



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

Public launch of Planning and Development Resource Kit

The Society's online 'Planning and Development Resource Kit' has been developed in response to the many enquiries the Society receives from its members and the public about environmental protection and development issues in their neighbourhoods or in the Blue Mountains more broadly.

The Kit provides practical advice on what to do in a number of common situations that residents seek information and help on, such as pollution, land clearing or suspected illegal development. It also advises residents on how they can find out more about a development that has started in their neighbourhood, for example, and gives detailed step-by-step instructions on how to make a submission to a development application.

The Kit guides people through the often impenetrable world of planning and environment law at local, State and Commonwealth government levels in a user-friendly way. Most importantly, it provides the information that residents need to take effective action to protect our environment.

At our general meeting on Thursday 30 May, Carolyn Williams, the project consultant, and Alan Page, the Society's website manager, will introduce and demonstrate the Kit. Following the launch, the Kit will be available to the public through the Society's website.

Hands off our LEPs

Community understanding of and engagement with planning and development issues has never been more important.

GENERAL MEETING

7.30, Thursday 30 May, 2013, at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls

- * **Public launch of Blue Mountains Conservation Society's online 'Planning and Development Resource Kit'.**
- * **Hands off our LEPs: Find out about the major reforms the NSW government is proposing for our planning system and how it will impact on all of us.**

Come along and learn more about the Kit and this important area of the Society's work, and find out what you can do in this critical year for environmental protection and planning law reform in the Blue Mountains and NSW.

Visitors are very welcome.

At our general meeting, Angela Langdon, convenor of the Society's Landuse Subcommittee, will also give an update on the "Hands off our LEPs" campaign and the implications for the Blue Mountains of the government's just released White Paper on the new planning system for NSW.

If introduced, the proposed new planning system will mean that the only opportunity for residents to have a say about planning for development and environmental protection in their area will be at the Local Environmental Plan-making stage. This is why it is so important to get our new LEP right.

Members who are concerned about development and the future of the Blue Mountains environment are encouraged to support the Society's "Hands off our LEPs" campaign and make a submission when the draft new LEP goes on public exhibition later in the year.



Blue Mountains residents rally to protect the Gardens of Stone (see page 4)

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Nursery News

It's Planting Time! Autumn is generally acknowledged as the best time to plant-out seedlings, giving the plant time to establish a good root system before Winter and when Spring arrives, growth can begin swiftly. Most gardeners realise this and our sales in this period have been exceptional with \$440 taken on Easter Saturday morning alone and \$531.50 at the Blackheath Markets on Sunday 7th April. We have good stocks at the moment in tubes (\$2.50 each) and as advanced plants (from \$4) in larger pots and are offering all tube-stock Wattles and *Kennedia rubicunda* for just \$1. What a bargain!.

Also, note that we will be closing our nursery for sales and not attending markets during June and July but then re-opening in August. So come and get your plants now!

Dianellas: We featured *Dianella tasmanica* in the February 2013 *Hut News* where I admitted to being puzzled by the relevance of the Roman Goddess of Hunting, Diana, to the genus but that was showing my ignorance of the fact that this mythical lady was also known as "the Queen of the Woods", which is very relevant to these lovely plants. We sold our entire stock of *Dianella tasmanica* within weeks of that issue appearing.

In the first edition (1989) of Fairley and Moore's classic book *Native Plants of the Sydney District*, there are just three species of *Dianella* listed but the revised third edition (2010) lists six with the mention that the genus is under revision and that recently discovered populations will probably result in more new species being described.

In that February article we also mentioned *Dianella caerulea* and we now can add another species to our list, *D. revoluta* (leaf margins rolled back) commonly known as the "Spreading Flax Lily". And it certainly does! It is a widespread species extending from coastal dunes to sub-alpine regions and occurs in all Australian states. It is hardy and tolerates poor soils and harsh conditions while still managing to look attractive and is ideal for filling in an area under taller plants. Like the other species above, it has blue flowers but with brown to black anthers unlike the yellow anthers of the other two. Dark-blue, shiny berries, much loved by birds, follow the flowers.

We have nice, advanced specimens in 125mm pots for just \$4, grown from seed but once you have a colony developing it can be easily divided and some transferred elsewhere. But if our experience with the *D. tasmanica* is relevant, hurry before these ones go quickly.

Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager, 4787 6436, kevinbell@eftel.net.au



Photo: *Dianella revoluta*
(<http://www.anbg.gov.au>)

Threatened Species Officer

Nakia Belmer is the Society's new Threatened Species Officer. Nakia's contact details are in the box on this page.

**BUT, there is still a vacancy
on the Management
Committee ...**

PUBLICITY OFFICER

If you are interested in finding out more about this position, please contact a member of the Management Committee (contact details on this page).

NO HUNTING IN OUR NATIONAL PARKS

Thousands at rally

Around 3000 people attended the rally on Thursday 18 April to protest against the O'Farrell Government's plans to allow amateur hunters into our national parks. It was a family affair on a lovely Sydney autumn day, young children carrying placards and wearing animal costumes, people from all over including Blue Mountains. We gathered near the Archibald Fountain in Hyde Park and marched down Macquarie Street to Parliament House. Speakers included Bob Debus and former Greens leader Bob Brown.

Promoting a gun culture

Former NSW environment minister and Member for Blue Mountains Bob Debus told the crowd (this proposal) is "a deliberate attack on the very idea of national parks".

