



NEWSLETTER NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC

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SOUTHERN SYDNEY BRANCH

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In This Issue:

- Walks/Activities
- Costens Point
- While the Billy Boils: Map settings
- While the Billy Boils: Bearings
- Shark nets
- Wetlands in Dubai
- Royal National Park Draft POM
- Kamay 2020 Kurnell Master Plan

BUSINESS MEETINGS All are welcome to attend, have your say and hear what's happening in the NPA. Contact Brian on 0419260236 or Gary on 95701813 for details. These meetings are now held on either the 1st or 2nd Monday of the month.

BRANCH MEETINGS:

The next meeting will be held on 25th November via Zoom.

We are still assessing plans for 2021. Do let us know your preferences!

Free event. See details on the following page

And, most importantly, keep an eye out for the latest information on the draft plan of management for Royal/Heathcote/Garawarra that is due for release in early December

Walks/Activities

On November 25th the Southern Sydney Branch will host all members and guests in a Zoom meeting to hear Greg Steenbeeke, an ecologist with expertise in NSW vegetation and threatened species, discusses orchids in the Australian bush. Details are:

Join Zoom Meeting from 7.00pm. When you do that you will be admitted by the host and be able to see and hear a brilliant presentation. Greg is my go-to expert on all matters relating to orchids!



<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81398467370>

And let's face it, those orchids have been having a wonderful time this season! For those tracking our bushwalks in and around the State of NSW there has been great excitement about the variety and numbers of orchids in flower. Early on, through winter and early autumn, there were many reports of various species of Greenhoods (*Pterostylis*). There were also many discussions about the various *Caladenia* species and on and on It has indeed been special.

But don't take my word for it. Tune in and hear Greg tell us more about the fascinating life of orchids, of their weird sex life and their role in our ecosystem!



At this stage the Branch is still considering whether we continue with face-to-face meetings in 2021 as was our previous method of operation, or to hold general meetings via Zoom instead. It would be good to hear your views on the matter. On the one hand it is lovely to meet in person, to shake hands, have a cuppa and chat before and after a presentation. On the other hand, it is sometimes a comfort to know you just travel from your loungeroom to

your computer, with PJs and slippers in place, and a glass of wine in your hand. From the Branch perspective we know we can reach more people via Zoom and we can also get speakers from all over Australia so possibly we are also enriching our program as well!

The editor (Brian) is also making an editorial decision to no longer list our walks activities here. Most who go walking with us receive the regular NPA bushwalking bulletins that carry all the Branch activities and more and that bulletin also carries all the short walk notices.

Those short walk notices are becoming more important to the program so if you are not getting the short walks notices make sure you get your name on that list! Especially over summer there will be short walk notices, tailored to suit the weather! I know that I, for one, will be adding late notices during January and February in response to weekly weather forecasts.



Costens Point

In lieu of a list of future walks I thought I'd add short notes of walks done. This one was completed on September 7th and covered about 5km, with side trips, plus about 100m ascent. It included some scrambling but also lots and lots of history.

Let us begin this short but attractive adventure and given where we were heading, perhaps we go back in time to when a few people were setting up shelters from which to fish, eat, sleep and store their supplies. Some even took up residence, including Charles Gogerly (1854), William Costen (1858) and George Simpson (1863). The track we took was to Costens Point. Costen had arrived in Sydney in 1844, aged 14, along with his mother and five siblings. In 1857 he married an Irish lass, Ann Rogers, and in 1858 he was granted 25 acres at Red Jacks Point (the next big point to the east), He sold that in 1869 and in 1870 was granted a further 40 acres at Costens Point.

While Costen lived here he used the site to careen and repair vessels, process lime from shell grit, fish and cut timber. He may have even been in the sly grog business. Well, he was Irish! When Ann died in 1881 it would appear that Costen left it and it was then subdivided and in private hands until the NPWS resumed it in the 1970s.

If you look at the Port Hacking map (1:25000) the subdivision shows that there were seventeen thin and long blocks of land. All face west, or towards Warumbul. None were down on the actual Costens Point itself. And while the map shows two dwellings (block one from the north and block 14) the evidence suggests that there were more structures than just those two at one stage.



While the Billy Boils - Map Setting

I know it is an old stereotype but have you ever wondered about those people who sit in the car and twist the street directory around to face the way you are driving in order to tell you whether to turn left or right? You know the sort: the ones who like to have a map facing in the right direction.

Well, strictly speaking, of course, it is not necessary; but it sure can be useful when using a map out in the field. It gives you a greater sense of comfort when you are deciding just where you happen to be.



When starting out orient yourself – it helps when you are on the coast!

There are two obvious ways to do this. The first is easy. Just select some obvious points you recognise and you can see. Turn the map so that the objects on the map are lined up with those on the ground. The map is now set. We call this orienting the map, by the way.

Generally, of course, you are not in such a location where you can do that. In order to orient by sight, you would need to be on a prominent position with a good line of sight and be able to see other recognisable features. But what if you are under tree cover, down on a meandering creek, unsure where you might be?

