



Surviving the Inferno: Greater Glider conservation before and after the Black Summer bushfires

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society's June members event featured a presentation by ecologist and conservation practitioner Melina Budden. Melina shared insights from her extensive conservation career, which includes biodiversity surveys and ecological research and rescue. During the Black Summer bushfires, she worked on the firegrounds coordinating wildlife search and rescue operations, identifying critical habitat areas through biodiversity and fire mapping, and helping develop emergency wildlife feeding guidelines later adopted by government agencies. Melina is also the founder of the Blue Mountains Wombat Conservation group.

Drawing on her doctoral research at the University of Newcastle, titled *Surviving the Inferno and Anthropocentric Climate Change: Addressing Key Knowledge Gaps in Greater Glider Conservation*, Melina examined how severe bushfires, habitat fragmentation, climate change and the loss of refuge habitats are affecting the long-term survival of this highly specialised arboreal marsupial.



Greater glider: Melina Budden

Her work highlights the increasing challenges faced by forest-dependent species in a changing climate and the importance of understanding ecosystem recovery after fires.

The presentation emphasised the urgent need for integrated conservation strategies that combine rigorous ecological science, habitat protection, climate adaptation planning, effective environmental governance, and community involvement.

Annette Sartor, president@bluemountains.org.au

High pathogenicity H5N1 bird flu:

update July 2026

Scientists using sampling collected from Heard Island, an Australian territory 4,000 kilometres from Perth, have confirmed about 13,000 baby seals from a group of 17,000 on the island were killed by the H5N1 strain of bird flu. The scientists also found more deaths than expected in penguin populations. Several hundred dead adult king penguins were observed. Six out of nine species on Heard Island have now tested positive for the H5N1 strain, including southern elephant seals, king penguins, gentoo penguins, Antarctic fur seals and South Georgia diving petrels.

Both drone surveys and ground visits were used to collect samples from the nine species. Scientists believe bird flu was probably introduced to the islands last August from migrating birds from the French-owned Crozet Islands, about 1,800 km away. Early risk assessments for Australia had focused on the potential introduction of H5N1 from

the north, particularly from migrating birds. The movement of the virus across vast distances in the subantarctic made the risk of entry to Australia via the south more plausible.

On 20 June 2026 the agriculture minister, Julie Collins, confirmed that a brown skua bird found unwell last Sunday at Cape Le Grand national park near Esperance in southern Western Australia had died from H5N1. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the government's first priority was to 'restrict the spread' after the first confirmed case of H5N1 bird flu was confirmed on mainland Australia.

If you find sick or dead birds or animals, the Australian Centre for Disease Control says:

- avoid the area
- do not handle the birds or animals
- record your location and what you see (take photos or video, if possible), also GPS reading
- report this information to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

The following is a link to information about H5 bird flu compiled by the Australian Government.

<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/campaigns/birdflu>

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President's report

Throughout June, Blue Mountains Conservation Society continued achieving advocacy outcomes, strengthening community connections and advancing several significant projects and campaigns.

These included submissions on the Wolgan MOD4 Helicopter Flights Proposal, the federal government's environment laws reform consultation papers, and the proposed Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) and the proposed Offsets Standards. We also lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman regarding the release of feral trout into Wentworth Falls Lake and submitted a grant application for a proposed campaign proposal on Blue Mountains Rivers.

The Society continues campaigns against inappropriate developments, including at 142-150 Narrow Neck Road, and other environmental threats. As a member of the Gardens of Stone Alliance, we oppose Centennial Coal's expansion of the Clarence, Springvale and Angus Place underground mines. We provided recommendations to the Blue Mountains City Council on the Active Transport Link – Great Blue Mountains Trail – Upper Mountains.

Community education and engagement remain a key focus with the *Living Near the Bush* booklet's flyer on display in Blue Mountains City Council libraries. The Society also began its support of the Hawkesbury Education Network Birding Program in local Blue Mountains schools, and hosted a successful member event at the Conservation Hut featuring Melina Budden (PhD) speaking on greater glider conservation following the 2019–2020 bushfires (see separate articles). Thank you to those who assisted on the evening: Jo Carroll, Nathalie Verellen, Lyndal Sullivan, Carolyn Williams, Kylie Gabriel, Kathy Husselbee and new member Dave Cox.

We continue to seek members willing to step into several important volunteer roles and contribute to conservation, advocacy and community engagement:

- Nursery Manager – oversees nursery operations across propagation and sales sites, including the management of materials, volunteers and finances.
- Events Coordinator – organises events for members and the broader Blue Mountains community.
- Meetings Secretary – prepares agendas and minutes for monthly Management Committee meetings and the Annual General Meeting.

Contact Annette Sartor on Society related issues or for further information on vacant positions.

Annette Sartor, 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.

A Blue Mountains Conservation Society initiative

“Clean the Blue Mountains Rivers”

The river that connects us

The Coxs River is one of the significant river systems in the Blue Mountains, flowing from Lithgow into Warragamba Dam. Pollution threatens the river's water quality, wildlife and community health. Platypus populations are important indicators of river health.

