



HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

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Informed Opinion About Fire and Development

– see pages 6-7

Nigel Bell was responsible for the design of the modern Conservation Hut which opened in 1993. The *Hut News* Team much appreciates his timely explanation of how fire risk has been assessed up until now in approving developments, particularly when the NSW Government introduction of fast-track approval processes is currently so controversial.



Fungi facts – More than just mushrooms

When people hear the term fungi, they usually think of mushrooms. Indeed, the word fungus is a Latin word meaning mushroom. However, most fungal species are microscopic and include the moulds, rusts, yeasts and mildews.

There are also a range of different fungi species that live in a close beneficial relationship with an algae to create the combined "organism" known as a lichen. There are tens of thousands of species of lichen that are found even in the most hostile environments on Earth such as deserts and Antarctica.

Another key trait of fungi is that they aren't mobile, except for their spores which are mostly dispersed in the air. Fungi are also known for absorbing their food from the environment by breaking down pretty much all forms of organic matter – alive or dead.

Fungi are possibly the second most diverse group of organisms after the insects. There are estimates that the number of species of fungi is somewhere between 1.5 and 5 million, but there are only around 120,000 species that have been formally described by scientists who study fungi (mycologists). The vast majority are still to be discovered and described so it is likely that huge numbers will go extinct before we can find them all.

Source: Botanic Gardens of Sydney – Discover and Learn.

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

THIS MONTH

Annual General Meeting – Saturday 11 April, 2pm
Mid Mountains Community Centre

After close of business, there will be light refreshments and a guest speaker: **Eilish McMaster**, a scientific officer at Sydney Botanic Gardens, will talk about a very rare and endangered Blue Mountains plant, the Dwarf Mountain Pine (*Pherosphaera fitzgeraldii*). It grows only in Katoomba, Leura and Wentworth Falls in the Blue Mountains and is confined to the spray zone of waterfalls and on ledges on a 9km stretch of cliffs facing south-east to south-west.

Free registration (to help with catering):

<https://events.humanitix.com/annual-general-meeting-2026>



Autumn is a time for getting up close and personal with Blue Mountains fungi.
(photo by Alethea Morison)

Public Forum – The Future of Nature Laws Sunday 3 May, 1.30pm-5pm

Tibbi Whalan Hall (Civic Arcade),
Level 1/81-83 Katoomba St, Katoomba

Join Resilient Blue Mountains and the Macquarie Alliance for Climate for a vital Public Forum exploring Australia's new Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation reforms. Discover what the changes to the Environment Protection Reform Bills mean for our community at local, state, and federal levels.

- **Expert Panel** featuring Bob Debus (Chair of Wilderness Australia), Federal Member Susan Templeman, State MP Trish Doyle, Mayor Mark Greenhill and representatives from leading environmental organisations.
- **Interactive Q&A**, so bring your questions and join the discussion.
- **Networking**. Enjoy light refreshments and connect with fellow attendees after the forum.

Entry is by donation (\$5 to \$20)

Reserve your spot now

<https://resilientbluemountains.org/event/future-of-nature-laws/>

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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.



From the President

This will be my last report as President of this fine Society. I have very much valued my time as President and the opportunities it has brought me to work with people across the conservation and public space network. It is always inspiring to talk to our members, who have such a wealth of knowledge and such a depth of devotion to this remarkable part of the world. I have learned so very much about the history of the Blue Mountains and how the national parks and World Heritage Area came to be, and the amazing folk who kept driving the campaign and didn't give up. Such foresight and strong vision have been rewarded with a magical place preserved into the future. Thank you for being members of this amazing organisation and for supporting my term as President.

I thank the various groups that network with the Society. The Blue Mountains City Council is implementing a stewardship model for the Blue Mountains, applying also to tourism. Our Council has been the first government entity in Australia to commit to the integration of the "Rights of Nature" principles and practices into its mode of operation. The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, whose management and staff work hard to maintain the health of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and always find the time to chat to Society members. The National Parks Association of NSW, Nature Conservation Council, Science for Wildlife, Wilderness Australia, the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute and many other groups. Our local MP, Trish Doyle, is a Society member and always welcomes our discussions.

The conservation community in the Blue Mountains is strong, because it revolves around a shared love of place – our beautiful bushland, with its clean air, rich fauna and dark sky. Now, more than ever, people need natural spaces to spend time relaxing and resetting. Going out into a forest for a picnic, for a walk, to look at plants, insects, lizards or birds, helps to unwind and connect to nature. It's as important for adults as for children.

To end on a high note – the Society is a Sydney Basin Koala Network (SBKN) partner. They have been developing a "bold vision for landscape-scale habitat connectivity across Greater Sydney" which includes our GBMWH koalas, as our area is part of the Sydney Basin Bioregion. This connectivity plan will help establish, retain and revegetate corridors for koalas to safely move between various populations helping prevent the local extinction of koalas in populations which become isolated. This Greater Sydney Corridors Plan includes legal protection mechanisms which will help when conservation groups are campaigning to stop the fragmentation of these vegetated corridors. You can have a look at the report on this link: <https://bit.ly/4cIpEW8> There is also the interactive "Greater Sydney Koala Corridors Map" on the link. You can check out areas of interest and also all recorded koala sightings since 1960. Makes for interesting viewing!

