

PNIHA NEWS

Pittwater Natural Heritage Association - thinking locally, acting locally

RockCorps Rocks Asparagus Fern at Barrenjoey Dunes

A great effort by 110 RockCorps volunteers from all over Sydney removed a huge mass of Asparagus Fern on March 10. We hacked out masses of this pest with encouragement from pop music on huge boomboxes.

This was great fun on a hot sticky day, topped off with lunch boxes and rock concert tickets for the crew, as in return for 4 hours work the RockCorps, supported by Optus, offers helpers a free Rock Concert, just for them. *Give and Get Given* is their motto.

The event is part of our Pittwater Estuary Care grant project. Pittwater Council and NPWS staff assisted at the event as we worked on both National Parks and Pittwater Council land.

It was great to see that areas previously worked on AFOD days and by contractors are almost Asparagus free.

A special thanks to Pittwater Council's Bushcare Officer Helena Dewis and Hawkesbury Nepean CMA for alerting us to RockCorps. See more:

<http://www.optusrockcorps.com.au>

We're hoping another such effort from RockCorps may happen but their special concert is on April 11, so time is short.

Otherwise we will do our own AFOD at Barrenjoey at a date to be announced.



Above:
RockCorps at Barrenjoey Dunes.

Left:
RockCorps weed bags full of Asparagus Fern, and the RockCorps team heading back for lunch.

Planning Process for Ingleside

Pittwater Council has accepted an invitation by the NSW Department of Planning to participate in a 'precinct planning' process for the Ingleside area.

According to Mayor Jacqui Townsend, the precinct planning process is 'a significant opportunity for the Council to work closely with the state government in managing an orderly release of land in Ingleside.'

A recent unanimous Council decision to participate in the process is the result of lengthy negotiations between the Council, the government and landowners to resolve the development question for Ingleside, she said.

Mayor Townsend said the process was already used in other land release areas in south west and north west Sydney and would be the first time it had been used in the northern Sydney region to address a major land release. "The outcome of the precinct planning process is to rezone land in a holistic way involving multiple government agencies and taking account of infrastructure and service needs for any new development," she said.

Once the process was completed, complementary planning controls would be prepared for Pittwater's new Local Environmental Plan and corresponding Development Control Plan, as well as a developer contributions plan for funding and a delivery program of infrastructure and services.

Extensive community consultation will be an important part of the precinct planning process from the outset.

PNHA is concerned that any development incorporates wildlife corridors linking the Warriewood escarpment bushland with Ku-ring-gai and Garigal National Parks. We expect these corridors to be designed by

someone with suitable expertise .

Bird monitoring of the Upper Mullet Creek Valley during 2008-10 by Ingleside Residents Landcare Group showed that Ingleside, despite being partly cleared, contains much valuable habitat for birds. Many of the species found there entirely depend on bushland and cannot adapt to a more urban environment.

We believe the proposed rezoning of 120-122 Mona Vale Rd (see page 3) while technically part of the Warriewood land release area, would have the effect of interfering with the movement of flora and fauna along the escarpment and through Ingleside.

PNHA recognises that development will occur in Ingleside and supports the precinct process.



Ingleside the future? Photo: David Palmer

Feature Bird: Eastern Yellow Robin

Eopsaltria australis

The Eastern Yellow Robin must be one of our most charming birds. You can usually see at least one in Warriewood Wetland or Irrawong Reserve.

Eastern Yellow Robins feed on insects, spiders and other arthropods. These are caught mostly on the ground, and are pounced on from a low



perch. Birds normally feed alone, but may also be seen in pairs or small family groups. Eastern Yellow Robins are inquisitive and confident with humans.

The voice includes a variety of high bell-like piping, a repeated "chop chop" and some scolding notes. *Eopsaltria* means "dawn harper". You can hear the calls on website below.

