

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



"A Sustainable Energy Future for Australia" Is the massive expansion of Mt Piper coal fired power station really needed?

At our monthly meeting at the Conservation Hut on Friday 28 May, Dr Mark Diesendorf will discuss the technologies and policies that could provide a 100% ecologically sustainable energy system for Australia, based on the efficient use of renewable energy. In doing so, he will bust some of the common myths that vested interests are disseminating to try to keep renewable energy as a set of fringe technologies. **These are the arguments used to justify the massive expansion of the coal fired Mt Piper power station near Lithgow.**

Mark will also argue that the principal hope for getting real action on climate change, instead of the current ineffective token gestures, is to mobilise the community.

Dr Diesendorf is Deputy Director of the Institute of Environmental Studies at UNSW. Previously he was Professor of Environmental Science at UTS. He is co-editor of "Human Ecology Human Economy: Ideas for an ecologically sustainable future" (1997) and author of "Greenhouse Solutions with Sustainable Energy" (2007) and "Climate Action: A campaign manual for greenhouse solutions" (2009).

**Blue Mountains Conservation Society Monthly Meeting
7.30 pm, Friday 28 May 2010
The Conservation Hut, far western end of
Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls
Visitors are very welcome.**

From the President

Our Friday night meetings are a great opportunity to get together with members and have an enjoyable and informative experience. Our next meeting, featuring scientist Mark Diesendorf, is a fabulous opportunity to address the 'baseload power' myth.

In the absence of a Monthly Meetings Convenor, some of the members of the management committee have taken on the task of arranging the meetings for the next few months.

Members would know that there has been a lot of discussion over the years as to the best time, location and format of our meetings (held on the last Friday of each month at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls.) Ongoing discussions led the Communications sub-committee to consider why we have these meetings, and if these meetings are achieving their purpose.

Among other things, the meetings aim to: increase knowledge of the environment by listening to a speaker or watching a film, update members on the work of the Society, provide an opportunity for members to get involved in that work, and to hear concerns from members about environmental issues in the Blue Mountains.

I am aware that the various monthly meetings held at the Conservation Hut have often met the purposes discussed above. However, I also believe that we could increase the opportunities for members to get involved in the activities of the Society.

We are considering ideas at the moment and would love to hear what you think. Please let me know!

Tara Cameron

Email: domtara@bigpondcom
Mobile: 0419 824 974.

Sartor puts National Parks tourism on the agenda again

Our national parks have been kept free from being over-run from tourist resorts and other commercial paraphernalia by a concerted campaign from NSW conservation groups over the last two years. BMCS is playing an active role in this campaign by recently engaging experienced campaigner and former NPA CEO, Andrew Cox, to assist.

When BMCS met with Environment Minister, Frank Sartor, in March he said that he was about to complete draft legislation to implement the recommendations of the Tourism and National Parks Task Force that called for more tourism developments in national parks. This means that after no action for more than a year, the Government is now moving ahead.

BMCS expects to see this draft legislation to amend the National

Parks and Wildlife Act in May. Already we have learnt that the NSW Government wants to overhaul the leasing provisions in national parks legislation to make it easier to permit new buildings and facilities in national parks.

'Tourism' is going to be added as a purpose of national park management and one of the functions of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Surely conservation is the job of NPWS and tourism is the job of Tourism NSW!

One alarming proposal for the Blue Mountains that emerged in an internal NPWS tourism planning document (NPWS Draft Tourism Strategy Dec 2009) was a Govetts Leap Sunset Restaurant. Expect some fireworks soon if the Environment Minister doesn't back down. **Andrew Cox.**

**"Hut News", the newsletter of
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HUT NEWS EDITORIALS

The deadline for the next issue of Hut News
is **Saturday 22 May 2010**

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

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BUSHCARE GROUP

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare
Group meets second Saturday of each
month, 9am till noon. Tools and gloves are
available. Bring a drink, a snack and a hat.

New members are always welcome.
Phone Karen on 4757 1929.

Nursery News

Blackheath Community Markets:

We will make our first appearance at the above markets on Sunday 2nd May with mostly Upper Mountains plants to tempt you, including some opening specials. The markets are held in the grounds of the Blackheath Primary School. Look for us under the new Society marquee featuring a roof adorned with the Society logo and which we first put into use on Sunday 18th April at the Lawson Magpie Markets (see photo). The latter markets are held every 3rd Sunday of the month and the former every 1st Sunday of the month but we will suspend our participation during the colder months of June and July only to reappear with a burst of new plants in August.

Council Plant Vouchers:

Almost 2 500 of these vouchers have been redeemed at our nurseries and Council officers have expressed great satisfaction with the enthusiastic public response to the Carbon Offsets scheme, so much so that it is planned again for next year. The Society strongly supports the scheme not only for the environmental benefits but also for the publicity it brings for the nursery and the Society.

Waratahs and Mountain Devils:

Our state floral emblem, the popular Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*) is currently adorned with its long pods and we are anticipating collecting large numbers of brown, winged seeds when they ripen. Experience has shown that seeds over a year old are rarely viable and we need to collect fresh specimens each year. The nursery volunteers are planning a bush-walk/collection day soon. Using our special technique for winged seeds, germination is usually rapid (2-3 weeks) and gives near 100% yields. We will have hundreds for sale by the end of the year.

This favourable season has seen the appearance of hordes of little, green, horned creatures in the bush. I'm referring to the fruits of *Lambertia formosa*, commonly called the Mountain Devil because of their similarity to the head of that perceived mythical creature. When the fruits ripen they turn brown and on drying release two, flat, round, black seeds, which also germinate easily in high yield. These will also be for sale by the end of the year.

Both these fascinating plants should be included in any Mountains garden so come and see us then.

Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager.



Carbon trading delay will come at a price

Ben Cubby, Environment Editor, Sydney Morning Herald, Weekend Edition, May 1-2, 2010

Cows will continue to graze in a paddock north of Port Fairy in Victoria for the next few years – just one of the consequences of the postponement of the federal government's carbon trading scheme.

The gas company Santos had approval to build an \$800 million, gas-fired electricity plant on the site, but immediately shelved its plans this week upon hearing that the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme would be held off at least until 2013.