The river not only supports native wildlife but is a major water source to Warragamba Dam and Greater Sydney. It is a river with enormous environmental and community value to Sydney, but the water is contaminated from upstream coal mines, grazing of animals, weeds and the like. Water bugs, a food source for platypus and other wildlife, struggle to survive in it, and you and I are drinking it.

We can fix it. We have the solutions.

By working as a community, we can improve water quality, reinstate a strong Neutral or Beneficial Effect (NorBE) water test, restore riverbanks, strengthen habitat and ensure that this remarkable river remains healthy for future generations.

The platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) is one of Australia's most iconic native species. It relies on healthy waterways, abundant aquatic life and stable riverbanks to survive. When rivers thrive, when the quality of our drinking water improves, the platypus thrives.

Imagine a future where industries and communities actively care for local waterways, and where platypus populations are secure and growing. That future is possible.

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society's campaign aims to bring together community members, scientists, local councils, government agencies and conservation organisations to achieve practical outcomes. Our campaign envisages a water quality reference point in the river, and we then work upstream to identify the sources of contamination and solutions. The campaign will:

- identify river health monitoring points and potential contamination sources
- work to eliminate water contamination
- use and support evidence-based water quality management techniques
- run education programs to restore damaged habitat to protect and enhance platypus populations
- promote biofilters etc.
- strengthen community water catchment stewardship
- ensure reinstatement of a strong NorBE water quality test.

The Coxs River is not someone else's responsibility. It belongs to and requires care from all of us. This campaign is about creating a legacy – a healthy river.



A stormwater biofiltration system improving water quality at Leura Falls Creek.

(Blue Mountains Waterways Health Report 2017)

Together, we can restore one of the rivers that helps sustain Sydney's future

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society's "Clean the Blue Mountains Rivers" campaign is working to engage with Water NSW, Sydney Water, local councils, NPWS and others to build coordinated activities for long-term water stewardship.

To get involved contact

natpks@bluemountains.org.au

Malcolm Read

National Parks and World Heritage Officer

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Add your voice and tell the NSW Government: reinstate a strong NorBE test and stop allowing mining pollution to put our drinking water at risk: <https://bit.ly/4g0dXMd>

\$200 million wildlife resilience package urgently needed as H5N1 bird flu reaches mainland Australia

The Invasive Species Council is calling on the Albanese Government to invest at least \$200 million over the next two years to strengthen wildlife resilience after authorities confirmed the first detection of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in a wild migratory bird in Western Australia.

The virus has devastated wildlife populations around the world, causing mass mortality events in seabirds, marine mammals and other wildlife. The virus's arrival on mainland Australia means we are entering a new and uncertain chapter for Australian wildlife. Whether this particular outbreak is contained or not, the threat is no longer theoretical.

The Albanese Government should urgently invest at least \$200 million over the next two years in a national wildlife resilience package. This is a genuine wildlife emergency and it must be treated as such with emergency funding to increase efforts to protect wildlife populations.

Invasive Species Council

20 June 2026

Reducing our footprint

Have you spent a lifetime advocating for the climate and seeking to reduce your own carbon footprint? You may have given some thought to the environmental costs of disposing of your own body when the time comes. While there is no clear best choice, there are some possibilities. Unfortunately, cremation releases gases into the atmosphere that effect climate, and burial ties up land for the long term.

The **Springwood Cemetery Master Plan**, adopted by Blue Mountains City Council in August last year, recognised that natural burials could be an option. This is burying a body in the earth in a manner which allows for natural decomposition with minimum impact on the surrounding environment. Only degradable materials can be involved and no permanent marker at the location, so that the land can be reused as a burial site or the land revegetated to bushland.

Council has decided to assess the level of interest and, if sufficient, to develop a small portion of the Springwood site as a “natural interment area”. If you wish to register your interest, contact Dominic Smith, Acting Manager, Recreation, Aquatic and Cemetery Service, Blue Mountains City Council, on dsmith@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

If you are interested in other environmentally friendly options which may be available in the future, look up the Natural Death Advocacy Network on www.ndan.com.au Next year the NSW government plans to review the legislation around the range of body disposal options available in other parts of the world, such as human composting.

Lyndal Sullivan, Land Use Subcommittee



Environmental weeds

Identification: not always straightforward!

Nearly 300 plants have been listed as environmental weeds by Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC). Of these, approximately 80 are categorised as Priority Weeds.

To help keep your garden free of Priority Weeds and other weedy pests, make use of reputable, online weed identification resources.

Particularly check the identity of garden plants that you are not familiar with, that climb or spread vigorously, produce numerous seedlings, have fruits and seeds that attract many birds, or that you have seen growing in local bushland or along streams.

Packed with colour illustrations, the *BMCC Priority Weeds Handbook* only takes a few minutes to look through! Also try the websites *Weeds of the Blue Mountains*, and *Weeds Australia*. Links to these resources are available on the Society's Environmental weeds webpage

<https://bluemountains.org.au/environmental-weeds.shtml>

Still stumped? BMCC weed management officers are keen to assist residents with weed identification. Send an email to council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au with a detailed plant description, and photographs including above and underside of leaves, and distinctive features such as flowers, fruits and nuts/capsules/pods.

