



# HUT NEWS

*"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"*

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## Mine pollution in Coxs River

A recent *Sydney Morning Herald* investigation has revealed "colossal" pollution spikes in the Coxs River, a high-conservation river that flows through the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area into Warragamba Dam, Sydney's main drinking water supply.

The NSW Environment Protection Authority has issued a clean-up notice to Centennial Coal's Springvale mine after salinity levels downstream of a discharge point reached up to 4,270  $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$  – far exceeding environmental guidelines and many times higher than natural Blue Mountains streams. Water scientist Professor Ian Wright described the discharge point as one of the most poorly regulated in NSW, warning of a long plume of saline pollution affecting aquatic life, including platypus habitat, and highlighting the absence of enforceable salinity limits.

Community groups, including the Gardens of Stone Alliance, welcomed the EPA action as a step forward, but experts and conservationists stressed it exposes deeper regulatory failures in protecting the Coxs River and the sensitive Gardens of Stone region from ongoing coal mining impacts.



*Flowing near Duddawarra Bridge, the Coxs River has left the coal mining region north of Lithgow and carved through the granite country of the proposed Three Sugarloafs Reserve. It will soon traverse Blue Mountains National Park and empty into the drinking water catchment area of Lake Burragarang. In the national interest, it deserves to be one of Australia's least polluted rivers. (The Hut News Team)*

## Living Near the Bush – COMING SOON!

In 1998 the Society published a special little book, *Living Near the Bush*. Featuring sections on Aboriginal cultural heritage, gardens and bushland plants, animals, recycling, chemicals, waste management and lots more, the book presented "simple things that we can all do to minimize damage to natural ecosystems".

As then president of the Society, Imre Gahl succinctly explained, "Sometimes the things that we do, both in the bushland and in areas adjoining bushland, can cause or contribute to damage without us realising it. Many of the suggestions in this booklet are fairly apparent; others may be less obvious. However, none of the suggestions will cause any serious inconvenience to bushland users, but all go some way towards [creating] a sustainable balance between people and the natural world."

The book was immensely popular, and senior members of the Society still remember it fondly. For many years, talk of a second edition was frequently heard.

## Annual General Meeting Saturday, 11th April 2026, 2 pm

Mid Mountains Community Centre,  
Mavis Wood Hall, 7 New Street, Lawson

Learn what your Society has achieved in the past year and what is planned for the coming year. Business will be as described in Notice of Annual General Meeting (on another page of this newsletter).

**Guest Speaker:** After the formal part of the meeting, our guest speaker will be Eilish McMaster, a Scientific Officer at Sydney Botanic Gardens. Eilish will talk about the Dwarf Mountain Pine (*Pherosphaera fitzgeraldii*) which is endemic to the Blue Mountains. It is confined to the spray zone at the base of waterfalls and on ledges along steep cliffs facing south-easterly to south-westerly directions, located along a 9 km stretch of cliffs between Ngula Bulgarabang (Katoomba) and Wentworth Falls. The species' restricted extent of occurrence and subpopulation isolation has led to its classification as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List.



Refreshments will be provided.  
To help with catering, please register your intention to attend:  
<https://events.humanitix.com/annual-general-meeting-2026>  
or message to 0490 419 779 or on the QR code.

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\* To 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.

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>



### From the President

The end of January and February were busy months for the Society. The Sunset Gathering on 19 February was well attended, and members received updates on important campaigns and activities, including the ongoing issue of pollution from waste water from a coal mine in the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, the proposed private leases for three accommodation nodes in the GOS SCA and the potential impact on the internationally important pagoda landscape, the State Significant Development on Narrow Neck Road, Katoomba and our weeds campaign.

Also members heard from Simone Novello (Program Leader Visitor Economy) about the BMCC initiative Destination Stewardship Alliance, to promote a stewardship in managing tourism in the Blue Mountains and Dimitri Douchin who spoke to us about the Blue Mountains Dark Sky Initiative; the Society is supportive of both these initiatives.

Amongst other business, the Society made submissions on important proposals including:

- The draft Federal Environmental Standards for Matters of National Environmental Significance, and for Offsets.
- The BMCC draft encroachment policy.
- Draft review of environmental factors for the construction and operation of 3 bush camps for a supported walking experience on the Gardens of Stone Pagoda Walk.

Remember you can read our submissions and letters on the Society's webpage.

### Hut News Flip Version

Have you checked out the new online "flip version" of *Hut News*? It looks great and is easy to read online. Thanks to our technology and *Hut News* teams for this excellent version and for the valuable and engaging information shared with us in every edition.

*Continued page 3*

### Welcome to new volunteer

Tanya Edwards, a keen new member of our Society, has volunteered her help by taking on the role of Meetings Secretary until the AGM in April. The President and all members of the management committee welcome Tanya to our team.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

## Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given of the Annual General Meeting of the Society to be held at Mid Mountains Community Centre, 7 New Street, Lawson, at 2 pm on Saturday, 11th April 2026.

Business will include receipt of reports, adoption of annual accounts, determination of structure of Management Committee, election of President, Management Committee members and other office holders and appointment of auditor.

By order of the Management Committee  
Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

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### Volunteers needed

Have you thought about volunteering for the Society? By volunteering your time, you can help us preserve our environment and educate others about why the Blue Mountains is worth saving.

There are positions vacant on our Management Committee (see separate item in this Newsletter or on our website

(<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/agm/bmcs-mc-position-descriptions-latest.pdf>).

