



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

From The President

Greetings! May I say from the outset that I am looking forward to the year ahead, despite a rather daunting workload.

We have many issues already on our plate, with many more looming.

The case against Delta Electricity for allegedly polluting the Cox's River continues to stagnate in the Land & Environment Court. We are also opposing a proposal for an open cut coal mine in Ben Bullen State Forest, which form part of our Gardens of Stones, Stage 2 initiative. A banner drop to highlight this monstrosity is planned for Saturday May 14. We need as many members as possible to turn up to this event to show public outrage. See inside, or our website for further details.

Future issues may be the spectre of coal seam gas extraction inching its way closer to the Mountains, hunting and commercial development in our National Parks, plus local issues such as inappropriate land developments and downhill mountain bike tracks. And then there are the things we don't know about yet?

And then there will be all the positive things - walks, talks, meetings, bushcare, seeing the nursery flourish and further progress with Gardens of Stone campaign. The Society will also be celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

Phew, it will be a busy year!

Lachlan Garland, 0415 317 078

**Blue Mountains Conservation Society Monthly meeting
SATURDAY MORNING
10 am, 28 May 2011**
**at the Wentworth Falls School of Arts Theatre
(Cnr Great Western Hwy and Adele Avenue, opposite Falls Road)**

**ANDY MACQUEEN
"WOLLEMI EXPLORATION"**

*The Colo River
country, photo-
graphed by .
Tristram Miller*



Andy Macqueen will present an illustrated talk about the early exploration and survey of the Wollemi by Major Mitchell's surveyors, with emphasis on Frederick Robert D'Arcy.

Over a four year period and against considerable odds—including a tyrannical boss who had little idea about the nature of the Wollemi country—the young D'Arcy managed to explore and survey the Colo River and most of its tributaries. This was accomplished with only a band of convict assistants, often carrying all their gear on their backs for up to three weeks at a time. Some of his journeys were probably the most rugged undertakings in colonial exploration on mainland Australia.

Andy is a direct descendant of D'Arcy and has explored much of the Wollemi himself. He says that it is one of the wonderful aspects of wilderness areas that one can still see and experience the country as it was seen not only by its Aboriginal inhabitants but also by the earliest European travellers.

Andy has previously given popular talks to the Society on other early explorers, on Blue Gum Forest and the Grose Valley, and on remote area adventure conservation.

Visitors are very welcome

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.

Over 1088 hectares of public forest within a uniquely scenic and biodiverse area are at risk of exclusive occupation and destruction by open cut coal mining.

Help us Protect the Gardens of Stone!

- ❖ Join supporters, discover the area and take action at 1.00pm on Saturday 14th May 2011 to help protect the Gardens of Stone, in the western Blue Mountains, NSW. (Full details on page 3.)
- ❖ Complete the form letter on the back page of this newsletter and return to us. We will deliver all the letters to the Premier.

"Hut News", the newsletter of
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HUT NEWS EDITORIALS

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

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BUSHCARE GROUP

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

Nursery News Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager

Our Contracts: Next week the planting contractor for the RTA works at Wentworth Falls will be taking the first batch of just over 7 000 plants. You will soon see them appearing on the right-hand side of the highway as you travel west above the "crazed walls" which seem to be dividing opinions on their artistic merit. This has been a historic collaboration with Wildplant Rescue and has shown the value of pooling our combined expertise. We have continued this association by lodging a joint quote with the RTA to supply seed and plants for the next section of the highway upgrade at Bullaburra East. Disappointingly, the large *Angophora costata* by the roadside in this area is to be removed but we will be offering tubestock of this species for just \$1 afterwards as small compensation.

Reminder: Our Lawson nursery will close for sales at the end of this month and we will have our last appearances at the Blackheath Community Markets (Sunday 1st May) and the Lawson Magpie Markets (Sunday 15th May) until the end of winter. If you still have Council vouchers for plants please note that these are only valid up to the 31st May.

Featured Plant: This month it is *Tristaniopsis laurina* or the Water Gum. This is a common, small tree found along water courses and damp hillsides in wet sclerophyll forest. It has lovely, long (up to 14cm) lanceolate leaves and a smooth, grey bark blotched with other colours when young. In older specimens the bark becomes scaly. In summer, striking bright yellow flowers in clusters of three adorn the tree. If you have a shady, moist position in your garden, this tree would be a valuable addition. We have about 20 nicely advanced tubestock for sale. The genus name honours a French botanist Jules M. Tristan (1776 - 1861) about whom I have been unable to find little information so if you can enlighten me, please do so. **Kevin Bell.**



Photo: *Tristaniopsis laurina* © Murray Fagg ANBG
(<http://anbg.gov.au/gnp/gnp10/tristaniopsis-laurina.html>)

Wonders of Nature: Bird-dung spider

The mystery spider in last month's Hut News has been identified. It was well camouflaged and, among other things, could have been a bit of dung. I had the following response from the Search and Discover team at the Australian Museum. "Your spider is apparently an undescribed species of the spider genus *Archemorus* and has been known about since 1980. It is a bird dung mimic and animals, such as birds and lizards, ignore it because of its appearance, while other animals, such as flies, seek it out - and get eaten!"

Jill Dark saw an identical spider in her garden at Woodford.
Christine Davies.



Protect the Gardens of Stone

“Say NO to open cut mining!”



Over 1088 hectares of public forest within this uniquely scenic and biodiverse area are now at risk of exclusive occupation and destruction by open cut coal mining.

Join supporters, discover the area and take action at 1.00pm on Saturday 14th May 2011 to help protect the Gardens of Stone, in the western Blue Mountains.

