

PNHA NEWS

Spring 2022 Issue 93

Pittwater Natural Heritage Association - thinking locally, acting locally

PNHA UPDATE:

PNHA has taken action against several threats to, and neglect of, our natural environment in recent months

Submission to Northern Beaches Council: Draft open Spaces and Recreation Strategy

<https://eservices.northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/ePlanning/live/Common/Output/LoadGenWebDoc.ashx?id=Z1HYACrTBIV0A60ki4OEg%3d%3d>

In August PNHA made a submission on Northern Beaches Council's Draft Open Spaces and Outdoor Recreation Strategy. We noted that surveys undertaken for the strategy showed that a high number of residents appreciate access to nature, views of nature and protection and preservation of bushland.

We know that there is a lot of pressure on Council to provide facilities for active recreation such as sports fields and bike tracks but we asked that no bushland in the northern beaches area be destroyed by conversion to open space or degraded by allowing unsustainable activities within bushland reserves. In particular we expressed our opposition to a proposal within the strategy to authorise mountain bike trails in Ingleside Chase Reserve. We will be taking this matter up with Council in the near future.

Destruction of bushland on McCarrs Creek Rd.

Transport for NSW sold several blocks of land at 231-233, 235, 237, 239, 241, 243, and 245 Mc Carrs Creek Road Church Point. Numbers 241-245 are near the bus turning circle. We opposed the DA for No 241 as it proposed a large house on a small 547 sq metre lot which is on a steep slope containing loose boulders and would require removal of every tree on the site. The DA has been refused.

At 243, right, you can see how this lovely area of bushland is already being destroyed by development on adjoining sites. We



Protecting Pittwater's Environment

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INSIDE: 2: Bushland Management discussion with NBC 3: PNHA Grant Projects 4: Duffys Forest Walk 5: Useful Links—Powerful Owl feather ID, Brush Turkeys, Urban Birds and Noisy Miners 6: Strolling in the bush—Warriewood Wetlands.

contacted Rob Stokes, asking how the state government could have sold for residential development such sensitive land, zoned C4 conservation and surrounded by a Council owned bushland reserve and adjacent to Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. He told us it was too late and there was nothing he could do.

Proposed Unleashed Dog areas on north Palm and south Mona Vale beaches

We sent PNHA members our submission to NBC on the Review of Environment Factors. We were opposed to the trial on environmental and procedural grounds. Apparently the trial will proceed.

Bushland Management

For some time we have been concerned about lack of proper bushland management in Pittwater and also the bushcare program. We are not convinced that Covid and wet weather alone account for this apparent neglect.

In February this year we sent an Open Letter introducing PNHA to the new Northern Beaches Council members and stating our concerns about neglect of bushland and proliferating weeds in the Pittwater area.

In response to this letter, Councillor Miranda Korzy contacted PNHA to say she would do her best to increase the budget for bush regeneration.

Here is a summary of PNHA questions and NBC responses from our September 16 Teams meeting with council staff.

PNHA: Re bushcare, how many active volunteers are there really? You could update by looking at the attendance sheets. Some volunteers seem no longer engaged. Reminders for bushcare events need to go out in a timely fashion. This doesn't always happen.

NBC: *Volunteer numbers have increased. Training programs will start within 3 months. We did an audit of volunteers a couple of years ago. We will update the list. At the end of each volunteer session the vols could suggest further action that could be taken on the site by the contractors, eg spraying.*

PNHA: Bushland Reserve site plans are needed to coordinate work of bushcare groups and contractors.

NBC: *A review of site plans is underway and will be done within six months. Some site plans are four years old.*

PNHA: Mona Vale Dunes bushcare site is very weedy. Weeds are coming across the path from Mona Vale Golf Course. We understood a condition of the recently renewed lease was that bush regeneration would be done on the mounds beside the walkway.

NBC: *We met with supervisors of the contract team, will spray with a grass specific herbicide, MV Golf Club will do a bushland management plan. There will be more funding for work near the existing planting area.*

PNHA: We heard that Council's bush regeneration budget had recently been increased. Is that a one-off or will it be on-going? Can we have a breakdown of the \$250, 000 spent in Pittwater? What is the amount of funding allocated to the Council nurseries?

