



# HUT NEWS

*"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"*

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Kangaroos: Daniel Hutchins Read

## Protecting the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

### National Parks and World Heritage Committee – Environment Protection Plan 2026

The Blue Mountains and Kanangra-Boyd National Parks form one of Australia's most significant natural landscapes. Covering more than 340,000 hectares, these parks protect one of the largest and most intact areas of bushland in NSW and sit at the heart of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

This extraordinary region is internationally recognised for its dramatic escarpments, ancient sandstone formations, wild rivers, waterfalls, forests and biodiversity. It is home to rare and threatened plant and animal species, important waterways that support Sydney's drinking water catchments, and landscapes of immense cultural significance to the Dharug, Gundungurra, Wiradjuri, Dharawal and Darkinjung peoples.

The National Parks and World Heritage Committee Environment Protection Plan 2026 outlines a practical and forward-looking strategy to help protect these remarkable landscapes for future generations.

## A voice for nature – the housing crisis

We (native animals) are the quiet life of the Blue Mountains – the wombat in the creek-line, the platypus in the water, the kangaroo moving through the bush at dusk. For thousands of years these lands were our home, connected by forests, rivers and open space.

But our world is shrinking. Roads, clearing, powerlines, pollution and expanding cities are breaking the pathways we need to survive. Many people in the Sydney Basin may never see us, and because we are unseen, it becomes easier to forget we are here. Some species have already disappeared from places that still carry our names – there are no wild emus left at Emu Plains.

Environmental protection is not only about preserving scenery. It is about leaving enough room for life to continue. Healthy rivers, connected bushland and protected habitat mean native animals still have a future in the landscapes we once freely roamed. If we protect nature now, the voices of the wild will not fall silent.

## Protect what we have – improve the quality

The Environment Protection Plan is designed to deliver long-term environmental outcomes through community action, scientific understanding and collaborative conservation.

Just half of one percent of Australia is classed as wilderness. We feel obligated to protect this tiny area of Australia from further impacts.

## Our key focus areas

### Protecting rivers and waterways

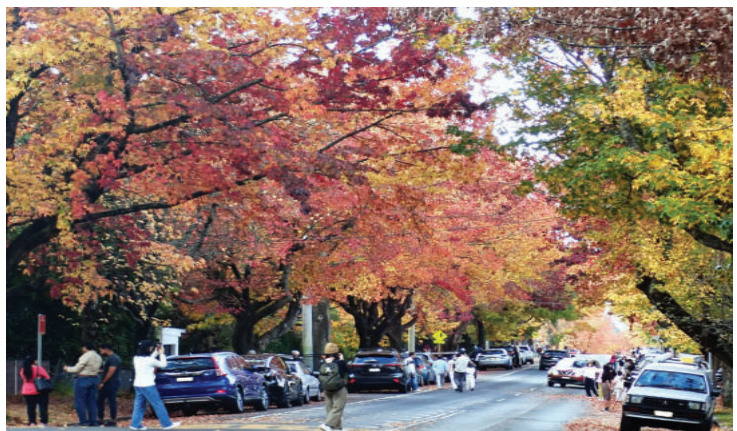
A major priority is improving the health of the Coxs River and surrounding creek systems. The plan focuses on reducing pollution impacts from mining, power

*Continued page 5*

## Autumn in the mountains

(3 May 2026) It is the first weekend in May and the weather is fine. The leafy streets of Blackheath are crowded with hundreds of visitors, admiring and photographing the autumn colours, with no regard for the traffic. The northern hemisphere street trees are lovely for a few weeks, but the leaves will soon fall and social media will promote another destination. To really experience the Blue Mountains you need to go into the national parks.

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\* To contact management committee and subcommittee members by phone, please leave a message with your full contact details and reason for your call on 0490 419 779.



## President's report

It has been another productive month for the Society. Significant advocacy work and growing community engagement progressed our initiatives. Priorities have included opposing the Gardens of Stone glamping proposal, strengthening Blue Mountains City Council's Climate Change and Natural Hazards State Environmental Planning Policy (CC&NH SEPP), responding to the Wentworth Falls Golf Club seniors housing development, the Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro Energy Storage project and the Narrow Neck Road Katoomba proposal.

The lead-up to the 2027 state election has seen engagement with decision-makers. Senior Vice President Annette Cam and Land Use subcommittee member Lyndal Sullivan attended a Q&A session with NSW Treasurer Daniel Mookhey at the invitation of Trish Doyle MP. Annette Cam represented the Society at the public forum "Will the New Nature Laws Work?". This was followed by a meeting attended by Annette Cam and myself with Federal Environment Minister Murray Watt and Macquarie MP Susan Templeman to discuss the proposed Federal Nature Laws reforms and the development of environmental standards and regulatory frameworks. Discussion focused on implementation, the strength of bilateral agreements with states, the powers of the proposed National Environmental Protection Authority, and ensuring that local ecological knowledge is recognised within national environmental decision-making processes. Members are encouraged to participate in pre-state election Nature Conservation Council of NSW activities. Further information: Nature Conservation Council NSW Election Platform.

Community engagement with the Society is reflected in increased public correspondence, strong interest in submissions and advocacy campaigns, rising visitation to the Society's online platforms and steady increases in membership (currently 945). The updated *Living Near the Bush* booklet was led by 2nd Vice President and Bushcare Officer Peter Ardill (see advertisement on another page). Planning is underway for this year's *Gardening with Natives* weekend in October, coordinated once again by long-term BMCS member Margaret Sleath.

Our strength comes from the dedication, knowledge and generosity of members and volunteers. This was brought home to me by a talk with long-term BMCS bushwalk leader, Diana Levy, and a visit to the society's native plant nursery to discuss capital works priorities and plant stall coordination. Special thanks to outgoing Nursery Manager, Bronwyn Murphy, who I met along with Stephen Marsh, Fiona Forrest, Kelsey Webber, Margaret Sleath, Leona Kieran, Shaun Miller and Liam Ramage, who is also the Society's Threatened Species Officer. Their commitment, knowledge and sense of community reflect the very best of the Society.

**Personal reflection on my first month as President.** My first month has provided valuable insight into both the complexity

*Continued page 3*

## Join Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Find out how you can help preserve our beautiful World Heritage Area.