Meet 12 noon on Gardners Gap Trail or book a place on the free shuttle service which meets the train which arrives Lithgow at 11.10 am. 4WD transport 4km to banner drop site. For more information and map go to <http://bitly.com/hmyp3f> or contact Justin McKee 0404 824 020.

Program (Saturday)

1.00 to 1.30 pm: Photo and media opportunity holding a large banner with a backdrop of stunning pagodas and wilderness at an easily accessible location.

1.30 to 2.30 pm: Lunch and opportunity to speak with campaigners, botanists and people who know the area and its values well.

3.00 to 4.30 pm: Scenic walk led by Keith Muir, Colong Foundation. People staying overnight can set up camp.

2.30 and 4.30 pm: Shuttle services to Lithgow trains.

(Sunday)

9 am to 1 pm: Option of easy or mid-range walk exploring the pagodas.

1pm: Lunch and depart. Assistance for return to train station will be co-ordinated on the day.

Contact Justin McKee if you need a lift on the free shuttle service or by 4WD from the meeting place, if you have a 4WD and can offer to help, or need assistance or information.
justin.mckee@ethicalintegration.com
mobile 0404 824 020.

A clarion call to all

“We need to restore balance. We need to reassert our obligations of custodianship of this country. We need to remember that what we do today affects the many generations yet to come. We need to restore priorities that put the land, the people and the environment of Australia first.” (John C Thompson, LTG)

“We can no longer continue to develop mining at all costs. We can no longer continue to allow these industries to self-regulate, no more than we would allow users of the roads to self-regulate. We can no longer allow coal mining to proceed without appropriate checks and balances. We can no longer pursue coal seam gas mining in light of the evidence and science that so clearly highlight the environmental and ecological disasters we now face. We can no longer sacrifice our water, our food and our environment to rapacious greed. We can no longer race after royalties as if that were the only thing that mattered. There is a better way forward.” (John C Thompson, LTG)

John Thomson has had to stand down, for personal reasons, from the Lock the Gate Alliance (LTG), of which BMCS is a member. His words capture what more and more people in the broad community are feeling.

Black Cockatoos flying in formation

In early April, I saw a very amazing sight of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos flying in formation.

A friend and I were driving along the highway just west of Lithgow, after a day's bushwalking, when we saw a long line of Yellow-tails in the sky. There must have been between 50 to 100 birds.

There was just this long, long, line of big black cockatoos flying east towards Newnes Plateau and the Wollomi – the line stretched as far as I could see - to the Woodlands on the horizon. All the birds were in family units of three and each family unit was evenly spaced from the other families. Seeing so many birds all flying in groups of three was remarkable and emphasized in my mind their long partnerships and family connections. I pondered their intelligence in forming and holding this exact pattern of flight.

We speculated that they were returning to Newnes Plateau and Wollomi NP after a day's feeding in the Oberon pine forests.

Watch the skies in the first ten kilometres west of Lithgow next time you are travelling out west. Meredith Brownhill

Images of the Wild

an exhibition of wilderness photographs by
HENRY GOLD

at the Bondi Pavilion Gallery, Queen Elizabeth Drive on Bondi Beach from Tuesday May 31 to Sunday June 12 to raise funds for wilderness conservation by the Colong Foundation.

Gallery hours are 10am – 5pm daily

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

**Official opening by Bob Carr - 6pm Wednesday June 1st.
Everyone welcome.**



Wilderness Centre, Mount Knapjar NP, NSW. Photo: Henry Gold

The Surprising Lyrebirds of Scenic World by Carol Proberts



Photo of male Superb Lyrebird by Trevor Quedsted

Throughout the winter of 2010 I had the enviable task of carrying out a survey of the Superb Lyrebirds in and around Scenic World. The Scenic Railway, Cableway and the rainforest boardwalk are visited by many thousands of tourists every year. For observant visitors, the lyrebirds can be a real highlight as they wander close to the boardwalk without fear, sometimes launching into their famous and spectacular display. Philip Hammon, the Managing Director, wanted to find out more about this population of birds so that visitors could be provided with accurate information. I was given a list of eight questions - such as the number of breeding males and females, the areas they occupy, what threats they face - and it was my job during the next few months to find out and report back with the answers. As it turned out, I also discovered something quite unexpected about these lyrebirds, but I'll get to that shortly.

During the field work, I spent 135 hours at the site and observed lyrebirds on 155 occasions. Most of these sightings were of single birds or two together, but a surprising 20 percent of sightings were of groups of three to eight birds which usually included several mature and adolescent males.

Lyrebirds do not form pair bonds. Instead, males compete for the attention of females by singing and displaying throughout the winter breeding season, with each bird occupying its own territory containing a number of display mounds. Females may visit a number of displaying males before making their choice and mating with one, or possibly more. The female builds a substantial nest, incubates the single egg and cares for the chick unaided, no mean feat through the coldest part of the year. The chick then continues to depend on her for many months to follow.

Ascertaining the total number of males on the site was a challenge. One part of this involved rising before sunrise and walking, by torchlight, down Furber Steps to be in the rainforest at the first glimmer of light, when the lyrebirds start to sing. By doing this, I could record the number and location of roosting males. Watching the rainforest come to life as the daylight seeps in is a magical experience, even if it was during the freezing dawn temperatures of mid-winter!

Although none of the birds were banded, some were able to be individually recognised due to distinctive plumage features. These birds were useful as they

could be followed, their territories mapped and their behaviour and use of display mounds recorded.

I quickly discovered that here, most of the males were not spread out in individual territories as they normally are, but were often gathered in one area within the bounds of the boardwalk. Within this area were eight display mounds. I was astonished when I realised that each of these mounds was regularly being used by more than one male. And this was not in a furtive or antagonistic way - in fact, after one or more birds displayed the males would often go off side by side feeding together. Despite such a concentration of mature and adolescent males, I witnessed virtually no aggression between them. These lyrebirds clearly have not read the lyrebird books!