With our AGM coming up on 11th April, it would be a good time to consider applying.

There are vacancies on some subcommittees, particularly on the Climate Change and Sustainability and Events subcommittees. Even if you can only spare a couple of hours during the day or an evening now and then, your assistance would be most welcome.

Send me an email to find out more about how to help ([president@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:president@bluemountains.org.au)). I am looking forward to hearing from you!

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

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## Society supports Lincolns Rock closure

On January 19, Blue Mountains City Council announced temporary closure of Lincolns Rock due to escalating safety and environmental concerns. The closure will be reviewed on 30/4/26.

The Society commends and congratulates the local residents and Friends of Kings Tableland who have vigorously campaigned to protect Lincolns Rock. Said BMCC Mayor Mark Greenhill: “As the popularity of the site has grown, visitors have ventured further into intact bushland which significantly impacts upon native vegetation and wildlife ... visitor numbers are beyond an acceptable threshold ...”

Society president Annette Cam wrote to Council that “the Society applauds Council’s decision to temporarily close the site, prepare a management plan and undertake degraded area restoration ... The Society believes that Council has [appropriately] exercised its responsibility to prioritise the protection of significant landscapes, vegetation communities, wildlife and ecological functioning ... to enable appreciative, responsible visitation by current and future generations.”

(<https://bluemountains.org.au/submissions/submissions-2026.shtml>).

Council is developing a Locality Plan for Lincolns Rock which will be released for community consultation in April. Our Society believes that restoration work at Lincolns Rock should effectively protect the escarpment and adjoining swamp and heath vegetation communities and utilise naturally occurring resources such as timber, sandstone and local native vegetation species. Use of concrete, bitumen and other introduced materials should be avoided, or at least minimised, due to well-founded concerns about nutrient runoff and resultant environmental weed spread.

— BMCS Bushcare Officer

## BOB BROWN *DEFIANCE* – Stories from Nature and Its Defenders

For half a century, Bob Brown has been standing up to the powerful interests who would put profit before planet.

In *Defiance*, he draws on this experience to inspire a new generation of individual and collective action. He reflects on the people and places that have shaped him, celebrates the irreplaceable beauty and value of nature and shares what motivates him to keep fighting.

The book was launched at the Theatre Royal Hobart on 1st October 2025. A broadcast presented on ABC Radio National, presented by Natasha Mitchell, can be found on podcast:

<https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/bigideas/bob-brown-on-the-role-of-defiance-in-the-climate-crisis/106246224>

For more than 50 years, Dr Bob Brown has been breaking and making laws to protect the environment. Now aged 81, he is hoping to give strength to new generations who are facing the climate and extinction crises front on.

The interview was positive and inspiring. Among many memorable quotes from Bob Brown, he said that “We (the people) have got one thing that they (the profit takers) haven’t got. Love of this planet, love of those coming after us and love of our fellow creatures on the planet. A small number of people can change the world. Nothing ever else did.”

Towards the end of the interview, the presenter asked Bob: “How do you handle your mental health, especially after aggression or confrontation.” Bob’s answer was: “Go for a walk in nature. Go for a stroll along the beach. If you’ve got children, take them every week to the bush or to the beach. If you don’t do that when they’re young they’ll miss out and miss that fantastic bond.”

– The Hut News Team



White-striped Free-tailed bat  
(Terry Reardon)

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### BLUE MOUNTAINS BAT NIGHT 2026

Saturday,  
21st March,  
6.00 pm – 8.30 pm

Blue Mountains  
Cultural Centre,  
30 Parke Street, Katoomba

(Entry via Katoomba Street or Coles car park)

#### FREE ENTRY!

- Listen to bat experts
- Meet a flying fox
- Catch the bat bus
- Library treasure hunt
- Face painting
- Craft cave
- Gallery

Bats are the only true flying mammals. There are over 1,200 bat species in the world. Australia has around 90 different species of bats. Bring the kids for this fun family-friendly event and discover the mysteries of our fascinating bats through talks from bat experts, displays and artmaking. Explore the library for hidden treasures and unleash your creativity in the craft cave. With face painting, delicious snacks from the Gallery Café, and free access to our Gallery, there’s something for everyone to enjoy.

*This event is proudly supported by the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, Blue Mountains City Council Library and the Australasian Bat Society.*

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

## Environmental ethos emphasised – Welcome back to the Wolgan

The environmental credentials of the new partnership set to reopen the Wolgan Valley Resort have been highlighted ahead of the expected substantial regaining of visitor numbers in the second half of 2026.

Wolgan Valley Association president, Andrew Chalk, believes the several dozen conservation-minded landholders who make up his association will have their cause aided by once again having a large landholding entity to deal with over land management issues in the valley. There are a large number of historical land titles in the multiple square kilometres of private holdings surrounded by the NPWS controlled reserves, Wollemi National Park, Gardens of Stone National Park and Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area.

Before 2022, the year that use of the traditional access road became entirely at the road user's own risk, businesses operating in the valley included the large resort as well as the Newnes Hotel cabins (still operating), other smaller cabins and private tour businesses and a wedding reception venue. Although Lithgow Council is apparently not confident of re-establishing normal two-wheel drive access on an open public road before the 2030s, the valley's landholders are encouraged by private initiatives to bring back valley ecotourism.

