



NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW
protecting nature through community action

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NEWSLETTER NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC No 113
Autumn edition 2016
SOUTHERN SYDNEY BRANCH

If undeliverable return to:
PO Box 312, Engadine, NSW 2233

A special electronic edition with additional features.

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ISSUE: Autumn 2016

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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.

Branch Members Night

Wednesday 24th February

**Come along, bring your friends and hear all about two
delightful national parks in Western NSW**

Toorale and Kwiambal



**8.00PM the Multi-Purpose Centre, 123 Flora St
Sutherland**

Campaign Matters

Special Focus - Wetlands

On February 2nd 2016 we celebrated World Wetlands Day. Indeed World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on 2 February. This day marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Each year the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention chooses a theme and this year it is Wetlands for our Future: Sustainable Livelihoods. Livelihoods from fishing, rice farming, travel, tourism, and water provision all depend on wetlands. And wetlands are vital to us in many other ways. They host a huge variety of life, protect our coastlines, provide natural sponges against river flooding, and store carbon dioxide to regulate climate change.

Unfortunately, wetlands are often viewed as wasteland, and more than 64% of our wetlands have disappeared since 1900.

Enabling people to make a decent living, and at the same time ensuring that wetlands can still provide their essential benefits, do not have to be conflicting goals!

- See more at: <http://www.worldwetlandsday.org/en/#sthash.qYBD9QAk.dpuf>

Wetlands are important at a local level too! For those in the northern parts of our Branch, just a short walk along the Cooks River demonstrates their importance. The Cooks River, a semi-mature tide dominated drowned valley estuary and is a tributary of Botany Bay.

The course of the 23 kilometres long urban waterway has been altered to accommodate various developments along its shore. It serves as part of a stormwater system for the 100 square kilometres (39 sq mi) of its watershed, and many of the original streams running into it have been turned into concrete lined channels. Some of that is now being modified in ways that will enable the return of wildlife. The photo below shows the softening of the river around Cup and Saucer Creek.



Care and control of the river is shared between many local councils and the New South Wales Government through agencies such as the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority, the Environment Protection Authority and the Sydney Water Corporation.

The river also has a number of community-based organisations which assist its maintenance, in particular The Cooks River Valley Association (CRVA). The CRVA grew from The Cooks River Improvement League, founded in 1925.

In 2010 the Cup and Saucer Wetlands were built in Canterbury to create a natural environment for the native wildlife and fauna.



The attitude that sees wetlands as wasteland could be seen in the initial planning of the WestConnex motorway. They had planned to go right through the Tempe wetlands.

Press Release from Marrickville Council now says that the NSW state government & the WestConnex Delivery Authority have recognized the importance of Tempe Lands, Tempe Reserve & the Tempe Wetlands telling Council that, “they agree the areas have important recreational, environmental, social & economic value.”

“Planning for the WestConnex M5 Extension route between St Peters & Beverly Hills is now expected to be revised accordingly.” Hopefully, this will save the Wolli Creek bushland & some 400 mature trees & a vital & important habitat for urban wildlife.

Tempe Lands, Tempe Wetlands & Tempe Reserve are all important areas of green space for the Marrickville community, especially as we have the least green space in the whole of Australia. To have a motorway go through these areas would have been a disaster for the residents of Tempe, the wildlife & the users of this green space. It makes me very happy to be able to write that it is not going ahead. Reference: <https://savingourtrees.wordpress.com/tag/tempe-wetlands/>

What sort of a National Park do we want?

Gary Schoer, Secretary, Southern Sydney Branch of National Parks Association of NSW

My wife, Bronlyn, suggested to me the other day that we, perhaps still hanker after a Royal National Park we might have enjoyed 40 years ago, and with increasing demands on it from a growing city we might have to adjust our vision somewhat.