BMCS Bushcare Officer

Image: Priority Weeds Handbook 2024 (Blue Mountains City Council)

Hut News Trivia: Question 24

How many spider species are estimated to be in Australia?

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

Living Near the Bush

HOW TO SUPPORT NATURE IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS



Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Practical ways that residents can support our beautiful wildlife and unique local bushland! Illustrations by artist Fiona Lumsden, ecologist Ian Baird and photographers Alan and Dianne Page.

Lots of resources for people of all ages!

To view the online flip book or download a PDF version visit

<https://bluemountains.org.au/LNTB.shtml>

A limited number of print copies are available at Society events.



The light was beginning to fade. Across the valley, the Banks walls reflected golden in the setting sun.

The lyrebird was alternatively singing and scratching for food. He didn't seem to mind the people walking past him, to and from the Evans lookout.



At Springwood. Misty rain began to fall. Is this a fungus on a fungus?

PFAS in Capertee Valley

In March 2026, PFAS, also known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances were detected in the Capertee River. Earlier in 2025, PFAS were detected in Brogan's quarry which is believed to be the source of contamination in Ulumbra Creek and Capertee River, including at Genowlan road bridge, Glen Alice.

This spectacular valley, which is a popular place for bird watching and tree regenerative programmes for the endangered Regent Honeyeater, now has contaminated creek water. Capertee Valley is also popular with bushwalkers and campers from other areas of NSW, who also visit Capertee and Wollemi National Parks. The farming sector will have concerns for livestock and soil quality too.

What will be the effects upon the wildlife who drink the water and bathe in it? What about the aquatic creatures who live in the river water? There are 204 species of native animals known to live in Capertee National Park and 26 are threatened species including the Regent Honeyeater. (NPWS Plan of Management).

According to the NSW EPA, Brogan's quarry was used by 3M Australia to test large quantities of fire-fighter foam which contained PFAS during the 1980's and 1990's. The EPA state they issued a Clean Up Notice to the polluting company in May 2025 and have required further testing of Capertee River, including near Coorongoooba campground in Wollemi National Park.¹

The Capertee Valley National Park has a new notice at the gates and on the website advising park users not to use river water for drinking and cooking purposes. If you are intending to stay in the park, do take all your own water.

Meredith Brownhill

References:

¹ <https://bit.ly/3QqE1pm>



From the archives

World Environment Day at Katoomba (1996)

I am a BMCS member who remains in the background but hears all about everybody from a man (our membership secretary Ross Coster) who goes to every meeting and then comes home to talk me almost to death about everything that has gone on at the meeting. When asked to help man the stall that we were putting together for this big day I agreed reluctantly, as coming out of the closet is not always easy.

I arrived early for the day as I feared that, if I did not, I may have found a way to back out. On arrival I was greeted by Linda and Jessica and with the overwhelming excitement of the day. I stood back while they put up the most magnificent pictures of animals and plants that I have seen. We were standing back looking at the great work that we had done, when the excitement was taken back with the arrival of the T shirts and Sloppy Joes. It was like Christmas to a child, opening and admiring the goods that were in our hands after weeks of planning, thinking and putting of all the ideas together.

The day was a pleasant one that I hope was enjoyed by all that attended and the many hands that helped man our display. For the many weeks that Linda put into the day and the many people that helped, I personally would like to congratulate them. I found the day to be very pleasant and I was proud to be a part of it.

Proud Member, Heather Coster

This article was published in July 1996 *Hut News*. The Society's newsletter archives can be found on our website: <https://www.bluemountains.org.au> (go to *publications/ Hut News* archives)

National Threat Abatement Plan on Escaped Garden Plants

As reported in the June edition of *Hut News*, in October, 2024, former Minister for the Environment and Water, Tanya Plibersek MP, formally approved development of a National Threat Abatement Plan on Escaped Garden Plants (environmental weeds).

The Society and many other Australian environmental advocacy agencies have been consistently requesting development of the plan. The Society wrote to former Minister Plibersek in 2024 and to the current Minister, Senator Murray Watt in 2025 seeking development of the plan. The Society is deeply concerned that the plan has still not been developed.

On 14 May 2026, the Society yet again requested the development of a comprehensive threat abatement plan. In particular, the online interstate sale of environmental weeds is a major concern and this issue requires strong regulatory attention.

Writing on behalf of Minister Watt on 26 May 2026, Acting Threatened Species Commissioner, Kat Waterhouse has reassured the Society that a draft plan is being developed and is due for completion by late 2027.

The draft plan will be made available for public comment on Environment and Water Have Your Say portal <https://consult.dcceew.gov.au> for at least 3 months. The Society will definitely be presenting a submission.

Peter Ardill, BMCS Bushcare Officer

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

Population, environment planning and politics

OPINION by Don Morison

Are top decision makers unimpressed by the Blue Mountains' future?

