



NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW

protecting nature through community action

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NEWSLETTER NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC

Spring edition 2019 129

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 February. See inside for details. 26 Feb 8pm TALK: FOLLOW THE SUN

An extreme grey nomad global adventure. Bill and Julie Lawler are spending six continuous northern and southern hemisphere summers in a row travelling by vehicle following the sun.

Hear about their experience of travelling 543 days in a camper across five continents, 51 countries and over 130,000 kilometres.

Walks/Activities

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

We are now well into the summer fire season and as I write this journal prior to distribution the Greater Metropolitan area of Sydney is facing a “catastrophic” fire event for the first time in history. That means that as of writing all parks are closed. The announcement reads as follows:

All national parks in the Greater Sydney area will now be closed from Tuesday. As part of the State of Emergency declared by the NSW Premier today, in response to predicted catastrophic fire weather, all national parks, including tracks, trails and campgrounds in Greater Sydney, will be closed from Tuesday 12 Nov 2019 until further notice.

I suspect that we will receive more such notices over the summer period so do check the following websites for regular updates whenever you plan to go into the bush:

<https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/alerts/alerts-list>

<http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/fdr-and-tobans/total-fire-ban-rules>.

That said the Branch does have some listed activities:

Sunday 24 th November	Hawkesbury Explorer 1	Geoffrey Lee
Monday 2 nd December	Early morning coastal walk in Royal	Brian Everingham
Tuesday 5 th December	Engadine Lagoon	Brian Everingham
Sunday 8 th December	Hawkesbury Explorer 3	Angelo Emmanuel
Tuesday 10 th December	Kangaroo Creek	Brian Everingham
Saturday 14 th December	Mount Kuring-gai to NPA Xmas party	Brian Everingham
Saturday 14 th December	Cowan to NPA Xmas Party	Geoffrey Lee
Sat/Sun 14 th /15 th	Car camping on annual NPA Xmas party	Bob Crispin
Sunday 22 nd December	Oxfam: Section 7	Geoffrey Lee
26 Dec to 2 nd January	Mount Kosciuszko	Esther Chow
Tuesday 4 th February	Burning Palms	Brian Everingham
Tuesday 11 th February	Forest Island and Bola Creek	Brian Everingham
Tuesday 25 th February	Curra Moors	Brian Everingham

And there will be more added via the short walks bulletins. Keep up to date via

<http://bushwalk.npansw.org.au/>

Note that if you receive this newsletter prior to 27th November our Branch meeting will delight. We have Rhonda Daniels from the Australian Plants Society who will share the life and legacy of Sir Joseph Banks, patron of the natural sciences. Banks collected many plant specimens in 1770 on Captain Cook’s Endeavour voyage, followed by a long life supporting scientific discovery. Learn why he is remembered in the Banksia genus and many place names including Joseph Banks Native Plants Reserve at Kareela. At 8.00pm at the Multi-Purpose Centre 123 Flora St Sutherland (near Belmont St)

While the Billy Boils

You have walked all day and your feet are tired. The walks program did say it was only 15km. How come, then, are you aching all over and there is a blister developing on the ball of your foot? Is the leader so incompetent that he/she can't judge the difference between 15 and 50? And why is this hill - a hill, incidentally, that the leader claimed was a short rise – so damn steep? Why, in other words, did I let the kids buy me that NPA membership for Xmas!!!!

Ah, the mysteries of walks and grading, distance and altitude. Let's begin.

A secret! Don't spread this too far. I used to grade walks leaders instead of the walks. Yes, when but a young walker, just after the knees stopped aching and at about the time I realized that my fitness was actually improving after all, I discovered that one way to cope was to go with a variety of leaders, get an idea of what types of walks they did – and grade them. In my mind, of course. It would never do to confess this too loudly. Leader X walked as though he wanted to get home for lunch, never stopping to smell the flowers. Leader Y dawdled over pots of tea and looked like she could extend a morning dawdle into eternity. Leader Z loved to keep a slow, steady pace for every hour, stop for 5 minutes, give everyone a breather and then head off again. Yes, all leaders have their own little quirks. That system will soon enough become apparent to you too.

But be careful. I used to have a reputation as a "tiger walker", one of those idiots who bounded up steep mountains without pause, stopping only to reach back and haul up a pack, looking for all the world like I had just hopped out of the shower. Now, I am lucky to drag myself through an easy day walk, stopping to look at flowers and birds and the odd lizard. Anything, in other words, that might bring the bush to life.