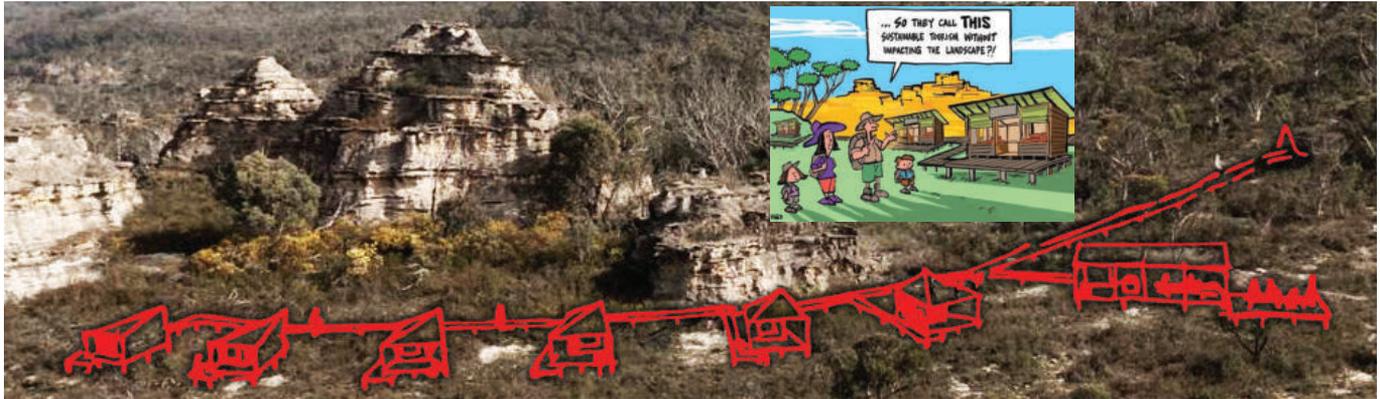
– Annette Cam president@bluemountains.org.au

Join Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Find out how you can help preserve our beautiful World Heritage Area.

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

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



Stop the Glamping Invasion

The Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area is under threat from an unlikely source: the NPWS. A current proposal seeks to build three commercial glamping resorts within internationally rare platy pagoda landscapes.

The NPWS has mislabelled these pristine sites as “degraded” to by-pass conservation hurdles. However, site evidence shows these areas are near-pristine and home to important flora, including the nationally endangered *Banksia penicillata*.

Why This Matters

- **The Damage:** The project involves greywater waste systems with massive mounds of imported soil placed on sandstone plates which risk spreading weeds and pathogens like root rot.
- **Dangerous Precedent:** If we allow commercial resorts in our most significant heritage areas, no National Park in Australia is safe from development.
- **Governance Failure:** The NPWS is acting as both proponent and approver, creating a massive conflict of interest that relies on seasonally limited and statistically thin biodiversity data to flag approval for this glamping resort plan.

Take Action Now

We must act before these rare landscapes are leased away. Please write to [Premier Chris Minns](#) and [Minister Penny Sharpe](#) today.¹

Oppose the resort development. Demand a stay on all leasing until an independent environmental review is conducted. Tell them that tourism infrastructure belongs in Lithgow, where it can support the local economy without destroying the very heritage people come to see.

The Gardens of Stone should remain a place managed for nature, not for luxury glamping resorts. Ask that they stop this irresponsible shift in park management.

¹ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/pages/ministers.aspx>

Stop the Glamping Invasion – protect our Parks

Public Meeting, Katoomba Community Centre, 81-83 Katoomba St

Wednesday April 8, 2026 – 6.30-9.00pm

Speakers:

Sue Higginson, Greens MLC – the NSW park development threats
 Prof Ali Chauvenet, Griffith Uni – the tourism industry’s national park plans
 Trish Doyle, MP – NSW Government’s view
 Keith Muir – Gardens of Stone resort issues

Commercial lease plans have involved park managers in a conflict of interest where rare examples of outstanding natural beauty are being targeted for development.

Come to the meeting and find out what needs to be done to stop it.

Gardens of Stone Alliance member organisation launches legal challenge over zombie Angus Place mine

A member of the Gardens of Stone Alliance, the conservation group 4nature, has launched legal proceedings seeking to compel the rehabilitation of the mothballed Angus Place coal mine near Lithgow. The disused mine continues to discharge polluted water into the Coxs River, part of Sydney’s drinking water catchment.

The case, filed in the NSW Land and Environment Court on 8 January 2026, challenges an October 2025 decision by the Independent Planning Commission (IPC) that allowed Centennial Coal to modify its development consent for the mine. 4nature argues that the original approval for Angus Place had already expired in August 2024, meaning the mine should have been rehabilitated by that date.

