

PNHA NEWS



Pittwater Natural Heritage Association - thinking locally, acting locally

Down with Weeds! PNHA Gets a Grant

We've been successful in getting nearly \$30,000 for

- Asparagus Fern control on land near Pittwater YHA, at Rocky and Woody Points on the Western Shores and at Palm Beach Dunes
- Revegetation of more of Careel Creek in Avalon and Saltmarsh restoration and weed control around Careel Bay.

The grant is part of the program **Engaging NSW Coastal Communities in Coastline Conservation**, administered by Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Authority.

The project includes an in-kind contribution of over \$117,147, mostly from volunteer labour (valued at \$30/hr). A cash contribution of nearly \$18,700 from Pittwater Council and Pittwater YHA guests will further boost the project.

Planting field days, bush regeneration contract work, educational events and signage are some features of the project.

The program aims to get as many people as possible in the community engaged in caring for the coast. We expect that children from several local schools will include the topic in their curricula to some extent and take part in planting days.

Pittwater Council will manage the grant funds on PNHA's behalf. The grant will run from January 2011 to May 2012.



Careel Creek beside Barrenjoey High School



Warriewood Valley's Hidden Walks

The development of Warriewood Valley has brought about great changes from its market garden past.

One of these has been remediation of several creeks which wind their way across the Warriewood floodplain to empty into Narrabeen Lagoon. The subdivisions were designed with creekline corridors to provide native vegetation and fauna habitat, as well as pathways for recreation.

The creeks had been seriously degraded, choked with weeds, with poor water quality and sometimes turned into

pipled drains, for instance under the old drive-in theatre.

To see how sections have been improved with extensive plantings and reworking of the creeks to improve conditions for aquatic flora and fauna, go for some walks. Take small children as the paths are good for trikes, and your binoculars to see some interesting birds.

Narrabeen Creek

You can access the Narrabeen Creek pathway on Ponderosa Parade 100m north of the Forest Road intersection, also from a path between Blair Athol and Gleneagles multi-unit housing complexes on McPherson Street or at the other end near Brands Lane (off Warriewood Road). There's an attractive fenced playground. Birdwatchers: good spots for fairy wrens, Eastern Spinebill and White-cheeked Honeyeater. On the path watch out for basking Eastern Water -skins

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(*Eulamprus quoyii*) which enjoy the warm concrete. Eastern Waterdragons (*Physignathus lesueurii*) hang about near the bridge over the creek. Males have the throat blotched with orange, red or blue. Dogs must be on leads. Further downstream it dwindles across McPherson Street, passes the Sewage Treatment Plant and then east of Boondah Reserve, meeting Mullet Creek near Jacksons Road. For more details click on: www.pittwater.nsw.gov.au/environment/water/creeks/narrabeen_creek

Fern Creek

This goes under Garden Street to flow east north of Shearwater Estate. You can park near the bridge on Garden Street. Follow the path along the southern bank as it swings around towards the stormwater detention ponds, designed to catch and hold water to improve its quality before it flows into Warriewood Wetland. Near the southernmost pond you can take a left turn along boardwalks which will take you through to Jacksons Road at the back of Warriewood Square shopping centre, or if you take the right hand path you end up on Garden Street again.

Birdwatchers: The settlement ponds have become good bird



Superb Fairy-wren

Nevil Lazarus 2008

habitat. Little Grebes breed here, watch for Tawny Grassbird and Little Grassbird, various Cormorants. Dogs on leads; no dog swimming allowed.

Mullet Creek

This is the most southern of the creeks, with its headwaters in Ingleside and Elanora. It flows through Irrawong Reserve, under Garden Street and then through Warriewood Wetland, meeting Narrabeen Creek near Jacksons Road. No dogs are allowed in these reserves as this is important fauna habitat.



Black Faced Monarch

Nevil Lazarus

2008

In Irrawong Reserve, just north of Irrawong Road, the section of the walkway beside the creek has recently been named the Jim Revitt Walkway in recognition of Jim's outstanding contribution to Pittwater's natural environment and its establishment as a separate local government area. The track to the waterfall beyond the western end of Irrawong Road has been upgraded to a boardwalk. Birdwatchers: Powerful Owl, Glossy Black Cockatoo, Rufous Fantail, Lyrebird, Brush Turkey, Black-faced Monarch, (and once a Noisy Pitta). Swamp Mahoganies attract nectar feeders in winter. A bit rough for strollers and trikes.

