



**"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"**

## From the President

Thank you to all of our members who came along to our 'Meet the Candidates' evening. The night was very interesting and well attended (see full report on page 5). We hope that it helped encourage the candidates and their parties to think about the environment in light of the State election.

Sometimes it is good to reflect upon some of the good things the Society has achieved. A recent example is our action to stop stormwater and raw sewage (5-8%) from being discharged down Fitzgeralds Creek in Springwood. Members of the Society were concerned about weed proliferation, erosion and the impact on platypus, if large volumes of water and sewage were to be discharged. Happily, the plan seems to have been shelved but we still await official confirmation of this.

A good way to hear about all of the things we are doing is to attend our Annual General Meeting. I would love to see many people there as it is a great opportunity to meet other members. We are also lucky to have Ian Brown come along with some beautiful slides.

This will be my last report as President as I will be stepping down at the AGM. I have thoroughly enjoyed being in this role and I would like to thank everyone who has helped me along the way.

**Tara Cameron 0419 824 974**

### **Blue Mountains Conservation Society**

Native Plant Sales

Blackheath Community Markets 1st  
Sunday of the month.

Lawson Magpie Markets:  
3rd Sunday of the month.

Look for the stall with the  
black cockatoos.

## **Blue Mountains Conservation Society Annual General Meeting**

**7.30 pm, Friday 25 March 2011**

**Conservation Hut (end of Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls)**

Business will include receipt of reports, adoption of annual accounts, setting of membership fees, determination of structure of Management Committee, election of President, Management Committee members and other office holders and appointment of auditor plus the a Special Resolution making changes to the constitution as set out in Notice of Meeting dated 21 February.

FOLLOWED BY

## **Monthly Meeting and Slideshow presented by Ian Brown**

**8.15 pm, Friday 25 March 2011**

Ian's photos of the Blue Mountains bushland and World Heritage Area are legendary, and even the more experienced bushwalkers amongst us are bound to see something new and fascinating.

Come along and support those taking the responsibility for running the Society. Perhaps you have questions for them, or comments about the progress of our various campaigns.

Then be entertained by a slide show from Ian Brown and meet other members over supper.

## **Take a role in the management of the Society**

At our AGM on Friday 25 March members will elect a Management Committee for the year to 31 March 2012. All positions fall vacant. We have nominations for some positions, but more volunteers are needed. No experience is needed, just an interest in helping our natural environment. Many of us "learn on the job" and it can be very rewarding.

This year is the 50th anniversary of the Society. It is probably the largest regional environmental group in NSW and enjoys respect from the community and from the agencies with which it deals.

Notice of AGM sent separately had details of all the Management Positions on the reverse side. You can contact the President or any other member of this year's committee for more information and you can come along as an observer to the management committee meeting on Saturday 19 March, 9.15 am at Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson.

Please give consideration to nominating for a position. Whilst our constitution allows for nominations to be received on the night of the AGM, we really need to be organized beforehand to ensure that there will be at least one nomination for each position. To be nominated, send in the nomination form on page 4, or contact Tara Cameron 0419 824 974 [domtara@bigpond.com](mailto:domtara@bigpond.com)

**The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Experience**  
[www.worldheritage.org.au](http://www.worldheritage.org.au)

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

The deadline for the next issue of Hut News  
is 19 March 2011

### MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Lachlan Garland 4757 1929  
[membership@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:membership@bluemountains.org.au)  
PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

### 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 Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager

**Sales:** At the first Blackheath Community Markets for 2011 on 6<sup>th</sup> February, we earned a record \$341.50 in cash sales and collected another 19 of Council's Summer Reading programme vouchers at \$2.20 each, making a total of \$383.30. A tray of 50 lovely Waratahs disappeared quickly but we will have more at the next Blackheath Markets (on the first Sunday of the month) and the Lawson Magpie Markets (on the 3rd Sunday of the month), as well as at our Lawson nursery. Don't delay as these outstanding specimens will sell quickly.

**Council's Summer Reading programme:** As mentioned above we have been redeeming vouchers for this programme which encourages children to read over the summer holidays and be rewarded with plants from our nursery. It is clearly a delight for children to select for themselves plants so earned, a process often taxing the patience of their accompanying parents. A valuable offshoot of this has been publicity for our nursery and the additional plants parents buy for themselves. Council planned to make available 500 vouchers but we have only collected 67 thus far. As nursery manager, I have been invited to the Mayoral Award's Presentation for this programme to be held at the Springwood library on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March.

**Plant of the Month:** This is *Hovea lanceolata* (Lance-leaf Hovea), a shrub to about 2m tall with flat, lanceolate leaves which are densely hairy underneath giving them a felt-like appearance. In Spring, lovely purple-violet flowers, about 5-6mm wide, appear on the softly hairy branches. It prefers a partly-shaded location and is found mostly in open forest, especially on rocky outcrops in the Blue Mountains.

This endemic genus was named by the eminent Scottish scientist Robert Brown (about whom we shall talk more in a later issue) to honour the Polish botanist, Anton Pantaleon Hove, who was a collector for the Kew gardens and gathered specimens all over eastern Europe in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. He never set foot in Australia. Hove engaged in much correspondence with Sir Joseph Banks and was highly regarded by his botanical contemporaries. If you are intrigued, as I was, by his middle name it may be after Saint Pantaleon, an early Christian saint and physician, whose fame as the latter earned him the position of physician to the Roman emperor Maximian from 275 BCE to 303 ACE at a time when Christian persecution was rife. He is now regarded as the patron saint of physicians and met an ugly death by being nailed to an olive tree and beheaded.

To end on a happier note, we have good stocks of this lovely *Hovea*, which are now ready for planting. We treat the seeds, like those of most pea plants, with boiling water before sowing and germination takes place within about 2 weeks. There are other *Hovea* species in the Blue Mountains and when we can gather seed later in the year we may include these as well. **Kevin Bell.**

### Management Position: MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

At the AGM, our present membership secretary, Lachlan Garland, will be nominating for President. If elected, he will not be able to stand for Membership Secretary. Do you have computer skills and would like to nominate for this position? Duties and responsibilities of the position are underneath. You can contact Lachlan for find out more.