Instead, rehabilitation has not occurred, and large volumes of groundwater continue to be pumped from the inactive mine. According to 4nature, up to 13 million litres of groundwater per day is still being extracted from underground workings and much of this water ultimately discharged into the Coxs River.

The group is seeking court orders to overturn the IPC’s modification decision and require Centennial Coal to prepare and implement a rehabilitation plan within twelve months. 4nature president, Andrew Cox, said the company should not be allowed to defer its obligations indefinitely. Delayed rehabilitation, he argues, risks ongoing impacts on local rivers and the broader Sydney drinking water catchment.

The case is being run by the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO), a public-interest environmental law centre that represents community groups in legal challenges relating to environmental protection. 4nature’s case contends that the IPC did not have the legal authority to extend the consent as it had already lapsed, raising broader questions about regulatory oversight and the enforcement of rehabilitation requirements.

Coal production at Angus Place ceased in 2015, though Centennial continues to operate other mines in the Lithgow region. The current proceedings do not affect any active mines.

For the Gardens of Stone Alliance and its member groups, the case highlights a long-standing concern: ensuring that legacy coal mines are properly rehabilitated and that waterways feeding Sydney’s drinking water supply are protected from ongoing pollution.

A directions hearing took place on 13 March 2026. More to come.

– **Steph Lentz**

Are small investors the future of sustainable housing?

– Mega-projects and market failure – *Opinion by Don Morison*

Conservationists have opposed certain large construction proposals while environmentally and financially viable housing has become less accessible. Is government supporting giant projects, whose advocates are unjustifiably linking their schemes to sustainable housing?

The troubles with mega-projects

Among mega-projects in government-backed delivery pipelines are Badgerys airport, the hypothetical Newcastle to Sydney express train and large building projects in the Blue Mountains. The Blackheath-Little Hartley tunnel could become another. They are typical of schemes whose drawbacks include:

- Local communities and organisations are almost always manipulated out of any real say about the environmental and social effects.
- They put huge pressure on supply of labour and building materials, excluding from commencement projects that could be useful and sustainable.
- Government spending increases, worsening the interest rates that harm less advantaged people the most.
- Projects like fast rail can require an intense and rapid increase in the concentration of residences and workplaces to be viable. NSW residents would not like policies that severely discriminated in favour of those living or working around two or three stations on a Newcastle fast train route. Sustainability could be better achieved if density of destinations for all journeys was modified by less expensive improvements to multiple transport modes.
- Mega-projects often involve clandestine deals and “commercial in confidence” rules applied to public money. Future generations of taxpayers can be held to ransom by arrangements governments have no mandate for.

What are the alternatives?

Patterns of development in Greater Sydney do need to change. Are there alternatives that would let owners of small properties including owner/builders, mortgage holders and the more modest renovators have a chance to financially breathe while gradually transforming the housing stock of Greater Sydney? Rules and policies of certain local councils need modification. Politicians have prescribed cures that are worse than the disease for housing shortages and associated problems.

People who care about the natural and built environments of their local areas are resentful that as soon as one mega-project is abandoned, more mega-projects rear their heads and everyone’s energy is consumed by what masquerades as consultation.

There needs to be negotiations involving all levels of government to chart a new course. If there are to be statutory bodies, such as the NSW Government’s “Housing Delivery Authority” (a new entity with legal power to override traditional approval processes), they need to operate under more sensitive guidelines. Economists describe as “market failure” a situation where leaving outcomes to so-called free market forces results in inequities and catastrophes that need carefully targeted intervention by government to prevent. That would certainly appear to be the case with the future of sustainable housing in NSW.

MEGA PROJECTS ... EXTRA AIRPORTS ... BIG HYDRO POWER ... HIGH VOLTAGE NETWORKS ... LONG DISTANCE SUPER TRAINS ... RESIDENTIAL MULTI HIGH RISES ... LARGE RESORTS/AMUSEMENT PARKS ... TALLER DAM WALLS ... WIDER MOTORWAYS AND ROAD TUNNELS ... POLITICIANS IN HARD HATS AND HIGH VIZ ... PLANNING INTEGRITY BYPASSED ... COMMERCIAL “IN CONFIDENCE” PARTNERSHIPS ... DELAYS AND COST BLOWOUTS ... MORE MEGA PROJECTS

Narrow Neck Road: Preparing for the Next Stage

Thank you for the strong attendance at community meetings about 142–150 Narrow Neck Road, Katoomba. Thoughtful questions were raised. It’s clear that many of you care about the precedent this development could set.

This proposal is being assessed under the NSW Government’s Housing Delivery Authority (HDA) fast-track pathway – the first time in the Blue Mountains. Once the developer lodges the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS),

it will be on public exhibition for just 14 days. Community submissions will be critical for the assessment process.

Please begin preparing now. Familiarise yourself with the key issues. Consider what matters most to you about the proposal. Our campaign webpage contains background information and a submission guide.

Keep an eye on our weekly e-blasts and campaign page for the latest information.

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

Blue Mountains Not Another Suburb of Sydney

LEAVING Mt RIVERVIEW

It's the known, the familiar
That made this place our home
The view across the valley
The bush we loved to roam.

