of fresh, clean water out in shady locations. Shallow dishes are better for smaller animals. If you use a large container make sure to provide a rock or stick so that small animals can climb out. Place the container in an area where animals are protected from predators when drinking e.g. near a shrub or bush and keep your pets away from this area so that animals can drink undisturbed. Don't attempt to feed wild animals.

### Observing Nature

The caterpillars who make their own mobile home are often seen attached to fences and walls in urban settings. Case moths spend most of their lives as caterpillars, the larval stage, which may last for up to 1 or 2 years in some species. Once constructed, the female caterpillars never leave their cases.



## Hut News Trivia: Question 19 ANSWER

The Brushtail Possum sleeps in the hollow of a tree, or sometimes in man-made shelters like the roof of your house. The smaller Ringtail Possum has a long prehensile tail with a white tip. It uses its tail like a fifth limb to climb and jump between connecting branches. During the day, Ringtail Possums sleep in a spherical nest known as a 'drey', made from grass and shredded bark collected and loosely woven by the possum. One drey may be shared by several possums.

*A page for keen nature observers of all ages ...*

## **What to look for this Summer in the Blue Mountains**



### **Channel-billed Cuckoo chick**

In January 2014, Sue Nicol photographed these birds in her garden at Blackheath.

The Channel-billed Cuckoo migrates to northern and eastern Australia from New Guinea and Indonesia. This occurs between August and October each year. The birds leave Australia in February or March.

A female cuckoo has laid its eggs in the nest of a Pied Currawong. The chick is much larger than its foster parent and is always hungry! I'm sure that, for that Currawong, February 2014 did not come too soon! **Adelina.**



**What did you see in the Blue Mountains this summer - in your garden or during your favourite bushwalk? Was it something that is not there in other parts of the year? Please tell Hut News! Please send your stories, photos & drawings to Adelina: [hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au) or post to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.**

Dear Adelina,  
My frog hotel is attracting uninvited guests. They are eating my residents!

—Maria Taverner 😊



Great photo! Thank you Maria.

The Red Bellied Black Snake is well known for eating frogs and will also consume lizards, rodents and other snakes. They are venomous but will often consume frogs whole while they're still alive! As a specialist frog eater, the species unfortunately can succumb to the poison of the Cane Toad.

Some say that it is good to have a Red-bellied Black Snake in your garden. Because they eat other snakes, they may keep away more aggressive species.

**Water for birds:** The old bird bath is cracked but still holds enough water to tempt the birds on a hot day. Some clay rubbed on the surface of the bath and into the cracks can stop the leakage for a while.



As a lover of nature, one cannot prefer the frog to the snake. I find all native creatures fascinating, able to coexist so that the species survive. Or perhaps almost all. I don't much like ticks and mosquitoes!!!

—*Adelina*