



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

Congratulations Lachlan - thank you Tara!

Lachlan Garland was elected BMCS President at the Society's 2011 Annual General Meeting.

Tara Cameron - our inspirational leader of three years is Senior Vice President.

Tara's President's Report can be found on our website..

Tara replaces Liz Van Reyswoud, who although no longer on the Management Committee is involved with organising our 50th anniversary celebrations in September.

Don Morison is the 2nd Vice President replacing John Haydon who has stepped down from the Management Committee.

Gary Humble replaces Chris Yates as Environmental Education Officer. Chris has moved to Sydney.

Craig Linn has joined the Management Committee in the position of Project Officer - Food & Environment.

There were no other changes to the Management Committee - a full list and contact details can be found on page 2.

Vacancies exist for Membership Secretary - Lachlan's former position; and Monthly Meetings Convenor. Please contact Lachlan if you are interested in either position.

The proposed constitution changes were approved and are being sent to NSW Fair Trading for consent. Membership Fees have risen by \$5 - the first change in seven years.

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 Monthly meeting SATURDAY MORNING

9.30am, 30 April 2011

**Wentworth Falls School of Arts Theatre
(Cnr Great Western Hwy and Adele Avenue, opposite Falls Road)**

Guest speaker: ALAN FAIRLEY

New Plants, New Names: a photographic look at some of the rare plants discovered in the Sydney region in the last few years and at the often annoying practice of revision and re-naming native species

Alan Fairley has written a number of books on wildflowers, walks and national parks, but is probably best known for his *Native Plants of the Sydney District* (co-authored with Philip Moore). This publication has been extensively rewritten and with new photos was released in Sept 2010 as *Native Plants of the Sydney Region*. He is a retired teacher who divides his time looking for and photographing rare plants and travelling overseas.

(Photo: *Melaleuca megalongensis*)



Visitors are very welcome

Gardens of Stone Campaigner

The Society has engaged Justin McKee as a consultant to help us stop the development of an open cut coal mine in the Gardens of Stone Proposal Area.

Plans to destroy 1,088 hectares of Ben Bullen State Forest **is a destructive proposal that must be rejected.** If approved, piles 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.

The proposal seeks to 'maximise the recovery' of coal to the detriment of the broader public interest of the conservation of Ben Bullen State Forest. See the March Hut News for full details (www.bluemountains.org.au)

Justin has recently worked for the Nature Conservation Council as a marine campaigner. Before this, he co-ordinated the successful campaign by the Wilderness Society to oppose the construction of Tillegra Dam.

Join us for a campaign action on Saturday 14 May. See Page 3 for more information.

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Experience
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 April 2011**

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

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BUSHCARE GROUP

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

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

Nursery News Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager

Feature Plant: This month we have chosen a rather unusual
although common plant, *Dodonaea triquetra* or Large-leaf Hop-bush. The
common name derives from its use in the early days of the Sydney
colony as a substitute for hops in beer making. Have any of our
members ever tried using it for their home brew? There is a real market
today for "boutique beers" so there could be potential here.

The *Dodonaea* genus occurs principally in Australia but also extends
into the tropical areas of America, Africa and Asia. This particular species
is a small to medium shrub with elliptic leaves about 10 x 4cm with a
pointed apex. It bears insignificant male and female flowers on separate
plants but its most attractive feature is the quite striking seed capsule
about 1cm long which is initially green but turns purple-brown on maturity
and is fitted with 3 yellow wings (hence "*triquetra*"). In a good season the
bush is covered with these capsules and is very showy. With tip pruning
it can be kept to a bushy shrub which makes a good screen. It is
abundant in the national park at Glenbrook.

The other part of the scientific name, *Dodonaea*, was given to the
genus by the eminent Swedish botanist, Linnaeus, in honour of the 16th
century Flemish botanist and physician Rembert Dodoens (b. Mechelen
1517 - d. Leiden 1585). He completed studies in medicine at the
University of Leuven in 1535 and held a number of positions all over
Europe (for example as court physician to emperor Rudolf 2nd in Vienna
from 1575 -1578) before his last post as professor of medicine at the
University of Leiden. Throughout his life he maintained a strong interest
in botany and his most eminent work "Cruydeboeck" on herbs, published
in 1554, was, in his time, the most translated book after the bible and
was subsequently used as a reference book for 2 centuries. Like the
Polish botanist Hove we described last week, needless to say he never
came to Australia.

There are reports of this plant being used by Aboriginal people for a
variety of medicinal purposes including chewing the leaves to relieve
toothache, using the leaves as a poultice to relieve stings, and using an
infusion of the leaves to relieve fever. We have good stocks of this plant
which will be available by the end of April and after all the publicity
above, how could you not want to have several in your garden?

Our Contracts: One of the rewards for the nursery volunteers is to
see the plants they have so carefully raised finally put into position and
there is no better example than Council's drainage works at Echo Point,
Katoomba. We have supplied 2 500 plants for this area and they look
magnificent and I urge all Society members to see for themselves. Not
only is this a tribute to the nursery volunteers but also to Council for the
design of the works and the care with which the plants were put in place
ensuring they will grow well. By way of contrast, many of the trees we
supplied for the GWH works just outside Lawson on the left-hand side
ascending the mountain have died.. We can assure members that when
these 1- 2m high trees left our nursery they were in pristine condition but
the planting process by an outside contractor has obviously been less
than successful and while we have received financial reward for these
trees it is a great disappointment to see their ultimate fate.

