



NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW
protecting nature through community action

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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 27th
Birds and wildlife of Florida: Guest speaker Gary Schoer will share stunning photos from his recent trip to the USA where he got up close and personal with wetland birds and wildlife in some remote wildlife refuges.
Note that this is also our AGM.

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.

Healthy Parks/Healthy People

Research shows that regular exercise and relaxation are important for keeping your mind and body healthy. Bushwalking can help decrease the risk of heart disease and stroke, lower stress levels and blood pressure, boost immunity, promote healing, improve mental wellbeing and enhance your quality of life.

Visiting a National Park for a picnic, walk or just to sit and relax allows you to experience the peace and tranquillity of the natural environment, lets your senses come alive and helps maintain a healthy life/work balance. No phones, no computers, no deadlines, no worries.

The NPA works to ensure the ongoing protection, expansion and good management of National Parks and other natural areas for present and future generations. The importance of National Parks will increase over time as the stress of population growth, urbanization, and climate change impact on our societies.

"Walking is a man's best medicine."

- Hippocrates (c.460-370BC), ancient Greek physician & "the Father of Medicine".

Walks/Activities

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| June 4 th | Inspection Kamay Botany Bay NP, Kurnell |
| June 6 th | Inspection Kamay Botany Bay NP, Boat Harbour |
| June 18 th | Inspection Kamay Botany Bay NP, La Perouse |
| July 15 th | Waterfall to Heathcote along Heathcote Creek |
| July 21 st | La Perouse to Maroubra via Henry Head |
| July 25 th | Bellambi Lagoon Circuit |

Contact brian.everingham@gmail.com for details and keep an eye on short walks notices.

Update from the NPWS

Note that the draft plan of management and precinct plan for Kamay Botany Bay and Kurnell section of that park is now available for comment. See <https://engage.environment.nsw.gov.au/kamay-2020-milestone-project-consultation>

Submissions must be received by the 2 August 2018.

Do let us know what you think and help NPA inform its own submission.

Bhutan's Successes in Environmental Conservation and Sustainability

What Can We Learn?

Bhutan's conservation achievements read like an environmentalist's heavenly dream, in our time of diminishing global biodiversity;

- More than 50% of its land area designated as protected in national parks, nature reserves and biological corridors,
- More than 80% in natural forests with an ongoing re-forestation program that is further increasing this figure,
- Carbon sequestration that is greater than its national emissions by factors of 3-4, and
- A national plan to stabilise its population by 2050.

But it is not a dream. It is a reality that confronts us by demonstrating that it is humanly possible to both preserve its very high biodiversity and achieve sustainable development, and all this in a least developed country. Intriguingly, the Eastern metaphysics that is foundational to these outcomes has a strong resonance with the science and sentiments of our ultimate Western materialist Charles Darwin.

Bhutan's environmental successes are running so counter-current to most other countries, they represent a 'pleasing paradox', an environmental light on the hill, which begs to be fully understood.

Environmental commitments enshrined in Bhutan's National Constitution..... and Counter Intuitive Development Goals

Within its 2008 National Constitution the Government pledged to;

- Protect, conserve and improve its pristine environment and safeguard the biodiversity of the country, and
- Maintain at least 60% under coverage of natural forest.

In 2009 at CoP 15 in Copenhagen Bhutan declared it "will always be carbon-neutral".

The flip side is that all Bhutanese are formally held responsible under the Constitution to protect the environment, conserve its rich biodiversity and prevent ecological degradation.

In Bhutan, Development = Environmental Sustainability

- For Bhutan, environmental sustainability is both the primary objective and starting point for national development.

- The environment is not simply something to protect: it serves as the important asset for development and the reduction of poverty.
- Environmental sustainability is at the core of development, and development strategies are applied on top of this paramount objective.
- Most appropriately the key indicators of development progress are also environmental, e.g.; proportion of land under protected area status and forest cover, creation of sustainable conservation finance; in late 2017 the Bhutan For Life Fund was announced with a commitment to create a USD \$43 million fund—the first of its kind in Asia—to forever protect Bhutan’s network of protected areas.
- Other key indicators are progress made towards mainstreaming environmental concerns into development such that the environment has now been included in the current 5 year plan as a cross-cutting issue that underpins all the other programs associated with poverty alleviation.

Bhutan’s environmental economy

Bhutan is transcending the classical tension between economic development and environmental conservation by developing through economic sectors that require continuing environmental protection to be sustainable in the long term, e.g.

