

PNHA NEWS

Spring 2013

Issue 64

Pittwater Natural Heritage Association - thinking locally, acting locally

Bushland at 122 Mona Vale Road

PNHA continues to campaign to have 122 Mona Vale Road transferred into public ownership.

Our petition asks the Director General of the Planning Department to acquire this area of bushland to protect it for a future fauna corridor. At October 31 we had over 520 signatures on our petition.

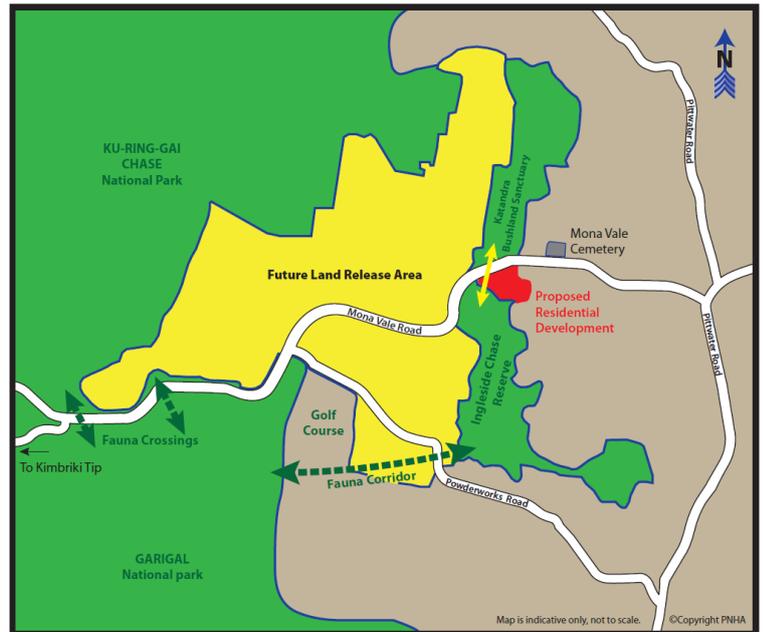
<https://www.change.org/en-AU/petitions/nsw-department-of-planning-infrastructure-acquire-bushland-for-a-fauna-corridor-at-122-mona-vale-rd-warriewood-nsw>

Please give your support to this petition to show them that we are serious. If you have not already done so, please sign it and ask friends, family, workmates and employees to do likewise.

Watch our You Tube video called Katandra Sanctuary. Its message is that we need the bushland corridor so that animals in Katandra sanctuary won't be isolated.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2Y4PSaYPOs>

The rezoning proposal for 120 – 122 Mona Vale Road has gone to the Sydney East Joint Regional Planning panel and is on exhibition until 19 November. Checkout the Ingleside Animal Bushlink Facebook page. More about Katandra Sanctuary, page 6.



Ingleside Land Release— Planning Commences

Planning for the Ingleside Land Release has started, including formation of a community Reference Group composed of technical advisors from state and local government organisations and fifteen community representatives. Pittwater Natural Heritage Association is represented by David Palmer.

The proposed Ingleside development area is about 700 hectares in total, stretching from Elanora Heights to Bayview Heights and west to the Wirreanda Valley. The two main arteries are Mona Vale Road and Powderworks Road.

The State Government is keen to get the planning process completed in a couple of years, with adoption of the Development Control Plan set down for November 2014. At this moment consultants have been engaged to look at the work which has already been done and identify what additional studies need to be undertaken.



Shooting the Katandra Sanctuary Youtube video

There will be a number of opportunities for community input during the planning process and your PNHA committee will keep members up to date with progress.



Inside: PNHA Update; PNHA Activities; Wild About Wales; Rabbits; Feathertail Glider; Australian Fur Seals; Bush Stone Curlew spotting; Grevillea caleyi; Bio control for Trad; Phenology; Fungi; Katandra Sanctuary.

updateupdateupdate

PNHA AGM September 1

The committee for 2012-13 is Marita Macrae – Chairperson, David Palmer- Secretary, Ken Hughes – Treasurer. Committee members: Julie Bennett, Annette Bonnefin, Gary Harris, Robyn Hughes, Kerry Smith. Ken wished to retire as Treasurer but agreed to stay until a replacement is found. (He has since resigned).

