



NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW  
*protecting nature through community action*

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NEWSLETTER NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC Summer 2016  
Spring edition  
**SOUTHERN SYDNEY BRANCH**

**If undeliverable return to:**  
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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 alternate months.

**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. The next meeting is in February.

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.

## Our Branch

The NPA offers members over 1000 free midweek and weekend activities a year including bush walks, canoe trips, bike rides, biodiversity surveys, bird watching, and family trips. Activities cater for all levels of fitness. Easy/short walks, day bushwalks, overnight bushwalks, week bushwalks, educational walks, conservation work.

The first talk in 2017 is on Kosciusko and is being delivered by your President, Brian Everingham. It's on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February at 8pm Sutherland Multi-Purpose Centre, 123 Flora St Sutherland (near Belmont St) and please come along. Lots of images of summer in the High Country! It might tempt you to join him on a Branch camp out in April.



**Admission Free All Welcome**

### Walks

Summer is rather hot to be walking but there are a number of activities to look forward to. Contact Brian Everingham at [brian.everingham@gmail.com](mailto:brian.everingham@gmail.com) for details.

Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup> December	An afternoon walk/swim in Engadine Lagoon
Saturday 10 <sup>th</sup> December	Bundeena to Little Marley via Jibbon Head
Tuesday 13 <sup>th</sup> December	Morning photographic walk, Lady Carrington Drive
Friday 3 <sup>rd</sup> February	Otford to Otford via Palm Jungle
Tuesday 7 <sup>th</sup> February	Scouters Mountain
Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> February	Wises Track
Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup> February	Wattamolla
Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup> February	Afternoon walk/swim onto Kangaroo Creek
Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> March	Woronora Valley, Engadine

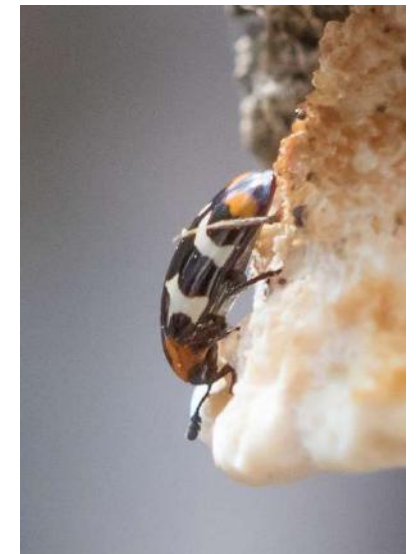
### Pleasing Fungus Beetle

While walking on the Box Vale Walking Track at Woodlands, NSW, one of our walking party pointed out a colourful beetle on a fungus growing on a fallen tree trunk. I took some close-up shots which, on my return home, quickly posted to the Amateur Entomology Facebook page requesting for identification. This didn't take long – it was quickly identified as a beetle belonging to the family Erotylidae<sup>1</sup> common name being “Pleasing Fungus Beetle” (PFB).

Ranging in size from 2-22mm, the Erotylidae family comprise of about 3,500 species in 260 genera worldwide<sup>2</sup>. It's not hard to realise why the word “pleasing” forms part of the common name. The photography site “Flickr” revealed that indeed many of these are brightly coloured some with combinations of red, orange, black and white patterns as this specimen was. Some of these PFBs are even described as being gregarious, i.e. the larva feed in groups, and as exhibiting parental care of larvae aggregations in that “females herd masses of entangled larvae along fruitings of their fungal host”<sup>3</sup>. However we don't know whether our beetle exhibits the same behaviours.



After learning which family this beetle belonged to, the next step was to try and identify the species name and, if possible, the fungus it was on. A most helpful amateur fungi observer identified the fungus for me as possibly *Postia pelliculosa*. The Collection Manager, Entomology, Australian Museum at William St, Sydney, who, on comparing it with specimen collections, identified the beetle as *Episcaphula pictipennis*. On checking online Greek/Latin dictionaries, “*pictipennis*” roughly translates to: “painted wing” – appropriately so!