It's the brilliance of the colours
As day begins to rest
The vesper sounds accompanying
Bird flights to their nest.

It's the wildflowers that surround us
Their colourful displays
Beloved tracks that we wandered
Through the bushland maze.

It's our children's precious memories
Forged from every year
As caves and secret places
Would wonderously appear.

When flames stalked the ridge line
Then jumped the valley floor
And forced us all to question
Should we live here any more?

It's the rockeries and pathways
That spill across the land
The many rocks that formed them
Placed there by my own hand.

When the creek ran wildly
We heard its thunderous roar
The rushing sound of water
Along the valley floor.

The ebb and flow, perpetual
On a summer's night
Of sound waves from cicadas
Bidding us goodnight.

It's the python at our door step
The brown snakes on the go
Lyrebirds trashing gardens
Cockies white as snow.

Trees crashing on our roof top
Inside cascades of rain
The good and bad together
The happiness and pain.

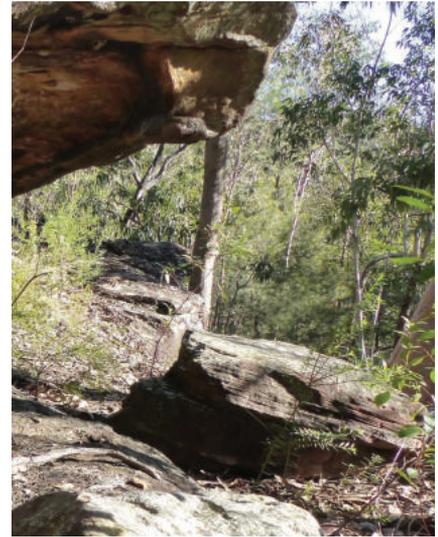
The constant, searching bower bird
For anything that's blue
The possums' thud across the roof
As if they're coming through.

Let's not forget that python
Who seemed to stay each year
Up there in our ceiling
Always wanting to be near.

And now it's time for leaving
This place so long our home
Fond memories travel with us
Regardless where we roam.

Jim Low
December 2022

On the first day of 2021 my wife and I moved to Mt Victoria. For over forty years we had lived at Mt Riverview where we raised our two daughters. Our bushland block there overlooked a valley and creek. Over the years we never tired of this view or its wonders when exploring its vastness.



A report card on the Kedumba Valley Escarpment

Part 3. Environmental impacts at Gordon Falls Park Reserve

The Gordon Falls Reserve is managed by Blue Mountains City Council and adjoins land managed by NSW National Parks within the World Heritage area. Since the construction of the upgraded facilities to the Gordon Falls Reserve in Leura, there have been several noticeable negative impacts to the natural environment in the surrounding area. These are the dieback of numerous native trees and other native flora, increase in invasive flora, erosion of slopes, slope instability and tree falls, and the ongoing collapse of a hanging swamp on the cliff top below the site.

From initial observations it is possible that these impacts are likely to have been the result of increased hard impermeable surface area, changes to stormwater runoff, and the changes in soil pH due to increased concrete surface area at the site. Some of these impacts may predate the upgrades but likely have been accelerated by them.

The collapse of the hanging swamp below appears to be ongoing. It is possible that further erosion and future high rainfall events may cause catastrophic slope collapse. This could possibly damage the population of endangered Dwarf Mountain Pines directly below the swamp collapse area.

This development has failed to properly assess the environmental impacts of the surrounding natural area

and consider the fragile ecology and hydrology within the catchment of the site. Even with World Heritage status and endangered plants of significance the impacts may have not been properly considered or not fully understood.

– Liam Ramage, Threatened Species Officer



Image: *Eucalyptus dieback* at Gordon Falls Reserve.
(Liam Ramage)

The deadline for May *Hut News* is 12 April
hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

BUSHFIRE PLANNING and DESIGN – Nigel Bell

Bushfires cause damage to people and property in five main ways: burning ember attack, radiant heat, direct flame contact, smoke, and the strong erratic winds, often generated by the fire itself. And the Blue Mountains has the highest bushfire risk in NSW with 74% of all properties deemed bushfire prone (with Kur-ring-gai second at 39%). So, bushfire hazard and risk to people and buildings is a fundamental matter for all of us living within hundreds of metres of native bushland vegetation. And even more so when we're close to native bushland on sloping land. Many existing properties would never now be approved – as planning conditions and building costs become prohibitive.

ASSESSING RISK

Perhaps surprisingly, data has shown it is **burning embers** (leaves, twigs, even branches) that can travel kilometres away from the fire front that lead to 80%-90% of all building losses. The common weakness being gaps and cracks plus combustible materials that can lead to ignitions that may quickly become unstoppable.

Radiant heat is measured in kilowatts per square metre and is the basis of the *Bushfire Attack Level (BAL)*, which is the measure officially used to assess building risk in *Australian Standard AS 3959:2018*. That BAL scale starts at Low, then through BAL-12.5, BAL-19, BAL-29, BAL-40 and on to BAL-Flame Zone (the numbers show watts per square metre radiant heat). Bodies can only withstand a few kW of radiant heat, but common building materials can usually manage up to BAL-29 (a medium-high rating). Past that rating, increasingly specialised and costly materials, windows, doors, shutters and roof construction must be used. And this is all highly regulated.