#### Membership Secretary (35 hpm)

- Initiates programs to attract new members to the Society
- Keeps membership records
- Sends welcome letters to new members
- Sends renewal notices, follows up members who become unfinancial
- Removes unfinancial members from membership
- Provides monthly membership report
- Arranges printing and postage for each member mailout
- Deposits membership fees

# Battle lines drawn over proposed open cut coal mine in the Gardens of Stone

by Keith Muir

Over Christmas 2010, Coalpac announced a proposal to open cut mine 1,088 hectares of Ben Bullen State Forest in the Gardens of Stone. This proposal, on the western side of the Great Dividing Range, will come forward this April.

**This extremely destructive proposal must be rejected.** If approved, heaps of waste rock and dirt would replace the scenic woodland vistas on both sides of the Castlereagh Highway north of the Cullen Bullen village, as the existing Invincible and Cullen Valley collieries become integrated into one huge mine.

Coalpac's Invincible colliery extensions 1 and 2 have already cleared about 110 ha of woodland along the fringes of Ben Bullen State Forest. Since 1999, Coalpac's Cullen Valley open cut colliery has cleared hundreds of additional hectares of native woodland on private land.

The proposed loss of 1,088 ha of woodland by the open cut mine includes Box Gum Woodland (Federally listed as a Critically Endangered Ecological Community) allegedly 40 hectares in extent, and woodland containing *Eucalyptus cannonii* (listed as Vulnerable under Federal environmental laws) allegedly 196 hectares in extent.

Site inspection of the project area has found many pagoda rock formations along the Great Dividing Range and a new slot canyon, the 'Coalpac Cleft', as well as a new occurrence of the Broad-headed Snake (*Hoplocephalus bungaroides*).

**The point of setting Ben Bullen State Forest aside in perpetuity for conservation and sustainable use is defeated if the recreational and ecological values of this public asset are now to be destroyed by open cut mining. In effect, the mine proposes to privatise the state forest by stealth.**

The environmental offset standards for these losses are thoroughly inadequate. There has been no ecological assessment of species richness of the woodlands proposed to be cleared by Coalpac's integrated operation of its Invincible and Cullen Valley mines. The replanting of areas of farmland and the open cut areas with *Eucalyptus cannonii* and other native plants would constitute a small fraction of the species richness of the intact native woodland communities in Ben Bullen State Forest.

The current proposal seeks to 'maximise the recovery' of coal to the detriment of the broader public interest of the conservation of Ben Bullen State Forest. The Coalpac proposal would wind back the environmental protection embodied in its existing consent for the Invincible Colliery, approved in December 2008. The approved operation includes more benign underground methods that would, under this new proposal, be replaced by destructive open cut mining which would have highwall faces up to "100 metres high" directly adjoining scenic pagoda features.

Despite undertaking seven botanical surveys before lodging this proposal over the Christmas break, at least forty native plants were missed. Coalpac's environmental report also omitted reference to *Genista monspesulana* (Cape Broom) and *Scabiosa atropurpurea* being present on Invincible colliery. The use of a non-sterile

## Don't let this public forest ...



## Be undercut like this ...



grass in 'rehabilitation' of this mine's mullock heaps has seen this environmental weed invade previously pristine pagoda shrublands on public land proposed for future reservation as a state conservation area.

Coalpac's environmental record is further compromised by its failure to adhere to its undertakings. Approval of a previous Invincible Colliery open cut mine proposal on 7th September 2006 was partly based on Coalpac's assurance that "the open cut operations proposed would not be visible from the Castlereagh Highway due to the intervening topography and existing vegetation coverage". The steep open cuts into the escarpment of Ben Bullen State Forest are clearly visible along the Castlereagh Hwy north of Cullen Bullen.

**This vast open cut proposal would set a destructive precedent for future open cut mining in the Gardens of Stone. If approved, it would have a devastating effect on the Gardens of Stone reserve proposal, including matters of national environmental significance.**

## Stop it NOW! Please Take Action before the State Election.

Write to the Premier, Kristina Keneally and Opposition Leader, Barry O'Farrell asking that they show leadership and commit to reserving Gardens of Stone Stage 2 and also ask them to ban open cut mining in the proposed State Conservation Area.

The Hon. Kristina Keneally, Premier of NSW, Parliament House, Sydney 2000, [premier@nsw.gov.au](mailto:premier@nsw.gov.au)

The Hon. Barry O'Farrell, Leader of the Opposition, Parliament House, Sydney 2000, [LOP@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:LOP@parliament.nsw.gov.au)



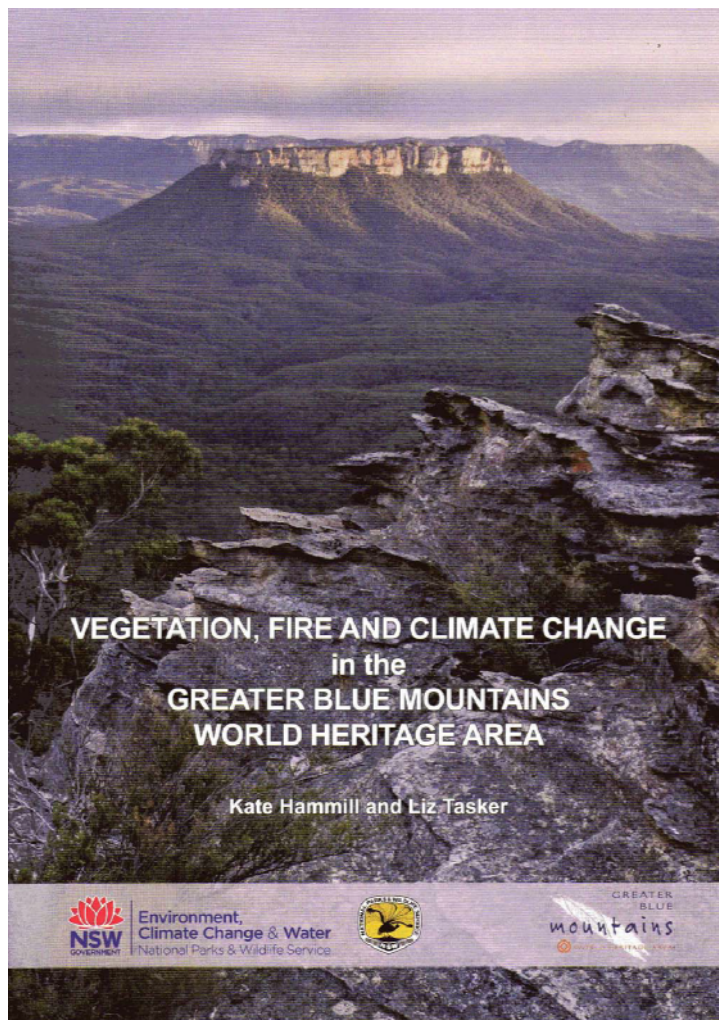
## New booklet summarises the science of fire and climate change in the Greater Blue Mountains

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area covers just over 1 million hectares of national park estate from the edge of the Hunter Valley to the Southern Highlands. It is one of the most fire-prone regions on earth, with major fire seasons occurring once or twice per decade. It also adjoins long stretches of urban areas. These features present significant management challenges for the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change and Water (DECCW, which includes the NPWS). To add to this challenge, climate change may increase the frequency and intensity of fires in the region.