Sales: The combined revenue for our last two market sales at
Blackheath and Lawson reached a record level of \$1,188.80 and we are
looking forward to an even better result with the next markets.
Particularly popular were lovely, advanced Waratahs in tubes. We still
have plenty left at only 4 for \$10 but be early as they are sure to
disappear quickly. Almost as popular were ferns in 65mm pots at 3 for
\$10 and we, similarly, have good stocks of these. Just a reminder that
the Blackheath Community and Lawson Magpie Markets are on the 1st
and 3rd Sundays respectively. Our Lawson nursery is open on
Wednesday and Saturday mornings through April.

We look forward to seeing you. **Kevin Bell.**

Genowlan Mountain and Mt Airly Reserved at last

After a 30 year campaign, which was particularly intensified over the past seven years due to the combined efforts of BMCS and Keith Muir of the Colong Foundation, two dramatic plateaus (Genowlan Mountain and Mount Airly) in the Capertee Valley have been reserved as the 3,600 hectare Mugii Murum-ban State Conservation Area. This scenic and biologically diverse area is a key part of the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 reserve proposal and was initially proposed for intensive coal mining that would have caused the ground to collapse 1.8 metres, but the mining intensity has been wound back. The area's outstanding sandstone features - its hundreds of pagodas, deep gorges, slot canyons and tall sheer cliffs will now be protected for all time.

The new Mugii Murum-ban State Conservation Area has the 'full kit' of heritage features packed into a relatively small area, there is really nothing else quite like it. Notable features of the new reserve include the stone dwellings of New Hartley oil shale ruins near Airly Gap, the amazing rock formations like the 'Citadel' and the 20 metre Brown Barrel eucalypt trees downstream of the 'Grotto'.

The area contains more than 340 different plant species, including the Federally listed and endangered Genowlan Point Dwarf Sheoak Heathland which is unique to this reserve and the only living examples of the critically endangered *Pultenaea* sp. *Genowlan Point*.

It has taken decades to get to this point. This is a wonderland of biodiversity and geodiversity, so it is simply fantastic it has finally been gazetted! The decision reflects a lot of hard work by the Western escarpment (Objective 3) subcommittee of the Society, the Colong Foundation and the Lithgow Environment Group.



The tall sheer cliffs of Point Hatteras. J Plaza ©

Join us to help protect the Gardens of Stone

12.30 pm

Saturday, 14 May

Ben Bullen State Forest

The unique scenic and biodiverse Gardens of Stone, NSW is at risk of exclusive occupation and destruction by open cut coal mining.

At 12:30pm on Saturday 14th May we will be holding a simple, 30 minute campaign action to help protect this precious piece of public land from destruction.

Supporters will be asked to join us on the mining proposal site, Ben Bullen State Forest to hold a banner for a photo opportunity and later explore the stunning pagodas and forests.

Justin McKee
Gardens of Stone Campaigner,
Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Break up of department undermines environmental protection in NSW

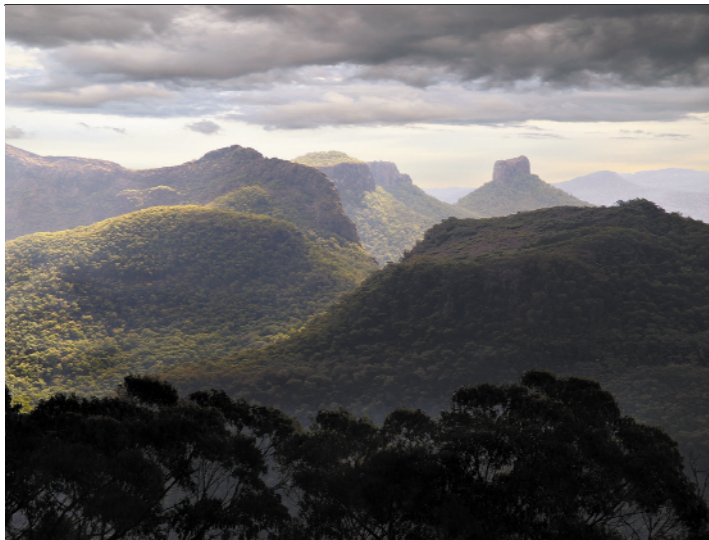
The NSW government's move to break up the Environment Department and shift responsibility for key environmental decisions to Industry and Investment NSW puts the fox in charge of the henhouse, potentially compromising the protection of the state's environment, according to the Nature Conservation Council of NSW.

"In coming years there are some significant environment policy decisions facing NSW, from the future of marine parks to regulation of the logging industry. Our community needs full confidence that these decisions will be taken free of undue influence from industry and with full management of corruption risks," CEO Pepe Clarke said today.

"Sound environmental governance demands that the department responsible for promoting industry is not also in charge of its regulation. Under the former Labor government we already had a taste of what happens when the close relationship between an agency and the industry it promotes undermines effective environmental regulation.

"To date, Industry and Investment NSW has comprehensively failed to keep in check the massive expansion of the coal seam gas industry across NSW, with serious impacts on local communities, the environment, water supplies and prime agricultural land.

"A healthy, resilient environment is a key responsibility of government. We need assurance from Premier Barry O'Farrell that our natural world, marine habitats and cities and towns will get the appropriate attention and oversight they need for a sustainable future," Mr Clarke said.



Images of the Wild

An exhibition of wilderness photographs by **HENRY GOLD**, OAM at the Bondi Pavilion Gallery from Tues May 31 to Sun June 12, 10am to 5pm daily.

Henry Gold, who has been the Colong Foundation's Honorary Photographer since its formation in 1968, is one of Australia's leading landscape photographers. His work evokes the emotion and inspiration of the distinctive Australian wilderness. His images present true wilderness, and cover such subjects as remote forests, coastlines, snowy mountains, rainforests and central Australia.

Henry will be featuring his colour images of wilderness, including colour panoramas for the first time, as well as his stunning black and white photography. This exhibition is also your chance to own a beautifully framed Henry Gold photograph.

