

PNHA NEWS

Spring 2021 Issue 89

Pittwater Natural Heritage Association - thinking locally, acting locally

PNHA Update:

The NBC Local Environment Plan

PNHA's submission to the Discussion about the new Local Environment Plan to come was sent to our members a few weeks ago. It's a daunting task for community group folk to assess long and detailed documents. The actual draft LEP will be presented to the community for comments towards the end of next year. PNHA is a member of the Pittwater Community Alliance consisting of several community groups in the former Pittwater LGA. We have agreed to contribute financially to the cost of engaging an expert consultant to assess the draft LEP. The cost of that and the contribution needed remains to be seen.

We insist on the very best outcome to preserve and enhance the natural environment of our very own wonderful part of the world.



Grants: Mona Vale Dunes bush regeneration

Weed control is continuing, funded by our NBC grant and PNHA. Maintenance is so important, but less easy to find grant funds for. It's often easier to start a new project than to manage the vital follow up. Grant providers like to see results for their outlay. Before and After photos for ongoing weed control will not reveal much to those assessing final reports at the end of projects.

Planted in June: Revegetation project funded by the Federal Government Community Environment Program. Rabbits and dry weather have been challenging to young plants planted on this site. But most are surviving. We are grateful for any rain at this normally dry time of year. Covid has prevented volunteer work on the dunes but



PNHA is on Facebook Want to get in touch?
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INSIDE: Dark Sky Place at Gov. Philip Park, Ingleside Precinct Update, Private developments threatening bushland, Riding bikes through Warriewood Wetlands? Weed Alert: Corky Passionfruit, Local Orchids in September, A Stroll in Bayview Park—Mistletoe, birds and butterflies, *The Coast*—a new series

NBC staff have done some watering.

A view of part of the site in July. Most plant guards have more than one plant inside, a mix of trees, shrubs and groundcovers. One of our favourites: *Scaevola calendulacea*. Sadly, also a favourite with rabbits.



Cats and Wildlife

RSPCA NSW is partnering with 10 councils including Northern Beaches Council on a research project that will help keep cats and wildlife safe.

The old idea of putting the cat outside before we went off to bed is no longer OK.

It's now known that urban pet cats kill a lot of wildlife. And cats get into fights and get run over.

We've sent information about the cat survey to PNHA members and posted about this on Facebook. If you missed this survey, here's the link: <https://redcap.sydney.edu.au/surveys/?s=3MR4LAEYPR>

Quite a few local government areas outside NSW already have cat control rules.

All Canberra suburbs will be required to contain new cats from July 2022. More information [here](#). [Knox Council](#) in Victoria requires a cat to be confined to the owner's property, if not actually indoors.

You can read more [here](#) in The Conversation of 13/9/21: "Research reveals why pet owners keep their cats indoors – and it's not to protect wildlife"

Cats and Australian wildlife by the numbers

Pet cats

There are 3.8 million pet cats in Australia, of which:

1.1 million (29%)

...are kept inside 24 hours a day.



2.7 million (71%)

...are allowed outside to roam and hunt.

- Roaming pet cats **kill 390 million animals** collectively per year in Australia
- An individual roaming pet cat **kills 186 reptiles, birds and mammals per year**, most of them (59%) native species
- A study found **39% of cats** brought in at night **snuck out** for nocturnal roaming and hunting
- Pet cats bring home only 15% of what they hunt.

Feral cats

- The average feral cat **kills 748 reptiles, birds and mammals** a year
- In the bush there is **one feral cat per 3 to 4km²**, versus **40 to 70 pet cats per km²** around towns
- **Pet cats kill 30-50 times more animals per km²** around towns than feral cats do in the bush.



