



HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

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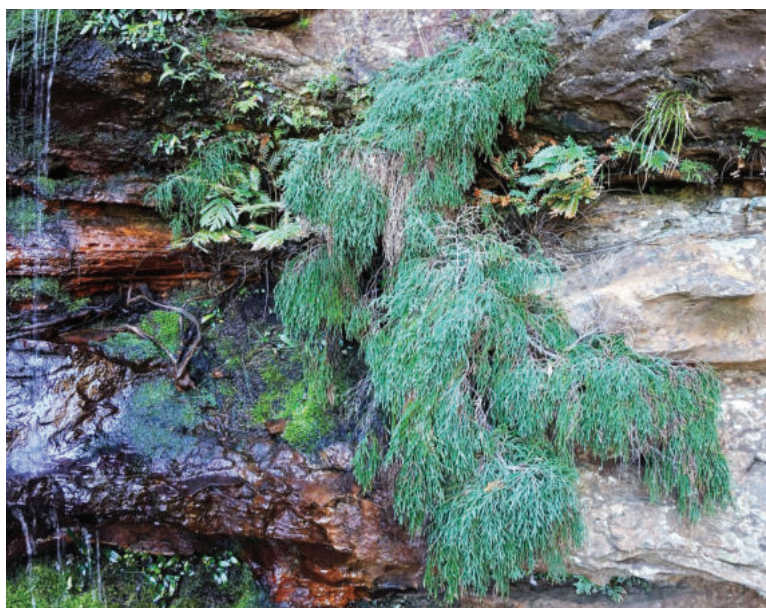
Our Society's threatened species officer, Liam Ramage, has been promoting the conservation of the dwarf mountain pine. At the present time approximately 800 specimens of this plant have been recorded growing in the wild, on the escarpment between Katoomba and Wentworth Falls, see also "A report card on the Kedumba Valley escarpment," part 7 on page 4.

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A great way to appreciate the Gardens of Stone (pictured below) is to visit Lost City North lookout, now accessible through State Mine Gully. The new roadwork by NPWS in the State Conservation Area is in good condition, but the Lithgow part of the road needs some work. Read *Subcatchments of the Cocks Valley, Part 2* on page 6, and Christine Davies hopes for Lithgow on page 8.

* * * *

Luke Gelder is welcomed on board as a new paid campaigner for the Gardens of Stone Alliance. Luke will take time away from the coast to defend another of our state's most environmentally sensitive regions. Read his report on page 7.



A healthy mature dwarf mountain pine (*Pherosphaera fitzgeraldii*) at a recently discovered population on the Kings Tableland escarpment. These smaller populations outside of the urban runoff zones are important as they are an insurance against the effects of urban pollution within their natural range.

(Photo Richard Delaney)



Love
Lawson
Festival

Saturday 17 October 2026, 9 am to 6 pm
Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson

A full day of community, entertainment, local stalls, food, activities and plenty of reasons to spend the day in Lawson. Don't miss the exhibition of artworks created by young Blue Mountains artists, celebrating Australian native wildlife.

The Love Lawson Festival Wildlife Art Competition – Kids & Teens

Calling all young Blue Mountains artists!

Create an artwork celebrating Australian native wildlife and be part of the Wildlife Art Competition at the Love Lawson Festival.

Open to Blue Mountains LGA residents aged 7–16, with two categories: Children (7–12) and Teens (13–16). Artwork should be A4, feature native Australian wildlife—preferably a Blue Mountains species—and can use any 2D medium. Entries must be original and created without generative AI.

Prizes: First prize is a \$75 bookshop voucher, with an art supply set for second prize. Every entrant will have their artwork exhibited at the Love Lawson Festival on 17 October.

Entries close: 5 pm, Saturday 10 October.

Entry fee: \$10. Drop-off: Story Garden bookshop, 1 Badgery Crescent, Lawson.

Full competition rules and submission details:

<https://lovelawsonfestival.com.au>



A new lookout gives sweeping views over pagoda country.

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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**.



President's report

September found the Society continuing to be active on many fronts.

Advocacy: During the past month, Blue Mountains Conservation Society has continued its advocacy on several significant environmental issues. We have followed up with the office of State Member Trish Doyle regarding our request for support for the *Water NSW Amendment (Warragamba Dam) Bill 2026*, as well as our concerns about the Housing Delivery Authority approval pathway. BMCS has also made significant contributions to the development of the Nature Conservation Council's 2027 Election Policy Platform. Locally, we have echoed community concerns about the proposed fast-food development on the former Wentworth Falls Bowling Club site. I attended two community meetings on 30 August to draw attention to the potential environmental impacts on Jamison Creek and the wider Kedumba catchment. This was followed by a submission from the Land Use Committee to Blue Mountains City Council.

Strategic planning: Our strategic planning process continues to be one of the Society's major priorities. Our second workshop was held on 22 August, where we explored the results of our members survey. In total, 121 Society members responded, helping us identify what members value about BMCS, where we can improve, and what our priorities should be for the coming years. A summary of the results will be available in forthcoming *Hut News*, together with the major themes emerging from this process.