The new Wolgan Valley resort partnership has access to a property at Wallerawang where resort guests can be transferred from other modes to a newly acquired fleet of four-wheel drive vehicles which will take them via the "donkey steps" unsealed trail route to their destination. It is hoped that this will minimise use of the helipad on the resort property. If visitation rises above current levels, this may encourage the development of new walking trails at environmentally friendly locations in the valley that will help visitors discover the region's diversity and appreciate environmental values. NPWS is already at work on parts of a long-distance Wollemi walking trail that traverses the valley. Such



*Sunrise in the Wolgan Valley (Julie McPherson)*

actions have to take account of protecting fragile areas including those that have not fully recovered from the bushfires in the summer of 2019/2020.

Andrew Chalk hopes that 2026 will continue the interest of parties involved with the valley in preserving its conservation values in a manner that complements the plans of management for the NPWS controlled reserves surrounding it.

– Don Morison

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*Continued from page 1*

Unfortunately, getting a republishing project underway always had to be delayed because more pressing, urgent priorities constantly emerged, such as the threat of recreational hunting in our national parks.

Early in 2025, the Management Committee of the Society resolved that a new edition of *Living Near the Bush* was sorely needed. Republishing was designated a top priority. Due to the hard work and generosity of many Society members, that objective is now only weeks away from being realised. *Living Near the Bush*, second edition, fully revised, beautifully illustrated, is on the way!

— BMCS Bushcare Officer

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### What can YOU do to help the natural environment?

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a voluntary organisation and has been working to help protect the Blue Mountains natural environment for 64 years: <https://www.bluemountains.org.au>

Blue Mountains Conservation Society has around 900 members and together we can make a difference! Members will be voting for a new management committee at the AGM on Saturday, 11th April.

Find out more: <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/agm/bmcs-mc-position-descriptions-latest.pdf>

**What can you do to help the natural environment?** What are your interests? Do you want to join a subcommittee, grow native plants, write submissions, help at events, or help in other ways?

Email or phone the Society ([bmcs@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:bmcs@bluemountains.org.au) 0490 419 779) to find out more. Leave a message detailing what you are interested in. A member of the management committee will contact you.

## Visiting us too rarely

Recently, as we were breakfasting at our bush home, a mother kangaroo and her daughter appeared in our yard. Whenever we catch sight of any wildlife, we immediately fall still and lower our voices to whispers. I tiptoed to fetch my phone and edged toward the door. I peered out and around the corner. There she was, the mother, peering back at me. I retreated quietly indoors but not before I'd taken a snapshot.

After a little more grazing and a rest, they slipped away. We rarely see kangaroos here. When they do visit, it's usually in our absence. They trim the rough grass better than any whipper snipper!

This area has a history of fire. Since the last were wildfires, we expect the next to be just as intense. Each sighting of birds or other wildlife is precious. The bush itself still feels vulnerable. As climate change and urbanisation reshape the landscape, we empathise with our wildlife. Like us (humans), they constantly live with uncertainty. But unlike them, we have the ability, and the responsibility, to protect the world we share.

– John Turner and  
Anne Ammann,  
Dargan



## Ambience

Making stately progress on the up track  
your ears pop west of Linden  
and sometime after Lawson  
there's a change of mood in the quiet carriage:  
taciturn Germans erupt to announce  
they'll be doing the National Pass today.

Emerging at a higher station  
you see every leaf and blossom in crystal light,  
like a blind man touched by a holy hand  
and know you're back home.

By your front door  
the unweeded garden greets you  
in nonchalant disarray.

Later, sitting in the quiet air  
you hear a beetle whir,  
a finch zings past,  
rustle of summer leaves –  
a rainbow is tasting your nectarines.

'Imagine standing on a scenic escarpment  
and there's plane after plane roaring overhead.  
It would certainly affect the ambience',  
said the mayor in the local paper.

Now only the distant creep and clank  
of a coal train on the down track  
reminds you, briefly,  
of the spreading cancer.

– By Brendon Doyle

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## Lost Golf Balls – *the environmental cost*

At the October 2025 Blackheath Markets ConSoc Plant Stall, the Govetts Leap Catchment Group had everyone guessing, "How many golf balls do you think we've collected?" — with answers from 142 to 1,500! The real number? 380. And each one told a story about a surprising source of pollution on our doorstep.

During Bushcare activities across the catchment in 2025, group members began removing golf balls they found — not just on land beneath the Blackheath Golf Course, but also along Braeside Trail, Govetts Leap Brook, and as far away as Acacia Flat, deep in the Grose Valley. As our collection of golf balls grew, we began to wonder how long they had been there and what impact they had.

So, we did some research. Modern golf balls are made from synthetic rubber, plastics, and chemical additives like zinc oxide and titanium dioxide. They don't biodegrade and can take up to 1,000 years to break down. As they age, they release microplastics and chemicals, including zinc and BPA, into soil and waterways, harming fish, wildlife, and the ecosystems that make the mountains so special. Some animals can mistake them for food or nesting material.

U.S. research suggests that lost golf balls generate about 20,000 tonnes of plastic waste each year. An extrapolation of data on the average number of lost golf balls per round and the number of registered golf rounds played in Australia in 2023-24 (Golf Australia) resulted in 18.5 million golf balls lost in Australia annually, and that's without counting unregistered rounds!

And we are not the only ones concerned. The information stand and guessing competition were repeated upon request as part of Katoomba High School's Environment Week activities in 2025, and NPWS is organising a Clean Up Australia Day Activity on 1 March, 2026 in Terrey Hills to remove golf balls from the bushland surrounding Shortees Golf and the Swing Factory.

