

PNHA NEWS

Issue 86

Pittwater Natural Heritage Association - thinking locally, acting locally



MERRY CHRISTMAS and
HAPPY HOLIDAYS to
PNHA MEMBERS and
FRIENDS
ALL THE BEST FOR 2021

PNHA AGM 2020 October 18 Newport Community Centre

Our Guest speaker Dr Helen Smith, Australian Museum arachnologist, gave us a fascinating presentation about spiders, increasing our awareness of what marvellous creatures we live amongst. One of many spiders she told us about is the Net-casting Spider *Deinopis subrufa*

Left: A female holds her net between her two front pairs of legs ready to cast it over her prey.



Right: This adult male has done with hunting and is now waiting to find a female.



Big but not scary: This harmless spider's legs are each about 4cm long

PNHA Report for 2020

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

Our Year: Yet another year has passed but one like no other. This report usually covers what we've done from AGM to AGM, rather than during the last financial year, as our financial report does. So we'll continue that tradition and even foreshadow some promising events coming up before the end of this calendar year. PNHA Report continues on page 7:



Protecting Pittwater's Environment

PNHA is on Facebook Want to get in touch?
pnhainfo@gmail.com

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PNHA UPDATE

Grants progress

Our Federal **Communities Environment Grants** for Mona Vale Dunes and Avalon Golf Course bushland are going ahead as planned. Dragonfly Environmental bush regeneration company is working on both sites.

A terrible weed in the **Avalon Golf Course bushland** is *Ochna serrulata*, also called Mickey Mouse plant. Dragonfly



invested in some tree poppers. **Left:** Supervisor Sylvain gets ready for work. **Below:** Heavy metal jaws clamp onto the base of the stem, then the heel resting on the ground permits the whole plant to be levered out of the ground, roots and all. A very efficient way to remove Ochna.



On Mona Vale Dunes, primary work continues. Weeds have dominated this area for a long time, so it will need revegetation. We expect the site to be ready for planting tubestock next autumn. Here the Mona Vale Dunes bushcare volunteers check out the site. The dead weed material makes mulch that will help tubestock get established.

New grant for Mona Vale Dunes: Northern Beaches Council has approved a grant for \$3500 for maintenance of bush regeneration work done over the past 14 years of bushcare on the dunes. This will be very encouraging for the bushcare volunteers there. PNHA will contribute an extra \$1000.00. We expect to engage contractors early in 2021. Bush Regeneration, like gardening, never stops!



Want to get in on the action on these dunes? Have a look at Mona Vale Dunes Bushcare Facebook page. This group works two morning each month, the second Saturday and the third Thursday.

Saving *Grevillea caleyi*

For the recovery program for *Grevillea caleyi* we are contributing to bush regeneration with our grant from Greater Sydney Local Land Services of \$26 000 over four years. Because of Covid concerns at the Bahai Temple site, the work will instead continue behind the golf course on Booralie Rd Duffys Forest. Our on-ground contribution includes two bushcare days.

The next will be on Monday March 15, 2021.

Contact David Palmer 0404171 940 for more information.



Combating Trad with Smut

PNHA received from the CSIRO some Trad stems infected with a smut, a type of fungus disease of leaves. This organism has been proven to infect only Trad and once established its spores spread to suppress or kill it. When this might happen is uncertain. We planted the stems at Bangalley Headland Reserve, along the track to the Irrawong waterfall (right) and at McCarrs Creek Reserve on October 28. This is just the beginning of the smut release program in our area. We are optimistic it will make an impact sometime.



Bushland at Red Hill Under Threat

Pittwater Natural Heritage Association works in the Pittwater area of the Northern Beaches but we also support environment groups working in other parts of the Northern Beaches. Recently we heard of a major threat to bushland around Red Hill.

A couple of months ago local environmental volunteers noticed that a number of bushland lots around Red Hill, located between Cromer Heights, Beacon Hill and Oxford Falls, in the Northern Beaches Local Government Area have come up for sale. They are part of a larger area of bushland that needs protection.

This land has significant bushland. It contains aboriginal sites and habitat for a number of threatened species of flora and fauna. Tributaries of South Creek, Wheeler Creek and Middle Creek flow through it. Marita and I have walked over this land and seen its natural values. It's hard to believe that bushland like this can be divided up and sold for development, but that is what is proposed.



Lots for sale are numbers 1090, 1091, 1092 and 1093 Brooker Avenue, Beacon Hill

However, there are possible ways to preserve it. The State Government has been approached to acquire the land and Northern Beaches Council are supporting public ownership. It is suggested that it could be bought as a nature reserve, or as Biodiversity Offsets for large infrastructure projects. Let's hope that the Government finds a way to place it into public ownership. There are many local environment groups working to ensure that they do.