Gardens of Stone Alliance campaigner: Recruitment of a new Gardens of Stone Alliance campaigner has been completed and the management committee is pleased that Luke Gelder has been appointed to the position, providing additional campaigning capacity at an important time for the protection of the Gardens of Stone and surrounding landscapes.

Native Plant Nursery: There has been considerable activity around the BMCS Nursery during the past month. In the absence of a nursery manager, work has progressed on arrangements for the employment of a nursery manager. I congratulate the nursery volunteers for doing a stellar job in keeping the nursery operating and for their outstanding sales at the Blackheath Growers Market Nursery stall on 13 September.

Behind the scenes: Much of the Society's work is less visible but equally important. During the month, there has been extensive correspondence with members, government agencies, journalists and other community

Continued page 3

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.

President's report: from page 2

organisations. BMCS is represented on both the Greater Blue Mountains Area Environmental Monitoring Program Stakeholder Group and the Weed Management Stakeholder Engagement Group (WMSEG). Requests for media interviews concerning Lincoln's Rock and environmental noise monitoring associated with Western Sydney Airport were referred to the relevant BMCS members. We also worked with Varuna to secure discounted tickets for BMCS members attending selected Blue Mountains Writers Festival events, including the Mick Dark Talk for the Future.

The Saving Blue Gum commemoration at Perry's Lookdown on 2 September provided an important reminder of one of the defining moments in the history of Australian conservation and the legacy it has created. I also had the opportunity to reflect on our Society's conservation history at the inaugural **Blue Mountains International Day of Peace on Saturday, 12 September 2026**, emphasising the importance of the democratic practice of people coming together to care for place, listen to different perspectives, participate in decision making, and pursue change through dialogue and collective action. The history of the BMCS demonstrates that conservation can itself be a form of positive peacebuilding, through the strengthening relationships between people, community and the environment while providing peaceful and democratic ways for citizens to protect the places they value.

Thank you, as always, to all our volunteers, including those who facilitated and assisted with BMCS stalls at the Springwood Festival, Biodiversity Diversity Discovery Day and the Sustainability Festival. Please contact me if you have some time to spare and want to volunteer on a regular or casual basis.

Annette Sartor president@bluemountains.org.au

Blackheath Growers Market
Sunday 11 October, 8 am to 12 noon
at the Blackheath Community Centre,
just a short stroll from Blackheath railway station.

The Lyrebird Festival – Megalong Valley

The Lyrebird Festival, **Thursday 12 November to Sunday 15 November**, celebrates the spectacular Megalong Valley with music, art, food and wine. The program brings together art, science and conservation relevant to both local and international topics. Participants will enjoy local culinary delights and intimate, world-class performances.

There will be guided wildlife walks, including a birding walk with Fiona Lumsden, and environmentally oriented concerts. Former ABC presenter, Gregg Borschmann, will host an outstanding series of conversations. <https://lyrebirdfestival.com/>

H5N1 bird flu¹

Update October 2026

As October approaches, South Australia appears to have the most confirmed events of bird flu: 306, including three infected dolphins, a sea lion, and one fox, the first infected mammals found in Australia. The first infected pelican has also been found in SA. All states have infected species. The two territories remain disease-free.

NSW has 56 cases confirmed, with recent tests finding infected greater crested terns (a local species) at Milton, Berry, Kiama, Forster, Port Kembla, Port Botany, Randwick, Cronulla, Warriewood Beach in the Sydney northern beaches area and many areas on the far south coast.

Bird flu was detected in a Hutton's shearwater at Coffs Harbour. This endangered species generally breeds in New Zealand. NZ has confirmed a small number of H5 bird flu cases in wild birds. Its first case was found in July 2026 in a brown skua near Wellington.

The NSW government has started a vaccination program and revealed that Taronga Zoo has so far given the first dose to 70 animals across 18 species in captivity and will soon work with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to vaccinate little penguins in Manly and Barunguba (Montague Island) off Narooma on the NSW south coast. Little penguins, cockatoos, emus, ducks, kites, parrots, owls and buzzards at Taronga Zoo were among the first recipients of the vaccine.

As of late September there have been 46,396 calls to the government hot line and 582 positive cases confirmed throughout Australia.

Detailed information can be found on the Commonwealth Government "Bird Flu (Avian Influenza)" website:

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

This site is subtitled "Together we can help minimise the impacts of H5 bird flu on our people, wildlife and farms". The site has noted that as H5 bird flu is confirmed in more locations and species in Australia it will not be necessary to continue testing all species in known areas of transmission, or to test every animal involved in an investigation. Reporting will be targeted to provide a clear picture of the national H5 bird flu situation in wildlife in Australia and key developments. It has also noted that reporting is now based on events, rather than individual detections. An event may involve one or more animals. The new number of positive events captures all previously reported individual confirmed detections.

Public reporting is an important part of the response to bird flu, with calls to the Emergency Animal Hotline critical in supporting detection efforts.

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

- do not handle the birds or other 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**

Chris Whiteman

¹ Numbers are from 20 September 2026

BMCC Waterways Health Snapshot 2026: How did your local stream score?