A Tasmanian website<sup>4</sup> had this same species on their site and, on looking at their photos the beetles were on what looked like the same type of fungus. Could it be that this fungus is the host for our beetle? Clearly more observations need to be made as there is very little information available on this species.

On the next trip I join, I know what I'll be looking out for and it won't just be fungi! Hopefully we'll find some more of these colourful beetles. John Prats, author and photographer

#### References:

1. Erotylidae: from the Greek word erotilos “sweetheart, darling” (diminutive from eros).
2. “Bugguide” <http://bugguide.net/node/view/149>
3. Systematic Entomology (2004) 29, 173–187, A molecular phylogenetic analysis of the pleasing fungus beetles (Coleoptera: Erotylidae): evolution of colour patterns, gregariousness and mycophagy  
JAMES A. ROBERTSON<sup>1</sup>, JOSEPH V. MCHUGH<sup>2</sup> and MICHAEL F. WHITING<sup>1</sup>  
<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.595.1890&rep=rep1&type=pdf> Pg 181
4. <https://sites.google.com/site/insectsoftasmaniacoleoptera/suborder-polyphaga/erotyliidae-pleasing-fungus-beetles/pictipennis>

## Middle Head

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (Harbour Trust) and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) manage adjoining lands at Middle Head as public parkland. The Harbour Trust has prepared a draft amendment to its Management Plan for Harbour Trust-managed land at Middle Head, while the NPWS has prepared a draft Master Plan for its land at Middle Head. Together the Harbour Trust and NPWS are aiming to collaborate on whole-of-headland outcomes such as bushland management and a connected network of paths, to create a unified parkland.

To learn more about the public exhibition of these draft plans, please visit: NPWS – Draft Master Plan for Middle Head, <https://engage.environment.nsw.gov.au/consult> or Harbour Trust – Draft Amendment to Middle Head Management Plan <http://www.harbourtrust.gov.au/planning-projects/public-comment> You might be too late to affect the outcome but you will know the plans for the sites we wish to see protected and better managed for their natural heritage values.

## Green List of Protected Areas

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature Green List of Protected Areas (IUCN Green List) is a new initiative to encourage, measure, celebrate and share the success of protected area excellence. National Parks and Wildlife Service has been working with IUCN representatives to pilot the Green List nomination process.

There are currently three National Parks and Wildlife Service managed reserves accepted to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Green List of Protected Areas (GLPA). They are Arakwal National Park, Cape Byron State Conservation Area and Montague Island Nature Reserve.



Ref: <https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/our-work/iucn-green-list>



### Salute to an NPA Walks Leader

Mark Goodson turned 60 this month and many of the Branch members were there to help him celebrate that occasion and thank him for the many walks he has led for NPA members. Several Branch members were instrumental in planning the event and, in particular, the Branch would like to thank Florence Cho for her extraordinary work behind the scenes. It did not go unnoticed Florence!



### **Milton Way – a Branch Stalwart**

Milton Way has always been a hands on contributor to advancing the needs of our local National Parks and natural areas. Milton volunteered with NPWS assisting with weed removal and bush regeneration projects on the Kurnell peninsula and the Cronulla sandhills. He used to enjoy getting access to Towra Point Nature reserve via NPWS boat. Milton also represented NPA over many years advocating for better management of Kamay/Botany Bay National Park through many workshops coordinated by NPWS. His contribution to this process was especially acknowledge through awarding of the Centenary Medal for significant input as a volunteer. In more recent years, Milton has always assisted his wife Joan in getting together supper for our regular slide nights. When he was more active, Milton joined his many friends in NPA exploring every corner of Royal National Park.

Milton has suffered a stroke and is currently involved in rehabilitation and will be moving to a high care facility shortly. Your Branch salutes Milton as a person who has given so much to NPA and has spent decades enjoying the many opportunities it has offered. We wish him well in this next struggle and we are thinking of his partner, Joan, who has also been so supportive of Milton and of the NPA.

