



NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW
protecting nature through community action

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NEWSLETTER NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC
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SOUTHERN SYDNEY BRANCH

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Connectivity and corridors

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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 26th. See inside for details

Walks/Activities

May 26	Geoffrey Lee geoffrey.k.lee@gmail.com Distance 19km	Grade 3	Oxford to Thirroul
June 2	Geoffrey Lee Distance: 22km	Grade: 3	Thirroul to Port Kembla
June 3	Brian Everingham Distance 13km	Grade 3	Berowra to Cowan
June 5	Brian Everingham Distance 8km	Grade 2	Deer pool to Little Marley
June 12	Brian Everingham Distance 10km	Grade 3	Couranga Track
June 16	Geoffrey Lee Distance 26km	Grade 3	Port Kembla to Minnamurra.
June 19	Brian Everingham Distance 1km	Grade 1	Wallumatta Nature Reserve
June 21-23	Esther Chow and Ann Mitford Grade 3		Thredbo Skiing
June 24	Brian Everingham Distance 8km	Grade 2	Whales at Kurnell
June 26	Brian Everingham Distance 5km	Grade 2	Taronga to Cremorne
June 30	Geoffrey Lee Distance 28km	Grade 3	Minnamurra to Gerringong
July 7	Bandula Gonsalkorale: 0418 485 231, bandulag@gmail.com Text or email preferred		Stanwell Park to Austinmer
	Distance 18km	Grade 4	
July 14	Geoffrey Lee Distance 24km	Grade 4	Berowra to Wahrenonga

July 17	Brian Everingham Distance 14km	Grade 3	Garie Beach to Burning Palms Circuit
July 21	Bandula Gonsalkorale Distance 25km	Grade 4	Heathcote to Bundeena
July 24	Brian Everingham Distance 11km	Grade 3	Uloola Track
July 28	Bandula Gonsalkorale Distance 17km	Grade 3	Oxfam Trail Section 1(Parsley Bay to Cowan)
July 31	Brian Everingham Distance 6km	Grade 2	Woolwich Wharf to Boronia Park
August 3	Brian Everingham Distance 14km	Grade 3	Heathcote to Heathcote (RNP)
August 4	Bandula Gonsalkorale Distance 14km	Grade 3	Oxfam Trail Section 2 (Cowan to Berowra)
August 7	Brian Everingham Distance 11km	Grade 2	Curra Moors Circuit
August 11	Bandula Gonsalkorale Head) Distance 21km	Grade 3	Oxfam Trail Section 3 (Berowra to Bobbin
August 18	Bandula Gonsalkorale Ives) Distance 21km	Grade 3	Oxfam Trail Section 4 (Bobbin Head to St
August 21	Brian Everingham Distance 5km	Grade 2	Milson Point to Waverton

Contact Esther Chow (eeesee@gmail.com) or Brian Everingham (brian.everingham@gmail.com)

Long term members will note that Brian Everingham has slowed down and those multiple day full pack exploratory walks of the past are a dim distant memory as age and stuffed knees take their toll. It is therefore with great pleasure to note that both Geoffrey and Bandula are adding some of those longer day walks to the program. We look forward to some more volunteers to put their hands up and offer to lead some overnight full pack walks once more. It's in the bush, around the campfires, that a love of our natural world is stimulated.

Brian might not be doing them anymore but he can advise any potential leader and is willing to mentor those who might just want a bit of a push.

FREE TALK/ SLIDESHOWS IN 2019
26 June 2019 8PM
Global pollution, Global solution

Marine Scientist Sarah-Jo Lobwein will discuss #SwapfortheSea - simple solutions to avoid single use plastic pollution to stop the sea drowning in plastic, raising the awareness of contributing countries, communities and individuals, and marine conservation and empowering individuals and communities to change behaviour. An engaging look at a serious problem including the 'hidden' plastics we use, the true sources responsible for plastic pollution, the effects on marine life and humans, and easy preventative actions for individuals no matter where you live in the world.