World Heritage consciousness has blossomed in the Blue Mountains local government area within a single state electorate and a single federal electorate. But this area has an annual population growth rate of only one third the Australian average (0.49% in 2025) and a rising median age of residents.

Some comparable communities have had their political representation diluted. The federal electorate of North Sydney which was abolished in 2024 contained almost the whole of the North Sydney local government area and a further community of interest which overlapped into other local government areas. That community is now divided into three different federal electorates, each with their political centres of gravity far from North Sydney. Our own Macquarie federal electorate was scrutinised in the same redistribution but left largely intact at that time.

The similarities do not end there. The major federal and state spending project in North Sydney is currently the Western Harbour Tunnel, which is almost exclusively about people moving under the harbour and bypassing the North Sydney area for purposes not benefiting local communities. The major expenditure project near us is Badgerys airport, which does not offer benefits exceeding the disadvantages to Blue Mountains residents. The Victoria Pass repair could easily become a costly megaproject and, so far, that situation has been managed for the benefit of those trying to move across

our region with minimal attention to local convenience. North Sydney Council has recently applied for a rate rise of more than 50% to complete projects it considers are of real advantage to the community there.

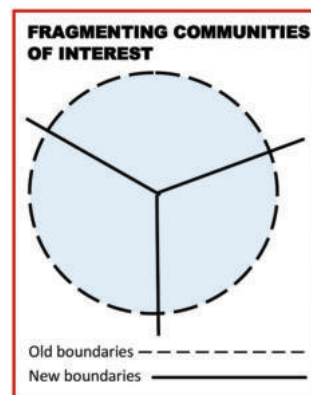
The reasons why members of the same political party at different levels of government might disagree on policies have been widely documented. However, environmentalists cannot ignore the fact that Blue Mountains environmentalism will be more important to upper-level decision makers if our state and federal electorates are seen to have a secure future.

A future for our political influence means slowing down the rates at which our population is aging and shrinking compared to the national average. That necessitates making it more attractive for a broader variety of people to live here. There is a missing middle in the upper Blue Mountains housing stock. There is an excess of large dwellings on expensive-to-maintain grounds. There is also an excess of quite old homes that are difficult for landlords to maintain.

Tenants can feel compelled to endure houses that are not in good repair, are expensive to heat and so on.

There are not nearly enough comparatively new, well-designed, low-maintenance homes to attract newer breeds of house buyers and tenants.

It could be in the interests of the Blue Mountains community and environment to fine-tune the local environment plan to improve our demographic future.



School birding program

BMCS supports the Hawkesbury Environmental Network's School Birding Program

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society sponsored its first Birding at School program at Blaxland Public School on 19 May 2026, introducing young students to the world of local birds and their habitats.

Two engaging sessions were delivered to kindergarten and year 1 students in which children enthusiastically shared their observations of birds seen around the school before learning about seasonal changes in the Blue Mountains and how birds adapt to the colder autumn weather. Through hands-on activities, students examined different types of feathers, discovering how down and waterproof feathers help birds stay warm and dry, and finding plants in the school grounds that support both resident and migratory species. Through focusing on the yellow-faced honeyeater, the program also explored bird migration, and the importance of the Blue Mountains as a migration corridor.

After a lesson in using binoculars, students ventured outdoors on a bird walk around the school. Their excitement in spotting birds and sharing discoveries was infectious, while the activity also



provided opportunities for quieter students to engage more closely with the presenters.

The sessions were warmly supported by teachers and staff. The success of this inaugural event highlights the value of connecting young people with nature and fostering environmental stewardship from an early age.

BMCS looks forward to supporting future Birding at School programs across the Blue Mountains. If you know a school is interested in the program, contact Annette Sartor at education@bluemountains.org.au

Luxe camping in wilderness: a total paradox

It was an interesting and diverse group of people who went on a field trip on Sunday 19 April into the Gardens of Stone to look at site number 1 for the private glamping “wilderness experience”. I went with an open mind. Yes, the area concerned is a State Conservation Area, but environmentalists fought hard to wrest it from the slow death of pine forests and adrenalin junkies on wheels. It abuts Wollemi and Blue Mountains National Parks.

We drove past Bungleboori picnic area, trashed for years. But degradation does not have to be The End: replantings by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) are dotted about. How degraded is campsite 1 then, as rated by NPWS?

We all set off along a rail trail, built for the mining operations on Newnes. Slowly the vegetation became more mature, the scribbly gums (*Eucalyptus racemosa*) and flowering sunshine wattle (*Acacia terminalis*) a delight. One of my companions told me that glamping in wilderness was a worldwide trend. *Grab it before we kill it*, I thought.

*soft sand
of the road –
a mystery pawprint*

Guests of the “glamp” will be provided with linen, bedding and cuisine. No surprise when the name of a company tilting for a lease is “Wild Bush Luxury”. We walked down a very eroded track and the view opened out to the valley of one arm of Carne Creek. Across the way were “endangered upland swamps”, as somebody said. It was a great view – across bare rock. This site for five cabins, a common area, toilets and a kitchen – how could human waste be disposed of sustainably?