Henry is one of a small band of photographers who have directed their energies toward persuading decision-makers to protect threatened wilderness. He was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for service to wilderness preservation.

His images have prominently featured in the successful campaigns to protect our rainforests and the wilderness areas of NSW, particularly in the Greater Blue Mountains.

All proceeds will go to support the work of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness.

Can't Eat Coal, Can't drink gas

The **Lock the Gate** rally in Sydney on 20th April was supported by a large cross section of the NSW community with farmers, environmental groups, Sydney-siders, community groups, coalmining-affected communities, lawyers, etc., etc represented. The rally's slogan was "Can't eat coal, can't drink gas".

A clear, strong message was sent to the politicians that they are not looking after the interests of the people of NSW and that food security and clean water for now and for the future are of far more value than the short-term gains of coal mining and CSG extraction.

Kerrie Sebbens

Capertee Valley Tree Planting 7-8 May 2011

Last year the Regent Honeyeater had its endangered listing upgraded to "Critically Endangered", the most severe classification before extinct in the wild. This highlights how important the ongoing work to replace habitat in the Capertee Valley is.

Volunteers are always welcome to come along and be part of this inspiring project. The next tree planting weekend will be held on 7-8 May, when we will be planting 3000 trees and shrubs of local provenance on a property on Huntingdale Road near the geographical centre of the valley, to extend plantings carried out in May 2007. A few people are also needed on the Friday to help with laying out the plants.

Accommodation is available at various cottages in the valley for \$40 (1 night) or \$70 (2 nights), and camping is also possible. It's always an enjoyable weekend in this most scenic of valleys with the Saturday night dinner a real highlight. Advance registration is necessary so your accommodation can be allocated and directions sent to you. Contact Pixie Maloney at Birds Australia, phone (02) 9647 1033 or email: basna@birdsaustralia.com.au

The second tree planting weekend in 2011 will be 13-14 August.

Low energy lawn mowers



The Interpretive bushwalkers recently spent a few days at Merry Beach on the south coast near Ulladulla. There were some good coastal walks, banksias flowering, lots of birds, butterflies, sea eagles soaring, good food, good company.

Kangaroos were everywhere - on the beach, in the camping ground, in front and back yards in the town - mowing the lawns, fertilizing the soil. I took this photo on Merry Beach just after sunrise. Christine.

Welcome to new members

Brian Coates, Blackheath
Wayne Levi, Blackheath
Fraydon Golafshan, Prospect
Christina Graf, Bondi
Claudia Echeverria, Wentworth Falls
The Carrington Hotel, Katoomba
John Freeman, Sydney

Opposition to New Downhill Mountain Bike Track in Knapsack Reserve

Background

In early 2010 the Society received concerning reports about illegal track construction for downhill mountain bike riding on the Eastern Escarpment near Nichols Parade, Mt Riverview. Downhill mountain biking should not be confused with mountain biking on the top of ridges. These are steep tracks on highly erodible soils on highly visible areas along the escarpment.

Concern by residents led to Councillors passing a resolution to close all downhill mountain bike tracks on the eastern escarpment and adjoining ridges; rehabilitate all closed tracks utilising local bush care groups and volunteers as a priority; liaise with NSW Police in order to enforce track closures; and work with local riders to find a “new location for downhill bike riding in a **non-environmentally sensitive** and non-residential area”. (BMCC Council Minutes, 16 March 2010).

Proposed Solution – a NEW TRACK through ecologically endangered communities?

Between March and November 2010, BMCC staff consulted with mountain bike riders about possible sites for downhill bike riding. Knapsack Reserve Glenbrook was identified as a place for mountain bike riding on the ridge and downhill mountain bike riding. Mountain bikers preferred a new alignment rather than the existing downhill track.

On December 14 2010, a report came to council recommending the “construction of the downhill track marked Option A, subject to environmental assessment”. President Tara Cameron spoke at the meeting. She stated that the Society is opposed to the new downhill track as it is extremely likely to go through both an endangered ecological community (Shale Sandstone Transition Forest) and a critically endangered ecological community (Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest). These are both listed under State and Commonwealth legislation and do not meet the criteria of a ‘non environmentally sensitive area’. Tara also stated that track construction down steep slopes is likely to cause erosion and is nonsensical when all other tracks have not been closed.

Many of the Councillors expressed support for the downhill bike track construction (Greenhill, Luchetti, Creed, Van der Kley). A motion was moved by Councillors Gibbs and Mays to defer the item “until an independent environmental assessment, including a Species Impact Statement, of the area is completed and further community consultation is reported to the Council”. This motion was supported by a majority of Councillors but later rescinded in a motion moved by Councillors Greenhill, Creed, Luchetti and Van der Kley.

Instead, at the 1 February 2011 Council meeting a majority of Councillors agreed to an amendment put by Councillor Gibbs and supported by Councillor Greenhill to defer construction until “an independent environmental assessment of the area is completed, including a recommendation as to whether a Species Impact Statement is required; further community consultation is undertaken with residents, local

environment groups and other stakeholders; and vegetation maps of Knapsack Park found are publicly released”. Councillors Luchetti and Van der Kley voted against the amendment.

The independent assessment involves completing a Review of Environmental Factors. The Society will actively participate in any consultation offered.

Phytophthora now found in Knapsack Reserve

Zoe Joy Newby, a PhD candidate from the University of Sydney, recently tested ten sites for phytophthora in Knapsack Reserve. Five were positive. This is a significant concern as phytophthora is spread through contact. A new track will expose the plants adjoining the track to disease.

