

The Mounts Winter 2023

Community Newsletter of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine



A blast of autumn colour (Sarah Howell)

EDITORIAL

Winter has officially just started but the temperatures have been cooler, actually cold, for a few weeks now. You may have noticed the strong yellow colour of many of the trees in Autumn, apparently this is due to the cold weather being later than usual.

For me this is when the Mounts come into their own, a quiet respite from the noise, crowds and general franticness of Sydney. I have spent over 40 years coming to the Mounts and each season of each year I am still surprised by something – I hope that never stops.

What fire could ever equal the sunshine of a winter's day?

Henry David Thoreau

STOP PRESS

ZIG ZAG RIDES AGAIN

Saturday 27 May bought the long awaited news that the Zig Zag Railway is up and running after ceasing operations in 2012. The State Mine Fire in 2013 caused major damage and operations were just about to get underway when the Gospers Mountain Fire in 2019 caused yet more major damage to rolling stock and infrastructure.



Acting Zig Zag Railway chief executive Dan Zolfel operates trains on the newly reopened Zig Zag Railway track near Lithgow. (Supplied: Zig Zag Railway, via ABC News)

Footage of the train running on 14 May 2023 can be viewed [here](#).

The train will be operating every second weekend on Saturdays and Sundays, tickets can be purchased [here](#) and further details about the Railway and its history can be found [here](#).

MWPA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Your MWPA has continued to ensure the autumn season is as smooth as possible for residents and visitors. And what a beautiful autumn it has been with clear skies and crisp days.

We have had many visitors with over 2,000 cars entering the villages on some days on the busy weekends. Parking as always is difficult and we have worked with Council to rope off areas where parking may be dangerous and to assist with the traffic management.

Most of the new toilets have been installed but unfortunately not usable for the peak season. They should come online any day now. We did arrange for additional port-a-loos and hopefully that was sufficient.

Recently, our Stronger Communities grant proposal for the new picnic tables at Marcus Clark Reserve was declined so we will be seeking a new way to fund them. Please contact me if you have any ideas.

Lastly, a website has been established for residents to stay up to date on the developments at Western Sydney Airport fly path. The [Online Community Portal](#) provides information on airspace and future flight path design and upcoming engagement opportunities. It will also provide information on [upcoming community information stalls](#) which will be held across the greater Western Sydney region.

Stay warm!

Nancy Fox

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE AT THE OLD SCHOOL

The Mt Wilson Artist in Residence program welcomed Sharon Peoples in February and Anna Glynn and Peter Dalmazzo in March 2023.

Anna Glynn and Peter Dalmazzo

Anna Glynn is a contemporary artist who works with traditional media (painting and drawing) and new media (video/moving image, sound & digital photomontage). Peter Dalmazzo is an Australian biologist and environmental scientist with a passion for marine plants and animals and terrestrial botany.

Anna and Peter gave a very interesting presentation (see photo page 4) to an appreciative audience at the Village Hall. Anna presented images of her artworks, many of which feature extinct animals, and showed moving image works created from previous international residencies, including soaring frigatebirds in the US and giant pink slugs in Australia.

Peter spoke of his work as an environmental scientist and together Peter and Anna revealed their work in progress from their current residency at the Old School. 'Beauty on Beauty' comprises moving images of native forest and European gardens found in Mt Wilson. Anna was pleased to let us know the finished work is a finalist in the Lethbridge Landscape Prize 2023.



Above: Still image from 'Beauty on Beauty' a finalist in the Lethbridge Landscape Prize 2023.

Below: Image of landscape at Lambs Hill





At the end of the presentation and much to her delight Anna received the 2023 International Women's Day Arts Award from Zonta Berry in the Women of the Shoalhaven Awards. The award was given by Barb Smith (left in photo below with Anna), who had come to Mt Wilson to present her with the award.



Sharon Peoples

Sharon Peoples is a visual artist who constructs embroidered textiles using soluble fabric to make lace-like structures. She gave a fascinating presentation at the Old School studio where she described how, after much thought and planning, she embroiders her works on dissolving paper, after which they are mounted or often made into a miniature in a box. She loves to research and experiment to bring her ideas to fruition, while in Mt Wilson one of her projects was to explore how to visualise bird sounds.



Sharon gave the following account of her time in Mt Wilson.