We disposed of the campfire circle, rocks and burnt wood, which was NPWS’s reason for describing it as degraded. A development here would be visible to walkers within a 300 metres radius. But nearby were the magnificent pagodas.

*do the suits think
how to monetise this?
cockatoos fly over*

We trekked on down and spotted pagoda daisies. Clients of the private resort will immediately want to



climb them: the best photo is always from the top. But the platy pagoda is a delicate structure at its frilly edges.¹ Within six months this will be damaged, I thought, no more “glam”.

Down the track was a lunch spot in the shade where we mulled over the issues. Further on was a lovely view – somebody pointed out the newly formed Pagoda Walk in the distance. Then the group straggled back up the eroded track into the scribbly gum forest. Here cabins could be sustainably managed without the “glamp”, and out of sight. Why not by NPWS themselves? It is the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service that manages the iconic Three Capes walk with all of their local expertise.

*late afternoon
beyond the gilded bush
pine trees*

One of my companions was indignant that after years of campaigning, the benefit of the choice spot we had seen would go to a private company. Credit to NPWS who have done extensive work in regenerating the “hoon” tracks with many plantings. But the deals with NPWS seem to be very opaque. Socialise the conservation, privatise the profits?

Diana Levy

¹ Platy pagodas are globally rare, tiered rock formations, characterised by distinctive, protruding ironstone bands, these ancient formations create a breathtaking, fortress-like landscape.

Unsafe building materials

The nest of the eastern spinebill is “a small cup of twigs, grass and bark, combined with hair and spider’s web, built in a tree fork, generally between 1 and 5 metres from the ground”.

Eastern spinebills in my garden in Blackheath successfully raised several offspring this year and have left for warmer climes. I look forward to seeing them again in the spring, but danger lurks in suburbia.

I found the remains of one of their nests (photographed). The blue plastic is probably from a cheap, light-duty polyethylene tarpaulin. A small one can be purchased for less than \$5, “perfect for use as a groundsheet or a protective cover for you and your belongings”, which quickly falls to pieces and leaves behind strips of plastics which are a danger to wildlife.

Our world is drowning in plastic. Even when we recycle it, it will never go away. When we know that plastic is a hazard both on land and at sea, why do we continue to manufacture and use it? When a product has been proved to be harmful to human health, we have usually found an alternative or learned to live without it.

Christine Davies





On the summit of Mount Kosciuszko: Di Thompson

UPDATE

The environment wins the brumby wars

Love them or loathe them, but brumbies, particularly brumbies in national parks, evoke strong emotions. Supporters see them as beautiful animals infused with the spirit of *Man from Snowy River* (based on Banjo Paterson's 1890 poem) and World War I Light Horse Brigades. Opponents see them as destroyers of pristine waterways, delicate soil and small mammal habitats. One thing all sides might agree on, though, is that there are a lot of them in Australia: over 400,000, the largest feral horse population in the world. Of these up to about 25,000 have inhabited the Australian Alps national parks (three quarters of them in Kosciuszko).

In an article with this introduction, originally published by the National Parks Association, ACT, in its June 2026 *Bulletin* (volume 63, number 2), Greg Buckman describes the conflict between anticulling activists and defenders of Kosciuszko National Park's environment and wildlife, especially between 2018 (the passing of the Wild Horse Heritage Bill) and 2025 (that bill's repeal).

Greg Buckman is now concerned that the 2025 census of Kosciuszko brumbies showed there are still far too many feral horses in sensitive sections of the national park and that anticulling activists are vigorously criticising the state government's policy for reducing these numbers by distributing misinformation through social media.

Read the full text of Greg's earlier article – Google NPA journal June 2026 and download Vol. 63, No. 2, June 2026.

Many Blue Mountains Conservation Society members have helped defend Kosciuszko National Park, including participating in some sections of a Sydney to Kosciuszko Walk.

The Hut News Team

8 – Hut News, Issue No. 448, July 2026

The Pines wind farm:

a major renewable energy proposal near Lithgow

The Pines wind farm is a proposed large-scale renewable energy project located between Lithgow, Oberon and Bathurst, with turbines proposed within existing plantation areas rather than native forest.

If approved, the project could include around 250 wind turbines, up to 300 metres high, with a generating capacity of up to 2 gigawatts of electricity. This could potentially power around 1.25 million homes, making it one of the largest renewable energy developments proposed in New South Wales. If approvals proceed as planned, electricity generation could begin around 2031.

Wind farms will make a significant contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and helping meet the state's future energy needs as coal-fired power stations retire.

At the same time, the area is valued for its natural landscapes, wildlife and proximity to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. For many residents, the challenge is not whether renewable energy should be developed, but how it can be done while protecting the environmental values that make this area special.

The immense scale of The Pines proposal means its potential impacts deserve close attention. Although the turbines would be located mainly within existing pine plantations, concerns have been raised about possible impacts on wildlife such as birds and bats, as well as the effects of new roads, transmission infrastructure and construction activities on surrounding habitats. These issues need to be properly assessed, supported by transparent monitoring, meaningful community engagement and a thorough understanding of potential environmental impacts.