Sutherland Multi-Purpose Centre
123 Flora St Sutherland (near Belmont St)

Contact: ssydney@npansw.org.au

Admission Free All Welcome

And for any walker new to the game just go to <http://www.bushwalking101.org/>



Plastic floating to see in the Cooks River

News from NPWS

Royal Coast Track, Royal National Park

Work continues on the upgrade of the Thelma Head section of the track. The work includes the construction of 664 stone steps and cross drains across one of the most degraded sections of the RCT (Refer attached images). Work at Thelma Head is expected to be complete in late 2019. A tender for similar stone-based upgrade work for the Burgh Ridge Track (which provides access to Figure 8 Pools) will be issued shortly, with the works expected to commence in July/August 2019. A tender for the construction of the remaining sections of elevated boardwalk from Garie Beach to Otford will close in mid-May and will be awarded in late May/early June with works expected to commence in July 2019.

Wattamolla Visitor Precinct Upgrade, Royal National Park

Implementation of Stage 1 of the Wattamolla Master Plan consists of two work packages; the Amenity Building Upgrade and the Civil & Landscape Upgrade.

The Amenity Building Upgrade is currently out to tender and will close on the 10th of May 2019. It is expected that construction will start in early June and be completed by November 2019.

The Civil and Landscape Upgrade will include a new lower loop carpark, new upper carpark, main lawn area upgrade, board walk, and the secondary picnic area. The design of the Civil and Landscape Upgrade is due for completion by the end of June.

Annual Whale Disentanglement Training Day

The Greater Sydney annual whale disentanglement training day was successfully held at Botany Bay in April. This day received exclusive TV coverage by Channel 7 with a story included in the St George and Sutherland Shire Leader. Staff practiced a number of rescue scenarios throughout the day in anticipation of this year's whale migration season (May to October) which will see more than 30,000 whales pass the NSW coast.

Greater Sydney Branch Mountain Biking Strategy

A mountain biking strategy is being developed for Greater Sydney. A ranger has been appointed to manage this process. Meetings were recently held with land managers such as local councils in northern Sydney to discuss ways to work together to provide connected and longer trails. Greater Sydney is working with the Saving Our Species team to produce a number of short online videos explaining some of the threatened species that are present in the parks ridden by mountain bikers with the key message being to 'ride lightly'.

A Special Feature Article by Beth Mott - Powerful Owls and remnant wildlife corridors

Do you hear strange noises in the night near your place? It may be hoots or chuckles or growls, and it may even be the dulcet tones of a Powerful Owl, Australia's largest owl and one of our five threatened Australian owl species. BirdLife Australia's Powerful Owl Project is a citizen Science project that has been working to understand the ecology of urban Powerful Owls in the Greater Sydney Basin since 2011. The magnificent work of over 500 citizen scientists has helped to identify nearly 200 Powerful Owl territories in urban areas between the Shoalhaven and Newcastle. Powerful owls stand at about 60cm high and have a wingspan of up to 1.4m. Amazingly these huge top predators live in many green spaces within the urban envelope in the Greater Sydney Basin.



*Mrs Powerful Owl waits for her mate to bring dinner.
Picture: Dave Robson*

Recent work by the Powerful Owl Project has identified some really important things about successful breeding in these birds. Firstly, whilst we knew large tree hollows were essential for breeding, we also now know that more than 60% of these rapidly vanishing large, old nest trees are not protected in areas like National Parks and bushland reserves. Many of these trees sit close to creek lines. In fact, Powerful Owls breed in nest trees in patches of bushland near creeks, often within 50m of the urban boundary. That proximity to the edge is very important when you are carrying prey as big as a large Brushtail Possum, small Fox, Grey-headed Flying Fox or even a small Koala, back to your chicks for dinner!