Alice Simpson

My time as artist in residence at the Mt Wilson school has been exceptionally rewarding for me as a visual artist. I was determined to walk all the tracks and trails set out on the website and information booklet in the cottage. Early most mornings I'd head off on yet another adventure. As I was by myself, I left a note on the table as to my direction, as a bit of insurance and I stuck to the tracks marked out. I have to admit I did get a little lost when there were missing arrows but that wasn't too dramatic as I could orient myself by the sound of cars. It was great to return to spots in the afternoon to pick up on details but often the light was so different. The landscape overlooking Wynnes Rocks at 8 in the morning is so different after lunch.

My approach to residencies is that it's a time for gathering resources to take back to the studio. I usually set up a 'nature table' of things of interest that I collect while out and about. Often I draw these objects, getting the details down by taking my time and carefully looking at them. I do a lot of writing in my journal, as walking provokes a lot of thinking. Each morning in the studio, whether in my home studio or in residence, is to hand stitch for no longer than 30 minutes. This is followed by writing, be it just a diary of what I've been doing, or discussing problems in my

work, what I am hoping to achieve in the day or fleshing out ideas. While on residency I can think for long periods without interruption. I have time to think up lots of solutions to ideas rather than going along with the first 'good' idea. I have time to reject things I make because I have time to repeat. I also can make things using very slow processes like hand stitching or detailed drawings.



I do a lot of playing, playing around with ideas, building little constructions, and wondering how I can translate them into textile pieces. Generally, I question why I am embroidering a piece – asking what does that process add to the work? Why would a stitched image of a bird do that a watercolour illustration can't? Mind you I did a few bird paintings that probably won't see the light of day for a while but are filed away in my resources.

I came without any preconceived ideas about where I was going. All I knew is that I was driving from Canberra to the Blue Mountains via Oberon and there were lots of walks to take. Of course, the drive in along The Avenue was surprising to say the least. Arborists were trimming the road-side trees so the drive in was slow as I had to stop and wait. I was so distracted that I drove past the school, ending up at the cathedral reserve.

I began drawing and painting in the manner I usually work until new ideas began to flow. My project was to explore the sound of birds – making the aural visual. Although I had tried this previously, it initially seemed elusive here at the school. Playing around for a couple of weeks did bring up a few solutions which I will now go back to solve technically and making with the right materials. I will work on these ideas and work towards exhibition pieces in the future. The

working title is 'Eavesdropping – bird conversations'. I will let the Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine communities know when I finally show this work.

I am truly grateful for the time and effort that goes into such philanthropy of inviting and hosting artists of all persuasions to spend time in this amazing landscape.

MT WILSON AND MT IRVINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The historical society held its 24th Annual General Meeting on Saturday 18th March 2023 in the Mt Wilson Village Hall 10.30-12.30. This meeting was the intended AGM for 2022 and would normally be held in November but was deferred to March 2023 due to the unavailability of key members to meet at that time.

Attendance was modest based on total members of the society and probably reflective of how busy and 'time poor' we are in these hectic times. Inadvertently, the meeting was scheduled on the same day and time as the AGM of the Blue Mountains Cultural and Heritage Organisation which precluded several members and supporters from attending. This should not re-occur when the society AGM returns to its usual scheduled month of November each year.

The society very sadly said farewell to more members and local residents who passed away recently; Maurice May (Wollartukkee) - former lawyer, garden lover and member since 2003; Paul Naylor (Booralee) – son of Helen and Ron Naylor and descendant of the Morley family original settlers of Mt Irvine; and Elaine Turnidge (Telopea Cottage) – member since formation, who worked tirelessly for the society and notably donated a folio of her late husband Graham's artworks to the society in 1997.

The society warmly welcomed some new members. Peter Resanceff, James Douglas, Alexander Moffatt, Petula Martin, Hugh Cowan and Terri Jorgensen.

The president's report thanked all the outgoing committee for their work during the last 12 months and noted some of the achievements, new acquisitions and problems that beset the society. The main current dilemma is that the society's annual financial obligations are much greater than current anticipated income. This is mostly due to a threefold increase in the cost of building insurance for the museum. The problem rather reminds one of the 'annual income' quotation of Mr Micawber from *David Copperfield*. The society committee will be meeting through the year to determine how these additional costs can be managed. There were many positive and helpful suggestions made during the meeting to assist in raising our profile and promoting our objectives throughout the local community as well as some very encouraging ideas to assist in future fundraising ventures.