<https://www.bluemountains.org.au>

**We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Dharug and Gundungurra people, and pay respect to Elders past and present.**

President's report: from page 2

and strength of the organisation. It has highlighted the many moving parts involved in sustaining an active and respected community environmental organisation, as well as the enormous amount of work undertaken behind the scenes.

What has become especially clear is the strength of the Society's people; individuals who quietly and persistently keep environmental advocacy, governance, finances, education, submissions, events, communications, membership activities, nursery operations, Bushcare activities and community engagement functioning. Much of this work is highly skilled, time-consuming and undertaken voluntarily because of a deep commitment.

The experience has also reinforced the importance of renewal, succession planning, increasing volunteer support and strengthening connections across the membership to ensure the Society continues to grow and adapt into the future. Supporting these areas will be an important focus of my role.

I would like to sincerely thank all members, volunteers, subcommittee members, and management committee members for their support, generosity and patience as I navigate this new role. I warmly encourage readers to contact me about available volunteer positions.

**Annette Sartor**, [president@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:president@bluemountains.org.au)



Annette Sartor and Annette Cam (Blue Mountains Conservation Society) meet with Federal Environment Minister Murray Watt and Macquarie MP Susan Templeman

## Narrow Neck Road development: Thank you for your support

Thank you to everyone who took the time to lodge a submission on the proposed Narrow Neck Road development at Katoomba.

We were incredibly encouraged by the strong community response and number of submissions lodged by residents, members and supporters across the Mountains and further afield. Despite the short exhibition period, the advance preparation clearly helped, with many people taking time to participate in the process and having their say.

This level of participation sends a strong message about how deeply the people care about the future of the Mountains, and the importance of protecting the environmental and planning safeguards that underpin its unique character and World Heritage status.

The proposal is now under review, and we will continue to keep you updated as soon as we hear more.

### Land Use Subcommittee

#### Dwarf mountain pines at the Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens

Monday, 22 June 10.15 am to 2 pm

The Conservation Society is organising a visit to the Mt Tomah Blue Mountains Botanic Gardens to hear about the work the Gardens are doing to preserve the endangered Dwarf Mountain Pine – *Pherosphaera fitzgeraldii*. The highlight of the visit will be a tour of the nursery where work is being done on the species in an attempt to ensure survival into the future.

Read more:

<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/> (Society events)

Autumn: from page 1

While the autumn leaves in the towns are beautiful, the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWA) was dedicated for an Aussie tree – the eucalypt – and there are 101 eucalypt and related species in the GBMWA.



Many of their leaves are eaten by a multitude of native fauna. Eucalypts are a key component of a vast natural ecosystem which is found nowhere else in the world.

Parking areas on the edges of the national park are full, with people coming to admire the view or walk to experience the abundance of natural attractions in the Blue Mountains. It was reported in the *Blue Mountains Gazette* that last year the Blue Mountains National Park recorded 6.4 million visits, making it the most visited in the state.

Blue Mountains MP Trish Doyle said our region was a "sanctuary". "We are incredibly fortunate to have this World Heritage National Park right on our doorstep."

**Christine Davies**

### Hut News Trivia: Question 23

Do ants have brains?

The answer can be found on another page of this Newsletter.

# New Commonwealth Nature Laws

The Australian Government's Environment Protection Reform Bills were passed by the Australian Parliament on Friday 28 November 2025.

The reforms implement the key recommendations of the 2020 Samuel Review.<sup>1</sup> In his review, Graeme Samuel said: "The EPBC Act is outdated and requires fundamental reform. It does not enable the Commonwealth to effectively fulfil its environmental management responsibilities to protect nationally important matters." Some parts of the new laws have already commenced while others continue to be rolled out in stages.

The Society has contributed to public discussion and consultation on these reforms at each stage of the process. In November 2025, the Society contributed to the Senate Inquiry into proposed Environment Protection Reform Bills; in January 2026 the Society sent a submission on the draft of the National Environmental Standard for Environmental Offsets and the draft of the National Environmental Standard for Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES). These submissions are on the Society website.

The Federal Government aims for the reforms

to deliver stronger protection for the environment, as well as greater accountability and transparency in decision-making. However, the Society and other environmental organisations are of the view that the initial drafts failed to do this in many ways.

The Federal Government has now released revised drafts for both the Environmental Offsets (released 8 May 2026) and MNES standards (released 30 April 2026); these were open for public comment until the end of May and early June. Whilst there are many improvements in the revised drafts (including stronger legal language relating to decision-making and responsibility), there remain ongoing weaknesses in the revised drafts.

The Society has again made a submission to the Federal Government on these revised drafts, seeking further strengthening of new standards.

Also released by the Federal Government were consultation documents on: transition to National EPA; more certainty for projects and environment protection; reducing duplication.

The Society participated also in the public consultation on these as well. Once completed, each of these submissions will be posted onto our website.

**Annette Cam**, [seniorvp@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:seniorvp@bluemountains.org.au)

<sup>1</sup> <http://bit.ly/4nITGcP>

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## Momentum builds in the Gardens of Stone Alliance campaign

*By Steph Lentz, Campaigner, Gardens of Stone Alliance – 12 May 2026*

The Gardens of Stone Alliance is thrilled that the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Management Committee continues to strongly support our campaign, particularly our growing focus on protecting water flowing into the Sydney drinking water catchment. With major coal mine expansion proposals expected to come before the NSW Government over the next 12 to 18 months, there is real opportunity to secure stronger protections and meaningful policy reform ahead of the next state election.

We are grateful for the ongoing support from BMCS. The strength of local advocacy over many years has helped keep pressure on government and industry, and we are keen to continue building momentum.

In recent weeks, the Alliance has continued its engagement with the NSW Government, including a letter to Planning Minister Paul Scully calling for stronger policy settings ahead of three major Lithgow mining proposals expected to go on public exhibition in 2027.

We are urging the government to require simultaneous exhibition of the proposals and to strengthen rules relating to water pollution, subsidence and mine rehabilitation. The letter also underlines our campaign focus, being the reinstatement of a robust Neutral or Beneficial Effect (NorBE) test for all developments affecting Sydney's drinking water catchment.

The need couldn't be clearer. Our letter follows continued evidence of serious pollution impacts from coal mines. Earlier this month, the Alliance issued a media release highlighting new salinity readings in the Cocks River downstream of Centennial Coal's Springvale operations. Monitoring recorded extremely high salinity levels downstream of mining operations, despite EPA intervention earlier this year.