- ‘run-of-the-river’ hydroelectricity development which requires the preservation of watersheds in natural forest and is virtually carbon-neutral. This both fulfils enhancing national needs for electricity and generates foreign exchange from India, with its expanding energy needs.
- Bhutan has also developed a particular approach to tourism- ‘low impact-high value’ eco-tourism- that guards against some of the negative, culturally destructive aspects of mass tourism, yet provides income in a sustainable way. Controlled pricing and limiting the numbers of tourists and their access to only certain areas is minimising unwanted impacts but ensuring quality tourism services are provided. Enhancing eco-tourism to protected areas is also generating income for local communities, often living with charismatic but problematic wildlife, and ensuring the conservation of biodiversity and landscapes that particularly attract the eco-tourist.

Resolving human-wildlife conflicts

Bhutan’s very successes in conservation with the enhancement of populations of wildlife can often lead to conflicts with communities living within protected areas. Snow leopards can be very effective predators of domestic yak, often the primary source of livelihood and wealth of yak-herding communities. These communities who experience high losses to snow leopards are renowned for their unbelievable level of tolerance to these beautiful predators that are so attractive to eco-tourists. However, nationally it has been felt it was unjust that communities in prime snow leopard land should bear the full brunt of their predation. Community-based compensation and herd insurance programs that are funded by revenues from both eco-tourism and non-timber forest products are transforming snow leopards into an economic asset, bringing tangible benefits rather than liabilities to the local community.

Bhutan's Gross National Happiness includes all Sentient Beings

Bhutan has become internationally famous with the endorsement by the United Nations of the 4th King of Bhutan's declaration that in Bhutan, "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product".

Whereas our Gross National Product (GNP) is restricted to measuring the market value of all products and services produced in one year by our labour and property, Gross National Happiness (GNH) is composed of nine domains, which focus not only on indices of subjective wellbeing but also on concern for the others and the happiness and wellbeing of all forms of sentient life. In fact the percentage contribution to GNH of the metric for harmony with nature is comparable to those for living standards, education and health.

Why is environmental conservation so important to Bhutan?

We can understand how Bhutan is having such success in its program of conservation and environmental sustainability, but the question that remains is why it gives these issues the highest national priority.

Part of the answer seems to lie in aspects of Bhutan's metaphysical heritage which have particular conservation significance. The original religion of Bon Shamanism inculcates reverence for the local deities and spirits that inhabit components of the landscape. Supernatural qualities are ascribed to animals and forests are seen as a valuable source of spiritual health, necessitating their conservation. Moreover, Mahayana Buddhism that supplanted Bon aspires to deeply perceive the interdependence of all things and events. Such a mindset enhances holistic environmental insights and understanding. A very strong eco-ethical sentiment is found in the Buddhist belief that all actions should bring the most help and least harm to other sentient beings.

What can we learn from Bhutan?

It is important to firstly acknowledge that Bhutan's Eastern metaphysic that ascribes sentience to other animals is a very similar viewpoint to that found within the Western scientific tradition. Our ultimate materialist Charles Darwin was willing to look for sentience in worms and found it and the most recent investigations have found sentience in a variety of taxa, beginning with ants. Moreover Darwin proclaimed that "The love for all living creatures is the noblest attribute of man"- not so far from Bhutan's eco-ethic of compassionate conservation.

However, Bhutan's eco-ethic is absolutely foundational to the way it currently operates as a society and within its plans for future socio-economic development. The priority we give to biodiversity conservation and sustainability is currently much lower in our list of concerns.

We could learn to celebrate our wildlife in festivals and art forms as the Bhutanese do, acknowledging they are also sentient, and in doing so caring a little more. And maybe the Australian compassionate ethic of a 'fair go for all' can be extended to embrace all the sentient beings that we share the continent with. By Ross Jeffree

The Murray-Darling Basin, Emissions Reduction, Climate Change and Biodiversity

It's a heady mix! But what are we getting for all this government involvement, all these political announcements and all the media coverage?

And what is happening to the energy levels of communities and environmental activists as we are called to participate more and more in government processes, inquiries, etc without any obvious impact on decision making?

In May I listened to a Big Ideas¹ program on the Emissions Reduction Fund and its subsidiary "benefit" to landscape². That program seemed to be positive, showing that quite a few of these projects were providing good money to help manage arid lands through the Indigenous Protected Lands and through rangeland management and yet when I look at the projects under the Emissions Reduction Fund I have to wonder. As Australian farmers and other landholders sign up for 'carbon farming' credits, including being paid not to clear native vegetation on their properties, are we getting best value? Are we truly having the best bits protected from the perspective of biodiversity? And are those farmers who are getting credits linked across the landscape, creating wildlife corridors and thereby creating resilience in the ecosystems that are most at risk from climate change and land clearing? So far it would appear to be that the entire program is an ad hoc throwing of money at whoever wishes to participate.