Females took an interest in these mound-sharing males. On one day in June I watched two females literally running from male to male as each started up his display. By displaying close to each other, males have the advantage of a more likely presence of females, and females have the advantage of being able to compare the choices available. This is similar to the "lekking" behaviour of grouse and birds of paradise.

Is it a coincidence that the communal display area sits in the middle of the boardwalk, where tourists walk in often noisy groups every day of the year? The site is largely an elevated terrace, relatively flat and free of undergrowth compared to the surrounding country - topography which no doubt favours sound transmission, visibility and foraging opportunities. I wonder if there are other communal display areas in places with similar environmental attributes.

Altogether I estimated 8-10 mature males and a similar number of adolescent males using the boardwalk area. Four breeding females were found, at least three of which had a nest in or close to this communal display area.

I closely monitored two of the nests until each chick had left the nest. The just-fledged chick from one of these nests was then located, "parked" by the mother for four days in a dense tangle of vegetation on a steep shale ledge, 80 metres from the nest, where she continued to feed it. It would be hard to find a place more difficult for predators to access!

(continued on page 7)

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

Yerranderie: Sydney's Historic Ghost Town Protected

Val Lhuedé has been restoring her own private ghost town of Yerranderie for over fifty years, but at the age of 87, she donated the 467-hectare property to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. It will become a Regional Park, preserving its heritage buildings and wildlife habitats. Handover celebrations took place at Yerranderie over the Easter long weekend.

The Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife has been working for five years to facilitate Ms Lhuedé's land donation. It will ensure that that the town's unique historical and ecological values continue to be preserved, and access to the public maintained.

"As I have become older, I realized I could no longer pursue the role of manager and custodian as I had before. So for the last ten years I have tried to find an organization to which I could donate Yerranderie," Ms Lhuedé said. In May 2011 Ms Lhuedé announced, "I am donating Yerranderie to the National Parks and Wildlife Service with a list of my wishes for Yerranderie's future. I am also donating to the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife, a philanthropic institution, which will make sure my wishes are complied with."

"Yerranderie is an important part of Sydney's cultural heritage," said Ms Leonie Gale, CEO of the Foundation. "A visit to the place immerses you in the area's rich silver mining history, and its intriguing European and Indigenous stories. Val has lovingly restored many of its early 20th century buildings and preserved countless artefacts of historical value."

"Val's property also contains hundreds of hectares of wildlife habitats. Yellow-Bellied gliders, Sugar gliders, Eastern Grey kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, possums and numerous bird species live on the property." Ms Gale said. "Thanks to Val's generous donation, these thriving 467 hectares will be protected forever."

Yerranderie, once stripped of native grasses by cattle and partially deforested, was encouraged to return to a wildlife sanctuary under Ms Lhuedé's care. "I let all the trees grow back and got rid of the nasties that had come in. I'd go out in the evening and chop the weeds, and by slow degrees I had the area around the Private Town back to the original tall trees and grassland underneath," Ms Lhuedé said. During its heyday of 1907 to 1914, Yerranderie had a population of over 2000 people.

Those heady days are long gone. The price of silver dropped and the site was cut off from direct access to Sydney by the Warragamba Dam project.

Ms Lhuedé chose the timing of the handover celebrations for historical significance. The Easter long weekend marked one hundred years since the consecration of the property's Catholic Church. Yerranderie's Post Office, which today provides accommodation, is 104 years old this year too. To learn more about Yerranderie, visit www.yerranderie.com.

My 13 year-old grandson Brodie and I and a group of bushwalking friends (The Golpholobiums) were fortunate to be at Yerranderie over Easter 2011 to join in the celebrations for the handover of the historic ghost town to NPWS.

We camped in the private camping area in the village, beneath Yerranderie Peak. Kangaroos and Maned Wood Ducks grazed and frogs chorused at the dam. At night the cloud cover cleared and the Milky Way stretched, like a river of stars, across the sky. The Easter moon had been full earlier in the week so was late rising. Mornings brought the lovely song of the Butcherbird.

We explored around the old silver mining areas and ruins, climbed to the top of Yerranderie Peak, boiled the billy and sat around enjoying the ambiance of this peaceful place. On Sunday the population of Yerranderie swelled as people came in for the celebrations - old Burrarorang families, Catholic bushwalkers, people from all over. A church service was held in the morning, then a town tour was led by Val Lhuedé and the Yerranderie caretakers. For lunch, National Parks and Wildlife Service put on a great barbeque. Brodie went back for second and third helpings. Members of the Wollondilly Heritage Centre presented Val with a lovely turned bowl made from Olive wood.

There were lots of Eastern Grey Kangaroos, everywhere! And we found signs of echidnas and wombats. Another camper photographed a Sugar Glider just about to glide from a tree trunk. Near the Wonga Mine we found a stand of Greenhood Orchids, and there were lots of interesting fungi. Beautiful trees were the Grey Gums (*Eucalyptus punctata*) with orange patches exposed from beneath newly-shed bark, Ironbark species whose deeply-furrowed black bark is a habitat for so many little creatures, and in swampy areas large old paperbarks.

Lester Ives played his didgeridoo by the campfire; Brodie had a great time accompanying Lester on clap sticks. Other campers materialised out of the darkness and came into the campfire circle to listen to the didge. It rained on the last night, which meant packing up a wet tent and a slow drive homeward along 60 km of the historic Oberon-Colong Stock Route, now slippery as well as badly potholed. The road is best suited to 4WDs but, driven carefully (mostly in low gears), my little 2WD survived the journey intact. Christine Davies.

Yerranderie, Easter Sunday 2011. Talk and tour by Val Lhuedé. The building on the left is the 104 year old former post office.