Alliance members also recently visited the Lidsdale Siding area and met with Centennial Coal representatives about the company's proposed extension plans. Worryingly, these proposals appear to reopen the issue of Angus Place East, a project abandoned around a decade ago after strong community opposition. The current concepts extend mining under areas near the upper Carne Creek catchment within the Gardens of Stone and beneath sections of the new multi-day walking track.

These developments reinforce why strong planning and water protection rules are urgently needed before new proposals are assessed. The coming period will be critical, and we look forward to continuing this work.



Gardens of Stone Alliance members and Centennial Coal representatives on a visit to the Lidsdale Siding coal loader/unloader in late April.

*Protecting Blue Mountains WHA: from page 1*

generation and urban runoff while strengthening riparian zones and aquatic ecosystems.

We will investigate the impact and the solutions to remove non endemic invasive species. Weeds, Ferals like deer, pigs and carp.

By 2029, the subcommittee aims to achieve a measurable improvement in river health indicators through water quality monitoring, habitat restoration and community advocacy.

### Expanding buffer zones around National Parks

As urban pressures continue to grow, protecting the edges of the parks has become increasingly important. We will investigate visitor impacts and potential solutions. The plan investigates opportunities to expand conservation buffer zones through discussions involving Crown land, council-managed land and private land stewardship.

These actions aim to reduce habitat fragmentation, improve wildlife corridors and limit the spread of weeds, pollution and infrastructure impacts into sensitive bushland areas and natural habitat.

### Protecting biodiversity and heritage

The plan also seeks to identify and protect biodiversity hotspots, endangered species habitats, cultural heritage sites and ecological corridors across the Blue Mountains region.

Working to understand the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service plans, Blue Mountains City Council environment plans, Landcare groups, researchers and local communities, the Subcommittee will continue to

build knowledge, strengthen partnerships and advocate for stronger environmental protection measures.

### Practical action for long-term protection

The Environment Protection Plan combines strategic planning with practical on-ground action, and will evolve to include:

- Mapping pollution sources and high-risk environmental zones
- Identifying threatened habitats and wildlife corridors
- Supporting conservation agreements and stewardship programs
- Advocating for stronger environmental protections via our environment protection laws
- Investigating opportunities for park expansion
- Coordinating with Landcare, threatened species and conservation groups

### Looking ahead

The long-term vision of the Environment Protection Plan 2026 is simple but ambitious — to ensure that human activity within and around the parks has a neutral or beneficial environmental impact.

Through stronger waterways, healthier ecosystems, expanded buffer zones and collaborative conservation, the plan aims to safeguard the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area as one of Australia’s most valuable natural and cultural landscapes.

Protecting these parks means protecting biodiversity, clean water, cultural heritage and the natural experiences that define the Blue Mountains for future generations.

**Malcolm Read**, National Parks and World Heritage Officer  
natpks@bluemountains.org.au

During the winter breeding season, the mature male lyrebirds retreat to their territories to sing. Different groups of lyrebirds have different songs depending upon where they live. If a female approaches, the male lyrebird cycles through his own particular version of a sequence of vocalisations, dance moves and tail postures, all designed to show her he'll be a good mate.

(ABC Catalyst, "Language of the lyrebird")



*Eastern yellow robin*

The Superb Lyrebird feeds on insects, spiders, worms and, occasionally, seeds. It finds food by scratching with its feet through the leaf litter. Sometimes other bird species will be seen near the lyrebird while it digs. The lyrebird might overlook a tasty insect or spider for the grey shrike-thrush or disturb a flying insect for the eastern yellow robin.

#### Blue Mountains Conservation Society – Planning and Development Resource Kit

Do you want to take action on an environmental issue in your neighbourhood or the Blue Mountains broadly?  
Do you want information about the laws and procedures relating to development and environmental protection?  
Find out what **YOU** can do! Go to the Planning and Development Resource Kit:  
[www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml)

#### Blue Mountains Conservation Society Native Plant Nursery

Our nursery volunteers are taking a well-earned winter break. They will be back at the Blackheath Growers Market on Sunday 13 September. In the meantime, the little plants in the greenhouse will be cared for and ready to be planted in your garden in the spring.

## Help us clean Sydney's drinking water

### "Catchment Futures Forum"

Saturday 13 June 9.30 am to 12.00

Wallerawang Community and Sports Club

(Mackenzie Street, Wallerawang)



Platypus, *Ornithorhynchus anatinus*. Image: David de Groot

In January 1836, the 26-year-old Charles Darwin walked along Coxs River at Wallerawang on the western slopes of the Blue Mountains. He saw a number of platypuses cavorting and his guide shot one. It was clearly a different species. Would the Creator, mused Darwin, create an entirely different species in the antipodes?

On Saturday 13 June 2026, join the Gardens of Stone Alliance for a morning exploring the history, ecology and future of the Sydney drinking water catchment.

We'll begin with a guided walk at Lake Wallace – where Charles Darwin first recorded seeing platypus – followed by a demonstration of community water quality testing and discussion of the growing pressures facing local waterways from coal mining and development.

We'll then gather at the Wallerawang Community and Sports Club for morning tea and a short forum on protecting the Gardens of Stone and strengthening community action for clean water and catchment protection.

The event is open to both new and existing supporters. We'll also hear from long-time Lithgow Environment Group volunteers Julie Favell and Chris Jonkers, whose decades of local conservation work have helped protect this remarkable region.

To RSVP, contact Steph at [campaigner@gardensofstone.org.au](mailto:campaigner@gardensofstone.org.au)

Further details, including meeting location and what to bring, will be provided closer to the day.

Image: <https://australian.museum/learn/animals/mammals/platypus>

## We're still waiting for a federal threat abatement plan on pest species

In 21 October, 2024, former Minister for the Environment and Water, Tanya Pliibersek MP, formally approved development of a National Threat Abatement Plan on Escaped Garden Plants (environmental weeds). The minister stated that "Around 27,500 exotic plant species have been introduced to Australia, mostly for ornamental purposes, with approximately 70 percent of environmental weeds originating from our gardens. Weeds are the most frequently occurring threat to vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered native species in Australia". <https://bit.ly/42xxN9F>

The Society and many other Australian environmental advocacy agencies have been consistently requesting development of the plan. The Society wrote to former Minister Pliibersek in 2024 and to current Minister for the Environment and Water Senator Murray Watt in 2025 seeking development of the plan. The Society is deeply concerned that the plan has still not been developed.