Altogether, up to \$2 billion of investment in gas-fired power may have been put on hold since the Herald broke the news on Tuesday, the Energy Supply Association of Australia said. The ripples are still spreading, with thousands of jobs in construction, transport and the financial and legal sectors now uncertain, say an array of economists and climate analysts.

The Santos decision may be good news for the cows, but the gas industry is suffering. The carbon trading deferral means coal will remain much cheaper than gas, even though gas-fired electricity pumps out between a third and three-quarters less greenhouse gas.

(The article goes on to discuss investment and power bills and an increased start-up carbon price caused by the delay, and concludes ...)

The government remains committed to introducing its scheme in 2013 or after, depending on international developments.

Climate scientists said the trajectory of emissions cuts implicit in the decision to defer the scheme would make Australia's path steeper and harder in the years leading up to 2020.

"The truth is that every year of delay means the actions finally taken will either be a little more painful, or a little less effective", said Professor Steven Sherwood, a climate scientist at the University of Sydney.

The p2p2020 project - Renewable power to people

We have learnt about an exciting plan to get 100% renewable energy by 2020, funded by Australians. At this stage, subscribers just show support by registering for email updates on the website. Nothing more than that!

The aim is to gather 20,000 subscribers prior to an anticipated public launch. If the group can gather 2 million + Australians behind the vision of 100% renewable electricity for Australia by 2020, they will then move to Step 2 - the economic and business proof. Armed with that, they plan to launch a private company that sees Australians who partake owning an equal share. From there, shareholders can divert a proportion of their Superannuation based upon the final business case.

Many Consoc members, including myself, are registering for email updates. To find about more and register, go to <http://www.p2p2020.com/>

Tara Cameron

Blue Mountains Conservation Society What do we do?

The Society was formed in 1961 as the Katoomba and District Wildlife Society. The name was later changed to the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society. In 1991 the Upper and Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Societies amalgamated and took the name of Blue Mountains Conservation Society. At present there are almost 1000 members. The Society has a long history of involvement in campaigns to protect the Blue Mountains natural environment.

A management committee is elected at the Annual General Meeting in April each year. There are a number of subcommittees which meet regularly.

The Society's native plant nurseries operate at Blackheath and Lawson. The nursery volunteers grow native plants for sale to members and the public as well as for contracts with RTA and other organisations.

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets on the 2nd Saturday of each month. We have stalls at some of the Mountain festivals.

Members are always welcome as volunteers to help with the Society's activities and campaigns. You can find out more by contacting Tara Cameron (domtara@bigpond.com,

4751 1130, or 0419 824 974).

Hut News, the Society's newsletter is produced monthly (except January). Annual membership fees include cost of printing and posting newsletters to members. The newsletters are printed on recycled paper and posted in recycled paper envelopes.

Hut News is also on the Society's website www.bluemountains.org.au On the website you will find the latest news and bushwalk information, and Strobos, an environmental magazine prepared by high school students.

The Society has an comprehensive bushwalks program (see back page of this newsletter). There is also a plant identification group which meets for a walk once a month, and an interpretive bushwalks program with walks on Thursdays during school terms.

We have monthly meetings with guest speakers, an annual picnic day, and we are looking for other suggestions (see From the President on page 1).

Above all, members are helping to protect Nature and the natural environment of the Blue Mountains.

If you are not already a member, there is a membership application form on page 9 of this newsletter.

Visioning the Blue Mountains in 2020

Given climate change and peak oil our future will necessarily be more local and use less energy. What do we want it to look like?

"Inherent within the challenges of peak oil and climate change is an extraordinary opportunity to reinvent, rethink and rebuild the world around us" Rob Hopkins, Transition towns co-founder.

On Sunday May 23rd 1.30pm- 4.30pm Masonic Hall, Station Street Katoomba Transition Blue Mountains is facilitating an interactive visioning workshop exploring what we cherish and want to ensure continues into the future in our community, what we may need to create to ensure a sustainable future, what we need to recover from the past and what we will refuse to take into the future. We'll look at the many different aspects of our community including housing, food, waste, energy, the arts, education, the psychology of change, transport and more..... Once we have spent some time in small groups visioning all the different aspects of our community in 2020, we will start creating timelines for how we might realise our collective visions.

*Vision without action is merely a dream
Action without vision only passes the time
Vision with action can change the world*
Joel Barker

Please join us and pass the invitation on to others

www.transitionbluemountains.org.au

enquiries [email: info@transitionbluemountains.org.au](mailto:info@transitionbluemountains.org.au)

0450921095

Transition Blue Mountains is auspiced by
Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre

Shameful statistics on food waste

It is estimated that food wasted by the US and Europe could feed the world three times over. Food waste contributes to excess consumption of freshwater and fossil fuels which, along with methane and CO2 emissions from decomposing food, impacts global climate change. Every tonne of food waste prevented has the potential to save 4.2 tonnes of CO2 equivalent. If we all stop wasting food that could have been eaten, the CO2 impact would be the equivalent of taking one in four cars off the road.

The "Next Generation Food" article has other interesting if not shameful statistics on food waste, including:

- In the US, food waste has increased by 50 percent since 1974
- 40 percent of all the food produced in the US is thrown out
- Food waste accounts for more than a quarter of freshwater consumption and 300 million barrels of oil annually.
- Food is the third largest waste stream after paper and yard waste
- 8.3 million tonnes of food is thrown away by households in the UK annually
- In the UK, city dwellers generally waste the most food, with the worst culprits being single men, aged between 25 and 35

Food waste doesn't necessarily mean something is thrown away. Eating more than our bodies need could be considered a form of food waste too.

(And meanwhile, here in Australia ??????)

Source: www.greenlivingtips.com and Next Generation Food.

Meet the Management Committee

Karen McLaughlin
Project Officer, Gardens of Stone

My love of the bush started during my childhood when my family spent weekends and holidays camping in quiet bush settings.

This continued when I began canyoning over 20 years ago. Hence my love of the Blue Mountains and Newnes Plateau in particular.

I am lucky to have been able to combine my passion for protecting the natural environment with my profession of Cartography/GIS mapping by volunteering with the Blue Mountains Conservation Society. I highly recommend volunteering. You meet lots of interesting 'like minded' people and get a lot of personal satisfaction.