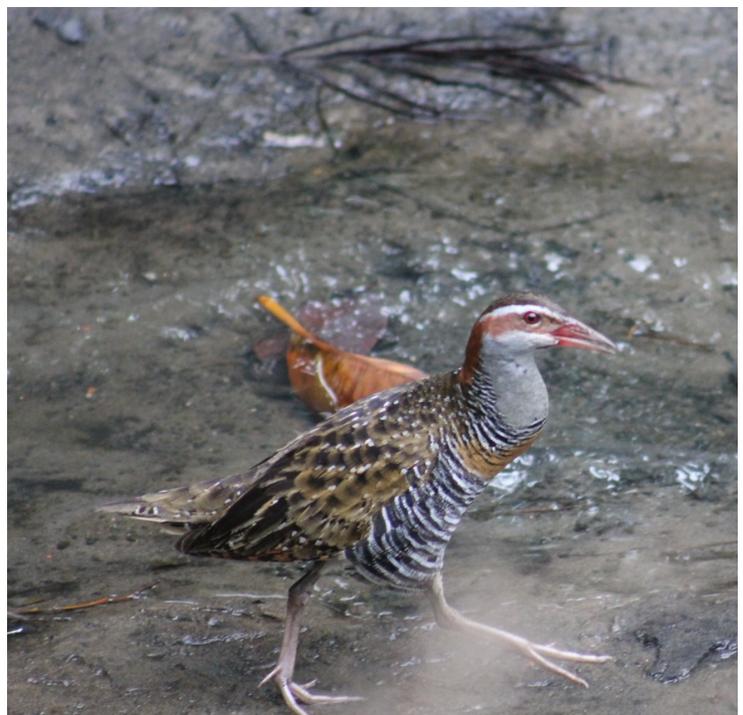
The nest is a woven cup of bark, grasses and other vegetation, bound together with spider web and lined with finer material and leaves. It is normally built in an upright tree fork, up to 20 m above the ground, but usually within 5 m.

Information from <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Eopsaltria-australis>

(Image: David Palmer)

Buff- banded Rail in Careel Creek Avalon

Rails are birds that inhabit wetlands and creeks, feeding on invertebrates. Most are extremely shy and while several species are recorded for the Warriewood Wetlands, you are very lucky or clever to see them. Except for the Buff-banded Rail, which seems to have a more confident personality. Alison Guesdon saw a family, a pair with a chick, on a recent walk along Careel Creek. (Image by Alison Guesdon).



update

Widening Mona Vale Road

The only section to be considered for widening so far lies between the Powderworks Rd intersection and Kimbriki Rd. Three options for avoiding damage to the environment and other topographical constraints near Kimbriki have been proposed. Our submission on the Mona Vale Road Upgrade Options Report did not include a preference for any option. Our comments related to the project in general: PNHA is concerned about the effect that the road widening options will have on the surrounding natural environment.

Firstly, our reading of the options report does not assure us that the important environmental outcome of preventing or minimising roadkill will be achieved. Roadkill on the present road is unacceptable, but there is little in the report to give us confidence that adequate measures to prevent or minimise roadkill will be included in any of the options. The report points out roadkill hotspots but does not adequately discuss structures that may be installed to deal with the problem. The language in the report is not convincing, for it merely states that the link between the national parks “would need to be considered in the project design.” The report does not make any recommendations as to what structures would be possible with which option, and indeed whether adequate fauna crossings will actually be built.

Some other concerns are:

- The need for adequate pollution control devices. The selected option must include installation of devices that control water pollution and minimise the spread of weeds into the national parks. These devices must be regularly maintained.
- Ensuring the continued existence of the endangered native flora growing along the route, *Grevillea caleyi* and the orchid *Microtis angusii*, as well as the Duffys Forest endangered ecological community.
- Plants used in the upgrade should be indigenous species of local provenance.

Rezoning Application R0002/12 for 120 – 122 Mona Vale Road, 10 Jubilee Ave and 4A Boundary Street, Warriewood

We are concerned at the implications of this rezoning as it will allow building of about 70 houses on an area of Warriewood Escarpment. The land in question lies at the northern end of the escarpment bushland reserve, now called Ingleside Chase. Across Mona Vale Rd is Katandra Bushland Sanctuary.

We have objected to the DA on several grounds:

1. The development proposal doesn't satisfy the Department of Planning sustainability criteria for new land releases in that it doesn't properly acknowledge the environmental constraints of the site and doesn't avoid any land use conflicts with adjoining land.

2. The planning proposal is in conflict with the Ingleside Warriewood Draft Planning Strategy

The Draft Planning Strategy places this land in Sector 26 with a principal land use for conservation purposes. We feel that this classification should still apply. If unauthorised land clearing had not taken place in 1994 the appropriateness of this classification and the ecological value of the site would be obvious today.