"It's part of a culture war on nature conservation by very conservative members of the coalition government in New South Wales and the Shooters Party," Mr Debus said.

He spoke about the values of National Parks. "They were not established for logging or grazing. And until now no environment minister, Labor or Liberal, ever held the view that they could be used as a shooting range."

Mr Debus said that effective feral animal control sometimes does require "systematic professional shooting in carefully controlled circumstances," but "the demand for environmentally useless unsupervised amateur hunting—to the endangerment of all the other users of national parks—comes straight out of the playbook of the gun lobby and the National Rifle Association in the United States."

He referred to a bill, presently held up in the US Senate, promoted by the US Gun Lobby to undermine wilderness legislation and massively expand hunting in American national parks.

"Our cousins in the United States have terrible problems with their mad culture of guns but, in contrast, hardly anybody in New South Wales supports the promotion of a gun culture."



Photo: Tony Verway

"John Howard has reminded us recently that the legislation he and Tim Fischer sponsored after the Port Arthur massacre in 1996 has successfully subdued the culture of guns in Australia.

"What on earth is the Coalition Government of New South Wales doing promoting it again? What are they thinking?"

Now, what's this all about?

Not far away, in a leafy part of the Royal Botanic Gardens, a Powerful Owl roosts for the day. This species is listed as 'vulnerable' and will be further threatened by the presence of amateur hunters in our National Parks.



Christina Davies

Australia's gun laws "stupid", says Borsak

Sean Nicholls (SMH 19/4/13) reports that in a video, posted on YouTube on March 14, Shooters Party MP Robert Borsak has described Australia's gun laws as "stupid" and urged Americans to "fight and fight hard" against gun control measures being considered in the wake of the Sandy Hook massacre in the US. Mr Borsak urged Americans to "fight as hard as you bloody well can. Don't allow [US President Barack Obama] and the rest of the reconstructionist socialists to get away with what they want to do".

He cited as an example the recent tightening of ammunition laws in NSW. "What it's all about, ultimately, is taking everything off you completely one day," Mr Borsak said. "And the way you'll die on this issue is in a lot of little cuts. That's what they've been doing to us in Australia since 1996 and they're trying it today again."

(Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/dont-do-it-fight-hard-shooters-mp-urges-us-to-oppose-firearms-control-20130418-2i328.html>)

Borsak and his Shooters and Fishers Party colleague, Robert Brown, made a deal with Premier O'Farrell for recreational hunting in national parks in return for electricity privatisation support.

Mr O'Farrell, should a man who holds such extreme views be allowed to dictate environmental policy in New South Wales?

Why Ben Bullen State Forest should be protected?

by Keith Muir, Director, Colong Foundation for Wilderness

It was no good telling the Department of Planning and Infrastructure (DoPI) that “*we’ve already told you why*”, when they asked this question of Brian Marshall and me in early April. Instead, we were given two weeks to produce a stronger conservation case for the protection of that part of the Gardens of Stone threatened by the Coalpac open-cut project.

Fortunately after some hard thinking we realised that the western portion of the Ben Bullen State Forest contained a distinct pagoda landform.

Only along the Ben Bullen Range do the internationally significant platy pagodas of this part of the forest become closely associated with five types of grassy woodland forest that occur below the pagodas on the Permian coal measures. The coal measures increase the productivity of these forests, such that herbivores and insects flourish. The insects provide prey for bats, birds and other fauna which exploit the many niche habitats and refuges in the adjoining less fertile pagoda landforms.

Unfortunately this pagoda landform to the north of the Coalpac proposal has been damaged by extensive cliff falls and desiccated due to intensive coal mining. Across the Dividing Range in the upper Cocks River valley to the east, the forests on Permian strata have been cleared along the Wolgan Road. To the south, Triassic Narrabeen sandstones are absent, and so there are no pagodas.

Further north in the Capertee Valley, grassy tableland forests are absent; and still further north, the climate becomes drier and the vegetation types change, such as the Blue Mountains Pagoda Shrublands reaching its northern limit. **The platy pagoda landscape of the Ben Bullen Range, exactly where the Coalpac proposal is located, was found to be the sole example of a distinct kind of pagoda landscape.**

For its size the Ben Bullen State Forest has a higher overall plant and animal diversity relative to Newnes State Forest and the Gardens of Stone National Park. The unique pagoda landscape within Coalpac’s open-cut proposal area, with its many rare plants and grassy tableland forests, is an essential element of that diversity. And none of this unique pagoda landscape is protected in national parks or state conservation areas. So, we told DoPI why again, but in a different way.

Keith Muir.



Internationally significant platy pagodas are found right across the Coalpac project area. Photo by Ian Brown.



The open-cut would move more than half way up the slope below these pagodas under Coalpac’s ‘contracted project’. Some contraction! Photo by Keith Muir.

Blue Mountains residents rally to protect the Gardens of Stone

The fight to save the Gardens of Stone came to the streets of Springwood when mountains residents rallied in the town square calling on the government to protect the area from coal mining once and for all.

The rally, organized by the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Lithgow Environment Group and Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) was the final event in a week-long tour by senior NCC staff of iconic natural areas across the state that are being threatened by damaging coal mining and gas developments.

Speakers included NCC chief executive Pepe Clarke, BMCS Vice President Tara Cameron. Eva Rizana spoke for the majority of residents of Cullen Bullen who “have a lot to lose from this proposal”. See photo on page 1.