Environmental weeds pose a serious threat to the Outstanding Universal Value of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWA). Many hundreds of bushcare volunteers work hard to control the spread of weeds in the Blue Mountains. They are alarmed, distressed and exasperated that garden plant pests continue to be available for public sale and still constitute an ongoing threat to locally indigenous plant communities, including threatened species.

The current system of plant sale self-regulation is completely ineffectual. The inter and intrastate exchange and sale of garden plants known to be environmental weeds and those with the potential to become environmental weeds still occurs on a daily basis in Australia.

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## Living Near the Bush

HOW TO SUPPORT NATURE IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS



Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Practical ways that residents can support our beautiful wildlife and unique local bushland!

Illustrations by artist Fiona Lumsden, ecologist Ian Baird and photographers Alan and Dianne Page.

Lots of resources for people of all ages!

To view the online flip book or download a PDF version visit

<https://bluemountains.org.au/LNTB.shtml>

A limited number of print copies are available at Society events.

## IT'S RAINING

The unfamiliar sound of rain woke me last night ... a welcome gift to the vegetable seedlings I planted the day before and the marigold seeds scattered to add colour and confuse the pests

Rosemary Lewis,  
The Blue Mountains Folkbook

## Looking back . . .

This is the day! ( November 2003)

How many times have you passed a spot that looks interesting and promised yourself that **one day** you would explore it? Recently the Thursday pleasure walkers discovered that a couple of us had always been attracted to the same interesting rock outcrop on Kings Tableland and decided, **this is the day!**

Scrambling through a gap in the rocks we entered a world of small caverns, magnificent rock formations and interesting plants. A great place for morning tea!

I'm now compiling a list of all those **one day** spots and intend to visit them all as soon as possible. (Joan) *Hut News* November 2003.

## Living and visiting near natural icons – how can negative messages be reversed?

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and nearby reserves cover a substantial, if fragmented, portion of the earth's surface. Between the reserved areas are numerous small communities of land holders, rarely amounting to large populations of people but often close-knit and able to provide services for visitors such as camping areas or more comfortable, reasonably priced accommodation.

Due to announcements by the NSW Government, there has been intense focus on the possibility of providing high priced “glamping” within areas earlier believed safe from any form of commercial development and intruding on the pagoda rock structures recently within the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area. These are widely considered some of the most iconic natural features among the many iconic aspects of the Greater Blue Mountains reserve system.

Among our reserves, Blue Mountains National Park alone had over six million visitors last year. There are millions more people who live within easy reach and may visit our reserve system in coming years. For the vast majority, “glamping” would not be within their normal yearly budget and the economic health of the many small businesses operating just outside the reserved areas can add to their appreciation of visiting the natural icons.

What do governments need to do to consolidate sustainable and environmentally appreciative visitation to our reserve system? It is a high priority to reassure the

members of the small communities living closest to the relevant reserves. This includes putting more resources into fire protection and the resilience of the minor roads that underpin the quality of life for both residents and visitors around the fringes of the iconic reserves.

Firefighting authorities need the resources to water bomb or otherwise neutralise small fires in remote areas before they become large fires. This is to protect both private property and the qualities of the rural and bushland areas that will be crucial to the future tourist economy. Although intense rainfall events are likely to become more common, efforts must be made to minimise potential isolation of populated and tourism areas because of land slips and flood waters.

Drop the “bean counting” approach of harvesting revenue from a tiny amount of very up-market tourist operators who want to cherry-pick the best areas for modifications and exclusivity. Government policies need to empower multiple small businesses who draw their workforces and experiences from local communities to be more involved in our region's natural area tourism.

Those who visit once or visit again and again need to be encouraged to form at least short-term partnerships with local custodians to appreciate and care for iconic landscapes. This emphasis is needed to reverse the negative messages that interacting with the icons is reserved for a privileged few.

**Don Morison**

## LIFE IS SWEET:

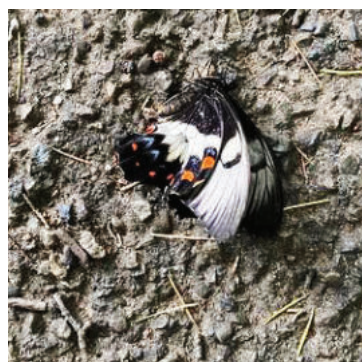
*on meeting an orchard swallowtail in Hinkler Park*

(Did you know Bert Hinkler was given a state funeral by Mussolini?)

Life IS sweet.

My Mum told me that  
and she rarely lied;  
in a nursing home —  
a few days  
just  
before she died.

But I woke this morning  
and it was overcast —  
dull grey skies,  
and me not yet recovered  
from a bout with flu.  
Then came across  
a butterfly  
along the path,  
in the park,  
where I walk through. . .  
. . . an orchard swallowtail,  
lying still,  
in full dress uniform,  
dressed to kill;



like an Air Vice Marshal  
on parade —  
all ribbons  
and medals  
and entwined braid;  
his chest puffed up  
all black  
and grey  
and red  
and blue —  
and was it jade?

But stooping down  
so I might have a closer look  
I saw one wing moving listless  
in the breeze;  
the other severed off  
lying a little to the side,  
beyond repair;  
and realised then  
he had come off second best  
in a dog fight up above —  
a wattle bird, maybe,  
zooming in,  
relentless, as the Red Baron —  
in the air.

Thinking then of my Mum's words  
from long ago, buried deep in the past;  
I plucked him from the bitumen path  
and laid him in a patch of grass;  
beneath a flowering fuchsia  
and some myrtle  
hoping he might enjoy  
a last splash of colour —  
green  
crimson  
purple.

**Paddy Cavanagh**

# Rail Corridor Weeds

Members of the Blue Mountains Weed Action Group, Andrew Cox, Ian Brown and Liam Ramage, conducted a short investigation of the weeds in the rail corridor between Mount Victoria and Emu Plains. This was done by observing identifiable weed species and systematically surveying them from the train window while travelling. These maps show the results of the most common weeds along the route on the north and south side of the track.

These interesting results show the difference in weeds between the upper and lower mountains and can be repeated to track changes in weed distribution over time. The colours on the maps represent the abundances of the observed weeds.