New track to be funded by a grant to “benefit” threatened ecological communities

The Blue Mountains City Council applied for \$32 000 from the State Government to create the “downhill Mountain Bike Track at Knapsack Park” through the NSW Communities Community Building Partnership Program. Council was successful in gaining \$12 000. If approved, the remaining money will come from Council assisted by voluntary labour and money for signage from the downhill mountain bike riders.

The Society was able to get a copy of the grant application (the only date stated on the document are the words “printed on 28/09/2010”). It states that “both recreational mountain bikers and the environment, in particular threatened ecological communities will benefit from this project” (page 1). Additionally, that **funding is for “refurbishment and construction of trails that avoid conservation value assets, such as threatened ecological communities**, and a (sic) built in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner thus minimising environmental impacts” (page 5).

Contrary to the information provided in the grant application, the Council is investigating the **construction of a trail that will NOT avoid conservation value assets such as threatened ecological communities (TECs)**. This fact is acknowledged by Council. The report for the BMCC meeting of 14 December 2010 states that a “large proportion of the existing and proposed track network is now within a TEC” (threatened ecological community).

The Society believes that Council’s current proposal is not consistent with the environmental commitments made in the grant application. This raises a number of governance concerns in terms of the grant application and funding which the Society intends to raise with Council and Councillors.

The Society will continue to work AGAINST the construction of new downhill mountain bike tracks along the eastern escarpment. HELP by contacting Councillors to support those who oppose new construction and express opposition to those in favour <http://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/yourcouncil/councillors>

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

We came down the valley to a tributary of Megalong Creek. 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 from past month ...)

Jim then got onto the perennial subject of NPWS and their failure to upgrade old tracks and allow National Parks for the people. The main aim seems to be to keep people out of them. Between 1959-67 so much was accomplished in the National Parks on small grants of money. Jim has at least 700 accounts of bushwalking in the Blue Mountains over the past 100 or so years. Reading these enhances the experience of bushwalking. The big question is 'Where do you draw the line, should old tracks be upgraded or left to deteriorate?' NPWS wants them to return to nature, only a few to be in use. Originally, when the tracks were made, they were properly designed and, as labour was cheap, many worked on the tedious task of building rock walls which meant the carrying and sorting of thousands of rocks which are not easily placed together. These stabilized the tracks. Jim is about to reopen another track at the original Point Pilcher.

We crossed the creek, passed the big open area where the Scouts camp, then continued along the track. We noticed a Wombat hole and saw its scats. We came to the road where there was a cairn. Jim picked up a mountain dragon. We all had a good look at it and noticed its orange mouth and its beautiful markings. Then Jim put it on Kelly's hand, as she loves little creatures, but this one bit her, so she was very upset. Looking down into Megalong Valley, Jim pointed out that at the intersection of this road and the Six Foot Track was the mining village. In Macarthur's shop at Katoomba is the only known picture of the butcher shop that was in this village. There was a two storey hotel – 1894-1904. The four ways out of the valley for the miners were Devils Hole, Redledge Pass, Blacks Ladder and Nellies Glen.

We turn left and climb up the very steep 4WD road. At the bend in the road another track went off to the right. A very old notice said 'Department of Public Works Access road, locked gate, no turning space'. At the top of the hill the gate was open!

Towering above us is the cliff wall of Narrow Neck. Looking across the valley where we had been, Boars Head is clearly seen against the skyline, along with the other features of the irregular cliff top from Devils Hole to Cahills Lookout. We saw one specimen of *Kennedia rubicunda*, the flower looks like the Sturt Desert Pea. There was some steel cable and posts for a fence, but it was leaning over at a precarious angle. On reaching the top of the road we found a narrow, steep track led up to



Image: Boar's Head: Postcard in Jim Smith collection.

the enormous concrete pillar that went up beside the cliff wall. This covered the water pipe. Beside it was a metal cable hanging from the tree on the cliff above and Jim led us to believe this was the way up! Fiona, Brian and Kerry, with Kelly on his back, had goes on swinging on the 'Tarzan swing', but somehow its centre of gravity had been altered on the tree above and it wouldn't swing properly, just bashing them into the *Callicomas* or the cliff wall. Kerry and Fiona had swung on it on another occasion so knew that it was out of alignment.

Nearby were some steel ladders that took us to the base of the cliff. Then we went to the bottom of the very high Water Board ladders. We sat here awhile and learnt a bit about rock climbing, Jim having done it in his youth! The multitude of ways of ascending the cliff face are graded according to how difficult it is. In Jim's time it was from 1-21, now it's been pushed up to 30 – that requires Olympic standard of fitness. In Jim's day climbers used nuts and ball races and hemp ropes – these days it's nylon rope – much safer, and more refined equipment. One device is called a 'friend' as it expands and stays in the cracks. Safety is of paramount importance, as is courage – especially for the belayer who goes first up with the rope. Chalk is used on the hands to get a better grip. Rock climbers' clubs teach safety rules. There have been four or five deaths in this area. There is quite a sub-culture among rock climbers. It is an absorbing sport – both mentally and physically, and there's always the challenge to go one better! There is a new breed of climbers who go solo – no ropes and no assistance. (continued next month) © Heather Mollenhaur's family.

Source to Sea

Much of the debate in the Sydney basin focuses on the demand for new residential developments. However if agriculture, fishing and horticulture are to survive on the fringe of Australia's biggest city, the health of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River catchment will be of equal importance. More than 3,000 volunteers are working to improve its water quality and ensure a sustainable future for primary industries.

A 22-minute documentary which appeared on ABC's "Landline" about the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment is now online at <http://www.abc.net.au/iview/?series=2293598#/series/2293598>

From time to time, I am fortunate to have a letter published in the Blue Mountains Gazette, in my capacity as ConSoc publicity officer. However I suspect that certain topics are doomed to be rejected, specifically where I condemn population growth and the role of major developers in that inexorable greedy quest. The following letter was one such rejected submission.

