

PNHA NEWS

Winter 2014

Issue 66

Pittwater Natural Heritage Association - thinking locally, acting locally

Regent Honeyeaters, Swift Parrots and Noisy Pitta

In early June the Chiltern Trail attracted several Regent Honeyeaters. This once common large honeyeater is now endangered. It is the subject of a recovery plan involving much tree planting in its formerly extensive woodland habitat in NSW and Victoria.

Its closest breeding area to Sydney is the Capertee Valley. In winter it migrates in search of flowering eucalypts, feeding on nectar, lerps, (see article elsewhere in this issue) and insects.

The trail was swarming with birders eager to see what is now a very rare bird.

Swift Parrots were seen on June 1 in Swamp Mahoganies near the detention basin near Shearwater estate on Garden St, adjoining the Warriewood Wetland. This endangered parrot breeds only in Tasmania and migrates to the mainland to escape the Tasmanian winter. Another bird depending on flowering eucalypts, it feeds on nectar, psyllids, lerps, seeds and flowers.

See Birds in Backyards for more details of:

Regent Honeyeater <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Anthochaera-phrygia>

Swift Parrot <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Lathamus-discolor>

Another rarity for Pittwater recently seen was the Noisy Pitta. You might hear rather than see it. Calling *walk to work* repeatedly, this colourful ground-dwelling bird lives in rainforests. For image and to hear the call:

<http://www.graemechapman.com.au/library/viewphotos.php?c=400>

Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment News - Narrabeen Lagoon State Park

The whole of Narrabeen Lagoon and part of Jamieson Reserve has been declared a State Park. This is a great outcome for the hard work of Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment (FoNLC) who have long campaigned to save bushland in the catchment from subdivision. Read more:

<http://www.pittwateronlinenews.com/narrabeenlagoonstateparkconfirmedapril2014.php>

Spotted Gum with Dandruff?

In March sticky white flakes were falling out of Spotted Gums. The nymphs of psyllids, tiny sap sucking insects on leaves of Eucalypts, make a protective covering for themselves, called a lerp, made of sugar, wax and excrement. The dandruff-like flakes are fragments of these lerps.

Adult psyllids look like aphids and move about openly on foliage. Population increases may occur with new plant growth, as females prefer to lay eggs on succulent leaves and young shoots

Spotted Gums in California were affected by psyllids in 2000. Searching for a bio-control agent, researchers collected mummified psyllids from Brisbane. What they wanted was a parasitoid, an insect that would lay eggs inside the bodies of the psyllid. After testing various species, one was found to be effective in controlling the psyllid.

In Australia Spotted Pardalotes and other tiny birds, spiders and mites usually control psyllids.

Different psyllid species live on the various species of Eucalypts. Their lerps have characteristic structures and patterns. The foliage of some trees are damaged so badly by psyllids that the leaves die. At times Bangalay *Eucalyptus botryoides* on the Bilgola Bends and near the Sport and Recreation Centre on Wakehurst Parkway appear to be dying, but manage to recover.

Strange words? According to the online Dictionary of Invertebrate Zoology, *lerp* is an aboriginal word for sweet. *Psyllid* comes from Greek for flea, *psulla*.

The next FoNLC Forum is at 7pm on August 25 featuring Bugs and Beetles, presented by Martyn Robinson of the Australian Museum. Also, Neil Evers will reveal the meaning behind some well-known local Aboriginal place names.

It will be at Narrabeen Tramshed. Email Judith Bennett at Sydney.educ@npansw.org.au to get a ticket.

Outdoor Activities around the Lagoon include bushwalks and kayaking: <http://www.narrabeenlagoon.org.au/Activities/activities.htm>

Inside: Upper Mullet Creek Biodiversity Restoration Project; Rainfall and Climate; Update; Native Bee Information; Swamp Mahoganies; PNHA 20th Anniversary and AGM; PNHA Birdwatching on Sundays; the late Jim Somerville.



Upper Mullet Creek Biodiversity Restoration Project

The Wesley Street Community Planting Day on July 28 surpassed expectations with 220 tubestock dug in and watered by local volunteers. All plantings were riparian creekline species for sandstone gullies.

