



NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW
protecting nature through community action

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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. These meetings are now held on either the 1st or 2nd Wednesdays of the month, except when this coincides with school holidays

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 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. Now held on the 4th Wednesday night every second month. The next meeting is **June 28th and Ken Griffiths will show his extraordinary photographic skills to show off the birds of Royal**

Branch Matters

Out n About

NPA members and visitors share walk and photography highlights with you.

The theme for this walk, with several Banksia species already in full bloom, was Birds n Banksias. Well, we did see many New Holland Honeyeaters visiting nectar-rich Banksias especially near “The Goat Track”, an eroded volcanic Dyke not far from Providential Head, Wattamolla. Also notable were the female Variegated Wrens teasing us as they flitted around the sandstone and eroded logs near the waterfall at Wattamolla Picnic Area. John Prats and Gary Schoer had their Canon Cameras and long lenses poised. Visitor Geoff Innes was keen to try out his new Nikon 300 mm lens. Here are a few snaps we were happy to share. Perhaps you will send in a few of your best whale pictures as you explore lookout points within Royal National park and Botany Bay/Kamay National Park over next couple of months!



Photo courtesy of Gary Schoer



Photo courtesy of Geoff Inness



Photo courtesy of John Prats

Whale watching in Southern Sydney

Every year, Humpback whales migrate along the NSW coastline. They head north from summer feeding grounds in Antarctica to the warm coastal waters of Queensland and the Coral Sea to mate and give birth from late April to August, and return southwards from around September to November. Southern right whales may arrive in our waters anytime through to October. During this migration they can usually be spotted close in to shore. There are many spectacular land-based sites in NSW national parks where you can watch whales safely from shore. To find the best site close to you check out our guide to whale watching sites.



Photo courtesy of Gary Schoer

Watching whales from headlands in our beautiful national parks is a relaxing family pastime. Try Providential Head at Wattamolla, cliff lines in Royal National Park, off tracks around Bundeena south (stay well clear of edges as they can be thin and dangerous in windy weather), Garie Headland, and the whale watching platform near Cape Solander in Botany Bay/Kamay National Park, Kurnell.

Many people have contributed to our understanding of whales by doing some citizen science and joining the NPWS Cape Solander Whale Migration Study Volunteer program. The Cape Solander Whale migration study is a long-term scientific study to collect data on the abundance of whales swimming past Cape Solander (on the southern side of Botany Bay). Community volunteers count whales from the 24th May until the 1st of August each year, from sunrise to sunset.



Photo courtesy of Gary Schoer

This information helps us to understand the behaviour of whales and contributes to the conservation management of cetacean species. NPWS doesn't currently list whale surveys as a volunteer opportunity, but see the current volunteer program if you wish to contribute to any of the citizen science or other volunteer programs of NPWS.

Note you can find more spots to watch whales via <https://www.wildaboutwhales.com.au/top-spots>



Photo courtesy of Brian Everingham

NPA Speaker Program

Improving Cities for Biodiversity

NPA's new citizen science officer, Dr Fran van den Berg gave a riveting and practical talk to a small enthusiastic group at Sutherland Multi-purpose Centre at our recent April meeting. Fran came from Macquarie University where she was involved in an Environmental-trust funded collaborative project exploring practical ways that we can improve biodiversity in the urban environment at both a larger landscape level and in our own properties.

Here are some top hints on what you can do to contribute to overall improvements in the natural landscape.

Consider replacing parts of your lawn with gardens that have a variety of local trees shrubs and native grasses.

Try to avoid planting too many of the new hybrid Grevilleas and the like that will attract the other native bird excluding honeyeaters and urban adaptors such as the Noisy Miner. If Miners get a helping hand from what we plant, they will harvest a lot of the good insects that keep a balance in pest species and favour survival of herbivorous insects that will damage your gum trees.

Source your plants from places like Sutherland Shire's Native Plant Nursery (Details can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/m8wqt55>)

Here you can buy local genetic stock for \$2 a tube. You don't have to be a Shire resident to access the nursery. The web site has a list of available species, bigger pot sizes and prices, but NPA recommends mass plantings with smaller, cheaper stock.

Use logs and rocks hollows and water features to attract lizards and even echidnas.



Photo courtesy of Brian Everingham

Have a say if developments threaten tree loss. Trees are well known to be of great value in minimizing urban heat islands.

Do not let Councils or residents proceed with compromising urban bushland remnants by practices that clear edges, allow weed incursions and increase water runoff into them. The larger these are and the less impact there is from compromised edges, the more that native species will be able to thrive.



Photo courtesy of Brian Everingham

Contact NPA Head office on 9299 0000 if you wish to talk with Fran about any practical measures you are embarking on to make Southern Sydney a more biodiversity friendly place. Fran had the feeling that Sutherland Council was probably more advanced than many others at working with nature...but the proposed increases in urban density foreshadowed for “The Shire” perhaps make this a work in progress as reports come in about unacceptable tree loss in some areas.