The discussion around The Pines reflects a broader issue facing many regional communities while Australia is transitioning away from fossil fuels. There is a strong need that new developments should avoid or minimise impacts on biodiversity and local landscapes wherever possible. Finding that balance will be one of the key tests for projects such as The Pines.

Nathalie Verellen, sustain@bluemountains.org.au

The deadline for August *Hut News* is **12 July**
hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

Hut News Trivia: Answer to Question 24

As of 2024, there were approximately 4,100 named species of spider in Australia, although it is thought that this represents only 20 to 30% of the total, suggested to be 12,000 to 20,000 species. Many of these undescribed species are "known unknowns". Museum scientists know that they exist (and are represented by specimens in museum collections), but the taxonomic research required to formally give these species a binomial scientific name has not yet been conducted. Australia is widely considered the country with the highest number and diversity of spiders.

A report card on the Kedumba Valley Escarpment

Part 5: Paths to the edge and recognising bushcarers

Recently, our Society lodged a submission which broadly supported the Blue Mountains City Council's plan for accommodating pedestrians, bicycles and motor vehicles travelling towards the magnificent lookout at the southern end of Sublime Point Road, Leura. We noted that an active council-supervised bushcare group is looking after both the area of natural bushland surrounding the lookout itself and the bushland crown reserve south of Willoughby Road, which is adjacent to a turning point on the much-promoted Grand Clifftop Walk from Wentworth Falls to Katoomba.

Caring for this bushland at the corner of Willoughby Road and Sublime Point Road was a priority for Blue Mountains conservationist David Coleby, who passed away earlier this year. David had been a great advocate for native plants during the decades since he migrated to Australia, serving as nursery manager at the Society's native plant nursery during some of the early years of its existence. He worked assiduously to restore damaged sections of the Willoughby Road



The Kedumba Valley and Mount Solitary. It is hoped carefully planned 'Active Transport' links will make such views easier to access: Christine Davies

bushland and keep it as pristine as possible. The bushcare group also had a plaque installed in honour of another much-loved bushcarer of past years, Grete Vanry.

If Council develops its plans as expected, sections of Sublime Point Road including the stretch near Willoughby Road could be a model for slowing motor traffic and keeping pedestrians and two-wheel vehicle users safe with minimal addition of paved corridors. This area, frequently traversed by lyrebirds and other fauna, deserves a treatment that puts nature first and it will require much campaigning to establish this principle on all approach roads to the national park. **Don Morison**

Thirlmere Lakes National Park

As our bus wound its way to Thirlmere Lakes National Park in May, Plant Study Group members said: "It's time we celebrated the 25th World Heritage anniversary". Thirlmere Lakes are an important ecological system and are often overlooked.

It was a warm autumn day as we called in to Burratorang lookout for morning tea. The view we beheld was of the Burratorang Valley with flood waters, extending far to the west. We thought of the Gundungurra living their traditional lives in the valley before colonisation and then of early settlers struggling to work the land before it was all flooded between 1948 and 1960. There is a lot of water in there for the people of Sydney.

Burratorang lookout has bushland and some lovely smooth bark eucalypts growing on it. As there are old coal mines, and possibly more coal underneath the ground surface, it is only protected as a State Conservation Area.

Arriving at Thirlmere Lakes National Park we were thrilled with the views of water between all the trees in the woodlands. We delayed lunch and eagerly stepped from the bus to see the tall grey-bluish rush *Lepironia articulata* along the water's edge with other sedges. Birds called as they flew between the shrubs and trees.

All five lakes have differing land heights, which is unusual. This geological structure is thought to have occurred as when they were elevated and isolated from a meandering watercourse during the folds and faults that formed the Lapstone monocline (NPWS *Plan of Management* 2019). Thirlmere Lakes have a long history of periodic drying, such as in the millennium drought, World War II and 2019 droughts. University of New South Wales (UNSW) research concluded that the lakes are controlled by climate and they are reliant on catchment rainfall (UNSW, Hydrology Thirlmere Lakes brochure)¹.

This sensitive ecosystem has three Endangered Ecological Communities (EEC) with threatened plant



Plant Study Group at Burratorang lookout: Meredith Brownhill

and bird species. The EEC of particular interest to us was the Lepironia Freshwater Wetland. We wandered along on the shore of Lake Couridjah identifying shrubs and trees. We saw *Acacia filicifolia*, which grows in sandy soils near water, and *Bossiaea lenticularis*, which likes moist sites too.

We delighted in the woodland birds in the trees overhead and heard a golden whistler, pardalotes and honeyeaters. A flock of superb fairywrens hopped around on the ground beside us as we ate our lunch at the lake shore picnic tables. After all these delights, at mid-afternoon our splendid volunteer bus driver got us back on the bus and we headed for home.

Thirlmere Lakes are a lovely place to visit, whether you are an amateur botanist, a bushwalker or just like views and picnics.

Meredith Brownhill

Reference:

¹ Google: UNSW Thirlmere Lakes hydrology

Continued page 10

A history of the Blue Mountains heritage walking tracks¹

Private track construction on freehold land became a fashion among wealthy residents of the Blue Mountains from the 1870s.² Some of the early private track makers became trustees of public reserves.

