



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

From the President

Well, it's time to say Happy Birthday. Some of you may be saying what, who, when? It is us and it is a very big milestone. Blue Mountains Conservation Society turned 50 on the 29th of October.

The Society as we know it formally came into existence in March 1996 with the amalgamation of the Lower and Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Societies. But the real start was in 1961 with the creation of the Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society when a group of concerned residents met to determine the action that they could take to help protect the Blue Mountains environment. The full story can be found at <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/aboutus.shtml>

I don't know how many members they had then, but now we have approximately 850.

One of their biggest concerns was the maintenance and running of the "Hut" to provide refreshments and education for visitors, as well as environmental protection campaigns.

Today we have a wide range of activities from various subcommittees managing a huge number of issues, bushwalking groups with over 300 members, a bushcare group, plant study group and nursery volunteers. Then there are the various environmental campaigns we have been and are involved in across the Mountains and beyond. Some have been highly successful, like the "Stealth" film in the past and the recent success with our case against Delta Electricity. But, of course, with some, we have failed, as can only be expected with so many things happening. Once again details of many of these campaigns can be found on our website.

So what does the future hold? Past experience says we will be campaigning for sometime yet on various issues and who really knows what they will be. Coal seam gas has

MONTHLY MEETING
7.30 pm, Friday 25th November
at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls
Food and Environment - a focus on the Mountains and NSW: Presenter Craig Linn

We all eat, and for many of us food consumption accounts for the largest single component of our ecological footprint. So as the festive season approaches, what better topic for the final meeting of the year than **food** and its very powerful connection with the environment.

The talk will take a considered look at food related environmental issues in NSW in general and in the Blue Mountains-Mid West in particular. And, while Craig will of course provide a quick overall perspective on the nature of the food-environment nexus, he will quickly move on to issues of direct consequence and interest to us all: what trends are emerging, are we moving towards more sustainable agriculture, food initiatives of real environmental importance, local food security, and more . . .

About the Presenter: *Craig Linn is currently Project Officer (Food and Environment) for the Society, and has been an active environmentalist and organic gardener in the mountains for more than three decades. His earlier incarnations have included: Scientific Officer for the Pollution Control Commission, University Academic, and Education Officer for Con-Soc. Those of you who have attended a talk by Craig will know that they are never dull – you will go away thinking!*

Visitors are very welcome.



A seedling emerges



Cox's Orange Pippin with bee

unexpectedly reared its ugly head. Governments will change and have agendas we may not agree with. The environment will need protection from all forms of exploitation.

What we will need is people, people willing to lend a hand and to stand up for what they believe is right.

Happy birthday Con Soc, long may you live! Lachlan Garland.

GOOD NEWS ...

Coxs River Case settled.

Delta Electricity admits to polluting the Coxs River and agrees to take action!

Full story on page 3.

"Hut News", the newsletter of
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HUT NEWS EDITORIALS

The deadline for the next issue of Hut News
is **20 November 2011**

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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

The Genus *Pultenaea*: The brilliant blaze of yellow from three large shrubs of *Pultenaea flexilis* in flower now in my garden reminds me that I haven't reported on this, the largest of the Pea group, in *Hut News*. *Daviesia* and *Dillwynia* were covered in earlier issues and like the British botanists after whom they are named, so *Pultenaea* honours the British physician and botanist, Richard Pulteney (1730-1801). He wrote the first English language biography of Linnaeus, the inventor of the binomial system of plant nomenclature and, himself, has been the subject of a recent (2004) biography by I.D.Hughes. His most famous work, published in 1790, is "Historical and Biographical Sketches of the Progress of Botany in England from its Origins to the Introduction of the Linnaean System". This remarkable work was dedicated to Sir Joseph Banks and covers the entire history of British botany starting with procedures of the Druids and Saxons, through the Middle Ages, into the Renaissance and to contemporary times. Some 221 years later it is now available as an E-book on Google. Times change but quality endures.

Our nursery currently offers three species of *Pultenaea*. *P. flexilis* (Graceful Bush-pea), mentioned above, is a graceful shrub to 3m tall and makes an excellent screen plant as it holds its lower branches and leaves. It is widespread in NSW from Deua National Park through to the Queensland border. It is covered in masses of lovely yellow flowers with a small red centre in October and November. There are extensive stands on the road below Mt. Banks and along the Bells Line of Road from Kurrajong. *Pultenaea daphnoides* or the Large-leaf Bush-pea is an attractive shrub 2-3m tall, common from coast to mountains, with similar flowers and grows well in sheltered sites. *Pultenaea scabra* (Rough Bush-pea, referring to the scabrous nature of the leaves and stems) is a smaller shrub (to 1m) and bears similar flowers over a long period from October in the Upper Mountains. It is probably the most common member of this genus in the Blue Mountains and makes a good low hedging plant.

These and other pea plants are easy to germinate from seed, after hot water treatment, but are difficult to maintain under nursery conditions so we recommend that, even if the seedlings are small, they be planted directly into the garden as quickly as possible.

Nursery Sales: In my absence overseas for five weeks, the nursery volunteers, under the leadership of Ray Kennedy and Sue Nicol, managed excellent sales at the Markets and at Lawson so over September and October we were able to deposit \$3,050 into the Society's account. Sales at the Magpie Markets were helped by a generous donation of advanced Rock Orchids raised by Simone Bowskill. Offsetting these gains are, of course, expenses and one way of lessening these is the return of tubes and pots.

Currently, nursery pots are not recycled by Council and end up as landfill which is so unnecessary as we can re-use them over and over again. So, if you have any forestry tubes or small (65-125mm) pots sitting at home please return them to us and we will give you 10cents each off your next purchase. It's good for you, good for us and good for the environment. You can bring them to our Lawson nursery (open on Wednesday or Saturday mornings or just drop them outside the gate at other times) or Blackheath nursery (Tuesday mornings) to the Lawson Magpie Markets (3rd Sunday of the month) or the Blackheath Markets (1st Sunday of the month).