Nine, ten, four and out! Another nuclear disaster

An earthquake of magnitude 9, a tsunami with 10-metre¹ waves, and a coastal plant comprising four² active nuclear reactors do not mix. In Japan, the Fukushima Daiichi (No 1) reactors were and still are a nuclear disaster. A full meltdown has seemingly been averted, but partial meltdown and dangerous releases of radiation have caused the nuclear crisis to be upgraded from 5 to 7, equivalent in severity to Chernobyl³. For the Japanese people, the lives lost and incredible destruction caused by the earthquake and linked tsunami did not need to be compounded by major evacuations, fears of radiation sickness, and contamination of the food chain and water supply.

Barely had the tsunami retreated, sweeping bodies and detritus out to sea, and almost before there was enough time for major aftershocks and another tsunami to take place, the first pro-nuclear letters appeared in the press. The belief that the reactors (built to withstand a magnitude 8.4 earthquake and about a 6 m tsunami) survived apparently intact, '**clearly demonstrated**' the safety of nuclear power plants. There was no mention of the containment structures potentially being compromised (even before the explosions), there was little regard for the failure of the mains-electric cooling systems (due to the earthquake) and the diesel electric back-up systems (the tsunami flooded the generators), and nothing was said about possible short cuts during construction or the suspect safety record of the operating company⁴. It would seem that risks from earthquakes and tsunamis to the containment structures were evaluated separately, rather than in terms of their synergistic interaction⁵, and insufficient attention was paid to safe-guarding the all-important cooling systems.

In a similar vein, some⁶ noted that only six earthquakes of magnitude 9 or more occurred over the past 100 years, therefore concluding that the chances of nuclear reactors being damaged, even to the '**limited amount**' seen in Japan, are extremely low. Others⁷ hastened to emphasise that their reactors of similar age and design had cooling-system modifications which circumvented the risk from power loss, or that their design criteria were more robust, and/or their reactors were of a more advanced generation. Yet this has not stopped Germany from shutting down 7 plants of 'Fukushima No 1' vintage and bringing forward its plans for total dependency on renewable energy sources, China from suspending approvals for all nuclear plants pending development of a new safety plan, India and the US implementing safety audits of all their nuclear facilities, and the International Atomic Energy Agency foreshadowing an overhaul of its safety standards.

There is no doubt that reactor design, efficiency, and safety have greatly improved since 1967-73 when the Fukushima No 1 reactors were built, as partly borne out by the newer Fukushima Daini (No 2) and Onagawa plants being shut down safely, despite both being closer than Fukushima 1 to the epicentre⁷. But this provides little comfort to the hundreds of thousands of Japanese

directly impacted by the nuclear crisis. Nor will it help the millions of Japanese indirectly affected by lost generating capacity from permanent closure of Fukushima No 1 and 'temporary' shut downs of other nuclear and thermal plants, by massive disruption to local consumption and the export of manufactured goods, and by a substantial reduction in the numbers of overseas visitors⁸. Indeed, the extensive and protracted impacts could result in the world's third largest economy moving into irreversible decline.

Earthquake-magnitude statistics and reactor-safety improvements should provide little comfort to the many other countries selecting an oxymoronic 'nuclear future'. All nuclear plants were and will continue to be designed based on the statistical likelihood of experiencing extreme-magnitude natural events, but 'over-design' to combat infrequent or historically unknown events is disproportionately expensive and leads to risk-management compromises. Fukushima No 1 was designed to withstand lesser magnitudes of earthquake and tsunami than those which occurred, New Orleans risks the direct impact of high-magnitude hurricanes and lost the gamble with Katrina, San Francisco on the San Andreas fault system is the 'City which waits to die', and Christchurch had little expectation of high-magnitude earthquakes focused close to the surface⁹. Geological uncertainty, financially-driven design compromises, many 'old' reactors remaining operational or perhaps being recommissioned after their 'use-by' date⁷, and the increasing number of coastally located plants in developing countries around the earthquake/tsunami-prone Pacific rim, fail to inspire confidence. And this disregards terrorism, war and the effect of rising sea levels on tsunami-linked disasters. As with Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and now Fukushima, the next nuclear accident is waiting to happen! Humanity's hubris is to defy 'nature' to do its worst and invariably come second¹⁰!

Fuelled by Australian (and other) uranium, many developing economies (including China, India, Korea, Vietnam and Indonesia) see nuclear power as an essential part of achieving the economic growth rates needed to improve their peoples' living standards. No matter whether one accepts this justification, these countries are welded to a nuclear future. So, the nuclear energy and uranium mining industries, although acknowledging short-term erosion of public support due to Fukushima, are nevertheless bullish. The Australian Uranium Association¹¹ believes that adverse public perceptions will 'soon' wane because the "*...nuclear fuel cycle remains as safe after the Fukushima accident as it was before.*" I accept this concept of 'safe' as applied to the cycle unencumbered by human-induced and natural disasters. Yet how can one seriously consider 'safety' in such a reductionist way, when the 'safe' Fukushima 'accident' attained the highest level of severity on the logarithmic International Nuclear Event Scale³? Do you feel comfortable with Indonesia, a world-class earthquake and tsunami belt, contemplating nuclear dependency?

