

## BETTER PLANNING IN NSW

Recent news of a forecast 2.1 million increase in Sydney's population over the next 20 years is worrying news for those concerned about protecting the natural environment in and around their suburb.

While PNHA's main focus is on the environment of Pittwater, we are aware that we must support organisations campaigning on the larger stage, who have a more direct focus on planning in NSW.

The Better Planning Network (BPN) is one such organisation. Formed in 2012 in response to major changes proposed for NSW's planning system, BPN represents hundreds of affiliate and member groups across NSW, including PNHA.

There are many challenges ahead, one of the most important being the need for effective community engagement in the planning process. PNHA believes that the community should have a stronger voice in decisions that affect our community. We believe that community wellbeing and environmental protection are essential components of good development.

We will continue our support for organisations like BPN which give the large number of smaller organisations like PNHA the opportunity to speak with one voice to the Baird government.

If you would like to know more about the Better Planning Network go to [www.betterplanningnetwork.org.au](http://www.betterplanningnetwork.org.au) or look at the Better Planning Network Facebook page.



*A green suburb incorporating fauna corridors*



*Business as usual*

*Inside: Update; Campaigns & Concerns; Victim of July Storms; Mistletoe Birds and more; Ingleside Chase Biodiversity; Nocturnal Pittwater.*



## PNHA AGM, July 24 Katandra Bushland Sanctuary

The previous year's committee members were re-elected: Marita Macrae Chair, David Palmer Secretary, Mark Turner Treasurer, Kerry Smith bird walks leader, Robyn Hughes Membership Secretary, Committee members: Gary Harris, Julie Bennett and Anette Bonnefin.

Ecologist Cecil Ellis gave a fascinating presentation on what lives in our local freshwater streams and how presence or absence of certain species can indicate water quality.

### Committee update:

*After serving on the committee for several years, Annette Bonnefin has retired for family reasons. Thankyou Annette for sharing your previous experience of working in government offices and offering advice based on that for PNHA's benefit, and for your help at PNHA's stand at the Pittwater Wine and Food Fair. We wish you well in your new directions in life.*



## Bird Walk Reports

### August 28. Chiltern Road. Warriewood Wetland Birds and Wildflowers.

This track is always interesting for birds and brilliant with wildflowers at this time of year. Notable birds were a pair of Wedgetailed Eagles circling high overhead, Yellow Tufted Honeyeaters, Brown-headed Honeyeaters and lots of nesting Spotted Pardalotes

### September 25. Warriewood Wetland and Bird Presentation

Despite a damp start this walk was well attended, and by many people new to the area and bird watching. To the right of the board walk was a Dusky Moorhen's nest and tiny black babies venturing out, being fed by their mother. Whipbirds were calling very actively. We also heard an invisible Lewins Rail calling repeatedly, an unusual event. To see the bird and hear the call go to [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewins\\_rail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewins_rail)

Morning Tea followed with a chat about what we had seen and a photo display of some of the 160 birds that call this area home.

We ran this event as part of the Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment Spring Festival.

## Northern Beaches Council community consultation

PNHA is represented on the Natural Environment Strategic Reference Group, one of 11 groups providing community input on various aspects of council management. We'll be speaking up for better control of weeds across all classes of land, not just bushland reserves, and management of coastal dunes by natural environment staff, rather than reserves and recreation land staff.

## Dog Control Policy – stalled by council merger

With one meeting to go, in which recommendations were to be finalised to put to Council, the committee was abolished when the councils were amalgamated.

## PNHA CAMPAIGNS & CONCERNS

### Indian Myna campaign

A mini grant from Greater Sydney Local Land Services to progress this campaign will now run until the end of December. We attended the Dee Why Fauna Fair on September 11 and attracted some interest. Here Julie Bennett explains use of trap to Kylie Ferguson.

To reduce Indian Mynas:

- deny them food – don't leave pet and chook food where they can get it.
- they nest in hollows and holes- watch out for them entering holes in roofs, shop awnings, nestboxes put up for parrots and so on. Get rid of nests, block up holes.



## PNHA CAMPAIGNS & CONCERNS

### The Greater Sydney Commission

The Lane Cove Bushland & Conservation Society held a community forum on the Greater Sydney Commission on August 9. Robyn Hughes attended for PNHA.