“Stop the Squeeze

The folks at Qualicum Beach understand it. So, too, those in Okotoks. Judging by survey statistics, so do most Australians. Politicians don't seem to, or are coerced by big business dollars and pressure. Groups like the Business Council of Australia and their ilk probably do as well, but don't really care. For them, short term financial returns always seem to trump a preserved environment.

Growth is the issue, in population and economically, with the consequent varied and deleterious impacts on the natural systems essential for our survival. Unfortunately and predictably both major parties are fixated on mindless and relentless growth, apparently seeing some disconnect between unceasing growth and the limitations of a finite planet. Since all studies to date are clear that our impact is already more than the planet's biosphere can bear, one would think that the precautionary principle would be sufficient reason for humankind to slow down and take stock.

Not in our state; no way. Both major parties seem oblivious to environmental destruction resultant from growth. O'Farrell is absolutely intent on pushing Sydney westwards, further destroying the remaining peripheral farmland and disregarding Australia now being a net importer of fruit and vegetables. Keneally's government has plans for an extra 7,000 homes in the Mountains, and the ADI site plans place recreation ahead of conservation.

People live in the Mountains for many reasons, with the proximity to bushland and a national park being pre-eminent, a quality of life reason. Without a strong response from the electorate to the incoming government, such an attraction will be severely compromised. In Okotoks and Qualicum Beach, both small Canadian towns, the locals have decided to resist any further growth. Why can't we?"

I supported my thoughts with those of an article in *The Age*, reproduced below. Alas, no resonance in our local media. Some readers might respond that most media here is focussed on the imminent state election, but that would ignore the blatant pro-growth stance of both major parties. The Liberals plan hundreds of thousands of new dwellings in western Sydney, and Labor plans to jam huge numbers into our leafy Mountains. Absurdly, most of our media and politicians utterly fail to recognise the ultimate stupidity of attempted endless growth, display no more than a child's grasp of planetary finiteness, have no understanding of Peak Oil and our utter dependence on oil for modern civilisation, and treat the only long term solution, a steady state economy, with disdain.

The article was titled “**City sprawl is the road to madness**”. I hope to reproduce it more fully later, perhaps in the next *Hut News* or on our website. In the interim, here are a few excerpts.

“Kristina Keneally, meanwhile, bangs on about “stopping sprawl” but her administration has already wrecked pretty mountain villages like Lawson with the Great Western six-lane super highway and stealthily pursues its plan to treat the Bells Line of Road similarly, destroying what romance is left in the Blue Mountains, and spreading suburbia to Dubbo. It has already destroyed the strawberry fields of Leppington, the bok choy fields of Bringelly and the orchards of Pitt Town for the sake of low-density residential greed. And it has already failed to deliver any of the promised rail lines - Epping-to-Parramatta, north-west sector or city metro - then has the front to mail out a special shiny pre-election pamphlet congratulating her ever-smiling self on acquiring three - yes, three - new metro buses. Brilliant. Well done, ladies.”

“One thing we need to understand is that roads make traffic worse, not better. The Cross City Tunnel has not eased congestion in the city. It has just meant that more people drive. Congestion is self-limiting. Whether we're talking freight or passengers, when it gets bad enough - and only then - people use public transport. But of course the public transport has to be there. This is why Craig Knowles - remember him? - should have been blacklisted for destroying Patrick's proposed self-funding road-rail interchange at Ingleburn while approving shopping centres like Orange Grove in greenfield woop-woop. Instead, cronyism prevails and he scores the Murray-Darling sinecure.”

“The Coalition just doesn't understand planning,” blogs the Planning Minister, Tony Kelly, citing “Barry O'Farrell's plan to dump some 128,000 extra homes on western Sydney”. But what he forgets to mention is his own government's policy, restated in December, to “plan for 770,000 additional homes [including] up to 30 per cent [uh, that's 231,000 homes] in greenfield areas.” Five years earlier, Morris Iemma had described himself as “an unapologetic supporter of new releases on Sydney's outskirts”. He planned 181,000 new homes in the so-called north-west and south-west growth sectors; the Keneally government proposed a 50,000-home increase on that.”

“And it's not as if there's any real attempt out there to offer an enchanting alternative model. There's no suggestion, from any of the government-sponsored developments, of higher density urban cores, walkable village centres or any of the New Urbanist principles, much less anything really out-there like zero-carbon or energy-positive development. The single exception, which makes a plausible effort at density, is Lend Lease's Rouse Hill.”

“But pushing our agriculture out past the Blue Mountains, only to truck the stuff back in on more and more roads, using more fossil fuel to create more pollution in order to service a growing agglomeration of the world's biggest houses and bellies is also destroying our climate, our soils and our air.”

“Fairness for families? Let's have it.”

In closing, the article above quotes ex-premier Iemma as an unapologetic growthist. The same enlightened leader once opined “what is the point of saving the planet if we ruin the economy doing so”. Doesn't that just say it all? Peter Green, Publicity Officer.

Visiting Bushells Lagoon Jenny Miller

In March Hut News I read about proposed water skiing at Bushells Lagoon. This sounded crazy, but I had never heard of this lagoon. The only way to find out was to go there.

My new GPS and I needed to become friends, so off I went. Having got to Wilberforce I did have to resort to my Skyway directory to get an overall impression.

This area is surrounded by market gardens and turf farms and private access roads. It's all very green. Egrets mingled amongst the cattle near a large pond.

Finally I found a way to the lagoon via Freemans Reach and drove down Brewers Lane, stopping to admire some double-barred finches. I parked and walked over the dirt road that splits the lagoon in two.