Note that the November Magpie markets will be the last for 2011 and re-open in February 2012 and the Blackheath markets will run on the first Sunday of December but then, similarly, not again until February 2012. Wednesday and Saturday sales at Lawson will cease after the second week in December and will resume in the second week in January 2012. Plants or gift vouchers for plants make ideal Christmas presents and we have many advanced plants in larger pots.

Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager.

Delta Electricity admits to polluting the Coxs River and agrees to take action!

After two years of litigation, the Society has reached a settlement with Delta Electricity regarding water pollution in the Coxs River.

The Society and Delta Electricity have agreed to discontinue the legal action based on the following:

Delta Electricity admitting that it has discharged waste waters containing the pollutants between May 2007 and August 2011, and **that it has polluted waters** within the meaning of section 120 of the *Protection of Environment Operations Act 1997*, **without authorisation under its Licence** except in relation to salt;

Delta Electricity agreeing to **submit an application to the EPA** by 25 October 2011 to vary its Environment Protection Licence for its Wallerawang power station to **specify maximum concentration levels for each of copper, zinc, aluminium, boron, fluoride, arsenic, salt and nickel in the waste water** authorised to be discharged at Wallerawang power station into the Coxs River; and

Delta Electricity agreeing to submit an application to the EPA by 25 October 2011 to include a condition or conditions in its Licence which requires **Delta to implement a program of works** to be completed by the end of 2015, subject to government approvals, **for the full treatment of cooling tower blow down water** from Wallerawang power station pursuant to a pollution reduction program with the EPA.

This is a great step forward and follows years of hard work by the Society, the Environmental Defender's Office and our barrister Tom Howard who acted pro bono.

The Streamwatch testing undertaken by members, and the independent water sampling conducted by Dr Ian Wright were also crucial for the case.

We will now be working hard to make sure that the EPA



Upper Coxs River subcatchment

<http://www.hn.cma.nsw.gov.au/topics/2072.html>

sets appropriate limits on the pollutants.

The Society hopes that the case will bring improvements to pollution licensing practices more generally in NSW.

'Environment Protection Licences' need to live up to their name! We need a well resourced Environment Protection Authority, prepared to limit pollution to levels appropriate to the receiving environment.

Tara Cameron.

BACKGROUND: In June 2009 the Society instigated legal action against Delta Electricity over alleged pollution in the upper Coxs River below Wallerawang Power Station.

This followed Streamwatch testing by Society members showing salinity, phosphate, turbidity and temperature at levels higher than natural background levels.

The water was then independently tested by Dr Ian Wright from UWS revealing of aluminium, arsenic, copper, nickel, zinc, boron and fluoride in the water.

His report stated that "all results were assessed against the ANZECC (2000) water quality guidelines, particularly using guidelines for protection of aquatic ecosystems. It was determined that salt, copper, boron, and aluminium all exceeded guideline levels for ecosystem protection and were probably toxic to aquatic ecosystems".

The Society brought this matter to the attention of the Sydney Catchment Authority, the Minister for Environment, and the Department of Environment and Climate Change. DECC advised in April 2008 that it did not intend to prosecute Delta for water pollution offences.

As the regulators were not taking any appropriate action,

BMCS felt that it must take action itself.

Running such a case had the potential to bankrupt the Society, so our legal team argued for a 'Protective Costs Order' to limit the costs upfront to \$20,000. This was successful and was a precedent for a 'public interest' case in NSW (September 2009).

The legal representatives of Delta Electricity lodged an appeal against this decision but their appeal was unsuccessful (October 2010).

Delta then attempted to have the case dismissed. On 2nd December 2010, Justice Rachel Pepper of the Land and Environment Court heard an application by Delta to have the case summarily dismissed, under Rule 13.4 of the Uniform Civil Procedure Rules 2005. That rule enables the Court to dismiss the proceedings if the proceedings are frivolous or vexatious, or no reasonable cause of action is disclosed, or if the proceedings are an abuse of the process of the court.

This was rejected in August 2011 allowing the case to continue.

Mediation between the Blue Mountains Conservation Society and Delta Electricity occurred on 11 October 2011.

A reason to celebrate, but still a long way to go! Brian Marshall

The *Clean Energy Package* has passed through the House of Representatives and will be passed by the Senate where a majority is assured. Australia will then have a price on carbon, be committed to billions of dollars of investment in renewable energy programs, and proactively invest in carbon-rich ecosystems. For the first time, Australians, through government legislation, will be taking responsibility for their highly polluting lifestyles. **This should be celebrated**, but will it be enough to prevent global warming exceeding 2°C? Certainly not!

Australia is only part of the world-wide problem of greenhouse gas emissions (GGE), despite being a disproportionately large part in *per capita* terms. Many believe there is negligible chance of keeping GGE at or below 450 ppm and stopping warming at 2°C. Even were governments capable of ensuring compliance with exceedingly optimistic assumptions over the remainder of this century, GGE could still rise to 650 ppm and cause disastrously irreversible climate change¹. **But governments must not stop trying.** Humankind, the most destructive species on the planet, should strive to **mitigate** global warming. We owe this to all other species and, if that argument doesn't register, appealing to humankind's selfishness might. Somewhat paradoxically, that very selfishness, as expressed through unfettered population growth, 'limitless' economic growth and the omnipotence of 'the market', has led to human-induced global warming.