We now live in an era when forces with different values have enunciated that more of our tracks should be dedicated to more active pursuits such as mountain bike riding; that the great Cliffline of the Coastal track should be protected from inappropriate risk-taking activity by erecting more fences; and where some of our precious bushland might be sacrificed for yet more parking as cars crowd the National Park's main roads to counter full carparks adjoining natural magnets like Wattamolla. We are a tourist icon despite not having the recognition factor of the Three Sisters. Social media, changes to the National Parks Act to include tourism as a core function of the National Parks Estate and demands for increased tourism to be a government-endorsed contributor to the economy have helped to erode those intuitive values that our members were fighting for 40 or 50 years ago. Royal National Park is seen through different lenses. What is the counter to these more conservative forces within both our government and its on-ground managers? Education directed at our decision makers is one such approach.

Take the current debates about mountain bikes in Royal National Park. NPA members over ten years ago participated in a working party that came up with the idea of trialling a few single-track routes behind Loftus. A full, public evaluation of these tracks never took place. Instead the biking fraternity was basically asked what it wanted and where prior to the issue going before the general public as an "Issues paper" leading up to a revised plan of management. This generous nod to a single interest group followed years of a growing use of tracks not on the current plan of management and forging of routes where no bike should ever go, including one track where a metal sign advising that biking was not allowed due to endangered plants by the trackside...long since vandalised and replaced with a Mountain biking sticker where only the pole remains. Tracks have been claimed with signs screwed into trees and emblazoned on rocks ...christened by the new caring user-group with names such as "Nature's Revenge".

We sent the evidence to management personnel, and now after a lot of education about what is really happening on these public lands, there are signs, at least, of some de-branding of illegal track claims. Will we see closure? Call it lobbying, public embarrassing or whatever suits, but I like to think that, once educated about the scale of what we see as abuse of conciliatory "trials", decision makers have no choice but to act. NGOs have been forced in the past to legally challenge unjustifiable "adaptive management practices" that are an excuse for pressures often seen as insurmountable. We don't see it that way. Sticking to the core values of our National Parks estate is something that can't be compromised, as we are forced to educate others about what is really happening on our abused natural lands.

At the next meeting of NPA and Sutherland Environment Centre representatives with Royal National management, we will be enunciating how education of all walkers near the spectacular cliff lines of Royal National park does not have to extend to putting barriers at scenic magnets along the way. The so-called "Wedding Cake Rock" near Marley has attracted one person so close to the edge that he risked far too much and ended up falling to his death.

Could he have been saved by a barrier? Might he have considered repeated signs on the track as to the dangers of cliff edges, any less than an actual “barrier”? The ultimate extension of engineered solutions to such tragedies might be near 20 km of fence lines along arguably one of the most spectacular coastal walks in the world. We will be enunciating the collective wisdom of NPA executive gleaned from over 100 collective years of walking this route to advocate an alternative to a heavy handed approach. Regrettably, management is sometimes bound by recommendations of coroners, but is a heavy-ended approach going to be any better than alternatives sometimes not fully explored? We wish to be an alternative, educated voice in decision-making about how to manage our public lands.

