

PNHA NEWS

Spring 2018 Issue 77

Pittwater Natural Heritage Association – thinking locally, acting locally

PNHA Update

Annual General Meeting

Our 2018 AGM on August 26 at Katandra attracted about 40 people. One reason was our star presenter Jayden Walsh who shared facts and photos of many frogs of the Northern Beaches area. He is an expert frog finder, photographer and entertaining speaker. In the last year he discovered a population in the Ingleside area of the Dainty Tree Frog. This species is not generally seen in Sydney but is brought here accidentally from further north, earning it the popular name of Banana Box Frog. Has it been here all along, just unnoticed?

The new committee: Marita Macrae, Chairperson; David Palmer, Secretary; Robyn Hughes, Membership Secretary; Mark Turner, Treasurer; Kerry Smith, Gary Harris, Julie Bennett and Edna Blanchard who replaced Annette Bonnefin who retired during the year. The PNHA Report for 2018 is on page 8 below.



The Dainty Tree Frog or Banana Box Frog, *Litoria gracilentia*. Image: Jayden Walsh

Inside:
PNHA grant projects progress,
Draft Urban Tree Canopy Plan open for
comment, Wildlife in the 'burbs: Hollows
as Homes, PNHA Report AGM 2018

Jayden commented that the reason he and friends found this frog in Ingleside Chase Reserve on the night of 14.3.18 was because he was on the lookout for it and it was one of three nights they bred that season thanks to 83mm of rain that day. He said it is highly likely to have been here all along but the fact that it typically breeds/calls only one or two nights per year (on the heaviest rains when most people are inside) is why it is undetected. He has submitted a paper to Australian Zoologist journal on the find, as it is a 250km range extension to the south of previous sightings.

For more about Australian Frogs: <https://frogs.org.au/frogs/species/Litoria/gracilenta/>

Mona Vale Basin Stronger Communities Grant project

This grant provides for extra contract bush regeneration help for the bushcare volunteers here. The last \$3000 of the \$12000 grant to PNHA will be spent by the end of November. The bush here contains Littoral Rainforest on one side of the turf area, and coastal dune vegetation.



Careel Creek Vine Weeds Project, Avalon

On-ground work ended with a second community planting day on September 15, between Etival St dog park and Barrenjoey Rd. Thanks very much to our energetic volunteers. It's a wet area and the rain since has ensured success.



Plants are bagged to protect from rabbits. Still to come is a brochure about vine weeds to be completed shortly. A grant from GSLLS to PNHA plus Council funds paid for this work.



**Local Land
Services**
Greater Sydney

Tube-stock from earlier planting now in bloom: Bottlebrush *Callistemon rigidus*, Goodenia *ovata*, Hardenbergia *violacea*



South of this area is some remnant **Sydney Freshwater Wetlands**. This is an endangered ecological community in need of restoration. Some at Careel Bay adjoins the Vine Weeds site.

We received just over \$3000 from GSLLS for bush regeneration on this area, supported by extra funds from Northern Beaches Council. More about this EEC here:

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/determinations/SydneyFreshwaterWetlandsSydneyEndComListing.htm>

A Community Planting Day to speed up regeneration after massive weed infestation will be held on Saturday October 27

Time 8.30-11.30 am. Meet on Barrenjoey Rd opposite Crane Lodge Place. Tools, training and morning tea provided. Gum boots might be a good idea too.

Our Urban Tree Canopy

This is such an important feature of the Pittwater and Northern Beaches natural environment.

Northern Beaches Council has prepared a Draft Urban Tree Canopy Plan. This can be read at

<https://yoursay.northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/urbantree>

PNHA will be commenting on this and we'll send members our submission soon. Closing date for comment is **November 15**. There will be Drop In sessions where you can hear more about the draft plan.

- Manly Town Hall forecourt - Wed 24 Oct - 12pm - 1pm
- Glen Street Theatre - Thu 1 Nov - 12pm - 1pm
- Mona Vale Library lane - Thu 8 Nov - 12pm - 1pm
- Dee Why Beach, The Strand - Wed 14 Nov - 12pm - 1pm

Be sure you have your say. We have lost a lot of trees in the past few years. Storms and the 10/50 Bushfire protection code, plus ongoing loss of trees to make way for ever-larger houses are some reasons. Some trees are dying of root damage that occurred long ago, or are simply at the end of their lives. We must stop this loss.



For the latest PNHA news and events visit our Facebook page

Wildlife in the 'burbs:

A Place to Hide

Australia has about 300 birds and animals that depend on hollows to hide, roost or nest in. These are in short supply in the suburbs.