3. The site is a wildlife corridor

The location of this site between Ingleside Chase Reserve and Katandra Bushland Sanctuary, plus the fact that it contains a potential site for construction of a fauna crossing over Mona Vale road should be considered in the larger context of the whole of the Warriewood/Ingleside escarpment. A 2011 study by SMEC for RMS showed that wildlife cross Mona Vale Road at this site. If it was to be developed to the extent proposed, fauna movement between Katandra and Ingleside Chase would be severely affected.

4. The site has significant environmental constraints

4.1 Pittwater Council's 1994 resolution has not been taken into account

The Ecological Site Analysis outlines three habitat areas on the site including Open Forest. Tall Open Forest and Open Forest are features of the Warriewood/ Ingleside escarpment and were present on much of this site before unauthorised clearing of native vegetation took place in 1994.

(Continued from page 3)

As a consequence of the unauthorised clearing the site was subject to a resolution of Pittwater Council (minutes, 7 February 1994) which has not been taken into account by the Ecological Site Analysis. Had the site remained as it was pre 1994 it is likely that more than the 2 reported threatened species would be found on the site.

4.2 Bushland along Narrabeen Creek

A riparian zone of 20 metres along Narrabeen Creek is not enough as this is a special case. The bushland along this creek is a fauna corridor. Further reduction of biodiversity on the site will occur during the creation of the 19 metre APZ.

In addition, it is likely that the slope from the top of the ridge to Narrabeen Creek will be subject to invasion of weeds carried down from the private properties. The riparian zone should extend to the top of the ridge adjacent to Narrabeen Creek. This land could be added to Ingleside Chase Reserve

4.3. Bushfire hazard

We believe that there is a conflict between the requirement to manage bushfire risk and the need to maintain a bushland setting. The significant asset protection zones required for a residential subdivision of the size suggested will involve destruction of valuable native vegetation, thus removing native habitat and fauna corridors from the site. We would suggest that the bushfire hazard is such that residential development of this size should not be recommended for this site.

In summary, we believe that there are too many environmental constraints, and as a consequence this rezoning proposal has no

net community benefit. We would like to see the land acquired for environmental protection purposes.

We consider there is potential to develop only the lower area of the site fronting Boundary Road.

In partnership with Katandra Bushland Trust, PNHA has approached the owner of the land, Roy Mustaca, and hopes to discuss modification of the application with the consultant for the project, Charles Hill.

PNHA members and others addressed the Council on this item. Staff had recommended refusal and Council agreed 6:1. The Joint Regional Planning Panel will now consider the DA. This panel consists of Mayor Jacqueline Townsend and Cr Julie Hegarty and three representatives of the Department of Planning. PNHA is contacting government departments and Pittwater Council to investigate how the environmentally sensitive part of the land could be dedicated as bushland at no cost to the owner.

AFOD at Woody Point November 8th

Another great AFOD, a team of 30 people attacking Asparagus Fern in the glorious setting of Woody Point (see image below).

A big thankyou to the Morning Bay bushcare group, our hosts, for organising this day, supported by many local bushcarers. Fantastic morning tea and lunch to die for (well – almost). Pittwater YHA's Michael Doherty and NPWS staff also helped with tools and weed bag removal. This year the hostel has a grant to fund two more AFOD weekends.

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activities

Activities 2013 Program

This year we offer more of our popular bird-watching activities.

Our area has many species of birds that don't visit gardens because they need native bushland. Our walks leaders will help you identify what you hear and see in the bush.

Birdwatching at Careel Creek

April Sunday 21

Bring children! Birdwatching and community walk along Careel Creek looking for birds, crabs, strange plants. We'll walk from Careel Bay tennis courts to Careel Bay & back.

Activities for kids. Grownups can learn the story of how we are making a bush connection between Avalon Dunes and Careel Bay.

Meet at Careel Bay tennis courts, Avalon.

Time: 9.30-11.30 Bring a drink and hat.

A Pittwater Estuary Care grant activity.

Birdwatching in Irrawong Reserve March 10

Our scheduled February 24th birdwatching was postponed because of bad weather.

PNHA is monitoring birds regularly for the Upper Mullet Creek catchment project. This big bush regeneration project is being run by Pittwater Council and Pittwater Environment Foundation, with a six year \$2.5K grant to the Foundation to run over from the NSW Environmental Trust.