Flame contact occurs when and where a fire-front touches a building most particularly for BAL-FZ, most commonly after heat and ember attack in combination. The slope under the vegetation is crucial, as speed and fire intensity doubles with every 10 degrees upslope.

Vegetation type and strong winds are other key ingredients that control bushfire intensity, which is why our westerlies on High, Extreme and now 'Catastrophic' bushfire risk days are worrying – we certainly don't want an ignition.

So, understanding your risk is the starting point. Within a common Mountains scenario where a building is upslope and within 20–50 metres from unmanaged native vegetation (bushland) it's frequently determined to be BAL-FZ to AS 3959. However, within NSW, the Rural Fire Service *Planning for Bushfire Protection: 2019* utilizes



"After the fire" – Images by John Turner

even lesser distances (measuring predominant vegetation to the building) that increases the BAL from the national Standard.

LESSONS for BUSHFIRE BUILDING

So, from this brief analysis, what are the key bushfire and building matters?

- Preferably, locate and site buildings away from bushland and away from steeper slopes and ridges.
- Understand what's required for *Asset Protection Zones* around buildings (see RFS online publication) including defensible space.
- Carefully manage bushland (where permissible), gardens and windbreaks and enhance stored water supplies.
- Know your BAL – engage an accredited Bushfire Assessment consultant early for advice.
- Use experienced local practitioners to plan, design and construct for bushfire and your BAL (dealing with the regulations is complex).
- Simple measures can enhance bushfire safety for existing houses, but building anew within high/extreme BALs can add hundreds of thousands of dollars to construction.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Australian Standard AS 3959:2018 Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas (expensive, and about to be updated, Standards Australia).

Standards Australia: *Construction of buildings and maintenance of properties in bushfire-prone areas – Part 2: Consumer manual*,

Homeowners Manual HB208.2

(free, to be released soon).

NSW Rural Fire Service publications online:

<https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/resources/>

including:

Continued page 7

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- *Planning for Bushfire Protection: 2019* (about to be updated)
- Asset Protection Zones
- Bushfire Survival Plan

Sanctuary (magazine)

- Issue 53, Nigel Bell 'Beating Bushfire: retrofitting for safer homes...'
- Issue 55, Nigel Bell 'Designed to Last: the house that survived two bushfires'.



NIGEL BELL

Nigel is principal (retired) of *ECOdesign Architects*, working across the Blue Mountains and elsewhere as a national leader in sustainability and bushfire building for decades. He's been active across the three Australian Standards regarding bushfire (including refuges and water-spray systems), an expert witness to the 2020 Royal Commission and involved in the last decade of the *Australian Bushfire Building Conference* held annually in the Mountains. He led bushfire recovery in Marysville Victoria (2009). He's written, reported and presented on bushfire planning design and construction matters from schools to universities and many professional audiences.

Could this Plant Become Another Environmental Weed in the Blue Mountains?

The red valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) is an ornamental garden plant introduced from Europe. Recently this species was planted in the centre of Blackheath Village around the intersection of Govetts Leap Road and Wentworth Street.

This plant is an environmental weed in parts of Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. It has also been declared an invasive weed in South Africa and New Zealand.

The red valerian has already been seen naturalising in the road cuttings at Victoria Pass, in Mt Victoria. We need to be aware that popular garden plants can become incredibly destructive environmental weeds and recognise the benefits of planting local native plants in our gardens and public land.

– **Liam Ramage, Threatened Species Officer**



Naturalised red valerian in Mt Victoria.



Plantings of red valerian around Blackheath Village, once flowering finishes numerous seeds are spread in the wind.

Roots and all success for Environmental Weeds Campaign!

The Society's Spring-Summer (2025-26) Environmental Weeds Campaign concluded in January. As well as *Hut News*, Facebook and E-News publicity, this session featured ten advertisements in the *Blue Mountains Gazette*, up from six in 2024-25. Three half-page advertisements were tried for the first time and they were certainly prominent. An interview on 2BLU-FM program, *Rights Rorts and Rants* with Nick Franklin helped to spread the message.

As well as publicising the Blue Mountains E-weeds problem and solutions, the campaign is also an exercise in community outreach: connecting beyond the Society's traditional/standard audience. Positive themes are supported: environmentally friendly gardening, fostering indigenous wildlife, community ecological literacy.

An encouraging range of enquiries was received from local property owners and other members of the public. And of course, the campaign provides excellent public exposure for the Society.

Maintaining the ecological health of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWA) is one of the Society's major objectives and consistent messaging of this issue is required. Roll on the 2026-27 campaign, bigger and better! Your suggestions and feedback are welcome.

— **BMCS Bushcare Officer**
bushcare@bluemountains.org.au

Hut News Trivia: Question 21

Are insects animals? Yes, or No.

The answer can be found on another page of this Newsletter.