To the left was a pontoon. A few pelicans and a kite flew overhead; a darter dried itself on a branch. Zebra and gold finches made their presence known. A few black swans swam past.

Why would anyone give permission to water-ski on this beautiful waterway? Jenny Miller

The good news is that sanity has prevailed the permit for water-skiing on the lagoon has been withdrawn. This was a substantial concern to many, including bird-



watchers and anyone with a belief in the environment and its ecosystems.

The responsible (or should we say irresponsible) body rescinded the licence to destroy the sanctity of the lagoon. It seems that the Maritime Services Board is intending to cancel the licence permitting speed boats on Bushells Lagoon and is to erect signs at the lagoon prohibiting all forms of motorised craft. This will be closely watched!



Wonder of Nature

I photographed this object at Blackheath on 10 April. You might wonder why. It was on the leaf of a Shady Lady waratah - a strange bug? a cocoon of some sort? a lump of dung? Naturally, as one does, I touched it to find out if it would move ... and I was surprised and delighted when hairy spider legs stretched out from the object.

A mere .8 cm long, and except when touched it stayed perfectly still throughout the day. On very close inspection, the two little lumps near the front are part of the spider face and the hairs on the front legs were visible.

What amazing camouflage! Has anybody seen a spider like this one? If was on a new pot plant so could have come from elsewhere. Next morning it was gone.

Christine Davies.

An Election Promise: Funding for National Park management and weed control

The Society worked hard before the state election to argue for more funding for national parks. The Coalition announced it would "deliver an additional \$40 million to address core pest control and management issues in National Parks and an additional \$10 million for bush regeneration" (Shadow Minister for Environment Catherine Cusack and Liberal Candidate for Blue Mountains Roza Sage, 8 March 2011).

Roza Sage added "I will work hard if elected as part of a Liberals & Nationals Government to secure a fair share of this funding for the Blue Mountains."

Loose Feathers, with Carol Probets

This is the time of year - when most birds have finished breeding - that you are likely to encounter an "MFF", or mixed feeding flock. Take a walk through the bush and you might at first notice how quiet things are. There seems to be a distinct lack of birdlife, until.... suddenly, you round a bend and the trees are alive with activity, small birds of a dozen different species are all around you. There are so many birds it's hard to know where to look. You have found yourself in the midst of a mixed flock, a phenomenon characteristic of late summer, autumn and early winter.

There are certain advantages for a small bird to join with others and move around as part of a mixed-species group. With chicks fledged, it is free to wander away from its immediate nesting territory and make use of other areas. A flock provides safety in numbers, with many eyes to watch for predators. Different species can recognise and benefit from each others' alarm calls. By force of numbers they can also swamp any territorial birds without fear of being chased away.

In addition, looking for food in a mixed flock can be a more efficient way of foraging, with birds taking advantage of insects disturbed by each other, without necessarily competing for the same food. For example, a tree creeper hopping up a tree trunk looking for spiders, cockroaches and ants might flush out a small flying insect, which is then caught by a Grey Fantail. A Bassian Thrush turning over the leaf litter looking for worms might also uncover small landhoppers which an Eastern Yellow Robin pounces on. A Golden Whistler seizes a mantid too big for a party of Striated Thornbills moving through the foliage.

I've seen mixed flocks comprising up to 16 different species, and returned the next day to find almost the exact same mix of species together. It seems that the MFF is a fairly stable unit for a period of time, rather than a casual arrangement in which different birds drift together and apart at random.

Mixed feeding flocks consist largely of insectivores. The Grey Fantail - that acrobatic sprite of the canopy - is often regarded as an indication there are other species nearby. Migratory birds, like its cousin the Rufous Fantail, may join in until the time comes for them to fly north to their wintering areas.

Watching birds at this time of year is typically an all-or-nothing experience. Keep an eye out on bushwalks for the frenetic activity of mixed feeding flocks.

Carol Probets 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 \$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) \$.....

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

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

Wombeyan Caves Volunteer Weekend

21-22 May 2011 WEED WHACKING

Two day weekend session treating woody weeds and vines (lower slopes and valley floor) impacting upon the unique karst values of Wombeyan Caves.

All required tools, herbicides and PPE will be supplied for the weekend work session. Contract bush regenerators will assist with training for identification and control.

Accommodation and main meals provided - bunk beds, share rooms/dorms, separate shower and kitchen blocks. BBQ dinner Saturday night, precinct tour, nocturnal fauna spotlighting, complimentary cave tour. Enjoyable and informative weekend, very easy terrain.

For more information and to register, contact:

Trish Kidd, NPWS, Oberon.

Trish.Kidd@environment.nsw.gov.au

,phone 6336 1972, mobile 0423 527 740

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.

Community Wildlife Forum

A Community forum will be held to explore issues of Wildlife protection, Companion animal regulation and Feral animal control by Blue Mountains Council, NPWS and the World Heritage Institute on Sunday 29th May.

Please register your expression of interest in this Forum by sending an email to Michael Hensen, BMCC on

mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

You will be notified of the forum details once confirmed. Meredith Brownhill.

Moths and mother sawflies

Meredith Brownhill

In a recent summer trip to Kosciuszko National Park which is full of summer wonders, plant group studiers of small things quickly saw that all the *Eucalypts* in the sub-Alpine ecosystems were very thoroughly chewed and eaten.

In the Sawpit Campsite we found two gigantic caterpillars! By gigantic I mean, around 10cms long, as thick as a finger, bright green and busily munching on new *Eucalypt* growth. We watched morning and night for several days, whilst the caterpillars just munched and munched their way along the branches. They were so full they looked as they might pop at any moment. First one disappeared, then the other.