### **Hungry Point Reserve**

The Branch has made a submission on the Hungry Point Reserve Draft Masterplan. You might recall that the NSW Fisheries Research Institute was closed due to a poorly considered political decision. NPA was informed by Lee Evans, MP that the then Minister for Fisheries, Katrina Hodgkinson had failed to consult key stakeholders prior to her determination to close this Institute. The Minister on being questioned by fellow MPs had conceded that she ""had driven past the Institute on the weekend. The motivation for closure, reportedly was the Minister interpreting a government aim to decentralise some government services. The closure proceeded despite a massive community outcry. Some few staff relocated to Port Stephens, and others found employment elsewhere. Thus decades of research and accumulation of databases for some of the more pristine estuarine and marine waters was compromised.

NPA wants this site to be part of the future for marine protection. The NSW Government is currently considering feedback from extensive rounds of community consultation that will hopefully see a new Sydney Marine Park located between Newcastle and Wollongong, within the so-named Hawkesbury Shelf Marine Bioregion. NPA has made a number of major submissions highlighting key sites in that range, including around Port Hacking, Cronulla, Kurnell and Royal National Park that should be incorporated into such a marine park as sanctuaries (or habitat protection) zones. Port Hacking is regarded as an estuary with the highest water quality within the Greater Sydney Region and beyond, while waters off Royal National Park are similarly of high quality. Scientists of the former Institute were aware of these values and the access to mangroves, seagrasses and saltmarshes added further values. Access to these sites from the Institute's wharf further explains why the practical, not just cultural value of the site needs to be reinstated to the maximum level possible.

Gary Schoer's submission has provided further detailed recommendations. If you wish to see the entire document contact the Branch and we will send a copy to you.



## **DOWN the DARLING - a camping trip: Rain. Floods. Closed roads.**

This was the backdrop to our planned camping trip down the Darling River. Our party of three left Sydney, having delayed our departure by several days after poring over weather forecasts, river levels and road conditions. With some optimism under a beautiful blue sky, we headed west late September in two 4WDs to meet up with the Darling River at Bourke.

Over the Blue Mountains and on to the plains, the countryside en route was spectacularly green. In Wellington the swollen Macquarie River was moving at speed through gums that had lined the banks. Our regular riverside picnic stop at Nyngan saw only the tabletops visible above the Bogan River overflow. The incredible green landscape was broken with occasional splashes of photogenic, but aptly named, Paterson's Curse.



Eight hundred kilometres from Sydney and we arrived in Bourke. It was unusually cold, windy and definitely not camping weather so we settled for the comfort of cabins at the excellent Kidman's Camp, North Bourke.

Our first look at the Darling River was from the historic, multi-levelled timber wharf at the Port o' Bourke where in the late 1800s paddle steamers provided the transport link for passengers and wool carting to Adelaide. The river was brown, swollen and moving steadily while the trunks of huge gums revealed water levels way above normal.



We visited the helpful NPWS Visitors Centre for up-to-date information on the then closed road into Gundabooka National Park our next destination to the south. The enthusiastic ranger said that the wildflower display alone was the best it had been for decades and definitely “We must go.”

At the ‘Diggers on Darling’ we were very pleased to meet and have a yarn with Phil Sullivan, Aboriginal Ngemba Traditional Owner formerly of NPWS but now an OEH Aboriginal Heritage Conservation Officer. He spoke passionately of Mt Gunderbooka (sic), the centrepiece of the Park that plays an important role in Ngemba and Paakantji creation stories.



The next day we got the all clear and headed south. This semi-arid region is a land of unpredictable ‘droughts and flooding rains’. The only permanent surface water is found in the larger riverbeds and isolated waterholes fed from the north. We’re excited to be here to witness the transformative effects of one of these ‘flooding rains’ events.

Fifty kilometres down the sealed Kidman Hwy we turn off on to the dramatically red, dirt road into Gundabooka NP. We were not disappointed. We set up camp at the basic Dry Tank campground and the next morning headed for the Mulgowan art site.