Jubilation over the incipient introduction of an Australian carbon-pricing mechanism is justified, but global and Australian factors urge moderation. For Australia's mechanism to be effective in the short term it must be passed and survive the gauntlet of disinformation; over the longer term it must interact with developed and developing countries to establish an international, market-driven carbon price. Neither is likely to be easy.

Although carbon-price legislation has jumped the first hurdle, opposition from business has intensified and the voting public is responding to "...the age of post-truth politics" in which "...the Coalition has proceeded to attack the...scheme with virtually no reference to the facts."² The Manufacturing Industries lobby wants the whole issue deferred or, failing that, far more compensation. The AIG wants a much lower carbon price (\$10/t versus \$23/t) and many other vested interests³ are demanding various forms of escape clause in case Australia is disadvantaged by being ahead of other developed and developing economies. The near-hysterical Coalition is demanding an election and, should it gain office, guaranteeing to repeal the legislation (though it may not be possible)⁴ and cancel the \$10 million renewables scheme. Lastly, parts of the media and a seemingly compliant public are intent on harrying the government and magnifying the worth of opinion polls without serious consideration of the consequences. Factual reporting and comment are blurred, and little attempt is made to analyse the disinformation embodied in corporate spin and political sound bites.

From a global viewpoint, the Kyoto Protocol expires at the end of 2012 and few would be prepared to predict

the outcome of negotiations over its replacement. The aim **should be** to set a carbon price whereby developed countries can purchase credits from developing countries, but the price is open to endless debate because there are too many conflicting factors and uncertainties. For example, how will the foundering European, American and Japanese economies influence carbon price, will the emissions trading schemes to be introduced by China, South Korea and Japan go ahead and drive up the price, and what will be the impacts of such things as peak oil, renewable-energy technologies and the fluctuating fortunes of nuclear power?

Then there is the elephant in the room. Australia's scheme levies a carbon price **when and where the emissions are released**. This means that voluminous emissions from exported coal are largely 'un-taxed'⁵. Irrespective of any carbon levy raised at the release site (e.g., China, Japan or South Korea) **Australia is effectively sacrificing a substantial revenue stream**. Faced with an imperfect international response to global warming, Australia and most other countries heavily dependent on fossil fuel exports⁶ **would be better served by levying a carbon price at the extraction point**⁷. The logic is sound, but what about the politics?

The only long term certainty is that the carbon price will escalate as emissions-reduction trajectories steepen due to foregone opportunities through the vacillation of governments.

What can you do? Your relatives, friends and contacts could be part of the many opposed to carbon pricing on the grounds that they might 'lose out'. Acknowledge there could be a small cost, but then ask them how much more they and their families will lose through inaction. Are they prepared to commit to the future or vote for a giant step backwards?

¹ Brian Marshall, *Now is too late!* Hut News Issue No 279 March 2011 pp6-7.

² Lenore Taylor, *Ignore all facts and just run with the bluster*, SMH October 22-23 2011, News Review p17.

³ One of the more risible claims for compensation comes from the NSW Association of Independent Schools. See <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/carbon-tax-to-push-up-school-fees-says-study-20111021-1mcbj.html>

⁴ George Williams, *Abbott courts trouble with carbon tax plans*, SMH 26 October 2011, Opinion p13.

⁵ This was deemed a practical necessity by Government because coal is our biggest export commodity. Conversely, coal for domestic energy production will be affected, as is apparent from the screams for compensation by the coal-fired power industry. See <http://home.alphalink.com.au/~jperkins/CoalDelusion.htm>

⁶ e.g., Canada, Russia, Brazil, Mexico and the oil- and gas-producing countries.

⁷ Paddy Manning, <http://www.smh.com.au/business/our-greatest-challenge-on-climate-coal-exports-20111021-1mc81.html>

Walking through the Ben Bullen State Forest

The Ben Bullen State Forest (BBSF), near Lithgow, NSW, takes in an area of around 8000 hectares of primarily old-growth forest, along with montane heaths and peat swamps. The BBSF boasts the same natural beauty as the adjoining Gardens of Stone National Park and the nearby Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and Wollemi National Park. The area is home to a great diversity of plants and animals as well as an array of unique geological structures. Around thirty species of native animals and 350 or so plant species found in the BBSF are threatened by proposed extensions to coal mining activity in the area.

The BBSF is known for the incredible pagoda rock formations which seem to grow up out of the eucalypts creating silent rock communities. The intricate ironstone banding and thin plates of these sandstone structures give the appearance of enlarged versions of a potterer's artistic project. Making a home among these formations is the Pagoda Rock Daisy (*Leucochrysum graminifolium*) whose bright yellow petals contrast against the earthy grey and brown backdrop.

Those visiting the BBSF may find themselves among some of the forty hectares of box-gum woodland, an endangered ecological community in NSW. Walkers may also come across the endangered Capertee Stringybark (*Eucalyptus cannonni*) which produces quaint white flowers over the summer.

Into the denser old growth forest, the Superb Lyrebird (*Menura novaehollandiae*) may be heard mimicking the sounds of the forest as it forages for insects among the leaf litter. The male Lyrebird impresses both female Lyrebirds and passing bushwalkers with its two large black and caramel brown patterned feathers extending up to 50cm out from its tail. It is hoped that the Lyrebird will not be imitating the sounds of mining machinery any time soon.

The increasingly rare, Regent Honeyeater (*Xanthomyza phrygia*) may also be seen swooping through eucalypt forests in search of nectar or else dropping to the forest floor to gather strips of eucalypt bark and spider-web (a natural adhesive) for nest building.



The forest is home to mainland Australia's largest carnivorous marsupial, the tiger quoll (*Dasyurus maculates*). This agile hunter may be 'spotted' stalking sleeping birds and possums in trees at night. It may less commonly be seen on rocky outcrops marking a territory which can extend several kilometres.