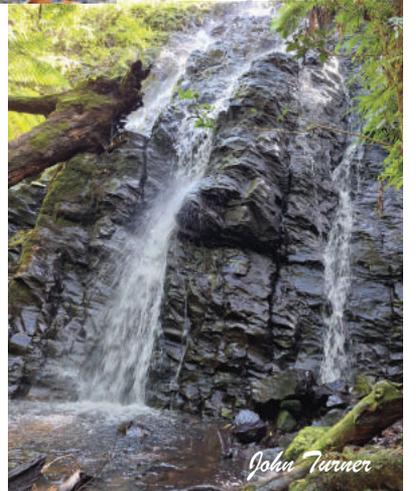
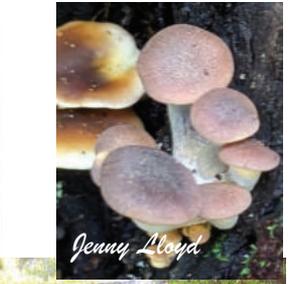
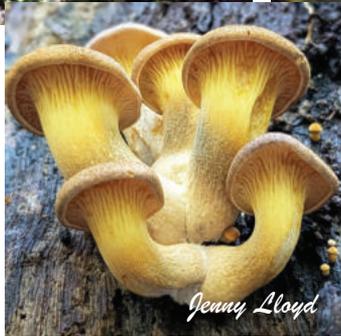
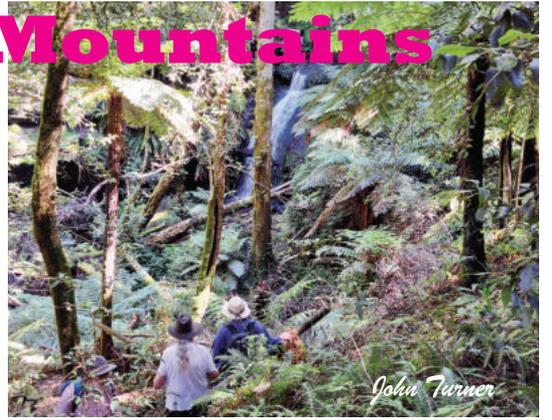
BMCC NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

Native plants will be on sale at the Blackheath Growers Market on **Sunday, 12 April (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

Autumn in the Blue Mountains

Autumn is a good time to see mushrooms and other fungi. The Thursday Interpretive Bushwalking Group (TING) went to Mount Wilson on 11 March. Two of our keen photographers took some wonderful photos along the Waterfalls Walk.



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



What a difference a day makes

The Monday walking group has visited Bridal Veil Falls Lookout twice in the past months. The first date was 19 January when our walk to Butterbox was cancelled due to rain. Then again on 16 February as part of a cliff top walk to the Leura Cascades. A totally different experience. Both beautiful and mystic examples of our beautiful scenery.

— Marian Haire



Letter to the Editor

I enjoyed the Member's night. It was so jam-packed with information and actions to take, I'm glad that I had a pen and paper handy.

One of the many suggestions that I took up was to attend the Aboriginal Cultural Tour at Echo Point, which is currently on trial. Uncle Chris Tobin gave an excellent talk.

The saying 'We have so much to learn from our First Australians' is so true, and I believe there is a relevance to conservationists. It just deserved a bigger audience than only me.

Here's an opportunity to listen and learn, as well as support a transition to sustainable stewardship. Find out more and book ahead: <https://bit.ly/470iBHY>
Regards, Karen Taylor

Living Near the Bush: the environmentally friendly garden Bird netting, fencing and native wildlife safety

Local gardens and properties contain valuable natural resources, and frequently attract wildlife. However, hazards like bird netting and wire fences, especially barbed wire fencing, often inflict serious and fatal injuries. Animals trapped inside netted areas can become extremely distressed, and often die of exhaustion.

Avoid using bird netting. Where netting is absolutely essential, ensure that holes are too small to poke a finger through (less than 5 x 5mm). Do not use netting that has a large net hole size, or low visibility, or that is not properly installed and maintained. Use the wildlife friendly netting recommended by WIRES

<https://www.wires.org.au/wildlife-information/wildlife-friendly-netting>

Please do not use barbed wire. Remove any existing barbed wire. Also, check the visibility of fencing. The *Wildlife friendly fencing and netting* website has lots of great advice on netting and fencing, so take a look. But first, a warning: the illustrations of harmed wildlife are quite distressing. See <https://wildlifefriendlyfencing.org/>

For lots more on environmentally friendly gardening, see <https://bluemountains.org.au/environmentally-friendly-garden.shtml>

Happy gardening!

— BMCS Bushcare Officer



These garden Crimson Bottlebrushes (*Callistemon citrinus*) are highly valued by resident wildlife, including Red Wattlebirds.

Peter Ardill 2025

New ban on dangerous rodent poisons is lifeline for our native animals

Source: The Conversation, 13/3/26,
<https://bit.ly/4bsGhD2>

The federal pesticides regulator has announced a ban on the sale of a type of rodent poisons called second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs). These commonly used rat baits will be taken off the shelf at retail outlets.