My favourite places are in deep, dark, wet canyons or looking over some of the wonderful pagoda country on Newnes Plateau. And, of course, my home which is on the southern end of Newnes Plateau. Karen.

WINTER MAGIC FESTIVAL

Saturday, 19th June 2010

The Society will have a stall at the Winter Magic Festival in Katoomba. Come along and visit us and find out more about the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 campaign and other activities we are involved in.

Katoomba High School students will be there. Last year their "bottled versus tap water taste test" was very popular. (It turned out that the majority of people couldn't tell the difference.) This year the students will be involved in another activity to promote the Drink Tap Water Campaign.

Come and visit our stall. We also need helpers for the stall, particularly in the morning. If you can help for an hour or so please contact Liz on 0418 206 899 or 4757 2694

Making the shift: from consumerism to sustainability

The inconclusive outcome of the UN climate conference in Copenhagen last December highlighted one of the dilemmas of sustainable development – humans will often fail to change their behaviour in the face of scientific evidence about its damaging impacts. Alexandra de Blas, who presented *Earthbeat* on ABC radio for 8 years, explores why we do this, and how we might shift from a culture of consumerism to one of sustainability.

Consumerism has become a way of life in the West, and is rapidly gaining traction in the developing world. But what seems normal today wasn't always so. Today's consumerist culture can be largely traced back to the post-World War II years, when it was promoted by the United States government and industry as a solution to prevent the recession of the massive war-time economy.

Consumerism has led us to a point where humanity now has a global ecological footprint one-third larger than the planet we inhabit. According to Professor William Rees, an ecologist at the University of British Columbia and founder of the ecological footprint concept, we are drawing down the natural capital of resources that have accumulated over thousands of years, and using them at a faster rate than they can be replenished.

Professor Rees and Eric Assadourian, Project Director of the latest *State of the World Report* and a senior researcher at the Earthwatch Institute, argue that a wholesale transformation of our dominant culture is required if we are to avoid the collapse of human civilisation.

Rees says we must learn from our history as a species, be honest about our unconscious behaviour patterns – which are rooted in our evolution – and understand that we live on a finite planet.

Becoming conscious

According to Rees, three key factors predispose us to our current condition. Human beings, like any other organism, have a biological tendency to fill all the available space – just as a bacterial colony does when it grows in a Petri dish. Our second tendency is to use up all the resources at our disposal, and our third is that, as a species, we are inherently optimistic.

Consequently, human beings develop mythologies and cultural narratives that help us to make sense of the world. Techno-industrial society is no exception. As Rees points out, 'one [myth] we are completely seduced by right now is the "progress myth" – a vision of global development and poverty alleviation centred on unlimited economic expansion fuelled by open markets and more liberalized trade'. He asserts that perpetual growth is the principal myth giving 'shape and direction to [economic] life in virtually the entire global village today'.

To survive, he concludes, we must assert our capacity for 'consciousness, reasoned deliberation and willpower' to 're-write the "myths we live by" and articulate the necessary conditions for sustainability'.

Re-writing the consumption myth

For many in the West, consumerism has become a means of bringing value and social acceptance to their lives. This is why, argues Eric Assadourian, we need to consciously 'reject consumerism – the cultural orientation that leads people to find meaning, contentment and acceptance through what they consume – as taboo, and establish in its place a new cultural framework centred on sustainability'.

The shift to a new sustainability paradigm, he suggests, will take decades of effort by 'cultural pioneers' influencing key institutions such as education, business, government, the media, social movements and religious traditions. According to Assadourian, no generation has previously achieved a cultural transformation on this scale.

The *2010 State of the World Report* demonstrates that this transformation is already happening. While it gives examples of industries that have made our lifestyle less sustainable – such as bottled water, fast food and pet food – it also profiles many initiatives that are taking us along a healthier path for the future.

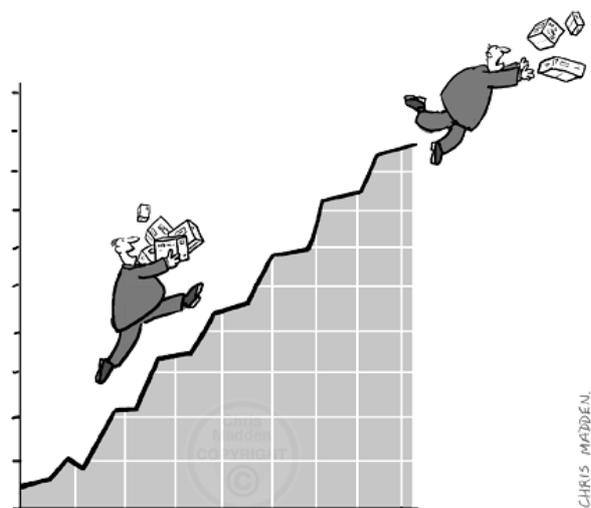
One example is the 'human buses' for children to commute to primary school. In Lecco, Italy, 450 elementary school students walk with a 'driver' and parent volunteers along 17 routes to 10 different schools each day. Since their introduction in 2003 these 'piedibuses' have eliminated more than 16 000 kilometres of driving, cut greenhouse gases and other pollutants, and provided exercise for the children. A number of Australian states also have a 'walking school bus' program.

On the legal front, the report explores new concepts such as Earth's jurisprudence. In Ecuador, rights for the planet were incorporated into the country's new constitution in 2008 – providing a strong impetus to safeguard its ecosystems and people. The constitution now states: 'Nature or Mother Earth, where life is reproduced and exists, has a right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structures, functions and its evolutionary processes' and that 'every person, community and nation will be able to demand the recognition of nature's rights before public institutions'.

When Muhammad Yunus first asked established bankers to lend money to poor, illiterate women in Bangladesh, they replied that poor people 'are not creditworthy'. Yunus's Grameen Bank now lends US\$1 billion annually to 8 million borrowers, and 99 per cent of the loaned funds are repaid on time. Microfinance has now spread worldwide.

[This is an edited version of an article by Alexandra de Blas in ECOS #153, Feb-Mar 2010 www.ecosmagazine.com Ecos is a CSIRO magazine]

CONSUMPTION GRAPH



As consumption rises the effects become more perilous.
Consumption Graph cartoon by Chris Madden
chrismadden.co.uk/cartoons/environment

History and butterflies

A butterfly experience in late April!!