One may feel fortunate or unlucky to cross paths with reportedly Australia's most endangered snake, the Broad-headed snake (*hoplocephalus bungaroides*) found only in the Sydney Basin area. The Broad-headed snake, with its intricate black and gold-banded design, appreciates the provision of crevices among the sandstone rocks. In summertime the snake may be seen journeying from rocky areas to seek out cooler tree hollows.

It is hoped that the public may continue to be able to experience such wildlife and unique geology into the future. The decision on the Coalpac Consolidation Project by the new government will impact this remarkable natural area. John Good.

Photos: Endangered animals of Ben Bullen State Forest—Eastern Quoll, Regent Honeyeater, Broad-headed Snake.



CSG as dirty as coal? Yes, we think so. The facts remain despite CSG industry disinformation!

In the August 2011 edition of *Hut News*¹ we reported on new research² from Cornell University indicating that natural gas (both unconventional and conventional) is not the “clean green” fuel as portrayed by many in the fossil fuel industry. It turns out that because of significant fugitive methane emissions (aka gas leaks!) natural gas, when assessed over its total life cycle, has a Green House Gas (GHG) footprint at least as big as, and probably greater than, that of coal.

It has come as little surprise that the CSG industry, its front organisations, and lobbyists are now attacking both the research and those who choose to publicise its findings. After all, the CSG industry is spending a small fortune on green-wash trying to build the image that CSG is clean, green, and what we all need. Now that some “inconvenient” research findings have emerged, the CSG industry has shown little hesitation in employing disinformation to pursue its economic objectives.

It is all too easy to get mired (for hundreds of pages) in a swamp of technical details, because one paragraph saying the research is wrong or falsely applied may require fifty paragraphs to show otherwise. So let's not succumb to one of the CSG industry's destructive strategies and just focus on the following:

(1) The Cornell research is independent, well balanced (just read it), published in a respectable peer-reviewed journal, and the solid track record of the researchers is open for all to examine. The researchers adopted a highly conservative approach by using publicly available

data, using figures consistent with best industrial practice and technology in most instances, and building their work on an existing body of published research about fugitive gas emissions. In contrast, the Australian CSG industry's arguments are based on a report commissioned and paid for by the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association (APPEA), and to date³ not fully published on the grounds that it is commercial in confidence. In the *Brisbane Times* on *August 19, 2011* reporter Graham Readfearn noted that “*The APPEA research was carried out by consultants WorleyParsons, which in late 2010 won a \$580 million contract to work on Queensland Gas Company's current \$15 billion coal seam gas project.*”⁴

Which to you has the greater credibility, Cornell University or the APPEA?

(2) Australian CSG industry proponents claim the Cornell University research is not relevant to Australia as shale formations in the US are different from coal seams in Australia. They also say that Australian practice is very different, even to the extent that we don't have leaks in Australia! Yes, there are differences between shale formations and coal seams. **But** the Cornell research covers the full gas life cycle and, of those five stages (See Table 2 of the Cornell report²), all but the first (i.e. well completion) are **identical**, irrespective of whether the gas comes from shale formations, coal seams, conventional wells, or spin-doctors' mouths. (continued on page 7)



16th October 2011: Thousands march and close Seacliff Bridge to stop CSG in the Illawarra. Similar marches and rallies occurred throughout NSW, including Katoomba! Image Copyright: Michael O'Brien and Stop-CSG-Illawarra

CSG as dirty as coal? (continued from page 6)

As to Australian practices being different, where do you think much of the gas equipment and practices come from? If you guessed North America and Halliburton Corporation, you're probably right on the money. As for saying we don't have significant leaks in Australia, would you believe Sydney Water if it said it didn't have leaks? Whenever one has large infrastructure with a maze of pipes, valves, storage tanks, distribution hubs, processing facilities, and the rest, leaks are inevitable!

(3) The Cornell study and its predecessors were in fact far too kind to the gas industry. They largely assumed best practice, whereas risk assessment normally is less optimistic. The possibility of major accidents or the need for emergency venting was excluded from the GHG footprint, despite being part of the real world – for example, AGL's Camden CSG field, a few kilometers east of the Blue Mountains, experienced a well blow out in May 2011⁵. Also, much of Australia's CSG is intended for export in the form of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), and production of LNG was not covered in the Cornell study. As such, it is appropriate to note that Cornell University Professor Robert Howarth recently told the Sydney Morning Herald⁶, that in relation to LNG production: “*Then you have real issues*” and “*The leakage [of gas] from the compression and transport of LNG is incredible. That is probably the worst thing you can do with gas*”.

The bottom line is don't believe industry spin! If anything, the Cornell research significantly **understates** the threat posed to the environment by gas in all its forms. So the solution is not to limp along to global warming oblivion with coal but to immediately embrace 100% renewable technologies as fast as is humanly possible.

**Craig Linn, BMCS Food and Environment
Project Officer**

Relevant Links and Comments:

¹ Page 4 of <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/hutnews/1108news.pdf>

² <http://www.springerlink.com/content/e384226wr4160653/fulltext.pdf>

³ At date of writing, 20th October 2011, the APPEA has made only the Executive Summary publicly available.

⁴ <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/environment/cloud-over-csg-emissions-20110818-1izx1.html>

⁵ <http://www.kateausburn.com/2011/08/10/nsw-govt-issues-agl-with-a-formal-warning-after-coal-seam-gas-well-blow-out/>

⁶ <http://m.smh.com.au/business/benefits-of-switch-to-csg-may-not-be-all-they-seem-20111007-1ldi4.html>

JOIN Blue Mountains Conservation Society, or
renew your membership online. Go to our website:

www.bluemountains.org.au

Disinformation (noun)

Translation of the Russian *desinformatsiya*.

