

PNHA NEWS

Pittwater Natural Heritage Association - thinking locally, acting locally

pnha update pnha update

Activity Report

Asparagus Fern Out Day at Barrenjoey Headland in June. PNHA members and locals were joined by a goodly contingent from NPWS volunteers and staff, plus some from North Palmy Surf Club too - 47 all up - a record for a Mainland AFOD.

Fifty bags of corms were despatched, about one tonne, which will give the Bad Guys something to think about!

And a special thanks to our sponsors: Pittwater Council, National Parks & Wildlife Service, Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Authority and DATS Environmental Services.



Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Authority

Pittwater Estuary Care grant progress: Along Careel Creek the contractor has been maintaining sites from Barrenjoey High through to Etival Street off Barrenjoey Road. Primary works have been undertaken at the entrance to Etival Street and the dog exercise area, targeting weeds throughout the wetland area. The site is improving and mulch will be spread there.

Parole and Probation workers have been helping along the Careel Creek area by mulching, planting and weeding for several days over a period of a few weeks.

The John Street foreshore area along Careel Bay has had major primary works targeting weeds within the drainage line running into Careel Bay - some weeds, mainly Lantana, are being left at present to stop further dumping of rubbish into the site.

Sites are being prepared for planting days - dates to be announced.

Breakfast with the Birds June 26. A lovely day with lots of people and birds. Our next Breakfast has been postponed from October 23 to October 30 to avoid a clash with Birding Essentials at the CEC.

Coastal Communities Walk July 17. Despite threatening weather about 35 people walked around the headland from Newport into the Bilgola Valley along the coastal walkway, looking at the various vegetation communities. Karin Nippard of Pittwater Council gave a fascinating insight into the management of this bushland. A grant from Hawkesbury Nepean CMA is funding bush regeneration in the Bilgola Valley.

Spring Wildflower Walk August 21. The Chiltern track was brilliant as usual, with three types of Boronias, wattles, grevilleas, banksias and lots of busy birds, including Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters.

PNHA AGM August 28
Our new committee for 2011-12:

President: Marita Macrae
Vice-president: Allan Porter
Secretary: David Palmer
Treasurer: Ken Hughes
Committee members: Sue Anderson, Annette Bonnefin, Gary Harris and Kerry Smith. The President's and Treasurer's Reports will be emailed to PNHA Members, or posted with the next newsletter.

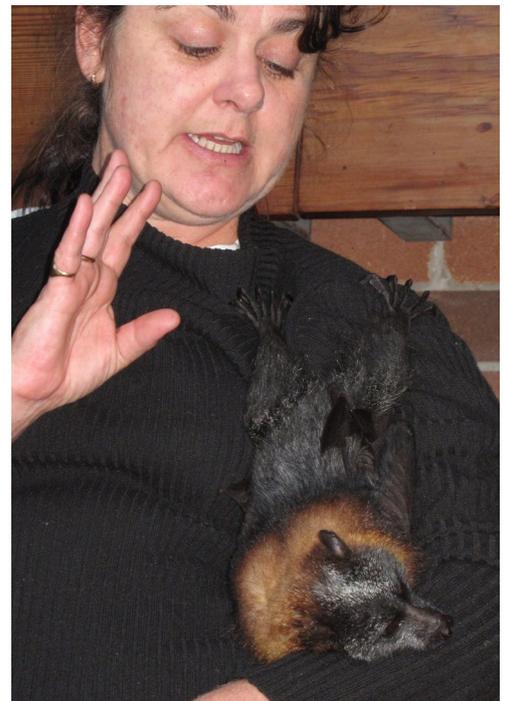
We thank Sonja Elwood for her presentation about fauna in Pittwater, assisted by Jamie, a Grey-headed Flying Fox, and a Diamond Python. Now in care, Jamie cannot fly.