The site is critical to the success of the Upper Mullet Creek Biodiversity Restoration project to eradicate weeds, protect biodiversity and improve this vital wildlife corridor in the heart of Pittwater. Previously a haven for noxious environmental weeds, this riparian zone has been undergoing a transformation by bush regeneration contractors. Now the PEF is turning to the community to continue the bushcare. A call for more volunteers, partic-

ularly in the Wesley Street area, will be made over the next month with the first of a regular bushcare group meeting planned for early spring.

Managed by the Pittwater Environmental Foundation in association with Pittwater Council, this is third year of a six year project funded by the NSW Environmental Trust by a \$250,000 grant.



Rainfall, weather and climate

We hear a lot about climate change and when the weather seems too dry or too wet we fear this is evidence of the change. But weather is naturally variable. Weather is what happens over shorter time spans. Climate is the bigger picture.

The total average annual rainfall for Pittwater is about 1215mm. Monthly rainfall averages in millimetres for Pittwater are roughly shown below. So you can see why Autumn is a good time to plant and September was a good month for the Olympic Games.

Autumn is a time for fungi. We've seen these big ones at the Bahai Temple bushcare site.



Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rainfall	120	120	150	100	110	135	75	80	70	85	90	80



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120-122 Mona Vale Road Rezoning Success

Our campaign to preserve part of this site for environmental protection has succeeded.

At a Mona Vale meeting of the Joint Regional Planning Panel on February 27, several speakers convinced the panel that a zoning of E2, rather than E4, was needed to preserve bushland.

Zoning E2 guarantees environmental protection, whereas the proposed zoning of E4 (Environmental Living) does not.

The proponent of the rezoning later proposed that No 122 and also a 25m wide corridor of bushland along Narrabeen Creek be rezoned E2. Pittwater Council has agreed to be the acquiring authority of this land.

The JRPP noted that the requirement by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage for studies of the environmental impact and aboriginal heritage had not yet been met.

At a later meeting of the JRPP on April 8, PNHA requested that the OEH studies be completed to ensure a good planning outcome and that the proposed 25m creekline zone be measured in a horizontal plane from the centre of the creek, as the creek here has steep and deep rocky banks.

The JRPP in its decision of May 8 stated: *In the Panel's view, the proponent's desire for some certainty about the outcome of the process before committing itself to the preparation of the environmental studies is understandable. The important thing is that the studies are completed before any development is permitted on the land. This can be ensured by inserting a clause in the LEP that requires the adoption of a Development Control Plan (DCP) before a development application can be lodged. In turn, the DCP must be informed by the above-mentioned environmental studies.*

Just what residential development is approved on this land depends on the above, also finding a solution to issues of bushfire safety and access, and tree loss.

For the JRPP's decision see:

http://www.irpp.nsw.gov.au/DevelopmentandPlanningRegister/tabid/62/ctl/view/mid/424/JRPP_ID/1477/language/en-US/Default.aspx

Bird Walks

Both PNHA and the Coastal Environment Centre offer bird walks. PNHA birdos assist the CEC as guides. The last was at Deep Creek in March, where we saw and heard a Brown Cuckoo Dove.

The weather caused



Rose Robin male, image: Neil Fifer

cancellation of the April 27 birdwalk at Irrawong Reserve.

Future PNHA Bird Walks will be on 21 September, 8am, Deep Creek and 16 November, 7.30am, Irrawong Reserve

To book email pnhabirdwatching@gmail.com or phone 0439 409 202. A recent bird in Warriewood Wetland is the gorgeous Rose Robin. An altitudinal migrant, it comes to our warmer climes from the mountains in winter.

Pittwater Wine and Food Fair May 4, Winnereremy Bay Reserve

At the Fair the Sustainability Lane hosts PNHA and many organisations involved in promoting sustainable living and caring for our environment.

PNHA was there again this year, with our Weed Display. This is always appealing to Some Pittwater weeds visitors to our stand, as people recognise, name and learn how to defeat them.



Some Pittwater weeds

Weeding on the Chiltern Trail

The Chiltern Trail in Ku-ring-gai Chase NP is favourite place for PNHA wildflower and bird walks. Exotic grasses near the start of the trail near Chiltern Rd Ingleside were an unwelcome sight.