Should Australia continue exporting the nuclear risk while greedily pocketing the revenue? In all conscience, the answer is no, but Australia seemingly lacks such altruism. Should Australia embrace domestic nuclear

power? Here the answer is less clear-cut because the risks are Australia's, the self-interests of the nuclear and fossil fuels industries are potentially in conflict, and 'nimby' concerns inevitably set **Australians** against each other. So what are the risks from natural disasters? Australia's main populations along the eastern and southern seaboard mean that most nuclear plants would be located in coastal areas close to abundant water supplies. Significant earthquakes (Newcastle was magnitude 5.6, but higher onshore and offshore magnitudes are known¹²) are more common than many realise, but have done little damage because their epicentres have (so far!) been distant from the main cities. The risk from tsunamis along the north-western and eastern coasts of Australia is substantial, which is why the Australian Government committed \$68.9 million over four years to establish the Australian Tsunami Warning System. Then there are cyclones, and the type of inundation which has caused emergency shutdown of the Ranger uranium mine to prevent discharge of radioactive water into the World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park¹³. These natural risks should severely constrain the location of **nuclear plants** and indeed negate committing to an Australian nuclear future. Now factor in the strong social, political, environmental and economic arguments for rejecting nuclear power generation and the answer becomes clear. Australia should develop Australia's abundant opportunities for solar, wind, and other renewable forms of power generation, whilst progressively relinquishing its fossil fuel dependency.

If you believe Australia must focus on renewable power generation, rather than perpetuating and promoting national and international dependence on environmentally and economically dangerous coal, gas and nuclear fuels, then tell your local representatives¹⁴. Ask them for their personal views as well as providing the party line!

Brian Marshall

¹ Now said to be at least 14 m by Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), but this estimate could be self-serving; Associated Press, *World must learn from crisis...*, SMH p8, 23 March 2011.

² Actually 6 reactors but 2 were shut down well before the earthquake for 'operational' reasons.

³ Kenji Hall and John Glionna, *Fukushima leak same level as Chernobyl*, SMH, 13 April 2011; 7 is the highest level on the logarithmic International Nuclear Event Scale (INES) - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Nuclear_Event_Scale.

⁴ After initial attempts by TEPCO to understate the risks, the Prime Minister took over and realistically presented the evolving problems; the media then exposed the less than exemplary safety compliance of the power company.

⁵ David Nakamura and Chico Harlan, *Warning of tsunami threat to nuclear plant was dismissed*, SMH p10 World, 25 March 2011.

⁶ Andrew Horvath, *New era of honesty in a time of crisis*, SMH p7, 15 March 2011.

⁷ Hamish McDonald, *Crisis of faith for nuclear Brahmins*, SMH p16 News Review, 19-20 March 2011.

⁸ Hamish McDonald, *Japan's shock vibrates around the world*, SMH p16 News Review, 26-27 March 2011.

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Christchurch_earthquake#Geology - 04/09/10 magnitude 7.1 - 22/02/11 magnitude 6.3 at a depth of 2-3km with a peak ground acceleration of 1.8g (one of the world's highest), disproportionately higher than the relatively low magnitude.

¹⁰ The damage and loss of life from the Fukushima event would have been far less had Japanese east-coast villages fully heeded the ancient tsunami stones and not built **below** them over the past half-century; Martin Fackler, *Tsunami warnings carved in ancient stone*, SMH World p15, 22-24 April.

¹¹ Reported in: Ben Cubby, *Call for renewed debate on nuclear energy in Australia*, SMH p7 News, 21 April 2011.

¹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_earthquakes_in_Australia

¹³ Lindsay Murdoch, *Uranium mine shutdown sparks environmental fears*, SMH p5 News, 19 April 2011.

¹⁴ Federal - Louise.Markus.MP@aph.gov.au; State - Roza Sage <bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au>; please copy your letter to Greg.Hunt.MP@aph.gov.au, and Barry O'Farrell <office@premier.nsw.gov.au>

The Surprising Lyrebirds of Scenic World (continued from page 4)

These breeding successes are pleasing. In many places, cats and foxes can be a serious threat to the survival of chicks or adults, but happily I found none at the boardwalk site during the survey. This does not mean they are not present nearby, and the management will need to remain vigilant.

The only disturbing find was that nearly a quarter of the birds were suffering an unsightly leg condition believed to be caused by *Knemidocoptes* mites, a parasite known to infest Superb Lyrebirds in Sherbrooke Forest, Victoria, as well as Pied Currawongs and other wild birds. Although none of the affected birds appeared to be ill in any other way, the condition, if severe, may potentially cripple or kill a bird. It is quite possible that the disease occurs mostly as a secondary infection, attacking already weak or stressed individuals with lowered immunity. Perhaps it's mostly limited to places where the density of birds is particularly high. More research is needed to find out whether there is any real cause for concern.

As is often the case, this survey raised more questions than it answered. It's amazing to think that a relatively well studied species like the Superb Lyrebird still holds secrets. What is certain is that the Scenic World birds are the most trusting lyrebirds I've ever encountered and are providing an ideal opportunity to learn much more about this iconic species. **Carol Proberts.** (Photo: Lyrebird's nest at Scenic World)



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

This month we conclude the description of a walk by Heather Mollenhaur undertaken as part of the Outdoor Guides Course 23 years ago.

We followed the track to Rock Climbers Cave, and noted three overnight packs. Nearby is a big waterfall which we sat near to admire. The track continues on under the waterfall and to Devils Hole – not far away. We then made our way back to the base of the ladders. As we passed under one overhang we saw bolts in the roof and a pile of rocks to reach up to climb along the roof! We then started up the very steep long ladders. These replaced the spliced wire ladder made by Dickson, who was employed by John North. Ross explained to us the process of proper breathing – taking in breaths in three stages, holding it, then breathing out in three stages, then we'd never be puffing after steep climbs. So after the three steep ladders he proved his point! We came out at the pumping station, a big building. This is the end of O'Sullivan's Folly. He was Minister for Public Works, and spent much money for a road to be built to go down into the valley. This is as far as it got (early 1900s).