Coalpac update

Yes, it has still not been resolved! But let's be positive, the longer it takes the more likely it means that the Society's case is being heard, registered and becoming increasingly difficult to disregard by the ultimate decision makers. Also, the more money it is costing Coalpac to mount its case and then, if approved, put plans into action, must surely be making a hole even in its deep pockets; definitely less attractive to any prospective buyer! Two advantages of being a predominantly volunteer-based group are that time does not equate to salaries and high-cost management by industry-dependent consultants, and our strength comes from the passion of true beliefs, rather than just being 'opinions for hire'.

In Hut News, Issue 300, February 2013, pp3 and 7, I outlined details of stages 2 and 3 of the assessment process. We are currently approaching the end of **stage 2**. The components of stage 2 comprise:

- BMCS, other special interest groups (SIGs) and individuals making submissions to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure (DP&I) in relation to the Planning Assessment Commission's report (termed PAC1) – this was completed by mid-February.
- Coalpac making its response to DP&I in relation to PAC1 – Coalpac was allowed additional time and completed its report (some 60 MB of report and consultants' appendices) by mid-March.
- BMCS, other SIGs and individuals making submissions to DP&I about Coalpac's assessment of the PAC1 review – BMCS completed this by late March.
- Coalpac, presumably following discussion with DP&I, presenting its *'Preferred Project Report'* (about 42 MB) – this appeared on the DP&I website about April 12 and is essentially an abridgement of the 60-MB document submitted in mid-March.
- The Colong Foundation and BMCS met with DP&I on April 3 and were given two weeks to provide additional information regarding the significance of landforms and biodiversity – this work (in cooperation with the Lithgow Environment Group) involving an additional report and a pictorial annexure was completed and submitted by April 19.
- All reports, with the exception of those in the previous dot-point are available for everyone to access on http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=4332.
- **The only task remaining in stage 2** is for DP&I to complete its report for the Director General's signature – the structure of this report is unclear, but it will necessarily address the findings of PAC1, the principal responses to PAC1, the content of the *'Preferred Project Report'* and such additional information that the DP&I has requested. DP&I expects to have this report ready by mid-May, at which time the report will be posted on the DP&I website and concurrently forwarded for consideration by PAC2 – the latter will constitute different members of the PAC from those involved with PAC1.



Stage 3 commences with the DP&I report being posted on its website. Should any of the parties (for or against the Coalpac proposal) wish to comment on the DP&I report, or make any other form of representation, this should be submitted to the Planning Assessment Commission for PAC2's consideration. PAC2 will make a determination under delegation from Minister Hazzard. There is no provision to appeal the decision, but there is the possibility of challenging the decision in the Land and Environment Court. A recent precedent relates to the Court overturning a decision by Minister Hazzard to allow expansion of a mine near Bulga (see page 9). There are many similarities to the Coalpac proposal at Cullen Bullen!

So keep your fingers crossed because the commercial forces of darkness are still at the gates.

Brian Marshall

Redevelopment fiasco

The letters to the Blue Mountains Gazette editor on April 24 contains a blast at Council's planning instruments from a person who was a champion of the State Government's redevelopment of the Lawson town centre to accommodate the four-lane highway.

Not long ago I was in the car park of the Mid Mountains Community Centre when a visitor asked me for directions to the centre of Lawson. I didn't have the heart to tell the person they were standing where the centre of Lawson was meant to be. Lawson is one of the worst possible advertisements for allowing a pro-development State Government to over-ride a planning system negotiated between residents' groups and the Council.

The correspondent to the Gazette is supporting the generic planning code which the O'Farrell government is attempting to bulldoze over the codes which environmentally minded activists have taken years to help Council create. By the time you read this, a forum will have taken place – ironically at Lawson – to defend the planning instruments which support the quality of life, the tourism industry and all those highly valued characteristics unique to the Blue Mountains.

Somebody who made a major contribution to the disappointingly slow rehabilitation of Lawson should be the last one to try and allow the O'Farrell government to over-ride local concerns in our City.

Don Morison.

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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COMMENT: The mining boom: a fickle dependency? Brian Marshall

Late last year the so-called mining-boom collapse was marked by a drawn out 'phuuuutt', as the balloon deflated. Coal and iron ore prices plummeted and panic was in the air.

Numerous articles told us that the mining boom was over. Many 'authorities' presented their 'unbiased' renditions of how Australia would be impacted. Joe Hockey concluded that the mining tax would provide insufficient revenue for the government to meet its associated expenditure commitments; and in this he was right¹. The 'mining tax' deal between the big miners and government was weak when adopted and became totally undermined by the collapse in resource-prices. Martin Ferguson intoned from his pro-mining portfolio that Australia's future was bleak. Ross Gittins conversely kept pointing out that Australia and Australians were still better off than most countries and that, despite the downturn in manufacturing, there was too much emphasis being placed on short-term market fluctuations. This approach was echoed by Wayne Swan who said that Australia's economy was at the forefront of most 'western' economies based on its resilience through the Global Financial Crisis (still not over!) and the strength of the Australian dollar.

The PM told us that the resource-prices boom induces an investment boom, followed by a production boom. She suggested that despite price-drops, the investment component was in place and would underpin a production boom into the future; so be not alarmed! Such an analysis disregards basic economics to the extent that price-drops lower confidence and this adversely affects investment decisions and future production capacity. Even if investments in train are not compromised, increasing production in a market where price-drops reflect reduced demand can only result in more downward pressure on prices; not good for miners or our balance of payments. All this is why the price-drops alarmed 'Twiggy' Forest such that he deferred some investment plans, caused Rio Tinto to defer its plans for Olympic Dam, and continues to contribute to the downfall of Tinkler.