Information on birds seen is noted for the project but also sent to Birdlife Australia for their Australia-wide Bird Atlas records. Contact Kerry Smith at pnhabirdwatching@gmail.com or ph: 0402 605 721 if you would like to come.

PNHA Pittwater Geology Excursion 2012

Dr Peter Mitchell, formerly of Macquarie University, guided us on a tour explaining local landscapes, rocks, fossil, soils and some little-known local history.

Have a look at the two documentaries on this excursion, made by John Illingsworth.

Part 1: Sandstone, Sediments and Swastikas

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEv1hPW5IUc>

Part 2: Sandstone, Sediments and Labyrinthodonts

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8QS44uBXGM>



Catchment Management Authority
Hawkesbury-Nepean

Plague Soldier Beetles *Chauliognathus lugubris*

Amazing numbers of slim green and yellow beetles appeared before Christmas last year. "Plague" only refers to the fact that they can appear in huge swarms. They are quite harmless. The grubs live in the soil, feeding on other small creatures. The adult beetles don't seem to eat the plants they settle on, although the sheer weight of a mass of them may break weaker twigs. What they are more interested in is sucking nectar from flowering trees, and copulating.

The bright colours of *Chauliognathus* are a warning to any predator thinking of taking a swipe at one, as they exude a white viscous fluid from their glands that repels any predators thinking of getting too close. This information is from this website below, where there is a video showing a huge swarm.

<http://csironewsblog.com/2012/11/08/insect-of-the-week-the-plague-soldier-beetle-isnt-nearly-as-bad-as-it-sounds/>

Article and image—Gary Harris



Giant Burrowing Frog

Heleioporus australiacus

By Tracy Chambers, Coastwide Marine

As part of the **Mullet Creek Restoration Project** being carried out by Pittwater Environment Foundation a survey of amphibians and reptiles is currently being undertaken by environmental consultants. Giant Burrowing Frog February 2013 Survey manager Tracy Chambers of Coastwide Marine (Environmental and Ecological Services) has engaged herpetologist Chris Jolly to assist in the surveys.

Exciting news so far is the rare sighting of the Giant Burrowing Frog during nocturnal surveys in the escarpment of the northern arm of Mullet Creek.

According to "Atlas of Living Australia" this is the third record of the species in this bushland patch in 20 years. <http://www.ala.org.au/> The last two occurred on 01/04/1993 and 31/07/1994.

The Giant Burrowing Frog (*Heleioporus australiacus*) is listed as Vulnerable under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 and federally under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

It is one of our largest frogs and a burrower. The males of this species possess large black spines and thorns on their fingers, arms, and chests to aid in gripping the slippery female whilst spawning. This armoury may also be used in male combat. Adults are found in wet and dry forest and woodlands. The Great Burrowing Frog usually spawns in a small water-filled burrow or under thick vegetation in dams, ditches, and slow flowing streams. The tadpoles hatch and escape when the water rises to flood the burrow.

Habitat and ecology

Found in heath, woodland and open dry sclerophyll forest on a variety of soil types except those that are clay based.

It spends more than 95% of its time in non-breeding habitat in areas up to 300 m from breeding sites. Whilst in non-breeding habitat it burrows below the soil surface or in the leaf litter. Individual frogs occupy a series of burrow sites, some of which are used repeatedly. The home ranges of both sexes appear to be non-overlapping suggesting exclusivity of non-breeding habitat. Home ranges are approximately 0.04 ha in size.

Individuals move into the breeding site either immediately before or following heavy rain and occupy these sites for up to 10 days. Most individuals will not attempt to breed every year.

The Giant Burrowing Frog has a generalist diet and studies to date indicate that they eat mainly invertebrates including ants, beetles, cockroaches, spiders,



Image by Chris Berry

centipedes and scorpions.

When breeding, frogs will call from open spaces, under vegetation or rocks or from within burrows in the creek bank. Males show strong territoriality at breeding sites. This species breeds mainly in autumn, but has been recorded calling throughout the year. Egg masses are foamy with an average of approximately 500-800 eggs and are laid in burrows or under vegetation in small pools.

After rains, tadpoles are washed into larger pools where they complete their development in ponds or ponded areas of the creekline. Tadpole development ranges from around 12 weeks duration to up to 12 months with late developing tadpoles overwintering and completing development when warmer temperatures return.