Owls depend upon 'green fingers', the bits of vegetation along creek lines, to survive in urban environments. These green fingers often push up into the suburbs, and offer Powerful, Sooty and Boobook owls a place to roost, a place to sally forth from if they want to forge in urban space, and sometimes a place to breed.



*A sleepy Southern Boobook owl resting in the creek.
Picture: John Prats*

Without the riparian strips that exist along creek lines, owls could not persist in the urban space, and all the fantastic work they do controlling our populations of birds, insects and herbivores and balancing our ecosystems would be lost. Green fingers also offer a way for owls and many other types of wildlife such as butterflies and beetles, birds, bats, small mammals, frogs and reptiles to move through the urban space.

These green fingers are often small, weedy and unprotected patches of vegetation, but they have a huge impact on wildlife when they act as corridors for movement, refuges from predators and places to find food. The more we can connect our green fingers with bigger patches of bushland and with each other by developing, protecting and championing corridors, the healthier our urban wildlife populations will be. For Powerful Owls, green fingers provide a way for the young of each year to move away from home and find their own place in the world. So next time you see a small, vegetated urban creek, remember that it may just be the home of our biggest Australian owls, and it will absolutely be an essential landscape feature for our wildlife.



*A young Powerful Owl stays cool in the creek in hot weather with his possum dinner.
Picture: Lloyd Hedges*

Nature's Dangerous Decline 'Unprecedented'

On May 7th news broke across the media in Australia that the globe was facing a crisis of extinction.

In The Conversation the story began:

"We are witnessing the loss of biodiversity at rates never before seen in human history. Nearly a million species face extinction if we do not fundamentally change our relationship with the natural world, according to the world's largest assessment of biodiversity".¹

The Guardian added:

"Human society is in jeopardy from the accelerating decline of the Earth's natural life-support systems, the world's leading scientists have warned, as they announced the results of the most thorough planetary health check ever undertaken".²

Despite this we note in the SMH that:

"Prime Minister Scott Morrison has vowed to stop the spread of union power and stem the growth of environmental rules that he blames for costing Australian jobs, as he sharpens his pitch to voters in the final days of the election campaign".³

Something is very much amiss! Our politicians are failing us. Consider the following:

The IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services⁴, from which this dire warning has come, states that:

"The Report finds that around 1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades, more than ever before in human history.

The average abundance of native species in most major land-based habitats has fallen by at least 20%, mostly since 1900. More than 40% of amphibian species, almost 33% of reef-forming corals and more than a third of all marine mammals are threatened. The picture is less clear for insect species, but available evidence supports a tentative estimate of 10% being threatened. At least

¹ <http://theconversation.com/revolutionary-change-needed-to-stop-unprecedented-global-extinction-crisis-116166>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/06/human-society-under-urgent-threat-loss-earth-natural-life-un-report>

³ <https://www.smh.com.au/federal-election-2019/pm-shifts-attack-on-labor-to-green-tape-he-says-costs-australian-jobs-20190507-p51ky0.html>

⁴ Note that this is the first intergovernmental Report of its kind and builds on the landmark Millennium Ecosystem Assessment of 2005, introducing innovative ways of evaluating evidence. It is compiled by 145 expert authors from 50 countries over the past three years, with inputs from another 310 contributing authors. That's a lot of intellectual muscle. Especially as it is based on the systematic review of about 15,000 scientific and government sources, and also draws (for the first time ever at this scale) on indigenous and local knowledge.

680 vertebrate species had been driven to extinction since the 16th century and more than 9% of all domesticated breeds of mammals used for food and agriculture had become extinct by 2016, with at least 1,000 more breeds still threatened.⁵

Some of the other points the report makes are:

“Three-quarters of the land-based environment and about 66% of the marine environment have been significantly altered by human actions. On average these trends have been less severe or avoided in areas held or managed by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.



Weddin Mountains National Park amidst a sea of cleared lands

Photo by Brian Everingham

More than a third of the world’s land surface and nearly 75% of freshwater resources are now devoted to crop or livestock production.

