

# P N H A N E W S

Spring 2023 Issue 97

**Pittwater Natural Heritage Association - thinking locally, acting locally**

## PNHA AGM 2023

**1.30pm Sunday October 8 2023**

**Newport Community Centre  
The Boulevarde, Newport**

**Agenda: 1.30 AGM**

**2.00 Lynleigh Greig's Presentation**

A driving force of Sydney Wildlife Rescue, and co-founder of the Mobile Care Unit with Joan Reid, she will talk about Wildlife in Spring and some local snakes.

Lynleigh is an engaging speaker, not to be missed

**2.30 Afternoon Tea**



Lynleigh with a rescued Wedgetail Eagle, from Northern Beaches Living, May 30 2023

## Walk Report: Spring Wildflowers and Birds on the Chiltern Track in Ingleside on August 27.

Fantastic flowers as usual. Honeyeaters in flowering trees included Brown-headed, White-eared and White-cheeked, Scarlet and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. A first for us on this track: a Waratah in bloom. Our walks are to introduce people to the wonders of our natural environment and while we love seeing old friends we were delighted that some people joined us for the first time.

**Right: We usually see White-eared Honeyeaters along this track.** More information and hear its call [here](#). They are hard to see in trees, but have a distinctive call. Image: Rod Warnock—not taken on the track.

**Here's a video** of one on the Chiltern Track by **Birds in Backyards**.



© Rod Warnock PhD AP/MP



Protecting Pittwater's Environment

**PNHA is on Facebook** Want to get in touch?

**pnhainfo@gmail.com** Follow us on Instagram

**INSIDE:** Hillside Rd Littoral Rainforest, Synthetic Turf, NBC Weed information, Turkey Rhubarb, PNHA at CEC Open Day + Christmas Cards, Feral Cats, Australian Admiral Butterfly, Spring & Wildlife Risks, Leonie & Future Iconic Eucalypt, Cockatoos Feeding on Turf, Find the Powerful Owlet.

## Remember the battle to save some Littoral Rainforest in at 62 and 85 Hillside Rd Newport?

For several years we have been asking NBC about setting up a bushcare group there, but were told asbestos on the site in old sheds has delayed action. In frustration we asked MP Rory Amon to help and he passed on this report from NBC:

*Council's Bushcare volunteer team have recently inspected the site to ensure the site can be safely accessed by Bushcare volunteers. To ensure their safety a temporary fence will need to be installed around the asbestos sheds until the sheds are demolished and removed.*

*Council's property team confirmed funding for demolitions of the sheds at Hillside Rd has been allocated to carry out that work in 2024/25.*

*Council's Environment and Climate Change team will be in contact with Pittwater Natural Heritage Association as soon as the safety fence has been installed and the site is safe to access.*

## Synthetic Turf

One of PNHA's concerns is the growing practice of replacing grass playing fields with synthetic turf. The NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer's 2022 report "*Independent review into the design, use and impacts of synthetic turf in public open spaces*" provides information on the toxic chemicals, microplastic pollution and other hazards associated with its use.

Recently we spoke to MP Rory Amon and Northern Beaches Council about the issue and will be making more representations. We need to know what Council's policy is on using synthetic turf on their own playing fields and how they deal with private use of this material.

## Progress on improving NBC weed information

Following Cr Miranda Korzy's motion at the Council meeting at the end of May this year, we met with her and NBC staff to talk about how to improve weed information, get more community involvement in bushcare and so on. We suggested further improvement to the NBC website.

**Feedback needed from YOU:** Please go on to the NBC website, search for a weed or weeds, and report back to PNHA about your experience, to [pnhainfo@gmail.com](mailto:pnhainfo@gmail.com).

- Did you find what you were looking for?
- Can you suggest changes or improvements to the site?
- How would you like to get weed information – about identification and how to manage weeds?
- Would you be interested in a PNHA weed information stand, with weed specimens and advice on control? possibly in Avalon or Mona Vale on a weekend day?

**One of the hardest weeds to get rid of: Turkey Rhubarb, now *Rumex sagittatus*, formerly *Acetosa sagittata*.**

In a recent episode of Gardening Australia, Clarence shows you [here](#) (at about 30 minutes into the program) how to tackle this weed from South Africa.



**Left to right:**

+ Arrow-shaped leaves

+ Trusses of flowers will turn papery brown, with seeds

+ Tubers



## PNHA at the Coastal Environment Centre Open Day September 2

PNHA members Julie Bennett & Sylvia Sasczack look at some of our cards on display on the CEC verandah.

Cards have images of local flowers, trees, birds, insects and scenery.

Contact PNHA for these including Australian Christmas Cards, with local NSW Christmas Bush and Christmas Bells.



## Protecting our Wildlife

**Feral cats kill over 1.5 billion native mammals, birds, reptiles & frogs, and 1.1 billion invertebrates each year in Australia.**

Public feedback is being sought by the Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment & Water on a draft threat abatement plan for predation by feral cats.

See <http://consult.dcceew.gov.au/draft-updated-threat-abatement-plan-for-predation-by-feral-cats> for a background document, the draft threat abatement plan, and a survey for your feedback.