To improve public awareness of some of the science behind these issues, the DECCW and NSW Environmental Trust recently supported the preparation of a booklet on the area's vegetation, fire history and climate change projections. The 74-page, full-colour booklet, entitled *Vegetation, Fire and Climate Change in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area*, includes extensive written information, ten maps and many beautiful photographs. It summarises information from a variety of sources including vegetation surveys, fire history data, ecological research and modelling of projected climate and fire regime change.

Key parts of the booklet are:

- descriptions of the extent and diversity of vegetation formations (broad vegetation types from Keith 2004) in the World Heritage Area, including a new map covering the entire area, compiled from the most recent local and regional vegetation maps;
- a summary of the internationally-recognised natural values of the World Heritage Area and updated lists of the eucalypts (based on Hager and Benson, in press, *Cunninghamia*) and threatened species (derived from the NSW NPWS Wildlife Atlas);
- a description of fire regimes in the World Heritage Area for the last four decades, including maps of recent major fire seasons, fire frequency and fire severity (Hammill et al 2010);
- a brief outline of the latest climate change predictions for the region, including summaries of recent scientific studies about how plants and



vegetation communities may respond to increases in both temperature and fire frequencies;

- a concluding section with constructive suggestions as to how DECCW can mitigate the potential impacts of fire and climate change in this amazing area.

The booklet is intended as a useful resource for land managers, interested members of the public, and ecology students. Copies are available from the NPWS Heritage Centre in Blackheath or by request from the authors, Kate Hammill or Liz Tasker:

[Kate.Hammill@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Kate.Hammill@environment.nsw.gov.au)

[Liz.Tasker@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Liz.Tasker@environment.nsw.gov.au)

A pdf of the booklet can also be downloaded from the DECCW website

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/protectedareas/GreaterBlueMountainsWorldHeritageArea.htm>.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc. 2011/2012 Management Committee Nomination Form

We.....and .....

being members of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society hereby nominate

.....for the position of .....

Signed ..... Date: .....

I, .....being a member of the above Society accept the nomination.

Signed .....Date: .....

This form must be lodged with the Meetings Secretary at least 24 hours before the AGM. PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls, NSW 2782, or email [bmcs@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:bmcs@bluemountains.org.au) Nominations from the floor are also accepted at the AGM

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## Meet the Candidates Evening

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of February, the Society hosted a Meet the Candidates evening attended by Trish Doyle (ALP), Janet Mays (Independent), Kerrin O'Grady (Greens), Roza Sage (Liberal). It was very informative with approximately 90 people attending.

Tara Cameron started the night by outlining the issues that the Society had asked candidates to consider at our election launch in January. These included; the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 proposal, climate change, national park funding and development, invasive species, planning, mining and groundwater.

Each candidate each spoke for 10 minutes followed by questions from the floor for another 40 minutes. Obviously, it is not possible to report on all of the things that were said as a full transcript would take up many pages of Hut News. A 'pick and choose' style summary of the candidates' responses could be argued as unfair, so we have decided to report the responses to the last question which all the candidates answered.

Question from Conservation Society member Angela Langdon, ***"You're elected, you've got your first year in office, what are the three top things you're going to achieve in the environmental sphere in the Blue Mountains"?***

Responses in speaking order:

**Trish Doyle** (ALP) "Seeing the Gardens of Stone Proposal realised is number one. I think that we need to seriously look at the mining and extraction issue so I'll put that up there as number two" and "number three is maintaining our LEP 2005 standards in the Standard Template".

**Roza Sage** (Liberal) "Getting rid of the Part 3A so that you don't have one person who can control what development can happen here, so that local communities can have input into what happens on their turf". "That reflects back onto development in National Parks and heritage areas like the Blue Mountains so I would be wanting that to go back on to the agenda so that we can fortify that so we don't have development in

National Parks". "The other thing that I would be fighting for would be to level the playing field with road and rail and fight to reintroduce the rail fuel subsidy so that we can get bulk freight onto rail. From another perspective, is getting better public transport so that people don't have to use cars so that we can get better services in the Blue Mountains".

**Kerrin O'Grady** (Greens) "Picking up something in Natural Advantage...it's about weeds". Getting that multi agency look at weeds to get together the Council and RTA and the other agencies to look at funding and ensuring that the spread of invasive species is controlled". That would number one, perhaps even almost achievable in a year". "Number two, the Gardens of Stone National Park most definitely. I would definitely look at what we can do about the Invincible open cut coal mine". "I think that's going to take a little bit longer than a year but that would be a massive thing to make sure that that does not happen out west".

**Janet Mays** (Independent) "I'm already on the record as saying that one of the first things that I would like to do is introduce a Private Members' Bill to exempt the Blue Mountains from in-park development. If I'm elected on March 26<sup>th</sup>, believe me, I'll be working with other independents who will be elected on March 26<sup>th</sup>, to achieve that Private Members' Bill.". "My number two is around this 7000 dwellings target for the Blue Mountains. It's not realistic, it's not sustainable and it's not appropriate for this community. I would certainly be looking to have that target seriously reduced and working with whomever is in government to achieve that outcome for the Blue Mountains". The third issue would be to see "the unravelling of the Game Council of NSW in year one and to be assured that we would not see, we would not ever see, recreational shooting taking place in our National Park". "The Gardens of Stone Stage 2 project is absolutely fantastic, it's a very ambitious project, I fully endorse it but I don't think that I would be able to achieve it in year one, but you can come and see me if year 3 if it is not achieved by that time".