Palm Beach Dark Sky Place

Northern Beaches Council approved this at its August meeting. Then came a rescission motion objecting to this location. This was lost at the September meeting this week. PNHA strongly supports the Dark Sky project, as it will draw attention to light pollution and its effect of our many nocturnal fauna including insects. Our view of the night sky in most urban areas is obscured. The Governor Philip Park area is one of the naturally darkest in the Sydney area. Events that will take place there in due course will show us types of lighting that reduce pollution. Maybe we can have a go at spotting stars and constellations in a dark sky.

Developments destroying bushland

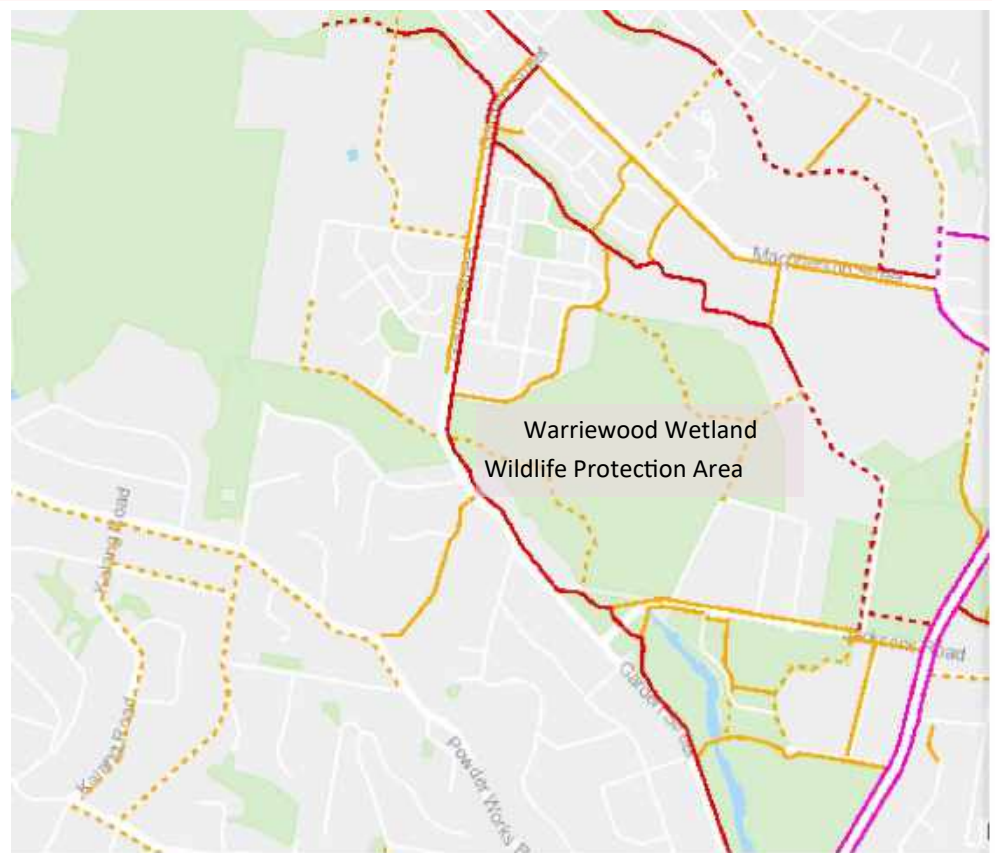
PNHA has objected to a **DA at 521 Barrenjoey Rd Bilgola** where a large house is proposed in the Bilgola Bends. It is very steep land and would require extensive clearing of bushland which at present covers the block. The status of quite a few areas of bushland within the Bends is uncertain. NBC will do a desktop audit to ascertain. This is an outstanding natural bushland area, important for flora and fauna and of great natural beauty, a major feature of our area. It must not be destroyed by urban development.

DA 2021/1522, 189 Riverview Road Avalon Beach for a large house would result in the loss of 17 large canopy trees, including seven Spotted Gums. We have objected to this inappropriate development in an E4 Zone, because of tree loss and questionable survival of any trees remaining. The owner is landscape designer Jamie Durie. Rumour has it that the building of the house would be the subject of a Grand Designs style television program. We believe Council should take into consideration the cumulative effect that developments such as this would have on the canopy trees which are critical to the character of the Avalon area.