Now, in testimony to our short-term approach to long-term issues, coal and ore prices are 'healthy', house prices are again rising, stock market indices are largely back on track, the dollar is above parity with the US\$, and most of all, business confidence is rising. All is well with our materialistic economy, but how long will this last? In late 2012, Australia was facing economic chaos according to the experts; it is now looking 'bullish', but current investment advice suggests 'lock in the profit' before the next downturn!

What are some of the external factors affecting our resource-based economy?

The USA and European economies are extremely sluggish to a point where, at best, they are bouncing along the bottom. Italy is causing waves, Eire, Spain and Portugal are in desperate straits and, although small economies, Cyprus and Slovenia could fester and generate a disproportionate domino effect. In many cases, other than through refugees and illegal

immigrants, their populations are flat or even falling, so there is little room for population-driven growth. This means that, despite the seemingly insatiable greed which is in lock-step with materialistic affluence, household indebtedness is too high to support the levels of consumption needed to sustain current levels of production. And this is worsened by their export markets contracting because their prices cannot compete with those of SE Asia, Central America and the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). Yet the USA and Europe are the principal export markets for the BRICS countries and other low-cost regions to which the BRICS are outsourcing their manufacturing capacity.

What does this mean for the BRICS and other low-cost exporters?

An option is to stimulate domestic demand and export growth by price reductions. This unfortunately places downward pressure on domestic wages, thereby stifling domestic demand and compromising their governments' promises of improved standards-of-living. Price reductions may enhance exports to a country like Australia where the economy is relatively strong, but the less robust economies of USA and Europe, burdened as they are with high levels of national debt and unemployment, are unlikely to provide sustained demand. The net result is that growth must be curtailed, as is seen with Chinese growth falling from 10% to 8% despite it now being the world's manufacturing powerhouse, and despite its huge domestic market and its government's aim to improve standards-of-living.

Are there other options for China² and is it exploiting them?

It can slow the demands of its people for improved standards-of-living and better qualities-of-life. This is practicable because there is central control and a capacity to force cooperation. But entrepreneurialism abounds, and vast numbers of people who have left the country for work in the cities (and the millions who were already there) have at least had substantial improvements to their standards-of-living³. However, the genie is out of the bottle and while the majority will accept some mild 'slowing', anything more will breed destructive discontent.

Another option is to outsource manufacturing to countries with lower wage structures. This is happening with respect to Vietnam, Cambodia and parts of Africa. It involves the type of commercial colonialism which was practised by Britain and other European powers, and is still practised by the USA.

It can reduce the quality of materials used and also the quality-control, so as to keep export prices down. This is certainly happening with respect to clothing, hand-tools and some electrical goods, and it is viable because it suits the types of throw-away society which comprise its export markets.

Lastly, and most importantly from Australia's viewpoint, it can find supplies of lower-cost resources to feed its manufacturing industries, (Continued on page 7)

COMMENT: The mining boom: a fickle dependency? by Brian Marshall (cont. from page 6)

and can enhance the role of renewable power generation within its power-generating spectrum. China has substantial contracts with Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Burma for coal, iron ore and other metallic resources which can be 'railed' into China, not be tied to the availability of shipping and Australian port facilities, and be delivered at potentially lower prices; it is similarly looking to Tibet (now part of China) for base and precious metals; it is aware of the gas and oil potential of some of the offshore islands variously in dispute with Vietnam, Japan and the Philippines; and it has ramped up its presence in the Antarctic. Australia's exports to China are part of China's diversified supply over a period of near-insatiable demand. The price-structures reflect this; but as China's growth eases due to declining export and domestic demands, China will place downward pressure on coal, iron ore and gas prices. This will be to Australia's disadvantage and will hopefully bring some realism to Australia's expectations.

Is there anything to be learnt?

Australia must repeatedly tell itself that the world doesn't owe it a living. There is need to rise above the boom-bust mentality which is exploited by our political pygmies and the daily media, to stop gloating over our good fortune, and to stop wallowing in despair if a minor hiccup affects the party.

China has many years of expansion ahead of it. There will be variations in demand for resources, but if Australia is realistic and not too greedy, it will remain a significant supplier.

Of course, if Australia is truly the 'lucky country', as China's growth eases, India (already a major importer of Australia's coal, gold and uranium)⁴ will take over as the world goes racing past its emissions and population targets!

Brian Marshall.

Notes:

¹ Whether by luck, good judgement, or : wishful thinking is of course debatable.

² I have avoided discussing India. It is the world's largest (and in some ways most chaotic) democracy, has massive natural and low-cost human resources, and an expanding manufacturing industry driven by its exploding population. However, Australia receives only 0.7% of India's exports

³ In the words of one guide, as long as the government continues to make standard-of-living improvements, give the people achievements to be proud of, and doesn't unduly interfere with traditional religious beliefs, the majority will accommodate within the system.

⁴ <http://www.smh.com.au/business/india-the-export-prize-ripe-for-business-and-investors-20121220-2bpd4.html>

Addendum to The mining boom: a fickle dependency

The article was written over a month ago. The economic chaos envisaged in late 2012 had given way to increasing public confidence: coal, iron ore and other metal prices were recovering, and the A\$ was worth about US\$1.06. Some investment advisors were 'bullish', but others were anticipating roller-coaster behaviour and saying 'lock in the profits'. I suggested that Australians should stop dancing to the media's tune because, providing Australia is not too greedy, China will import Australian resources for many years to come. In fact, all is superficially 'OK' unless one is concerned about climate change!