Liam Ramage, Threatened Species Officer

**KEY:**

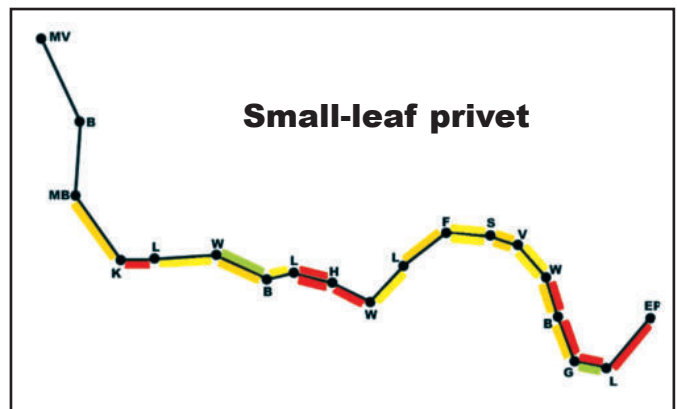
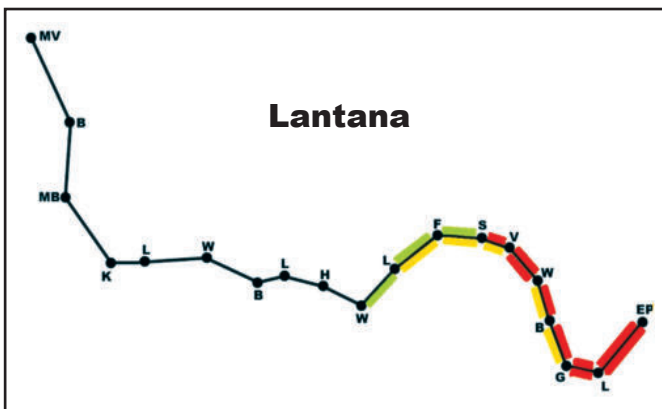
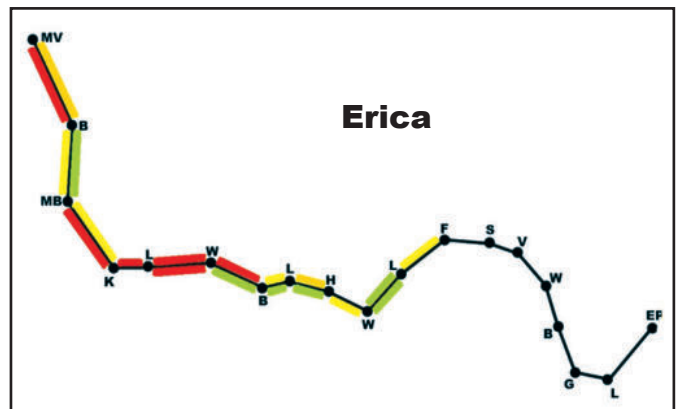
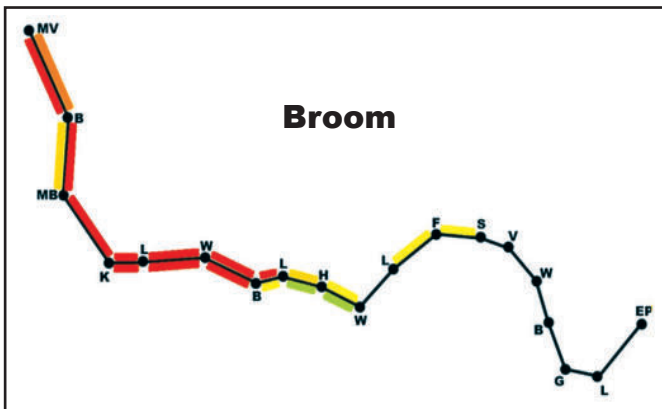
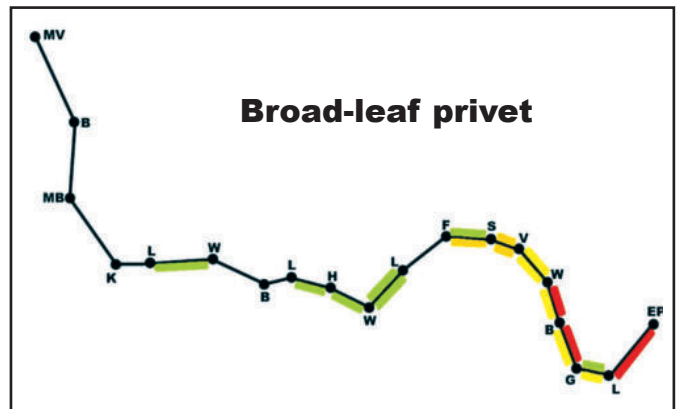
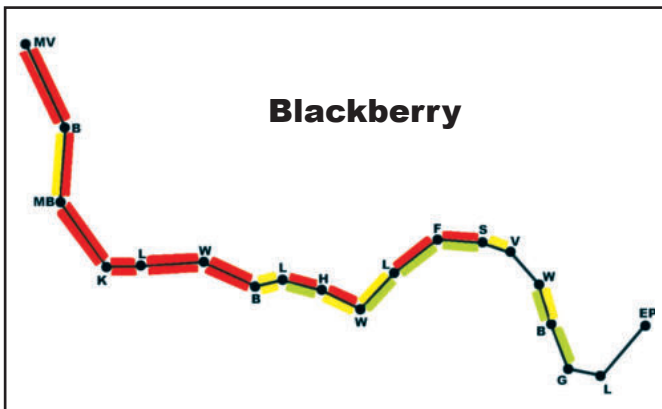
**Red** – abundant: frequent occurrences with large patches.

**Orange** – frequent: at least 20 individuals and small patches.

**Yellow** – at least 5 individuals or small patches.

**Green** – fewer than 5 individuals.

**Blank** – none observed



## Windy Day, Blue Mountains

Over the trees around my house  
 Fifty huge birds are playing,  
 Soaring and swooping about in the gale,  
 Yellow tails splaying;  
 Screeching and screaming with much ado,  
 Fifty great jubilant Black Cockatoos,  
 Showing the rest of us what they can do,  
 The big exhibitionist clowns!

Graham Alcorn

## Hut News Trivia: Answer to Question 23

Yes, ants have brains. Despite their tiny size, they are considered to have among the largest and most complex brains of all insects. An ant's brain contains around 250,000 neurons. While this is a fraction of a human brain which has 86 billion neurons, it provides ants with significant learning, memory, and navigation skills.