Des Barratt, who hosts museum visitors almost single-handedly, provided a report on the Turkish Bathhouse Museum. There is still much interest in visiting the museum, especially from community groups in the wider Sydney area. This provides some much needed, but modest, income for the society along with the small number of ad hoc visitors on the weekends. The Museum was open throughout last year. However, as in recent years, it could not be open every Sunday in that period due to insufficient volunteers to cover the roster. Currently the museum is only open on the days when it can be covered by a willing volunteer. The museum gutters were in urgent need of cleaning and this task has now been completed with warm thanks to Wendy Smart.

A marvellous demonstration of the Village Walk app project was provided by Peter Resanceff. The end product is very impressive with an excellent narration provided by Sarah Howell. An official launch of the online Village walk will be organised for later this year.

The election of office bearers occurred later in the meeting. Malcolm Reynolds was elected as president of the society, the treasurer position was kindly accepted by David Howell and the secretary position is now currently vacant. The previous members of the committee all agreed to continue in that role and we warmly welcome Peter Resanceff to the committee.

The society also extended its thanks to Lata and Bill Moss for their donation to the society of a copy of their publication *Dennarque – A Mt Wilson Story*. The historical archive was able to provide much useful material for the publication of this impressive book.

The St Georges Church committee has also made a wonderful donation of church records to the Historical Society's archive. This includes correspondence and other documentation dating back to the original building of the church in 1916. Our deepest thanks go to Helen Freeman for providing this wonderful material.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society you would be very welcome. Please contact the president either by phone (4754 2886 or 0402 891 941) or [email](#) to find out more or to receive a membership form.

Malcolm Reynolds

BUSHCARE NEWS

Many thanks to those who came to the May bushcare morning, it was a beautiful sunny autumn day, we had seven keen bushcarers dealing with the weeds in Gregson Park, many hands make light work, much progress was made!

The Mt Wilson Bushcare Group spend a few hours together each month helping to reverse the damage done to the environment by invasive weeds in bushland in Mt Wilson. During this time we carefully remove weeds and encourage native plants to grow, using the principles of bush regeneration to guide our work.

BMCC provides all equipment, including gloves, secateurs, spade, herbicide, kneeling pads etc. Those interested should check the calendar on the Mt Wilson Mt Irvine community website to determine the location each month. Covid safety precautions have now eased so there is a chance there will be a delicious home-baked cake at morning tea! Please bring your own tea/coffee. Bushcare is held on the second Friday of each month, between 9am and 12 midday. It is an enjoyable morning and a great way to learn more about the native flora including beautiful rainforest trees, shrubs and flowers.

For residents who are wanting to identify and control weeds in their gardens, the booklet "Bushland Weeds of Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine" can be found in the Bushcare section of the community website. The booklet is also available from the MWPA, if residents would like a free copy please contact Sue Woolfenden on 4756 2046.

Everyone is welcome, hope you can join us!

Mt Wilson contact: Alice Simpson (0414 425 511 or 4756 2110)
Council contact: Tracy Abbas (0428 777 141)

Alice Simpson

UPDATE FROM YOUR RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Where to start? We've had the busiest time.

With less fire related action during late summer and autumn we usually do a lot of training this time of year and into winter. And this year has been no exception. We've had Brigade members obtaining their Village Firefighting qualifications, doing modules for the Advanced Firefighting qualification which covers a range of subjects such as hydraulics (pumps and moving water about!), wildfire behaviour, crew safety and later in the year they'll be doing a navigation module. We have three members working through courses to get their Crew Leader qualifications. We've got some members doing driver training so they can drive our fire trucks (and what not-so-little boys and girls don't want to drive a fire truck?). A large number of members have also been doing Advanced First Aid courses which includes resuscitation techniques. While many of us have had this training previously, with COVID-19 putting a dampener on our refresher courses, we've had to do training from scratch rather than undertaking refreshers. We've saved a lot of mannequins. Have I left any of our training out? Probably, it's been quite hectic.

As we always do, we sent a truck to look after one of the drinks stations for the Six Foot Track race in March. It's always a great day with us handing out energy drinks, Coke and lots of water to those hardy souls who take on the course. There's a lot of ice put in hats and down backs too! Sunscreen and band aids are also distributed liberally. We usually have the last drinks station at the race finish line but, with a change to the course this year, we were stationed at the third last drinks station which gave us a different perspective. By that time, all the runners were in need of both hydration and encouragement (they had steep incline to get to us) which we gave them in abundance. The RFS receives funds from the race organisers for the work which many brigades do which, in turn, is made available to brigades to buy much needed equipment. So, we both raised funds (indirectly) and also supported all those runners.