The Warriewood Wetland section of the walkway is well-used and great for birdwatching, but also too rough for trikes. The track goes between Garden Street and Katoa Close. Please don't feed the birds.

Photos: Superb Fairy Wren (left) and Black Faced Monarch by Nevil Lazarus.



What's This?

The white ovals are 2mm long x 1mm wide.

Eggs of a lacewing. The larvae are fierce little predators of other insects and are called Ant Lions.

ANSWER:

The Year of the Rabbit?

We hope not! Before Christmas we sent letters to pet shops from Manly to Avalon Beach asking that they consider not selling rabbits and suggesting Guinea Pigs as an alternative pet.

Only shop one has replied to date, PetBiz in Darley Steet Mona Vale, assuring us they do not sell any animals. We also asked the Animal Welfare League to give away only rabbits already desexed. No reply received yet.

Last year on PNHA's behalf Pittwater MP Rob Stokes sent a letter to Minister for Primary Industries, Emergency Services and Rural Affairs, Steve Whan. His letter pointed out the anomaly that a pest species may be kept as a pet. Despite receiving supporting documentation, the Minister's reply indicated he does not recognise the rabbit problem in this area.

Rabbits occur in every state, but mostly in the more southern areas of the continent. In Queensland it is illegal to keep rabbits, but in other states they may be kept as pets. We believe NSW should have a similar ban and that such a ban would make sense Australia-wide. Googling the question of whether domestic rabbits can survive in the wild came up with various answers to questions from people whose rabbits had escaped. Some breeds certainly don't look very biologically

fit and may not be used to avoiding predators. However rabbits on the northern beaches can be various colours including piepald so must have escaped or have forbears that did.

Pittwater Council staff enquired about Animal Welfare League procedure and costs of sterilisation of rabbits and reported to PNHA that the procedure of the Welfare League at Ingleside is to euthanase any rabbits that act as wild rabbits (ie aren't easy to handle). Any that appear domestic are vaccinated for Calici virus, have health checks prior to going out. If people want more than one, they are given two males or two females and if given a male and female are given a \$100 voucher to help pay for sterilisation. People have to pay \$20 towards the vaccination and possibly another \$40. They are given an information pack and sign a form agreeing that they will keep the rabbit indoors or in secure housing.

PNHA understands desexing is not possible when rabbits are less than 4 months old. Desexing for males and females can be done between 4 and 6 months. Puberty occurs at 4-5 months. Sterilisation at Pittwater Animal Hospital costs \$164 for male rabbits and \$267 for female rabbits. Vaccination for Calici at this animal hospital costs \$57. Rabbit hutches are also over \$100.

Tubestock planted on Mona Vale Dunes about a year ago and protected by grow bags were doing well, but now that the bags have been removed, rabbits have almost destroyed the lot.

PNHA Activities

**Insects and Other
Invertebrates**
Saturday February 12, 7-9pm
**Katandra Bushland
Reserve, Lane Cove Road,
Ingleside**



Invertebrates—animals without backbones—are amazing, important and often overlooked. We could not survive without the services they provide in our environment.

Martyn Robinson, naturalist at the Australian Museum, will set up a light sheet to attract insects and tell us about the creatures we find. **Bring your own invertebrates—insects, spiders, etc., to be identified.**

Bring: Mosquito repellent.

Cost: Free

To Book: Ph 9918 0430, or 9918 3368, or email 4gharris@tpg.com.au

Image: Flower Chafer Beetle by Marita Macrae

What's On in 2011

A new Activities Brochure 2011 may be included with this newsletter. Otherwise go to **www.pnha.org.au** and click on the *What's On* tab to see it. There are two versions: one in black and white for you to print a double sided brochure and the other in colour.



Green Caterpillars—Caterpillar or Piece of Leaf?

The camouflage of this caterpillar involves both appearance and behaviour. It's the larva of a moth, the Red-lined Geometrid *Crypsiphona ocultaria*, on a Swamp Mahogany (image right). It feeds on a variety of Eucalypts. Pointed at both ends, it only feeds at night. By day it remains in one position, holding its body at an angle from the stem or leaf, attached only by its two pairs of prolegs, one of which is the anal claspers. If you move its perch, it moves its body to maintain that angle. (The prolegs are at the rear end of the body and the number can be an identifying feature in caterpillars). The three pairs of true legs are at the head end.



The adult moth is pale grey, beautifully marked underneath its wings, pale grey with black, and on the male, red lines.