Each year, the Blue Mountains City Council's Healthy Waterways Team tests the water quality and ecological health of approximately sixty local watercourses. The 2025 testing results were recently released. (Google: "2026 Blue Mountains Waterways Health Snapshot Flush Issue")

The ecological health of a watercourse is determined by sampling, with a net, the water bugs (aka aquatic macroinvertebrates, small but visible animals with no backbone) that are present, analysing the sample, and calculating a total health score. The types of sampled waterbugs that are sensitive to pollution receive high points, as their presence indicates healthy habitat and minimal environmental degradation. Waterbugs that are more tolerant of pollution receive lower points. The points are totalled, and the resultant score is graded as "Excellent", "Good", "Fair" or "Poor".

The 2025 testing revealed that 65 per cent of waterways were in excellent to good ecological health, and 35 per cent were in fair to poor ecological health. Overall, 53 per cent of sites remained stable, 30 per cent improved, and 17 per cent declined.

Why are some streams only in poor to fair health? Urbanisation is a prime culprit. Excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides in gardens, the presence of concrete and bitumen surfaces such as roads and driveways that create erosive, nutrient-enriched stormwater surges, environmental weeds, and clearing of protective native vegetation for infrastructure development all contribute to watercourse degradation.

If possible, buy a rainwater tank to help control stormwater run-off, plant locally indigenous (native) plants, use mulches instead of strong fertilisers, and minimise or plant over concrete and bitumen surfaces located on your property.

Poor household toileting etiquette also degrades streams! Only flush pee, poo and toilet paper. Why? Sewer pipes are designed to overflow when blockages occur, and yucky overflow contents inevitably end up in our watercourses, causing extensive ecological degradation. Wet wipes, pharmaceuticals, tissues and paper towels, cotton buds, Band-Aids, dental floss, hair, tampons, sanitary pads, nappies and condoms cause blockages, and don't belong in toilets.

Are you interested in learning more about the health of your local stream? Launch Council's fantastic Interactive Waterway Health Explorer at

<https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/waterquality>

Learn more about the great work of the BMCC Healthy Waterways Team in the December 2025 edition of *Hut News* <https://www.bluemountains.org.au> – follow links to **publications** / *Hut News* archives.

Peter Ardill BMCS Bushcare Officer
bushcare@bluemountains.org.au



A sample of waterbugs
(Peter Ardill 2010)

A report card on the Kedumba Valley escarpment

Part 7: Protecting a threatened species

The *Blue Mountains Gazette* reports that Blue Mountains City Council has unanimously approved a motion designed to raise the public profile of the *Pherospaera fitzgeraldii*, the dwarf mountain pine.

The plant is found exclusively within a nine kilometre segment of the Kedumba Valley escarpment, between Wentworth Falls and Katoomba. It is a small shrub, up to a metre high, and it survives entirely on steep, south facing sandstone cliffs with its specialised habitat under threat from climate change, human disturbance and altered water flows. It is the subject of a joint research project involving Macquarie University and the Royal Botanic Garden.

The council has actively supported the plant's conservation since 2005. Using existing budgets, the council has partnered with WaterNSW and DCCEEW Save Our Species Program to install 32 stormwater biofiltration systems across the Jamison, Leura Falls and Kedumba Creek catchments. Bushcare volunteers also provide significant in-kind support through annual weed control efforts.

Liam Ramage, threatened species officer of Blue Mountains Conservation Society, described the pine as a highly vulnerable survivor. "The dwarf mountain pine is a relic from a time when Australia was cooler, wetter and less flammable. It clings to the last moist, fire-free refuges of the upper Blue Mountains. Conservation efforts through protecting the water quality of the catchments this plant relies on are crucial to its survival."

On ABC Local Radio recently, Liam Ramage spoke optimistically of the chances of protecting these very rare plants from the impact of human residents and visitors in the catchment. He told the presenter that new locations had been discovered and, although he agreed that the total number (800) is still small, more specimens are known to exist than was estimated a few years ago.

The *Hut News* Team

Please see image and caption on page 1

Hut News Trivia: Question 27

The Great Barrier Reef Queensland at 34.87 million hectares is Australia's largest world heritage area. Shark Bay Western Australia at 2.20 million hectares is Australia's second largest world heritage area followed by Kakadu National Park at 98 million hectares and the Tasmanian Wilderness world heritage area at 1.58 million hectares. What is the 5th largest Australian world heritage area?

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



Gardening with native plants in the Blue Mountains 2026

24–25 October
Mid Mountains Community
Centre, Lawson

Many of us get great pleasure from blossoms in the bush – especially at this time of year. Only a few of us, though, have tackled growing native flowers and plants in our own backyards. Too hard to cultivate, too difficult to buy, not enough room, don't know where to start?

The 'Gardening with native plants in the Blue Mountains' event is on again for 2026 at the Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson on the weekend of 24–25 October. After the success in 2025, there will again be a free Sunday talks program packed with presentations from specialists on topics including ferns for damp shady spots, how to help our mighty native bees and minimising fire risk in garden design. Our keynote speaker is Narelle Happ, a professional garden designer who takes a permaculture approach to gardening, planting vegetables in one part of the garden and natives in another.

With stalls from four local native plant nurseries and many nursery volunteers to consult, you will find it difficult to go home without a tube stock treasure or two. There are many practical advantages to bringing the bush home into urban and semi-urban spaces including drought resistance. Engaging with and nurturing our local endemic flora also brings a deeper understanding, sense of stewardship and connection with our environment.