Now, shock, horror, the gold price has tumbled, confidence has crashed, and the dollar has fallen to less than US\$1.04. Headings such as: "*Coming after the mining boom: a leap of faith*" (SMH, April 13), "*Gold exodus rattles market*", "*One cough and miners all catch cold*" (both in SMH, April 17), and "*This is not a consolidation, its an old fashion collapse*" (SMH, April 20) adorn the business pages. Those who avidly follow the market will exploit the lower gold prices, and their impact on other resources shares, hoping for a quick killing when gold recovers (and it will!). Yet in terms of the broader picture, little has changed: few expect the 'Greek' solution to work and Slovenia remains a basket case; Italy is chaotic and other European and US economies remain very weak; the A\$ is still too high for a sustainable manufacturing industry; Chinese growth is 'only' about 8% and potentially easing; Australia's resource-based economy will continue to support a moderate level of economic prosperity; global climate-change mitigation will continue to be inadequate; and global population growth will remain a largely unaddressed concern.

Why is it necessary for the 'masses' to be kept on tenterhooks?

The media sell 'news' embedded in endless speculation: stability is not news, good news is OK in moderation, but bad news and the misfortunes of others are the 'bread and butter' of the 24-hour news cycle. Similarly, instability provides the price-fluctuations on which the stock market, investment gurus, and international currency speculators flourish. Likewise, oil companies use price-instability to focus us on when to fill up rather than why the ridiculous, seemingly collusive weekly cycling is permitted. Even negative oppositions benefit from instability because explaining long-term policies can't compete with a destabilising plethora of 30-second sound-bites and innuendo.

So, if you feel you are being manipulated through uncertainty and anxiety for most of your waking day, you are! But at least stop having weekly or monthly anxiety attacks over the next 20 years about your resources-dependent lifestyles. Indeed, be relaxed and comfortable behind your picket fences because, if my worst fears are realised, you will (after September) be hearing about the multi-billion dollar black hole and the need to double the GST!

Brian Marshall.

Loose Feathers, with Carol Probets

Imagine trying to count thousands of small birds flying fast between the treetops, coming in waves as they head north. That's what 25 members of Blue Mountains Bird Observers have been doing in April and May at key counting sites along the honeyeater migration pathways across the Blue Mountains.

And what interesting results are emerging this year! On 13th April, Fiona Lumsden and John French counted 2,790 migrating birds flying north along Narrow Neck peninsula during their 20-minute count. Sounds like a lot of birds? It certainly is! But just three days earlier in what must have been a frantically busy 20 minutes, Paul Vale and Barbara Crighton clocked an incredible 2,985 birds crossing Shipley Road, estimating at least another 1000 crossing further up the road that they were unable to count. An absolute torrent of birds, this is the highest result we've ever had! The 14th was another big day with Julie Neumann counting 1,920 at the same site. And remember that these counts are just a small sample of the total migration happening on any given morning.

But there have also been plenty of days with the birds slowing to mere hundreds, or fewer, per count. The honeyeater migration is variable in the extreme, with weather and other, unknown factors playing a big part. In autumn 2011 we saw hardly any by comparison. After a few more years of counting, perhaps we will begin to understand some of the complex patterns at play. And we will also have an index of abundance that can be compared over the years, thus alerting us to any long-term declines of the species involved, or possible effects of climate change.

The vast majority of the migrating birds are the rather modestly coloured Yellow-faced Honeyeater, with lesser numbers of White-naped and other honeyeaters, pardalotes, silvereyes, and others flying with them. On Narrow Neck alone, I've seen 15 species migrating this autumn. Without doubt, what we refer to as the



"honeyeater migration" through the Blue Mountains is one of the great nature experiences in Australia. Yet most people, even those living along a migration route, are completely unaware of it. If only they would look up, listen and watch for a while, people would be amazed.

With such impressive numbers it's easy to assume these are species that don't warrant any concern. But here in the mountains we're in the privileged position of being able to stand in one place and witness the convergence of birds from a huge area to our south, a large part of southern NSW and Victoria. This migration bottleneck of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters is one of the reasons the Greater Blue Mountains has been listed as an Important Bird Area. I believe it's not only our privilege but our responsibility to monitor them, and to spread the word about a bird which, although individually unspectacular, is collectively mind-blowing, and intricately tied to the vagaries of its environment in a way we don't yet understand.

Carol Probets, origma@westnet.com.au

Twitter: @carolprobets

Photo: Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Carol Probets.

COMMUNITY FIRE STORIES: A LESSON IN TIME The 1957 Leura Fire

**Free public event at the Edge Cinema, Katoomba,
on Sunday 2 June, from 3 pm**

Directed by Laura Zusters (daughter of renowned Blue Mountains painter, Reinis Zusters), this engaging and informative documentary looks closely at the devastating 1957 Leura Fires, which destroyed around 170 homes, businesses, schools and churches, cutting a path right through Leura and into Wentworth Falls.

The film will provide local residents with the opportunity to reflect on just how fire prepared we are as individuals and as a community, in 2013 and beyond. Staff from various government bodies including NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, NSW Rural Fire Service and Blue Mountains City Council will be on hand to provide further information and discuss with residents how to prepare and implement a "Fire Plan".

