



NEWSLETTER NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC

Autumn edition 2020 130
SOUTHERN SYDNEY BRANCH

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ISSUE: 130

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 the 1st Monday of the month.

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.

A 5 min walk from Sutherland Station. Contact: ssydney@npansw.org.au

Free event. All welcome

Walks/Activities

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

Walks by Brian Everingham

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Tuesday 25 th February | Curra Moors |
| Tuesday 3 rd March | Wattamolla to Eagle Rock and return |
| Tuesday 10 th March | Cape Bailey Walk, Kamay-Botany Bay |
| Tuesday 17 th March | Henry Head Circuit, Kamay-Botany Bay |
| Monday 23 rd March | Port Kembla Heritage Walk |
| Tuesday 31 st March | Taronga to Balmoral via Middle Head |
| Tuesday 14 th April | Spit Bridge to Manly |
| Tuesday 21 st April | Marley Beach via Deer Pool |
| Tuesday 28 th April | Waterfall to Heathcote via Uloola Falls |

Walks organized by Esther Chow

Crossing the Blue Mountains

LONG DISTANCE WALK SERIES

In 2019, the Sydney South Branch of NPA organised two walk series:

Barrenjoey to Gerringong (250km in 11 sections)

The Great North Walk from Macquarie Place to Wondabyne (130km in 7 sections).

These walks were designed for strong walkers who were happy to walk 20 - 30 km each day.

In 2020, we have two new walk series. The new series are:

Crossing the Blue Mountains (180 km in 16 sections) commencing 1 March

Great West Walk (65 km in four sections). Commencing in July

While the Blue Mountains crossing has been a feature of earlier NPA programs, the Great West Walk is relatively new and will probably develop further in coming years. The trail through the far western suburbs of Sydney connects Parramatta with Penrith following, as far as possible, local nature reserves.

Both the new walk series involve shorter walks, generally less than 15 km, which should appeal to a wider memberships of the Association.

- Sunday 1st March Mt Victoria to Blackheath
- Sunday 8th March Blackheath to Medlow Bath.
- Sunday 15th March Medlow Bath to Katoomba
- Sunday 22nd March Katoomba to Leura
- Sunday 5th April Leura to Wentworth Falls
- Sunday 12th April Wentworth Falls to Lawson
- Sunday 19th April Lawson to Hazelbrook
- Sunday 26th April Hazelbrook to Linden via Kings Cave
- Sunday 10th May Linden to Faulconbridge
- Sunday 17th May Faulconbridge to Springwood
- Sunday 31st May Springwood to Valley Heights

Talks and other activities

Weeding Scotch Thistles – Royal National Park

The NPA SSB team did a great job removing scotch thistles in January. We ended up with a team of nine. We basically cleaned the entire Figtree Flat of scotch thistles.



Before



And at work!



Removing the flowering heads to take from the site



Too much energy



Mulching the stems



And taking care of wildlife





With a big thank you to the entire team: Brian Everingham, Faye Bingham, James Moule, Pam Campbell, John Prats, Allen Lowe, Ross McDonnell, Peter Vaughan, Ian Hill and a Friend of Royal, Paul Rendell. We all worked from 8.00am to just after 10.30am and cleared much of the infestation. It will be interesting to check it out in a few weeks to see what we missed or what returns.

January 9th 2020

Brian Everingham

Guest speakers for the Branch meetings

26 Feb Follow the Sun. It should tempt those who are exploring our great wild world, even if from our armchairs....

22 Apr: Matt McClelland NPA Activities Manager: Topic "Walking the Overland Track and the Three Capes walk in Tasmania" Please mention this in the next newsletter.

And on 24th June Ken Griffiths will bring his magical camera to us once more

Put these dates into your diaries folks!

The Long, Hot Summer

Could this be the end of koalas?

Expert claims Australia's beloved marsupial is 'functionally extinct' after bushfires destroyed 80 per cent of their natural habitat and killed thousands.

Deborah Tabart, chairman of Koala Foundation said they are functionally extinct She claimed the fires in NSW and QLD has destroyed 80 per cent of their habitat Ms Tabart estimated the fires have killed over 1000 koalas in the last two months.

It may be too late to save the beloved koala after bushfires wiped out their natural habitat and killed thousands of their population, an expert claims.

Deborah Tabart OAM, chairman of the Australian Koala Foundation, estimated over 1000 koalas may have been killed in the last two months from deforestation and bushfires.

She said this this left the marsupials 'functionally extinct'.

The bushfires that continue to devastate NSW and Queensland have also destroyed 80 per cent of the koala's natural habitat.

Sadly, even if koalas survive the bush fires, they are still at risk.

'Because of deforestation and now the bushfires, there is so little habitat left and trees with eucalyptus take months to grow back,' Ms Tabart said.