Meanwhile a sister program of Big Ideas, Background Briefing³, is exploring the failures of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in a devastating critique in two parts. As its summary states, "Australia is halfway into the most expensive environmental program ever mounted—the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. We've spent more than \$8 billion trying to ensure the future of this crucial river system, but the plan is at risk of failing."

Now we have been invited to put in a submission to the Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission to investigate the operations and effectiveness of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. Submissions are due on 1st June 2018⁴. This is a Royal Commission driven by South Australia, the end point of whatever water actually reaches the state in whatever condition it is when it gets there.

The Terms of Reference are as follows:

ensuring the return to environmentally sustainable levels of extraction for water resources that are over-allocated or over-used;

to protect, restore and provide for the ecological values and ecosystem services of the Murray-Darling Basin (taking into account, in particular, the impact that the taking of the water has on

¹ <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/climate-crisis-%E2%80%93-saving-landscapes/9543336>

² <http://www.environment.gov.au/climate-change/government/emissions-reduction-fund>

The objective of the Emissions Reduction Fund is to help achieve Australia's 2020 emissions reduction target of five per cent below 2000 levels by 2020 and 26-28 per cent below 2005 emissions by 2030. The Government has provided \$2.55 billion of funding toward the Emissions Reduction Fund, with further funding to be considered in future budgets.

³ <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/murray-darling-basin-crisis/9687538>

⁴ <https://www.mdbrc.sa.gov.au/>

the water courses, lakes, wetlands, groundwater and water dependent ecosystems that are part of the Basin water resources and on associated biodiversity);

the establishment and enforcement of environmentally sustainable limits on the quantities of surface water and groundwater that may be taken from the Basin water resources (including by interception activities);

to give effect to relevant international agreements through the integrated management of Basin water resources;

to establish a sustainable and long term adaptive management framework for the Basin water resources, that takes into account the broader management of natural resources in the Murray-Darling Basin;

to optimise social, economic and environmental outcomes arising from the use of Basin water resources in the national interest;

to achieve certain “enhanced environmental outcomes”.⁵

All laudable: but will any of the other major players take any notice? Will Victoria? Will Qld? Will NSW within which we have found considerable rorting of the scheme already.

Note that the Basin Plan⁶ was established as a requirement of the Water Act 2007 and after much intense lobbying a scheme was eventually agreed to. But at what cost? We have seen illegal diversions that have not been prosecuted until exposed by Four Corners. We have also had a parliamentary inquiry into the integrity of the water market in the Murray-Darling Basin. That turned into farce when we read in the second report that on 31 October 2017 the committee travelled to Broken Hill and undertook a site visit around the region. This was followed by public hearings in Broken Hill on 1 November 2017, and Adelaide on 2 November 2017.

“However, during the course of the public hearing in Adelaide, statements were made by a senator, which, in the committee's view, reflected negatively on the value of the committee's inquiry. By bringing into question the integrity of the committee process, the comments had the effect of undermining the committee's collegial working relationship and threatened the committee's reputation. The comments had the potential to diminish the impact of the committee's inquiry and final report.

These concerns were reflected in the views expressed in a dissenting report to the committee's first interim report by coalition senators, who subsequently withdrew their participation from the inquiry. Thereafter, the committee was unable to progress the inquiry as anticipated. Difficulties in establishing quorum prevented the committee from conducting public hearings and deliberating on the evidence as expected.”⁷

⁵ <https://www.mdbrc.sa.gov.au/resources/terms-reference>

⁶ <https://www.mdba.gov.au/basin-plan/whats-basin-plan>

⁷

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Rural_and_Regional_Affairs_and_Transport/MurrayDarlingPlan

No wonder there is cynicism. No wonder there is fatigue within the environmental movement. Do we have any hope at all of getting better outcomes from these government processes? One hope so but sometimes one despairs.



Historic Water regulation at Toorale National Park (photo Brian Everingham, 2014)

Our Favourite Places

My Favourite Place: Eagle Rock, Royal National Park

Let me take you at dawn to my favourite place, Eagle Rock, within Royal National Park.