Part 4. Reserve development

The great majority of Blue Mountains walking tracks were constructed under the auspices of community based voluntary organisations. The most important of these organisations were the trusts appointed under the Crown Land Acts. The first list of trustees for Blue Mountains reserves was gazetted on 11 October 1878.

Some of the early private track makers such as Henry Parkes, Fairfax, North and Piddington became trustees of public reserves and were in an obvious position to influence the way the public track system was designed. Parkes' passion for "landscaping" the bushland with lookouts, stone steps, bridges and seats set the pattern for the development of recreational reserves in the region.

Trustees received no remuneration for their services but were allowed considerable freedom in how they spent the small annual grants allocated to them. Trustees could also lobby for extra additional grants for special projects. The trustee system allowed enthusiastic and energetic trustees such as Rodriguez and Murray to create remarkable monuments, still enjoyed today, such as the Grand Canyon walk at Blackheath. The peak of trustee track building occurred in the period 1890 to 1910.

Next month: Blue Mountains towns vied for tourism.

Notes:

¹ Excerpts from Jim Smith's *Blue Mountains Heritage Track Study, Historical Report*, 1998, a monthly series continued from the *Hut News*.

² Read more: <https://www.bluemountains.org.au> - publications - *Hut News* archives.



The Grand Canyon: Observe the beauty of the ferns and the coachwood trees through the wet rainforest. Appreciate the magnificent stonework on the tracks and stairs. Walking through the Grand Canyon is always a world class experience. Katriona Herborn

The Grand Canyon walking track

The first published indication that a walking track was planned through Blackheath's Grand Canyon was in the *Mountaineer*, 28 June 1901, when it was announced that the trustees of Evans Lookout had "every hope of a track being made right through connecting Evans Lookout with Walls Cave".

The work was eventually completed in November 1906 by contractor Thomas Williams with the expenditure of £77.¹ During the official opening by NSW Premier JH Carruthers, on 16th February, the trustees lobbied for additional funding to make the track safer. Grants for improvement of the Grand Canyon pathway, totalling £79, were received by May 1907. This made a total expenditure of £156 on the track to that date. The Greaves Creek dam, opened in November 1941, cut off the upstream section of the track to Walls Cave and visitors thereafter entered or exited at Neates Glen.

Between 2008 and 2017 the National Parks and Wildlife Service carried out a major reconstruction of the track costing \$4.8 million. As part of this project, over

3,000 large sandstone steps, most of them lowered from over 2,000 helicopter trips, were positioned by hand.

The £156 it cost to make the track in 1906-1907 would be the equivalent of about \$19,000 today. Williams had to cut his steps from boulders in the creek bed and from the canyon walls. As this is now considered environmentally unacceptable, the NPWS was committed to the huge expenditure of bringing in stone blocks. Many of these came from the demolition of buildings in Sydney.

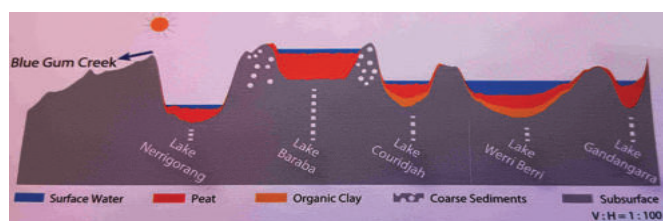
Completion of the rebuilt track was celebrated on 28 October 2017. At this time, it was calculated that more than 90,000 people used the track every year. By 2020 the number of visitors was estimated at 200,000 per annum.

(Source: *The Grand Canyon walking track Trustees*, by Jim Smith, Blue Mountains Historical Society, Hobby's Outreach, August-September 2021).

Notes:

¹ The Australian unit of currency, the pound, was worth 20 shillings, 240 pence. The Australian dollar was introduced in 1966, at that time equivalent to 10 shillings.

Thirlmere Lakes National Park: from page 9



Thirlmere Lakes hydrology, UNSW research brochure. For further information regarding this research, please contact Associate Professor William Glamore w.glamore@wrl.unsw.edu.au



A question for a spider expert!
At Springwood. Is this a *bird dropping spider* (*Celaenia excavate*)? Please tell Adelina and *Hut News*: hutnews@bluemountains.org.au



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.

- 6 July **Burrumoko Ridge (Hanging Rock) Trail** 10 km return. Maree **0427 390 645**
- 13 July **Nellie's Glen and Devil's Hole Circuit** 10 km, Grade 4, steep and uneven sections with poorly marked track. Melanie **0431 214 687**
- 20 July **Furber Steps** 5.2 km, 315 m ascent/descent. Marian **0411 658 562**
- 27 July **Lost World** 6.2 km walk, 429 m ascent and descent, crossing Glenbrook Creek. Lyn **0432 352 850**
- 3 August **Taronga Zoo Wharf to Neutral Bay Wharf** approx 7 km, meet at Central Station. Maree **0427 390 645**

TUESDAY

Please check our website for Tuesday bushwalks program.