There may not be significant rain in 25 years, especially in the western parts of NSW, so their habitat will struggle to recover.

Ms Tabart urged the government to take action to protect koalas and has called on the Prime Minister to enact the Koala Protection act, which was written in 2016.

'They are equivalent to the Great Barrier Reef. Everyone wants to touch a koala, so you would think the government would want to do something to save them,' she said.

'The plight of the Koala now falls on the Prime Minister's shoulders.'

Ref: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7713561/Expert-claims-koalas-functionally-extinct-bushfires-destroy-80-cent-habitat.html?ito=social-facebook_Australia&fbclid=IwAR39q0b8MLZS1rljuSU-GXW1d7Q6j-pdWbooQBED52Ug91-6C-VrD9hLd-U

Cuts to Services?

AS NSW braced itself against the threat of further catastrophic bushfires across much of the State, it has been revealed that the Berejiklian Government made major cuts to the capital expenditure budgets of both Fire and Rescue NSW and the Rural Fire Service.

While different from the daily operating budgets of these services that pay for things such as firefighters' salaries, the capital expenditure budget is put toward the purchase of all manner of essential firefighting equipment such as fire trucks, helicopter water bombers and support ambulances.

Under the 2019-20 NSW State Budget, Fire and Rescue had its capital expenditure budget cut by \$28.5 million or 35 per cent. The Rural Fire Service has its capital expenditure budget cut by \$49.9 million or 75 per cent.

While some of these cuts can be attributed to big one-off purchases during the 2018-19 financial year such as a 737 firefighting aircraft, both the Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW now have smaller capital expenditure budgets than at times during 2016.

In terms of the budget of day to day operations of the Fire services, Fire and Rescue had its budget cut by \$12.9 million or 1.6% and the Rural Fire Service had its budget cut by \$26.7 million or 4.8%.

However, there is also one other key pillar of fire fighting that has also been hit by the budget cuts of the NSW Coalition Government: the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Ref: <https://independentaustralia.net/article-display/gladys-berejiklian-slashes-fire-service-budgets-while-nsw-burns,13307#.XcseDcSylFE.facebook>

In the 2016-17 budget, \$121 million was cut from NSW national parks and according to the NSW Public Service Association that resulted in about 100 ranger jobs being lost.

In the latest NSW budget, \$80 million is being cut from the department that oversees parks.

In a statement to the ABC, the NSW Government said those cuts would come through more efficient work practices in the department.

Ref: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-06/national-parks-underfunded-former-ranger-warns/11282562>

While the Billy Boils

When I go jogging I hate to run with others. I love to meander, choose a street here, a pathway there, drift along and eventually return to the place from where I started. In the bush I can also have this infuriating habit. I want to clamber up to explore a cliff edge, poke my nose into a nook and stop and watch a wasp drag a spider to its hole.

Now that behaviour is not quite appropriate for an organized bushwalk. I resist the urge – or become the leader and make it a sanctioned activity! Wandering off is not quite appropriate when the pleasure of others, when the timetables of others and, indeed, when the safety of others depends on a little more discipline.

In an organized group wandering off and poking heads into nooks and crannies can be infuriating and might end up getting a walker separated from his/her party. The leader is the person who sets the starting time - please remember that and arrive with spare time - , sets the break times and sets the end time. Those who opt to go on organized activities must accept this is the leader's right and restrict all those independent urges.

When I lead activities I try to do so from the front at the beginning of a walk, whatever the track conditions. It's my little way of setting an appropriate pace. Some might wish to walk faster but that's not the point. I could also probably walk faster. I am trying to set a pace so that decent places to stop, interesting features to view, etc arrive at appropriate times in the scheduled day. I am also trying to set a pace so that the slower members do not think they have just joined the bushwalking Olympic Games.

As the day proceeds, if on a clearly marked track, I might drift through the group and even walk at the tail. The designated "tail-end Charlie" often then moves to the front of the group. That way I can judge who is walking well, who is lagging, who has blisters and who needs to be told that the next rest spot is "just around the next corner". I can also get to know the whole group.

And, yes, there is a "tail-end Charlie". For those who want to drift behind and cannot because someone always seems to be there, that's the reason. So what to do when the urge to add some nitrogen to the soil gets the better of you? Well, tell the person at the end. The person will wait! Or, if you are in the midst of the walk, leave your pack fully visible on the track. The tail will wait till you emerge from behind that bush.

And at the front? What to do when there is a track junction? Stop! Wait for the party at those points. It is so easy to take the wrong option.

So let the leader lead and drift along. Enjoy the walk without the responsibility. Smell the smells, hear the sounds and enjoy the sights. But make sure you are still within sight of someone, front and back, on the conga line.