- Misleading information supplied intentionally. (Macquarie Dictionary)
- *The dissemination of deliberately false information, . . . with the intention of influencing the policies or opinions of those who receive it. (Oxford Dictionary)*
- In an excellent article, titled *Information and Its Counterfeits: Propaganda, Misinformation and Disinformation*, the Sheridan Libraries of John Hopkins University note in regard to **disinformation**: “*You have now reached the lowest of the low. Never underestimate the evil intentions of some individuals or institutions to say or write whatever suits a particular purpose, even when it requires deliberate fabrication.*” See: <http://www.library.jhu.edu/researchhelp/general/evaluating/counterfeit.html>

Society welcomes Labor's opposition to open-cut mining application

On 19th October 2011 it was reported in the Blue Mountains Gazette that the NSW opposition has come out against the Coalpac Consolidation Project. The controversial proposal seeks to expand open-cut mining in the Ben Bullen State Forest (BBSF).

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society welcomes the announcement delivered by the Hon. Luke Foley, Shadow Minister for Environment who told the Gazette he would “actively oppose the application”.

Mr Foley also said he supports the BBSF “being declared a state conservation area. That would allow underground coal mining to continue, which we support, but would ban open-cut coal mining in that public forest.

“We're opposed to open-cut mining in the Ben Bullen State Forest. I think that the conservationists have made the case that the Gardens of Stone has some unique biodiversity and geological characteristics that warrant environmental protection.”

The Department of Planning declared in September that Coalpac's environmental assessment for its application did not adequately address potential impacts of the project on biodiversity, Aboriginal cultural heritage, groundwater and noise and air quality.

Coalpac will have to prepare a new assessment before it can be released for public exhibition.

In August the Lithgow City Council rejected the application for the proposal; in September the Department of Planning declared it inadequate; in October the ALP said they would not support it.

Call the NSW Premier in November and ask that the NSW government reject the Coalpac Consolidation Project proposal entirely: (02) 9228 5239.

Winmalee Wastewater System Improvement Consultation

In late July Sydney Water, through its SewerFix Alliance, invited various stakeholders to participate in a Community Working Group, to consider the options to address a situation arising in the discharge of stormwater via the Winmalee Wastewater Treatment Plant. The invited stakeholders included Blue Mountains City Council, Blue Mountains Conservation Society, local residents in the vicinity of potential damage and action and other interested parties. The Community Working Group met on three occasions during August, to examine the three identified options in some detail and to formally rank them in order of preference. As well, Sydney Water accepted feedback from the wider community during the six weeks from 15 July to 26 August.

The Blue Mountains Sewer Tunnel is 39 Km long, running from North Katoomba to Winmalee and is central to the wastewater network servicing the Blue Mountains. The tunnel was bored through the underlying sandstone and in two places, in the vicinity of Springwood, sections of the tunnel are joined by vertical shafts, as the steep contours of the land interrupt the bored sections. It is these vertical drop shafts that are now considered vulnerable to catastrophic failure during heavy rain events. The increase in the volume of wastewater during these events increases the pressure in the drop shafts and failure would result in risks to public safety, damage to neighbouring properties and public land and large flows of untreated wastewater into the environment of the World Heritage Area.

The three options identified by SewerFix are:

1. Build a new overflow pipe bypassing the drop shaft at Lugano Ave and discharging into Springwood Creek near Bednal Rd. This would relieve the pressure on both drop shafts for a cost of around \$10.5 million. However the untreated wastewater discharges down Springwood Creek, flows into the National Park/World Heritage Area and ultimately into the Grose River.
2. Increase the capacity of the drop shaft at Lugano Ave to cope with the increased pressure and open a new overflow outlet just upstream of the next drop shaft near Lawson Rd, to protect this second shaft. The cost again is around \$10.5 million, but the overflow discharge flows down the pristine Fitzgerald Creek, a popular recreational area.
3. Increase the capacity of both vulnerable drop shafts and expand the capacity of the excess wastewater bypass channel at the Winmalee Treatment Plant. This results in the untreated wastewater flowing down the same creek that currently carries the Treatment Plant outflow. This creek's water quality and ecology are already impacted. The cost of this option is around \$21.0 million.

The Community Working Group assessed the three options on six criteria being community, environment, operations and maintenance, flexibility for future works, safety and cost. The overall outcome from a weighted analysis was that option 3 was the Group preference with a score of 26.5, versus 11.5 for option 1 and 12.0 for option 2. Sydney Water have now advised they will be engaging specialists to do further environmental studies to help inform a decision on a preferred option. This may mean they are unable to confirm an option before the end of 2011, as previously advised.

Bob Cantwell, Land Use Subcommittee.

Waratah extravaganza Christine Davies

Thursday Interpretive Bushwalk Newnes Plateau, 21 October 2011

We drove out along the Glow Worm Tunnel Road, past the Bungleborri campsite, and turned off to the west. Logging operations were in progress. Huge logging trucks sped past, blinding us in a cloud of dust. A slashed firebreak between the woodland and the pine forest was a mass of wildflowers, especially the lovely purple *Patersonia*. We just had to stop and have a look, unaware of what was in store for us just around the corner!

Waratahs! And I mean hundreds, thousands of Waratahs. Their bright red flowers dotted the forest as far as the eye could see. How well named they are! "The generic name *Telopea* is derived from the Greek '*telopos*', meaning 'seen from afar', and refers to the great distance from which the crimson flowers are discernible. The specific name *speciosissima* is the superlative of the Latin adjective '*speciosus*', meaning 'beautiful' or 'handsome'. 'Waratah', the Aboriginal name for the species, was adopted by early settlers at Port Jackson." (*Australian Native Botanic Gardens website*)

On the dark side, we found a sign, laying on the ground, restricting hunting in that area.