Christine Davies

On 29 April the Interpretive Bushwalkers went to Hartley. We parked our cars near the courthouse and walked to the eastern end of the village. I had a book "Historic Hartley" published in 1974, and the signage outside the old buildings is excellent.

The township of Hartley was gazetted in 1838, with sixteen streets. It was the halfway point between Penrith and Bathurst. It was to be the central point of the district, the town which would grow and develop, and it did for a while. But in 1869 the railway reached Lithgow, by-passing Hartley, and Lithgow took on that role.

Our history walk started at the Royal Hotel, first licensed as the Hartley Hotel in 1846. It was the local booking office for the mail and passenger coaches to Sydney, Bathurst and Mudgee. In the 1850's diggers on their way to the goldfields would have come there and in the early 1900's it was a popular stopping place for meals with travellers to Jenolan Caves. The Anglican Church of St John the Evangelist opposite was built in 1859 and still has services once a month.

Along the way we regularly came across the name Finn. The family came from Ireland to Hartley in 1839, built the post office and some of the other standing buildings, ran a store and the post office, among other things. In the early days, Cobb and Co coaches delivered the mail. According to "Historic Hartley", in 1974 the post office was still operating and had the distinction of being the oldest in existence in Australia.

We had morning tea in the grounds of the Catholic Church beneath a huge spreading Protinia tree, a plant which is usually used as a hedge.

The information centre in the Farmers Inn was closed while the NPWS ranger gave a guided tour of the courthouse to a group of school children. Next to it is Ivy Cottage, and then the Shamrock Inn. The bush timber in the Shamrock Inn is sagging. At the back we could see the slab outer walls, and the wattle and daub inner walls. The shingle roof is covered by a corrugated iron one.



We followed the winding Bathurst Road, with its faded yellow central line, as far as the bridge over the River Lett. A kelpie-cross dog joined us along the way. The bridge is closed, and appeared very unsafe even for walkers. We did not venture further.

Beside the road to the bridge, butterflies were feeding on the flowers of the weed Purple Top. There were Monarch (Wanderer) Butterflies. This species is thought to have blown in from the Pacific on a cyclone in 1870/71 and found its larval food plants, the poisonous Milkweeds, established as a weed in northern Australia. There were Lesser Wanderer Butterflies, a native butterfly whose natural larval food plant is a desert plant but also uses the milkweeds. (Is this a co-incidence that they were together?). Also the Imperial Jezabel, a butterfly with colourful underwings and white upper wings with a black fringe. There were other smaller butterflies.

We returned from the bridge to pay our \$6.60 for a guided tour of the courthouse. I was there years ago and remember an "old bloke" (who was probably only as young as I am now) who told us stories about the people who scratched their initials into the walls of the cell. He would have been one of the local "trustees" who looked after the site before NPWS.

Three Blackheath haikus

Brendan Doyle

Tree bones stick out black
through the pearly skin of mist
begging for spring shoots.

The white cloud's rising.
I'm in it, like it or not.
Then all disappears.

A thousand green swords
catch droplets along each blade
from a passing cloud.



Photo: Walkers inspect the bridge over the River Lett at Hartley.

COMMENT: Dr Brian Marshall

Coal-powered pollution, the unhealthy expedient!

Blue Mountains City Council is to be congratulated on its unanimous decision to oppose the additional 2000 megawatt power station at Mount Piper, northwest of Lithgow (**Power plan row**, BMG, Wednesday March 31, p1).

The concept plan approved by the Minister for Planning (Tony Kelly) on March 3 2010 does not stipulate a fuel source. This will be determined at the project application stage *"...based on future regulatory and market conditions and subject to meeting all required standards of environmental performance."*

The favoured fuel is coal or natural gas, but coal is more probable based on current fuel prices and the delivery infrastructure. Planning's requirement that provision be made to minimise greenhouse gas emissions by retro-fitting carbon capture and storage (CCS) strengthens the probability. Yet the commercial viability of CCS for coal in NSW remains unproven, so the coal-fired plant will potentially increase the State's annual greenhouse gas emissions by 10.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, the equivalent of 2.9 million additional cars.

The Planning Minister and the Member for Bathurst emphasise the community benefits of construction and ongoing jobs and the associated flow-on effects. But these equally apply to natural gas power stations with less than half the greenhouse gas emissions, and to apparently disregarded renewable energy sources with minimal greenhouse gas emissions.

Lithgow Councillor Howard Fisher finds the Blue Mountains' decision bewildering, because he apparently sees the Mount Piper plan as a local Lithgow issue with no impact on others. This is partly true! The local community's health bears the brunt of negative impacts to air quality and water supply arising from proximity to coal dust, fly ash, and related mining and transporting activities, whereas the annual contribution to greenhouse gas emissions impacts globally.

For many, coal-fired expedience is a poor substitute for community and environmental health.

Environment groups call for more protection as new Baal Bone mine plan risks Cocks River headwaters and the Wolgan Escarpment

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society believes that the sensitive northern areas of Baal Bone Colliery should be surrendered by Xstrata as part of the development proposal for mine completion and rehabilitation.

In a recent press release, Tara Cameron, president of Blue Mountains Conservation Society, said that "Xstrata's development application for completion of mining at Baal Bone Colliery includes the 'northern' area that is not proposed for mining. We are asking Planning Minister Tony Kelly to protect this area of tremendous botanical diversity and magnificent scenery.

"Xstrata has acknowledged the environmental importance of this 'northern' area and recognised that economic mining operations are effectively incompatible with retaining the integrity of the beautiful area. The economic constraints in the area include faults, complex and rugged terrain, and a thinning, dirty coal seam", Tara said. .

"To the south in the last areas proposed for longwall mining, the dramatic 300 metre high Wolgan Escarpment would be forced to lean backwards, perhaps putting this cliff at risk of collapse," said Mr Keith Muir, Director of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness. "The longwall operations near the Wolgan escarpment should be curtailed.