Brian Everingham

THE GREAT WEST WALK?

A review by James Moule

There has been some hype in recent months about a “new” walk through the western parts of Sydney, starting at Parramatta and finishing at Penrith. Copying the style of “The Great Ocean Walk” and “The Great North Walk”, the creators and local councils are calling it “The Great West Walk”. I decided to try a couple of sections in recent weeks. My conclusion: not great and hardly worth walking.

The section I walked started at Toongabbie and headed west through Seven Hills, Blacktown and Maryong. The day was humid with rain threatening.

This section is flat, except for the bridges over the railway line. The track mostly follows bicycle paths, so why bother walking? Ride a bike and get it over with quicker.

Parkland and sporting fields are connected by paths, often running alongside creeks which are in a disgusting condition, littered with dozens of shopping trolleys and the detritus of the surrounding population. There are a few highlights such as the duck pond at Seven Hills and the picnic areas west of Blacktown but the seemingly endless trekking through ugly streets is the impression that I will take away from the day.

The Great North Walk takes in beautiful sections of the northern suburbs and is mostly bush tracks, all the way to Newcastle. This route takes in some of the most impoverished streets in the greater Sydney area. Rarely was a fence not vandalised by moronic “tagging” and “art”.





There are signs every couple of kilometres, several even pointing in the right direction! Without the All Trails map, we would have had no hope of following the correct route.

If the councils who are promoting this walk want to attract people, they should first make the area presentable. In its current state, it reflects poorly on the people of western Sydney.

The route map published online shows that there are toilet facilities along the way but, of course, they were all locked. (“We couldn't leave them open because they might get vandalised, then no-one would be able to use them.”) Fortunately, the toilets on the railway stations were open.

My mood was not improved as my Mongrel boots shed their soles (Mongrel by name, mongrel by nature) and left me with the usual blisters. It was a good excuse to bail out at Maryong after only 13 km.

BARGO RIVER, TAHMOOR CANYON AND MERMAIDS POOL

by James Moule

A bit over an hour south-west of Sydney, there are several rivers which lead to dams that supply Sydney, Wollongong and the towns in the area with water. One of the rivers that is not dammed is the Bargo River which flows eventually into the Nepean.

A few kilometres south-east of the Tahmoor shopping centre, there is a bridge on Rockford Road across the Bargo River. From the parking area at Potholes Reserve, there is a walk along the river which takes in a number of excellent swimming pools and the spectacular Tahmoor Canyon.



See-Through Pool

Access by public transport still entails a lot of walking so driving to the bridge and walking the loop is most convenient. There is another track called “The Bridging Track” that leads towards Tahmoor that adds several more kilometres of scenic country to your day.

The track was established over a period of 14 years by Robert Sloss, a keen walker but not a member of any conservation groups. Though now in his mid-80s, he continues to maintain the track which is mostly on crown land but also subject to a mining lease. Wollondilly Shire Council was aware of Robert's activities but offered no assistance, staff even removing his track markers from trees. More recently, the Council has seen the value of his work. They now plan to “establish a walking track”, even though a track has been there for more than 20 years!

The largest of the pools and a popular swimming spot is Mermaids Pool. There are several tracks, some used by cyclists but others that are quite rugged. Throughout the first half of the walk, there are many excellent lookouts.



Mermaids Pool through the smoke from recent fires.

The abundance of scats indicates the variety of wildlife in the area. We saw a swamp wallaby and there is a “koala tree”. Koalas and lyre birds were first sighted by Europeans in this area, hence the locality name “Pheasants Nest”, but rangers who have worked in the district for 25 years have told me that they have never seen a koala. There are yabbies in the river.

There had been severe fires around Tahmoor in the weeks preceding our visit and there was evidence of a fire at Rosies Pass. The trees and shrubs were red from the dye used by water bombers and the track shown on the map had been obliterated when a fire break was bulldozed.

There are plenty of pleasant places for lunch by the river. We chose one near Devil's Knee Waterfall in a precipitous part of Tahmoor Canyon. For the return walk, the Matilda Track offers more scenic views but the Old Loggers Track is a bit shorter though less interesting.

There are maps drawn by Robert Sloss in the Visitors Box at the top of Jack's Pass. He has also published walking guides to many other popular walking areas.

Taking the track at a leisurely pace, as befits our age, Esther and I completed the circuit of 11km in about 5 hours walking time. Though some sections used by cyclists are easy to walk, there are some challenging climbs, ladders and ropes, making it a Grade 3 walk.