There were lots of large trees down, apparently from the same wind storm which hit Blackheath in early July. Imagine being in the forest then!

We stopped by a Newnes Plateau Shrub Swamp (listed as an endangered ecological community). In it were masses of purple flowers, *Boronia deanei* (listed as vulnerable under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995), and the more subtle pink flowers of *Grevillea acanthifolia*.

We had lunch near "Alcatraz Canyon" in beautiful pagoda country. There were wombat scats along the track. The surrounding heathland had recently been accidentally burnt during hazard reduction.

After a walk on Newnes Plateau I come away with mixed emotions. Exhilarated by the beauty of the place and saddened by the evidence of man's unrelenting violence against Nature. So much damage is done by the activities of people who cannot appreciate the natural values of the Plateau – mining, forestry, shooting and trail bike riding among them. A few years ago some bright spark suggested Newnes Plateau as the site for Sydney's second airport!

Christine Davies.



Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

I'm often asked for advice by people interested in observing birds and keen to buy suitable equipment. The beauty of watching birds (or indeed observing many aspects of nature) is that in essence, you need nothing more than your eyes and ears. However, to make the most of living in such a diverse environment, a few simple tools will help you to more fully enjoy, understand and document what you see.

Binoculars ("binos" or "bins") make a huge difference to your experience, allowing you to actually see the features of a bird in breathtaking clarity. If you don't enjoy using binoculars, it probably means either you're not using them effectively, or you have faulty binos. Binoculars can set you back anywhere from a few dozen to a few thousand dollars, but in a nutshell, anything between 7 and 10 times magnification is suitable for birdwatching. It's best to avoid zoom binoculars as you're paying for a feature that in reality is not very useful for birding - far better to get the best possible optics your budget will allow. Close focussing is surprisingly useful - if you can't focus on anything in a small to medium-sized room then they almost certainly won't focus close enough for some sightings when you're in the bush.

These days there's a growing tendency for people to forego binos and use a camera with long lens instead. My advice is to do whatever you enjoy most, keeping in mind that you can't beat quiet passive observation of a bird in real life, its behaviour, the way it moves, etc, as the best way to learn.

Identifying the birds you see is the first step to keeping useful records, learning about birds and therefore, conserving them. For this you'll need a suitable field guide - such as the popular Australian guides written by Pizzey & Knight, Slater, Simpson & Day, or Morcombe.

A good field guide contains clear pictures of all the species which can be found in a given area (e.g. Australia), including separate diagrams of male, female and immatures if they differ. There should be notes detailing the typical behaviour, habitat, calls and any migration patterns for each species. Often these will be the deciders which help us to separate similar-looking species in the field. Distribution maps are vital as this will usually be one of the first steps in identifying a bird, instantly ruling out species which are not possible, or highly unlikely, in a given location.

All the modern guides have the picture, map and text for each species on the same double page spread so you are not constantly flicking back and forth to find the relevant information. It helps to have similar-looking species next to each other for easy comparison. This is why most guides list the birds in taxonomic order (with closely related species close to each other in the book).

The Morcombe field guide is also available as an iPhone app for those who prefer to access their information this way, and is proving very popular.

Finally, some way of recording your observations whether it be an old-fashioned paper notebook, a voice recorder or a digital database will ensure your observations have the potential to be useful and informative into the future. Much of what is known about Australian birds today is the result of observations made by casual and backyard birdwatchers.

Carol Proberts (origma@westnet.com.au)

**The Greater Blue Mountains
World Heritage Experience**
www.worldheritage.org.au

*Eastern Yellow Robin,
photographed at
Wentworth Falls
by Carol Proberts*

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 \$30 Concession (Senior/Student)\$20
Household \$35 Concession (Senior/Student)\$25
Corporate (open to negotiation) \$100

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

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

Send my copy of Hut News by
Please tick box mail internet only

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
or pay online at www.bluemountains.org.au



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.

Welcome to New Members

Nick de Brett, Leura
Sue de Brett, Leura
Robyne Reichel, Leura
Penny McIntyre, Blackheath
Les Ward, Orchard Hills
Hawkesbury Environment Network

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

'Like' us on Facebook: Blue
Mountains Conservation Society
Follow us on Twitter: bmcnsnw

Centennial Coal to pay for environmental damage

In a statement from the federal Department for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities on 21st October it was discovered Centennial Coal will pay \$1.45 million for causing damage to a nationally threatened ecological community on the Newnes Plateau, NSW.

'An investigation by the federal environment department found that the long wall coal mining operations of Centennial Coal on the Newnes Plateau, near Lithgow, New South Wales, had caused a significant impact on the endangered Temperate highland peat swamps on sandstone ecological community.

The mining activities caused a loss of ecosystem function shown by loss of peat, erosion, vegetation dieback and weed invasion in three swamps. They also caused the formation of a large slump hole, several metres wide and more than one metre deep, at the East Wolgan swamp.

These changes mean the swamps can no longer serve their important hydrological role of acting as water filters and releasing water slowly to downstream water-courses.

Centennial Coal will pay \$1.45 million towards a research program to be administered by the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the Australian National University.'

Fight for it or lose it Peter Green

To me one of the joys of bushwalking is to sit on a high and remote rocky outcrop contemplating the peaceful splendour of wilderness laid out before me. At such times I frequently silently and wholeheartedly thank those eco-warriors who have gone before, who recognised dangers being increasingly posed to wilderness and who were prepared to fight to preserve such treasures. And I am privileged to work with modern day activists who are engaged in an array of issues. If anything, with a greater population pressure, the threats are greater, and loss of habitat is the key driver to species extinctions; Australia has the world's worst record of mammalian extinctions as a result.