The Eriosoma Moth larva *Chrysodeixus eriosoma* (image right) is not a fussy eater, consuming leaves of many vegetables and herbs. It rests beneath the leaf, in this case on Eggplant. It also helps itself to Mint, Tarragon and Basil in my garden.

The adult moth is brown and about one centimetre long, its wings folded over its back like a tent, and a tuft of scales behind its head.



Above: *Eriosoma* Moth Adult
(Image from blass.com.au)

The adult Green-blotched Moth *Cosmodes elegans* (image right) is similar appearance and also has a similar green larva but this one only eats Lobelia and Verbena species.



Reference: *Flying Colours: Common Caterpillars, butterflies and moths of south-eastern Australia*. Pat & Mike Coupar. NSW University Press 1992.

Image of *Eriosoma* Moth from blass.com.au.

Article and other images by Marita Macrae.



Soldier Crabs

Strange dark shadows flow and stretch across the sand, drifting this way, then that. What's going on?

Soldier Crabs are feeding. On a falling tide recently were hundreds of Soldier Crabs *Mictyris longicarpus* on sand flats at the end of Etival Street, Careel Bay.

I moved to have a closer look and they sped away, their eight little legs and two claws clicking. I stood still. The hordes changed direction. Some came towards me and passed by my feet. Others just emerging from their burrows, look around and dashed away to catch up with the others. When undisturbed the groups moved slowly, feeding as they went.

Soldier Crabs remain in burrows for much of the day, but emerge almost synchronously at low tide to forage. They feed by scooping up clumps of mud with their claws (front clawed feet or chelipeds, photo right) and pass them to their mouthparts. The sediment is sorted and small quantities of silt are eaten. They digest bacteria and fine organic matter associated with the silt particles. Unwanted material is packaged by the crabs and discarded as pellets called pseudifaeces. Thus by burrowing and feeding soldier crabs loosen the sediments, remove significant quantities of organic material from them and repackage them as consolidated pellets.

Another species of Soldier Crab *Mictyris platycheles* can occur with *M. longicarpus* on flats near Sydney. This one is deep blue and lacks the brown patches on the leg joint seen in *M. platycheles*, and is only half its size.

For a look at more Pittwater soldier Crabs click on: <http://Pittwaterspirit.com.au/macro/2010/04/feeling-crabby>

Article and image by Marita Macrae

References:

Australian Seashores. Isobel Bennett. Harper Collins 1992

Coastal Marine Ecology of Temperate Australia. ed AJ Underwood and MG Chapman. UNSW Press 1995



Bird Books & Videos

Discarded by Warringah Library and rescued by a PNHA members, we are looking for takers. At \$5 each they are real bargains. Contact pnhainfo@gmail.com and we'll send you the list of titles. None are field guides. Some have a broad focus, others look at birds families, or birds of various habitats.

PNHA Cards

We have a lot of new Pittwater flora, fauna and landscape images, and many older favourites.

If you need a card for any purpose, these are ideal as you can write your own message. You can select a few to put together as a gift, or send to overseas friends to share our lovely area! Cards are \$2.00 each. Contact us to ask to see them. Only a small selection is on our web page.

Narrabeen Lagoon Trail – Stage 2

Warringah Council is designing and constructing 2.5km of trail and pedestrian bridge infrastructure between Deep Creek and South Creek. This project will complete the final links of the trail network along the foreshores of Narrabeen Lagoon.

Construction of Stage 1 is underway and will see 850m of multi-use trail built between Deep Creek Bridge and Middle Creek Reserve. Warringah Council is working with Pittwater Council to identify and design signage for the new and existing trail infrastructure.

Warringah Council has also commenced preliminary design for Stag-



es 2A and 2B. Stage 2A proposes improvements to Middle Creek Reserve and the concept includes upgrades to the car park, a multi-use trail to join the Stage 1 works, upgrades to the toilet facilities and installation of new signage, barbecues, shelters and picnic facilities. Stage 2B will provide trail and bridge infrastructure adjacent to the Sydney Academy of Sport and Recreation and Cromer Golf Club, providing the final link to South Creek Reserve and Jamieson Park.

Find out more and join in the discussion at www.yoursaywarringah.com.au/narrabeenlagoontrail

If you have any queries please email anne.kubiak@warringah.nsw.gov.au or call 9942 2111.

Image at left from yoursaywarringah.com.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.

Post cheque payable to **Pittwater Natural Heritage Association** to PNHA, PO Box 187, Avalon Beach NSW 2107.

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