New for 2026 is the offer of a deeper dive into a complex area with longer, limited-attendee masterclasses on Saturday. This year there will be classes on wattles, propagation and native grasses. These classes are filling up fast, so get in early.



Register for the masterclasses or the
Sunday talks now at
www.gardeningwithnatives.org

Patersonia sericea



Billardiera scandens



Indigofera australis



Blue Mountain Education and Research Trust invites
you to attend the 2026 Stockton Conversation

Nurturing an Australian Spirituality: Pre-Colonisation, Colonisation and Walking Together

About the Series: This presentation is part of a series titled the Stockton Conversation, named after the late Fr Eugene Stockton,¹ PhD LSS, who was its inspiration and patron.

About the Speaker: Evelyn Parkin is an Australian Aboriginal Quandamooka woman, born and raised at One Mile Community near Dunwich on Minjerribah/ North Stradbroke Island, Queensland.

In this public presentation, Evelyn will explore the deep spiritual heritage of this land, the impact of colonisation, and the possibilities that emerge when Aboriginal and Christian spiritual traditions encounter one another. She will invite us to consider what it might mean to develop an authentically Australian spirituality — one that listens to the ancient wisdom of First Nations peoples, acknowledges the realities of our history, and seeks a way forward through respectful listening, encounter and walking together.

Sunday 1 November, 2 pm — Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson

Registration: contact@bmert.com.au — see www.bmert.com.au for more information

¹ Fr Eugene Stockton, 91, passed away 5 August 2026. *May he Rest in Peace*

Printed on 100% recycled paper

World Kangaroo Day

Blue Mountains
World Kangaroo Day
will be held on
Saturday 24 October,
at the Wentworth Falls
School of Arts
from 9.30 am

The morning will be a fete for children and adults, and include items for sale. In the afternoon, an auction will be held, to raise funds for local kangaroo rescuers and carers, who must finance their own costs.

Subcatchments of the Coxs Valley

Part 2. Marrangaroo Creek

Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area now covers much of the upstream half of Marrangaroo Creek's catchment. A jewel in its crown is the pagoda panorama from Lost City North lookout (three photographs below), now accessible along an all weather road from State Mine Gully, Lithgow, with a few kilometres of two-wheel drivable unsealed road. The extent of the pagodas, the intensity of the seasonal wildflower blooming and the "big sky" openness of the landscape make this part of the Marrangaroo catchment a must-see for anyone who wants to really appreciate the Gardens of Stone.

The few square kilometres of the "Lost City" landscape are not far from underground coal mines and their ventilation shafts, proposed glamping and bike track sites and the urban development of Lithgow. There are still signs of old four-wheel drive tracks but, for the present, the regeneration and infrastructure provision by the National Parks and Wildlife Service have enhanced appreciation of this site.



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



Downstream in the Marrangaroo Creek catchment are grazing lands, a military reserve, a maximum security jail and the site of the now closed Archvale Trout Hatchery. Two decades ago, when this writer was taxi driving in Sydney, a charming and almost persuasive young lady passenger tried to sell him the Archvale trout hatchery because her grandparents who owned the hatchery wanted to retire. The media at the time said that industrial development near the hatchery was allegedly threatening its future.

Recently, trout fishers have been trying their luck at Lake Lyell only a few kilometres down the Coxs from the egress of Marrangaroo Creek. The two generations of main western line arched railway viaducts are still a pleasant reminder of the trout hatchery's history and naming.

Text by Don Morison. Images by Christine Davies

Volunteer opportunities

PUBLICITY OFFICER

Do you have a penchant for publicity? Would you like to coordinate publicising the activities of the Society through various media including social media, newspapers and items for the website?

Contact Annette Sartor at
president@bluemountains.org.au

“DROP-IN” EVENTS MANAGER

In the absence of an events coordinator, the management committee is seeking a “drop-in” events manager to organise a members’ event for late November 2026. The primary role of the events coordinator is to liaise with the management committee and other society members to plan events for society members and the broader Blue Mountains community throughout the year. However, if you don’t have time to commit to the ongoing role, why not organise a one-off event?

If interested, please contact Annette Sartor at
president@bluemountains.org.au

Gardens of Stone Alliance

Campaigning to protect the Gardens of Stone and our drinking water

I'm Luke Gelder, our campaigner to help protect the Greater Blue Mountains environment and Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area from environmental impacts.

I'm an experienced community organiser from the Illawarra. My involvement in local community groups includes dealing with topics such as climate change and renewable energy. I've been on the ground with several campaigns in my local community, reducing coalmine impacts on water in the local area including founding the Illawarra Environment Network to bring together organisations across the environmental movement to assist to protect the environment.

As the Gardens of Stone Alliance Campaigner, I'm walking the pagodas and the proposed "glamping" sites, and seeing where environmental impacts are happening. I'll be focused on campaigning to help protect the Gardens of Stone area from mining and, in particular, to fix the loopholes in the Neutral or Beneficial Effect (NorBE) water test in NSW Planning Law that currently allows mine water to pollute and degrade rivers with discharges having no salinity limit.