"Despite 30 years of monitoring, the actual mechanisms of cliff falls have not been studied in the region. There are two mechanisms of mine induced cliff falls; toppling and block sliding. Back-tilting and sliding collapse was the mechanism that produced the spectacular Nattai cliff fall on the southern side of Lake Burrangor, Sydney's main water storage. If back-tilting and sliding are the geomorphological mechanisms that formed the Wolgan Escarpment, then allowing mining operations to tilt the Escarpment backwards would increase the risk of cliff falls" said Mr Muir.

"The Long Swamp which forms the headwaters of the iconic Cocks River has already been affected by mining. The ponds in Long Swamp were always full until October 2009 when the waterholes in Long Swamp began to dry up following longwall mining", said Chris Jonkers of the Lithgow Environment Group.

"Areas of important montane heath and upland swamp are dying and repairs to the area's groundwater aquifers are required to return water flows through the swamp and return this headwater of Sydney's main water storage to a healthy condition" he said.

For more information contact:

Keith Muir, (02) 9261 2400 (wk) or 0412791 404 (mob) Tara Cameron 0419 824 974 (mob)

Observing Nature (at Mount Wilson, April 2010)



Du Faur's Rocks and surrounds was a popular place with the Aboriginal people and you can see why as you look out at the beautiful view over wild and rugged country.

Many grinding grooves have suffered extreme damage from vehicles driving onto them during the twenty years since I first saw them. Those beside the track to the Chinaman's Hat, named for the shape of the rock with its ironstone cap, are mostly undamaged.

A lyrebird was going through his repertoire of bird calls, and we found four species of Hakea growing together (*H. dactyloides*, *propingua*, *teretifolia* and *constablei*)

The Cathedral of Ferns is a short but beautiful walk in Mt Wilson rainforest. The signposted "Giant Tree" was hit by lightning in 2008. Tiny fungi dot its trunk and at its base are huge white bracket fungi (photographed). **Christine Davies.**

MOUNTAIN MEMORIES by Wilson Alcorn

Most of the walking tracks in the Blue Mountains are close to the villages and Porter's Pass at Blackheath is a good example.

You go through the railway crossing and straight ahead till the road turns sharp right. Then you follow a path down a gentle slope, cross the stream and up to a headland with a view to the Megalong Valley. Then there is a steep descent to the creek crossing, walking on sandstone flags laid maybe 100 years ago. This is almost a lost art as you will find if you try to get a slab to stay where you have placed it.

The creek which has gone underground emerges from a cave at the crossing. If you wish to explore up into the cave don't do so if there is any chance of flash floods! Crossing the creek, one has a one to two mile walk along the base of the cliff with a steep slope to the valley on the left. I have met a Euro (common wallaroo) there. If you meet one, stand still and he will hop down along the slope and back to the track. Cliffs house the nests of Wedgetails and Falcons marked by white marks of guano on the ledges.

Like most walks in the mountains, one has a sense of isolation due to the

absence of human habitation. The Megalong Valley where most farming dynasties go back 100 years came close to disaster at one time. There was a 300 acre minimum in place, but we got word that a councilor at the time who owned land was planning to move a motion to allow five-acre lots.

When I say "we" I mean the Conservation Society. My brother and I both held the position of President over the years. We had a mole in Council and were well informed. We alerted the public and the move was stillborn.

The track ends in a steep climb and a return by road to the starting point. On the way up I found, off the track, a flat place strewn with large rocks, like another Stonehenge. It seemed to induce a different state of consciousness. After reading my brother's poem 'The Clear Place', I wondered if he had found it. There is something similar near "The Devil's Hole", a rough scramble off Cliff Drive to the Valley.

Wilson Alcorn, former Head Ranger for Blue Mountains City Council, looking after Blue Mountains walking tracks.



THE CLEAR PLACE

By Graham Alcorn

Here is the path to the Clear Place
Over this rise, along that face,
Through the thicket, around the knoll,
What a lovely day for a stroll,
Into this patch of brush and out,
Up the incline, then with a shout –
Here is the sign: THE CLEAR PLACE
Leave all our cares behind the hill,
Nothing to worry us, just be still
In The Clear Place.

MYSTERY CATERPILLAR

This green caterpillar was photographed at Katoomba in February 2008 and as I had never seen one like before I sent the photo to the Australian Museum.

Imagine my surprise to be told that the Museum scientists had never seen one like it either and had referred my query to experts in Canberra and Hobart.

After several emails back and forth I was told that my caterpillar belonged to a moth in the **Geometridae** family, but even the experts could not identify the species. It was suggested that I try and rear it but it was a bit late for that now as of course I had left the caterpillar where it was.

The **Geometridae** family is huge. There are 1300 species recorded in Australia so far with many more known to exist so perhaps it is not surprising that mine belonged to an unknown species.

Somehow I like the idea that there are still species out there waiting to be discovered. If anyone finds one like it please let me know.

Jill Dark.



GREEN LIVING TIPS

Slug and snail control - the green way

Green Living Tips April newsletter (www.greenlivingtips.com/articles)

gives tips on how to control slugs and snails, the green way! This is a free internet newsletter which you can subscribe to online.

The main tip is stay away from baits containing Metaldehyde or Methiocarb. Instead, iron phosphate is considered a more environmentally friendly pesticide and according to the EPA, no toxicity has been seen in mammals, birds, fish, beetles and earthworms if applied per the manufacturer's instructions. Snails and slugs die within 3 to 6 days after consuming iron phosphate laced bait.

There are tips on how to control snail and slug populations without using commercial poisons and pesticides. The first one sounds fun if you have children in the family. Organise a snail and slug hunt, at night, with a torch, and offer an incentive for the most slugs and snails captured. However once won't be enough and the novelty might wear off.

You can create simple traps, such as upside down plant pots and wooden boards - snails like to hide in these sorts of places - and check the traps daily. Also check under other places snails might hide.

Try creating a barrier using copper around delicate areas in your garden, or crushed eggshells, pine needles straw, sawdust and shredded bark can be effective barriers.

There are lots more tips, including planting "repellent" plant species amongst your vegetables. These include lavender, thyme, sage, geraniums and mint. Or feed them beer! Snails and slugs love beer. Some people use beer traps which are just a shallow dish with beer poured in, but an interesting variation on this is to spray beer on weeds so the snails eat those instead of your plants. Christine.