We're still waiting: from page 6

In its most recent letter of May 2026 to Minister Watt, the Society yet again requested the immediate development of a comprehensive threat abatement plan that effectively regulates and prevents translocation, propagation and exchange and sale of potential and known environmental weeds and garden escapees and propagules (Australian and overseas species) by wholesale and retail plant distributors and outlets, nurseries, landscapers and allied industries, plant collectors, aquatic species dealers, market operators, online distributors and any other dealers in plant or associated matter including importers and inter- and intrastate dealers.

Development of a strong, fully effective National Threat Abatement Plan on Escaped Garden Plants is highly overdue. A weak, diluted plan that appeases commercial interests is not acceptable. The Society and its members require an action plan that comprehensively shuts down the trade in garden plant weeds.

**Peter Ardill**, Bushcare Officer, Second Vice-president

The deadline for July *Hut News* is **12 June**  
[hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au)



Banded feathers emerge through the scrub as a melodic clicking begins. As the lyrebird comes closer, its tail expands, revealing a magnificent plume of feathers that soon engulf the bird itself. It turns and hops across the forest floor, emitting a range of whistles and pinging laser-like sounds as it performs a fan dance.

The display is often used by males to find a mate, but as a younger bird begins to circle, it soon becomes clear that this isn't about courtship. It's education. The young male is trying to look at the tail and listen to the song. "This is how they learn – this is their cultural transmission of which songs to sing," says Dr Maisey, a research fellow at LaTrobe University.

(ABC Catalyst, "Language of the Lyrebird")

## 65 years of conservation effort and a special anniversary

*Alan Crooks, BMCS Website Manager*

There is something about the Blue Mountains that makes the people who live here, since indigenous Australians arrived tens of thousands of years ago right through to now, want to look after it and conserve its unique natural environment.

With this in mind, in 1961 a small group of locals in the upper mountains formed the Katoomba and District Fauna and Flora Protection Society, which by 1995 had been transformed into the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society (UBMCS).

With a similar idea in mind, in 1966 a small group of locals in Springwood formed the Lower Blue Mountains Wildlife Conservation Society, which by 1995 had been transformed into the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society (LBMCS).

By 1995 each Society had been involved in many campaigns and activities – all aimed to further the conservation of the natural environment – as set out on our website at Blue Mountains Conservation Society – a timeline.

However, by October 1995 the committee of the LBMCS decided that they had no choice but to consider merging LBMCS with another conservation group, mainly because of the difficulty in raising funds, and that there would be a Special General Meeting in November to consider the future.

In their December 1995 Newsletter, the UBMCS announced that at a Special General Meeting, held in November 1995, members of the LBMCS had agreed to incorporate with UBMCS. This arrangement was ratified at a joint meeting between the Management of each society on 18 December 1995. Thor Schache, President of UBMCS, welcomed the members from the

lower mountains confirming their common aims and objectives – to preserve the wonderful environment in which we live.

And thus the Blue Mountains Conservation Society was born, though it took until April for the formalities to be finalised and somewhat longer for government to officially record it.

The Committee of UBMCS decided that they would need a new name for the monthly newsletter of the merged organisation and so set about asking their membership via their Newsletter for suggestions with a handsome prize as the motivation.

Apparently, there were plenty of good suggestions and *Hut News* was chosen for its simplicity and for its association with the old Conservation Hut which had been the meeting place of UBMCS. Vivien Hunter won a lunch or dinner for two people at The Hut for the winning name.

In March 1996 the first edition of the new publication, *Hut News*, was published.

The April 1996 *Hut News* confirmed that at the recent AGM the LBMCS was officially merged with the UBMCS, and a cheque for \$700.19, being the remaining funds of LBMCS, was presented to the Society.

It was then agreed that the name of the Society be changed to Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

The July 1996 *Hut News* confirmed that at long last the name change had been approved and 'Blue Mountains Conservation Society' could be put on letterheads and in the *Hut News* masthead.

The Society's membership is still working hard to make BMCS a strong and effective environmental organisation, 30 eventful years later.

# A history of the Blue Mountains walking tracks

There was a remarkable period of private track construction on freehold land that became a fashion among wealthy residents of the Blue Mountains from the 1870s. The beginnings have been described in the May *Hut News*.

## Part 3. The Hydro-Majestic

Private track building reached a pinnacle of development in the Blue Mountains at Medlow Bath. Starting about 1893, William Hargraves<sup>1</sup> gardener, Murdo McLennan, created possibly the most extensive and meticulously constructed network of private walking tracks in Australia. This network was extended by McLennan after Mark Foy bought the property in about 1901.

The aesthetic integration of bushwalking tracks with the landscape reaches its most impressive development at Medlow Bath. The vast amount of earth and stone moved, the length and height of the drystone walling and the quality of the stone masonry is unsurpassed in the region. Only the Wentworth Falls tracks rival those of the Hydro Majestic in complexity.

In the 1998 Historical Report, Jim Smith wrote: ‘Changes in land tenure have meant that parts of the Blue Mountains private track system have passed into the public domain. In Medlow Bath, virtually the entire track system is intact. However, the land on which the hotel originally stood has been broken up and the hotel’s owners now own only a portion of the track system. The multiplicity of owners of this track system makes the prognosis for its continuing survival intact a poor one.’<sup>2</sup>

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Sadly, for many years the Hydro Majestic tracks have not been maintained. The tracks may have been in reasonable condition in 1998 but in recent years access has not been encouraged. The track to the “Colleseum” is blocked by a rockslide. Another dry stone wall structure, Glen Rosa, is more accessible.

<sup>2</sup> Excerpts from Jim Smith’s *Blue Mountains Heritage Track Study, Historical Report, 1998*.