But there is something we can all do. If you spot a golf ball in the bush, pick it up and place it in the red bin. Every small action helps keep our catchments clean and our bushland thriving.

– Tracie McMahon

(on behalf of the Govetts Leap Catchment Group)



*The Guessing Competition stand at the October 2025 Blackheath Market.*  
(Tracie McMahon)

# Managing a Blue Mountains conservation property: tremendous satisfaction, lots of challenges!

Blue Mountains Conservation Society's Bushcare Officer, Peter Ardill, recently interviewed Eva Johnstone, co-owner with husband Bill Johnstone of bushland conservation property, "Allendale", Blackheath.

## Describe Allendale and your conservation agreement

We fell in love with "Allendale" in 2016. We decided to buy and restore and nurture it, as custodians of this very special country. The property is 3.2 hectares, of which 2.5 ha are bushland (*Eucalyptus piperita* and *Eucalyptus oreades* forest), bordering Popes Glen reserve and a peat swamp located on private property.

Because of the site's unique biodiversity, in 2017 we applied for an In-Perpetuity Conservation Agreement with the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT). After on-site surveys by BCT ecologists, and much persistence on our part, we were successful in early 2019.

## What are your major objectives?

We have an obligation to restore and maintain the biodiversity values. The Conservation Agreement provides for weed and erosion control grants, and degraded area restoration (see illustration).

We record new flora and fauna species, and the growth and transition of our vegetation communities post the December 2019 bushfire (see below).

We share our knowledge with our children and grandchildren, so that they can take up custodianship of "Allendale" in years to come. We enjoy learning from continuous involvement with Popes Glen Bushcare, and sharing our experiences with them.

## Best conservation experiences?

On 22nd December 2019, the Black Summer bushfire came up from the Popes Glen reserve and the neighbouring



Degraded area restoration by Allendale Landcare Group.  
Note rock armoured drain line.

Photo: E. Johnstone 2020



Bill & Eva Johnstone  
December 2019

"We are smiling because the fire has passed, we are out of danger and we haven't lost our house and sheds!" – Photo: Trish Davies 2019

swamp. The whole of our bushland was burnt, but the house and sheds were saved. As the bushland has regrown, we delight in the incremental return of our birdlife, frogs, reptiles and other fauna, although the flora and fauna diversity is not as broad as it was before the fires.

Also, and it's an important practice, we hone our learning and connection to Country by constant monitoring and observation, by walking through our land in all seasons and weathers.

## Challenges?

The high density of mid-storey post-bushfire regrowth, especially of fire loving species – *Acacia*, *Hakea* and *Leptospermum* – is concerning, with regard to fuelling further bushfires. We are aware that our and surrounding bushland is not managed according to Caring for Country traditions. We were advised by a Traditional Custodian and by our BCT ecologist that the bushland needs a cultural burn, at regular intervals. We cannot do this, as there is currently no approval pathway for a cultural burn on private property, even if it is a listed Wildlife Refuge, and a Conservation Agreement with the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust is in place. This anomaly leaves us vulnerable – fires do not know about property boundaries. I shall continue to advocate for a change in the legislation, together with my neighbours, who own a large swamp bordering Blue Mountains National Park.

We do not wish to see a repetition of the 2019 bushfires that almost made their way into the Blackheath township.

Further challenges are managing continual gully erosion and weed incursions from a drain that enters our place off Hat Hill Road. Also, educating the community about the threats to our bushland from the increased number of sealed hard surfaces, including paved roads and structures, which reduce soil porosity and exacerbate erosive stormwater runoff.

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## What can Blackheath residents do on their properties to support conservation?

Only by learning from each other and sharing our knowledge can we all achieve sustainable land management practices and a holistic understanding of our very special World Heritage Area.

We always try to get together with neighbours, invite them over, show them our latest projects and help them with weed recognition and control. Our actions impact the greater catchment, and this is the kind of knowledge that we attempt to share with them. Weeds do not know about property boundaries.

We ask them to think about why they decided to live here – because of their love of the bush? Asking that question may stimulate the desire for a deeper understanding and connection with the intrinsic value of the land that they have chosen as their home.

To gain a deeper understanding of our natural bushland, one of the best actions for residents is to participate in a local bushcare group, join Blue Mountains Conservation Society and/or Blue Mountains Bird Observers, and learn from those who have engaged with our bushland for decades.

**Excellent advice, Eva. Many thanks for sharing your valuable time with us. Eva welcomes enquiries: [evajohnstone@hotmail.com](mailto:evajohnstone@hotmail.com)**

## End krill trawling in Antarctica

Protests in Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Brisbane and Sunshine Coast have called on wellness giant, Swisse, to stop selling environmentally destructive krill oil pills.

Krill are the foundation of the Antarctic ecosystem, upon which whales, penguins and seals all rely to survive either directly or indirectly. Bob Brown Foundation has met with Swisse executives and informed them of the damage caused by krill supertrawlers in Antarctica, but so far, Swisse has refused to stop selling this controversial product.

“Krill oil is the reason huge supertrawlers are plundering the Antarctic ecosystem. Swisse is knowingly destroying the food source of whales and penguins,” said Alistair Allan, Antarctic and Marine Campaigner at Bob Brown Foundation.

“The public is learning more about the horrors of krill supertrawlers all the time, especially after the impacts of the fishery were highlighted in the David Attenborough documentary – OCEAN. It’s time for Swisse to realise that the public wants places like Antarctica protected, not destroyed.”