The value of agricultural crop production has increased by about 300% since 1970, raw timber harvest has risen by 45% and approximately 60 billion tons of renewable and nonrenewable resources are now extracted globally every year – having nearly doubled since 1980.

⁵ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>

Land degradation has reduced the productivity of 23% of the global land surface, up to US\$577 billion in annual global crops are at risk from pollinator loss and 100-300 million people are at increased risk of floods and hurricanes because of loss of coastal habitats and protection.

In 2015, 33% of marine fish stocks were being harvested at unsustainable levels; 60% were maximally sustainably fished, with just 7% harvested at levels lower than what can be sustainably fished.

Plastic pollution has increased tenfold since 1980, 300-400 million tons of heavy metals, solvents, toxic sludge and other wastes from industrial facilities are dumped annually into the world's waters, and fertilizers entering coastal ecosystems have produced more than 400 ocean 'dead zones', totalling more than 245,000 km² (591-595) – a combined area greater than that of the United Kingdom.

Negative trends in nature will continue to 2050 and beyond in all of the policy scenarios explored in the Report, except those that include transformative change – due to the projected impacts of increasing land-use change, exploitation of organisms and climate change, although with significant differences between regions.”⁶

It is enough to make one weep with frustration. But whatever you do, do not give up on our planet. Let this report energise you. Be ready to stand up for Nature. Continue to fight for better policies and then fight to ensure that they are implemented, that our politicians are held accountable and we pass on a planet in better shape that it currently is.

For detailed information on what the NPWS is doing in NSW go to <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/threatened-species/saving-our-species-program/threatened-species-conservation>

You can search that site by Council and it is interesting to note how many species are listed just for the Sutherland Shire. One in particular, the Broad-headed Snake, has had some action via the erection of signs about habitat destruction through the removal of bush rock.

Threatened species have different conservation needs depending on:

- their ecology, habitat and distribution
- threats to their survival
- how much we know about them

And they are then assessed and placed into nine different management streams: site-managed species, landscape-managed species, iconic species (the koala is one), threatened ecological communities, data-deficient species, threatened populations, key threatening processes, partnership species and keep watch species. Let's hope it is not too late.

⁶ ibid

Deadman's Creek a Threat to Koalas

The Premier and Ministers for Planning would have already received some major correspondence from our Southern Sydney Branch of National Parks Association as a part of a Koala coalition centred on ensuring continuing viability of Campbelltown's and Appin's Koala populations. That correspondence pertains to efforts to create a national park that will help to better conserve Chlamydia-free populations in the light of increasing risks from proposed urban expansions especially related to the Mt Gilead development proposals.

As our Branch's specific interests are generally associated with lands only as far west as the Army lands off the Heathcote Road, we would like the Government to agree to and help facilitate protection of Koalas that regularly exit the Army lands used as a firing range and head eastwards to sites around Menai West and even on occasions, as far as Royal National Park.