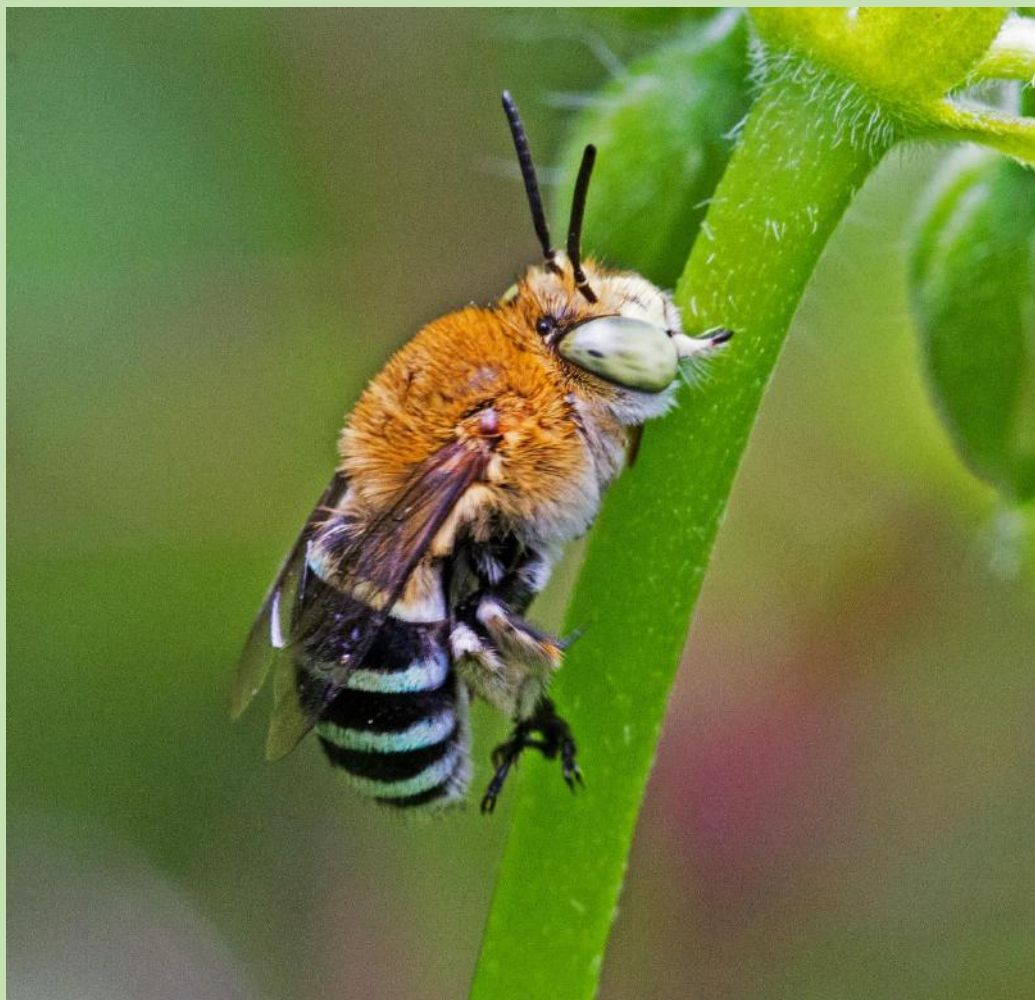
I can't remember how many years NPA has been advocating a shuttle bus service to places like Wattamolla. I DID manage to get a car park at Wattamolla one sunny day a few weeks back to accompany some overseas visitors to eagle Rock, 3 km away. I was shocked to see the number of cars parked on the main route through Royal National Park when visitors found the car park full...a three km walk was required to reach Wattamolla. The unofficial car park on Bertram Stevens Drive was both an eye sore and potential traffic hazard. So, will the discussion paper on Wattamolla suggest that more bushland will be cleared to accommodate more paying customers? Or will genuine, less energy-intensive alternatives be suggested alongside other solutions to elicit a genuine public conversation?

It is all too easy to roll with the punches when we see compromises being made in how our public lands are managed. But groups like NPA and the Sutherland Environment Centre will continue to fight for management that puts the natural values of the national park system at the forefront of any planning. All of us who wonder about what we are seeing happening in our National Parks could do a lot worse than challenge the status quo in informed, educative ways that reflect values much deeper than those which have slowly but surely allowed more soil to be lost, more cars to dominate, and engineered blots on the landscapes erected to “look after” our well-being.

I shall be informing Bronlyn that MY values have not changed compared to 50 years ago. The natural world needs champions more than ever.