**Next month: Part 4.** The reserve trusts

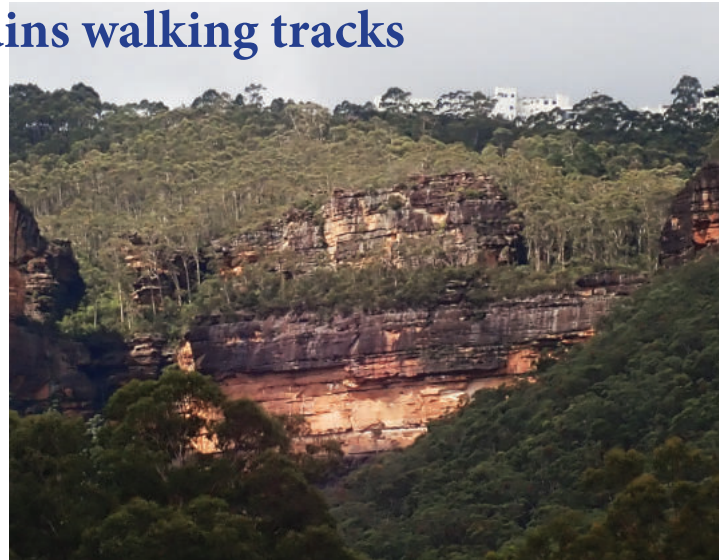
To read Part 1 and 2 visit

[www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au) (*Hut News* Archives)

## Flowering banksias

Banksias in my garden are flowering, attracting a large number of wattlebirds and satin bowerbirds. The red wattlebirds and their cousins, the little wattlebirds are having a noisy party while they feed on the nectar. As they feed, they are spreading pollen to fertilise the flowers. Not so the satin bowerbirds which simply bite off the flowers.

*Adelina*



The Hydro Majestic perched above sandstone cliffs; The Valley Farm in the Megalong Valley, at the foot of the cliffs. A flying fox was used to carry produce and food scraps to and from the valley to the Hydro.



*Banksia ericifolia* (heath banksia)

*Banksia cunninghamii* flowers chewed by bowerbirds





**BUSHWALKING:** Enjoy the bush, learn about the Blue Mountains natural environment and find out why bushwalking has been a popular pastime in the Blue Mountains for more than 100 years. Our bushwalking convenor is Doug Nicholls [dougnicholls@bigpond.com](mailto:dougnicholls@bigpond.com) phone 0455 850 753.

Walks are graded and generally suitable for walkers of average fitness but may vary in degree of difficulty. Participants need to be aware of their own capabilities and can discuss with the bushwalking convenor, group coordinator or leader.

Underneath is a brief summary of walks and leaders for this month.

**Please check our website for detailed walks program and program changes.**  
<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/bushwalking.shtml>

**MONDAY LEISURE WALKS:** Short day walks 3–5 hours. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water.

Coordinator: **Melanie Lawson 0431 214 687** [melanielawson@outlook.com.au](mailto:melanielawson@outlook.com.au)

*All walks are Grade 3 unless indicated otherwise.*

- June 8 **No walk scheduled** due to Public Holiday (King's Birthday)
- June 15 **Glenbrook Gorge to the Old Tramway** 5.5 km, some road walking. **Wayne and Mary 0407 643 512**
- June 22 **Asgard Swamp and Thor Head** 9 km, 403m ascent/descent. **Lois and David 0427 184 165**
- June 29 **Pippa/Florabella Pass** 8 kms return with small section near cliff edge. 300m ascent.  
**Angela 0427 133 327**
- July 6 **Burramoko Ridge (Hanging Rock) Trail** 10 km (return). **Maree 0427 390 645**
- July 13 **Nellie's Glen and Devil's Hole Circuit** 10 km, Grade 4 – steep and uneven sections with poorly marked track. **Melanie 0431 214 687**

**TUESDAY FITNESS WALKS:** 'Medium Day' walks suitable for walkers of average fitness, 3–5 hours. Bring morning tea/lunch/adequate water. Coordinator: **Phill Cox 0415 449 174** [mrpacox@hotmail.com](mailto:mrpacox@hotmail.com)

- June 9 **New Greenway, The Bay Run to Cooks River** Grade 1, Easy, 6 km. Transport: Train/Light Rail.  
**Lynne Blane 0407 498 397, Roger Blane 0449 902 774**
- June 16 **Kings Cave and Paradise Pool** Grade 2-3, 7 km. **PLB required.** Transport: Train or car.  
Paradise Pool via Kings cave, and Paradise Walking track. Start Linden, finish at Woodford Station.  
**Sharon Cox 0404 622 515**
- June 23 **Centennial Park and Paddington Reservoir** Grade 1, Easy, 5 km. Transport: Train/light rail/bus.  
**Julie Martin 0466 964 815, Ian Chappel, 0412 757 902**
- June 30 **Bouddi Coastal Walk** Grade 2, Medium, 8.5 km. Bus from Springwood. Cost \$20 pay Maurice.  
Start McMasters Beach to Putty Beach Central Coast.  
**Roger Blane 0449 902 774, Maurice Kirkham 0402 402 783**

**THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS** are 2-3 hours and are conducted at a leisurely pace.

Coordinator: **Beverley Thompson 4757 2076** [denfenella12@gmail.com](mailto:denfenella12@gmail.com)

- June 11 **Lockyer Track Head, Mount Victoria** Grade 2. **Tracy 0434 362 611**
- June 18 **Kings Table and Ingar Road, Wentworth Falls** Grade 2. **Beverley 0418 372 076**
- June 25 **Braeside Walk to Barrow Lookout, Blackheath** Grade 2. **Tracy 0434 362 611**
- July 2 **Adeline Park, Faulconbridge** Grade 2. **Ros 0417 261 465**
- July 9 **Ridgewell Road towards Hanging Rock, Blackheath** Grade 2. **Tracy 0434 362 611**
- July 16 **West Glenbrook Reserve** **Ros 0417 261 465**

**SATURDAY WALKS:** There are no Saturday walks at present. Saturday walks will be restarted when we find new coordinator/leader(s). If you have solid bushwalking experience, are comfortable leading small groups, are interested, and feel you're qualified please contact **Doug Nicholls** for information [dougnicholls@bigpond.com](mailto:dougnicholls@bigpond.com)

**NOTE TO ALL BUSHWALKERS:** Meeting places and times are not given because sometimes there are changes to the program. Please check with the walk leader.

## On Finding a Dead Robin

Small yellow breasted one whose watchful eye  
followed the turning earth beneath our spade  
for luckless grub or hapless worm  
companion of the lonely track  
joining us when the billy boiled  
for crumbs and company  
small friendless fearless one  
farewell.

**Wilson Alcorn, June 1976**

## Volunteering for the Society

The management committee positions are listed on page 2. You will notice that there are some vacancies. Please contact the president, Annette Sartor, by email at [president@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:president@bluemountains.org.au) or by phone (leave a message) **0490 419 779**.