**Source: Bob Brown Foundation, 3 February 2026.**

## An introduction to the Gardens of Stone Alliance – Steph Lentz

When people talk about the Gardens of Stone, they often describe it as other-worldly. And it really is. Just a few hours from Sydney, near Lithgow, this vast sandstone landscape has been shaped over 250 million years into pagodas, cliffs, canyons, swamps and forests found nowhere else on Earth. It adjoins the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, yet much of it remains unprotected and under threat.

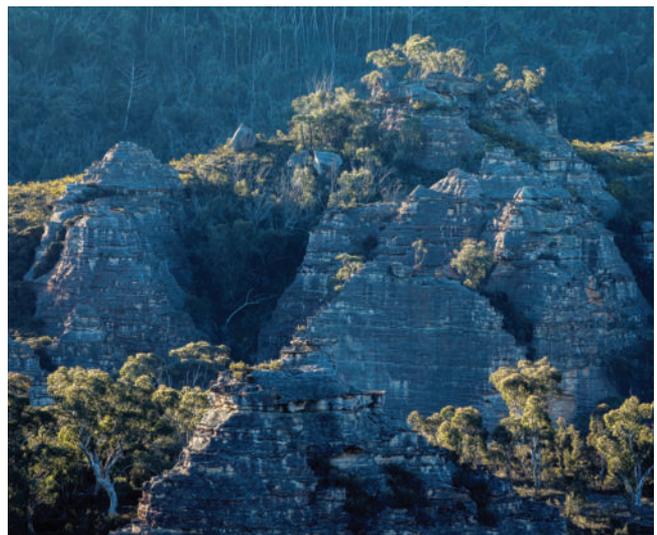
The story of the Gardens of Stone Alliance begins well before the Alliance itself. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, local conservationists discovered that coal mining was linked to cliff collapses and damage to this fragile landscape. After a decade of campaigning, the NSW Government created Gardens of Stone National Park in 1994.

In 2005, Blue Mountains Conservation Society joined forces with the Colong Foundation for Wilderness and Lithgow Environment Group to form the Gardens of Stone Alliance, with a clear purpose: to secure full protection for the Gardens of Stone region and to stop further damage from mining. Over time, the Alliance has grown and now includes BMCS, the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, Lithgow Environment Group, Wilderness Australia, 4nature, Bushwalking NSW and the National Parks Association of NSW. I’ve been on board as the Gardens of Stone Alliance campaigner since December 2025, thanks to funding from the Society (*thank you!*).

The case for protection is overwhelming. The Gardens of Stone contains internationally significant pagoda formations, endangered upland swamps, wilderness, and habitat for hundreds of plant and animal species, including the Regent Honeyeater and Blue Mountains Water Skink. The complex pagoda formations are globally unique and deserving of the highest level of protection.

The area also matters deeply for water. The Coxs River flows into Sydney’s drinking water via Warragamba Dam. Coal mines continue to operate within the catchment, perpetuating the pollution that the Alliance has been monitoring in the Coxs River system for decades.

I see this work as both urgent and hopeful. The Alliance exists to make sure this extraordinary place is protected in full – not just for its beauty, but for biodiversity, water security and the pleasure of future generations. We’re making progress, but much remains to be done. The Gardens of Stone may be a lost city, but it’s far from a lost cause.



*Pagoda landscape, Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area (Ian Brown)*

Letter to the Editor

## A Counterpoint to the “Privatisation Scare”

I would like to respond to articles in the December issue of the *Hut News* where concerns were raised about plans to issue leases for commercial enterprises to provide ‘supported camping’ and infrastructure for ‘glamping’ in National Parks. The proposals are met with strong opposition and described as “Privatisation” and “Landgrab” of National Parks.

The proposals are aimed at the international market but also at anyone who wants to enjoy our wonderful natural world in the comfort of facilities as they exist in most National Parks around the world. Even Tasmania provides facilities in their National Parks to more than the experienced bushwalker. Many people prefer a bed and board provided in a properly managed place in nature. They prefer not to spend a large part of their few days in nature organizing equipment and food and then carry everything to their destinations. Why should the experience in nature be restricted to the self-sufficient bushwalker?

The proposal in the 28,322 ha GOS State Conservation Area (which adjoins the 502,000 ha Wollemi Wilderness) is for 0.2 ha close to Lithgow to be leased to a private operator. There would be plenty of room left for people who prefer to venture into the wild.

I don’t see the proposed leases as a “Privatisation”. Like the renter who rents a house the proposed leases will be limited in time and reviewed after their expiry. If managed well, all aspects such as siting and management of the facilities would remain under the control of NPWS. They will have to ensure that the chosen sites do not compromise use by the general public and that the management of the facilities has limited environmental effects.

The companies involved are international leaders in nature tourism. There are opportunities to ‘value-add’, including educational opportunities e.g. aboriginal history and environmental education. The traditional view that independent bushwalkers are the only acceptable means of experiencing nature in national parks needs to accommodate people who like their creature comforts. So, it is important to cater for a wider range of users. Indeed, if more people can enjoy national parks, it is likely that more people will value what they stand for and thus advocate for them. I believe this could be a great opportunity for Lithgow to become a destination for the growing number of people of all abilities, interests and background who want to reconnect with nature.