On returning home we discovered they were the larvae of the Emperor Gum Moth or *Antheraea eucalypti*, which leave the food plant to pupate elsewhere. The moths are large, furry and oh so beautiful.

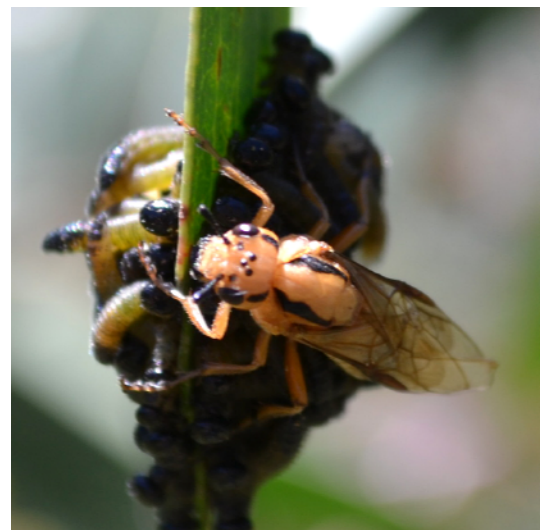


Australia Post, 2002

Other leaf eaters were the Sawfly larvae which abounded in packs, tapping and chewing their way up and down the branches. One wet mountain day, when out walking, we spotted a Sawfly standing over the edge of the leaf with lots of tiny, very tiny newly hatched caterpillars beneath it. This mother sawfly, *Perga lewisi*, is renowned for standing over

and protecting her young until they are big and ugly enough to protect themselves! Apparently sawfly larvae are very prone to attacks from parasites.

Lewis (1836) long ago described this behavior in P. lewisi Westwood of Tasmania, and Froggatt (1901), who says that this is "the commonest sawfly about Sydney on blood wood" (Eucalyptus corymbosa), records his own observations as follows: "The female makes a double slit on the upper surface of the leaf generally among the young growth, in which she inserts a double row of elongate eggs, which, as they swell form a regular blister, but the most remarkable fact in the life history of this insect is the care she takes after laying her eggs. Nearly all insects after the eggs are laid leave them to their fate, but Lewis' saw-fly not only stands guard over them until they are hatched but further looks after the helpless grubs for some time after they have commenced feeding. She straddles the eggs with her wings half opened, the tip of her abdomen turned up, and with her jaws open, makes a slight buzzing sound if meddled with; if you pick her up, she never attempts to fly, but crawls back to her post, reminding one of an old hen protecting her chicks. The grubs are general colour dull brown to dirty yellow, covered with short brown hairs, the last abdominal segment yellow. When full grown they crawl into the ground and form the typical form of cocoon, generally in regular rows."



Perga Lewisi
Photo by Sue Nicol

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

TRACKING THE JAMISON VALLEY

When you next walk down Katoomba Street, stop for a minute in front of St. Canice's Church and glance across to the old retail building, now almost 100 years old, with the name 'Raeburn' visible on its facade. You will be looking at a reminder of one of Katoomba's early 'identities', a businessman who also devoted a good deal of his leisure time to "tracking the trackless and ... secret places" of the Jamison Valley.

William Raeburn Copeland (1855-1928) was a Scot, a direct descendant of the artist Sir Henry Raeburn, who arrived in Australia in 1882 and the following year settled in Katoomba. Here he established himself initially as a builder and, in subsequent years, a timber merchant, grocer and general provider. He served as an alderman on the Katoomba Municipal Council, involved himself in numerous church and community affairs and expressed a genuine engagement with the landscape through walking. One of his walks attained a special status.

In 1893, probably descending into the valley at Leura Falls where track making was beginning to gather momentum, Copeland struck off into the bush via an uncertain, eastward route. He crossed the Jamison Valley to the head of Sublime Point where he made a steep and difficult climb out, pioneering what has become known today as the Copeland Pass.

Twenty years later, when his friend Charles Lindeman was trying to persuade the local authorities to fund the completion of his own great walking project, Copeland's ascent of the promontory was still being talked about as

a "performance [that] has not been repeated". In 1898 Lindeman, another local businessman in the same mould as Copeland, had retraced Copeland's steps and pushed on around Sublime Point, venturing as far as Gladstone Pass and conceiving his grand vision of a track linking Leura to Wentworth Falls. It was a bold idea, but one that would prove difficult to implement. *

Copeland was a man of diverse interests that also included archaeology and science and in his later years he became something of a local historian in Katoomba. For a short period he farmed on the North Coast of NSW, though he retained his links with the Mountains and eventually returned to live in Katoomba until his death in 1928.

While Sublime Point offers a magnificent view of the Jamison Valley, I have my own favourite spot to remember Copeland and others of his contemporaries for whom the cliffs, valleys and waterfalls of this place were as important as the pursuit of business. It is the small lookout, a short diversion from the Prince Henry Cliff Walk, which has carried his name since the 1890s. It first appeared on a map as Copeland's View in 1898 and like the prow of a ship it charts a course out into the valley in the direction of his epic 1893 walk.

John Low (johnlow@iprimus.com.au)

* For the story of Charles Lindeman and his track see Jim Smith's excellent book, 'The Blue Mountains Mystery Track: Lindeman Pass'.

SPEAK UP FOR WILDLIFE

Now is your chance to complete a Council survey about the importance of Wildlife protection, feral animal control and the regulation of cats and dogs.

Council want to know if you have seen feral or stray pets in bushland and would you support an education campaign to promote responsible cat and dog ownership, are two questions amongst others.

Would you support council lobbying to strengthen cat management regulations under the NSW Companion Animals Act, is an important question to answer so that the domestic - stray - feral cat continuum can be managed effectively.