A happy new member of our Branch



OK, how, then, do we measure distance? This is what I told leaders:

Look over your topographic map of your proposed route. Take a length of string, cut to the scale on the map for ease of calculation, and line it out along the proposed route. String can take into account the various bends along the way. Do not be precise. An estimate is all that is required. After all, all walkers know that a walks leader states “just around the next bend”, whenever he or she asks “how far”?

It’s not too hard, is it? And remember that a km on a footpath is very different to one along an untracked creek.

Similarly, this is my secret tip for altitude measurement.

Ascent:

Look over the proposed route you intend to follow on a topographic map. Note the number of major hills climbed. Note the number of contours and note the contour interval. Calculate an approximate height gained by noting the contour height at the foot of the climb and the contour height at the top and use that figure. If there are several major climbs simply add the figures together.

Do not worry about small climbs and do not try to get an exact figure. Give a rough, round figure to indicate if there is a major expectation of height gained. Give potential walkers an idea if these climbs are steep as well. Do that in the description of your route.

Indeed, the ascent figure is not quite such an important one. It might be better if walks leaders considered how much height was gained over a specific distance. Steepness can be more worrying than actual length of the climb.

Now you, too, know. And keep enjoying the Xmas gift package.

Brian Everingham

THE CONVICT TRAIL

Some walks offer beautiful scenery. Others offer wildflowers in abundance. There are some with historical significance and others are frequented by interesting fauna. Any walk that combines several of these attractions deserves to be popular.

On the other side of the Hawkesbury River from Wisemans Ferry, there are two national parks, each with a lot to offer the bushwalker. Until as late as 1927 when the Pacific Highway was opened, the main road between Sydney and Newcastle was the Great North Road which crossed the Hawkesbury at Wisemans Ferry and continued north towards Broke and Pokolbin before turning east into Newcastle. One can imagine the delight of motorists when the bridge at Brooklyn was completed. A trip that now takes around 2 hours must have taken all day in 1925.

The Great North Road has been replaced by other roads through most of its length but the section north from Wisemans Ferry was open until 1992 when it was closed to protect its historical significance. A number of trails have been established in the area, based on the old roads.

The basic route for walkers these days follows a track that traces the line of road proposed by Heneage Finch, then links with the main section of the Great North Road. Leave cars at the track head about 2km east of the vehicular ferry. The main reason for this climb is to view the Hawkesbury and the junction with McDonald River.



The track was abandoned by Surveyor-General, Major Sir Thomas Mitchell who ordered that the road be moved to the west up a gentler slope on Devines Hill. There are wonderful views across the Dharug and Yengo National Parks before the junction with the Old Great North Road is reached. A little further on, walkers can choose to complete a side track loop of about 2.5km through Shepherds Gully, covering two other historic roads. This takes the total length of the walk to about 14km. There are also some minor tracks and bridle trails in this area but they do not add greatly to what can be seen on the main track.

Throughout the area, especially in spring, wildflowers are abundant.



There is little settlement at this point in the river so fauna can live with little disturbance. Last year on the nearby Grass Tree Circuit, I came face to face with the largest lace monitor I have ever seen, over 4 metres in length and with the body girth of a crocodile. I tried to take some photos but I was not prepared to get close enough for a good shot.

The walk down the gentle slope of the Old Great North Road to Settlers Road is of most historical interest and there are explanatory plaques to provide information at regular intervals. This was of special interest to me as one of the 550-odd convicts who built the road in the 1820s was one of my great-great-great grandfathers, Richard Sargeant. Receiving a 14 year transportation sentence in 1818 having been a rather unsuccessful highwayman in Cumberland, he later worked in the area, dying near St.Albans. He was buried at Wisemans Ferry but all traces of the grave were washed away in a flood.

The engineering of the road is described on the plaques as can be seen on Victoria Pass, retaining walls were built to widen corners. An elaborate drainage system protected the road from erosion

and some of these culverts have been opened to show visitors how they were meant to work. Cutting into the hard sandstone must have been back-breaking work. Then the blocks of stone had to be carried from the quarry and put in place in the walls. This project would be a challenge today with modern machinery. What must it have been like 200 years ago to work in such conditions? It is no wonder that many of the convicts tried to escape.

There are fascinating rock formations on this road, such as Hangman's Rock.



Once Settlers Road is reached, it is a tedious 3km walk back to the cars, past the ferry ramp. A large group could organise a car shuffle to avoid this.

James Moule

News about our Parks

Wattamolla

Work continues on the construction of the new amenities building, with the main structural elements of the building completed. The roof structure is complete, and the precast walls have been installed. The completion date is 13 December 2019.