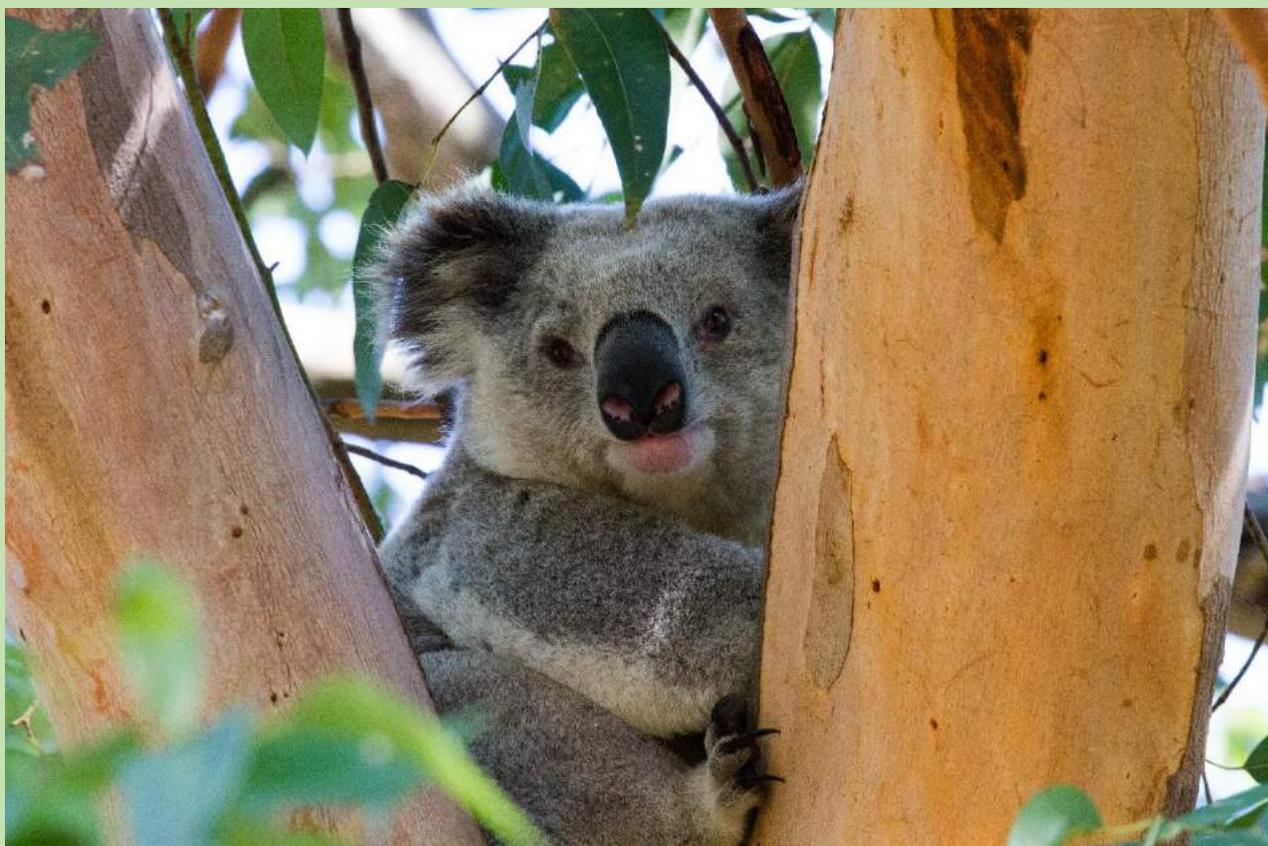


Photo by Brian Everingham taken in Mill Creek area

Koala sighting records available on the NPWS Bionet site have a record of sightings of Koalas that are moving from the Army Lands across the Heathcote Road from Sandy Point south and into the Gandangara lands of Menai west. There is a major cluster of records adjacent to Deadman's Creek which rises in the Army lands and travels beneath Heathcote Road to the Gandangara Lands. Regrettably, most of these records are road deaths associated with Koalas presumably wiggling under the safety fence bordering the firing range rather than taking the safer drainage route beneath the road.

NPA Southern Sydney Branch would like the Minister for Transport, Andrew Constance, to help facilitate the building of a properly designed funnel-shaped structure at Deadman's Creek that will serve to concentrate movement of koalas in the direction of an enhanced under-road wildlife crossing to address this koala death hot spot. Road signs have not substantially reduced such a road toll as far as we can ascertain.

We ask:

1 that he will help ensure government commitment to a budget item to construct such a crossing.

2. That he refer our Branch to a local Main Roads environmental officer contact who can engage with our branch on planning. We would anticipate that such a person can help facilitate engagement with other stakeholders such as the Army, and the Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council.

3. Such engagement would also provide a good opportunity to help ascertain what other wildlife-supporting projects can be part of the local core business of regional road maintenance teams.