Ken Griffiths will be showing some of his best bird photos from Royal National park at the next talk at the Multipurpose centre on Wednesday June 28th. See Program details elsewhere in this newsletter.

News from and about our parks Draft Plans of Management

How can I comment on the draft plan?

While all submissions count, they are most effective when we understand your ideas and the outcomes you want for park management. Some suggestions to help you write your submission are:

Write clearly and be specific about the issues that are of concern to you.

Note which part or section of the plan your comments relate to.

Give reasoning in support of your points - this helps avoid misinterpretation and makes it easier for us consider your ideas.

If you agree or support a particular part or idea in the plan, please tell us.

If you disagree, please tell us specifically what you disagree with and why you disagree.

It is very helpful to suggest solutions or alternatives to managing the issue if you can.

Plans of Management on display include:

Sturt National Park, in the far western corner. The Draft Plan of Management is on display until July 17th so if you have knowledge of this place (and it is a magical place) do respond and send us a copy of your own submission. You can access the draft plan at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/parkmanagement/sturt-national-park-draft-plan-management.htm>

Public exhibition for the plan is from 7 April 2017 to 17 July 2017. You are invited to comment on the draft plan by sending a written submission during this time. Email your submission to: npws.parkplanning@environment.nsw.gov.au

Inner Pocket Nature Reserve, NW of Brunswick Heads. It's not abutting any other national park estate. Public exhibition for the draft plan is from 21 April 2017 to 31 July 2017. Go to <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/parkmanagement/inner-pocket-nature-reserve-draft-plan-management.htm>

And for those who don't know anything about it, it is in the Brunswick River catchment and on the eastern rim of the erosion caldera of the long-extinct Tweed Shield Volcano. The reserve is located in the locality of Inner Pocket, approximately 10 kilometres west of Brunswick Heads and 40 kilometres south-west of Tweed Heads on the NSW far north coast.

But, Branch members, keep an eye out because at some stage the draft plan of management for Kamay Botany Bay NP will be released and soon there will be discussion papers on directions for a new draft plan for Royal. Then we will want your active participation.

Special Places

Sea Acres National Park

In February 2017, we visited Port Macquarie and one of the places we visited there was Sea Acres National Park which is situated on Pacific Drive about 4km from the centre of Port Macquarie. It is bounded by the Pacific Ocean on the east, Shelley Beach on the north and Tacking Point lighthouse to the south and roads on the west. This park is only 76 hectares in size but is rich in biodiversity. According to its Plan of Management: “The primary purpose for dedication of Sea Acres Nature Reserve was to preserve an area containing significant geological features and an outstanding remnant of coastal littoral rainforest for an area so far south.” (Ref 4, pg 3)



Aside from the rich plant and animal life, another attraction is the 1.3 km circuit elevated boardwalk which winds itself, not over, but through a magnificent rainforest with bungalow palms, giant water gums, native tamarind, yellow carabeen, laurel and myrtle species and many other species. The boardwalk allows visitors to observe flora and fauna without disturbing them. According to its Plan of Management (1995), 100 species of birds, 17 species of reptiles, 6 frogs and numerous invertebrates including a rare freshwater snail (*Fluvidona* sp.) (Ref 4, pg 7) had been recorded so far. (It appears that no general survey has been undertaken since so it's possible that some changes have occurred.)



Land mullet, *Egernia major*, are generally restricted to rainforest of south-eastern Australia and can grow up to 60cm in length.

This park used to be a Nature Reserve (dedicated as such in 1987) but its role has now been changed to National Park status. Basically, “a nature reserve has conservation as its primary focus while a national park allows for more opportunities for public nature appreciation” (Ref 1) hence the boardwalk and Rainforest Centre which were opened in 1989.