Our Wildlife
The Blue Banded Bee - *Amegilla cingulata*



If you look in your garden from late summer through autumn you might find the Blue Banded Bee. It is a truly wonderful native bee! Blue banded bees are solitary bees. This means that each female bee mates and then builds a solitary nest by herself. She builds her nest in a shallow burrow in clay soil or sometimes in mudbricks. Many blue banded bees may build their nest burrows in the same spot, close to one another, like neighbouring houses in a village. Blue-banded bees can sting, but are not as aggressive as other bees. They appear to be more rapid in movement than other bees. The males cling to plant stems during the night.

Blue Banded Bees apparently collect the majority of its nectar from blue flowers so if you wish to attract them to your garden remember to plant some around for it. In my garden I often find them on Lavender, Rosemary and native Scaevola plants. It's great fun to watch them at a flower. The bees use a process that involves clinging onto flowers and vibrating powerfully, which increases the release of pollen. They make quite a noise!

Enjoy them and if you find them also look for the Neon Cuckoo Bee. It is quite striking and parasitises the Blue Banded Bee!

Brian Everingham

Special Places Landing Lights Wetlands



Black Winged Stilts

To mark the occasion of World Wetlands Day on February 2nd the Branch visited Landing Lights wetlands within the Rockdale municipality. Landing Lights Wetland (also known as Riverine Park Wetlands), located at Spring Street, Banksia is one of Council's most environmentally significant natural areas. The site contains some of the last remaining saline wetlands on the Cooks River and includes vegetation identified as threatened under NSW legislation (salt-marsh).¹ We found 29 species of birds on site in the short time we were there and of special note was a Sharp Tailed Sandpiper, one of the species that flies from one side of the world to the other and back each year on a massive migration. It is crucial to ensure that these wetlands are available for these birds – here, in their “summer” homes in Siberia and other northern locations and also along the flyway. The world would be the poorer without them.

The Branch has supported the Council in its efforts to manage this site and commends them for their work. To protect this site Council has begun undertaking significant weed control and vegetation removal which will continue over the next three years. This includes the removal of Mangroves, Casuarinas and Acacias within and adjacent to the Landing Lights Wetlands. Yes, that also meant the clearing of some native species.

We hope that this site can continue to thrive and be a home for the birds that utilise it and congratulate the Council and local volunteers in their ongoing efforts to protect this remnant wetland.

¹ https://www.rockdale.nsw.gov.au/environment/Pages/Environment_LLProject.aspx

In the media

Activities

Past Highlight

Kosciuszko National Park



In December eighteen NPA members joined the annual Branch walks in Kosciuszko and appeared to enjoy the expansive scenery!!!!

And Coming Up

Walks and or nature rambles are scheduled for:

February 23 rd	Engadine Lagoon
February 25	Milsons Point to Taronga Zoo
March 15	Bundeena Coast
March 19	Blackheath to Junction Rock via Govetts Leap
March 22	Kamay- Botany Bay National Park; Kurnell Section
March 24	Berowra to Cowan via Berowra Waters

And more besides

The next Branch Members night will be in April

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

Royal National Park Plan of Management

And, finally, be prepared for a short notice email newsletter shortly. The Royal/Heathcote and Garrawarra parks will shortly have a new plan of management developed and this time the process will be different.

What will happen is that it will be a complete rewrite but it will follow the model for Kosciuszko, whereby issues papers will be released for public comment on a dedicated webpage and via “town hall” style meetings (expect those to focus on Coast Track, Wattamolla Precinct and mountain biking). Mind you, with all the excitement on social media about both Wedding Cake Rock and the Figure of Eight Pool, who knows what other issues papers will appear.

NPA hopes all members register and use that site to express your opinions in this early drafting stage!



NPA members at Middle Head, Sydney Harbour National Park.

Finally, after positive feedback from members about the electronic version, here is the second! I have changed the format to remove columns for this version. Members said it was easier to read online in this new layout. I hope you agree.

And feel free to provide copy!!!!

Brian Everingham, Newsletter editor