These rodent poisons are lethal for wildlife. The active chemicals in these baits persist for up to 248 days in the tissues of the animals who eat them. When predators such as owls or goannas eat the poisoned rodents, these chemicals accumulate in their livers. The more rodents an animal eats, the higher the concentrations of chemicals that builds up.

The removal of these toxic rodent baits from public sale will save countless native animals from suffering, and improve the outlook for many threatened species. First-generation rodent poisons and non-coagulant baits that are better for wildlife will remain available for home users. But there are many alternatives to try first before reaching for those baits. These include cage traps, snap traps, electric traps, good hygiene practices and rodent-proofing. The owls and goannas will thank you.

If you have rodent poisons in your cupboard, please have a look at the label. SGARs can be kept in a safe place (unused) until the next Council Household Chemical CleanOut Event.*

• **Blue Mountains City Council has twice yearly Household Chemical CleanOut Events. The next one is at Katoomba on Saturday 16 May 2026, 9am to 3.30pm. Poisons and other hazardous chemicals CANNOT GO IN THE BIN.**

<https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/hazardous-waste/chemicals>

A history of the Blue Mountains walking tracks

The Blue Mountains network of walking tracks is unique in Australia's history. How did it all come about? The story starts in the 1800s and continues today with restoration of the old tracks and creation of new ones by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Blue Mountains City Council.

In 1998, Jim Smith completed the **Blue Mountains Heritage Track Study**. *Hut News* published a series of excerpts from the **Historical Report** which discusses the period from the 1830s to the 1960s, when most of the tracks were made. These excerpts are being republished for the edification of present-day bushwalkers and others who love the Blue Mountains.

Part 1. The First Constructed Walking Tracks

The 1832 *Post Office Directory*, in describing the landmarks of the western road between the Nepean River and Wellington, encouraged travellers to leave the road for the purpose of enjoying the scenery at only two places: at the *Weatherboard Inn* (Wentworth Falls) and *Gardner's Inn* (Blackheath).

At Wentworth Falls it was stated that "the wild scenery of the inaccessible valley into which it (the falls) vanishes is well worth the travellers' attention". At Blackheath the guide said there "is another fine cataract, named Govetts Leap". Thus, the *Post Office Directory* could be considered to contain the first tourist's guide to the Blue Mountains.

The two innkeepers had probably by this time cut rough tracks from their inns to the two sights mentioned. These tracks could be considered the first constructed walking tracks in the region.

Both tracks were used by Charles Darwin in 1836. Darwin carried the 1835 edition of the *Post Office Directory* which had added a few lines of poetry on the mountain air at Wentworth Falls. These lines, the only ones in that austere publication, began a long tradition of poetic and romanticised descriptions of Blue Mountain scenery in guide books. Darwin's own more scientific descriptions of the two sights, published in 1839, brought international attention to these two early "bushwalks".

The next bushwalking track to be constructed was made especially for the visit of Queen Victoria's son Prince Alfred in 1868. The Colonial Secretary, Henry Parkes organised the construction of a carriage road from the Weatherboard railway station, to the edge of the escarpment. From there a walking track was made to the lookout known today as Princes Rock. Trees were cleared from around the rock to improve the view.

Next Month: A remarkable period of private track construction.



The Wentworth Falls (then called the Weatherboard Falls) featured prominently in early Blue Mountains sightseeing. These photos depict a reminder of Darwin's 1836 visit and the prominence of the Princes Rock Lookout, named after the royal visit of 1868.

Images: Princes Rock (Alethea Morison), Wentworth Falls and the Darwin sign (Laura Irvine).

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

The Tasmanian branch of the Wilderness Society is mounting a renewed effort to have the Spero-Wanderer Wilderness added to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA). Read more: "**A hole in World Heritage**", Ian Brown (*Hut News* March 2026). In the printed version of March 2026 *Hut News*, the links given were incorrect.

Correction:

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>





BUSHWALKING: Enjoy the bush, learn about the Blue Mountains natural environment and find out why bushwalking has been a popular pastime in the Blue Mountains for more than 100 years. Our bushwalking convenor is Doug Nicholls dougnicholls@bigpond.com phone 0455 850 753.

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

Underneath is a brief summary of walks and leaders for this month.

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

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

All walks are Grade 3 unless indicated otherwise.

April 13 **Walls Lookout and Rigby Hill** 4.5kms. Leader **Wayne and Mary 0407 643 512**

April 20 **Pierces Pass** 4.5km, 500m descent. Leader **Lyn 0432 352 850**

April 27 April no walk scheduled due to Public Holiday

May 3 **Blue Gum Swamp** 10kms, 350m ascent/descent. Leader **Bill 0407 271 685**

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

April 7 **Lizard Log-Western Sydney Parkland and Sydney International Equestrian Centre G3/9K,**
Doug 0455 850 753

April 14 **Birdwood Gully and Madeline Glen G2/6K, Maurice 0402 402 783**

April 21 **Dee Why to Manly G1-2/6K, Anna 0403 711 457, Imma 0422 313 828**

April 28 **Pope's Glen and Braeside track G3/6.5K, Sharon Cox 0404 622 525**

May 5 **Zoo to Balmoral G2/6K, Marilyn 0409 924 663, John 0400 990 444**

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS are 2-3 hours and are conducted at a leisurely pace.