### **"Alice entering wonderland"**

On 19th February, the Saturday bush-walkers, led by Jim Percy, walked to Dalpura Gully.

Dalpura Ridge runs from Bells Line of Road to the Grose Valley, bounded on the west by Dalpura Creek and by Birrabang Creek on the east.

A small creek flows from Dalpura Ridge down through a small canyon-like gully to merge with Dalpura Creek in a large chamber.

Photo by Jim Percy.

Under this forbidding title, I want to look at two things: BMCS' views on coal mining, particularly in the Western Coalfield; and selected aspects from Clive Hamilton's recent book<sup>1</sup> on greenhouse gas emissions (GGE) and the implications for climate change.

### **BMCS' views on coal**

These views are largely (but not entirely) as outlined and forwarded to Centennial Coal with the approval of Management Committee. They are not specific to Centennial Coal, although Centennial is one of the principal companies operating in the Western Coalfield.

- BMCS opposes all new mines (both underground and open cut) in the Greater Blue Mountains' Western Coalfield aimed at supplying coal to 'dirty' coal-fired power stations.
- BMCS opposes all attempts to exploit coal-seam gas within parks and park proposals in and immediately adjacent to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.
- BMCS supports various organisations (dealing with other coalfields elsewhere in the State) which seek to protect rich agricultural land, and groundwater and surface water resources from the impacts of inadequately controlled coal mining and/or coal-seam gas extraction.
- BMCS opposes Australia's ongoing commitment to finite coal resources and governments' direct and indirect funding of CCS (carbon capture and sequestration), because these impede support for and exploitation of 'renewable' resources, and also impede the development of cushioning assistance programs to ensure the viability of mining communities as coal mining declines.
- BMCS advocates the introduction of a direct 'carbon price' and a market-based 'pollution reduction scheme' consistent with the need to mitigate GGE and limit climate change to less than 2 degrees centigrade.

Members may be aware that the underground Airly mine was opposed by BMCS before approval was originally granted in 1993. Centennial purchased Airly with its consent to mine in 1997 and, following a feasibility study in 2008, opted to proceed with development and mining coal for export. BMCS would prefer Centennial not to undermine the Airly region which will (very shortly we hope!) be reserved as a State Conservation Area (SCA). BMCS acknowledges, however, that SCA reservation and appropriate forms of underground mining are compatible. No mining would be best for the total environment, but where underground mining is sanctioned by government, SCA reservation potentially protects the superficial environment.

Over the past few months, BMCS opposed four mining applications in the Western Coalfield (two open cut and two underground) based on environmental criteria. Furthermore, BMCS continues to evaluate the effects of current mining and power generation on Newnes Plateau, the Western Escarpment, Lithgow's water supply, the Coxs River system, and other river systems flowing eastward into the World Heritage Area.

Some may ask why BMCS isn't against all coal mining and all new mines irrespective of whether the product is for local or export markets. Very simply it is, but BMCS campaigns indirectly either through supporting other organisations (see dot-point 3), or through advocating broader principles (see dot-points 4 and 5). In effect, because coal-fired power and exported coal feed the Australian economy, BMCS opted to limit expansion through highlighting the potential for locally based environmental damage, whilst concurrently seeking a government-managed transition to other energy sources.

Others may have concerns about the capacity of government-based schemes to mitigate GGE, and limit climate change to less than 2 degrees centigrade. BMCS acknowledges these concerns, but climate change is accelerating, the detail is immaterial and the time for endless debate is more than past. This will be addressed in the next section.

### **It's the economy stupid<sup>2</sup>**

In international climate change negotiations, the conventional wisdom is that warming must be kept below 2°C<sup>3</sup>, equivalent to a maximum CO<sub>2</sub>-e<sup>4</sup> of 450 ppm, and that (as made necessary by ongoing governmental procrastination) the target can be overshoot and returned to the 450 ppm stable level through intensive mitigation measures.

This may sound reasonable but it is little more than a flawed numerical exercise. Firstly, GGE over the last decade are increasing at a faster rate than expected due to the expanding global population, substantial migration from less to more affluent countries, and the legitimate aspirations of developing-world populations, so any comfort zone is rapidly diminishing. Secondly, the recognition of complex feedback mechanisms has replaced the assumed linear relationship between GGE and global warming with frighteningly accelerating behaviour at various 'tipping points'. Thirdly, it requires governments to act in a concerted manner in the face of argument that sustainable economic growth is the solution to climate change rather than its cause; how this can be when resources and even global space are finite is beyond belief.

Yet irrespective of this, economic growth is seemingly sacrosanct for governments within most western and developing countries, so it is hard to see governments having sufficient foresight and courage to adopt a global plan for restricting warming to 2°C and then actually enforcing it.

Unsurprisingly, Clive Hamilton and many climate scientists believe there is negligible chance of keeping GGE at or below 450 ppm and stopping warming at 2°C. Such 'excess' warming would impose substantial and potentially irreversible impacts including loss of most alpine-type glaciers, and melting of the Greenland and West Antarctic icesheets with sea level increases of 10-15 m upward. The consequent loss of biodiversity, inundations of major cities and alluvial food bowls, and major human migrations would have dire consequences. Is this too pessimistic? Regrettably no! If a miraculous

*(Continued on page 7)*



**Now is Too Late!** (Continued from page 6)

If a miraculous conversion caused governments to adopt and enforce compliance with exceedingly optimistic assumptions over the remainder of this century, GGE would still rise to 650 ppm, causing warming of about 4°C and disastrously irreversible climate change.

Governments have failed to see the true magnitude of climate change and view its mitigation solely within the context of economic growth. In Australia, this has spawned criminal levels of procrastination and the potential for ridiculous levels of compensation for polluting industries. When the war on climate change demanded long-term non-partisan commitment, our political and business leaders indulged in short-term mean-spirited opportunism, and voters greedily accepted the compatibility of population growth, a burgeoning economy and combating climate change. Other countries are no different. Misguided short-term self-interest reigns supreme as they strive for competitive edges and grow their stupid economies. Indeed, history will judge the past two decades as the period over which a truly sustainable future was sacrificed on the altar of humanity's arrogance and greed as captured by "It's the economy stupid!"