The previous coalition government watered down the water quality NorBE test (pun intended). For most mining modifications, the NorBE test does not apply, and more mining in our drinking water catchment is not legally required to consider whether its proposal has a negative effect on water quality.

My immediate focus is to have the laws changed to protect our rivers, the environment, the Blue Mountains World Heritage area, and the Sydney drinking water.

Many of the people reading this have already contributed to showing our elected representatives the impacts of mining in the water catchment. If you want to take action, you can visit the Gardens of Stone Alliance website <https://www.gardensofstone.org.au/> and register to become a supporter, write to your local MP (or Ministers with relevant portfolios such as Paul Scully, Minister for Planning and Public Places, or Rose Jackson, Minister for Water) or contact me about helping within the Gardens of Stone Alliance.

Luke Gelder

Campaigner@GardensOfStone.org.au



On the Fence

A 70-minute independent feature documentary, *On the Fence*, directed by Australian wildlife filmmaker Harry Vincent, will screen at the Edge cinema in Katoomba on Wednesday 21 October at 6 pm, as part of the film's first Australian theatrical tour. The screening will be followed by a filmmaker Q&A.

Filmed over several years and across thousands of kilometres of Australia, the documentary investigates the extraordinary and complicated relationship Australians have with the dingo. A part of that journey was filmed in the Blue Mountains.

"It's only a part of a much bigger journey across the country, but it was an important one. It's an incredible landscape and dingoes are still part of that landscape" (Harry Vincent).

At the centre of the documentary is the Dingo Fence, a barrier stretching 5,600 km across inland Australia and one of the longest structures of its kind anywhere in the world. Built to protect livestock from dingoes, the fence has become a physical dividing line through the Australian landscape, but also a symbol of a much larger debate about agriculture, conservation, culture and the way Australians coexist with native predators.

The documentary brings together scientists, ecologists, genetic researchers, pastoralists,

conservationists, First National voices and people living and working alongside dingoes. It explores why the same animal can represent something completely different depending on where in Australia you stand.

For generations, dingoes have been trapped, poisoned and shot across large parts of the country to protect livestock. At the same time, a growing body of ecological research has examined the role dingoes can play as top predators within Australian ecosystems, including their relationships with kangaroos, wallabies, introduced predators and other wildlife. The documentary also explores changing scientific understanding of dingo genetics and classification, as well as the cultural relationship between dingoes and First Nations people extending back thousands of years.

Tickets: Google "On the fence Katoomba NSW", or try this link

<https://events.humanitix.com/on-the-fence-blue-mountains-premiere/tickets>

Watch the trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KG2HbgZO4>



Gardens of Stone can be a boon for Lithgow

We had breakfast at the Lithgow Workies and drove through the backblocks of Lithgow to the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area (SCA). We agreed to stop off at Dobbs Drift on the way back and our first stop was at Lost City North.

It is hard to find words to describe the pagoda country except to say that the scene took my breath away. It was very windy, the wind whistling around us, and wattle was flowering in the foreground. The magnificent pagoda scenery in the background looked familiar, and then I remembered I had been to this place before, about 30 years ago, during a Blue Mountains Conservation Society bushwalk led by Olive and John Noble.

Olive and John's walks were not just about reaching a destination. They were journeys of discovery, looking and appreciating everything we saw. Many of the participants were knowledgeable about the environment and we shared our knowledge and learned from one another. I learned a lot from those people.

A little way along the road, through a gap in the trees, we could see the city of Lithgow. So close but so far. The road from Lithgow to the plateau is not signposted. In State Mine Gully the road deteriorates to a series of potholes. After Dobbs Drift, the new unsealed road in Gardens of Stone SCA is excellent.

Lithgow developed as an industrial town and has a rich industrial history. Because of its coal, the first steel in Australia was manufactured there. But the days of coal are ending.

It is good to show as many people as possible the Gardens of Stone so they can help us protect it. But we don't need accommodation on public land when Lithgow is so close. Tourism in the Gardens of Stone could be a boon to Lithgow to help it transition from coal. Can funding be allocated to Lithgow Council to improve the road to the Gardens of Stone? There could be accommodation and all other services in Lithgow. Perhaps buses to take tourists to the Gardens of Stone?

Opinion by Christine Davies



Walking with Olive and John

Out in the vast northern mountains
In tangles of canyons and creeks
A man and a woman stride unafraid
As the walking group straggles and gapes

The Nobles are taking a walk today
Are you ready, all set for a lift
Will your mind soon be riding a lonely trail
Till we park in a clearing and hike

Their gardens of stone ... and moss ... and dreams
Their gardens are open today
The Nobles are eager to show us around
A secret corner shared

A stroll on a property heals the soul
With the gardeners at your side
When their simple joy in the soil's green fruits
Makes each step light and calm

And these are the plateau's gardeners
The wardens of the wild
Where the stone pagodas tower and flake
In swirls of mist and wind

The Nobles guard an ancient land
Where the Wolgan River snakes
Young are the Eastern temples
Whose name the pagodas share

And when the canyon country's voice
Has lured us to return
We'll clamber along the shady beds
And thrill to the bushland's songs

And we'll imagine that Olive and John
Are walking just ahead
Familiar guides in the wilderness
The plateau walkers' friends

Don Morison

Environmentally friendly gardening

In the September edition of *Hut News*, a range of native planting suggestions was presented. This month, we take a look at some wildlife safety tips, garden management techniques and useful resources. The list is certainly not intended to be exhaustive.

