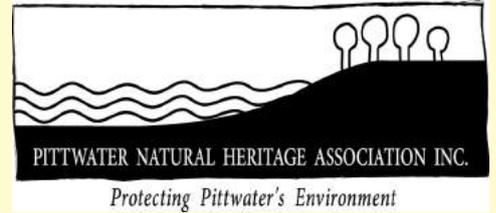


Pittwater Nature

Issue 10 February 2022



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

Is your garden Noisy Miner territory?

If so you probably never see smaller native birds such as Blue Wrens or Scarlet Honeyeaters. How to get rid



How about an Eastern Yellow Robin in your garden?

Image: Rod Warnock

of these aggressive honeyeaters and welcome back the others?

Should we cull Noisy Miners? If so, how?

They are native birds, after all. But

their habits and personalities are challenging researchers.

<https://theconversation.com/should-we-cull-noisy-miners-after-decades-of-research-these-aggressive-honeyeaters-are-still-outsmarting-us-169524>



For Pittwater gardens, the best option is to develop gardens that Noisy Miners dislike, but small birds can use. + Re-planting dense mid-storey and understorey native trees and shrubs, + connecting these areas to other gardens or bushland,

+ removing long-lasting nectar sources such as hybrid grevilleas and many bottlebrushes. The current fashion for lawn, Frangipanni, hedges, Bromeliads and Agaves under taller trees suits Miners very well.

Rain and Rabbits

We hear the usual release of calicivirus in Autumn probably won't happen on the northern beaches this year. It's known that kits up to 10 weeks old are not affected by the virus; in fact exposure to it at that age triggers a lifelong immunity. The rain is causing steady growth of nutritious grass so that rabbits are continually breeding instead of slowing down because of lack of food.

If there's a warren at your place, please get a pest controller to remove it. This can be under your house.

Image: Jose A. Bernat Bacete/ Getty Images



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

Avalon Community Garden Helping to Save the Planet

Any organic matter that goes into the red bin or the skip bins will end up in landfill. The organic matter in landfill doesn't get enough oxygen and when it decomposes anaerobically creates methane.



The hens check for delicacies and add their own contributions before composting starts

Methane is a greenhouse gas more toxic than carbon dioxide.

So, at Avalon Community Garden we do our bit to reduce the impact on the environment. We pick up organic scraps from Avalon Organics daily and twice a week we pick up outdated or spoilt fruit and vegetables from Woolworths in Avalon. The scraps we collect provide treats for our chickens, valuable organic matter for our compost and stop it from ending up in landfill.

All the waste we collect makes compost which builds up the soil in the garden beds. The compost is nutrient-rich, helps improve soil structure, helps maintain moisture levels, keeps the soil's pH balance in check, helps to suppress plant disease and provides nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.

Compost not only improves the soil but our plants and flowers love it!

Why such wet foliage? Guttation

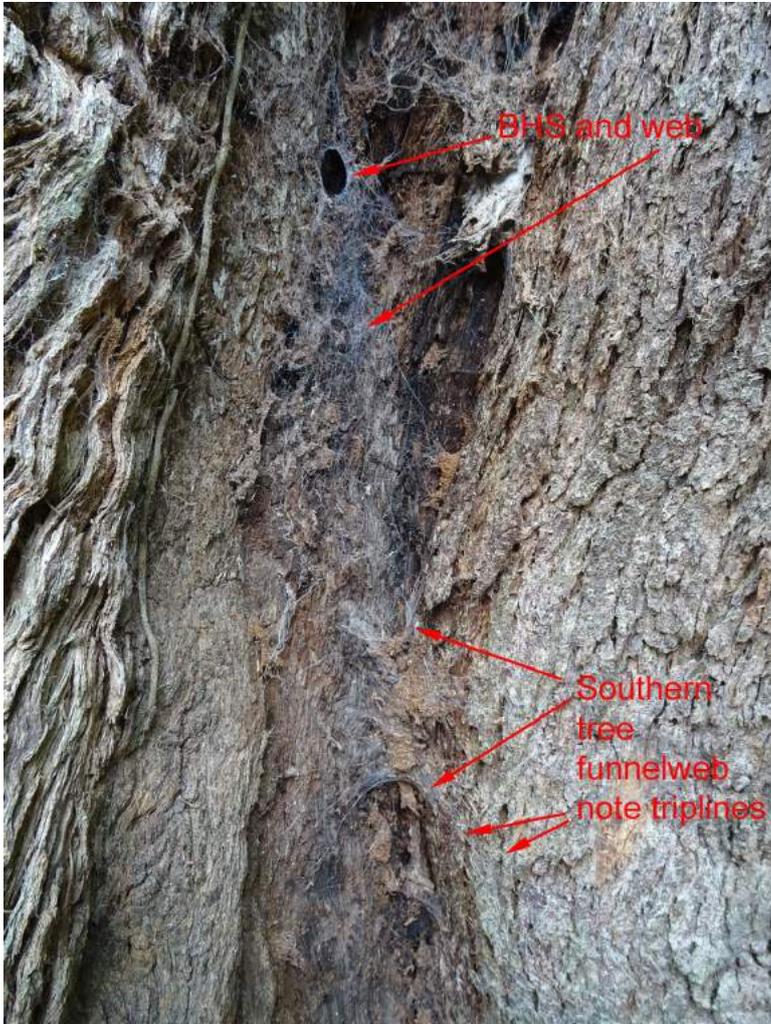
Guttation is not dew. As on these cucumber leaves it may occur in the morning when transpiration is very low, so water is not evaporating from the leaves. At the same time there is pressure upwards from water in the roots if the soil is damp. These water droplets reveal pressure valves called *hydathodes* or water glands along the edges or on leaf tips. You can also see guttation on grass leaves at times.