Wildflowers lined the road there and paddocks were carpeted in breathtaking expanses of colour – white, yellow and blue. Emus ran through them and occasionally a kangaroo popped up its head. Just a short walk from the car park took us to the interesting Mulgowan art site. Paintings of dancers and animals and an intriguing geometric design are on a rocky overhang. We sat under a coolabah enjoying the peaceful scene by the creek below watching the water tumbling over the rocks.









Later we enjoyed the Valley of the Eagle walk through open country that provided wide views of the range, to Bennetts Gorge at the foot of the 500m Mt Gunderbooka.



Geologically, the NPWS park brochure informs me, is a syncline, 385 million years old layers of hardened sandstone. It is the horseshoe shape of the mountain that funnels water into the life-giving creeks and waterholes.



We continued on to Yanda campground in the north of the park stopping to explore a deserted homestead on one of the four former grazing leases which make up the park today. Rusting vehicles and old tools evoked memories of times not too long ago.

Yanda is situated on the banks of the Darling lined with River Red Gums. In the gentle light of the early morning we watched a lone pelican gliding along through their reflections. Flocks of parrots flew overhead, too fast to be able to identify. Sacred Kingfishers and the beautiful Rainbow Bee-eater were highlights- just some of the 137 species of birds found in Gundabooka. This peaceful scene was reward indeed for coping with our constant companions- the flies by day and mozzies by night!

Ahead, the roads to Wilcannia and Kinchega NP remained closed. Every morning we checked in on-line and almost became best friends with our helpful phone contact at the Central Darling Council.

We inched our way down the Darling to the small community of Louth, camping beside the friendly Shindys Inn, a classic timber and iron-roofed outback pub with long verandah right on the river. Here we learnt more about the feral goats we'd seen packed in their hundreds on livestock trucks. Apparently the around \$120 paid per head for feral goats equalled or surpassed that paid for sheep. Hence sheep farmers, we were told, had all "moved into goats." Farmers were deemed to own the feral goats on their land. Keeping some for breeding stock and with multiple litters per year it was a profitable business. Many said that without the goats, farmers wouldn't have survived. We learnt that the goats were trucked to Albury/ Wodonga for slaughter and the meat shipped to the Middle East.



Still waiting for roads to open we moved to the other side of the Darling and pitched camp at the enormous 320,000 acre Trilby Station, a sheep and goat station. There we selected one of their natural, secluded campsites dotted among the giant River Red Gums on the Darling River right on top of the riverbank. The doorless dunny was a room with a view! And the small swimming pool back at the homestead was pure luxury in the now very hot weather. We watched the sun go down over the river and shared dinner with our companions the flies then mozzies.

The next day, armed with a mud map and large information folder, we took a 55km drive around the vast property through a variety of environments: red soil, clay soils, grasslands and limestone ridges. We passed by mulgas, coolabah and Leopardwood trees, gave way to flocks of very healthy looking sheep crossing the track, saw goats corralled behind electric fences, emus, kangaroos and the old homestead. This was left exactly as it was when its owners departed in 1965- right down to the table setting in the kitchen. All this and more under an expansive blue sky with cirrus clouds.

Our friend at Central Darling advised us next day that roads down the Darling to Wilcannia were still not open so we opted for a 180km detour via Peery Lake in the Paroo-Darling NP.

The Lake was just a distant blue line beyond the red stony landscape with clumps of fleshy, green low plants, mulga and white ground covers. The waters were yet to reach there. The park shelter area and surrounds were mysteriously covered with the bodies of tiny swallows. Future plans outlined there to make a walk to the lake will improve the experience for visitors.

We continued on. The Wanaaring Road of red dirt, sometimes white clay, took us south through beautiful undulating country. Not another vehicle was seen. It was hot. The car radiator boiled. We waited, photographing yet more white paper daisies on the red soil as black skies loomed overhead. Thankfully we arrived at Wilcannia before the heavy rain could damage the track. We set up camp again on the banks of the Darling under the red gums (carefully!). It was now freezing! This called for a late Chinese dinner at the local club. It had been a very long day.