- For inspiration, visit the **Gardening with Natives in the Blue Mountains event** at Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson (24 and 25 October).
- Think “bushfire safe” when planting. Check out Chapter Eight in the Society’s publication, *Living Near the Bush*, on our website.
- Keep an eye out for garden plants that spread rapidly, for example by suckering, or prolific seed production. Consider removing these plants, especially if they are becoming established in adjacent bushland.

Hut News Trivia: Answer to Question 27

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage area at 1.03 million hectares is the 5th largest Australian world heritage area.

- Use pesticides very sparingly, or not at all. Even organic pesticides can be quite toxic. Skip fertilisers too; use mulch and/or compost.
- If landscaping, keep hard surfaces to a minimum, to reduce stormwater runoff. Allow space between pavers, to encourage moisture absorption.
- Check for any objects that may cause injury to wildlife, especially barbed wire. Do you really need bird netting? Hole width in nets should be less than 5 x 5mm.
- Our local birds have access to plenty of natural resources and don’t need supplementary feeding.
- Keep up to date with H5N1 bird flu information relating to urban bird management and personal hygiene measures e.g. Biodiversity Council, Birdlife Australia. Is a bird bath still appropriate?
- Share your garden space, and be tolerant of any damage caused by wildlife.

Have a great time!

BMCS Bushcare Officer

bushcare@bluemountains.org.au

The visible impacts of climate change in the Blue Mountains

On 6 August 2026, the ABC published an article “White winters across regional NSW towns now a fading memory”¹ which tells of the decrease in snowfall in our region as a clear sign of climate change. The trend is particularly obvious when you consider the conditions that allow for snow to occur, when the temperature is below zero degrees Celsius.

This graph below shows the number of days each year where snowfall is possible in the upper Blue Mountains and a steady decline is apparent. Unfortunately, this trend reveals that in the near future there will probably be, for the first time, a year with no days where the temperature drops below zero degrees and therefore no chance of snow falling. This lack of snowfall is a very visible indicator of climate change in the Blue Mountains.

This graph was made using data from Mount Victoria weather station, now defunct (1962 to 1989) and the Mount Boyce weather station (1990 to the present).²

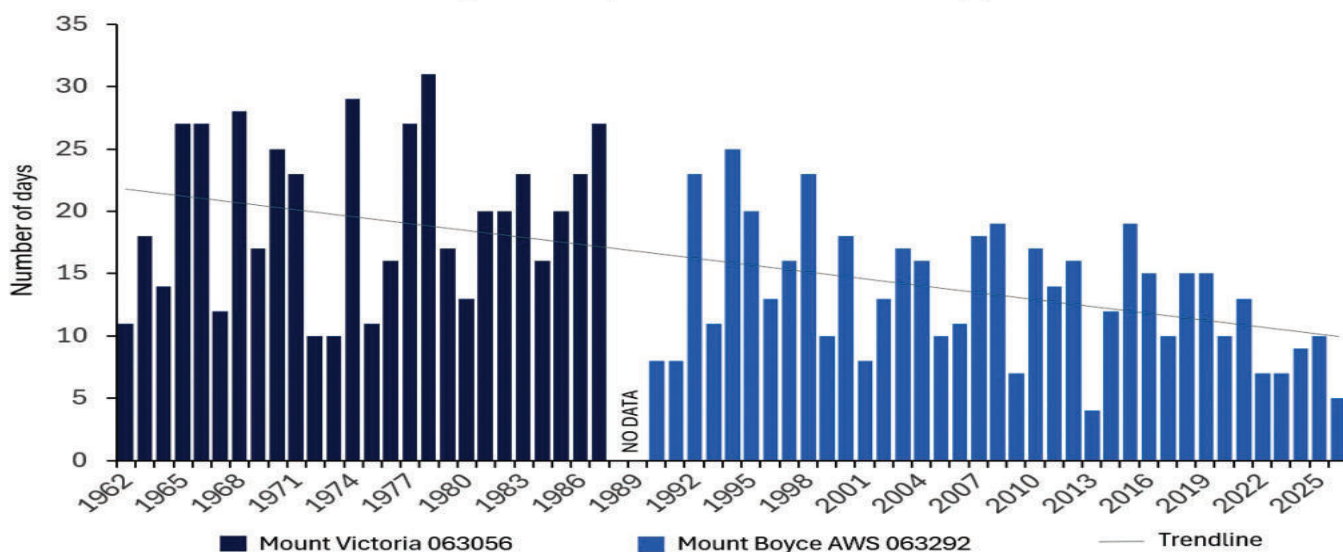
¹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-08-06/blue-mountains-snow-drought-reaches-record-four-years/106982612>

² <https://www.bom.gov.au/climate/data/>



Snow on a banksia in Blackheath on 10 August 2019
(Philip Gleeson)

Annual number of days with temperature below 0°C in the upper Blue Mountains



A history of the Blue Mountains heritage walking tracks¹

During the past few months, we have covered the period of walking track construction before 1960.² Older members of Blue Mountains Conservation Society might remember some of the events described below, or volunteered for trackwork.