Cycleway through Warriewood Wetlands

We noticed in the NBC Bike Plan recently adopted that the Warriewood Wetland boardwalks are included in the approved for cycling—Tier 3—Local Connections. We will object. This should be a quiet place for wildlife and people. But how would NBC enforce any restriction?

The orange dotted lines are the bike tracks. Map: from NBC Bike Plan



Latham's Snipe needs quiet times to feed and rest in the wetlands, after its long flight. Also known as Japanese Snipe, it is a migratory wader, breeding in Japan and the east Asian mainland and moving to Australia in our warmer months. Birds may fly directly between Japan and Australia, stopping at a few staging areas. They leave their breeding areas from August to November, arriving in Australia mainly in September. They leave the south-east by the end of February, moving northwards along the coast. Most have left Queensland by mid-April. More information [here](#).

Image: Neil Fifer—Japanese Snipe in the Wetlands, 2003

WEED ALERT: Corky Passionfruit *Passiflora suberosa*

This pretty vine has dark green leaves, usually with three lobes, tendrils and small passionfruit type flowers followed by pea-sized fruit, with lots of seed inside. Starting off green, they turn black when ripe. It is difficult to control once established and can smother native vegetation.

We are reporting it to NBC staff who are now hot on its trail and asking for sightings. Watch out for it on your land. Let NBC know if you see it around the area. It spreads by seeds and also by suckering – growing new plants from deep roots. You may be able to pull up a seedling with its small tap root, but if you pull up a sucker, the rest of the root will sprout again. Email weed officer pamela.bateman@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au and send her a photo, if you can, to check identification.



Flowers, green unripe (poisonous) fruit, and corky bark on lowest stems.

Some Local Orchids Flowering in September

Black Bootlace Orchid *Erythrorchis cassythoides*

Whilst a common climbing orchid in eastern Australia, it is not often found in the Pittwater area. What's unusual about this plant is that it lacks chlorophyll and typically is rooted at the base of mature trees suggesting the orchid receives its carbon supply via root fungi from either rotting vegetation or indirectly from living tree roots.

The mode of nutrition of this orchid suggests that the orchid is potentially capable of both saprophytic, depending on a partnership with a fungus, and parasitic, depending on another plant, modes of nutrition.

Its inflorescence is also rather striking. I have only recorded the species growing within Pittwater Wagstaffe Spotted Gum Forest in the Pittwater area.

Andrew Jennings, Bushland Manager NBC
Image Helen Mackay, Clareville





**Tongue Orchid,
*Dockrillia linguiformis***

A lithophyte or epiphyte, growing on rocks or trees. Its thick leaves store water, shrivelling in dry seasons. Such a hardy plant! This one is on sandstone in private bushland above Whale Beach.

Some Terrestrial Orchids - found by PNHA orchid hunters in September



Pixie Caps *Acianthus fornicatus*



**Copper Beard Orchid
*Calochilus campestris***



**Common Wasp Orchid
*Chiloglottis diphylla***



Donkey Orchid *Diuris aurea*



Pink Sun Orchid *Thelymitra carnea*



**Spotted Sun Orchid
*Thelymitra ixioides***

Where to look for these terrestrial orchids—keep your eyes peeled and watch your feet: *Calochilus campestris* KCNP, West Head. *Thelymitra pauciflora* Belrose. *Diuris aurea* Ingleside. *Chiloglottis diphylla* Deep Ck. *Thelymitra ixioides* KCNP, West Head. *Thelymitra carnea* Belrose. *Acianthus fornicatus* Deep Ck. There are many others to watch out for. Join? <https://www.facebook.com/Australian-Native-Orchids-824500924238774/>

A Stroll in Bayview Park

On a stroll around Bayview Park near Winnereremy Bay you'll see lots of Swamp Sheoaks *Casuarina glauca*. Not so easy to see are two plants that live on them, their foliage so like the Sheoak's that they are camouflaged.