David Palmer

Bangalley Head Vertebrate Fauna study

We commissioned Jayden Walsh to do this study between September 2019 and November 2020. He found 61 bird, 11 reptile, 3 amphibian and 11 mammal species in the survey period. The entire site was sampled within approximately 10m of the reserve boundaries. These surveys covered a variety of habitats and recorded several species that were previously undocumented from this area. An additional 7 species of seabirds were recorded over the ocean within 100m of the cliffs including the Vulnerable Black-browed and Shy Albatrosses.



One reptile on Jayden's list was the **Golden-crowned Snake**. It feeds at night, searching for sleeping lizards by scent, taking them from their night-time retreats. It may also eat frogs and blind snakes. Its average length is 50cm but may reach nearly one metre. It's venomous but not considered dangerous. See more: <https://australian.museum/learn/animals/reptiles/golden-crowned-snake/> Photo: Jayden Walsh

If you would like a copy of Jayden's report, contact PNHA: pnhainfo@gmail.com

Get Out in the Bush with Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment

Sunday 27 December 7.30 am

Walk & Weed along 5 Mile Creek track in Garigal NP.

Short 15min walk to exotic grass and lantana infestation site.

Weed for 2 hrs on rockshelf surrounded by beautiful bush. Bring gloves and long handled screwdriver if available.

Walk easy-medium.

Finish 10.30am

Bookings essential. Conny 0432643295

Sunday 21 February 2021 7.30 am

Walk & Weed along the Narrabeen Lagoon catchment transverse walk.

Start at Oxford Falls walk for 3 1/2 hours, weed for 30min, continue 30min walk and car pool back to start.

Bring gloves and long handled screwdriver if available.

Walk grade: medium.

Bookings essential. Conny 0432643295

More Information: <https://www.narrabeenlagoon.org.au/>

Urban Night Sky Place

Pittwater Natural Heritage Association is supporting the Urban Night Sky Place Project ,UNSPP, at Palm Beach as we have become increasingly aware of the importance of the night sky and the effects of poor lighting on the natural world.

Research has shown that excessive lighting disturbs habitat, sleep patterns and reproduction rates in our native fauna. Recent studies in Australia have shown sleep deprivation in our own magpies due to unnecessarily bright artificial light.

It causes disorientation in migratory birds and turtles for example and pollination rates suffer. The Audubon Society in the United States ran a very successful LIGHTS OUT program to save their migratory birds. It has excellent ideas to reduce the damaging effects of artificial lighting and could be useful for Council in the future.

The American Medical Association has documented the deleterious effects on human circadian rhythms and the importance of dark skies and quality lighting.

PNHA hopes that this project will increase public awareness of the beauty and importance of the dark sky as community involvement, engagement and education is an essential part of the working party's agenda.

We hope also that Council itself will work to improve public lighting and encourage households to turn off lights at night.

We congratulate NBC on the UNSPP and are delighted to be involved with the working party.

Edna Blanchard, PNHA's urban Night Sky campaigner.

Street Trees

Would you like a street tree on the nature reserve outside your property? If you undertake to care for it by watering and keeping grass away from its trunk, you can **"jump the queue"** in the council's tree planting program.

Contact Fenton Beatty, Tree Services Manager, on 8495 6766 or 0481 911 922.

fenton.beatty@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au

Which Tree?

Not another Watergum! How about Snow in Summer, *Melaleuca linariifolia*, a small paper-bark tree with fluffy flowers in October-November. (right)

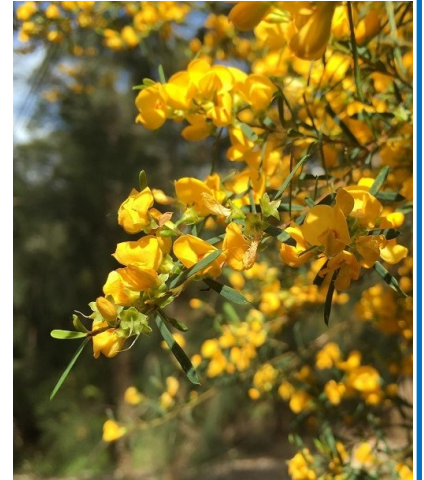
Or Old Man Banksia, *Banksia serrata*, a small tree of great character. How about a Scribbly Gum, *Eucalyptus punctata* or *Eucalyptus racemosa*. These are both small –medium sized local trees.