Have a look at <http://www.greatersydneycommission.nsw.gov.au/>

The website says: *"The Greater Sydney Commission will create and implement key plans for Greater Sydney. We're focused on making Greater Sydney more productive, sustainable and liveable."*

PNHA's concern is the preservation of the natural environment, though the Commission's activities are much broader. The community is encouraged to participate in the Commission's work. Jeff Angel from Total Environment Centre & Corinne Fisher are on the Environment Panel who will inform the Commission.

Robyn reported that feedback to date has stressed the importance of public transport, housing affordability, childcare needs and so on.

Online discussion forums are available 24/7:

**Facebook:** / greater sydney commission

**Twitter :** #greatersydney

[www.gsc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.gsc.nsw.gov.au)

### PNHA at SOS Green Spaces Meeting In August

Save Our Green Spaces is a campaign to save NSW green spaces from development, coordinated by the Total Environment Centre. Robyn Hughes attended a community campaign meeting for PNHA.

The threats to green spaces come from:

- The NSW government's Biodiversity Conservation Bill, replacing the Native Vegetation Act and Threatened Species Act. It is to come before Parliament shortly.
- Urban trees State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) which will determine urban clearing that can be done without a permit, clearing that be done with consent, and clearing that requires offsets.
- Crown lands review. This could lead to sale or lease of Crown Lands, including Crown Reserves and Travelling Stock Routes etc. These are important refuges for biodiversity and public recreation.
- Ad hoc planning. Threats to trees, bushland and parks. Council reclassification of community land for commercialisation and sale. State Significant Development infrastructure bypassing environmental controls.

Do you value our green spaces?

For more information: <https://www.facebook.com/totalenvironmentcentre/>

**See: #sosgreenspaces** Take action at: [www.tec.good.do](http://www.tec.good.do) and [engagement@gsc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:engagement@gsc.nsw.gov.au)



### Bangalley Head Landcare

Now we are starting the second year of a three-year grant project. Two more owners of private bushland adjoining the reserve have agreed to have contract bush regeneration done on their land. Follow-up work will be done on the five properties on which work began last year. Some of the grant funds will be spent in the reserve.

### Mullet Creek Project

Now in its fifth year, this project faces challenges from hungry Swamp Wallabies and floods. Rick Shire's photo of Irrawong Waterfall in July this year shows the torrent which swept away fences in the flood plain where a lot of tubestock has been planted. Luckily the grant funds and Council contributions will get the fences up and more tubestock in the ground.



**Local Land Services**  
Greater Sydney



## The Mistletoe Bird



The little male mistletoe bird could be mistaken for a robin, with his red breast.

The female is grey and pale red under the tail.

You can see this sparrow-sized bird easily just now in an unlikely suburban location - in the car park in Dee Why between Howard and Oaks Avenues. The Plane trees are now bare so that the abundant mistletoe is very visible as green tufts on the bare branches. Watch for movement around the tufts and listen for the high squeaky call.

This bird is a major disperser of mistletoes, which although a parasite of trees doesn't usually cause them harm. Its habit of eating the berry - which passes quickly through its gut - then perching sideways on a branch and wiping its sticky excreta containing the seed on the branch ensures the spread of its major food source.

Watch out for it near Winereremy Bay where the Swamp She-oaks have a lot of Mistletoes of various species.

To hear its call and get more information: <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Dicaeum-hirundinaceum>



## VICTIMS OF THE JULY STORMS

A Coast Banksia in Avalon was blown over and had to be cut up. In tunnels deep in the trunk were several large larvae of something. Beetle? Moth? Each measured about 5cm long and 1cm thick, with huge jaws equipped to gnaw wood.

We think they are larvae of the elegant Banksia Longicorn Beetle, possibly *Uracanthus triangularis*.

An adult longicorn beetle will bite in self defence. Pick up with caution.

The beetles were not to blame for the loss of the tree, which was shallow-rooted.



This bare Plane Tree above appears to be green and sprouting but the green tufts are clumps of mistletoe, in August 2016. These trees do look badly affected by the parasite, another challenge on top of struggling to grow in a paved car park.

## Do you like to feed birds?

Do you think you should?

Does it do any harm?

Opinions differ.

Have a look at these sites:

<https://feedingbirds.org.au>

<https://csdb.org.au/feedingbirds/home.aspx>

The ABC Science Show on Radio National podcast is at

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/scienceshow/is-there-anything-wrong-with-feeding-birds/7750616> where you can hear a discussion on this topic.