Then we've had our regular monthly training with our most recent training session held at Mt Tomah where we trained with the Bell and Mt Tomah Brigades doing scenarios involving fire threatening the Mt Tomah station and providing fire protection and rendering first aid to injured car occupants in a simulated motor vehicle accident. This gave our 'L' plate crew leaders the chance to practice deploying their crews, being Incident Controllers (first field officer on the scene of an event) and generally working out how to approach the scenarios. It was great to catch up with the Bell and Mt Tomah Brigades who we often work with. When there are incidents along Bells Line of Road all three brigades are often tasked by Fire Control to send trucks, so we get to know them at incidents as well as when we're training. And as everyone who lived through our recent fires knows - when it comes to a crisis we're all in it together.

Speaking of being in it all together, our Community Engagement Officer, Janet McDonald, and our Street Coordinators have been holding get togethers for our various street areas reminding everyone of how we, as property owners, can make it easier for the Brigade and visiting brigades to protect and defend our properties when fire comes along. These meetings are also the chance for neighbours to come together to talk about their particular fire risks and how we can work together to minimise those risks. They also give neighbours an opportunity to meet socially as a bigger group. Three of these meetings have been held so far (as at writing this column) with three more to go. For anyone who couldn't make it to their street meetings, Janet has some great RFS resources property owners can use to get ready for the next fire season. A special hello to all our new property owners – getting your properties ready for the next fire season is the way we do things around here. We're happy to give you advice on what you need to do now to make sure that if fire comes, you and your property are prepared and defensible. If you can't wait, have a look at our Brigade's column in the Summer 2022-23 edition of The Mounts where we set out our top tips for getting your property fully prepared for fire season.

Our Brigade Captain Beth Raines and Senior Deputy Captain Peter Raines have been attending RFS workshops on new bushfire risk management plans for the area and generally working hard to prepare for upcoming fire seasons.

As WH&S Officer, I'm working on a range of WH&S issues from making sure all our hazardous chemicals are recorded and we know what to do with them and about them if there's a problem through to new Site Rules for Brigade members and authorised visitors to follow to make sure we're all safe around the newly extended Mt Wilson Station.

Oh, and to show we do all this training and preparation so we can help in real life events – since our last column, we attended three motor vehicle accidents on Bells Line of Road and had four Community First Responder callouts. And because we're part of much bigger RFS efforts when needed, we sent a crew and truck to a fire at Hill End and three other members to crew in other strike teams responding to the grass fires in Central and Western NSW.

Sounds interesting? Want to know more and whether there's something for you in the Brigade? Well, there certainly is. We have a wide range of jobs to do, many of which do not require you to get on a fire truck and be on the front line – although we're always looking for more active firefighters too. We have jobs in the station officer group, in catering, station and equipment maintenance and many more occasional roles which really help to keep us running and ready for action when we, the community, needs our Brigade. And we're a really friendly and sociable bunch with most activities including a social element. For our new property owners, joining the Brigade in any capacity is a great way to meet other property owners and residents. So, what are you waiting for?

A final subject for this round-up of Brigade news; we held the community launch of the extension to the Mt Wilson Fire Station on 29 April. It was a terrific opportunity for 100 or so community members and the Brigade to come together to see what we've been doing for the past 18 months or so and, most importantly, to see what this extended facility will do to help us better protect our community and the many visitors who come to share the beauty of both of the Mounts. See some photos from the community opening [here](#).

We also had a look at the exciting plans for the new Mt Irvine Station which is to be built and funded by the RFS. It too will be a great asset to our community and increase our ability to look after ourselves and help others.

At the community event for the Mt Wilson Station extension opening, we heard about all the people who have worked so hard for many years to get this extension built. Unlike most RFS buildings, this extension was devised and undertaken by the Brigade, we designed it, we contracted with the builder through a special purpose entity we incorporated, we project managed it and we funded it (with half the costs coming from a government grant and the other half the result of over 10 years of fundraising). And we did it on time (weather delays excepted) and within budget (although the project and budget did expand as projects do!).