Tiny Blue Butterflies



Have you noticed swarms of these small blue butterflies around? We think they are **Common Grass Blues**, *Zizina otis*. They seem to be having an excellent year. They lay very small eggs, and in our Avalon yard young Graceful



Bush Pea *Pultenaea flexilis* (right) seems to be one of their favoured larval food-plants. Other food plants are in the Fabaceae (pea) plant family such as the local natives *Glycine* and *Indigofera*, also garden peas, lucerne and clover. More photos and information: <http://lepidoptera.butterflyhouse.com.au/lyca/otis.html>

Gary Harris

Bush in Your Back Yard?

Can you tell the difference between a seedling Phoenix Palm (weed) and a young Burrawang? (native Cycad)

Is that shrub a Small-leafed Privet (weed) or a *Breynia oblongifolia*? (native).

What's the difference between the two on the right? Can you name either? *

How could you be expected to know?



PNHA participated in a Teams meeting online with NBC discussing changes to E-Zonings across the merged councils. These zones include land of environmental value, for instance with remnant bushland. We were struck by some people living on E- zoned land asking for help in managing bush in backyards.

We later found that **Blue Mountains Council has a program to support residents who want to look after their bushland**. Have a look at this: <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/environment/conservation-volunteers/bush-backyards>

At present Northern Beaches Council offers advice about weed management but not more, as far as we know. We will be encouraging NBC to set up their own program.

If you own bush or have native plants on your land, and you'd like help and advice, contact the Council. Your requests may help persuade NBC to meet the need we know is there in the Pittwater community. All our bushland is important and deserves understanding and wise management.

* Left: Small -leafed Privet Right: Breynia. Leaves are the same size, about 2cm. Leaf arrangement: Privet leaves are opposite, come off the stem in pairs, Breynia's are alternate. Breynia also has tiny flowers and berries next to each leaf.

PNHA REPORT 2020 continued:

Bush regeneration grants

We were successful in receiving two grants for bush regeneration from the Federal Government's Communities Environment Program. One for \$12215 is funding bush regeneration on Mona Vale Dunes and another, received on behalf of Avalon Preservation Association is \$10 000 for work in the bushland on Avalon Golf Course.

For the recovery program for *Grevillea caleyi* we are continuing contributing to bush regeneration with our grant from Greater Sydney Local Land Services, \$26 000 over four years. Because of Covid concerns at the Bahai Temple site, the work will instead continue behind the golf course on Booralie Rd Duffys Forest. Our on-ground contribution include two bushcare days. The next will be on October 26. [now March 15 2021]

PNHA Walks 2020

We had a program of guided Sunday and Friday walks learning about mostly birds and wildflowers. The Fridays were offered as an experiment to see if they would be popular. They were not. Covid affected the program. Successes were walks in Warriewood Wetland and on our favourite Chiltern Track in Kuringgai NP, Ingleside.

Communications:

PNHA Website and social media. The aim of these is to gain recognition for PNHA and raise awareness of our wonderful natural environment. Our website has been improved, but we are more active on Facebook. Our Facebook page needs all the *likes* it can get. We are gaining interest. Currently 650 people like our page and 730 people follow us, meaning they get a message when we add to our page.

A post about an upcoming walk on the Chiltern Track reached 1820 people. The Facebook posts area automatically also posted on our Website front page. We found Instagram a bit beyond us.

Email We communicate by email to our members items of local interest, citizen science opportunities and wider environmental problems relevant to Pittwater. We've improved the appearance of our emails by using an app called Mailchimp. David's daughter kindly organises the actual sending out of these emails. But if the message is fairly urgent we use the usual email.

Newsletters. We send out about 130, emailed to members and also to non-members such as Council staff and Councillors. You can read the newsletter soon after on our web page. Readers can click on the links within the articles to find more information.

Our new publication **Pittwater Nature** appears every two months. Our second issue has just been sent out. We were inspired to do this by the example of Willoughby Council, because during the times when COVID shut down bushcare and other community activities, the staff there published a cheery *weekly* newsletter full of news, photos and contributions for bushcare, wildlife rescue people and community gardeners. The purpose was to keep people in touch with each other and positive about life and their environment. Since amalgamation Northern Beaches Council's Cooee E-newsletter published occasionally to people interested in the natural environment is disappointingly a faint shadow of its Pittwater former self so we are trying to fill a gap. We need more contributions – articles, photos, jokes.

Summary of our work this year - details in our 2020 newsletters.

- PNHA made a submission to the Federal Government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC) 2020 Review
- Mona Vale Road East Fauna Crossings: we note that the fauna crossing we worked hard to convince RMS was needed is going ahead, evidenced by the concrete foundations already built.

