



NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW
protecting nature through community action

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Spring edition
SOUTHERN SYDNEY BRANCH

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BUSINESS MEETINGS All are welcome to attend, have your say and hear what's happening in the NPA. Contact Peter on 95287341 or Gary on 95701813 for details. Held on the 3rd Thursday of the month.

BRANCH MEETINGS: Come and meet other members from your local area, new members and friends are most welcome. These meetings are organised for you, are informal, informative and relaxing. An interesting evening is guaranteed and supper is provided. These meetings are now held on the fourth Wednesday of the month, except when this coincides with school holidays. This means that you can all attend Australian Plants AND NPA talks. That is a bargain.

The venue for Branch meetings is the Multi-Purpose Centre, 123 Flora St Sutherland (near Belmont St) 3 minutes walk from the railway station and with plenty of parking. All meetings commence at 8.00pm.

President's Report

Brian Everingham

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Branch members of the National Parks Association of NSW, Southern Sydney Branch. Your support and loyalty has been a source of strength. Membership remains strong and participation in Branch affairs is equally strong.

Branch activities, through field trips (walks, photography sessions, talks) shows that the Branch members are eager to participate and strongly support what we do.

In reference to our activities I'd like to thank Peter Vaughan for all his dedicated work in running these nights. It is quite a task to find speakers, to advertise the evenings and to ensure that all the equipment is present and operational on the scheduled nights. If Peter is not available, there is usually at least one other member of the Executive willing to step in and, of course, there is the loyal support of Milton and Joan Way who make these nights so relaxing.

It is also important to note that these activities cannot be known to the membership without communication. Without it we would be working in a vacuum. Over the last decade much of that work has been with John Prats. He has been our newsletter editor, our website manager and the creator of our Facebook page for much of that time. I thank him for his dedication. John is taking a break from the role of Newsletter editor and we shall miss him but we also know we must continue to publish. That is an important tool in our means of communication. It might be cheaper to publish online but I suspect that most people read the hard copy! It is a false saving if no one reads what you write!

The NPA is a conservation advocacy group and not just a walking club. That's why we exist and even our activities are designed to be educational for the cause. In that regard 2014-2015 has been a trying year.

The Government has further cut the budget of Parks and Wildlife Division, is undergoing "trials" for grazing and "ecological thinning" in certain national parks and has created very little by way of new national parks or nature reserves. We are pleased, however, that the new Minister for the Environment is Mark Speakman, and have high hopes that matters will improve over the course of the next two years or so.

But for that we must continue to lobby. We have met with Mark Speakman and Mark Coure on a number of occasions and both Members are open to our contact. It cannot be said that other MLA's in our Branch area are as supportive and we urge our own Branch members to apply pressure to the local elected representatives on our behalf.

The Leader has been open to our media releases and to our letters and that has been pleasing but again there is a danger. They are introducing a digital-first system which means stories go straight on the website and then slot into a template newspaper, which will be produced once a week. They have cut staff to the bone, which will make it very difficult to maintain quality. I refer to my comments earlier about it being a false economy if we cut costs but have no readers.

I wish to acknowledge Gary Schoer has one of my key supporters in the campaign side. As Branch Secretary he has borne the brunt of campaign matters, ably supported by Joy and Murray Scott and Tom Kelly.

Finally, as your representative on the Regional Advisory Committee, let me say how disappointing it is that the Government and Department (it is hard to apportion blame) has yet to create a formal, operating Committee in 2015. We are meeting but without authority. That is surely embarrassing for all! At least I am able to operate formally, and with title, on the Advisory Council that covers the entire State.

News from and about our parks

Over the course of the next year or two Royal National Park will have a new draft plan of management prepared. In the development of that plan there will be a series of discussion papers and community forums so that the contentious issues can be discussed and – hopefully – resolved before the draft plan is put to the Regional Advisory Committee and, subsequently, to the Advisory Council and the Minister. It will take some time to prepare but the process will be more transparent and provide more certainty. Discussion papers will be prepared on mountain biking, the Coast Track and Wattamolla. When they appear do take time to participate in the process. You can imagine that the Branch will do so.