<https://www.bluemountains.org.au – activities/bushwalks>

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

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

- 9 July **Ridgewell Road towards Hanging Rock, Blackheath** Grade 2. Tracy **0434 362 611**
- 16 July **West Glenbrook Reserve** Ros **0417 261 465**
- 23 July **Blue Gum Swamp, Winmalee** approx 8 km circuit, Grade 2 Angela **0477 133 327**
- 30 July **Christmas in July, Wilson Park, Lawson** Grade 1. Meet 12 noon. Bring a plate to share
Beverley **0418 372 076**
- 6 August **Red Gum Park and Genevieve Road Nature Trail, Bullaburra** Grade 2. Libby **0405 371 944**
- 13 August **Three Waterfalls Walk, Lawson** Grade 2. 3 km, 125 m ascent/descent. Angela **0477 133 367**

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.

The Great Southern Forest National Park

A plan to create the Great Southern Forest National Park, launched in Eurobodalla on 19 June by the National Parks Association of NSW and community supporters, will protect nearly 1.2 million hectares of native forests on public land between the Illawarra and the Victorian border, representing a connected protected area five times bigger than the Australian Capital Territory.¹

Sue Higginson, Greens MP and spokesperson for the environment, said: "It's exhilarating to see the decades of work by hundreds and thousands of dedicated experts and community members come together in this Great Southern Forest National Park proposal. This is a moment of hope and vision for communities from the Illawarra to Eden and will benefit the entire Country.

"The Great Southern Forest National Park will be one of the largest connected conservation landscapes in Australia, bringing together 55 forests, 24 flora reserves and 98 existing national

parks into a protected area that will serve the community, nature and our economy forever."

"The proposal would protect more than 10,000 hectares of threatened ecological communities, support 12 endemic and four critically endangered flora species, and protect 61 threatened animal species, including the yellow-bellied glider, swift parrot, southern greater glider, spotted-tailed quoll and southern brown bandicoot. Industrial scale logging of our public forests on the NSW South Coast is coming to a rapid end."

¹ <https://npansw.org.au/great-southern-forest-resources/>

Volunteering for the Society

The management committee positions are listed on page 2. You will notice that there are some vacancies. Please contact the president, Annette Sartor, by email at president@bluemountains.org.au or by phone (leave a message) **0490 419 779**.

There are many other ways you can volunteer – join a subcommittee, help at one of our stalls, offer occasional clerical help – there is a long list of tasks and some we haven't thought of yet. Please contact the president and discuss what you might be able to do to help protect the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

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

Tracks in the sand

After weeks of rain, the sand by the track was very mushy. A good day to check for tracks in the sand. A kangaroo had passed this way.

The Interpretive Nature Group (TING) excursion included an inspection of Mount York cemetery in Hartley Vale, coffee at the Postmistress café at Hartley Historic Site and lunch at the Victoria and Albert guesthouse at Mount Victoria.

The little bush cemetery was opened in 1837. It has many stories to tell of the early colonial settlers in the valley. Other graves include that of Niels Hertzberg Larsen who was born in Norway and whose son, the poet Henry Lawson, was born on the goldfield in 1867 at Grenfell.

Set apart from the others is a small headstone which marks the grave of Tambo. Tambo was a Samoan servant of Thomas Neale, the last magistrate to sit in the Hartley courthouse.

The photograph was taken while walking back from the cemetery to the cars. The distinctive print of the hind feet of a kangaroo was easily recognisable. There are also imprints of the “hands” of the forelimbs, five digits and clawed, and the heavy tail.¹ A more expert observer might be able to work out the order they were laid there. You will notice that the marks are very symmetrical. A kangaroo cannot hop backwards, mainly because of its massive tail. But it can change direction by pivoting its entire body in a new direction while in the air, or by twisting a single foot.

Eastern grey kangaroos are often seen in Hartley Vale. Without trucks and other heavy traffic due to roadworks, more kangaroos and other wildlife can be seen in other parts of the Hartley valley.

¹ Kangaroo: <https://www.britannica.com/animal/kangaroo>

Adelina



Look for spider webs after rain

Where would we be without them?

This month's trivia question is about spiders. Some people don't like spiders, **but please read on.**

Spiders are the primary terrestrial insect predator on Earth. They have been evolving strategies to catch and eat insects for millions of years, which makes them a wonderful ally in pest control. Without spiders, the population of pest insects around the world would explode.

Spiders help control insects that can harm humans, such as flies, cockroaches and mosquitoes, and limit the diseases that these pests can spread.

On farms, spiders help control pests that damage crops. They provide a natural pest control service that enables farmers to reduce the amount of pesticides they use to produce our food. Spiders also provide a source of food for other animals such as birds, lizards and small mammals.

Spiders are fascinating creatures with a stunning variety of shapes, colours and behaviours. Next time you see a spider, look closely. Don't touch it and don't hurt it. Just admire it. **Where would we be without them?**

Adelina



Evans lookout, Blackheath. Lovely sunshine wattle (*Acacia terminalis*).

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