Martyn Robinson, the Australian Museum's Naturalist, talked to some slides of fascinating local invertebrates. With his great knowledge and affection for these creatures he captivated his audience.

One story was of the Termite Assassin Bug *Tegea atropicta* which specialises in attacking termites. It lives in urban areas, coastal heath, forests and woodlands.

Unlike most bugs which feed on plant juices, assassin bugs are predators. They ambush their prey, usually other insects such as beetles or caterpillars, piercing them with their curved sucking mouthparts (rostrum). Once the prey has been punctured and is held fast, the assassin injects a powerful saliva. This fluid immobilises the prey and dissolves its tissues.

The Termite Assassin Bug is about 1.6cm long and is a specialist predator of termites which are found on trees or

fallen logs. It positions itself above a termite tunnel and inserts its rostrum into it. When the termites discover the intrusion they attack it and are impaled and sucked dry by the bug. This species of assassin bug can continue to feed for an hour or more while the worker termites continually clear up the empty shells of their dead colleagues from the tunnel below.

He warned that if you see this bug on your house, think termites and beware. They can be found in some numbers. He explained that the bright colouring of red and black means it is distasteful to predators. See more at: <http://australianmuseum.net.au/Termite-Assassin-Bug#sthash.QzI3K6IL.dpuf>

Photo: *Tegea atropicta*, from www.brisbaneinsects.com/brisbane_bugs/TermiteAssassin.htm



activitiesactivities

Bird Walk and Wildflower Walk September 8, Chiltern Track

A day or so before September 8 we learnt a hazard reduction burn would take place here so we moved the activity to Warriewood Wetland. No wildflowers there, but a couple of interesting birds.

For the first time we saw Bellbirds or Bell Miners, *Manorina melanophrys*, not a welcome sight as though their call can be enchanting, their presence can be bad news for eucalypts if they stay long in an area. They are honeyeaters that specialise in eating the sweet exudates of leaf sucking insects, but do not kill the insects. To protect this resource they aggressively exclude other species that would eat the insects. The result can be dieback and death of trees, so we hope they move on. More information at <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Manorina-melanophrys>



Bellbird Photo from:
www.bie.ala.org.au/species/Bell+Miner

Wild about Whales

1 June – 30 November 2013

NSW Whale Watching Season

One of the world's great migrations can be followed and experienced and shared through the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service's campaigns, Wild About Whales, watching whales from coastal national parks.

The campaign includes social media communities, a website, a smartphone app to track whale sightings, as well as a host of nature-based experiences available in national parks along the NSW coast. Of course many Pittwater headlands offer outstanding viewpoints too.

During the NSW whale watching season, June 1 – November 30, you can get involved by sharing whale sightings on Twitter (@wildaboutwhales), Facebook, or by logging them via the free smartphone and iPad app (search for

Whales NSW in app stores).

Along with ORRCA, NPWS also hosts whale migration studies throughout the season such as the one held at Cape Solander in the Kamay Botany Bay National Park. This is held every year and is a valuable tool to keep track of the changes in whale populations. Each year a group of around 60 volunteers staff the whale counting stations from sunrise to sunset over the same period of time to contribute to the annual study which started in 1997.

The data collected in these studies indicates an increase in whale numbers of around 13-14% annually. The survey includes Humpbacks, the main species spotted, as well as Southern Right whales and sometimes even Blue Whales, Minke and Orcas.

The Wild About Whales campaign is now in full swing and has already exceeded campaign objectives in the social media space within the first month, totalling over 8000 Facebook fans. NPWS is calling on everyone to share their whale experiences in national parks.

Rabbits – they just won't go away

Some Pittwater residents are trapping rabbits in cat traps and taking them to vets for euthanasia. The fee for this is supposed to be subsidised by Pittwater Council, but still costs the residents \$10 at the vet, or \$5 if you're lucky (at Careel Bay Vets). Most vets are not interested in participating in this program. One local vet quoted \$61.50 per rabbit.

One Palm Beach resident has caught 20 rabbits by putting out carrot during the day, thus avoiding by-catch such as bandicoots and possums. The cost of euthanasia is mounting up, on top of the cost of the trap she bought herself. It's different in Queensland.