Note that Robert Sloss wrote in response to the article by James that

I am puzzled by your reference to a ranger not finding any Koalas in the vicinity as I never seen a ranger in the vicinity in all the years I have walked there. I did find a tree with a special plate identifying it as a Koala being sited on it. This tree is located between Mermaids pool and See thru pool on the western side. I believe it may have been a university researcher. I have started this year to record on a GPS the trees with Koala scratches but I intend to re-start mapping after the fire hazard period and the trees have new bark. I have seen Lyre Birds where the fire brigade bulldozed over the walking track.

I have not walked through the Canyon since last July but I will do it again soon to check out for weeds.

Back in the 1920-30 period there was a trust to manage the Mermaid's pool reserve and I have found the road access they made as it is still recognisable but I have never revealed its presence as the 4wd vehicles would soon trash the terrain. It would require 300m of steel fencing along Rockford road to stop them penetrating it.

I have managed to restore 500m of bush track on the bridging track; 3 by 2 hour work periods and have another 1km to go. The historic tracks at Jade Lake and Balmoral will be next. I may be 90 in 2026?

News about our Parks

I guess you could say that most of the staff has been totally consumed with the fire season!

As of January 28th the situation is as follows:-

Current active fire overview

There are currently 60 wildfires burning in NSW

28 of these fires started on NPWS tenure.

48 of these fires are relevant to NPWS (i.e. fires that have burnt National Park tenure or where NPWS resources have been deployed).

The majority of these fires are under the control of the RFS. There are 17 fires under NPWS control.

NPWS has 236 firefighters and 106 incident management team staff fighting fires; 342 NPWS staff in total. Updated 16:30 Tuesday 28 January.

Current active area burnt: 2,913,736 hectares are currently affected by active fires across NSW, including 1,689,630 hectares of National Park tenure (58% of the area burnt by active fires is on National Park).

Fire Season overview (1 July to January 28th)

Year to date area burnt: Approximately 5,357,602 hectares has been burnt since 1 July 2019 across NSW, including 2,688,709 hectares of National Park (50% of the total area burnt is on National Park)

For members walking in our national parks be aware that there are closures. Check <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/alerts/alerts-list>

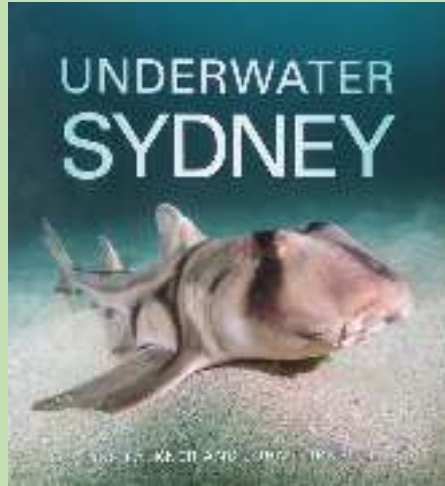
You can also check air quality monitoring at <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/air/current-air-quality/special-projects-monitoring>

And for the many members worried about our wildlife and need support go to <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/native-animals/helping-wildlife-in-emergencies>

Note that many animals can only survive a matter of days without water. You can help a range of native animals by giving them a safe supply of clean water, changed daily to prevent the spread of disease. Never add electrolytes or sugar to the water as it can be harmful. But also check the following to see what NPWS is doing: <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/about-npws/fire-recovery-2020>

Book Review

Book Review: *Underwater Sydney* by Inke Falkner (text) and John Turnbull (photographs and captions), 158pp; CSIRO Publishing, 2019



This is much more than a guide to fish and other marine organisms of Sydney harbour and nearby locations. The authors are both marine ecologists with much experience in educational outreach and relationships between society and the marine world and take a holistic view on ensuring the reader understands the nature of relationships between organisms in the diverse habitats discussed and humans' role in maintaining their sustainability.

A substantial part of the book covers the dominant interrelationships between species in the major habitats of Sydney Harbour and beyond, from intertidal rocky shores to algal forests, sponge gardens, mangroves, beaches and seagrass meadows. The captions and text ring with a research-based truth supported by countless hours of underwater observations by the authors and many citizen scientists. The many references backing up the observations and conclusions represent a who's who of local researchers over a multi-decade period making this book as much theirs' as the authors.

Bizarre and unexpected observations of adaptations will add meaning for the snorkelers and divers who bob their heads beneath the surface of this biodiversity-rich harbour. Novel habitats, stories of ocean travellers especially those riding a warmer East Coast current southwards changing the nature of ecosystems provide a context for discussing current and future human-induced threats. The spectre of current-hitching nomadic fish from the tropical north damaging Sydney's kelp forests as is happening at the Solitary Islands was just one disturbing insight I got from this book.

Hope, though, is provided in the exhortation to the reader to enjoy the underwater experience, get involved and make a positive future for these waters happen - a goal of many who have fought over many years for a Sydney Marine Park that promises to protect the beauties beneath the waves.

Gary Schoer