To prevent their spread along the track we asked NPWS ranger Judy Morris to organise a morning for PNHA volunteers to remove these grasses in March, with a follow up on April 15. A big thankyou to bush regeneration staff from Dragonfly Environmental who came to help.

The various native grasses there will be free of competition from African Lovegrass, Whisky Grass, Carpet Grass and others. Our next weeding morning will be in spring if needed.

Right: The grass weeder in March



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Ingleside Land Release Community Reference Group Meeting

PNHA attended another meeting recently. We requested to see the briefs given to the various consultants engaged on preparing studies, in particular that for fauna corridors. Now that bushland has been preserved at part of 120 and 122 Mona Vale Rd, we must ensure fauna can move through a developed Ingleside to Ku-ring-gain and Garigal National Parks.

We are determined the siting of the fauna corridors must be determined at the outset of the planning process and development planned around these.

Bahai Bushcare

More *Grevillea caleyi* seedlings are appearing as bushcare continues near the Bahai temple at Ingleside. Contractors Australian Bushland Restoration and volunteers are making good progress.

The smell of our morning tea lured a handsome Brushtail Possum from his sleeping place in the rafters (below).



PNHA has now received a grant from Sydney Local Land Services to continue the contract bush regeneration work on the site, and extra funds to buy tools from NSW Office of Environment and Heritage.

We work on occasional Monday mornings. If you can help contact David Palmer 0404 171 940 or email: pnhainfo@gmail.com

NSW Draft Weeds Strategy

The NSW Natural Resources Commission has produced a draft NSW Weeds Strategy, to which PNHA made a submission. The final document is expected to be released shortly.

We are hoping this will lead to improved management of weeds in the Pittwater local government area. As is clear to us all, weeds are a huge problem and too little is being done to combat them.

PNHA put in a submission on the draft. Some of our comments were:

As most of our weeds are garden escapes, we welcome the proposal for a "permitted list" as a means of closing off the source of new weeds. The list should be prepared by experts and include plants brought from interstate as well from overseas.

We support the tenure neutral approach to weed management and require public and private land managers to abide by the same weed laws.

We support the rebuilding of NSW weeds research capacity and also the improved coordination of weeds research and the dissemination of the results. (this was a comment on the closure of the former Weeds Cooperative Research Centre)

A property weed certification scheme that discloses information to buyers about a property's weed condition prior to its sale would be highly appropriate in our area.

We support the proposal for experts to be added to the body advising the Minister about weeds.

A sustainable funding model is needed. Increased state and local government funds must be provided for both prevention, early and action and long-term control of environmental weeds. We need programs with long-term funding guaranteed in order to maximise the potential for success.

Weed control should be done according to principles of bush regeneration, or a minimum standard of control established. The spray and forget method of control is destructive to native vegetation and wasteful of resources.

Environmental weed threats should be given high priority, recognising their links to other environmental threats and the need to develop more effective ecological approaches to management.

Community pressure, a more strategic approach and adequate funding is needed before we see real progress on weed control in the broader Pittwater landscape.

Swamp Foxtail, Fountain Grass

These two grasses, *Pennisetum* species, are extremely similar, both quite attractive, but neither are local native species and both are invasive.

They are popular with people who think they are planting native grasses. However Pittwater Council's own website warns that they should not be used in Sydney landscaping. See

http://www.pittwater.nsw.gov.au/environment/noxious_weeds/grasses/swamp_foxtail

They have been used in Council landscaping in the past and have not yet been removed. Evidence is around The Inch cafe near the Mona Vale Council offices. We have recently presented the Council with many photographic examples of their use in Pittwater and expressed concern that this is a weed that should be controlled.

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(Continued from page 4)

Mark Beharrell, Manager, Natural Environment & Education responded:

Pittwater Council will publicise its weediness and suggest alternatives through its

website. Council staff will also put it forward to be included as an undesirable species with Council's Tree Preservation Order. Council will also take your comments to the Metropolitan Noxious Weeds Committee to be reviewed in regard to being considered within the new Act which is set to replace the Noxious Weed Act.

