

Lithgow after the fire The healing journey continues ...

-- Julie Favell, Lithgow Environment Group

In Lithgow, the healing journey started after the 2019/2020 Gospers Mountain fire. The mountains around Lithgow were engulfed in flames, habitat was gone, the bush was silent. The people of Lithgow wanted to "do something". Many people phoned the Lithgow Environment Group (LEG) for help.

Andrew Lothian's company, Biodiversity Monitoring Services (BMS) had been monitoring native fauna on the Newnes Plateau. Andrew had installed artificial nesting hollows or 'possum tubes' prior to the 2013 State Mine fire to support the endangered Eastern Pygmy Possum. The tubes were destroyed in the 2013 fire, replaced and had been wiped out again. So began LEG's Eastern Pygmy Possum project.

LEG approached the Lithgow Women's Shed and connected them with Andrew. In March 2020, a training and education program began and, despite the interruption by Covid, the women of the Shed were able to build 100 tiny possum houses. Fifteen of these tubes were installed on Newnes Plateau in June 2020.

Nov 2021: The Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area (GoS SCA) was declared. This held up LEG's Eastern Pygmy Possum project while Newnes, Ben Bullen and Wolgan State Forests were handed over to National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW. In May 2022, the Gardens of Stone SCA was gazetted.

Jul 2022: LEG was successful in obtaining a small grant from Lithgow City Council. Eight-year-old Leo Williams donated the proceeds of his lemonade stall.

Oct 2022: LEG, Andrew Lothian and GoS SCA project met at GoS SCA Long Swamp trail.

Nov 2022: LEG kicks off an education information night, at the Lithgow Transformation Hub (UWS Lithgow Campus), inviting guest speaker Andrew Lothian, local fauna ecologist. Andrew was able to share that, over 10 years monitoring, 51 vulnerable or endangered species, including the Eastern Pygmy Possum, had been recorded in the GoS SCA.

Dec 2022: LEG founding members, Chris Jonkers and Julie Favell, Andrew Lothian and NPWS project officers scoped out locations for tube placements. NPWS determined LEG as the first volunteers for Gardens of Stone Guardians.

Jan 2023: 10 passionate locals heard the call from LEG, rallied to support LEG and NPWS project officers. Andrew Lothian's first tube placements in GoS SCA western area on Long Swamp trail.

Jun 2023: LEG's 20 dedicated volunteers roll up their sleeves, sharing their own stories of Gospers fire with Andrew Lothian and NPWS officers, on a nature walk and inspection of tubes and recording findings. No EPPs identified, but a Yellow-footed Antechinus scat was identified.

Nov 2023: Canberra Institute of Technology lecturer Blake Canackle made contact with LEG to bring 25 students, over 2 days, to inspect placed nest tubes. Chris and Julie shared knowledge of native flora field work.

2024: LEG's project assisted with a supporting donation from Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

What you can do to help: LEG is seeking volunteers to join their committee. Founding members will share their extensive knowledge, mentoring to enhance its ongoing work in the field. There are no membership fees to join, but donations welcome.

LEG will celebrate 20 years in 2025. More about LEG on facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/LithgowEnvironment/> and website <https://www.lithgowenvironment.au/>
Contact: lithgowenviro@gmail.com



Eastern Pygmy Possum - Andrew Lothian



Volunteers EPP placements, Long Swamp trail
GoS SCA Jan 2023

BIRDS

Birds are rushing
through my trees
having some sort
of tiff
yelling at each other
behaving like humans

-- Rosemary Lewis