- PNHA submission to NBC's Open Space and Recreation Strategy. Our submission stressed the need to preserve bushland. We urged Council to develop a strategy which accommodates the recreational needs of present and future generations without sacrificing bushland. This strategy must include provision for acquiring land for active and passive recreation, including acquisition of privately owned local bushland.
- **Vertebrate Survey of Bangalley Head Reserve, Avalon.** PNHA has commissioned Jayden Walsh to undertake a professional survey of this wonderful Wildlife Protection Area. Started in September 2019, he is looking for reptiles, birds, microbats and feral animals over the course of a year. We plan to produce a booklet about the reserve, using his findings and photographs, as well as information about the vegetation and geology.
- We missed being at Avalon Market Day, a non-event this year. We used to talk to a lot of people about weeds, also to sell a lot of our cards there, but they are here today, good for Christmas. We are now giving away our remaindered Warriewood Wetland Bird field guide published in 2004
- PNHA is again represented on NBC's Natural Environment Strategic Reference group, set up to develop priorities for management of our natural environment for the new Council. It meets quarterly. Since COVID meetings have been virtual.
- Draft Urban Tree Canopy. We submitted our ideas for this but it's taking NBC a long time to sort out what to do. Planting thousands of extra trees in the suburbs is not as straightforward as you might think. We hear that more trees are lost than are being planted. The rage of chainsaws and mulching machines is frequent. Fenton Beatty, NBC Tree Management Officer, sent this information as at June 30 2020 to Avalon Preservation Association. It is for the previous 12 months, for all of the NBC area. He notes that more than one tree might be included in each application. Also, the NSW government Vegetation SEPP that came in in 2017 replaced Tree D/A's with tree permits and as such they do not have the same status as a D/A, and the SEPP does not specify conditions such as tree replacement.

Sought for removal	Sought for pruning	Approved for removal	Approved for pruning	Recommended for replacement	Refused for Removal	Refused for Pruning
1006	172	898	229	963	347	83

- **Dogs on Beaches**

We objected to the use of Station Beach as a limited off leash dog swimming area on environmental grounds, that endangered seagrass would not be properly protected. We considered the latest Review of Environmental Factors (REF) should have been published before the proposed trial was offered for public submissions. We understand a legal challenge has been delayed by COVID. With regard to other beaches recently proposed for dog use, our concern is with possible impacts on the natural environment. [Update: The legal challenge has since found that NBC had acted illegally in allowing dogs on this beach]

- **NBC Bushland and Biodiversity Policy**

This is still only in draft. The delay in completing this policy is extremely disappointing. A consequence is that the Weed Management Plan which will fit within this has not been completed either. The bushland condition of our dunes and many bushland and road reserves is a disgrace. Weeds listed as Australia's **Weeds of National Significance** abound and without the backing of a plan staff are constrained in what they can do to control weeds on private land. This is particularly important in the Pittwater area. It is clear that the actual needs and costs of caring for our native flora and fauna was not considered at amalgamation. We still, despite many requests to staff, do not see signs on bushcare sites inviting people to join the groups. Website information is useless to people who have no idea that bushcare exists or that community help is important.

- **Our Submission to the Draft Budget and Delivery Program 2020-** made the following comments:

Environment and Sustainability is a top community priority. However under the Priority Areas p. 34, though it rates highly in the list of challenges Reducing the impacts on natural and built environment from urban life, natural hazards and climate change and opportunities p.35 Protecting and connecting bushland and urban

trees and restoring catchments we don't see what expenditure is proposed for this. What performance measures are in place for protecting native vegetation on all classes of land and what expenditure is planned for this? A major threat to biodiversity particularly in the Pittwater area of the NBC are weeds in bushland and coastal dunes. These can include certain native shrubs and vines as well as exotic plants. The management of our great biodiversity needs more attention and clear costing in this document. It is as much an asset as a foot-path or a bridge, and as all assets need maintenance, so does bushland if it is to survive present threats and increasing climate change. Pages 57-59 of the Budget document provide no answers to these questions. There seems no point in including Satisfaction Measures – a meaningless set of figures. However in response to a question asked at a Zoom meeting about the budget works for the Pittwater area we were told that the draft Budget 2020/21 provides \$1.096m (excluding staff costs) for bush regeneration activities for areas North of Narrabeen Lagoon. This covers contracted bush regeneration in bushland reserves, works on coastal dunes including fencing and rabbit control. It also includes bush regeneration activities associated with creek restoration works at Frog Hollow, Avalon and Fern and Narrabeen Creeks as well as grant funded works at Nareen and Warriewood Wetlands. Abundant weeds in these areas makes it clear this is not nearly enough. Much more must be spent on Bushcare recruitment and support.