His job is to welcome and comfort the
(Continued on page 2)

Sustainable Living Expo
Sunday October 9, Village Park Mona Vale
PNHA will have a stall here instead of at Mona Vale or Avalon Markets. Living sustainably means looking after our biodiversity, as well as reduce, reuse and recycle. A weed display and our new DVD **Weed War I** will be on sale and running on a computer so you can see before you buy. On it a series of short films demonstrates how to identify and remove several local noxious weeds. And that's just us! There will be lots at the Expo about how to live sustainably. See:
http://www.pittwater.nsw.gov.au/home/news_highlights/sustainable_living_expo



Native Rose, *Boronia serrulata*



Sonja Elwood and Grey-headed Flying Fox, Jamie

Inside:
PNHA Activities
Book Review
Bangalley Head
Myrtle Rust

Nest Boxes
Pool to Pond
Tidy Beaches
A Neuston?
Bush Stone Curlew

(Continued from page 1)

many young orphaned GHFFs that are brought in to be cared for by Sydney Wildlife volunteers.

Introducing our new committee members:

Kerry Smith

I am a long-time Northern Beaches resident, and have always been curious about the natural world. A keen bird-watcher, I take special interest in discovering and observing the wildlife in our local area. I have surveyed reserves, parks, waterways and roadsides, recording the rich and diverse birdlife of the Pittwater area.

Using computer technology, we can input local information to national databases, such as Birds Australia's Birdata. I hope to help build records of our local wildlife by assisting PNHA with outings and surveys, and contributing the data to local and wider organisations that seek to preserve wildlife and habitats.

Allan Porter

(profile in next newsletter)

Flora Fauna & Photo weekend at Pittwater YHA

This was poorly attended but the lucky participants received expert advice on camera management and other aspects of nature photography from Ken Griffiths. Thank you to Ken, and Michael and Sarah of Pittwater YHA.

Activities Coming up

Breakfast with the Birds – now on October 30, postponed from 23rd

Meet at the end of Katoa Close, off Jacksons Road, Warriewood.

8 – 10.30am. Sydney Freshwater Wetlands are a rare habitat in Sydney. Summer breeding birds will be here, some of the 170 species recorded for the area. Bring binoculars if possible. We can lend some. Cost: Tea/coffee and cake \$2.00

To Book: Phone Marita 9918 3368, 9918 9170, or email: pnhainfo@gmail.com

Fifth Asparagus Fern Out Extravaganza, November 12 will be at Rocky Point (Lovett Bay)

If you have not been there before, it is a great day, with a super duper lunch (Those Lovett Bay people sure know how to cater!) and a free ferry trip to boot. To RSVP phone Marita 9918 3368 or 0439 409 202 or email: pnhainfo@gmail.com

Exploring tidal waters on Australia's temperate coast



Phil Colman and Peter Mitchell

Book Review:

Exploring Tidal Waters on Australia's Temperate Coast

By Phil Colman and Dr Peter Mitchell

This is an excellent armchair guide to shore platforms without getting your feet wet. As Phil says: it's scientifically accurate without being scientifically boring. The book has chapters on topics such as geology, Long Reef, plankton, birds, seaweeds and so on, written with an infectious sense of wonder and appreciation.

By the end of the book, you'll have a good idea of what makes the Long Reef shoreline tick, but the information and biology principles are useful on any temperate shore. It is also a field guide you can take to the shore as a quick reference. It has 128 pages and 190 colour illustrations, mostly by the authors.

Available for:

\$20 from Phil Colman, 8 Ocean Grove, Collaroy, (9982 6142); \$22 from the Coastal Environment Centre, Lake Park Road, Narrabeen and Berkelouw Books, 11 Howard Avenue, Dee Why & 12-14 Park Street, Mona Vale, or \$25 posted from Ground Truth Consulting

groundtruthmitchell@gmail.com

Bangalley Head Landcare

With the aim of helping residents whose properties adjoin Bangalley and Careel Heads, we contacted them to suggest forming a Landcare group.

A meeting to launch the idea was held at Avalon Recreation Centre on Saturday September 17th. Several residents attended and decided a Landcare group would be a good idea. They are interested in working both in the reserve and on their own land. Vanessa Keyzer of Hawkesbury Nepean CMA explained that the group could benefit from grant funding. The first activity will be a walk into the reserve to learn about flora and fauna on October 16.

Pool to Pond

Are you sick of looking after your swimming pool? Wouldn't it be easier just to swim at the beach?