The policy is well researched & wide ranging. It discusses the threat in many situations: islands, deserts, rural settings including ones subject to rodent plagues, indigenous communities, industrial & urban areas.

It discusses the suitability or otherwise of various abatement options in each setting, including shooting, trapping, baiting, biological control, exclusion zones, local council regulations.

**Do pet cats do much harm?** The staggering death toll of roaming pet cats was revealed in a July 2023 article in the **Sydney Morning Herald** [here](#). Would a pet cat really go far at night? Here's how far a Lithgow cat went in one night.



**We owe it to our native wildlife, and to Australia's biodiversity, to get behind this initiative, to read the background document, to read, comment on, suggest changes, &/or support the draft policy.**

**The survey is open until 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

**A Reminder:** Pet cats also destroy our Pittwater native wildlife. Please keep your cat safe inside.

A Google search will find many solutions to keeping pet cats safe, happy and contained.



## Spring Things

**Spring is a very busy time for wildlife.** Joeys are starting to emerge from their mums' pouches, baby birds are donning their L-plates and learning to fly and reptiles are starting to shake off their winter slumber to seek some sun and 'special cuddles'...

Simultaneously, we humans seem to feel the need to start "Spring Cleaning" as soon as the weather starts to improve. But remember - cleaning out the cobwebs and wiping down the windows can be very hazardous for our wild critters.

Gardening in particular can present all kinds of challenges. Blue-tongue lizards are often hidden from sight in long grass and they become victims of lawn-mowers and whipper-snippers on a regular basis. Try to walk around your lawn and check for creatures before turning the blades on it. Bluetongue in care: Image: Marg Woods



Don't trim any branches until you have checked thoroughly for nests or dreys (possum homes). Tree hollows are also prime real estate and terrified animals will bound out at the sound of a chainsaw! Back-riding marsupial babies may drop off their fleeing mothers in fright.

Sweeping away leaves and moving old logs may unearth tiny reptiles that are still in winter dormancy. Try to wear thick gloves when gardening and do everything slowly and gently so as not to harm sleepy little creatures.

Don't fire up the barbie without checking for squatters first! The outdoor barbecue is often considered the Hilton of winter accommodation whilst not in use.

We (Sydney Wildlife Rescue volunteers) often get called out for possums and pythons in outdoor kitchens.

Spotless windows might be nice for you, but they become a source of concussion for birds! Placing visual obstructions



such as tape across the windows will prevent avian aviation accidents (try saying that 6 times in quick succession!)

Cleaning out the attic might become a whole lot more adventurous if you discover some new furry tenants. Sugar gliders have been known to enjoy loft-style attics so if you hear loud burbling sounds in grandma's old suitcases, be sure to move things slowly and carefully to prevent squashing tiny paws!

Be careful when opening outdoor umbrellas as these can be considered cute condos for microbats.

Garages, car-ports, outdoor pots, pool filter boxes, building rubble, mulch piles - all our forgotten objects become winter sleeping quarters for all types of wildlife.

Microbats in an outdoor umbrella. Image from A Bellingen Diary

If you inadvertently injure a cute claw or a tiny tail whilst getting your place spic-and-span, call **Sydney Wildlife Rescue** on **9413 4300**

Never attempt to touch bats or snakes. These animals require trained and professional rescuers only.



## Eucalypt on Barrenjoey Road

We noticed this thriving young Eucalypt on the Barrenjoey Rd road reserve in Avalon. Congratulations to resident Leonie for requesting it from NBC.

Eucalypts are such an important part of our environment particularly for all our local fauna.

We hear calls for listing of iconic trees, and probably think of big or old canopy trees, but little ones such as this one should be recognised and protected as the “iconic trees” of the future.

Somehow Crepe Myrtles are just not the same.



## Sulphur-crested Cockatoos

**Around Avalon, Cockies are feeding on the ground in great numbers.**

Not on fallen seeds of Norfolk Island Pines just now but on turf. What are they up to ?

Google suggested:

- 1.They have a penchant for lawns such as Kikuyu, and it's not the blades of grass they are after or even the surface runners but the rhizomes (or underground runners) that lie beneath the surface. The birds bite into these runners to release the sugary starch that exists within them.
2. Onion Grass *Romulea rosea*, native to South Africa. Small and usually inconspicuous with grass-like leaves, it's typically only noticed when it flowers in spring, producing pink and yellow-throated flowers. They are after its tasty underground tubers. You can see this plant in Trafalgar Park Newport, but we didn't see Cockies on it. NOT the same as the dreaded Onion **Weed**, *Nothoscordum* species)
3. Seeds of other plants in turf such as Burr Medic, Chickweed and smaller grasses.

Some cockatoos are digging holes of about 30cm deep. Is it partly the pleasure of digging, using their beaks?

Other cockatoos on the grass in Dunbar Park recently included Little Corellas and Long-billed Corellas

We were pleased to see Cockies pulling up Nutgrass *Cyperus rotundus* for its tubers in North Avalon.

Unfortunately they didn't complete the eradication of this interesting but awful plant, described [here](#) as one of the world's worst weeds!







It's Powerful Owl fledging time. Owlet sits waiting for parents to deliver food.

Image: Marlon Newling

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](mailto:pnhainfo@gmail.com) for one to be sent to you.

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