I'll also investigate what actions can be taken on the current problem in consultation. We'll remove random plants, discuss with relative business units of Council who have this plant within their assets and liaise with those residents who have undertaken the planting.

Madeira Vine Biocontrol?

One of our worst weeds is Madeira Vine, *Anredera cordifolia*, native to South America,

A biocontrol agent has been released in Southern Queensland and is now being bred up in Grafton. The larva and adult of the beetle *Plectonycha correntina* feeds on the foliage.

We are investigating whether this beetle could be introduced in Pittwater.

The very heavy vine is extremely difficult to control and as it



Flowering Swamp Foxtail, *Pennisetum* species



scrambles over other plants breaks branches and excludes light, destroying the plant beneath.



Succulent foliage and many heavy tubers along the stems. Each tuber can grow when it falls to the ground.

Native Bee Information

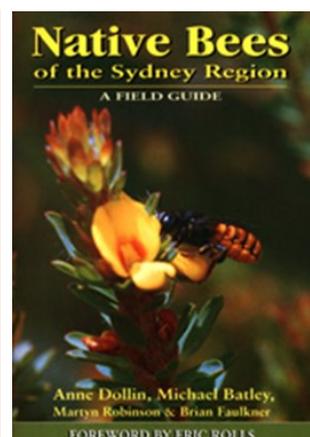
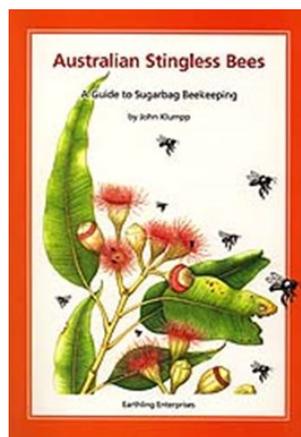
The bee workshops run by Pittwater Council were a great success, we hear. If you'd like bee information, the website of the Australian Native Bee Research Centre is a rich source:

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

Note that the Aussie Bee website shop is closed.

However, John Klumpp's stingless beekeeping book, limited stocks of the Centre's ten information booklets and copies of the Native Bees of the Sydney Region PDF (delivered by email only) will be available from Russell and Janine Zabel: email: bees@zabel.com.au

Website [Australian Stingless Native Bees](http://www.aussiebee.com.au/)



Swamp Mahoganies in Flower

Early April sees the big buds swelling to unfurl creamy stamens, the large blossoms filled with nectar and pollen, attractive to many birds, insects, Flying Foxes and probably small marsupials. In Pittwater the best stand of this tree, *Eucalyptus robusta*, is in the Warriewood Wetland. As the opening of the buds is staggered among the many trees, this source of food lasts until about the end of July, at a period when other trees are not in flower. It also grows well on dry land with deep soil and these trees may be first to flower, this year in late March.

Flowering continues through the winter.

PNHA 20 Year Anniversary and AGM

We celebrate our 20th Anniversary this year at Katandra Bushland Sanctuary. Members and friends are warmly invited to come and help us look back over our many achievements and plan more successes. We'll hold our AGM before the main festivities.

Date: Sunday September 21

Time: 12.30 PNHA AGM, 1pm BBQ lunch

Our official birth was with our incorporation on September 8 1994.

We'll be sending out invitations with more details.

Sunday Birdwatching with PNHA

- Sunday, 21 September, 8am, Deep Creek
- Sunday, 16 November, 7.30am, Irrawong Reserve

To book email pnhabirdwatching@gmail.com.



Brilliant in the Heathland
Heathleaved Banksia, *Banksia ericifolia*

Vale Jim Somerville 1915-2014 Environmental Champion

We are sad to lose Jim, a foundation member of PNHA. His recent legacy to our area is the multi-use track around Narrabeen Lagoon, nearly completed. This is the result of Jim's long and determined campaign.

But before that Jim had a long career as a determined and successful activist in saving northern NSW rainforest from logging. Extracts from his own accounts of this, and tributes from many people appeared in Pittwater OnLine News issue 164.

See: <http://www.pittwateronlinenews.com/jimsomervilleenvironmentchampiontribute.php>

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.