Spider Webs

Toongari Bushcare folk were wondering about some scary-looking spider webs on the Swamp Mahoganies in this Avalon reserve. Could they be Tree Funnel Web spiders?

We sent our photo (right) to Helen Smith, Australian Museum arachnologist (aka Spiderwoman). She sent back this one below.



The top red writing: **Black House Spider (BHS)** web.

Below is **Southern Tree Funnelweb** web. Note triplines. (hard to see). This spider lies in wait for prey, alert for tweaks on triplines that fan out sideways from its lair.

So we decided that at least on this tree in Toongari, we were looking at Black House Spider webs.

This spider also sets up those messy webs around window frames. This image, right, and more about the BHS:

<https://australian.museum/learn/animals/spiders/black-house-spider-badumna-insignis/#:~:text=The%20webs%20of%20Black%20House,a%20burrow%20in%20the%20ground.>



Two Browns

Large Brown Bean Bug *Riptortus serripes*. It has piercing sucking mouthparts so it's in the Order Hemiptera, alongside cicadas, aphids, bronze orange bugs, assassin bugs and so on. A native insect, it sucks the pods of Easter Cassia, some wattles and is a pest of pulse crops. This one was hanging about the pods of the climber Dusky Coral Pea, *Kennedia rubicunda*.



A useful Facebook page to help with identification is **Amateur Entomology Australia**. A private group, so you apply to join. Spiders are accepted on this page too.

Brown Bunyip Cicada *Tamasa tristigma*. This little one we identified using Dr Nathan Emery's excellent *A Photo Guide to common cicadas of the Greater Sydney region*. Not our childhood idea of a bunyip as big and spooky. Its call is a high buzz lasting for several seconds, not at all scary. Actually it's a complex of species and very widespread in eastern Australia.

Not a Green Grocer

This small green cicada had two lucky escapes, first from a Careel Bay bush regeneration weed-bag, then rescued from a green waste bin. Not in the cicada book above, so we sent a photo to Nathan who identified it as unusual on the Northern Beaches, a **Small Bottle Cicada** *Chlorocysta vitripennis*. The "bottle" relates to its rather bulging abdomen. It is completely green except for red eyes.



Lacewing – Fairy at rest?

Brown Lacewing or Antlion, *Myrmeleon acer*, in Avalon recently. It's about 2.5cm long.

The larvae- antlions - feed on ants and other small invertebrates that fall into their conical pit traps. You can see these dug in loose, dry soil in sheltered areas such as under raised houses and decks or underneath rock overhangs. The prey can't gain a firm footing on the loose sides of the pit and is bombarded by soil flicked up by the ant lion. The prey then falls to the bottom of pit where the antlion impales it with large, sickle-shaped jaws. Powerful saliva is injected, liquefying the prey's internal tissues which are then sucked up by the antlion. Unlike other lacewing larvae, antlions are only able to move backwards.

What a transformation to this adult; it's probably a predator of other small insects.



Image above: https://www.brisbaneinsects.com/brisbane_lacewings/Myrmeleontidae.htm

Reference: <https://www.qm.qld.gov.au/Explore/Find+out+about/Animals+of+Queensland/Insects/Lacewings/Common+species/Antlions>

Calling native bees!

Guinea Flower, *Hibbertia scandens*, will bring them. This climber can cover a fence, or be a sprawling ground cover. Happy to be pruned, it tolerates some shade but loves full sun. Three native bees, and a Hover Fly, lower right



Mona Vale Dunes

The Saturday bushcare group tidy up and weed in the area planted in June 2021.

Some tubestock are thriving, some struggling, some are dead. Considering the dry second half of 2021 we're grateful anything is alive!

Next bushcare mornings here will be Saturday March 12 and Thursday March 17.



Lily caterpillars are the offspring of this 2cm moth, *Spodoptera picta*.

Crinum, Clivea and Hippeastrum are some foodplants. Amazingly Crinums can recover from being defoliated, but look really terrible in the meanwhile, so you may prefer to remove these larvae. They usually feed at night and hide by day near the leaf bases.



Swamp Lily *Crinum pedunculatum*

Chiltern Track, Ku-ring-gai Chase NP, Ingleside - Green, wet and lovely on February 27

- 1. Sunshine Wattle *Acacia terminalis* in bud for its autumn flowering
- 2. *Banksia oblongifolia* in bud
- 3. Conesticks *Petrophile pulchella* flowers
- 4. *Crowea saligna*
- 5. Beetle on *Banksia ericifolia*
- 6. Teatree *Leptospermum squarrosus*
- 7. Grey Gum bark, *Eucalyptus punctata*



1



2



7



5



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4



3

8. A Boobook Owl out of its hollow was attracting attention of anxious honeyeaters

9. *Platysace linearifolia* – only flowers in autumn, spectacular soon

10. Fan-shaped Jelly Fungus *Dacryopinax spathularia*

11. *Pultenaea elliptica*



PNHA's Mission Statement:

To promote and facilitate the enhancement and understanding of the natural heritage and ecological systems within the Pittwater area.

The PNHA vision is: *An engaged and aware community working to conserve and enhance its natural heritage.*

Find us: pnha.org.au and Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/PNHAaus/>