One is an orchid with many common names. Rats Tail Orchid is one. Another we like better is Bridal Veil Orchid *Dockrillia teretifolia* also known as *Dendrobium teretifolium*.

Sorry, no flowers to show now. We were lucky to spot even the foliage. It is said to flower from July to October. Take binoculars for a good view. The roots cling to the bark, the long cylindrical leaves dangling. More: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

Another is a mistletoe, so well camouflaged on its Sheoak host you can easily miss it. Needle-leaf Mistletoe, *Amyema cambagei*.



Above: flower, right: spot the difference—mistletoe or casuarina foliage?



Left: Creeping Mistletoe, *Muellerina eucalyptoides*. This one doesn't bother with hiding in the casuarinas. The foliage resembles that of eucalypts.

But that's not all. A third Mistletoe will only use another mistletoe as its host.
Golden Mistletoe, *Notothixos subaureus* on Needle-leaf Mistletoe.



Mistletoes provide food—nectar and berries—for birds, and foliage for some butterfly caterpillars, such as the Jezebels.

The tiny **Mistletoe bird** can be seen here sometimes, eating the berries and propagating the mistletoes. Unlike other birds, it perches with its body in line with a branch. This enables it to wipe off the sticky residue from Mistletoe berries in its faeces. The seeds thus downloaded later germinates with a tiny blob of fertiliser.

Left: Mistletoe bird male. Image Rod Warnock. As so often with birds, the female is discretely plain brown with just a hint of red under her tail.



Mistletoe and Butterflies

Mistletoes are foodplants for the larvae/caterpillars of several butterflies. This is one of the Jezebels, *Delias nigrina*, a female. The upper surface of the wings is white or grey, so in flight there is a flickering effect. Gary Harris reports it can fly on sunny days in winter. He was lucky to get a photo of this one as they usually fly quite high.

Find out all about Mistletoes as foodplants for butterflies. You'll be surprised how important they are.

<https://www.anbg.gov.au/mistletoe/butterflies.html>

Lots more about both Mistletoes and Butterflies here:

<http://lepidoptera.butterflyhouse.com.au/plants/lora/loranthaceae.html>





Wendy Frew, interviewer *par excellence* and PNHA member.

New Season of Local Radio Show *The Coast*

The Northern Beaches' very own environment and sustainability show, *The Coast*, is back, with a new season – starting Friday 24 September – of interviews, stories and soundscapes from our beautiful peninsula.

Host Wendy Frew talks to urban planners and residents about the benefits of eco villages; she interviews founder of Canopy Keepers and Avalon resident Deb Collins; and she looks at new research commissioned by the Northern Beaches Council that investigates which animals are carrying ticks from the bush to our backyards.

Season 5 of *The Coast* also includes an episode devoted to the growing push to contain our cats inside, 24/7, for their protection and for the protection of native wildlife.

In the show's first episode, which aired Friday 24 September, Wendy interviewed University of Sydney Professor Annie Clarke about the mysterious inscriptions in the sandstone at the North Head Quarantine Station.

You can listen to the show on Fridays at 11am by tuning to 88.7/90.3 FM or stream via www.rnb.org.au.

You can also listen to all episodes of *The Coast* anytime at <https://www.mixcloud.com/TheCoastRNB/>

Birds in your garden: wish you had more?

If you plant hybrid Grevilleas that flower constantly, you will not get small birds.

Noisy Miners defend these as a year-round source of nectar. Their family groups set up territories and gang up furiously on any smaller birds that come by. They can kill them and also destroy their nests.

Noisy Miner on a Honey Gem Grevillea in North Avalon.



Membership of **Pittwater Natural Heritage Association 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.