Loose Feathers, with Carol Probets

A visit to Kings Tableland about half an hour after sunrise will often result in a memorable bird experience. Perched on the power lines along Hordern Road and Little Switzerland Drive you might find up to a dozen smallish black cockatoos in pairs or tight-knit groups of three, preening each other and warming up in the morning sun. If they momentarily spread their tail or take flight, patches of bright pure red, or red, orange and yellow are revealed in the tail. A spectacular sight and literally breathtaking for my visiting overseas birdwatchers.

These are Glossy Black-Cockatoos, a highly specialised cockatoo whose diet consists almost entirely of the seeds of she-oak (*Allocasuarina* species). They seek the fresh cones which still have a reddish tinge. Biting off the capsule, they hold it in their left foot like an ice cream cone while they systematically demolish it to extract the tiny black seeds - a task they perform with surprising finesse considering their broad, bulbous bill. A carpet of she-oak chewings on the ground is a sure sign of a favoured tree.

Despite the name their feathers are not obviously glossy black (more a brownish-black), but they do have a beautiful satiny sheen when seen in good sunlight. The female can be recognised by yellow blotches around the neck, and some degree of yellow with the red in the tail. People sometimes mistakenly assume they're Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos - but these are a different species which you would normally need to travel to the Darling River, or further north, to see.

Glossy Black-Cockatoos have declined throughout much of their range and are listed as Vulnerable in NSW. In the Blue Mountains they feed on the Black She-oak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*), Forest Oak (*A. torulosa*) and Shrubby She-oak (*A. distyla*). But the tiny *A. nana* and the large River Oak (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*) appear not to be favoured, perhaps because the seeds or the cones are too small. Equally important as a good supply of food plants are large tree hollows suitable for breeding close to their feeding areas.

Recently (during April) I've been seeing up to 16 Glossies at Kings Tableland between 7 and 8am. After their morning preening session on the powerlines they disappear into the dense Shrubby She-oaks to feed quietly for the day. How lucky are we in the Blue Mountains to have such magnificent birds living so close to our townships.

Carol Probets (origma@westnet.com.au)

Mistletoes

Mistletoes are not always obvious to the casual observer. Different species grow on different trees and tend to imitate the host's leaf shape. Once noticed you will see them everywhere. There are some nice specimens growing on the trees beside the Conservation Hut car park.

Mistletoe flowers are rich in nectar and provide food for a range of birds, mammals and insects. They are parasitic plants which live off the sap of their hosts and are found all over Australia, except Tasmania. Many mistletoes continue to flower in drought or during winter, when few other

blossoms are available. Indeed, they are often the only local source of nectar and pollen during hard times. Packed with sugar and carbs, mistletoe fruits are good tucker, not just for the ubiquitous mistletoe bird, but also for cuckoo-shrikes, ravens, cockatoos, shrike-thrushes, woodswallows, bowerbirds, and even emus and cassowaries.

The mistletoe bird plays an important role in the mistletoe plant's life cycle. The life of most mistletoes begins when a viscous, gluey seed drops onto a branch from the rear end of the brilliantly coloured black, red and white Mistletoe bird. Found throughout Australia, these birds are highly mobile and go wherever mistletoe is in fruit.

Membership Application Form

(Use capitals please—even for email address)

Name(s) 1.
2.
3.

Address:
.....PC

Phone(s)

Email

MEMBERSHIP FEES (please circle one item)

Single \$25 Concession (Senior/Student)\$15
Household \$30 Concession (Senior/Student)\$20
Corporate (open to negotiation) \$100

Bushwalkers only.:
(\$20 per walker per annum) \$.....

Donation (tax-deductible) \$.....

TOTAL AMOUNT INCLUDED \$.....

Note: All fees include GST at the relevant rate.

Would you like to be involved in any of the following activities or working groups? (Please underline): Land use/development issues; Environmental Education; Threatened species issues; Web or database management; Plant nursery assistance; Bushcare; Publicity/photography; Water quality/sourcing studies; Society administration.

I/We agree to support the aims and objectives of the Society as set out on reverse side of this membership application:

Please sign if named above.

Signature(s) 1.
2.
3.

ENQUIRIES: Phone (02 4757 1872)
Email: membership@bluemountains.org.au

Please cut out and forward this form with your cheque or money order to:

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls NSW 2782

Once eaten, the seed of the fruit quickly passes through the bird, emerging just 10-15 minutes later. The sticky seed sometimes fastens onto a branch.

Once established, the mistletoe plant grows rapidly as long as there is plenty of light. A single tree may carry up to 20 plants which can steal a substantial portion of the host's water and minerals. Some researchers argue that even a large infestation will only usually kill a tree if it is already sick and dying. Most mistletoes retain the ability, like other plants, to photosynthesise their own sugary food.

Christine Davies and ABC Science
(<http://www.abc.net.au/science>)

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community organisation working to achieve the preservation and regeneration of the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

The Society believes that World Heritage status provides an opportunity for local community members to become custodians of the unique biodiversity and scenery of the Blue Mountains.

The Mission of the Society is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains.

The Aims and Objectives of the Society are to:

- Disseminate and foster an understanding of the ideals of Conservation.
- Promote the need for ecological sustainability.
- Protect the natural environment—flora, fauna, habitat, water, land and air.
- Actively oppose those human activities which degrade or destroy the natural environment.
- Repair the adverse effects of human activities upon the environment.
- Encourage the love of the natural environment by conducting a regular program of bushwalks.
- Increase the pool of expert knowledge about the natural environment, through meetings, excursions, research and other activities.
- Provide information to the public on matters of Conservation, especially through the Conservation Hut at the Valley of the Waters, Wentworth Falls.
- Maintain close and friendly relations with like-minded groups.

Meet the Management Committee ...

Bart Beech - Treasurer and Public Officer

I developed early a love of the countryside in England's rural Midlands from my nature-loving mother. I then spent 7 years in Yorkshire with its wonderful Moors and Dales before moving to Australia in my mid twenties.