Ku-ring-gai Council has assisted 40 local residents in converting their unwanted swimming pools into ponds since 2007 by supplying native fish, aquatic plants and technical advice for the conversion. For more information click on the links below:

<http://www.kmc.nsw.gov.au/www/html/1190-wildthings.asp>

[Watch a short YouTube video on successful pool to pond conversions](#)



[Pool to Pond Brochure \(1.23MB\)](#)

[Pool to Pond Structure Examples \(1.51MB\)](#)

Nest Boxes

Many Australian animals and birds rely on tree hollows for nesting and shelter. Many live in Pittwater and they would benefit if more hollows were available. As Eucalypts suffer from age or the effects of urban development, mature trees are felled. If replacement trees are provided, it will be at least 100 years before they can provide hollows again. Too often trees are not replaced.

Nestboxes can provide accommodation. Pittwater Council is inviting people to nominate places where they think nestboxes might be used by fauna.

Some need large hollows, such as the Powerful Owl. Others such as the little insectivorous Microbats shelter under loose bark, but will use a type of box. The range of boxes on offer is surprising – there is even a box to accommodate the Spotted Pardalote. This tiny bird gleans insects from Eucalypt tree tops but nests in a burrow it digs in the side of an earth or sandy bank.

A couple of years ago PNHA installed nestboxes for Sacred Kingfishers in Warriewood Wetlands after the arboreal termite mounds collapsed for some unknown reason and were no longer available as nest sites. The boxes so far have not been used by Kingfishers.

At Bothams Beach on McCarrs Creek, Glider boxes have been installed as part of the Spotted Gum forest restoration project run by Pittwater Environmental Foundation and funded by a Hawkesbury Nepean CMA Community Action Grant.

What is Myrtle Rust?

Myrtle Rust (*Uredo rangelii*) is a newly described fungus that is closely related to the Eucalyptus and Guava rusts. These rusts are serious pathogens which affect plants belonging to the family Myrtaceae including Australian natives like bottle brush (*Callistemon* spp.), tea tree (*Melaleuca* spp.) and eucalypts (*Eucalyptus* spp.).

Myrtle Rust is distinctive in that it produces masses of powdery bright yellow or orange-yellow spores on infected plant parts. It infects leaves of susceptible plants producing spore-filled lesions on young actively growing leaves, shoots, flower buds and fruits. Leaves may become buckled or twisted and

may die as a result of infection. Sometimes these infected spots are surrounded by a purple ring. Older lesions may contain dark brown spores. Infection on highly susceptible plants may result in plant death.

If you see this in Pittwater contact Pittwater Council 9970 1111. Look at this website for pictures of rust and more information. <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/plant/myrtle-rust/hosts>

People and animals can spread rust spores on skin, clothing or tools from one susceptible plant to another so it is always important to use good hygiene in the garden. Clean earth off tools and disinfect them with a spray of methylated spirits.



Nestbox for Squirrel or Sugar Glider at Botham's Beach

'Tidy' Beaches

In this urbanised world, there is the inevitable battles between those of us who want a "nice, clean, sterile" world, and those of us who revel in the "natural" world. Beaches, familiar to us all, exemplify this problem.

To some, it is great to wander the shore line, stepping over the stranded kelp, fossicking, spying shells, a sea urchin test, a shark egg, or inspecting the ghost crab holes that indicate other life there, as well as ours. Lift up that drying kelp and see the (at times) thousands of small, jumping creatures some call sand fleas, visible when disturbed and quickly invisible again.

But some prefer the beach carefully raked over and swept clean of all extraneous matter, called rubbish, so that from a distance it looks pristine as if a wave had just swept over all the blemishes be it footprint or seaweed.

A "clean" beach, however, can indicate an unnatural sterility. A beach devoid of those crab holes or kelp, can indicate a literally unhealthy beach. Perhaps a coastal beach, constantly renewed, can withstand constant housekeeping. But the

beaches in quieter waters, such as the beaches surrounding Pittwater or Sydney Harbour, rely very much on that hidden fauna living in the sand to keep the water offshore 'healthy'. Those creatures survive by consuming the organic matter stranded by the tide.