Adult image:  
Wiki Commons.

Larvae images: M. Macrae





Image from Queensland Museum website

## Red Crowned Toadlets and Swamp Rats in Ingleside Chase

Northern Beaches Council staff are reviewing biodiversity of Ingleside Chase reserve, as part of the preparation for potential biobanking requirements when development of Ingleside and Elanora Heights goes ahead.

Two interesting species were found.

### Swamp Rat *Rattus lutreolus*

This native rat is a bit smaller than the native bush rat (*Rattus fuscipes*) and has very dark upper fur, often a yellowish belly, and a very short tail, shorter than its body, so can never be mixed up with introduced rats or bush rats.

It lives along the southern arm of Mullet Creek. It likes dense understory on edges of freshwater riparian areas, especially sedge areas, makes tunnels under vegetation to move around and likes to be left undisturbed as much as possible.

More information:

<http://www.qm.qld.gov.au/Find+out+about/Animals+of+Queensland/Mammals/Common+mammals+of+south-east+Queensland/Rats+and+Mice/Swamp+Rat#.V7ZPfU9f3oo>

<http://bie.ala.org.au/species/urn:lsid:biodiversity.org.au:afd.taxon:a2923e80-ee6c-49a2-b923-8e4905f4d174>



### Red Crowned Toadlet *Pseudophryne australis*

Surveys by frog expert Dr Arthur White for Red-Crowned Toadlets located these frogs in the upper catchments of Mullet Creek and Fern Creek at Ingleside, but not in the upper catchment of Narrabeen Creek. Only small numbers of toadlets were detected at each site indicating that the breeding activity may already have been in decline after the heavy autumnal rains.

Image: Red Crowned Toadlet - Wikipedia



Trampling through thick Saw Banksias, pushing between prickly Dagger Hakeas and weaving below towering Red Bloodwoods but in the pitch black night... doesn't sound like a lot of fun, does it? But it's just part of what Jayden Walsh does in order to find rare and threatened nocturnal animals.

Jayden is a passionate wildlife photographer and amateur ecologist currently completing his final year at Manly Selective Campus. His main spotlighting is undertaken in Warriewood Wetlands and Ku-ring-gai Chase NP. This article details some of his significant finds and is illustrated with his own photos.

## Reptiles

Reptiles- snakes, lizards and turtles- are often thought of animals that are purely diurnal. However as they are ectothermic (cold-blooded) and cannot control their body temperature they rely upon the ambient temperature to be 'just right' for their body. Thus, during summer when daytime temperatures often exceed 35 degrees these animals become nocturnal. Pittwater is home to 13 species of terrestrial snake, more than 10 species of Skink, four species of Gecko and two species of Freshwater Turtles.

The Eastern Stone Gecko (*Diplodactylus vittatus*) below, is the most uncommon of the four Geckos of the Sydney Region and is found in dry sclerophyll and Hawkesbury sandstone heath. Like the majority of Geckos, the Eastern Stone Gecko is purely nocturnal and very rarely sighted. Jayden's records are the second, third and fourth from Pittwater in roughly 30 years.



The Common Death Adder (*Acanthophis antarcticus*) is one of the thirteen species of snake that calls Pittwater home. It is known for being the fastest striking snake in the world. You certainly don't want to be on the receiving end of a bite; it is number nine on the list of the most



venomous snakes in the world! Fortunately it is a very placid snake, is generally quite a slow traveller and like all snakes doesn't strike unless provoked or acting in defence. Within Sydney there are two main colour morphs: Grey and Red, pictured below left and above.

## Mammals

Pittwater is home to roughly 25 species of Mammals including many threatened or rare species. Some common mammals of Pittwater include Bush Rat, Common Ringtail Possum, Brushtail Possum, Brown Antechinus, Swamp Wallaby and Grey Headed Flying Fox.

Jayden spotted a Rakali (*Hydromys chrysogaster*) also known as a Native Water Rat in Irrawong Reserve in early April this year. Once spotted it quickly swam up a small creek and disappeared into a hollow log before a photo could be taken. This is only the second record for the Warriewood area. However they are sometimes recorded around Narrabeen Lagoon.