We continued up the road to the gate which had the notice: 'Fish River Water Supply private road access (No access by order of Delegate of the administrator)' then onto Glenraphael Drive – the road along Narrow Neck. We came to a lookout on a big rock where we sat for quite a while. With the aid of the binoculars we could see a hut that had been built for a TV series "Ben Hall". The view of the Megalong Valley was very beautiful and

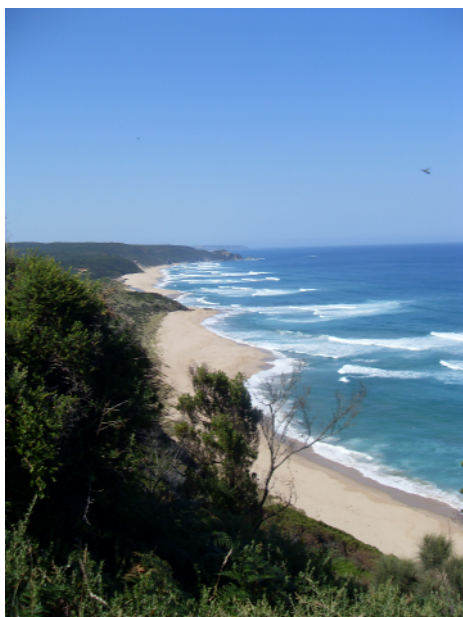


clear; it had been overcast all day but no rain. As we continued up the road there was one point where we were able to see the Megalong Valley on the left and the Jamison Valley on the right. The Landslide looked such a bright, clean colour. We could see Mt Solitary and Ruined Castle. We then went via the back streets behind Clairvaux, and lovely homes with beautiful gardens, till we got to the golf course at 4pm. It was a most enjoyable day. ■

Photo: The Landslide, Katoomba, from the Jim Smith postcard collection.. Arthur Mellor, a mine worker, first noticed a crack in the cliff face in June 1929. Small landslides occurred from 27th January 1931 until the main landslide on the night of 29th January 1931. The landslide was the result of weakened mine tunnels underneath the cliff when the mine was abandoned and the props removed.

The Great Ocean Walk Judith Dyer

For a long time I have wanted to visit The Great Ocean Road, Victoria. Never had the time until I retired and then it seemed a great idea to walk it! So in March 2011, eight of us, average age 68 and all keen Consoc bushwalkers met up in Apollo Bay for the start of the big adventure. Research had shown that you could walk for 3, 5, or 7 days, cover various distances and still say you had 'done' the Great Ocean Walk. You could camp



along the way or be picked up and dropped off at the beginning of each day and transported to accommodation in the area. While you walked, your luggage could be moved to the next destination.

In the end we went for the longest walk – seven days straight and finishing at Port

Campbell. We let Auswalks arrange everything for us including accommodation, meals and transport. We decided to go for the self-guided option so they also provided excellent maps, brochures and notes.

Every day we walked along beaches, through heath and forests and occasionally waded through creeks. Most days we saw no one else. The weather was kind, it only rained slightly on the last day but some days it was humid which made walking harder. We had to keep to quite a fast pace because we had to arrive at our destination by a set time each day. We saw koalas, snakes, kangaroos, echidnas, eagles and the rare Hooded Plover. The views were just amazing and the rock formations spectacular. The day we walked to the 12 Apostles it was misty and as we crossed each headland we could see them getting closer and more distinct. When we finally arrived, our peace was shattered by buses, cars and helicopters and hundreds of other sightseers. For many people doing the walk, this is their final destination. We were lucky that our group was then able to continue on to the Loch Ard Gorge. In my opinion, this is far more spectacular and well worth a visit. As yet there are no facilities there.

We all completed the walk but in hindsight, a day off in the middle would have been a good idea. Judith Dyer.

Photo: Johanna Beach

Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts

This year's autumn migration of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters through the Blue Mountains started late. A run of wet, misty and overcast weather has slowed the numbers to less than a trickle on most days. However on the rare calm sunny day the birds stream along their traditional pathways as if the traffic lights have suddenly changed to green. They are travelling north to their winter feeding areas, wherever those might be! (In fact they vary from year to year.)

Being a migration bottleneck for Yellow-faced Honeyeaters is one of the reasons the Greater Blue Mountains was declared an Important Bird Area (IBA) in 2009. IBAs are sites of international significance for bird conservation. To be designated an IBA, an area must meet specific criteria based on the numbers of key bird species it supports, such as globally threatened or restricted range species or congregatory species. These criteria, set by Birdlife International, are quantitative and scientifically defensible.

The Greater Blue Mountains is one of 45 IBAs in NSW and 314 in Australia and its territories, and it encompasses the entire World Heritage Area. It fulfils the criteria on a number of counts.

The Blue Mountains supports a high proportion of the world population of the Rockwarbler, a restricted-range species limited to the sedimentary rocks within a 250 km radius of Sydney. This is one of our most charming and unique birds that deserves to be better known than it is! Other key species for our area include the Pilotbird and Flame Robin, and the endangered Regent Honeyeater.

IBA designation has no legal implications but it provides a strong focus for conservation and a tool for garnering community awareness and activity. Members of Blue Mountains Bird Observers have embraced the project by taking on regular monitoring of Rockwarblers at key sites, establishing an inventory of Rockwarbler territories, and carrying out autumn counts of the migrating honeyeaters and other birds that migrate with them. For the past six weeks you might have noticed us, standing at points where the migrating honeyeaters stream up the gullies and along the escarpments, eyes fixed on the sky in concentration, frantically jotting down numbers! We'll be reporting our results to Birds Australia every three years, and it is hoped these surveys will be one way of becoming alert to any changes, particularly declines, in the abundance of these species.

Further information on Important Bird Areas can be found at www.birdsaustralia.com.au/projects/ibas and Blue Mountains Bird Observers at www.bmbo.org.au. You can read more about the honeyeater migration at www.bmbirding.com.au/hemig.html.