Most members of ConSoc would be fully aware of the contribution of our wilderness areas for clean water, pure air and the preservation of whole ecosystems and their component flora and fauna. But not all people do. Many people are as ignorant as Meriton's Triguboff, who enunciated his disdain for trees ("there are too many trees in Sydney"). Others simply see nothing being as important as development and money, and are wedded to a system of unceasing growth and cannot see the ultimate futility of such a quest on a finite planet (Flannery's "suicidal self interest"). Most are rich and powerful, and their destructive crusades have only been slowed or stopped by the passion and weight of numbers of environmentalists among the common folk.

The Blue Gum Forest is an iconic example of what was achieved, at great cost of effort and money. Today we fight issues like mining under wilderness, stream bed cracking, trail bike and 4WD damage, open cut mining, coal seam gas exploitation, human urban expansion, expressway construction, shooting, tourism development in national parks and freight movement via highways. I appreciate the Hut News as a vital means of informing and motivating ConSoc members about the threats, extant and future. An informed and passionate membership can then act individually, politically, to preserve what must be preserved. Today's and future children, and our supporting ecosystems, deserve nothing less.

The next time you are enjoying your time in the wilderness, spare a few moments to appreciate what we have and what we can do for it. Peter Green.

Down the Wallaby Track: a backward glance, with John Low

ON THE RUN IN THE BURRAGORANG

Supper had not long been served on the evening of Wednesday April 13, 1921 when the duty sergeant at the Katoomba lock-up found the cell empty. The beds had been placed under the window and a rolled blanket hung from the bars. The Hughes brothers were on the run, having squeezed to freedom "like eels" and vanished into the Katoomba dusk. William (27) and Herbert (17) were local larrikins and petty criminals on remand for stealing, but their brazen bid for freedom embarrassed the forces of law and order and all stops would be pulled to apprehend them. They were also Aborigines and they knew the country they were running to well.

Investigations soon suggested the Burragorang Valley as the likely bolt hole, its isolated wilderness having protected fugitives of one kind or another for generations. With a plan to target a known Aboriginal 'camp' on the Cox's River, a strike force of three constables – Ledger, Davis and Kerr - assembled at Wentworth Falls on Sunday 17. Un-uniformed and looking "for all the world like a party of rabbiters", they made their way off the end of Kings Tableland by nightfall and descended into some of "the roughest country in the State". When dawn's light etched out a shadowy landscape they were within sight of their objective.

In the camp the approach of the police did not go unnoticed. The Hughes boys were soon "seen streaking for the bush all out" and for over an hour and a half Kerr and Ledger pursued the escapees "over rocks and creeks, up gullies and through scrub" before being forced to give up "winded and bruised and their clothes torn to rags". Meanwhile, Davis, playing a hunch that the runaways would double back to the river, lay in wait and it wasn't long before his intuition proved correct. Revolver in hand, he leapt out and the two young men were soon in custody once more, handcuffed together and eagerly accepting the ample supply of cigarettes offered by their captors. They were fit and healthy and, equipped with a rifle, tomahawk and knife, had survived on a plentiful diet of rabbits and fish. Smokes, though, had been in short supply. By Tuesday evening they were back in the Katoomba lock-up.

While press coverage made much of police skills and courage and was not particularly kind to the Hughes brothers, this small thread in the broad historical tapestry of river and valley had an interesting but unexplored sub theme. A 'hidden' bond existed between William Hughes and Constable Kerr. Kerr was a veteran of the recent war, having lost an arm, and his brave and stoic part in the demanding pursuit was rightly praised. Later, during the court proceedings, a journalist also observed that the elder Hughes brother "wore a digger's badge". He had enlisted in 1916 and was wounded in action two years later in the aftermath of Amiens.

John Low (johnlow@iprimus.com.au)

BOOK REVIEW

The Six Foot Track: Journeys 1887-2000
Edited by Jim Smith

"Some people who complete the Six Foot Track feel a sense of achievement and a desire to make a record of their adventure".

Back in September 1990, I was one of those people. My friends and I had walked the Six Foot Track from Jenolan Caves back to Katoomba Station over three days and we were sitting on the evening train to the lower mountains, the other passengers giving us a wide berth, and feeling like a million dollars.

Jim Smith's latest book on the Six Foot Track contains 20 Six Foot Track narratives written between 1887 and 2000, mine among them. The first unpublished account is from the diary of Lady Cecilia Carrington, 1887. There are also snippets from newspapers (The Sydney Mail in 1885, Blue Mountains Echo in 1917 and 1985, Nepean Times in 1988 and 1895, The Mountaineer in 1899, Sydney Bushwalker 1985, just to name a few) and wonderful old illustrations and photographs. It's a great book and a must for anybody with an interest in the Blue Mountains and its history and walking tracks.

You can get your copy at Megalong Books, Leura. Price is \$25. Christine Davies.

BMCS Plant Identification Walks

Our latest walk with the Plant ID Group was a beauty. We went to Greens Road and had a wonderful day enjoying good weather and many glorious plants, both rare and common.

Philothea hispidula was in flower as was *Isopogon anemonifolius*, *Gompholobium grandiflorum* and *G. latifolium* making a lovely colour combination of yellow and white. The lower mountain form of *Grevillea laurifolia* was flowering showing its deep red flowers and its distinctive leaves.

We spotted two species of bearded orchids *Calochilus robertsonii* and *C. campestris* that were in flower, they were wonderful tall specimens and a pleasure to see, as was *Cymbidium suave* growing in a *Corymbia gummifera*.

Much to our excitement red crowned toadlets were heard and seen with eggs, which was an unexpected bonus for the day.