The official opening will be on Sunday 18 June at 10am at which we'll have visitors from Government (in acknowledgement of that grant from Commonwealth/NSW governments), the RFS and BMCC and we hope that we'll see a lot of Brigade and community members come along to that too. It's important to show that our community values the work done to help us be more resilient and prepared for natural disasters of all kinds, not only fires. And your Brigade is a big part of that community resilience building. Depending on the publication date of this newsletter, you should already have received your invitation or you'll be getting it very soon. Keep an eye out for it.

I think that's about it for now. Keep it safe, people.

Elizabeth Montano, Member of the Brigade Executive and WH&S Safety Officer

AWAKENING THE RICH AND ENTERTAINING HISTORY OF MT WILSON VILLAGE

After many months of researching, consulting, compiling, editing, digitising and uploading, the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society is pleased to announce that the Mt Wilson Historic Village Walk App is now available for purchase in both the Apple and Google app stores.

The new mobile app utilises the latest in GPS-based tour and storytelling technology to bring to life the fascinating and often entertaining history of Mt Wilson village and introducing you to the unique cast of characters who played an important role in the village's formative years from the late 1800s through to WWII.

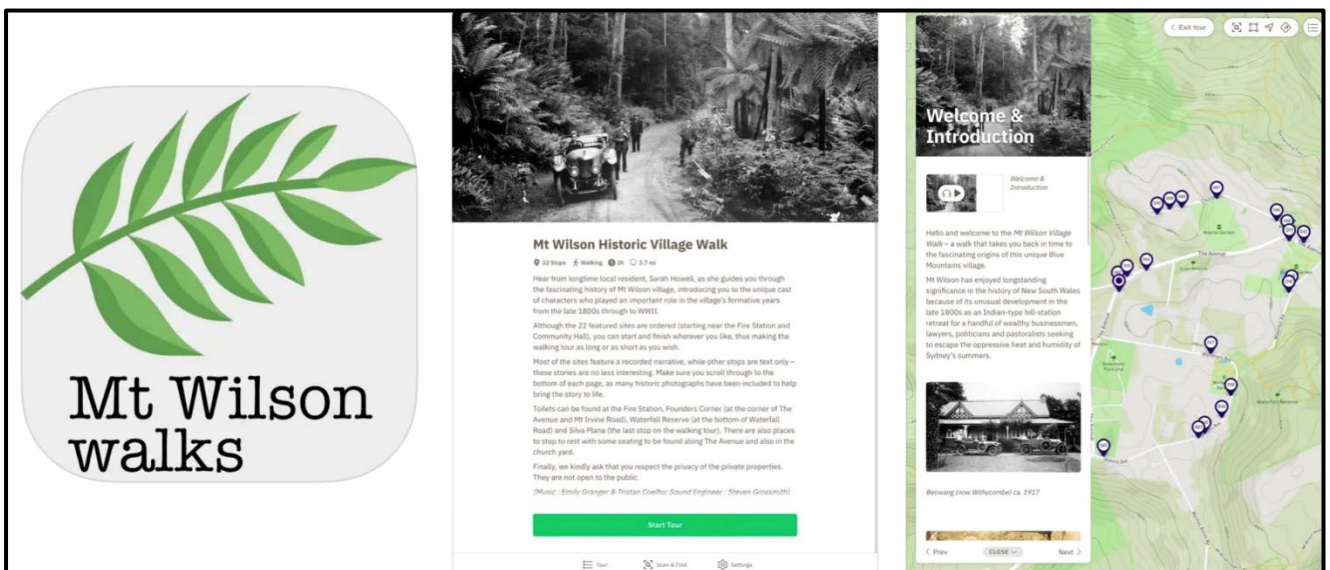
Spanning 22 sites across the village and featuring a recorded narrative by Sarah Howell, the app engages the village walker with lesser-known stories of the early inhabitants of Mt Wilson. From the Anglican Archbishop and his wife (right) who were annually (and unceremoniously!) transported around the streets of the village in the back of a Bedford utility, to the resident purported to be the illegitimate child of King Edward VII (below), to the story of not one but two Melbourne Cup winners. The app brings to life these stories with pictures drawn from the Society's extensive archive.



Special mention should be made of industry-renowned sound engineer Steven Grossmith, whose soundtrack including audio special effects is a highlight. The audio also features the enchanting sounds of former Artists in Residence, Emily Granger and Tristan Coelho who have generously donated use of their music throughout the app.

So, get downloading today! For just \$3.99, the app will add an interesting new twist to your village wanderings

and introduce you to a tales of the village that will surprise and delight. The net proceeds of your purchase will go straight to the Society and help to support the ongoing subscription cost of keeping the app online.