Some of the most significant mammalian finds by Walsh have been in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and have included:

- Common Dunnart (*Sminthopsis murina*) – first record for the Northern Beaches and maybe the tenth record for Greater Sydney Region ever!
- New Holland Mouse (*Pseudomys novaehollandiae*) first record for the Northern Beaches in 13 years. It was unfortunately found as roadkill.
- Southern Brown Bandicoot (*Isodon obesulus*) first record for Ku-ring-gai in several years and was unfortunately found dead on a firetrail.

Recently Jayden was on his way to spotlight in Warriewood Wetlands when several doors down his own street a Grey Headed Flying Fox was making an absolute ruckus. Deciding to check it out he spotted a Sugar Glider (*Petaurus breviceps*) in a street-tree (*Angophora costata*) several streets away from Warriewood Wetlands and in a very urban area, highlighting the persistence of animals in urban areas and the importance of planting and retaining native trees. Unfortunately by the time he ran home for his camera the Sugar Glider had disappeared. Attached is a photo he



captured in Ku-ring-gai Chase NP of a very confident Sugar Glider feeding in a *Banksia ericifolia*.



One of the little known residents of Pittwater but one that has been receiving a lot of attention is the Eastern Pygmy Possum (*Cercartetus nanus*), above. This species is often detected on camera traps and in artificial nesting hollows but is not often seen out foraging. Jayden has been lucky enough to sight these miniscule creatures out foraging several times in Ku-ring-gai Chase NP. They feed upon a variety of flora and fauna but nectar and pollen of *Banksia ericifolia* flowers is their staple food.

### Birds

Several nocturnal bird species are present in Pittwater including the Barking Owl, Powerful Owl, Barn Owl, Masked Owl, Southern Boobook, Owlet-Nightjar, White Throated Nightjar and Tawny Frogmouth.

The Southern Boobook (*Ninox boo-book*) is a small Owl



that is relatively common throughout the Pittwater area. It mainly predares upon insects and small mammals meaning that it utilises a wide variety of habitats. It is generally shy though the one photographed allowed a close approach in Ku-ring-gai Chase NP.



The Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*) is Australia's largest and most well-known Owl. Within Sydney there are believed to be 60 breeding pairs of this threatened species. Being so large, they love the taste of Ringtail Possum, Grey Headed Flying Fox and the occasional Brush Tail Possum. Within Pittwater they are a common sighting in Warriewood Wetlands, Irrawong Reserve and urban Avalon and Bayview. Jayden was lucky enough to discover one in a winter roost site that was used almost every day for two months in 2015, pictured with a Ringtail Possum.

### Amphibians

In Pittwater there are roughly 16 species of Frogs including four threatened species.

Recently Jayden discovered a Giant Burrowing



Frog (*Heleioporus australiacus*) and several Red-Crowned Toadlets (*Pseudophryne australis*) in Ingleside. Unfortunately Ingleside is planned to be developed and 3000 homes to be built meaning that these threatened species and many others including the Eastern Pygmy Possum and Large Eared Pied Bat will be destroyed.



## Places to Spotlight

Great locations to spotlight aren't hard to find. Any patch of bush larger than a hectare is almost guaranteed to contain at least three mammal species.

One of the most diverse and easy to access locations is Warriewood Wetlands. At 26 hectares in size it is home to roughly 20 species of mammal, six species of frog, four species of snake and three nocturnal birds and the 2km of boardwalk allow for easy and close viewing of all these animals in their natural environment.

## Tips

A strong headlamp such as the Ledlenser H14R.2 is essential for spotlighting to detect eyeshine that almost all animals give off. These can be quite expensive but are definitely worth the money.

Ultimately, Pittwater is home to an amazing array of nocturnal animals and I would encourage you to get out at night and find out what incredible creatures live in your area!

**Jayden Walsh**



## Membership Application

I would like to join Pittwater Natural Heritage Association. I agree with the PNHA's aims: raising awareness of and preserving our unique Pittwater natural environment.

Name:..... Signed:.....

Address:..... P/Code .....

Email:..... Ph:..... Date:.....

I would like a **paper copy** OR **emailed** newsletter (circle your choice). Membership fee: \$20 or \$10 pensioner/student. To pay your membership, you can deposit electronically into our account at the Commonwealth Bank: BSB 062 208, account no.10168467. Type your surname in the reference box so we know who the membership is for. Alternatively make cheque payable to: **Pittwater Natural Heritage Association** or **PNHA**. Post cheque payable to **Pittwater Natural Heritage Association** to PNHA, PO Box 187, Avalon Beach NSW 2107.

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