Is there a way back? For pessimists and realists, answers range from 'no' to 'not likely'. Optimists place faith in humanity's ingenuity, whilst 'deniers' have nothing to fear. Choose your camp; it matters not.

**The real choice was humanity's to make – pity it's too late.**

**Brian Marshall.**

<sup>1</sup> Clive Hamilton, 2010, "Requiem for a species", Allen & Unwin, Australia, 286pp; this book, particularly chapters 1-4 and 7, elegantly present the devastating truths of climate change – chapter 8 acknowledges reality!

<sup>2</sup> With apologies to Bill Clinton; this cynical but very rational approach may win elections by appeasing 'business' and greedy voters, but it is a recipe for planetary disaster.

<sup>3</sup> This and other data in this section are derived from Clive Hamilton's fully referenced book.

<sup>4</sup> The global warming potential of each component of the GGE spectrum is used to yield a total carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2-e</sub>).

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## Water skiing in a wildlife sanctuary?

BUSHELLS LAGOON, located approximately 6 km north of Windsor, is a 64 hectare wildlife sanctuary of international importance. Almost 140 species of birds have been recorded on this lagoon at various times including 17 species of shorebirds protected by international treaties. The habitat itself is protected under Bilateral Migratory Bird Agreements between Australia & Japan and Australia & China. The agreement specifically requires signatories to protect migratory birds in danger of extinction and their environment.

Vulnerable species listed under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act include the Black Tailed Godwit that is subject to a treaty with Japan. Also listed under the TSCA is the Painted Snipe subject to a treaty with China. These migratory birds coming from as far as Siberia and Hokkaido depend on this lagoon for sanctuary. Depending on the water level this lagoon on occasions can be seen teeming with bird life. Nesting swans were seen here last year.

It's almost impossible to imagine speedboats on this sanctuary. However the Maritime Services Board has issued a licence to a water ski club to ski on this lagoon. The club has already built a slalom course down the centre of the lagoon.

Hawkesbury City Council has become involved following a noise complaint from a nearby resident. A water ski club representative subsequently addressed a meeting of council. Raising the level of this travesty to comic opera Hawkesbury Council has decided to send a delegation to observe a demonstration by the ski club - not on the lagoon, but 6 kilometers away on the Hawkesbury River down the water ski racecourse.

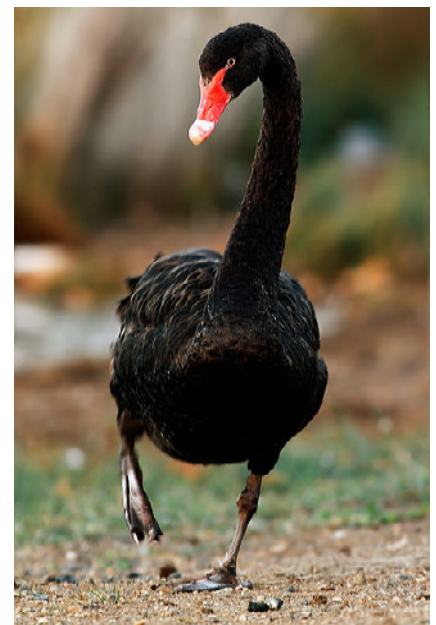
This decision to grant access to speedboats on the pristine sanctuary is outrageous in the extreme. There are numerous state agencies involved and this has the potential to go around in circles. The Australian Government has signed off on an International

agreement to protect these birds and their habitat the buck stops with them.

This is a major environmental concern of Local, National and International importance. Please act as a matter of urgency and email a request reminding our government of it's obligation under the JAMBA and CAMBA agreements and requesting intervention to overturn granting of the license issued by the MSB.

Send your submission to Hon. Tony Burke MP, Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, [Tony.Burke.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Tony.Burke.MP@aph.gov.au)  
Copies to: The Hon. Eric Roozendaal BA LLB MLC, Minister for Ports and Waterways, [enquiries@treasurer.nsw.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@treasurer.nsw.gov.au); Hawkesbury City Council, [council@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au)

*Glenn Vickery, Hawkesbury Environment Network*



Swan image by  
JHarrison, from  
Wikipedia

## DEVIL'S HOLE, 7 November 1987. Heather Mollenhaur

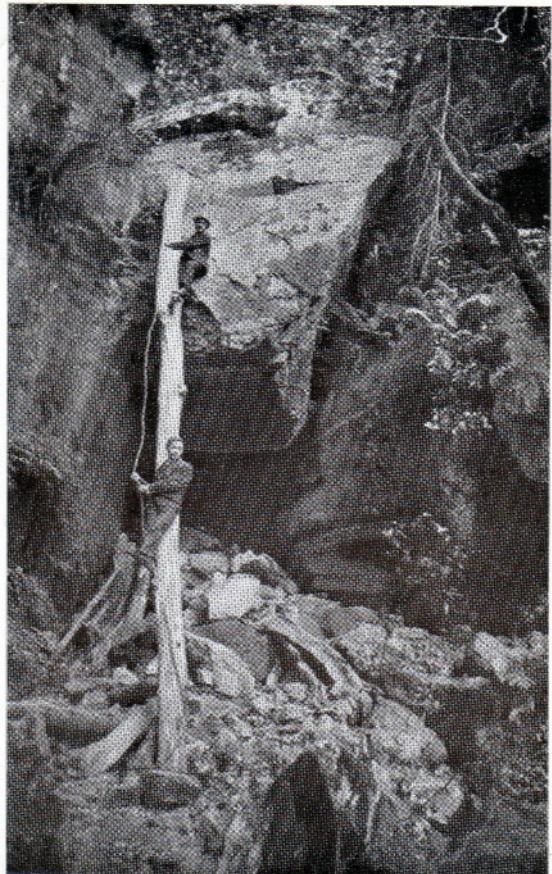
"... we sat on a rock looking for an owl that is a permanent resident of this area, but he wasn't at home today! We searched in vain with the binoculars. It was so peaceful sitting here, but we must move along." The story continues from last month's Hut News ....