Each cubic metre of sand can hold countless thousands of organisms, nematodes and copepods and polychaetes and those crabs, all quietly working away consuming kelp, or bird droppings, or other organic matter. They themselves provide food for other organisms, many of which become part of the food chain and supply the wants of those offshore whiting or bream. Beach, or ghost, crabs endlessly patrol the shore line scavenging or processing individual sand grains to feed on bacteria.

In other words, different organisms play a very important role in keeping that beach resilient or fit as a fiddle.

But in today's so-tidy world, a "mess" has to be cleaned up, a rake pulled by a tractor is necessary to get rid of all that visually unpleasant 'stuff', those tractor tyres might compact the sand and kill all

sorts of things, but nobody sees, so nobody cares.

As well, the totally unplanned but nevertheless large amounts of sunscreens and other oils which impregnate the beach each week can only do great harm to those small but essential organisms still alive.

We have to make a choice. Do we want to go the way of some beaches in Europe which are actually labelled Blue Flag Beach, which really means they are now totally sterile? Or do we want to even go so far (as some beaches in France and elsewhere) where deodorant is actually sprayed on the beach after raking, to make it 'nice'?

Or are we prepared to keep the beaches as natural as possible, and allow those myriads of creatures to live and process the beach as it has been for millions of years, so that we can have our brief pleasure on them on a weekend hot day and give the beach over to the rest the rest of the week.

Phil Colman



Palm Beach from
Barrenjoey
Headland

Photo: Marita Macrae

What is a Neuston?

The open ocean is to many a forbidding place. But to those few organisms that live their lives on the surface of the open ocean life can be even more forbidding.

One day might be calm and peaceful, and life pleasant. But when a cyclone roars over life is not the same. And then blazing sun follows, apt to cook anything floating. Hail or heavy rain follows to batter what's left, which is then driven at the mercy of wind on to a beach to die.

Many well know some of these organisms. The bluebottle comes first to mind – a bubble with stinging trailers extending deep into the water. Some might also know the by-the-wind-sailor, an oval blue disk with fragile sail looking very unappealing when stranded. Then there is the violet snail with thin shell and massed bubble raft. Finally there is that peculiar animal which is called sea lizard, though I fail to identify a reptile there.

These animals, called neustons or floating organisms, live their lives on that fragile interchange between air and water, and with one or two more I have not discussed, occur on all major oceans, driven hither and thither by the elements. They constitute a largely self-sufficient group, eating or being eaten by each other, with the bluebottles and its relatives (all cnidarians, animals with stinging cells) fishing for other prey in the water and bringing outside nutrient into the circle.

And in one way they are nearly all alike. They are blue, like the bluebottle, or two-tone blue like the violet snail, with a purpose. A potential predator flying overhead looks down but sees only a lot of blobs, all dark blue. But another predator swimming below looks up to see a lot of blobs, silvery-whitish, blending with the water surface.

Here's an interesting postscript. I record the presence-absence of neustons stranded on the beach for various reasons. Last year, as in most years, bluebottles were part of the beach scene, with them present most days, just a few, or myriads. The on-shore winds which bring us our typical cooling nor-easterlies also bring the neustons. But this year, on my little beach at Collaroy Basin but also on most other beaches, I've not recorded one bluebottle or any other neuston since February 24th. I of course cannot put this down to global warming, or sea-level rises or anything else, other than the vagaries of the weather over the years.

There you are. NO bluebottle for four months. What a wonderful headline!

Phil Colman



A Neuston: *Glaucus atlanticus*

Photo: Peter Mitchell.

The bright blue upper surface is actually the ventral surface. This creature creeps along the under-surface of the open ocean while upside down, while feeding on coelenterates such as *Physalia* spp (Bluebottles) and *Veleva veleva* (By-the-wind Sailor)

Bush Stone Curlew at Avalon



A Bush Stone-curlew is often seen around North Avalon Road and Catalina Crescent. Recently it found the bus shelter near North Avalon Road warm and sunny, and occasionally darted across Barrenjoey Road to relax on the grass in the little reserve opposite.

No wonder this is an endangered species in Sydney!

Photos: Marita Macrae

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.

Contact Details: Tel/Fax 02 9918 3368

Email: pnhainfo@gmail.com

www.pnha.org.au