Feathertail Glider in Narrabeen

Michelle Johnston found this little creature clinging to a shampoo bottle in her shower recess in September. His body was shorter than the barcode on the bottle.

She thinks he must have come in when she brought in a flowering African Violet and somehow escaped the two indoor cats. He was safely relocated to a Grevillea outside.

The Feathertail Glider lives in forests and woodlands of the east coast of Australia. Its body is 65-80mm long, with a feather-like tail with lateral bristles about the same length. This acts as a rudder when gliding. The average gliding distance is about 14m, though one managed 28m. Gliding helps the Feathertail Glider stay amongst the treetops to avoid larger ground-dwelling predators.

It is an omnivore that eats nectar, pollen and insects. In the wild Feathertail Gliders live in groups of 5-25 individuals. Several group members help to maintain spherical nests of leaves, bark and fern. Mothers suckle young that are not their own.

Threats are predatory birds, including Kookaburras, owls, foxes, cats and reptiles. They are also threatened by habitat destruction. It is not an endangered species and though rarely seen, is probably not uncommon in Pittwater. Keep your cats in at night.

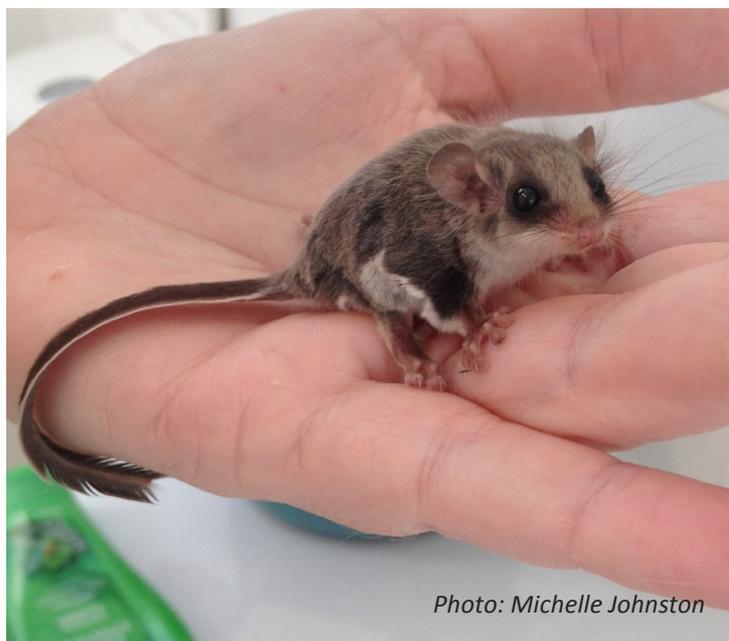


Photo: Michelle Johnston



Australian Fur Seals

Recent visits by seals to the beaches, headlands and in Sydney Harbour encourage us to be alert, but not alarmed.

According to information on the Coastal Watch website below these are all well-fed males, behaving normally. It is a sign that seal numbers may be on the increase after the devastation of seal hunting in the nineteenth century. Seal links:

<http://www.coastalwatch.com/news/article.aspx?articleId=9110&catId=125&title=NZ%20Fur%20Seal%20spotted%20on%20Sydney%20shores&display=0>

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/fur-seals-become-new-feature-of-sydney-waterways-as-population-numbers-boom-due-to-protection/story-fni0cx12-1226724722664>



Seal at North Whale Beach, 24.9.13
Photo: Michael Mannington

A Bush Stone-Curlew at Monash Country Club, Ingleside

Sighted at end of September, a single bird looking for food in sparse under-growth on the edge of the 6th tee. Monash is a private golf club so access is restricted.

This is an unusual place for this bird. Keep an eye out for it in the area.

Photo: Rod Warnock

Grevillea Caleyi Facing Extinction

This rare plant occurs only in an area of less than eight square kilometres at Terrey Hills, Duffys Forest, Belrose and Ingleside.

It is listed as endangered but the NSW Scientific Committee is now proposing it be listed as critically endangered. Its habitat is fragmented and more could be lost with the widening of Mona Vale Road and in the Ingleside Land Release. Weed competition is another problem.