NBC: *Not known if that funding will be on-going. Figures recently reported in Pittwater Life were inaccurate. The reserves (mostly in Pittwater) to receive the extra funding are:*

Bushland Reserves: Bangalley Headland, Avalon, Hillside Reserve, Newport, Allenby Park, Allambie Heights

Riparian areas: Warriewood wetlands (Irrawong reserve), Narrabeen Creek, South Creek, Dee Why Lagoon.

Dunes: Avalon Dunes, Governor Phillip Park dunes.

\$200,000 was allocated to set up the two NBC nurseries and \$10,000 per year is allocated to run both nurseries.

None of this money comes out of the bush regeneration budget. All sites in Pittwater have either had their funding increased or remained the same.

PNHA: When NBC was formed, Pittwater ward was enlarged to incorporate Terrey Hills and Duffys Forest. Was the bushcare budget for Pittwater increased to take account of extra sites in Terrey Hills and Duffys Forest? What about funding for Dunes bushcare?

NBC: *There are few sites in that extra area. There has been no decrease in Dunecare funding, but when a new site comes on stream, funding comes out of the existing budget, except if extra funding is requested and approved.*

PNHA: What's happening to the new land at 62 & 85 Hillside Rd Newport?

NBC: *The Hillside Road site is now owned by NBC. Additional funding has been approved to enable site remediation, starting with demolition of the sheds and removal of asbestos.*

PNHA: Community engagement could improve. We need more engaging signs at bushcare sites to encourage volunteers. The Mayor's message doesn't mention bushcare. Can we do a weeds display and info stall? What about setting up "Friends of" groups for places like Village Park Mona Vale and Narrabeen Creek?

NBC: *We have no budget for interpretive signs, but we can put signs in some sites. We can have the discussion to prepare a list. The web-site has improved. It now has a volunteering and weeds page. A committee has been working on digital platforms, eg Instagram etc. Cooee is being updated. We are doing the best we can with existing resources. We are doing some events, but COVID has had an effect. The recent CEC Open Day was a success. It included a plant give-away. Also **The Day at the Bay** event at Cabbage Tree Bay included a plant give-away. A story on weeds was in the Community Enewsletter. It was the second most read article.*

PNHA: We didn't know about those events.



The statement **"We are doing the best we can with existing resources"** is telling. We don't believe resources are so scarce – the problem is the culture of the NBC and the preference for spending on projects that are popular, ribbon cutting etc.

We consider the real needs of Pittwater's natural environment have been overlooked and under-resourced for a long time.

PNHA members and friends need to pursue NBC on this issue to ensure that extra funding is NOT a one-off.

Grant projects

North Narrabeen Headland

PNHA submitted to NBC a grant application for \$5000 for bush regeneration on North Narrabeen Headland. If successful this will provide for extra contract bush regeneration work supplementing work already occurring on Crown Land there. If successful PNHA will undertake community environmental activities there, such as setting up a light sheet to observe nocturnal invertebrates

Palmgrove Park Avalon

Spotted Gum forest restoration

The site to be restored is in the area between Palmgrove, Bellevue and Dress Circle Roads Avalon.

Contractors sprayed weeds and spread mulch months ago but the boggy ground has been too wet for planting tubestock. We now expect this to start after the middle of October and for students of Avalon Public School to help do this. This project is funded by a grant from NBC.



PNHA Activities so far this year

Birdwatching – Warriewood Wetland
Crown to Sea Walk, Newport
Chiltern Track spring wildflowers and birds.
Duffys Forest – Caley's Grevillea and Waratahs.

These were all well attended and went ahead as planned. We love taking people to see our natural environment and to places they may not know.

Right: If you'd like to take a stroll through the rainforest section of the Crown to the Sea walk, the narrow upper entrance is between 40 and 55 Kanimbla Crescent Newport. The lower entrance is at the end of Hillslope Rd.



Duffys Forest Endangered Ecological Community

We were delighted to see Caley's Grevillea and Waratahs aplenty on our September 18 walk. But as members of the Proteaceae plant family, they had plenty of relatives close by. We had intended to walk from Mallowa Rd as far as the drainage line crossing the track and return, but ended up going much further, along the Perimeter Track and back along Bulara St.

We observed from the track, between Mallowa Rd and the drainage line, 15 other species in this Gondwanan family, though not all were in flower. *Lambertia formosa* Mountain Devil was still in bud. *Conospermum longifolium* Smokebush was flowering modestly further along our walk.