More information: www.bmwhi.org.au



Photo: Blue Mountains City Library Local Studies Collection. Burnt out shops on the corner of Highland Street, The Mall & Great Western Highway, Leura.

Tiny Bulga wins day against mining Goliath

(SMH, 16/4/2013, Ben Cubby, Sam Rigney)

The tiny NSW town of Bulga has won a three-year battle against mining giant Rio Tinto when a court overturned a state government-endorsed decision to allow it to dig an open-cut coalmine next to the town.

A Rio Tinto subsidiary, Coal & Allied, had been granted approval to mine bushland next to the town which had been created as an "offset" a decade ago. It was to have created 150 mining jobs and extracted 18 million tonnes of coal a year, in the community of 300 people.

In a scathing judgement, Justice Brian Preston, chief judge of the Land and Environment Court, criticised the government's approval of the proposed Warkworth mine in the Hunter Valley, which he said could damage Bulga's "sense of place".

Planning Minister Brad Hazzard said he was seeking legal advice on what action might be available to the government. Rio Tinto said the community's ability to challenge the government's decision was "significantly obstructing investment and job creation in NSW".

The challenge was brought by the Bulga Mibrodale Progress Association, representing the views of most of the town's residents, with help from the Environmental Defender's Office of NSW.

In his judgment Justice Preston said he was not persuaded by the economic analysis offered by the company. "The project's impacts would exacerbate the loss of sense of place, and materially and adversely change the sense of community, of the residents of Bulga and the surrounding countryside," he said. "I am not satisfied that the economic analyses relied on by Warkworth and the minister have addressed these environmental and social factors adequately.

Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/tiny-bulga-wins-day-against-mining-goliath-20130415-2hw5n.html#ixzz2RKbEupkV>

A moment in an ant's life



The tall rough-barked tree looked so huge as the ant carried the large brown moth's wing upwards. Gripping the bark he tenaciously travelled, but where to? The ant came to a spot where the bark was disturbed, with feet and feelers he found a way around, once more climbing upwards.

Another obstacle presented itself but this ant was not deterred. The wing swaying in his grasp, looking as a leaf on a bough, without hesitation he walked up and over the knot sticking out from the tree. Looking for all the world like a rock climber negotiating an overhang. Where was this ant heading? Was its nest high in the tree? Who knows? But his determination to reach his destination was remarkable.

Sylvia Beamer, April 2013.

Christine Davies

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

Welcome to new members

Judith Chen, Glenbrook
Bernt Larsson, Cronulla

BUSHCARE GROUP

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets on the second Saturday of each month, 9am till noon. Tools and gloves are available. Bring a drink, a snack and a sunhat. New members are always welcome. Phone Karen 4757 1929.

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.

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

BLACKHEATH'S GRAND PROJECT

Fifty four years ago a writer in the *Australasian Post* commented that the "great precipices confronting Govett's Leap [were] simply screaming for something to give them zip". What prompted this extraordinary statement was nothing less than one of the great follies of Blue Mountains history.

It was mid 1959 and a Sydney publisher and Blackheath property owner, Oswald Leopold Ziegler, was busy convincing the Blue Mountains Council and seeking financial and creative backing for a development proposal of massive scale. Where the young, head-strong surveyor, William Romaine Govett, had gone about his work in the winter of 1831 a 600 bed luxury hotel complex was planned and the list of accessories became increasingly eccentric. Shops, gardens, swimming pool, tennis courts, golf course, ice skating rink, boating lake, toboggan slide and natural history museum and fauna park were all enthusiastically touted.

But even this was not enough, for Oswald Ziegler's vision was large indeed and he wished not only for profit but also to make a bold patriotic statement. With an eye, perhaps, to the approaching sesquicentenary of the 1813 Blue Mountains crossing he planned to create a centre-piece Explorers' Memorial Garden in which "sculptured representations of fifty leading Australian explorers" would express "the spirit of the birth of a nation". To ensure the centrality of the Blue Mountains in this, he further proposed a breath-taking *pièce de résistance*. Carved into the cliff face north-east of Govett's Leap Lookout a huge rock tableau, designed by the eminent sculptor Lyndon Dadswell, would celebrate the achievement of Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth by inscribing the very wilderness they 'conquered'. Our very own Mount Rushmore!

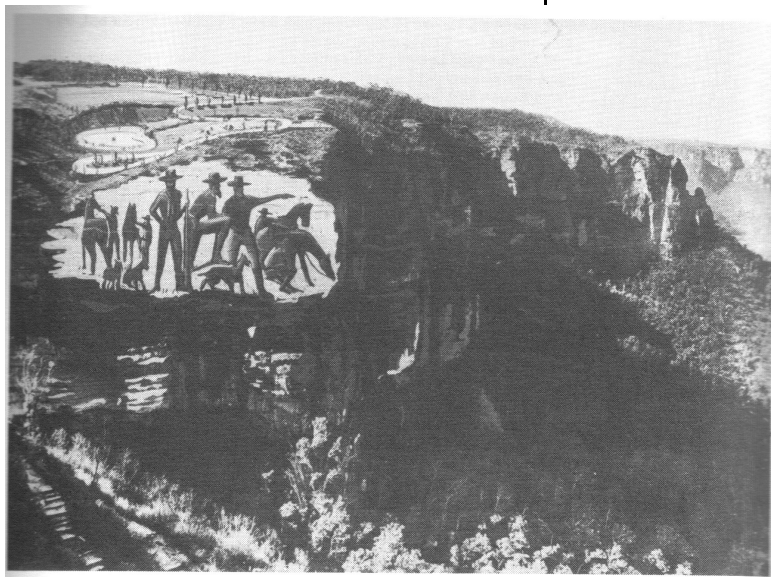
The giant tableau, it was estimated, would emerge over a two-year period, created by sculptors "using pneumatic drills and gelignite charges" and working from "platforms hung hundreds of feet above the Grose Valley". Excitement at the drama and sheer audacity of the project eclipsed critical assessment. Hal Missingham, Director of the Art Gallery of NSW, lent his support as did the popular Sydney press and a unanimous Blue Mountains City Council, Mayor Aubrey Murphy declaring it "would lure thousands more tourists" to the region.