WE know that an initiative of the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre is investigating options for the use of Cawley's Road near Helensburgh as a focus for a wildlife crossing initiative, but it would be good to do a broad assessment of other such needs and opportunities that needn't cost the earth.

We are uncertain if any planned new road works are intended for this vicinity, but either way the need is demonstrable to address this issue in a timely and comprehensive manner.

Our Branch has been dismayed to see that several of the ideas to preserve koala populations in the Macarthur region have been compromised as the developers seek more concessions, but this issue at Deadman's Creek is one that we expect is clearly possible given that it is somewhat removed from development areas. We do hope that expert personnel in Main Roads can help bring about necessary works to help koala and other animals cross a very dangerous and deadly road.

Gary Schoer

100th Anniversary of Sydney Shipwreck

The hundredth anniversary of the tragic sinking of the SS Tuggerah occurs on Friday 17 May. Long considered the best wreck dive in Sydney, the Tuggerah was a 56 metre long coastal collier of 749 tons built in Scotland in 1912. She was used on the Illawarra to Sydney coal run for most of her life.



Tuggerah in panorama

After loading 820 tons of coal at the Bulli Jetty on Saturday 17 May 1919, the Tuggerah put to sea at 2.30 pm. During the preceding few days, fairly strong seas had been running along the coast but the weather was not exceptionally rough at the jetty. When she left Bulli, the Tuggerah was noticed to have a slight list to port and coal was not evenly distributed in the holds and 10 tons of coal was on the deck. Rather than trim the boat and fix the hatches before leaving the wharf, the skipper, Captain McConachie, decided to do it at sea. It is not known why the coal was not trimmed before she left Bulli, but a good guess is that it would have delayed the Tuggerah and cost the owners money.

Soon after passing Bulli Reef, it became obvious that the seas were worse than previously thought. Despite this, the ship continued north, all the while taking water on board due to the list and the fact that the two hatches were not in place. The crew faced considerable difficulty in trimming the coal due to the seas.

Just after 4 pm when off Marley Beach in Royal National Park, a huge wave, later estimated as six metres, came over the port side. Within a few minutes the Tuggerah "turned turtle, and sank".

As the ship rolled, Captain McConachie saw she was doomed and ordered the lifeboat to be launched. The Tuggerah went down stern first and the survivors scrambled into the only lifeboat salvaged. After an hour searching for other survivors, the 11 lucky crew rowed to Port Hacking, arriving on the beach at Cronulla at 7.15 pm. Six persons died, including Captain McConachie.



The stern



The propeller

One survivor was Thorvald Thomsen. Six weeks earlier he had been absent from the SS Myola when she sank (all the crew were in quarantine due to influenza) and almost 30 years later he survived the sinking of the SS Bombo off Port Kembla.

Today the Tuggerah lies at a depth of 45 metres just over two kilometres off Wattamolla in Royal National Park. She is a favourite for very experienced scuba divers due to her relative intactness as well as the prolific marine life that is found on her.

To commemorate the anniversary, three boat loads of divers from St George Scuba Club will dive the wreck on Friday. President of the club, Michael McFadyen, said he is looking forward to repeating his dive of 25 years ago for the 75th anniversary. "I have dived the Tuggerah" almost 150 times over the past 30 years and I never tire of it. There is always something new to experience". After the dive the divers will remember the six lost sailors, just a few of the hundreds who died off the Sydney coastline in the past 230 years.

As well as being an important maritime archaeological site, the wreck has become an important part of the southern Sydney marine environment, offering protection to huge amounts of marine life. As well as the large schools of nannygai, kingfish, seapike and yellowtail that sometimes totally cover the wreck, it has visitors of the rarer kind. Over the years divers have seen many seals on the bottom, some grey nurse sharks, huge bullrays, black whaler sharks and a few times, the deep ocean sunfish.

Contact details: Michael McFadyen, 0407 276 556, michael@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info