Simply search 'Mt Wilson' in your app store to locate and download the app to your smartphone or tablet.

Peter Resanceff

MUSIC AT ST GEORGES

Mt Wilson's church, St Georges, was the venue for two memorable concerts in recent weeks. Showcasing two very different musical styles, both were enthusiastically received by local audiences.

Community choir, Timbre Flaws, was introduced to Mt Wilson by former Artist in Residence, Helen Pitt who is a member of the group. Led by Stuart Davis who formed the choir in 2002, the singers regularly travel together and have performed as far afield as Cuba, Morocco, and Vanuatu. Around 20 singers from the group set up camp in Cathedral Reserve and performed for free for the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine community. The choir sang beautifully as they presented an uplifting program of contemporary numbers ranging from South African folk songs to well-known pop songs arranged in four-part harmony. All music was performed from memory accompanied only by Stuart on guitar or unaccompanied. St Georges has probably never before seen a congregation waving their phones in the air in time to the music! We look forward to Timbre Flaws' promised repeat performance in 2024.



Another connection to the Artist in Residence program was the final concert in the current series of Music to Soothe the Soul. Harpist Emily Granger and her composer husband Tristan Coelho (see photo page 14) presented a program for harp and piano entitled, *Together Again* as they returned to Mt Wilson after their residency at The Old School in 2020. As well as works by Elena Kats-Chernin, Arvo Pärt, and Claude Debussy, Emily and Tristan performed several evocative pieces composed by Tristan during their residency including one entitled *The Old School*.

The next scheduled concert for St Georges will be a performance by the singers of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs on Saturday 29 July at 3pm.

Sarah Howell



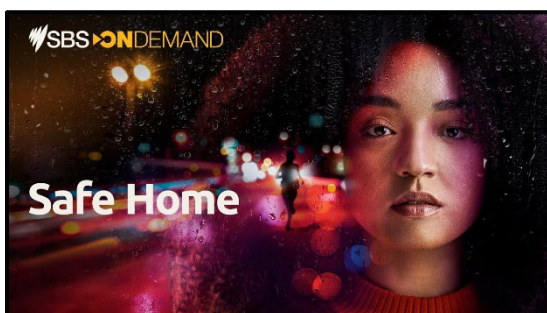
SPECIAL MAINTENANCE FRIDAY DINNER

A special maintenance Friday dinner was held on 10 March where Barry Freeman spoke about the role of women in the Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Brigade in honour of International Women's Day (held on 8 March), Beth Raines gave a response (photo thanks to Janet McDonald).



SCREENTIME

As the cold nights become a fixture, rather than sit in the sunshine with a book you may be more likely to snuggle up in front of a screen, here are some suggestions.



Safe Home is a new four episode series on SBS that premiered on Thursday (11 May). It is about a family violence legal centre and is by no means an easy program to watch but covers a very important topic with some less commonly addressed perspectives. The whole series is available now to stream via [SBS On Demand](#). For more information [click here](#).

Sir David Attenborough (who recently turned 97!) has a new program **Wonder of Song**. Sir David has chosen seven recordings of song from the natural world – yes birds but many other animals too. All recordings were made during his lifetime and there is a special Australian song featured. [Wonder of Song](#) is available to stream on Foxtel and Binge on BBC Earth (channel 134).

More of the natural world can be seen on ABC's [Ningaloo Nyinggulu](#). Hosted by award winning author Tim Winton, join him on a journey to one of the last intact wild places left. Known as Nyinggulu to its First Nations people, you may know it better as Ningaloo, this is worth watching on the biggest screen possible.

Matilda Halliday

SNAKES ABOUT!



The arrival of colder weather means our local snakes have gone into hibernation but please still be aware.

This beautiful 2m diamond python was photographed by Micah Baker-Fink in mid-March sunning itself.

Remember that snakes are protected native animals.

FEEDBACK AND SPRING EDITION

The Mounts is edited and compiled by Alison Halliday and Matilda Halliday. Your feedback and comments are always welcome, please send to themounts2786@gmail.com.

The closing date for the Spring edition of The Mounts is **Friday 11 August 2023**. Please send submissions in Word format to themounts2786@gmail.com. Images of local events, wildlife and flora are also welcome.

Contributions from members of the community are always welcomed – this is *your* newsletter. The email address for queries and contributions is themounts2786@gmail.com.