There are many other ways you can volunteer – join a subcommittee, help at one of our stalls, offer occasional clerical help – there is a long list of tasks and some we haven't thought of yet. Please contact the president and discuss what you might be able to do to help protect the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

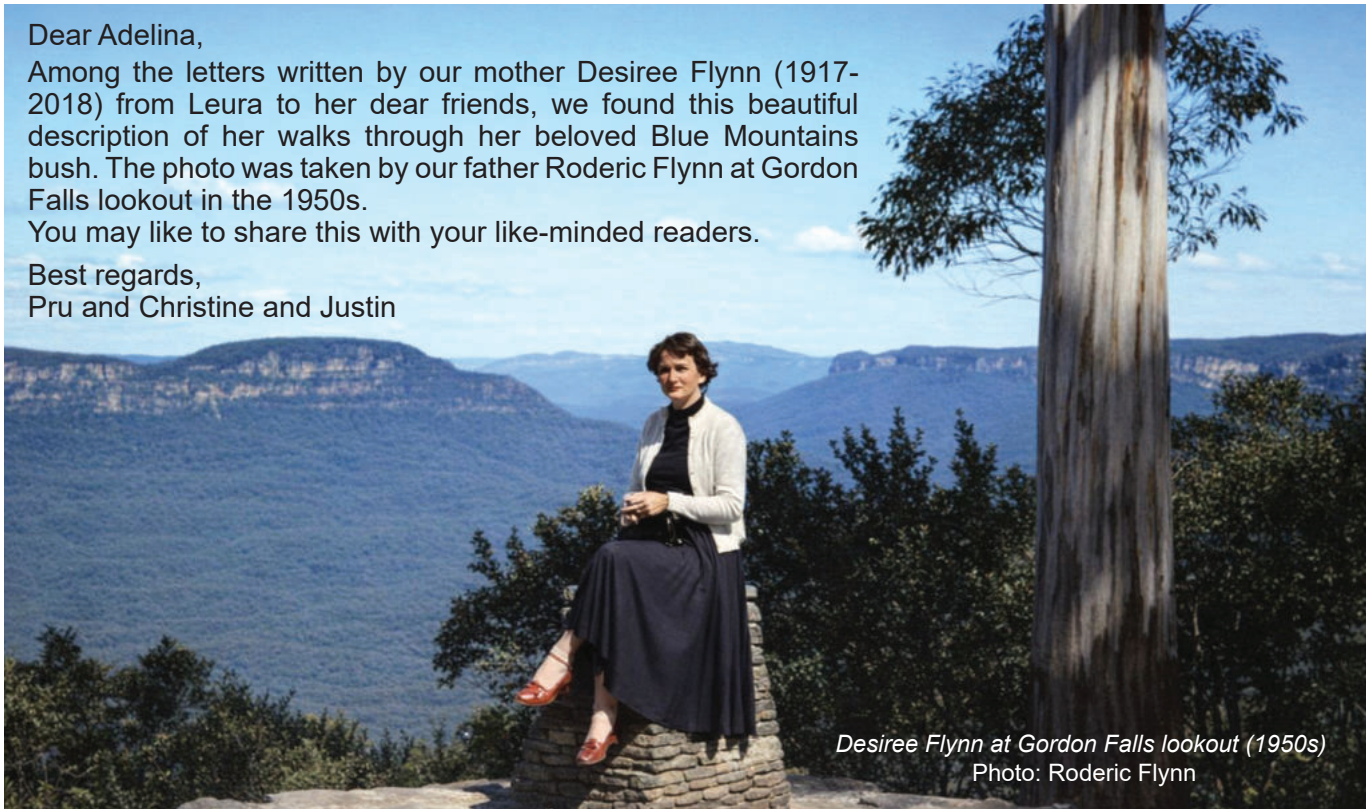
*A page for keen nature observers of all ages ...*  
**What to look for in the Blue Mountains**

Dear Adelina,

Among the letters written by our mother Desiree Flynn (1917-2018) from Leura to her dear friends, we found this beautiful description of her walks through her beloved Blue Mountains bush. The photo was taken by our father Roderic Flynn at Gordon Falls lookout in the 1950s.

You may like to share this with your like-minded readers.

Best regards,  
Pru and Christine and Justin



*Desiree Flynn at Gordon Falls lookout (1950s)*  
Photo: Roderic Flynn

### **Mountain Mist** For Mrs. Blick and Barbara

The valleys are full of grey mist rising and drifting, softly through the trees. Out of the depths of silence in the valleys comes the grey mist, and the sound of echoing bird calls and the rushing river. The grey mist fills the bush and each plant and tree glows in its individual spotlight. The great gold and silver rocks appear and disappear and in the steep gullies the slender gums, in their grey velvet jewel case, are white opals streaked with flame.

Here is a hard little gee-bung bush – emerald and jet with its black nuts – suddenly blazing at you with its radiating yellow suns of flowers. A most ordinary-looking, tough-leaved bush is miraculously spraying the whole hillside with delicate white lace underflushed with palest pink.

You stop with a gasp as a crimson-stalked gum sapling, its red leaves tipped with orange fire, thrusts its brilliant torch into your face. A scatter of pink boronia and white-starred heath. The cleft between the cliffs is a kaleidoscope of greens, startled here and there with ruby coloured ferns.

A gentle wind patterns the mist, and there is a strange little soft rattling sound like crunching tissue paper; the wet leaves rub against each other, and up with the grey mist floats a tingling fragrance, the breath of the living bush.

*Desiree*

### *Listen to the lyrebirds ...*

In the Blue Mountains, the Superb Lyrebird breeds in the winter.

Go to a lookout and watch the sunrise and listen for lyrebirds in the valley. During your regular bushwalk, listen for a whole string of sounds coming from the same spot in the bush. How many bird songs can you recognise? Record them in your nature diary.

*Adelina*

*The male secures a territory, attracting potential mates by singing and dancing on one of several mounds within it, while throwing the tail forward over the body and shaking it in display. The male will mate with several females. The female alone builds the nest, incubates the eggs and cares for the young.*

(ABC Catalyst, "Language of the lyrebird")



What did you see in the Blue Mountains – in your garden or during your favourite bushwalk? Was it something that is not there in other parts of the year? Please tell *Hut News*, send your stories, photos and drawings to Adelina:

**hutnews@bluemountains.org.au**  
or post to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.