Wilcannia's centre-lift bridge, completed in 1896, was the first crossing of the Darling River between Wentworth and Bourke. Classified by the National Trust it is now used by pedestrians and cyclists. We walked along a just-opened short path along the banks of the river completed by local youth under an employment scheme. Then we were invited to have a look in the local Aboriginal-run radio station Wilcannia River Radio, 103.1 FM. (Husband Tom's connection was as the first manager at 2RRR.) They broadcast to their local areas known as 'the Mish' and 'the Mallee'. They pass on local news, take requests, advertise jobs, play a range of music and make some programs in language. It was a very impressive outfit with grant funding to pay local staff.

The road to Menindee and Kinchega NP was now open so it was "on the road again". 153 km down the western side of the Darling River Run we pulled into Menindee to stock up and headed for nearby Kinchega NP.

Kinchega was the name of a former sheep station like all of the national parks along the river.

Originally this land was the home of the Paakantji people who travelled the length of the Darling from Bourke to Wentworth. 'Paaka' is the Aboriginal name for the Darling and 'ntji' means

belonging to. Numerous middens, up to possibly 35,000 years old, in the park have shown evidence of their diet of fish and small mammals. Scarred trees provide evidence of canoe building. Kinchega is a naturally stoneless country so grinding stones used for seeds and grasses that were found here had been carried in from at least 40 km away.

In 1860 the ill-fated Burke & Wills expedition passed through here.

Today the pastoral history is most evident. The historic Kinchega woolshed was built in 1875. We walked through the building that has been carefully maintained and restored. In the early days bales of fleeces were carted away on bullock drays, taken to the paddle steamer for transport down river to markets.

Once again we set up camp under the now familiar River Red Gums on the banks of the Darling. Campsites are well spaced along the riverbank on the 26km track. Driving down the track we stopped on the dry white clay pans to have a closer look at a carpet of mauve pig face. Further down in the river were the remains of the paddle steamer Providence.

Menindee and Cawndilla Lakes also form part of the park. They are natural lakes on the meandering Darling but they have been dammed to ensure continuous water supply and had not yet filled when we were there. Away from the river the land is arid where Prickly Wattle and Bluebush flourish. We saw Shingleback lizards, emus and kangaroos.

From Kinchega we headed to our last destination-Mungo NP. We travelled south 123km to the friendly village of Pooncarie, population 320, our last town on the Darling River. A further 26 km downriver and we left the Darling, turning east to Mungo NP in the Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Area.

We headed straight for the Visitor Centre but were very disappointed to learn that it is rarely staffed. There is however an excellent display including archaeological finds and a selection of information sheets on various aspects of the park. This remote and remarkable area is of great significance to the world. Here Mungo Lady and Mungo Man were found, dated to 42,000 years ago, the oldest human remains in Australia. The lakes that were once filled with water dried out and constantly blowing westerly winds blew sand on to the surrounding dunes gradually burying signs of human habitation. But now these same winds are displacing the sand further and revealing the evidence of the original habitation. The story of its oldest inhabitants has been told using this evidence found in the dunes.

We set up camp behind Mungo Lodge, the now privately operated excellent accommodation adjoining the park. The highlight of our stay was doing the 70km loop around the heart of Mungo. The drive starts from the Centre and crosses the dry lake bed, home to emus and kangaroos. It follows the semi-circular range of sand dunes called the lunette. There are various stopping places with informative signage along the way. Some of the sand has weathered into white cliffs known as the Walls of China. The Mallee Walk, a pleasant half hour circular walk is one stop. We had a break at the remote campsite half way around the track. There was welcome shade under Belah and Cypress Pines. At Vigars Well, a stopping point for Cobb & Co. Coaches, we were able to climb the sand dunes.

We celebrated our last night of the Down the Darling camping trip with dinner at Mungo Lodge.

No flies or mozzies!

Anne Carrick