Read all about this EEC here: <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/threatened-species/nsw-threatened-species-scientific-committee/determinations/final-determinations/2000-2003/duffys-forest-sydney-basin-bioregion-endangered-ecological-community-listing>

Other delights:

Heard: the lovely call of a White-throated Gerygone. Here's what you missed: picture and the song, (not from our walk) https://ebird.org/species/whtger1?siteLanguage=en_AU

Saw: An Eastern Yellow Robin on her nest, quite near the track but well hidden. Image: Marg Woods



Swordgrass Brown Butterfly resting in the sun, its wings closed. Its larva feeds on young stems of Swordgrass, *Gahnia* species. Image: Marg Woods





Along the track, clockwise from left: *Grevillea caleyii*, *Grevillea linearifolia*, *Bossiaea obcordata*, *Boronia pinnata*, *Comesperma volubile*



Useful Links to Bits and Pieces:

Powerful Owl feather ID

A feather found on the ground can tell us a lot of useful information. It can pinpoint locations that are important to birds, inform us of movement patterns and can even be used for genetic testing. A simple feather can help direct important conservation efforts! Read more:

https://birdlife.org.au/documents/UB_Powerful_Owl_Feather_Identification_Guide.pdf

Brush Turkeys

If a Brush Turkey decides to build his mound on your land what will happen next? What will you do? What can you do to protect your garden? Image: Neil Fifer

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/native-animals/native-animal-facts/australian-brush-turkey>



Urban Birds

Professor of Ecology at Griffith University, Darryl Jones has an enthusiastic curiosity about wild birds that, against all odds, flourish in Australia's cities and towns. Listen to this fascinating talk here:

<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/conversations/conversations-darryl-jones-suburban-birds/14032994>

His book *Curlews on Vulture Street: Cities, Birds, People and Me* is published by NewSouth Books



Noisy Miners are one of Australia's 'most hated birds'. How do we manage their booming population?

If you're wondering why you can see Fairy Wrens and other tiny birds in the bush but not in your garden, have a look at this article:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-09-16/noisy-miners-are-a-problem-across-australia/101442572>

Image: Rod Warnock

Strolling in the Bush

Warriewood Wetland, west of Warriewood Square

The **Grey-headed Flying Foxes** are hanging out in their camp there. These endangered mammals are often not as appreciated as they should be.

We noticed a lot of **Elkhorn Ferns** *Platycerium bifurcatum* on the trunks of Swamp Sheoaks, *Casuarina glauca*. These ferns produce two types of fronds, sterile and fertile. The fertile fronds have brown, rusty tips underneath, which is where they produce their spores. It's the sign of a healthy adult plant. The old, dead fronds are persistent, and serve to fix the plant to its support and gather any fallen leaves. They create their own compost for roots, moisture and nutrients. It's a clever trick. See: <https://www.abc.net.au/gardening/factsheets/stag-38-elk-horns/9426268>

What else did we see?

Good: Dense bush, small birds, Swamp She-oaks, the climber *Parsonsia straminea*, a foodplant for Common Crow Butterfly, Sword Grass *Gahnia* sp, foodplant for Swordgrass Brown butterfly. Eastern Whipbirds calling and feeding.

Not so good:

Corky Passionflower, *Passiflora suberosa*. Weed from South America, it has corky bark on the lower stems. Spreads by seed and suckering. Watch out for it around Village Park Mona Vale.

Salvinia molesta is an aquatic fern, a weed from Brazil. The Salvinia Weevil from Brazil has been introduced as a biocontrol, but has not been as effective in these wetlands as further north in warmer NSW and Queensland. "The two main factors influencing the salvinia weevil's success are temperature and nitrogen levels in salvinia plants. When temperatures drop below 19°C, the weevil lays fewer eggs. The ideal temperature for their development is about 30°C, which enables a life cycle to be completed in weeks. This life cycle takes longer at lower temperatures. More: https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/81789/Salvinia.pdf





Not lawn but *Salvinia*, growing so densely on the surface that light cannot penetrate below. This destroys the habitat for other plants, tadpoles, dragonfly larvae and so on.

Dense hairs on the surface of the leaf prevent the plant from sinking.



LAST PNHA Activity for 2022

Sunday October 16 Roadside trees in Waterview Street Mona Vale

Can you spot a Turpentine? How about a Grey Gum?

We'll take a stroll to see these trees and more.

Meet at 9.30 near the letterbox at the corner of Waterview and Mona Streets.

Book by emailing pnhainfo@gmail.com and add your phone number please.

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.