The Scouts have put red metal markers on the trees, and one here is the reason for people missing the Devils Hole Track, so Jim removed it and put it in the right place. We took note that we turn right and keep close to the base of the cliff. We sat on a big rock and could hear the shouting of rock climbers but couldn't see them. Many daisies were flowering here – *Olearia tomentosa*, *O. elliptica*, also *Viola hederacea*, *Smilax australis*, *Banksia marginata*, *Leptospermum lanigerum*, *Patersonia sericea* and magnificent, tall *Eucalyptus oreades*. A cairn marks the rock climbers' track on the opposite side. We had a lovely view of the Narrow Neck Plateau and the valley below it, and of Redledge Pass which is above what was the Glen Shale Mine. There was mining on either side of Narrow Neck, depending on demand and price as to when it was shale or coal mining! A tunnel goes under Narrow Neck to connect the two mines, especially to save on transportation costs. After the aerial ropeway collapsed, the horse-drawn system was introduced with railway tracks and trestles.

We went on the track along the base of the cliff line, past a big boulder with graffiti on it, then we went down a steep gully – very much like Gladstone Pass – except it was dry. We saw the Scouts' red markers from time to time, and had no difficulty in following the track to the creek where the Scouts have a camping area.

As we went through the open forest we could hear the loud noise of the cicadas. We saw a variety of plants including *Astrotricha latifolia*, *Caustis flexuosa*, *Lomandra obliqua*, *L. longifolia*, *L. gracilis*, *Persoonia pinifolia*, *Xanthorrhoea arborea*, *Oxylobium ilicifolium*, *Banksia serrata*, *B. spinulosa*, *Epacris microphylla*, *E. obtusifolia*, *E. reclinata*, *Dracophyllum secundum*, *Sprengelia incarnata*, *Gahnia sieberana*, *Pteridium esculentum*, *Symphionema montanum*, with its panicles of white flowers. Other white flowers were *Conospermum acerosum* (Smokebush), *Poranthera ericifolia* – with a very small head of flowers and tiny plant. The *Eucalyptus sieberi* is in flower, white, as is *Callicoma serratifolia* with its pale cream balls of flower. We were puzzled by another tree in flower. Fiona managed to get a specimen of the balls of flowers, it is *Acacia falciformis*. We also saw *Acacia elata*, *A. terminalis*. *Dianella caerulea* are now in flower – a pretty blue, also the deep blue of *Dampiera stricta*. The yellow flowers were *Hibbertia hederacea*, *Goodenia heterophylla* and *Sphaerolobium vimineum* – a wiry, leafless shrub with pea flowers. Some of the trees noticed were *Angophora floribunda*, *Eucalyptus piperita* and *E. gummifera*.

We came down the valley to a tributary of Megalong Creek. It was 12 midday. We sat at this lovely spot and had a long lunch break. A leech also had a lunch break on my leg! When Ross made the mistake of attempting to bury his biodegradable remains from his lunch Jim said that as it broke down it would enrich the soil, and



Black's Ladder, Katoomba.

*The Devil's Hole was one of a number of places called by whites "Blacks Ladder". The photo shows the big rock which was blasted out in 1930s. The 'hole' was under it. The log with cable was made by miners. Postcard from Jim Smith collection.*

eventually upset the ecology. (Kerry said Ross made the mistake of being caught!) Then Jim went on to say "Before, it was the trend to 'burn, bash and bury' now the tables have turned to such an extent that in USA National Parks everything taken in has to be brought out, even portaloos and the ashes from any fires lit!". Jim continues with his history lessons and we learn about the organizing for the water from the Fish River, Oberon to be piped to Katoomba, which was dependent on several dams on the north side and not enough for future needs. So this 'pipe dream' came into operation and boosted Katoomba's water supply. During the long drought this supply had to be cut off, due to the very low level of the Fish River. Warragamba Dam then extended its supply up the mountains.

Jim told us the story of Sam, an old man who had read Jim's 'Bushwalkabout' columns in "The Echo". He was a Scout Master in his youth, and had taken Scouts many times on the Devils Hole Track. Now, in his old age, he wanted to do the walk one more time and wanted Jim to come with him. It was just as well Jim did because Sam was able to show Jim the proper track. Jim, like so many others, had gone down into the valley too soon, instead of following the base of the cliff line. He said oranges were the best thing for refreshment on bushwalks, and saw that his Scouts had them.

(continued next month)



## Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

Many Australian birds feed on nectar, but the nectar doesn't only come proffered in flowers. Some acacias secrete nectar from a gland on the leaf stalks, and one of the best nectar producers is the Cedar Wattle, *Acacia elata*, which grows as a lofty (for a wattle) tree in gullies and on the edges of rainforest. The best nectar flow usually happens when the tree is flowering.

On 9th February I visited the Cathedral of Ferns picnic area at Mt Wilson and found the flowering Cedar Wattles alive with birds. Dozens of Yellow-faced, Lewin's, New Holland and Crescent Honeyeaters as well as the Eastern Spinebills were moving through the foliage systematically probing the little swellings on the stalks of the compound leaves. A concentration of honeyeaters like this is always an exciting experience with the constant movement and mixture of sounds. Brown and Striated Thornbills, though they don't have the specialised brush-tipped tongue of the honeyeaters, will also take nectar to supplement their mostly insect diet, and groups of these tiny birds added to the activity.

Another plant flowering around the mountains as I write is the *Banksia serrata*, always a drawcard for the nectar feeders with a more voracious appetite - like the Rainbow Lorikeets. In the past 11 years, Rainbows have firmly become established in the upper mountains, where they were generally absent before 2000. In that year many people in the Katoomba area noticed the invasion as up to 50 lorikeets at a time screeched across the sky. No-one knows why they arrived so suddenly, but they've never really left since. Of course, they've been established for a longer time in the lower mountains. I cannot help wondering what impact they've had on the smaller honeyeaters and hollow-nesting species like rosellas and kingfishers.

On a different note, one of the most understated and unobtrusive birds you could ever find is the Bassian Thrush, which breeds in the damp gullies but starts moving out into gardens about this time of year. You might see one quietly foraging in the leaf litter for worms and insects, its scalloped brown plumage blending perfectly with the forest floor. If disturbed it flies a short distance and freezes, relying on its camouflage to escape detection. The Leura Cascades picnic area is a regular haunt where they sometimes venture out onto the lawn.

Carol Proberts [origma@westnet.com.au](mailto:origma@westnet.com.au)

## Membership Application Form

(Use capitals please—even for email address)

Name(s) 1. ....  
2. ....  
3. ....

Address: .....  
.....PC .....

Phone(s) .....

Email .....