Carol Proberts origma@westnet.com.au

Eternal Vigilance

"The price of liberty is eternal vigilance". This ominous reflection on freedom is often, and probably wrongly, attributed to Thomas Jefferson. A similar declaration has been attributed to others, at least as far back as Demosthenes in the 4th Century BC. More recently, in 1923, our RSL adopted it as a motto.

The concept equally applies to the battleground between conservationists and those who see the environment as a resource to be plundered. This is an unequal battle: the man in the street against the resources of corporations. Nevertheless, the conservation movement understands that humans are part of nature, we depend on nature, and our quality of life and health will ultimately be damaged by a damaged environment. This understanding engenders the principal weapons that

conservationists bring to the battle, namely their passion and a determination to give their children a healthy environment.

So, the battle has typically involved the greedy exploitation of resources versus our present and future quality of life. Successes over 80 years of activism include saving the Blue Gum forest and protecting some of our iconic wilderness from logging, mining and dams. Yet little has changed, and we now face two determined attacks on state forests and parks, attacks on those places that provide such keys to life as fresh air and water. The first is the proposal to destroy a substantial part of the Ben Bullen State Forest by a large open cut coal mine. The second is the intention to target the Blue Mountains in the invidious quest for coal seam gas. Neither of these is compatible with the preservation of the environment or our future. **Peter Green, Publicity Officer.**

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

**BLUE MOUNTAINS
CONSERVATION SOCIETY**

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community organisation working to achieve the preservation and regeneration of the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

The Society believes that World Heritage status provides an opportunity for local community members to become custodians of the unique biodiversity and scenery of the Blue Mountains.

The Mission of the Society is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains.

The Aims and Objectives of the Society are to:

- Disseminate and foster an understanding of the ideals of Conservation.
- Promote the need for ecological sustainability.
- Protect the natural environment—flora, fauna, habitat, water, land and air.
- Actively oppose those human activities which degrade or destroy the natural environment.
- Repair the adverse effects of human activities upon the environment.
- Encourage the love of the natural environment by conducting a regular program of bushwalks.
- Increase the pool of expert knowledge about the natural environment, through meetings, excursions, research and other activities.
- Provide information to the public on matters of Conservation, especially through the Conservation Hut at the Valley of the Waters, Wentworth Falls.
- Maintain close and friendly relations with like-minded groups.

**Down the Wallaby Track — a backward glance, with John Low
THE WELSH WIZARD**

While film makers have long been attracted to the beautiful and dramatic scenery of the Blue Mountains, the industry's potential environmental impact has become a sensitive issue in recent times. No such reservations existed, however, in the 1930s when a Cardiff born film producer and flamboyant self-promoter, Harry Southwell (1882-1960), momentarily convinced some in Katoomba that he had the answer to their Depression blues.

Towards the end of 1931 the self-acclaimed Welsh Wizard, recently back from Britain and confidently talking up his reputation as a film producer, breezed into Katoomba with the intention of using the Megalong Valley to shoot a 'talkie' remake of his earlier silent versions of the Ned Kelly story. The last of these flawed, low budget attempts, made in the Burragarang Valley in 1922, had coincided with the failure of his production company and a temporary return to Europe.

Ensnared with his retinue in the Carrington Hotel and sought after by the local press, Southwell soon took on the appearance of a prophet whose vision offered hope of a promised land. "He states", declared the *Blue Mountains Times*, "that he and his colleagues are determined to make a Hollywood in our Blue Mountains territory."

Excitement at the possibility of a film industry based in Katoomba won over the editor of the *Times*. It is not hard to imagine him banging out his editorial at a rapid pace: "The screening of the completed pictures far and wide ... would bring the beauties of our scenery directly before many thousands, nay hundreds of thousands, of possible visitors", he enthused in the last issue of 1931.

Nevertheless, while the shooting of the film "When the Kelly's Rode" went ahead in the Megalong Valley and many locals found work as extras, things did not go smoothly for Southwell and the prophesied Australian Hollywood in Katoomba never materialised. When the film was released in Melbourne in 1934 it was panned by the critics as "unedifying, unconvincing, and often laughable". The fact that Ned Kelly couldn't ride and the Hydro Majestic occasionally appeared above the cliff line may well have contributed to their response.

There were no laughs in NSW, however, where it was promptly banned under a 1911 ruling preventing the screening of bushranger films that mocked the police and glorified criminal behaviour. When finally making it onto the screen in Sydney in 1948 it drew a sizeable audience, though perhaps for a reason unlikely to be celebrated. *Film Weekly* informed its readers that the film was "bad enough to serve as hilarious first half entertainment".

When the Kellys rode through the Megalong Valley they rode off with the hopes of many in Katoomba. The Welsh Wizard made no more films in the Blue Mountains and, despite raising the expectations of other locations with similar enthusiasm, spent the rest of his career on the margins of the industry in Australia. He died in relative obscurity in the western suburbs of Sydney in 1960.

John Low (johnlow@iprimus.com.au)



**BLUE MOUNTAINS
CONSERVATION SOCIETY**

'Like' us on Facebook: BMCS
Follow us on Twitter: bmcsnsw

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

- 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.
- May 21 **Gooch's Crater, Newnes Plateau.** Most on track. Chance to admire this remarkable natural feature and think about its preservation. Contact Bill 4758 8545. Meet Mt Victoria Station CP 8.15 am. Approx 8 km. Grade 2/3.
- May 28 **"The Horse Track" from Evans Lookout, and Rodriquez Pass track via Junction Rock to Govett's Leap, and cliff top walk back to start.** Contact Emanuel 4757 1090. Meet Blackheath Station CP 8.30 am. Approx 8 km. Grade 3.
- June 4 **Baal Bone Point, Gardens of Stone NP.** Walk changed from May 7. Contact Hugh 0423309854. Contact leader. Party limit of 8 (wilderness area). **BOOK EARLY OR MISS OUT.** Grade 4.
- June 11 **Mt Victoria ramble - Witch's glen through to Zigzag to Reinert's Pass.** Contact Liz 4754 4966. Meet Mt Victoria Station 8.30 am. Approx 8 km. Grade 2/3.