– Thomas Ebersoll

*Editor’s note:* This letter is largely a response to an article by Keith Muir, Honorary Projects Officer, Wilderness Australia, which appeared on page 4 of December 2025 *Hut News*

<https://online.pubhtml5.com/ejodq/pfsc/>

Mr Muir and Mr Ebersoll have both been members of Blue Mountains Conservation Society for quite some time. Mr Ebersoll is the proprietor of Newnes Hotel Cabins, a business operating on private land. The *Hut News* Team is aware of differing perspectives on recently formulated NPWS proposals for expansion of the role of private businesses on National Park land.

### BMCC NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

Native plants will be on sale at the Blackheath Growers Market on **Sunday, 8th March (8 am 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)

## A report card on the Kedumba Valley Escarpment (Opinion by Don Morison)

### PART 2: Leura Cascades and Leura Falls Creek Catchment

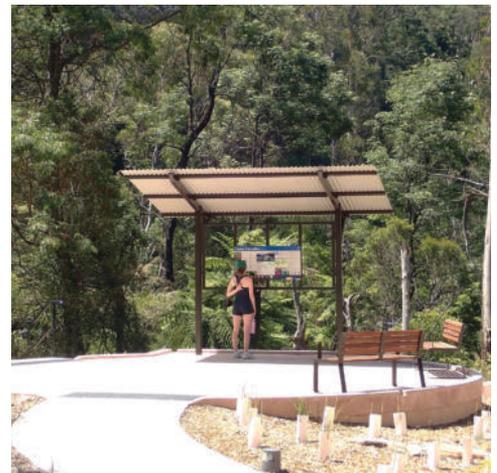
The northern (partly urbanised) escarpment of the Kedumba Valley and its waterfalls have been shown by studies to contain intricate communities of flora and fauna including species virtually found nowhere else. Sited in this catchment were the first two sewage treatment systems for the Katoomba/Leura settlements. The second was in operation till very late in the 20th century. A major rehabilitation operation followed, ridding Leura Falls of dumped car bodies and a massive flying fox structure associated with sewage disposal.

Now that the latest round of modernisation of the Council-controlled area is partly complete, it is necessary to ask what the impacts of further changes at the locality could be.

It is beneficial that there is now a functioning toilet block in the reinstated upper Chelmsford Drive car park, for the first time in many years. The advantages of this could be jeopardised if Council goes ahead with encouraging night visitation to Leura Cascades, as foreshadowed in the latest ratepayer newsletter Council has circulated. The NSW Government has greatly contributed to Council’s work so far. Next there will be more floodlighting of the views and under-rail lighting of pathways that have had only daytime visitation for many decades. Who is going to pay for the night-time ranger shifts and other measures needed to stop environmental damage by unauthorised campers and night-time visitors, including those who are not there to appreciate the natural environment?

*Editor’s note:* The guest speaker address at the AGM on 11th April will yield interesting information about a rare species of the Kedumba Valley escarpment.

*A summer visitor mulls over the Leura Cascades new interpretation area. More informative maps and signage are needed to cope with the constantly changing pattern of climate-caused closures in the local walking track network.*



### Hut News Trivia: Question 20

**What is a lerp?** Adelina gives you the ANSWER and tells you all about this important natural food source on page 12.

### Blue Mountains Conservation Society – Planning and Development Resource Kit

Do you want to take action on an environmental issue in your neighbourhood or the Blue Mountains 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)

## STOP PRESS

### 17 February 2026: Resistance to Narrow Neck Road development

110 people at our Society information night about Narrow Neck Road proposals became freshly focussed on issues not yet widely understood. Local architect Nigel Bell spoke about fire.

- How exactly will the threat from wildfire embers or other ignition be assessed in relation to the eight buildings proposed, particularly in view of the well documented history of fire within a kilometre of the site?
- How would the potential evacuation of more than 250 people proposed to be accommodated be handled?
- What are the overall threats to the various sensitive ecosystems on the application site and within a few hundred metres, if large numbers of people regularly present are deemed at serious risk?

Local State Member Trish Doyle treated comments from those present seriously. Many are worried that a new body called the “Housing Delivery Authority” could approve a development that contains multiple restaurants but accommodation suitable for only a small number of owner/occupiers or long-term renters. If there is

to be a Housing Delivery Authority, surely it should only deliberate on projects whose main focus is to address urgent housing needs?

See also statements from Blue Mountains Mayor, Cr Mark Greenhill, and others, on the Blue Mountains City Council website and in reports in the *Blue Mountains Gazette*.

Check the Society’s website for up-to-date information. Submissions will be wanted soon.

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

### 19 February 2026: Will pagoda sites be spared?

At our Sunset Gathering, Society President Annette Cam and Wilderness Australia Honorary Projects Officer Keith Muir were concerned that urgent public pressure on Environment Minister Penny Sharpe and other decision makers was needed to stop construction of three privately operated glamping resorts on or near sensitive pagoda sites within the dedicated Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area.

See also Keith Muir’s article on page 4 of December 2025 *Hut News* (*Hut News* archives)

<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/hutnews-archives.shtml#y2025>

and check the Society website

<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/>

**Observing Nature:** *Stop and look around you*

## Giants of the Forest

An exhibition at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, in Wellington, included the replica of an ocean-going Waka Hourua (canoe), carved from the trunk of a Totara tree, which was impressive. During our car tour we found out that Pouakani Scenic Reserve, near Taupo, has the largest and oldest known living Totara tree. So we stopped there to walk in the forest. At the beginning of the track was a sign, “The Big Tree”. (See note).

20 minutes along the track, I stopped to look around and found moss-covered relics of the old forest (see photo). Try to imagine the mighty giants in the ancient forests which had been felled. While the Maori people might have taken single trees for their canoes, there was no limit to the appetite of the colonisers.