MEMBERSHIP FEES (please circle one item)

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

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

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

TOTAL AMOUNT INCLUDED \$.....

Note: All fees include GST at the relevant rate.

Send my copy of Hut News by

Please tick box mail internet only

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](mailto: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

## THE Election 2011 ENVIRONMENT FORUM



6:00pm—7:30pm  
Tuesday 15 March  
NSW Parliament House, Theatre  
Macquarie Street, Sydney

## Will the major parties deliver for our environment this election?

Renowned ABC reporter Quentin Dempster will direct your questions to our political leaders from the Coalition, Labor and The Greens.

From renewable energy to river protection, mining and gas, planning and public transport - this question and answer forum is your chance to hear directly from the major parties.

Don't miss this unique opportunity just days before the election!

Register your question and RSVP at [www.nccnsw.org.au](http://www.nccnsw.org.au) or contact [elo@nccnsw.org.au](mailto:elo@nccnsw.org.au), 02 9516 1488.

The best questions will be asked of the Q&A panel on the night. For more information, check out the NSW environment platform Natural Advantage at [www.nccnsw.org.au/campaigns/state-election](http://www.nccnsw.org.au/campaigns/state-election)

## 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.

## Nature Walks

Christine Davies



*Scorpion Flies mating*

Sue spotted these insects in a shrub along the Six Foot Track. At first glance, a pair of mating dragonflies, but wings different, and such long legs. I later had them identified as Scorpion Flies (*Mecoptera*).

Their name is derived from the fact that the abdomens of some male species have genitalia that resemble the stinging tail of a scorpion and will often fly with it raised. The male attracts the female with pheromones and offers her an insect meal he has previously captured.

Scorpion flies prefer cool, moist environments and are common around mountain and coastal regions. Adults can sometimes be seen hanging from low vegetation waiting for a chance to capture passing prey with their hind legs. I have seen smaller species flying in cool damp overhangs. You could mistake them for giant mosquitoes.



*Sketch from CSIRO*

It's a pleasant walk along the Six Foot Track from the cemetery towards the cliffs of Katoomba. Further on, in a forested area colonised by Bell Miners, we came across several plants of the groundcover *Grevillea gaudichaudii*, a natural hybrid of *G. laurifolia* and *G. acanthifolia* which were growing nearby. *Grevillea laurifolia* is a groundcover plant with smooth entire leaves and red toothbrush flowers, *Grevillea acanthifolia* is an straggling upright shrub with divided leaves and pink toothbrush flowers. *Grevillea gaudichaudii* has divided leaves and red flowers. These *Grevillea* species are endemic to the upper Blue Mountains.

While we enjoyed lunch at the Megalong Tea Rooms we saw an Orchard Swallowtail Butterfly and found some of its caterpillars and eggs on the leaves of a lemon tree.

The following week (17 February), during our bird walk with Carol Proberts, we again found *Grevillea gaudichaudii* and its parent plants growing in Waterworks Gully at Lithgow. It is a great area for birds. We saw and/or heard 29 different bird species. We had perfect sightings of a male and a female Satin Flycatcher and Carol pointed out their recently-used nest on a tree branch. They are beautiful birds. We also saw a Chequered Swallowtail Butterfly.

Lunch on the veranda of the restaurant in Secret Creek Sanctuary, besides being delicious, was very entertaining. Dingoes set up a howling session, waking up the Spotted-tailed Quoll who was in a wire enclosure. He came to the front of the cage so we were able to see him. A Microbat came out from its home in the roof and flew around in daylight.

One of the Emus took off aggressively in hot pursuit of another and didn't catch it. A Long-nosed Potoroo and a Bettong (both nocturnal?) came to feed. And the tame wallaby, who was stretched out on the veranda so that everyone had to walk around him, moved a few metres to the shade and went back to sleep.



*Birdwatching with Carol Proberts. Carol points out a bird, "in the tree which is closest, on the right hand side about half way up, just to the left of ...."*



## Down the Wallaby Track — a backward glance, with John Low **CRONJE, THE BRUMBY BRIGAND**

Piet Cronje was a Boer General, rough of manner, ruthless, courageous and a thorn in the side of the British in South Africa. At the same time in the vicinity of Jenolan, in the mountainous back country of the Cox and its tributaries, a brumby stallion was causing similar disruption among the European settlers. Life in this isolated part of the Blue Mountains demanded a tough resilience from its inhabitants. They were skilled bushmen and expert horsemen, every bit as daring as the Snowy River men. They recognised in the wild stallion the characteristics of the Boer Cronje and bestowed that name upon him with genuine, if grudging, respect.

The story of Cronje is documented in that splendid book, *Cullenbenbong*, by Bernard O'Reilly whose family settled at Long Swamp in the second half of the nineteenth century. At the feet of his father and the older men, young Bernard (born 1903) absorbed the stories of the wild brumbies sweeping down from the mountains at night, killing tame horses and making off with the mares to replenish their breeding stock. He learned of the brumby runners, those men of "reckless courage and riding ability" who fought these depredations with their skills in pursuit and capture and the use of assorted firearms and who, aided by drought, gradually reduced the numbers of the marauding horde.

By the end of the century one dominant stallion remained, the last of a "long rebel line", a magnificent horse, "a brigand and a killer" but so coveted by the

mountain horsemen that they set upon a reckless determination to capture him. Drives were organised and strategies planned, issuing in dramatic displays of skill and courage, near success, injury and even death, but always failure. Cronje was equal to the challenge, usually with a surprise in reserve. He out-ran them, charged through lines of shouting, stockwhip wielding riders, ran pursuers into wombat holes (a rider "spinning along the ground like a football"), crashed out of timber enclosures and on one occasion hurdled to freedom over two mounted men.

The climax came when Cronje, cornered at the edge of a precipice, leapt "in a beautiful arc and disappeared into the blue air", traversed a landslide prone scree slope and in a "thrilling wild-horse run" escaped to the bottom of the gorge, leaving only "the ring of his hooves and the clatter of the rocks he took with him". That was enough and the pursuit of Cronje came to an end.

It's a great story, even if perhaps grown a little more colourful in the telling. The isolated life of men and women, thrown back so often on their own ingenuity, fosters a rich tradition of legend and story. Apparently, Cronje escaped the devastating bushfire of 1904-1905 and was last seen, still wild and free, years later in the ranges at the head of the Kowmung River. If you look at your map you will find him remembered in Cronje Mountain, Cronje Ridge and Cronje Gully.