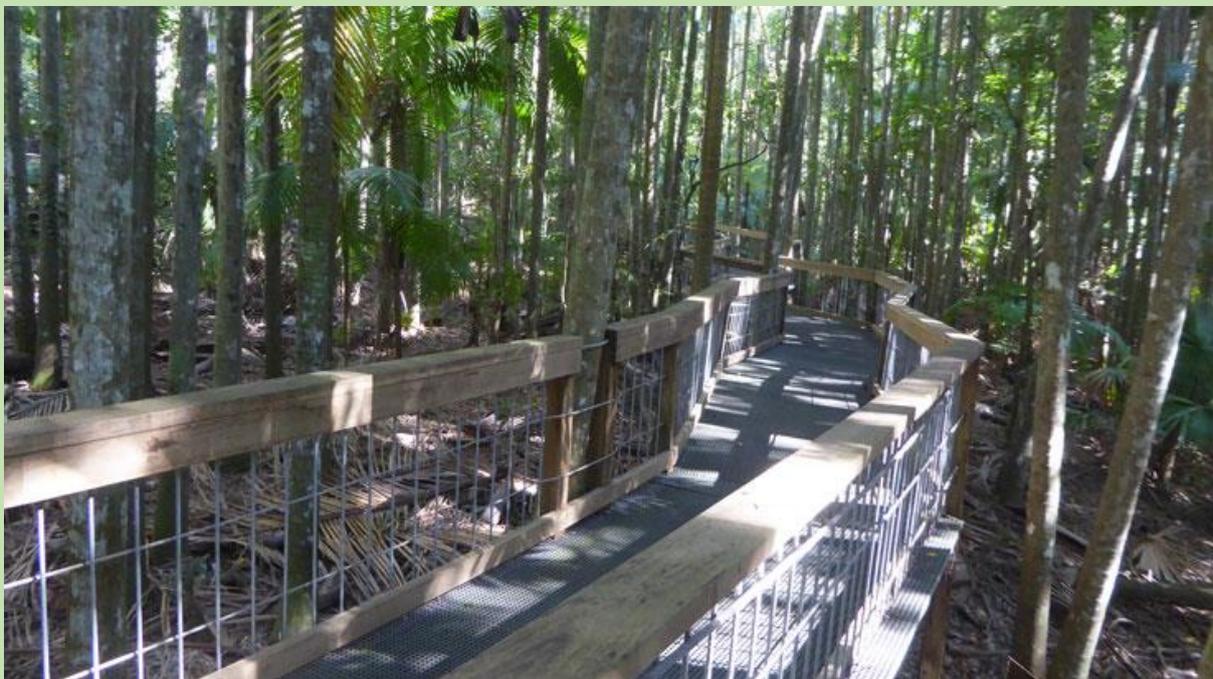
No national park is worth its salt without a resident Powerful Owl. This one had its back towards me – owls can rotate their heads to a maximum of 270 degrees without causing any damage to their anatomy (we can only do 180).

I visited the park twice, the first being more of a short reconnaissance visit, the second an early morning more relaxed one on my own where I managed to spot the resident powerful owl and other birds. On this walk I met a retired friendly couple who regularly visit this place - the husband photographs the wildlife and the wife draws and paints from the photographs. I was pleased to have met them as they pointed out things I wouldn't have noticed and explained general matters about the park itself. They mentioned that walking in the other direction can reveal interesting features, flora and fauna you hadn't noticed before. I could of course have joined a guided tour which the park management provides at certain times but walking with Helen and Rick gave it a more personal touch and the local information they imparted was wonderful.

One thing that you'll notice from looking at a map, or even a satellite photo of the area, is that except for some narrow strips of greenery leading to more substantive bushland, the park is pretty much isolated. These narrow green corridors revealed in the photos will hopefully enable wildlife to escape in the event of a catastrophic bushfire or other ecological changes that can occur with global warming and perhaps return later on when revegetation has occurred. This scenario has happened in the Royal National Park where the Greater Glider disappeared for a certain time after a bushfire but, because it was able to flee to surrounding

patches of bushland, the local population was able to survive and were spotted again years later in their restored former habitat.

As this park is popular you can get all sorts of visitors with various interest (or perhaps no interest at all!). When I was there I noticed some who just walked very quickly along the boardwalk and while others strolled along leisurely and talking loudly scaring away any wildlife – I don't really know if they appreciated the place at all. If not properly guided, children can be bored easily and also spoil others' enjoyment of the place. I think if you want to make the most of your trip, it's best to go early on a week day. This is what I did and managed to enjoy the walk and observe various plants and animals at a leisurely pace. Another attraction of the park is its eastern border, i.e. Miners Beach – there is a track leading from Shelley Beach on the north to Tacking Point lighthouse on the south – the scenery is magnificent and at various points you may find explanatory signs regarding the history of the place.



References:

1. For the difference in purposes between parks see:
<http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/conservation-and-heritage/different-parks-different-purposes> .
2. <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/visitor-centres/sea-acres-rainforest-centre>
3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_Acres_National_Park
4. <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/parks/pomFinalSeaAcres.pdf>

8 PM 28 Jun 2017 Birds of Royal National Park:

Australians oldest National Park the Royal is home to over 300 native bird species, the highest for any protected area in NSW. Ken Griffiths from Naturally Wild Photography will show stunning photos of the more common birds of the Royal and surrounding area. Enjoy free tea/coffee/cake after the talk, a chance to meet other members. Multi-Purpose Centre 123 Flora St Sutherland (near Belmont St)



Activities Coming Up

May 29 th	Seven Mile Beach National Park
June 13 th	Bellambi Lagoon
June 14 th	Branch Campaign Meeting
June 17 th	Barren Grounds Nature Reserve
June 20 th	Wises Track, Royal National Park
June 27 th	Curra Moors, Royal National Park
June 28 th	Branch Member evening
July 12 th	Branch Campaign Meeting
July 18 th	Hunters Hill walk
July 25 th	Oatley Park
July 31 st	Minnamurra to Kiama
August 6 th	Waterfall to Heathcote via Uloola Falls
August 8 th	Wattamolla to Little Marley

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