While we are speaking about Royal National Park, you can't help but notice that Wedding Cake Rock has been in the news and that risky and antisocial behaviour has led to the park service fencing the site (temporarily) and providing staff each week to explain to the many people who are walking the stretch between Bundeena and Marley (the most popular stretch of the Coast Track) why it is necessary to undertake such action.



Track reconstruction will continue along the Coast, at a higher quality than in the past, and the work will start in that busy area between Bundeena and Marley Headland. Expect that at some stages during the year the Coast Track will be closed to walkers.

Your Branch has opposed the push by Loftus Rovers Football Club, supported by the Council, to have more land cleared and turned into sporting fields within our beloved park. In reference to the existing ovals NPA Southern Sydney Branch believes that the three sporting ovals that are currently within the national park boundary and are being used as sporting fields are not revoked from the park. We make this decision despite the fact that sporting ovals are outside the terms of the National Parks and Wildlife Act because we fear what sporting developments would occur on those sites (including multi-story club houses), that NPWS would lose its power as a consent authority on matters on its boundary and affecting its catchments and because we are concerned that Council might move one day to change the use of such lands from sporting ovals, etc to, for example, housing.

In reference to the additional claim NPA would be vehemently opposed to any expansion of such facilities. The National Park estate is not just left over land that can be grabbed by any developer or Council when it sees fit.

The NPA believes that our national parks are essential for the health of all of us, for the health of our environment and for the health of our planet. They are not just lands that are set aside until we find some other use for them. They must be protected and cared for and not seen as land that can be grabbed and used whenever any user group wishes for their own purposes.

The plants we rely on and the plants we hate! This edition: a Plant to remove!!!!!!

Fireweed (*Senecio madagascariensis*)

Fireweed is a serious pasture weed of coastal New South Wales (NSW). It is able to grow on most soil types and in all aspects. It forms a persistent seedbank if not controlled before it flowers and can rapidly take over heavily grazed and neglected pastures, competing strongly with existing pasture plants. It seeds prolifically and grows to maturity quickly. Density is influenced by groundcover and competition, especially in autumn. Fireweed contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids that are toxic to livestock and cause liver damage. Young or hungry stock or new stock not previously exposed to fireweed are the most at risk of poisoning. All parts of the plant at all stages of growth are toxic. Hay, silage or grain that is contaminated with fireweed plants or their seeds can also be toxic.

Fireweed can quickly establish:

- where ground has been cultivated or disturbed, or
- where groundcover competition is reduced, for example in drought, or under excessive grazing pressure.

The population of fireweed in infested areas depends on seasonal conditions and varies from year to year.

Fireweed infestations may:

- reduce the total grazing capacity of a property;
- decrease pasture production;
- decrease livestock growth rates; and
- incur high control costs.

Ref:

<http://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Details/53>



Fireweed growing on the Woronora Valley (photo by Brian Everingham)

Special Places

Crowdy Bay National Park

Crowdy Bay National Park is located 250 km north of Sydney and 25 km north of Taree or 35 km south of Port Macquarie. It is approximately 10300 hectares in size and extends from the coastal villages of Harrington and Crowdy Head in the south to Laurieton in the north. It is perhaps best appreciated from one of those points. A view from the top of Dooragan (North Brother) or from Crowdy Bay headland gives the visitor an idea of the scope of the park and its surrounds.



The view over Crowdy Beach to the South and Middle Brothers. The coastal plains of Crowdy Bay fringe Crowdy Beach.



We are familiar with the idea that the low nutrient soils that dominate heath vegetation also enable a variety of plants to thrive and here, in Crowdy Bay, you see this in profusion. There are members of the Rutaceae family (Boronia, Eriostemon, etc), Myrtaceae (bottlebrush, Kunzea, etc), Leguminosae (the pea flowers) and Proteaceae (Banksias, etc) but in recent historical times it is for the Christmas

Bells that many visitors flocked. Indeed, prior to this becoming a national park, these plants were often picked to the point of endangering their existence.