One way to provide these is with nestboxes, but another way is by creating artificial hollows in stags – dead trees. On the northern side of Plateau Park Reserve, on Bilgola Plateau, a Sydney Blue Gum was growing and producing a lot of young trees. This species is not native to the Pittwater area and was becoming a weed. Council had the big



Left: Blue Gum stag, Plateau Park, Bilgola
Right: Red Bloodwood stag, Annie Wyatt Reserve, Palm Beach

tree and the younger saplings poisoned. Arborists were engaged to lop the branches and cut hollows into the trunk. These were re-covered with removable slabs so holes can be inspected. Different sized entry holes were made suitable for a variety of birds such as parrots and dollar birds, sugar gliders, insectivorous bats and so on. The stag has strong roots and will stand for many years.

A tree that died in Annie Wyatt Reserve above Palm Beach received the same treatment.



Looking for a hole, this Lace Monitor planned to enter the roof cavity of a house in Ingleside. Its huge claws enabled it to crawl up a vertical brick wall.

It could have been looking for a quiet place to hibernate over winter and/or it could have been after Brown Antechinus who nest in there from time to time.

It found a way in and stayed there snug over the winter. Monitor images: David Palmer





What's a Brown Antechinus, you ask?

A mouse-sized carnivorous marsupial. It is mostly nocturnal, coming out during the night to prey upon insects, spiders, centipedes and sometimes small reptiles and frogs. During the day it can be found in large communal nests in tree hollows, crevices or logs on the ground (or under roofs).

See: <https://australianmuseum.net.au/brown-antechinus>

Image: Wikinedia

The Hollows as Homes project

This project raises awareness of the value of hollows and invites you to help with monitoring them – where they are, and who is living there.

Have a look at: <https://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/hollows-as-homes/hollows-as-homes>

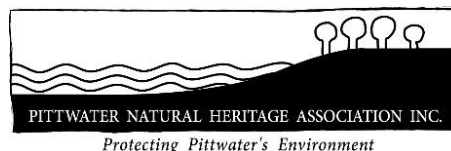
You can look at a video here to find out how you can get involved in monitoring hollows and keeping animals safe: <https://youtu.be/EpQtat76d6Q>

Ringtail Possum image: Gary Harris



PNHA Report, AGM 2018,

PNHA's objectives and vision



The vision and objectives that guide us are: to protect and enhance Pittwater's natural environment and raise awareness of it and the threats it faces in the community.

We have had another busy year, with some on ground projects completed, others continuing, ongoing campaigns from previous years and some new ones this year.

Ingleside Land Release/ Mona Vale Rd/ connectivity for fauna.

We celebrated a win this year with the announcement of a second vegetated overpass on a widened Mona Vale Rd East. This can't be on our preferred location for engineering reasons, but further west up Mona Vale Rd. It will not be as wide as we had hoped, either, but it will establish a safe connection for fauna between Ingleside Chase Reserve and bushland in Ingleside and Katandra Bushland Sanctuary. There will also be a widened culvert nearby, where Narrabeen Creek goes under the road, to allow fauna to pass under the road. We have to thank David Palmer and Jacqui Marlow for meetings over several years with RMS departmental staff at Parramatta and for their persistence for this success.

The land release has been delayed this year, as issues with bushfire safety and biocertification are dealt with by Department of Planning and Council.

The Ingleside Land Release area includes a vegetation type that is Federally listed as endangered is Coastal Upland Swamps. We found that the mapping of this in the area of Ingleside to be developed was inadequate and several areas had been overlooked. In response to a PNHA submission to Dept of Planning more areas of coastal upland swamp were identified, but we are still campaigning for buffer zones to be created around them. This year we have commissioned ecologist Nick Skelton to undertake a survey of the extra areas we believe should be mapped as CUS and protected with an adequate buffer zone. A swamp can't survive if it doesn't receive water.

Careel Creek Vine Weed Control project. This was funded by a Greater Sydney Local Land Services grant. The funds have now been spent and the project will end after a second community planting day on September 15. Introduced vines such as Honeysuckle, Morning Glory and Madeira Vine and also native vines, can smother trees and other plants, degrading the bushland.

Mona Vale Basin Bushcare group support with a Stronger Communities grant from NB Council. This site already receives council funding but our grant increases the amount of contract bush regeneration work done. This is heartening for the volunteers, who work on the first Saturday of each month. This is to be completed by mid October.