Part 7. Walking tracks constructed for environmental education²

The Blackheath Rotary Club, during the period 1965 to 1968, constructed the first new walking track in the upper Blue Mountains since 1941. The Coachwood Glen Nature Trail was a 'first' in another way also. It was designed as an environmental education walk, with plaques giving the names and information about trees and shrubs. These have unfortunately disappeared and have not been renewed.

Volunteer work, centred on the area around the Valley of the Waters, was carried out by the Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society (KDWCS) with some assistance from other groups. (KDWCS later became Blue Mountains Conservation Society.³) It involved the restoration of old tracks that had fallen into disrepair.

The KDWCS began in 1961 and by 1963 had started the renovation of the old Valley of the Waters tearoom as an environmental education centre and meeting place. This work and the landscaping of the area around 'The Hut' consumed considerable time of the society's volunteer workers.

The society's biggest track project was begun in 1969. This was the clearing of the track, originally constructed over the period 1898 to 1910, connecting the National Pass track to West Street. It had probably not been maintained since the late 1930s. As it had never been given an official name the society christened it "The Nature Trail".

This work took some five years to complete. Apart from a contract between the 530A committee and Kevin Browne for \$170 worth of work, the entire project was completed by volunteer labour. A feature of the project was the set of notes interpreting the environment along the track prepared by Isobel Bowden.



When the Grand Clifftop Walk was partially completed, in 2024, it shared a short common section with the Wentworth Falls Nature Trail. The small stand of rainforest near an attractive creek crossing is served by a picnic table which is a popular place for bushwalkers to pause and reflect.

(Photo Laura Irvine)

The Nature Trail project was entered into the 1972 Daily Telegraph – Bank of New South Wales Operation Earth Day competition. This was described as "Australia's largest conservation contest". It won the regional prize of \$65 and another \$200 for third prize in the state.

¹ Excerpts from Jim Smith's *Blue Mountains Heritage Track Study, Historical Report*, 1998.

² This series of articles can be found in February to October *Hut News* on the Blue Mountains Conservation Society website: www.bluemountains.org.au – follow the links to **publications/ Hut News archives**.

³ The Katoomba and District Fauna and Flora Protection Society (the original name of the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society) was formed in 1961, when a group of concerned residents met to determine the action that they could take to help protect the Blue Mountains environment. The name was changed the next year to the Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society. Like-minded people formed the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society in 1966. In 1996 the two societies merged to become the present body, the **Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.** The Conservation Hut remains the Society's headquarters and the Black Cockatoos its logo. You can read more about the Society's history on our website: <https://www.bluemountains.org.au> follow the links to **about us/ our history**.

From the archives

The honeyeaters

How exciting! How wonderful! Oh, to be a poet! In September, I watched the southern migration of thousands of little honeyeaters whose flight path was directly over my home in Blackheath.

In autumn and winter in the Blue Mountains, nectar from three species of banksia provide a feast for these little travellers. They arrive when the first chill hits the mountain air, in little groups of six to ten, coming across the valley, rising above the cliffs. Some of them stay here over winter to breed, while some go further north.

Now they are returning south, flying in groups of 12 to 20 and chirping as they fly in an ever-southerly direction. Where are they going? Where have they been? I phoned the expert (and poet) Graham Alcorn.

Graham tells me that we haven't found out where

they go, but their distribution is from Adelaide to Cairns. During migration they fly above the trees where they are safe from predators and don't like open spaces. They call during flight so that none of them get lost. (All migrating birds call during flight.)

More is known about the silvereyes. Tasmanian silvereyes (which can be identified by a rufous flank) migrate to Sydney, while Sydney silvereyes (with grey flanks) migrate as far as Cairns!

Christine Davies

This article was published in October 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)

Editor's note: There have been some minor changes in this story. Thirty years ago, I was only just beginning to learn about nature in the Blue Mountains. There is so much more to learn!



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.

- 12 Oct **Pierces Pass to Grose River**, 4.5 km. 500m descent and ascent with lots of steps. Lyn **0432 352 850**
- 19 Oct **Blue Gum Swamp and Bees Nest Hill**, 12 km. 270m ascent/descent. Bill **0407 271 685**
- 26 Oct **Pippa/Florabella Pass**, 8 kms return with a small section near cliff edge. 300m ascent. Angela **0427 133 327**
- 2 Nov **Wentworth Falls circuit via Darwin's Walk**, Undercliff and Overcliff tracks 10 km, 283m ascent/descent. Lyn **0432 352 850**

TUESDAY

- 13 Oct **Bus trip – Kentlyn Basin** Grade 2/3, 5 km return, steps, 83 metres up/down. Maurice **0402 402 783**
- 20 Oct **Valley Heights fire trail loop**, Grade 2, 6 km. Steep loose rock descent 152m/steep ascent. Julie Martin **0466 964 815** and Ian Chappel **0412 757 902**
- 27 Oct **Bondi to Coogee**, including sculptures by the sea. Grade 2, 6 km, some stairs. Beth Rohrlach **0424 732 287**
- 3 Nov **Sutherland to Prince Edward park return**, Grade 2, 4–5km. Steep descent/ascent, many shallow steps, 125m. Julie Martin **0466 964 815** and Ian Chappel **0412 757 902**