You can imagine that this park has many recreational opportunities. Bushwalking is popular. So is swimming, fishing, enjoying the wildflowers and appreciating nature. Equally, some recreational activities cause NPA some concern. Access to the beaches by 4WD vehicles cause issues for the proper management of wildlife and we remain concerned by this activity. Effective management of feeding, nesting and roosting sites for waterbirds and waders is difficult so long as 4WD access continues and so long as people bring dogs along those beaches.

Generally, however, this park is so much better than it once was and the park service must be commended. Road access has been controlled and many of the myriad access tracks have been closed. Revegetation has occurred on what were once bare hillsides and it is quite amazing how even the damaged strips where once there was sand mining has returned to what is a superficially healthy ecosystem. Local NPA members have worked long and hard clearing up major infestations of bitou bush and the Service and NPA can be proud of this park and what has been achieved. Do visit. It is worth the time and effort.

In the media

Brigitte Bardot condemned Environment Minister Greg Hunt's plan to cull 2 million feral cats. She did so on July 23rd, via the ABC, speaking on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). The Invasive Species Council opposed the call and stated that they were confident that invasive species such as feral cats are the main threat to the survival of our native mammals. NPA agrees, though I am sure we would also point out that habitat destruction and fragmentation is even more important. Ref: http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-22/brigitte-bardot-condemns-greg-hunt-for-feral-cut-cull-plan/6640846?WT.mc_id=newsmail

In early August the Federal Court rejected the approval of the Adani project to mine for coal in Central Qld because the Minister, Greg Hunt, had not considered at least two species protected under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. This action was taken by the Mackay Conservation Group and supported by the Environmental Defenders Office of NSW. We congratulate both groups for their persistent campaigning. Perhaps, now, the Minister for the Environment will actually take his job seriously and enforce the laws that do protect our environment. We expect nothing less.

Activities

Past

22 Jul, Wed, Anne Turnbull, spoke to the meeting. Her topic was "WIRES , the Wildlife Information Rescue Education Service", which is a not-for-profit organisation of volunteers dedicated to the rescue/caring for/ rehabilitation of native wildlife.

And Coming Up

23 Sept "Circumnavigating Spitzbergen...Arctic wildlife and Tundra flowers" Gary and Bronlyn Schoer will share their images and stories of an expedition on the "Polar Pioneer". This Arctic Island, well above the Arctic Circle and close to Greenland has just one small town, with the rest being wilderness. How will climate change affect the Arctic regions?

Friday 16th October Walk from Taronga to Manly. Contact Brian Everingham if interested.

Saturday 17th October NPA State Council, AGM and Annual Dinner. Let's make sure we get a table or two from the Branch.

Thursday 22nd October Barren Grounds Walk with Brian Everingham. Come see the wildflowers!

26/27 October Photography walks in the mornings to Lady Carrington Drive and Curra Moors. Nice slow pace for wildlife enthusiasts. Contact Brian Everingham

28 Oct "National Parks in the Baltics, Finland and Iceland". "Discover hidden treasures of Northern Europe which await your visit by bicycle or on foot". Guest speakers Maureen and David Carter.

31st October, a very different activity: a lengthy walk of over 20 km from Otford to Otford along the coast and across to Walumarra Track. Brian Everingham is the contact.

8th November a walk from Glenbrook to Red Hands Cave.

10th November, a photography walk from Taronga to Cremorne.

25 Nov "Naturally Wild Africa" Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and South Africa. Highlights include Etosha National Park, the Okavango Delta, Victoria Falls and Kruger National Park. Guest speaker Ken Griffiths from Naturally Wild Photography

28th November Erskine Creek via Pisgah Rock and Jack Evans Track.

Note that Brian Everingham can be contacted on brian.everingham@gmail.com