But enthusiasm masked practical problems. Serious financial backing for the overall proposal seemed less forthcoming and as rational reflection returned, concerns at the damage likely to occur to the landscape through falling rock and the ultimate vulnerability of soft sandstone carvings to rapid weathering also surfaced. In the end neither the resort complex nor Australia's answer to Mount Rushmore ever materialised.

The English writer Iain Sinclair has written extensively on the charismatic nature of 'Grand Projects', expressions of egotism and profit promising regeneration while destroying local character. It doesn't matter how mad the concept as long as it's done big. Size delivers a sort of "epic status". I can't help but agree and though I have considerable admiration for the members of the 1813 expedition, both animal and human, I'm glad Mr. Ziegler's GP came to nothing. The cliffs at Govett's Leap possess more than enough 'zip' just as they are.

John Low (grizzlybear3au@yahoo.com)

Photo from Blue Mountains City Library
Local Studies Collection



Ben Bullen State Forest Winter 2013 Walks

Saturday, 22 June: The Amazing Rock Formations of Poseidon Arena - Part 2. Map: Ben Bullen

Find out why Ben Bullen State Forest must be protected for future generations. This walk, second one in the series, will take us to another unique and stunningly beautiful part of the Forest – the Poseidon Arena.

Park the cars at GR 281 188 on Moffits Trail. Explore the Poseidon Ridge of the Poseidon Arena. This area is full of amazing rock formations, magnificent pagodas and spectacular views. Then climb the E side of Zeus Ridge (we explored the W side in an earlier walk). Return to the cars. If open cut mining is allowed in other parts of the Forest (eg the Coalpac project), it is only a matter of time before the Poseidon Arena too will be destroyed. See it whilst you can. Scrambling and exposure. About 6 km.

Friday, 12 July: The Cliffs of the Great Dividing Range and the Amazing Tara Slot. Maps: Cullen Bullen and Ben Bullen

Park at GR 302 168, head W and explore the dissected western Great Dividing Range cliff line for slots, ramps, pagodas and habitation shelters, gradually moving N and exiting at Tara Slot at GR 303 180, with the unbelievable view from the top. Use the ridgeline track to return to cars.

Exploratory. Scrambling and exposure. Numbers are strictly limited. About 8km.

Saturday, 20 July: The Amazing Rock Formations of Poseidon Arena, Part 3.

Friday, 26 July: 'Paradise Lost?' – The Northern Valleys.

Friday, 2 August: 'Paradise Lost?' – The Middle Valleys.

Saturday, 10 August: The Amazing Pagoda Maze.

Friday 16 August: 'Paradise Lost?' – The Southern Valleys.

For full details go to our website www.bluemountains.org.au or contact Yuri.

These walks are conducted under the auspices of the National Parks Association of NSW

Contact Yuri Bolotin,
yuribolotin@yahoo.com.au,
0413 715 943

BMCS NURSERY PLANT SALES

Lawson Nursery –Wednesdays and Saturdays, 9am to noon. The nursery is located in the Lawson Industrial Area on the corner of Park and Cascade Streets, opposite Federation Building Materials (see the map on our website www.bluemountains.org.au).

Blackheath Community Market, 1st Sunday of the month at Blackheath Public School, 9am to 1pm.

Magpie Market, 3rd Sunday of the month at Lawson Public School, 9am to 2pm.

Tube stock \$2.50 each. Larger pots available.

Enquiries Kevin Bell 4787 6436, kevinbell@etel.net.au

Paid To Pollute

Australia's leading environmental and community groups have signed a joint statement calling on the Australian Government to end fossil fuel subsidies.

The Australian government gives over \$10 billion worth of handouts to big polluters every year. It is no wonder that renewables find it hard to gain the necessary dominance of the energy market to ensure a sustainable future to our industrial society.

ConSoc has joined this campaign as a supporting signatory. The NCC has already signed, but the ConSoc management committee felt that, given our intense involvement with the various coal and CSG campaigns, we should join this campaign in our own right. See more information at <http://paidtopollute.org.au/ptp-about>.

Peter Green, Sustainable Population and Climate Change Officer

Where are the Blue Mountains?

The State Liberal Member for the Blue Mountains Electorate has said that "although the Gardens of Stone are not in the Blue Mountains I fully understand the concerns of the Conservation Society" (Blue Mountains Gazette, Page 7, 24/4/13). She was commenting on a large rally at Springwood about the Coalpac proposal which affects Ben Bullen State Forest as well as existing and proposed areas of Gardens of Stone National Park.