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

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

- 8 Oct **Braeside walk to Barrow Lookout**, Blackheath. Grade 2. Tracey **0434 262 611**
- 15 Oct **Pool of Siloam and Lyrebird Dell**, Leura, Grade 2. Ros **0417 261 465**
- 22 Oct **Asgard Swamp, Mount Victoria**, Grade 2, 5.6 km, 210m ascent/descent. Angela **0477 133 267**
- 29 Oct **View Photography Exhibition at Heritage Centre**, then walk Fairfax Track to Govetts Leap. Grade 1. Beverley **4757 2076**
- 5 Nov **Horseshoe Falls Reserve, Hazelbrook**, Grade 2. Ros **0417 261 465**
- 12 Nov **Undercliff Pass, Wentworth Falls**, Grade 2. Beverley **4757 2076**

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.

Nellies Glen and Devils Hole circuit



Images by Melanie Lawson

Nineteen adventurous walkers tackled the 10 km circuit down to Nellie's Glen and the Megalong Valley, returning via the Devil's hole. This spectacular track offers diverse terrain, stunning views and lush vegetation. The camaraderie and generous spirit of the group was a highlight as we helped each other over the tricky sections of the track. *A wonderful day!* **Monday Leisure Walks, July 2026**

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

What to look for in the Blue Mountains

Special exhibition at the Australian Museum,
1 William Street, Sydney.

Open until 14 February 2027,
10 am to 5 pm daily. Admission free.

The 2026 Australian Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year, a South Australian Museum exhibition

See nature in a whole new light in **The 2026 Australian Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year, a South Australian Museum exhibition**. For over two decades, this beloved annual exhibition has celebrated the natural world around us, showcasing spectacular flora, fauna and landscapes found throughout Australia, New Zealand, Antarctica and New Guinea.

From the mysterious ocean floor to majestic mountain tops and fiery outback panoramas, this bioregion is home to wildlife and environments unlike any other. Be inspired by this amazing collection of 100 photographs that showcase the unique natural heritage of this region, stretching back more than 80 million years.

The incredible works on display provoke a deeper connection with the natural world, offering an intimate insight into the delicate diversity of the environment and a reckoning with the changing climate that threatens its irreplaceable beauty.

<https://australian.museum/exhibition/agnpy-2026/>

Citizen Science:

Australia's frogs need your help

Our frogs are under threat from habitat loss, disease and climate change. Record frog calls with the free FrogID app and help gather essential information to better understand and conserve Australia's frogs. Download the app and register now. Remember, every call counts! <https://www.frogid.net.au/>

The deadline for November *Hut News* is
12 October

hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

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:

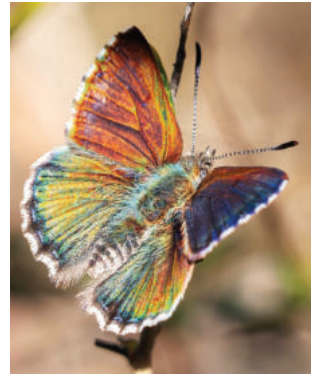
hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

or post to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

Butterflies

Lots of native and introduced plants are flowering in the spring, and lots of butterflies are going about their work, helping to pollinate the flowers. How many different species of butterfly have you seen?

Did you know that each species has different habitat requirements? The butterflies can feed on all sorts of flowers, but the caterpillars won't survive to become butterflies unless these habitat requirements



Bathurst copper
butterfly (Andy Klotz)

are met. Some are fussier than others.

Adelina

Butterflies and ants

This little butterfly, *Paralucia spinifera*, commonly known as the Bathurst copper or purple copper, was photographed near Bathurst recently. The Bathurst copper butterfly is only known to live in the Bathurst, Lithgow and Oberon regions. This species has highly specific habitat requirements and only lives where the food plant, a *Bursaria* subspecies, and an attendant ant species, are present. The butterfly is listed as endangered.

The butterflies emerge between August and November, with a two-week peak of activity in September. After mating, the female lays eggs on or near the area of *Bursaria spinosa* subsp. *lasiophylla*. After hatching, the larva is attended by the ant species, *Anonychomyrma itinerans*, which is thought to offer the larva predator protection and receive nutritional secretions from the larva.

Adelina

The frog has been identified

This frog lives in a bromeliad potplant in Adelina's garden. In September *Hut News* (page 12), Adelina asked for a frog identification. "Do we have a herpetologist or a batrachologist in the society who an enlighten Adelina and our members on the secret life of frogs?" The frog has been identified by Lillian O'Rourke as a Perons tree frog. Lillian said it is a very beautiful frog. Andy Klotz confirmed the identification.

Andy writes: The frog is an Emerald spotted tree frog also known as Perons tree frog (*Pengilleyia peronii*). Amongst the identifying features are a cross-shaped pupil, a dark line behind the ear and green spots on a grey to brown body. It is also known as the emerald-spotted tree frog, emerald-speckled tree frog, laughing tree frog, and maniacal cackle frog. Peron's tree frog is one of the most variably coloured frogs in Australia, with the ability to change colour in less than one hour.

Adelina

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