We ended up having a well earned lunch amongst the pure white wedding bush *Ricinocarpos pinifolius* where we took on the challenge of identifying male and female flowers. We explored the rock formations and found an unexplained area of dead trees and plants, including the one specimen of *Atkinsonia ligustrina* which was disappointing.

Thank you to everyone who came and contributed to such a wonderful day.

Robin Murray.

Wildlife Protection Group: There has been a positive response from members to form a Wildlife Protection Group. The working group will look at ways of improving wildlife education in the community around garden activities, responsible pet ownership, council policies on wildlife, etc. If you are interested in joining please contact Meredith 4782 4823 mountains@westnet.com.au

The Plant Identification Group has study field trips once a month. Contact Meredith for more information (details above).

Thursday Interpretive Bushwalks: Usually 3-4 hour walks, conducted at a leisurely pace, on Thursday mornings (followed by lunch) during school terms. Some full-day walks and trips away. Contact Christine 4787 7246, hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

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

- Nov 12 **Oroonga Canyon.** Some scrambling and difficult undergrowth. Wet feed. Bring protective clothing. Priority to those who haven't done it before, but book in early. Leader: Hugh 4757 3145 after 8pm or 0423 309 854 anytime. Party limit of 8—book in early. Grade 3. Mount Wilson map.
- Nov 19 **Carmarthen Ridge/Mount Banks**—in the tracks of George Caley who reached Mount Banks in 1804. Leader: Emanuel 4757 1090 after 7pm. Meet at Wentworth Falls Station car park 7.30 am or Mount Vic Station carpark 8am.. 8 km. Grade 3. Map Mount Wilson.
- Nov 26 **Faulconbridge historic sawmill site**, then climb to Linden F/T and view the 4KOR engraving. Leader: Jim 4758 6009. Meet Faulconbridge Station carpark, north side, 8.15 am. 8 km. Grade 3. Springwood map.
- Dec 3 **Wentworth Pass via the Nature Track.** Leader: Eddie 4784 2691. Meet Wentworth Falls station carpark 8.30 am. 8 km. Grade 3. Katoomba map.
- Dec 10 **Copelands Pass (1893)** - spectacular pass down Sublime Point into the Jamison—some exposure. Leader: Emanuel 4757 1090 after 7pm. Meet Wentworth Falls station carpark 8am. 6 km. Grade 3/4. Katoomba map.
- Dec 17 **Christmas Party Lunch at Wentworth Falls Country Club.** Deposit \$10. Bookings essential to Jim \$22 per head. Drinks for sale at premises, no BYO. Followed by a walk around Wentworth Falls Lake. Leader: Jim 4758 6009. Meet Wentworth Falls Country Club, Blaxland Road, Wentworth Falls at 12.30 pm. Lunch at 1pm. Short walk. Grade 2.

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

- Nov 14 **Baltzers Lookout and blooming Rhodo gardens!** Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9.45 am. Contact Mary 4757 4569.
- Nov 21 **BUS TRIP. New walk at Mount Wilson—Happy Valley and Waterfall Circuit.** Contact Marion 4759 2575, Grade 2. Book/pay Keith 4736 1010. \$12.
- Nov 28 **Mount Banks**—new walk with stunning views. Meet Mount Victoria Station 8.45 am. Car pool (\$10 pp). Contact Eddie 4784 2691. Grade 2/3.
- Dec 5 **Walk along creek to Jellybean Pool with option of a swim!** Meet Glenbrook Station car park 9.30 am. Contact Heather 4739 1493. Grade 1/2.
- Dec 12 **CITY**—new walk. Five ferries + 12 km walk along Parramatta River. Meet Central Station 9.05 am. Contact Judith 4758 6310. Grade 1/2.
- Dec 19 **Christmas party at Hazelbrook.** Details from Judith 4758 6310.
(Walks will resume in January.)

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 Beverley Thompson, 4757 2076, roybev12@bigpond.net.au

- Nov 10 **Tall Timbers to the Lagoon.** An easy walk along a pretty fire trail to a Lagoon. Coffee after an option. Meet behind Springwood Civic Centre 9.15 am. Car pool. Contact Robyn 4751 6328. Grade 2.
- Nov 17 **Nature Trail, Wentworth Falls.** Interesting level terrain at first. Lots of steps back to the Hut. Meet Stockyard car park, Wentworth Falls Station, 9.30 am. Contact Chris 4757 2864. Grade 2.
- Nov 24 **Cox's Road to Hartley Vale**, Mount York. First descent down the western escarpment. Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.45 am. Car shuffle to Hartley Vale. Contact David 4757 3416. Grade 2.
- Dec 1 **Jellybean Pool and Blue Pool**, Glenbrook. Contact Maurice 4739 4942. Meet Glenbrook Station car park 9.30am. Car pool. Grade 2.
- Dec 8 **Numantia Falls**, Faulconbridge. Walk down the Victory Track to the falls. Meet Faulconbridge Station car park 9.15 am. Contact Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 2/3.
- Dec 15 **Christmas Party** 12.30 pm. Bring a plate to share (salads or dessert). BBQ sausages provided. BYO drinks. Phone Gail 4782 1215 for venue details and to confirm attendance.
(Walks will resume in January.)

The Story of Stuff <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLBE5QAYXp8>

We all enjoy a bargain, but what does all that stuff really cost? The Story of Stuff is a 20 minute documentary narrated by Anne Leonard, an expert in international sustainability and environmental health issues. She spent 10 years travelling the world, tracking where stuff comes from and where it goes. In the film, Leonard discusses the materials economy, which is the system through which goods are manufactured, purchased and sold, and consumed. Leonard argues that the model is flawed in that it doesn't include one of the most important components—the people. The people are made up of governments, corporations, and those who work along the entire system, which interacts with cultures, societies, and the environment along the way. Her observations, while often not surprising when you think about them, are shocking.