My companions had gone further and turned back. We did not know how far it was to Pouakani (the big tree) and it was a hot day. The forest was very beautiful with several different tree species, trees that we would judge as being of average size.

I spoke to a man who had lived nearby. He told me that many of the young trees in the forest were Totaras.

Pouakani Scenic Reserve is not a large reserve and is surrounded by pine plantations and grazing land. It is hard to imagine that, in the far far distant future, these trees can become the giants of the forest, as their ancestors were.

– **Christine Davies**

*Note:* Pouakani is Aotearoa / New Zealand’s largest and oldest known living Totara tree (*Podocarpus totara*). Pouakani’s precise age is not known but is estimated to be approximately 1800 years old. Height 42.7m. Girth 12.18m.

*Once they were giants of the forest.*



# A hole in World Heritage

Ian Brown, January 2026

The vast landscape sweeps away in all directions. Flat plains of near-treeless, flower-studded sedgeland give way to steep slopes of the D'Aguiar Range in one direction and into the distance everywhere else. When the wind fades, the silence is all-encompassing ... except for a faint bass rumble from the Southern Ocean more than 20 km away.

I am standing in a big hole in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA). A "Conservation Area" in name only, this 130,000-hectare swathe south of Macquarie Harbour has been excluded because of mineralised geology. Now the Tasmanian branch of The Wilderness Society is mounting a renewed effort to have the area added to the TWWHA, and running a series of expeditions to document the conservation values of what they call the Spero-Wanderer Wilderness.

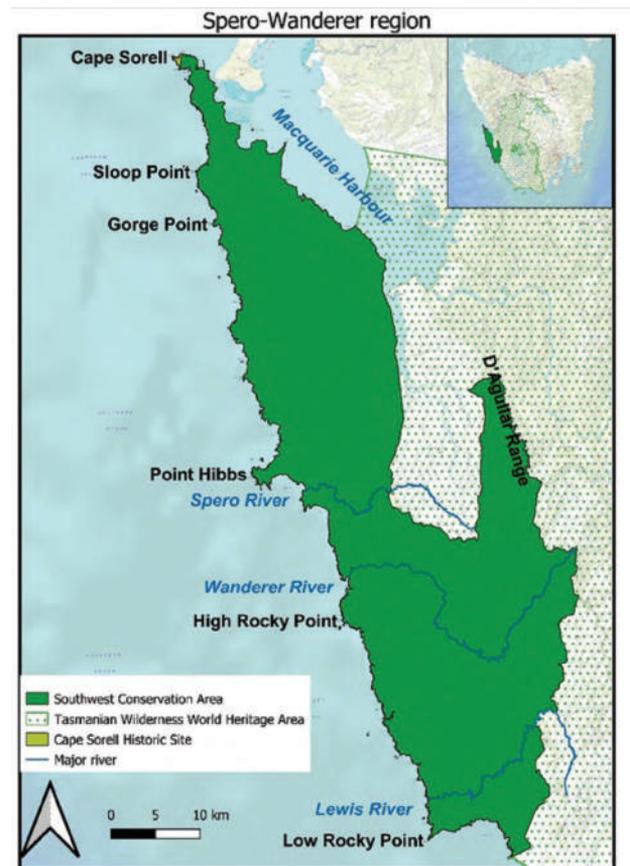
Last December I joined one of these treks, with the specific aim of looking for reported Huon pines in the remote Conder River gorge. *Lagarostrobos franklinii* is a famous member of Tasmania's ancient and unique Gondwanan flora, renowned for its perfumed, durable and valuable timber. Pines grow further down the Conder, and along the wild Spero and Wanderer rivers which drain most of the area to the sea (named after early white explorer T.B. Moore's dogs!). The rivers were logged in the old pinning days and remain unprotected

We reached the Conder gorge to discover magnificent rainforest and river, but no pines at all in what was mapped as "Huon pine dominated rainforest". This insight alone demonstrates the parlous state of knowledge about this remote and sparsely managed area. We also recorded a number of vegetation plots, and took photographs for the campaign.

Despite the healing scars of mineral exploration, no company has found an ore deposit worthy of overcoming the logistical and environmental challenges of mining. Meanwhile, the identified world heritage values are shared continuously across the almost-surrounding national park. Large-scale and spectacular landforms are very apparent in the big-sky environment. Macquarie Harbour occupies a graben, a sunken area of crust bounded by faultlines, with the unprotected D'Aguiar Range being one uplifted margin.



Sedgeland plains with flowering teatree, unprotected Southwest Conservation Area.



Map showing location of the Spero-Wanderer region and adjacent Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Credit: Tasmanian National Parks Association.

Vast riverine terraces (only partly within the TWWHA) are some of the best in the world and reveal progressive uplifts of the coastal block. The open sedgeland plains are a long-term product of both low-nutrient soils and fire going back to Aboriginal occupation, bounded east and west by rainforest on different geology.

It was a privilege to be able to visit such a remarkable but at-risk landscape, languishing for proper protection.