Council needs to set aside funds for ongoing purchases of bushland to conserve biodiversity and provide connectivity for flora and fauna across the landscape. For instance, to conserve the Federally listed endangered ecosystem Coastal Upland Swamps the hydrology of the swamps and the surrounding land needs to be conserved and protected by being spared from urban development.

In the Pittwater area there is a significant amount of bushland on private land. I attended a recent Teams meeting about a review of the various Environmental Zones. I was impressed by the remarks of a couple of residents who live on land zoned E3. They loved their bushland but said they didn't know how to care for it. I note that Kuring gai Council offers help to residents in managing their land by providing visits from staff to identify native and weedy plants and advise on management of the property. NBC must also offer the same service.

Our marvellous bushland with all its fauna and flora is an asset as worthy of expert and adequate management as any other asset.

- **Good news:**

The Site Compatibility Certificate needed by Bayview Golf Club for a big Seniors Living development was refused.

Trad aka Wandering Jew: PNHA has been included in CSIRO research into controlling this weed by the use of a leaf smut, a fungus. This began in Victoria last year. We expect to receive some infected Trad to plant among healthy Trad in three sites next week. The biocontrol program in NSW will run for several years.

- **No News:**

In August last year the littoral rainforest land in Hillside Rd Newport was bought by the NSW Department of Planning. And in October 2019 we arrived expecting to start on bush regeneration there. But the site was surrounded by construction fencing as it was not yet under NBC control. As far as we know it is not yet in Council ownership.

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, Edna Blanchard and Jan Marshall are committee members. Thanks very much all for your wise suggestions and hard work.

PNHA Membership is now 101, with 16 of those being members still to renew. We do urge members to try to get a friend to join. A big 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 and have now expanded to areas in the new Pittwater ward area, but bring to our members environmental news from further afield.

The average age of our membership is quite high. We need to engage those young Climate Striker-aged people with energy and ideas.

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

PNHA Management committee for 2020-21:

Marita Macrae, Chair, David Palmer, Secretary, Mark Turner, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Robyn Hughes.

Committee members: Julie Bennett, Edna Blanchard, Gary Harris, Jan Marshall

Pittwater Nature

Our new publication is about

- wildlife large and small,
- community gardens,
- animal rescue and more.

Do you receive this? Can you contribute?

Anyone can subscribe: just email PNHA on pnhainfo@gmail.com and we'll add you to the mailing list.

It is also on our website:

<http://pnha.org.au/pittwater-nature/> where you can see all issues.

Every two months there's another issue. We're always looking for photos and stories.

Watch out for our February 2021 number.
Your story or photo could be in it!

Pittwater Nature
Issue 3 December 2020

News and stories from Bushcarers, Wildlife carers, Community and home gardens

What's that tree?
Trees of the Koolewong Track, West Head

This loop track has two entrances opposite the Resolute Picnic area near the West Head lookout. You'll notice that the trees near the road are tall and close together, but others further towards the north are also big, but more spreading and not so close together. This is because there are richer soils nearer the road, derived from the volcanic rock bar between West Head and Barrenjoey. Further down into the bush, different trees can survive on the poorer sandstone soils.

To identify the trees on this track, looking at the bark is a way to start. Other features to look for are:

- leaf arrangement on a stem - Eucalypts have alternate leaves, Angophora leaves are in pairs, Turpentine in clusters.
- Fruits: Eucalypts have smooth gumnuts, Angophora gumnuts are ridged, Turpentine have several fused together. She-oaks have a nut with many compartments.
- Buds and flowers are often too hard to see. Binoculars are useful.

Grey Ironbark *Eucalyptus paniculata* is host to the Ironbark Orchid, *Dendrobium aemulum* flowering in September. You'll need your binoculars to see the plants which look like epicormic growth. (Right) It can also grow on other trees that do not shed bark.

Grey Gum *Eucalyptus punctata*
A favourite Koala food tree. This one is below the lookout.

We care for our natural world in the Pittwater area, by looking after bushland, caring for wildlife, producing sustainable food in community gardens, and at home. Pittwater Natural Heritage Association (PNHA) is publishing this newsletter to help us keep in touch and encourage each other in our various volunteer activities. We welcome your contributions. Contact us: pnhainfo@gmail.com and on Facebook

Membership of **Pittwater Natural Heritage Association, a Landcare Group**, is open to all who share our aims of caring for the natural environment of the Pittwater area and working to enhance and protect it. You can find a Membership Application form on our website <http://pnha.org.au/join/> or contact us on pnhainfo@gmail.com for one to be sent to you.

Cost \$20 per year, \$10 unwaged.