Environment NSW is proposing bush regeneration in the area at a cost of \$5000 a year for three years. It is hoped the Bahai community will assist by allowing work on their land.

PNHA has agreed to receive the grant. Most of the money would be spent on contract bush regeneration, and we hope PNHA members will be helping with volunteer bushcare.

The first bushcare meeting was on Monday October 21 at 9am. Over 20 volunteers, including many PNHA members worked enthusiastically in an interesting environment. The next event will be on 25 November. Contact PNHA or Helena Dewis, Pittwater Council's Bushcare Officer, if you would like more information.



Photo: Marita Macrae

What's Phenology?

What is climate change doing to the time cicadas emerge? Will the koels go north later if the weather is warmer in March?

Phenology helps us to find answers to such questions. It is the study of periodic plant and animal life cycle events and how these are influenced by seasonal and interannual variations in climate, as well as habitat factors (such as elevation).

Read more about Phenology at:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phenology>

At <http://www.climatewatch.org.au/> you can record your own observations of these events in the natural world.

It's important to do this to add to our knowledge of the natural environment and the effects climate change may be having on it.

Bio Control for Trad?

Wandering Jew, or Trad as we prefer to call it, is a succulent groundcover weed, a nightmare for both gardeners and bush regenerators. Trad, *Tradescantia fluminensis*, is a NSW noxious weed from South America.

It occurs widely around the coast of SE Australia, in many vegetation types. It is mostly spread by stem fragments but some populations can set seed.

A proposal is underway to investigate biological control, originating in the Department of Environment and Primary Industries Victoria.

New Zealand Landcare research has already undertaken the overseas exploration work and has an advanced biological control program in place. Two beetles from Brazil were approved to control it in June 2011 and the yellow leaf spot fungus in January 2013.

It is estimated that the cost for Australia of getting Trad declared a target for biological control would be \$60k (2013/14) while host specificity testing would cost approximately \$150k/year for 2-4 years depending on extent of the host specificity test list and availability of host specificity species. Melbourne Water has provided half of the budget for doing the declaration process.

The Department is now seeking additional resources to complete this project. It is seeking funding to undertake the host specificity testing from a range of possible stakeholders including shires, councils, Catchment Management Authorities, Melbourne Water and Sydney Water.

For more information:

Dr David McLaren
Principal Research Scientist and Science Leader - Weeds
BioSciences Research
Department of Environment and Primary Industries Victoria

David.McLaren@depi.vic.gov.au

Fungi

Fungi are complex and varied organisms. Some familiar ones are edible, but most are underground and out of sight until their fruiting bodies emerge to produce spores from toadstools and so on.

They are major recyclers of organic matter. Some form highly beneficial relationships with a wide variety of plants from grasses to huge eucalypts. In this way they can in effect vastly extend the root system of the plant.

We like the delicate fungal mycelium on this fallen bark, once protected against the tree trunk.



Fungal Mycelium

Photo: M. Macrae

Katandra Bushland Sanctuary - a hidden gem on the Warriewood escarpment

Katandra is an aboriginal word meaning “song of the birds” and on this 12 hectare reserve on Warriewood escarpment there are lots of bird songs to be heard. Katandra is home to hundreds of species of flora and fauna, found in a remarkable range of habitats, from moist rainforest to tall open forest, open woodlands and wet heathland.

The Sanctuary came into existence through the generosity of Harold Seymour a Northern suburbs businessman who purchased the land as a bushland retreat in 1946 and built a cottage on it. Mr Seymour was taken by the beauty of the area and the range of biodiversity that it supported. However, with advancing residential development in the 60’s he decided that the best

way to preserve it was to offer it to the government for the people of NSW. It was proclaimed a Crown reserve in 1967. Harold Seymour died at Katandra aged 93 in 1987.

Katandra is now owned by the NSW State Government and is administered by a board of trustees. Maintenance is carried out by a small but active group of volunteers who work at keeping the habitat in its original condition.

Mr Seymour’s vision is now threatened by a proposed development at 120 – 122 Mona Vale Road which, if it goes ahead, will cut off its link with Ingleside Chase Reserve.



A Heath Monitor in Katandra Sanctuary

Photo: David Palmer

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.