Construction documentation for the remaining works, including the upgrade of the main lawn area and lower loop car park has been completed and tender documentation is being prepared. It is anticipated construction will commence in March 2020.

Coast Track

Replacement of the final section of fire damaged metal boardwalk between Eagle Rock and Garie Beach is nearing completion. With the temporary suspension of helicopter operations from late June to October work progressed a little more slowly with materials being carried approximately 500m in small machines from designed drop off points to work areas. It is anticipated that this section of work will be completed early next year and concludes the replacement of the more than 1500metres of fire damaged metal boardwalk that has been undertaken as part of the coast track project.

Kamay-Botany Bay

Planning work was completed including preparation of detailed design to Alpha House and submission of a s60 Heritage Act application for adaptive re-use works to Alpha House, additional surveying, bushfire hazard assessment, and services location reporting. Works completed included removal of friable asbestos from Alpha House and commencement of minor precinct improvements in the lead up to April 2020.

Planning for a new visitor viewing platform at the popular whale watching destination at Cape Solander has commenced.

Audley

Audley Visitor Precinct (Royal National Park): Planning has commenced for works including the adaptive re-use of the Audley Boatshed, upgrade of toilets, landscape improvements at Ironbark Flat and improved access between Allambie Flats and the Audley Dance Hall.

Protecting the Woronora Catchment

National Parks Association of NSW Southern Sydney Branch shared a stall with Sutherland Environment Centre at the Gymea Community Fair on Sunday 27th October.

The aims of NPA's involvement was to assist the Environment Centre in gathering signatures on a petition aimed at stopping Metropolitan Colliery from moving its damaging long wall mining operations under the actual pondage of the Woronora Dam. Many hundreds of Shire residents readily agreed to our efforts to protect our drinking water and ecosystems that depend on that water as mining operations are causing subsidence causing creeks to dry out and endangered swamps to collapse losing water that is needed for both humans and species depending on riparian and swamp health. Despite some perceptions that Shire people are at the conservative end of the political spectrum, signatories mostly were spontaneously outraged that government does not seem to be doing anything about it. The comments that we don't want to experience water shortages as in western NSW was oft-repeated. The efforts of NPA volunteers Paul Jennings, Loan Down, Joy Scott, Pam Campbell and Vera Segoh supported many other volunteers from the Sutherland Environment Centre in making big gains towards collecting the required 10 000 signatures needed to have the petition debated in state parliament.



Paul Jennings explains the benefits of NPA membership



Mark Speakman MP, Member for Cronulla visits our stall and chats to NPA member Joy Scott



Paul Jennings of NPA and Tassia Kolesnikow, Chairperson of Sutherland Shire Environment Centre take a short break



Vera Segoh gathers signatures on our petition

NPA was pleased to see that local Cronulla State MP attended the fair and allowed several of us to air our concerns and seek his support on the issue.

NPA thanks Sutherland Shire Environment Centre for allowing us to share their stall and for organising it.

Thank you especially to the NPA volunteers who gave up 2 hours or more of their Sunday for a good cause. Thanks also to Fae and Kiran at head office for looking after promotion of this volunteer involvement by NPA Southern Sydney Branch members.

We hope that our efforts to promote NPA membership and our local talks program might also reap some benefits.

Gary Schoer, Secretary Southern Sydney Branch of NPA

MINISTER PROMISES MORE NATIONAL PARKS

Matt Kean, Minister for Energy and Environment, has promised to create new national parks and extend existing parks.

Giving the keynote address at the dinner which concluded the Annual Conference of the National Parks Association, Mr. Kean stressed the need for policies dealing with the environment to become bipartisan.



Anne Dickson, Gary Dunnett, Matt Kean and Brian Everingham

The Southern Sydney Branch of the National Parks Association hosted the Annual Conference of NPA on 9th November. The dinner, held at Mortdale RSL Club, concluded the conference.

Also among the 114 members in attendance were the new CEO of National Parks and Wildlife Service, Atticus Fleming, and Greens MLC David Shoebridge who is a walk leader in NPA.

Mr Kean was expected to leave after giving his address but instead stayed for an hour and a half, fielding questions from the diners. The passionate environmentalists in attendance expressed concern about the Berejiklian government's protection of feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park, cutbacks to NPWS funding and threats to national parks throughout the State. In particular concerns were raised about the raising of the Warragamba Dam wall and Snowy 2.0.

The Minister was keen to rebuild the relationship with environmentalists following a succession of controversial decisions made by previous ministers.

James Moule