It is puzzling to understand what point is being made here. The Greater Blue Mountains Drive (a concept expounded in publications on sale by the NSW Government) encircles the whole of the existing Gardens of Stone National Park as well as the majority of the open-cut coalmining proposal. For tourism purposes, Blue Mountains, Oberon and Lithgow have a joint tourism body and the significance of it was increased by 17 October 2012 as shown by a posting on the joint tourism body's website.

The quote from the Liberal Member could be read as implying that the Gardens of Stone ought not be a central concern to her as the Member for the Blue Mountains or to the Society which uses "Blue Mountains" in its name. However since "Blue Mountains", is the most internationally recognisable term in the phrase "Blue Mountains, Lithgow, Oberon", everywhere within those three local government areas, should receive an equally high standard of attention. Any interpretation which gave the Gardens of Stone a low priority would therefore be unjustified.

Don Morison.

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

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc: 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. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. If you are a new walker to Saturday walks, before attending ring the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Emanuel Conomos phone 4757 1090, mobile 041 977 3906, email emanuelanddi@yahoo.com.au

May 11 **Megalong Crossing to Coxs River.** Leader Warren 4787 5403 Meet at Blackheath Stn C/P 8.15am. 12 Km Gr 2/3 Map Hampton.

May 18 **Bluegum Forest via Pierces Pass,** Leader Bob 4757 2694. Meet at Wentworth Falls Stock yard C/P 8.30am 12 Km Gr 3 Map Mt Wilson

May 25 **Birrabang ridge to Yileen Spur** - Spectacular views into the Grose valley - off track, Leader Harold 9600 8005, Meet at Wentworth Falls Stock yard C/P, 8.30am, 7 Km, Gr 3, Map Mt Wilson

Jun 1 **Govetts Leap to Evans Lookout via the Horsetrack.** 500M descent and ascent and a few creek crossings (no wet feet). Spectacular views during the descent, Leader Warren 4787 5403 or 0428 962 460, Meet at Blackheath Stn C/P, 8.15, 10 Km, Gr 3, Map Katoomba

Jun 8 (Queens Birthday Weekend) **Jinki Ridge to Kamarah Ridge via the Jungaburra Brook rungs.** Contact Leader Emanuel 4757 1090 (after 7pm) or emanuelanddi@yahoo.com.au for meeting time and place. 5km Gr 3/4 Map Mount Wilson (Check the BMCS website (www.bluemountains.org.au) for updates)

For the full program of the Saturday walkers **Crossing of the Blue Mountains of NSW 2013** – Click on the following link if reading Hut News on line. Or copy <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/bm-crossing-2013.pdf> into your browser

Saturday Walks driver reimbursement. *In an effort to ensure that car drivers are adequately compensated for the use of their vehicles a driver reimbursement policy applies* (Check the BMCS website (www.bluemountains.org.au) -

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 Maurice Kerkham, 4739 4942, mauricekerkham@hotmail.com

May 13 **Victory Track, Faulconbridge "Rainforest and creeks".** Meet Faulconbridge rail station (south side) 9.15 am. Leader Mary 4757 4569. Grade 2.

May 20 **Boronia Park to North Ryde.** New walk, part of Great North walk. Meet top of escalators, central Station 9.30am. Contact Judith 4758 6310. Grade 2.

May 22 **Biggest Morning Tea.** Cancer Fund Raises. Entry by donation. 94 Lee Road, Winmalee, 10 am. Win Noake 4754 2826.

May 27 **National Pass, Wentworth Falls.** Circuit walk, start/finish Conservation Hut. Meet Wentworth Falls car park 9.30. Car pool. Leader Eddie 4784 2691. Grade 3.

Jun 3 **Lockley Pylon.** Best Grose Valley views. Extn to Buttress. Meet Leura Station car park 8.45 am. Car pool. Fare \$10. Leader Phil 4787 5560. Grade 3.

Jun 10 **Dark's Common & the Bluff, Glenbrook.** Historical walk plus lookouts. Meet Glenbrook commuter car park 9.30 am. Leader Maurice 4739 4924. Grade 2.

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

May 9 **Castle Head Katoomba.** Short walk along Narowneck then on bush track through heath to Castle Head Lookdown. Car pool. Take lunch. Meet Katoomba Station car park 10.30am. Leader Joan c/o 4757 2076. Grade 2.

May 16 **Govett's Leap to Evan's Lookout Blackheath.** Car pool. Take lunch. Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9.45am Rosemary 63552292 Tracy 0434362611 Grade 2.

May 23 **Red Hand Cave Glenbrook. Aboriginal Hand Stencils.** Car pool. Take lunch. Glenbrook Station car park 9.30 am. Keith 4736 1010. Grade 2.

May 30 **Florabell Pass Warimoo to Blaxland.** Walk to Glenbrook Creek. Some stps, rough and steep in places. Take lunch. Meet Warimoo Station car park, north side 9.30 am. Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 2.

Jun 6 **Bonnie Doon Katoomba.** Track traverses a variety of vegetation types from Nellie's Glen Lookout. Car pool. Take lunch. Meet Katoomba Station car park 9.40am. Joan c/o 4757 2076. Grade 2.

May 13 **Victory Track, Faulconbridge.** Rainforest and creeks. Meet Faulconbridge rail station (south side) 9.15 am. Leader Mary 4757 4569. Grade 2.

The Gardens of Stone Visitors Map

\$7.50 plus \$1.50 postage.

Buy the map online (www.bluemountains.org.au) or write to BMCS, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782 with your cheque or money order.

JOIN Blue Mountains
Conservation Society,
or renew your membership online.
www.bluemountains.org.au