**John Low** <[johnlow@iprimus.com.au](mailto:johnlow@iprimus.com.au)>

## **New Aboriginal Hands site discovered**

Volunteers searching for rare plants discovered something even more extraordinary when they stumbled onto previously unrecorded Aboriginal Hand stencils in a cave overhang near Lithgow.

Chris Jonkers and Julie Favell of Lithgow Environment Group (LEG) have been surveying native flora in Ben Bullen State Forest for a number of years, and have a particular interest in rock pagoda areas, where many rare and endangered plant species occur.

This day was no different - both had their heads down concentrating on the ground below when they came upon a stunning rock grotto. Looking up Chris quietly said to Julie, 'Does that look like aboriginal hand stencils to you?' Well the rest is history - they had found a cluster of ochre aboriginal hand stencils in a cave overhang, and immediately contacted the DECCW Aboriginal Heritage Register with the GPS coordinates for verification. This week LEG was informed that this site had not previously been recorded. LEG will now work with the DECCW to register this site and further

investigate the surrounding area.

It was an incredibly moving experience to stand there and realise that our aboriginal ancestors had visited, valued and cared for this site for many 1000's of years.

But it was also very disturbing to realise just how close this site had come to being lost forever, as there have been literally 100's of cliff and overhang collapses in Ben Bullen State Forest over the last 30 years due to long-wall mining, which removes the coal from underneath leaving no support for the fragile sandstone above. This site is within a mining lease and is only 800m from a previously mined long-wall panel. The area has been the subject of numerous environmental and archaeological assessments over 30 years for various mining proposals - and yet this site remained undiscovered until now?

This find demonstrates that current environmental assessments required by the NSW Government for mining proposals are inadequate. LEG members have similarly identified over 150 plant species

occurring within Ben Bullen State Forest that were not recorded in Flora Assessments for recent mining proposals. LEG believes that this site can best be protected by including it as a Conservation Area within the adjacent Gardens of Stone National Park, which is only 1.6 kilometres away.

**Chris Jonkers and Julie Favell.**



## 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](http://www.bluemountains.org.au) or can be posted on request. For more information call Maurice Kerkham 4739 4942 email [mauricekerkham@hotmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:jp34@tpg.com.au)

Date	Details	Contact	Meet at	(km)	Grade	Map
Mar 12	<b>Spit to Manly</b> - chance for a swim at various beaches. Travel in 2nd car, top.	Annemarie 4759 2172	Central - top of escalator, 9.35 am	6	2/3	
Mar 19	<b>Baal Bone Gap, Gardens of Stone NP.</b> Great views from Mt McLean through McLeans Gap	Meredith 4782 4823	Mt Victoria Station CP 8.40 am	7	3	Cullen Bullen Ben Bullen
Mar 26	<b>Boorong</b> Crags - Mt Hay and beyond with great views into the Grose Gorge - steep descents and ascents. We will attempt to get as far as GR 619788 described by Andy Macqueen as "one of the best views of the Grose Valley.	Jim 4758 6009	Leura School, Mt Hay Road, 8 am	16	3	Mt Wilson
Apr 2	<b>Six Foot Track</b> , Megalong to Cox's River.	Bill 4758 8545	Blackheath car park 8.15 am		2/3	Hampton
Apr 9	<b>Finches Line of Road.</b> Drive to Wisemans Ferry and across Hawkesbury to begin the walk.	Annemarie 4759 2172	Springwood Station CP, 8.15 AM	11	3	Lower Portland St Albans

**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](mailto:judithbushwalker@hotmail.com)

Date	Description	Grade	Contact	Meet
Mar 14	<b>CITY WALK. South Head, Watsons Bay.</b> Coastal views. Possible paddle & seafood lunch.	1	Heather 4739 1493	Central Station, top of escalator, 9.30am
Mar 21	<b>Long Angle, Sun Valley.</b> Picturesque fire trail, blue gums and water crossings.	3	Robyn 4751 6328	Behind Springwood Civic Centre, 9.15. Car pool.
Mar 28	<b>BUS TRIP. Evan's Crown.</b> Amazing views and rock formations. Option of lunch at Tarana Pub. Book and pay Keith 4736 1010 \$12	2	Heather 4739 1493	BMCC Depot, South Street, North Katoomba, 8.30 am.
Apr 4	<b>Butterbox Point.</b> Easy walk. Spectacular views and unique rock formations.	2	Robyn 4751 6328	Leura Station 9.30am. Car pool
Apr 11	<b>Two Creeks walk, Lindfield.</b> Walk the upper reaches of middle harbour. 6km.	2	Maurice 4739 4942	Escalator near Central Station, 9.30

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

Mar 10	<b>Leura Cascades to Gordon Falls.</b> Clifftop walk with great views of cliffs and valley.	2	Joan c/o 4782 1215	Cnr. Megalong Street and The Mall, Leura, 9.35 am
Mar 17	<b>BUS TRIP, West Head.</b> Bring lunch and swimming gear. Cost \$10. Book & pay Simone.	2	Simone 47 57 3416	Meet BMCC Depot South Street Nth Katoomba 8.30 a.m. sharp
Mar 24	<b>Fairy Bower, Mt Victoria.</b> Walk down from Mount Piddington. Bring lunch.	2	Barrie 4782 9235	Mt Victoria Station, 9.45am.
Mar 31	<b>Horseshoe Falls.</b> Three waterfalls and rainforest walk.	2	Maurice 4739 4942	Hazelbrook shops car park, 10am. Car pool.
Apr 7	<b>Pulpit Rock.</b> One-way walk from Govett's Leap to Pulpit Rock. Fantastic mountain views. Car Shuffle. Bring lunch.	2	Robyn 4751 6328	Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 8.45 am.

*Photo: Drosera binata, Centennial Glen, Blackheath*



### Welcome to new members

Lois Gaskin, Hazelbrook  
 Jo Newman, Hazelbrook  
 John Park, Blackheath  
 Penny Park, Blackheath  
 Howard McCallum, East Blaxland  
 Briga O'sullivan, Katoomba  
 Valinor Bowen, Winmalee  
 Kim Smith, Springwood  
 Amy Smith, Springwood  
 Zandra Wilson, Leura