In my working life I am an accountant, currently financial director of an engineering group in Western Sydney. Over the years my work has given me opportunities for frequent travel to Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and Japan and become acquainted with the spectacular countryside in these countries. It has also enabled me to contribute as Treasurer of the Richmond (Melbourne) Toy Library, Greening Australia Victoria and Lapstone Public School P&C before the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

Along the way I have also been able to experience hiking opportunities in the wonderful countryside of the French Alps and Crete where I proposed to my lovely wife Michelle in Hania before spending 5 days hiking along the (then) completely unspoiled south coast.

We moved to Glenbrook in 1998 to live in the beautiful Blue Mountains and became involved in conservation when a big block on our street containing a shale-sandstone transition forest endangered ecological community became under threat from a multi-unit development.

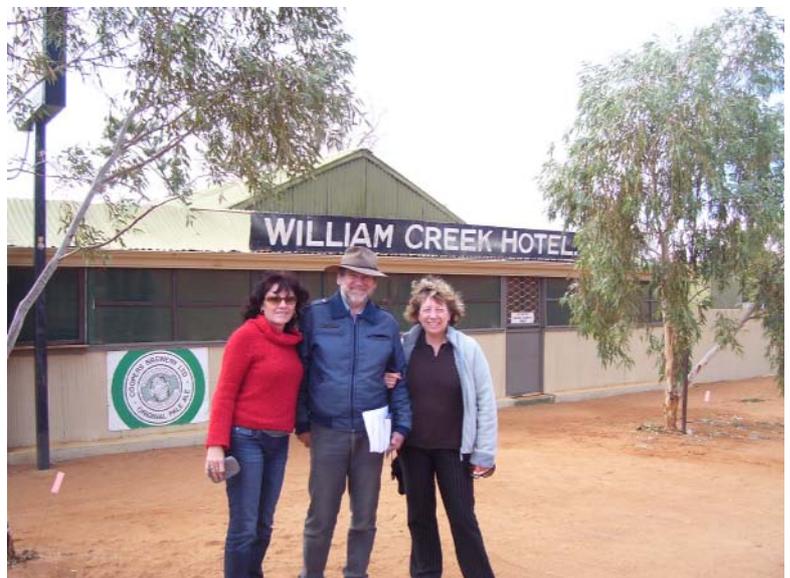
While we love wilderness and camping in the bush, we also enjoy hiking through countryside which has been used by local communities relatively unchanged for centuries and where we can enjoy traditional creature comforts. So in June/July Michelle and I have 2 weeks planned on the GR5 long distance walk in the French Alps and we are currently more than half way through long term projects of England's Pennine Way and the Sydney - Newcastle Great North Walk.

We have a 17 year old son James who we introduced to hiking at an early age - he climbed Pigeon House unassisted at age 4 and Mt Wilhelm in Papua New Guinea at 9 but now he's 17 it's no longer cool to be seen with Mum and Dad. My other interests include bushcare, aviation, real ale, cycling, canal boats and cryptic crosswords. As well as the Conservation Society and the Institute of Chartered Accountants I am also a member of the UK Ramblers' Association, the Australian Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association and the UK Campaign for Real Ale. Bart Beech.

Photo: Bart with wife Michelle and sister Lecia on the Oodnadatta track

Welcome to new members

Payam Nazri, Penrith
Ian Hay, Wentworth Falls
Brenda Hay, Wentworth Falls
Jan Roberts, Springwood
Brenda Finlayson, Katoomba
Andre Hacobian, Katoomba
Sue Dunphy, Narrabeen



Down the Wallaby Track — a backward glance, with John Low SPRINGWOOD'S CELEBRITY LYREBIRDS

The Superb Lyrebird has had a long association with Springwood, a fact recognised by the artist Norman Lindsay in 1964 when he incorporated one into his design for a town crest. Over a hundred years earlier the French naturalist René Primevère Lesson, travelling across the Mountains in 1824, was fortunate to discover a 'twitcher' among the soldiers stationed at the military depot at Springwood who "had seen them very often, but always in the evening or the morning, and in the most secluded spots in the neighbourhood".

But perhaps the town's most publicised association with lyrebirds occurred in the early 1930s when news spread that local bushman and naturalist Jack Coyle and his wife Ethel had successfully reared a pair of fledglings (Joe and Zoe) at their home in Raymond Road and were planning to breed from them. Though technically illegal, their project drew immense interest from ornithologists and naturalists (including Alec H. Chisholm) who descended on Springwood in numbers and, following a visit with the local member in June 1934, the NSW Chief Secretary gave the Government's official sanction. The lyrebird, he said, was of "great scientific interest" and he wanted "to do all in his power to preserve [it] from destruction".

Joe and Zoe's first attempt at producing offspring ended disappointingly when Zoe destroyed her egg after only twelve days. However, while several further attempts also failed, in 1936 she successfully incubated an egg for the full term. Lessons were learned from the earlier failures and every effort was made to give the birds the privacy they required and prevent predators from robbing the nest. The result was Pat, greeted by the *Sydney Morning Herald* with an article headed "Lyrebirds Start Hatching Family" and announcing the birth as "believed to be the first lyrebird ever to be incubated in captivity".



Among the many important visitors to make their way to Springwood in the coming months for an audience with the town's lyrebird celebrities were the NSW Governor's wife, Lady Edith Murray Anderson, and Mrs. Edith Stevens, the wife of Premier Bertram Stevens. They were both accompanied by their daughters and all were "greatly taken" with the birds, Lady Edith declaring Joe "the loveliest bird she had seen in this country". Mr. and Mrs. Coyle became accomplished hosts, entertaining the dignitaries with anecdotes and stories and presenting them with special photographs, especially of baby Pat.

Sadly, while Zoe, Joe and Pat brought Springwood into the popular and scientific limelight for a time, the story ends in tragedy. Pat was later killed in an accident, Joe died of stress in the aftermath of a bushfire and Zoe pined away within a few months of her mate of fifteen years. Fortunately Springwood retains a strong lyrebird presence and you are still likely to see and hear them in the gullies around the town, in their natural habitat.

John Low johnlow@iprimus.com.au

Hug a tree at Bidjigal Reserve Judith Dyer and Ken Godbehere

Don't you like it when a walk finally comes together? After two pre-walks (one when we got lost, the other when one of us pulled a thigh muscle) we felt confident enough to lead a group in Bidjigal Reserve at Baulham Hills.