Breeding habitat of this species is generally soaks or pools within first or second order streams. They are also commonly recorded from 'hanging swamp' seepage lines and where small pools form from the collected water.

This frog is a slow growing and long-lived species, living up to 10 years of age, possibly longer.

Threats

Habitat loss through clearing for residential, agricultural and urban infrastructure development.

- Disease (chytrid fungus)
- Reduction of water quality generally in the vicinity of urban development
- Forest disturbance associated with forestry operations.
- Climate change
- Populations appear fragmented and are consequently susceptible to unpredictable events.

Activities to assist this species

Retain native vegetation and minimise ground disturbance where the species occurs. This is essential within 300 m of known breeding sites.

Protect breeding sites from disturbance, sedimentation and pollution.

Miners and Mynas - some views and actions



Noisy Miner *Manorina melanocephala*

If you have this despotic native honeyeater in your garden, you are unlikely to see any smaller birds. The Noisy Miner actively excludes almost all other birds from its territories in urban landscapes and remnant woodlands. It thrives in these simplified habitats dominated by trees, grass and little other understorey setting up territories and defending them in aggressive groups. They can have such a harmful effect on other birds, by denying them habitat, that their presence has been proposed as a key threatening process in Victoria under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, also under the Federal Government’s Environmental Protection & Biodiversity Act.

In contrast, the Common Myna has attracted widespread loathing among the public and local authorities. Yet studies have not detected major impacts on native birds from the myna, which prefers to nest in roofs and urban areas. There is little evidence that it is moving into ‘natural’ habitats, says Richard Major, Australian Museum ornithologist.

See more at: <http://australianmuseum.net.au/blogpost/Science-Bytes/myna-or-miner>

How to discourage Noisy Miners and attract a variety of other birds. Birds in Backyards is a program to help you with exactly this. See <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/Guidelines-Creating-Bird-Habitats>

A few tips:

Do not plant large hybrid Grevilleas which flower all year, offering them constant food. Plant preferably native shrubs and trees of various heights, and some plants that will offer dense hiding places near the ground.

Provide water in a safe place near shrubs, keeping the container clean and fresh.

Try to get your neighbours to do likewise to create connected habitat. If your garden is a bird paradise, but an island, birds won’t find it.

Common or Indian Myna *Acridotheres tristis*

In Pittwater Mynas are pests around shopping centres, dubbed “flying rats” by some. They are related to Starlings.

The Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc (CIMAG) is a community group formed in April 2006 to reduce the impact of this exotic invader on native birds and animals.

Their numbers have exploded across Canberra since they were deliberately introduced, and CIMAG considers them a serious environmental threat to native wildlife. They:

- are one of the most invasive animal species in the world
- take over nesting hollows, evicting birds and small mammals, and prey on nestlings
- pose some small human health risk, and the nesting material they bring into roof cavities and other spaces in buildings can be a fire hazard.

Success in trapping Indian or Common Mynas in Canberra is encouraging. Have a look at <http://www.indianmynaaction.org.au/> This website describes how about 40 000 birds have so far been caught. Plans for traps are on the website. Is anyone interested in getting together to make a few traps PNHA could lend out to the community?

Common or Indian Myna Conference
Date: Wednesday, 19th June 2013
Venue: Discovery Centre, CSIRO, Black Mt, Canberra ACT
Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc: c/- 6 Fanning Place KAMBAH ACT 2902: ph 02 6231 7461
Information: Bill Handke, hanke@grapevine.net.au



Membership Application

I would like to join Pittwater Natural Heritage Association. I agree with the PNHA’s aims: raising awareness of and preserving our unique Pittwater natural environment.

Name:..... Signed:.....

Address:.....P/Code

Email:..... Ph:..... Date:.....

I would like a **paper copy** OR **emailed** newsletter (circle your choice). Membership fee: \$20 or \$10 pensioner/student. To pay your membership, you can deposit electronically into our account at the Commonwealth Bank: BSB 062 208, account no.10168467. Type your surname in the reference box so we know who the membership is for. Alternatively make cheque payable to: **Pittwater Natural Heritage Association** or **PNHA**. Post cheque payable to **Pittwater Natural Heritage Association** to PNHA, PO Box 187, Avalon Beach NSW 2107.