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

- May 16 **Mount York - Cox's descent to Lockyers Rd.** Historic Circuit. Meet Mt Victoria Stn. 8.45. Car pool Contact Eddie 4784 2691. Grade 2
- May 23 **BUS TRIP to Newnes.** Interesting walk through old shale mine works. 5km. Book & pay Keith 47361010. \$12. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 2.
- May 30 **Bald Head, Blackheath** - undulating walk through forest to stunning views over valley. 6km. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 8.45. Car pool. Contact Phil 4787 5560. Grade 2.
- Jun 6 **Causeway Circuit ,Glenbrook Euroka via campfire Creek & Ironbarks.** Classic walk with a difference. 9km. Meet Glenbrook Stn 9.30. Car pool. Contact Ros 4733 3880. Grade 2/3.
- Jun 13th **Whale Rock & Devlin's Creek, Cheltenham.** Walk through Lane Cove & Pennant Hills Parks. 6km. Meet Strathfield stn 9.15. Contact Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 2.

**"Christmas in July" lunch on 11th July at Everglades Historic House & Gardens, Leura. \$35pp.
Bookings and payment before 20th June. Judith 47586310**

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

- May 12 **BUS TRIP to 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 Contact 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 9.30 am. Car pool. Contact 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 Contact Maurice 4739 4942 Grade 2.
- June 2 **Castle Head.** Walk on Narrow Neck. Track through heath to Castle Head lookdown. Meet Katoomba Station Car park 9.30 am. Joan c/- 4782 1215. Grade 2
- June 9 **Faulconbridge Point.** Fire trail walk with great view at the end. Meet Faulconbridge Rail Station Car park 9.15 am. Car pool. Bring lunch. Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 1/2

Welcome to new members

Marie Cermak, Hazelbrook
Paul Thomas, Collaroy
Tina Graham, Collaroy
Euffrosine Ellul, Lane Cove
Michele Konrad, Sydney
Neil Crabb, Glenbrook
Helen Steadman, Blackheath
Jacinta Herborn, Warrimoo

Environmental harmony

Outside our kitchen window a White-throated Treecreeper hops up the posts of my boundary fence, seeking insects. With its long sharp toes the bird has no difficulty in clinging to the smooth wooden posts.

This cheerful, sprightly bird lives on insects it finds in the crevices of the bark of trees. Another species, the Sittella shares this food supply but they usually start from the top branches downwards, while the treecreeper flies to the foot of the trunk and works upwards.

How pleasant it would be if modern humans could fit so well into the environment.

Graham Alcorn, Newsletter No 44, June 1981. From Sipping the Nectar, the 'Bird Notes' of Graham Alcorn"

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



Protect the Gardens of Stone

“Say NO to open cut mining!”



To: **The Hon. Barry O’Farrell**
Premier of N.S.W.
CC: The Hon. Robyn Parker
Minister for the Environment and Heritage
c/o Blue Mountains Conservation Society
PO Box 29
WENTWORTH FALLS NSW 2785

Your Name: _____
Address: _____
Suburb: _____ P/Code: _____
Email: _____

Dear Mr O’Farrell,

Act to protect the Gardens of Stone from open-cut mining

I urge you to reject the 'Coalpac Pty Ltd Consolidation Project' proposal, Castlereagh Highway Cullen Bullen, NSW. This 'consolidation' involves extending open-cut and highwall mining into a large area of the publicly-owned Ben Bullen State Forest (BBSF), NSW and will impact the adjoining lands of the Gardens of Stone.

I am opposed to the development of the proposed Coalpac open cut mine because:

- If approved, the mine would scalp all biodiversity from 1088 hectares of predominantly old growth forest in the BBSF and turn its geodiversity into piles of waste rock.
- I support the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service wish to add BBSF to the conservation reserve system as a matter of priority; it is an area with outstanding natural values.
- Permitting this proposal would see the NSW Coalition Government privatising and liquidating a large part of public land, whereas I expect state forests to be protected from destruction in perpetuity.
- The Gardens of Stone’s iconic and unique sandstone pagodas provide a safe haven for a variety of native flora and fauna; it is a biodiversity hot-spot. If approved, their features and stability may be threatened by partial or total collapse, compromising the region's tourism.
- Our iconic Lyrebirds use the sides of pagodas in this area to nest and raise their young. Mining will completely remove their food habitats.
- Habitats for the Regent Honeyeater, Tiger Quoll and Powerful Owl and at least 32 other threatened native animals, five of which are listed under the EPBC Act, will be completely removed.
- The large open-cut will create significant dust and air quality issues which will directly affect local residents.
- The open-cut poses risks to the quality and quantity of westward-flowing surface water, and the quality of eastward-flowing groundwater.

Please reject this irredeemably destructive mining proposal and act to protect the region within a State Conservation Area.

Yours Sincerely,

(signed) _____

(This section will not be forwarded to the Premier)

Please complete and sign the letter and forward to Blue Mountains Conservation Society. We will deliver all the letters to the Premier.

Numbers count! Make a photocopy or download copies of the letter from our website www.bluemountains.org.au so that individual members of your household can sign separate letters. Pass on a copy on to a friend.

Find out more about the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 proposal at <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/gos2.shtml>

Tick this box if you want to volunteer to help protect the Gardens of Stone

I can help on Stalls Office/Admin Social Media Publicity Other (Specify) _____