Continued page 11



**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.*

March 2 **Fortress Ridge trail** 7.4km, 360m ascent/descent. **Melanie 0431 214 687**

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

March 16 **Golf Links Lookout to Sublime Point Lookout** 4km approx, 110 m ascent. **Marian 0411 658 562**

March 23 **Popes Glen and Braeside Track** 7.8km, 250m ascent/descent. **Melanie 0431 214 687**

March 30 **Wongarra Ridge and Window of God** 4.3km, 125m ascent/descent. Some easy off track.  
**Lyn 0432 352 850**

April 6 – no walk scheduled

**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)

March 10 **Victory Track – Sassafras Gully Track** Grade 3, 7km, 260m/195m ascent/descent.  
**Doug 0455 850 753**

March 17 **Glow Worm Tunnel** Grade 2, 3.6km, Bring torch. Car pool (\$15). **Sharon 0404 622 515,**  
**Phill 0415 449 174**

March 24 **Bus Trip Evans Crown** Grade 2, 3km, Train / Bus \$15. Book and pay Maurice.  
**Maurice 0402 402 783**

March 31 **Rhodes foreshore plus Newington Nature Reserve and Armory** Grade 1, 8km, Water views and a bit of history. Train and bus. **Judith 0419 789 640**

**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)

March 5 **South Lawson Waterfalls** Grade 2, 125m ascent/descent. **Angela 0427 133 327**

March 12 **Warrimoo Lookouts** Grade 2, 4km. **Ros 0417 261 465**

March 19 **The Three Brothers, Medlow Bath** Grade 2, **Maurice 0402 402 783**

March 26 **Lawson Golf Course to Adelina Falls** Grade 1, **Beverley 4757 2076**

**SATURDAY WALKS:** There are no Saturday walks at present. Saturday walks will be restarted when we find new coordinator/leader(s). If you have solid bushwalking experience, are comfortable leading small groups, are interested, and feel you're qualified please 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 walk leader.

*Continued from page 10*

We world heritage regions need to stand together.  
See references below to learn more.

**Spero-Wanderer Wilderness: The case for an extension to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.**

Read the book online:

<https://tnpa.org.au/spero-wanderer-wilderness-book/>

Buy the book:

<https://bit.ly/3OHmurA>

Read the World Heritage proposal:

<https://bit.ly/4rHrrza>



*Sedgeland, terraces and D'Aguilar Range, unprotected Southwest Conservation Area.*

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

**EASTERN SPINEBILLS**

Jill Dark said that the summer of 2025/26 had been an excellent season for the breeding of Eastern Spinebills and there were numerous families active in her garden at Hazelbrook. They were also frequenting Adelina's garden at Blackheath. Congratulations to the mascot of Australia's \$5 note.

Most Australian honeyeaters feed on flowers from a perched position. The Eastern Spinebill sometimes hovers like a hummingbird when feeding on the nectar from flowers. Adelina observed that they can do this at a very early age.

*Adelina*



*This little bird has yet to gain its attractive adult plumage, but the shape of its beak is unmistakably that of an Eastern Spinebill.*

**Signs of Autumn:** Mixed species of birds flocking together. Leaf-curling Spiders. Fungi in all shapes and colours! What else can you observe?

**Kids at tiny school work to save an extremely rare butterfly**

The Purple Copper Butterfly, also known as the Bathurst Copper Butterfly, is one of Australia's rarest butterfly species.

ABC Central West, January 7, has published an online article about tiny Meadow Flat Public School where the 30 students have been learning about the butterflies and have planted a garden of native blackthorn saplings which

are the caterpillars' only food source. The saplings were grown at Lithgow and District Community Nursery.

The butterfly's life cycle also relies on a 'mutualistic' relationship with the ant (*Anonychomyrma itinerans*). After mating, the female lays her eggs on or near blackthorn bushes, at the base of which there are nests of the attendant ants. The ants guard the eggs and tend the caterpillars when they hatch.

As the caterpillars grow, the ants move them underground into their nest during the day and out at night to continue grazing on the native blackthorn leaves. The ants' efforts are rewarded with a sugary honeydew from a gland on the caterpillar's back.

The school's efforts to educate its students went further than providing more habitat for the butterflies. "The children are becoming familiar with the native blackthorn and understanding the butterfly life cycle. They'll be the stewards in the future for this species."



*Purple Copper Butterfly  
(Robin Murray)*

What did you see in the Blue Mountains – 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 and drawings to Adelina: [hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au) or post to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.

**Hut News Trivia Question 20 –  
What is a lerp?**

**ANSWER:** The short answer is "A shelter made by a sap-sucking insect. But Adelina's long answer is more interesting.

**Lerps – One of nature's sweet offerings**

Lerps are created by psyllids. Psyllids are tiny sap-sucking insects. Like many insects, adult female psyllids lay eggs, which hatch into nymphs, which transition through various nymphal stages before emerging as adults. An adult psyllid is about 4mm in size. Psyllids build lerps, which act like tents, to protect them from predators and drying winds.

Lerp is a highly valued resource in the Australian environment. It is eaten by flying foxes, possums, gliders and a variety of birds such as pardalotes, honeyeaters, friarbirds, whistlers, silvereyes and thornbills. Some birds such as pardalotes, weebills and small honeyeaters virtually live off lerps in some seasons. Early European settlers documented the widespread use and efficient collection techniques of lerp by Indigenous people. Many settlers also valued and collected this free sweet resource. (Note 1)

Ants are attracted to feed off the excess honeydew and may protect the nymphs from predators in a mutualistic relationship.

(Note 1) This information comes from Land for Wildlife, a voluntary program in South East Queensland that encourages and assists landholders to manage wildlife habitat on their properties. You can read more at <https://www.lfwseq.org.au/lerps-one-of-natures-sweet-offerings/>

*Adelina*



*Lerps and ants on a gum leaf.  
(Christine Davies)*