The issue of funding is in the survey, however rather than taking funding from existing environmental projects please ask Council to obtain MORE funding from the State and Federal Governments.

In the Comments section at the end of the survey, you may want to point out that, reptiles and birds at attacked in the daytime so, keeping predatory animals indoors at night does not go far enough. Cats can now be contained on the owner's property, like dogs, with new fencing products and cat enclosures.

You may also want to report wildlife attacks you



have seen in backyards, bushland or roads.

This is such a good opportunity to speak up for wildlife, make the most of it!

Copies of the Community survey can be obtained from Council's Springwood & Katoomba offices, local libraries and neighbourhood centres. The survey can be answered on-line at <http://bluemountainshaveyoursay.com.au/companionanimalsurvey> The deadline is 20th April.

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING ACTIVITIES

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

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

Apr 16 Jinki Ridge to Wilkinson. Variety and grand views. Some difficult undergrowth and scrambling. Protective clothing reqd, 2 litres water minimum. Contact leader Hugh 0423309854, party limit of 8 (wilderness area), 6km mostly off track, grade 3, map Mt Wilson.

April 23 Easter Saturday. No programmed walk, contact Jim 4758 6009 if you would like to lead or participate in a walk.

April 30 "Coal and Pagodas" Mt Airlie to Mugi Murum-ban Conservation Area. Brief look at site of Coalpac open cut mine at Cullen Bullen. Walk over Mt Airlie, views, fantastic pagodas, steep uphill at the start of the walk. Leader Meredith 4782 4823, Meet Mt Victoria station 8.15 am. 11 km, scrambling off track, grade 3/4. Maps Cullen Bullen and Glen Alice. 4wd needed to get into Mt Airlie.

May 7 Baal Bone Gap, Gardens of Stone NP, party limit of 8 (wilderness area) Book early or miss out. Leader Hugh 0423 309854. Maps Cullen Bullen and Ben Bullen.

May 14 Wolgan Falls from the Spanish steps, mostly off track (4 wheel drive required) Leader Bob 4757 2694, Meet Mt Vic station carpark, 8.30 am. Approx 8 km, grade 4. Maps Ben Bullen and Cullen Bullen

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

Apr 18th Numantia Falls to Sassafras Ridge. hard walk with some climbing. Waterfalls & rock carvings. Meet Faulconbridge Stn 9.00 Leader Ken 4758 6310 grade 3

Apr 25th Amphitheatre Hazelbrook from 3 different angles (3rd time lucky) Hazelbrook Station 9am Cotnact Ken 4758 6310 gr 2

May 2nd Taronga Zoo to Balmoral Beach. Great views and points of interest. Meet Escalator nr platform 12 Central stn 9.30.

Contact Robyn 4751 6328 grade 2

May 9th Victory Track, Faulconbridge pleasant shady track beside creek Faulconbridge Stn 9am Mary Lee 4757 4569 grade 2

May 16th Mount York. Cox's descent to Lockyers Rd. Historic Circuit Mt Victoria Stn. 8.45 Car pool Eddie 4784 2691 grade 2

May 23rd BUS TRIP to Newnes Interesting walk through old shale mine works. 5km Book & pay Keith 47361010 \$12 Maurice 4739 4942 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 Gail Schwedler 4782 1215 platypusprotected@yahoo.com.au

21 April GOOCH'S CRATER "A gem of the Wollemi". Car pool. 4 Wheel drive preferred. Bring lunch. Meet Mt. Victoria Rail Station 9.45 am Maurice 4739 4942 Grade 2

28 April LYREBIRD DELL Fantastic lookout and two beautiful cascades Meet Cnr Megalong St & The Mall Leura 9.45 am Joan c/- 4782 1215 Grade 2

May 5 Sun Valley. Firetrail descent, interesting rock formations, creekside walk to cars. Meet Valley Heights Station Car Park North side 10.10 am Joan c/- 4782 1215 Grade 2

May 12 BUS TRIP Kanagra Walls Fantastic views. Cost \$10. Bring lunch. Ring Simone to confirm attendance **Dinner at Lithgow on way back** Meet Council Depot South Street Nth Katoomba 8.00 am Simone 4757 3416 Grade 1/2

May 19 Butterbox Point. An easy walk with 'the best views in the mountains'. Great rock formations on the way back. Bring lunch. Meet cnr Mall & Megalong Streets Leura. Car pool. 9.30 am Robyn 4751 6328 Grade 1/2

May 26 Dee Why to Manly Scenic coastal walk, return by ferry, bring lunch. Meet Central Station top of escalators 9.30 am . Maurice 4739 4942 Grade 2

THURSDAY BUS TRIPS

Of the last six bus trips only one has been at full capacity and the last two trips ran at a loss. With the increasing price of fuel and poor attendance, to break even, trips will have to be charged at \$20 per person. The next trip is on May 12 to Kanagra walls.

I will not book the bus until I have expressions of interest to go on the trip. Would those who are interested please ring me so that I can ascertain whether there are enough people to make the trip worth while. If no interest is shown these trips will be taken off the program.

Simone Bowskill 4757 3416
email simbow@tpg.com.au

THE GARDENS OF STONE

Visitors Map

Incorporating the

GARDENS OF STONE

STAGE TWO RESERVE PROPOSAL

To promote low impact visitor experiences and its reservation as a state conservation area, the Colong Foundation and the Blue Mountains Conservation Society have developed a Visitors Map with detailed interpretive notes on the reverse side. It is in full colour, 60 x 85 cm in size, and covers the entire Gardens of Stone region at a 1:100,000 scale.

Cost is \$7.50 plus \$1.50 postage. You can order online (www.bluemountains.org.au) or send a cheque/money order to BMCS, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782