The area is over 300 hectares and surrounded by houses,



motorways and sports centres but within 10 minutes walking you are in the bush. It has been described as 'an island of natural habitat in the middle of urban Sydney' but this does little to describe the variety of landscape, wildlife, birds and plants. It has remained relatively untouched because the rugged landscape is unsuitable for farming or urban development. Today there are over 370 different plant species, including 29 varieties of native orchid.

As we walked the landscape changed from open heath to eucalypt forest and rainforest gullies and creeks. We heard many birds but only saw cockatoos and Rainbow Lorikeets.. The endangered Powerful Owl breeds here.

The area has been used by the Darug people for thousands of years and there is evidence in the form of rock shelters. Blue Mountains artist and educator, Bundeluk, is deeply committed to the preservation of his culture. In September 1994 he lodged the first Native Title Claim to land in Metropolitan Sydney. It was accepted for determination in 1995 and he successfully had the area renamed Bidjigal Reserve after the clan that lived there.

For further information about Bidjigal Reserve contact Baulham Hills Shire Council.

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING ACTIVITIES

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. The BMCS Bushwalking Guide which explains the numbered grades can be found on the Society's website www.bluemountains.org.au or can be posted on request. For more information call Maurice Kerkham 4739 4942 email mauricekerkham@hotmail.com or write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782. **Late changes to the program will be published on the website.**

SATURDAY WALKS: Usually a full day longer walk at a faster pace. Before attending ring the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Jim Percy 4758 6009 or email jp34@tpg.com.au

Date	Details	Contact	Meet at	(km)	Grade	Map
May 8	Carlons Farm, Carlons Creek to Breakfast Creek, Bellbird Point. Steep scramble up of 300M with climb for the last section.	Bill 4758 8545	Blackheath Station CP 8.15 AM	7	3	Jenolan
May 10-14	Mid week camping at Dunns Swamp. Ideal walking and kayaking/canoeing venue. Come for 1, 2, 3 or 4 nights - \$5 pp per night	Jim 4758 6009	Contact leader for directions and possibilities			NPWS Brochure Dunns Swamp <i>Ganguddy</i>
May 15	Glenbrook to Lapstone via Glenbrook Creek. Many creek crossings with some rockhopping. Spectacular gorge section.	Peter 4751 9637	Glenbrook Station (finish at Lapstone Station) 8.30 am	8	3	Penrith
May 22	Temple of Doom to Wolgan Falls via Spanish steps	Bob 4757 2694	Mt Vic Station 8.30am	12	3	Ben Bullen/ Cullen Bullen
May 29	Farmers Creek, Lithgow. A new interesting walk. Some off track.	Bob 4757 2694	Mt Vic Station 8.30 am	8	2/3	Lithgow
Jun 5	Carlons Farm, Blackdog Track to Medlow Gap to Mt Mouin. 260M climb of Mt Mouin. Some off track	Bill 4758 8545	Blackheath Station CP 7.30 AM	19	3	Jenolan/Jamison
Jun 12	Noble Canyon and Glowworm tunnel, return via the grotto. Carpool - 4wd preferred.	Bob 4757 2694	Mt Vic Station 8.30 am	10	2/3	Ben Bullen/ Cullen Bullen
July 19-23	Forward Notice Midweek Monday to Friday at Wolgan Valley - Newnes Hotel Cabins. Cost approx \$25 per person per night. Confirmed booking and \$25 deposit by June 1.	Jim 4758 6009	Walks or various length, Grades 2, 3 and 3/4. See program.			Ben Bullen/ Mt Morgan

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS: Short Day walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of an average fitness. Bring morning tea and lunch and adequate water. The Group Co-ordinator is Judith Dyer, 4758 6310, judithbushwalker@hotmail.com

Date	Details	Grade	Contact	Meet
May 10	Porter's Pass, Blackheath. Superb forests, soaring cliffs.	3	Phil 4787 5560	Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre, 9.45am
May 17	Duck Hole, Glenbrook Creek. Historic walk, view old workings.	2/3	Heather 4739 1493	Glenbrook Rail car park, 9.30 am
May 24	Bald head, Blackheath. Spectacular upper Grose views.	2	Phil 4787 5560	Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre, 9.45am. (Car pool.)
May 31	Bus Trip. Forest Island, Royal National Park. Fare \$10. Book and pay Birgitta 4784 3191	2	Norm 4784 1554	Rear of Springwood Civic Centre, 8am.
Jun 7	Sydney Foreshore Park, Ballast Point. New harbourside park.	1	Jan Craney 9960 2174	Top of escalators, Central, 9.30 am, then ferry.
Jun 14	Colosseum, Medlow Bath. Public Holiday. Great views over Megalong.	3	Phil 4787 5560	Hydro Majestic, Medlow Bath, 9.45am

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS: Walks of 2-3 hours conducted at a leisurely pace to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, adequate water and lunch if noted. Group Co-ordinator is Gail Schwedler 4782 1215 platypusprotected@yahoo.com.au

May 13	Lyrebird Dell, Leura. Some steep descents and ascents on good track.	2	Joan c/o 4782 5966	Cnr. Megalong Street and Leura Mall, 9.30am
May 20	Centennial Glen and Wall's Ledge, Blackheath. Great views on bush tracks, some steps.	2	Phil 4787 5560	Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre, 9.45am. Car pool.
May 27	Silver Mist to Katoomba Cascades. Cliff top walk to cascades.	2	Joan c/o 4782 1215	Opposite BM Council Chambers, Katoomba, 9.30 am.
Jun 3	BUS TRIP to Dunns Swamp. Brookings \$10 Simone 4757 3416. Replaces the previously advertised trip to Noble Canyon.	2	Mary Lee 4757 4569	Council Depot, South Street, North Katoomba, 8 am sharp.
Jun 10	Minnie Ha Ha Falls, North Katoomba. Walk to waterfall to see regenerating vegetation.	2	Joan c/o 4782 1215	Opposite BM Council Chambers, Katoomba, 9.30 am.
Jun 17	Haystack Lookout, Bells Line of Road. Easy walk along original Bells Line of Road, then 10 minutes "bush bash" to a splendid lookout.	2	Phil 4787 5560	Mount Victoria Station, 9.45 am. Car pool.