Coordinator: **Beverley Thompson 4757 2076** denfenella12@gmail.com

April 9 **Circuit walk to Gordon Falls and Bridal Veil Falls Lookouts, Leura Grade 2 Ros 0417 261 465**

April 16 **Point Pilcher fire trail to stunning view Grade 2 Angela 0427 133 327**

April 23 **Marks Tomb, Medlow Bath Grade 2 Maurice 0402 402 783**

April 30 **Wentworth Falls Lake Grade 1 Gordon 0410 691 397**

May 7 **Glenbrook lookouts, 5kms. Grade 2 Ros 0417 261 465**

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

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.



*An orchid blooms in March 2026 near the circular driveway to Wentworth Falls lookout.
(photo by Laura Irvine)*

Hut News Trivia: Answer to Question 21 **Are insects animals? Yes, or No** **The answer is YES**

Insects are animals and like all animals, insects are multicellular organisms that respire using oxygen (without lungs), reproduce sexually, eat and move. They belong to the animal class Insecta, which, with over one million living species discovered and described and estimates of 10 million or more to be found, is by far the biggest class within the animal kingdom.

Insects are part of the phylum (division) *Arthropoda*, making them a diverse group within the animal kingdom. The *Arthropoda* is divided into a number of classes. These include the:

- *Crustacea* (crabs, crayfish, prawns)
- *Arachnida* (spiders, mites, scorpions)
- *Myriapoda* (millipedes and centipedes)
- *Insecta* (insects)

Arthropods are characterised by having the following features:

- a hard external skeleton (called an exoskeleton)
- a segmented body
- at least three pairs of jointed legs

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

What to look for in the Blue Mountains



Golf balls and Gang-gang cockatoos

I have just walked from Sublime Point to the Conservation Hut. My kids and I collect golf balls and re sell them. Funnily enough I had found a golf ball in the bush and had it in my pocket when I came across your golf ball article (**Lost Golf Balls-the environmental cost**, *Hut News* March 2026). Yesterday, while walking out towards Mount Hay I saw these gang-gang cockatoos, so quiet and just nibbling. *Gorgeous!*

Erin (Leura resident), 17/3/26.

Signs of Autumn: The Great Honeyeater Migration, currawongs flocking, Banksias flowering. Look for other native flowers. Mixed species of birds flocking together. Leaf-curling Spiders. Fungi in all shapes and colours! – **make a list in your nature diary.**



BIRDS ON THE MOVE

Each autumn, with the arrival of cooler weather, tiny birds migrate to find food further north. April 2020 surveys in the Blue Mountains and Central Coast recorded thousands of Honeyeaters migrating through per hour! Silvereyes will also be passing through, some will have flown 1000kms to reach here, all the way from Tasmania.

In Adelina's garden in the upper mountains some of the summer residents, including the Eastern Spinebills and the White-Browed Scrubwren family, depart for more sheltered areas. The scrubwrens return in the spring to build a nest and raise their new family.

Unusual visitors to Adelina's garden in March included a young Eastern Yellow Robin beginning to gain its yellow plumage and, briefly, a young Eastern Whipbird trying to find its voice.

Adelina

FUNGI – Mount Wilson



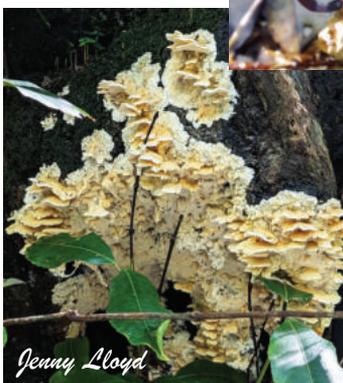
Jenny Lloyd



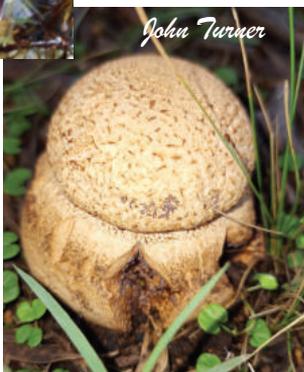
Jenny Lloyd



John Turner



Jenny Lloyd



Surprise visitors *In the forty years we have lived in Hazelbrook we had never seen these birds, a friend identified them as Tawny Frogmouths, they have returned a couple of times since, roosting in a neighbours tree. Welcome!*



Tawny Frogmouths are nocturnal birds. During the day, they perch on tree branches, often low down, camouflaged as part of the tree. They are often confused with owls but are more closely related to the nightjars. The Tawny Frogmouth is found throughout Australia. Its voice is a soft, deep and continuous low oom oom oom. Also makes a loud hissing noise when threatened. (Australian Museum)

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*, send your stories, photos and drawings to Adelina:

hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

or post to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.