Eagle Rock has great significance for me. At 70 years old I count my blessings when through determination and some pushing from fellow walkers within NPA I manage to revisit this place as part of a 5 or 10 km bushwalk from either Wattamolla or via the Curra Moors track. I have enjoyed it on days where its raptorial profile is a dramatic foreground to a deep sky-blue day. At another time, the adjoining Curracurrong Falls never reached the sea as its downward arc was lifted up above ground level in response to the gale-force winds battering the coastline.

Eagle Rock is also an iconic sentinel looking over the adjacent ocean that your branch and other passionate supporters are endeavouring to include in a multiple use Marine National Park. Eagle rock is a symbol of these efforts to maintain our local ocean biodiversity.

The world beneath the waves is, for most people, an unseen one. I was fortunate many years ago to get my scuba licence to explore places such as Bushrangers Bay at Bass Point and Lord Howe Island, but I have had to be content with snorkelling other places along the Royal National Park coast. But for me and I am sure many others who enjoy seeing the whales swimming north each June and July from this eagle's eyrie, it is sufficient to know that our local marine world is safe from threats that now go beyond over-fishing. A large, well-managed marine sanctuary can add resilience to the accumulation of threats, now including ocean warming from climate change.

I can reflect on the hidden beauties below as I linger at Eagle Rock, but look forward to the day when marine extensions to Australia's first National Park will make OUR oceans even more secure. Then, we can really celebrate.



Accompanying photo: Gary Schoer at Eagle Rock. Photo: Brian Everingham

For more go to our own film at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsqjQD3rObg>

MY SPECIAL PLACE – BOLA CREEK, ROYAL NATIONAL PARK

Esther Chow

My special place in Royal National Park is Bola Creek.

At the end of Sir Bertram Stevens Drive, not far from the Joan Holland Bridge, Lady Carrington Drive begins its winding way towards Audley. About 100m in from the entrance, there is a track head of the Wallumarra Track which leads down the slope to Bola Creek.

From the red earth around Lady Carrington Drive, we gradually enter the dark world of the turpentine forest. It is very pleasant walking on the boardwalk, with the occasional seats for morning tea, and waiting (hopefully) for the return of the platypus vanished since 1976. Recent fires through here have not seemed to get into the canopy but certainly cleaned out the under-storey. The ground cover is sparse but the ferns are returning. Saplings have done less well over the dry summer and it will take a long time before the forest is thick with vegetation.

I love the quietness and the darkness near the creek. I love the tall turpentine trees and red cedars towering above me. I love the ferns, mossy rocks and the trickling stream. Last but not least, despite the destruction that it represents, I love the archaeology relating to the timber logging.





MY FAVOURITE PLACE – LITTLE MARLEY, ROYAL NATIONAL PARK

James Moule

The easiest and most popular walk in Royal National Park is the stroll from Bundeena to Little Marley. This walk holds many memories for me. It was the first organised bushwalk that I ever did. I was 15 years old and the group included a number of girls who had caught my eye. (This ignores the time when I was nine years old and decided to explore Jamieson Valley on my own, much to the horror of my maternal grandmother.)

The walk is gentle but the rewards are manifold. The coastal views are superb and there is generally plenty of wildlife to add to the excitement. Wedding Cake Rock, the scene of many a tragic selfie, is especially beautiful.

Getting to the start of the walk is a thrilling experience in itself. Most people prefer to catch the ferry from Cronulla to Bundeena, a slow cruise through Gunnamatta Bay past the many mansions.

When I was in 6th Class, one of my mates took me to their weekender on Gunnamatta Bay. Most the houses were basic fibro dwellings. His place was little more than a boatshed. What would that waterfront block be worth today?

The trip back on the ferry is usually more exciting as the waves on Port Hacking break over the bows of the little vessel as it pitches and rocks in the beam seas. I have done this walk many times with many people over the past 50 years and it is always rewarding.



Out and About



It is with great pleasure that the Branch spent a morning out with the Labor candidate for Heathcote on May 25th 2018. It was important to help her understand the issues behind the management of Royal National Park and even better that her guests included Penny Sharpe, Shadow Minister for the Environment, and Bob Carr, the former Premier of NSW amongst other titles.

The Branch will be inviting Lee Evans to come along on a similar journey and hope that the Minister for the Environment can also be included in such a walk.

On this occasion, accompanied by members of Friends of Royal, local Labor Party members and other residents (almost thirty in total) we were also pleased that our guest leader was Bob Crombie. His knowledge of the park is substantial and his ability to impart that knowledge is exemplary.

The Branch thanks Maryanne for her initiative is creating this opportunity.