62 Hillside Rd Newport. We set up a petition to Northern Beaches Council and Rob Stokes, asking for land at 62 Hillside Rd Newport to be saved from development. This land of 1.06ha had been the subject of several failed development attempts during the last 18 years, but earlier this year Council approved a DA for subdivision into 6 blocks. The explanation was that zoning permitted this. The land, zoned E4, Environmental Living, contains littoral rainforest, federally listed as endangered. At the meeting of August 1, Councillors Alex McTaggart and Rory Amon successfully moved that Council investigate means by which this land could be acquired and managed as a bushland reserve. The petition with 2241 signatures was presented to Council at the meeting and to Rob Stokes later that

week. No news on this so far. The owner is expecting about \$4.5M. The land is steep and would be costly to develop. The pressures on bushland and its wildlife are relentless. We need to save whatever we can.

Bayview Golf Club DA for Seniors Living Housing. We opposed this on the grounds that it would cause serious environmental damage. Council opposed the DA. The Northern Sydney Planning Panel recently determined the DA should not go ahead. So this valuable fauna habitat is saved for now.

Indian Mynas. Our campaign to trap these pests has met with limited success. 1447 birds trapped so far, by people borrowing our traps. This has not been the success we had hoped and we will be closing it down. Council has not agreed to participate. Most of Mynas occur in shopping centres where there is food and nesting sites in buildings. Traps need to be located out of sight of people so that birds are confident to enter traps and people don't get upset at seeing them caught. This is not possible for us to do.

Grevillea caleyi. PNHA volunteers help at the Bahai Temple with bush regeneration every couple of months.

Clean Up Australia – the first weekend in March each year. We couldn't take part this year. It will be interesting to see next March if the Return and Earn machines have any effect on what is collected. A comment: The locations of these machines are apparently not signposted, so we wonder how people know where they are. Who knows where they are? Word of mouth is not good enough.

Birdwatching outings. As many of our bird guides were unavailable this year, we didn't continue these outings.

Communications:

1. PNHA Website and Facebook. Our website has been improved, but we are more active on Facebook. Our Facebook page needs all the *likes* it can get.

2. Email We communicate by email to our members items of local interest, citizen science opportunities and wider environmental problems relevant to Pittwater.

3. Newsletters. We now post only 1 paper copy compared with about 120 emailed to members and to non-members such as Council staff and Councillors. Besides saving on postage, the advantages are that photos are in colour and that readers can click on the links within the articles to find more information. We welcome suggestions and contributions.

4. PNHA Brochure. We are in the process of developing this; a forerunner version is available here today.

Northern Beaches Council

PNHA is again represented on the Natural Environment Strategic Reference group, set up to develop priorities for management of our natural environment for the new Council. It meets quarterly.

Submissions this year to Council:

1. Northern Beaches Council Delivery Program and Budget - 2018 to 2021

Given the importance of this to Pittwater people, and recognising our duty to care for our natural environment, we expected to find explicit recognition of its funding needs in this document.

The only reference we can find is on pages 41-43 under the heading: Environment and Sustainability
 We can't see figures for funding • bush regeneration in Council reserves and management of remnant roadside native vegetation • pest species control - weeds and feral animals • Council landscaping with local native plants or a program to encourage similar landscaping on private land • Promotion of the volunteer bushcare program

We didn't receive a satisfactory answer to our comments.

2. Narrabeen Lagoon Aquatic Walkway

We objected to what we believe is an unnecessary and expensive solution to the problem of bringing up to standard about 70m of the track around Narrabeen Lagoon. We think it is a visual blight on the natural reedy and wooded lagoon shore. We objected also to lack of enough community consultation. We understand this project is still being considered.

A big thanks to our management committee and our allies in our activities. The committee meets every two months. David Palmer our secretary, Robyn Hughes is Membership Secretary, Mark Turner is Treasurer, Julie Bennett, Gary Harris and Kerry Smith are committee members. During the year David James took Annette Bonnefin's place on the committee. Later he retired and Edna Blanchard agreed to fill that position. Thanks very much all for your wise suggestions and hard work.

PNHA Membership is now over 100, but it should be more. We do urge members to try to get a friend to join. Thank you to Robyn, who does a great job of managing the membership list and reminding us when membership renewal is due.

Looking to the future, we will continue to campaign for our local natural environment. We have generally kept our activities to the old Pittwater LGA, but bring to our members environmental news from further afield.

We welcome ideas and contributions from members as to what we could do, how we do it and feedback on what we've done.

The future is up to us.

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:.....

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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