This time you orient the map by compass. It is more accurate, in any case. Just place the compass on the map over the magnetic variation diagram with the compass axis along the

magnetic north line. Now just rotate the map and compass until the compass needle points directly along that axis. Yes, that is all you need to do. The map is oriented. Well, that is all there is to it unless you happened to do all this by sitting the map and compass on the bonnet of your car. That iron can play all types of tricks: or, if you are unlucky, while sitting in an area in the bush affected by ironstone, etc.



Indeed, why not orient the map at several locations! It seems to me that there is a lot of sense in checking regularly.

And for those who are navigating, in wild country, do so with your party. Not only are you giving them invaluable experience; you are opening your own judgement to scrutiny. That way you are less likely to make errors.

Now we have oriented maps it is time to stop, look around and put previous advice into action. You will remember I advised you to learn how to read the landscape before you attempted to read a map. Now have a look around. Not only should you be reading the landscape now; you should be soaking in what that landscape looks like on the map in front of you. You should be feeling quite comfortable about those contours, the shapes they make on your map and what they look like before you. You can even see the ridge lines that demand a climb and the hill sides that scream out “do not go here”. It is all coming together.

Yes, that Xmas present of an NPA membership one year ago has sure led to the acquisition of a lot of additional skills. It is even leading to a massive growth in confidence. Next time we will plan a cross country navigation exercise. In the meantime, do tell me how you are going.

Brian Everingham

While the Billy Boils - Bearings

Many walkers, bushwalkers, have a collection of maps and they grow to fill all kinds of spaces. By now, as you walk your way through the year, perhaps your first year in the NPA, you, too, have acquired several such maps, though I am aware many of you rely on your mobile phones and other various apps. Call me old-fashioned but I do love a map!

If you have been following this column for some time, you have also been opening them, looking at them, imagining the landscape and even beginning to see the potential walks. Ah, the beauty of maps! I confess, I can stare at them and be there. In my mind's eye, I can see that pass, imagine the route down that ridge and feel the grass under my feet as I select a campsite on the river bend. When I am old and infirm, I suspect those maps will enable me to have virtual overnight bushwalks, bringing back the smell of a brewed cuppa, the sounds of a dawn chorus.

In preparation for those walks, real or virtual, it is wise to get some idea of the direction to take, the compass readings that will be needed in the field. We will need our bearings.

A bearing is an angle, measured clockwise, that a line makes with a fixed zero line. And for our convenience, our zero happens to be north! Bearings to the east of that line will be between any angle between 0 degrees and 180 degrees. Those to the west will be between 180 degrees and 360 degrees.

Now you will remember that I said that there are three north points on our maps: True North (that's the one that runs through the North Pole!), Magnetic North (the one our compass will align to when we take it into the field and the one that varies slightly from year to year and from point to point) and Grid North (the one that I said your topographic maps were aligned to, when we looked at all those grid lines).

So, with that in mind, if you are working with a gridded map, all bearings plotted from the map are Grid Bearings and not true bearings. We will have to learn to adjust to that!

Beginning with the map, let's get a protractor. Yes, your Silva compass does have one built in! To measure the bearing from point X to point Y, use a straight edge to draw a faint pencil line between the two points. Then, place the protractor on the map and position it so that the centre point is directly over point X and north line is pointing to grid north. In other words, make sure your protractor straight line is parallel to the eastings. The bearing line can be then read off the graduated edge where the pencil line meets it.

Now the angle between the Magnetic North and Grid North line at any place is the magnetic variation for that particular place and on your topographic map you will have that information in the key. There is also a correction note for each year since the map was published that will be taken into account.

Given that today we have begun with the map and we are converting our work to use in the field, we are going to convert a grid bearing to a magnetic bearing. If your grid bearing is, for example, 85 degrees and the magnetic variation is, for example, 10 degrees, you would take

the 10 from 85 and get a magnetic bearing of 75 degrees. When we take our map and compass into the field, we would follow a line of 75 degrees!

Oh, and when returning along the same line ... add 180!!!!!!



You know, somehow, I think we need another article on bearings and compasses before we get out into the wilderness. For now, practise at home and continue to follow walking tracks and/or your NPA leader. But sneak up and watch while he/she is navigating and don't be afraid to speak your mind, share your thoughts or ask questions.

Brian Everingham

An Olearia returns



Photo: RogerLembit

A taste of today's work. The rare upper Blue Mountains endemic Oak-leaved Daisy Bush (*Olearia quercifolia*) now flowering in a burnt swamp on the edge of the Newnes Plateau

Shark Nets

Shark nets cause controversy wherever they are placed and many questions whether the effectiveness is worth the pain, suffering and death of not only sharks, but other marine creatures as well.

Shark nets are submerged off beaches in NSW and Queensland to apparently help keep swimmers safe.

Are we actually keeping our beaches safe or are we killing thousands of vulnerable and endangered sea animals?

I strongly believe that the removal of shark nets will be beneficial for all Marine creatures.

Over the last few months, I'm sure you have seen that migrating whales have been getting trapped.



Grey Nurse Sharks - Photo Mike Scotland

In June a whale entangled in shark nets on the Gold Coast died despite rescue attempts. A month later a mother whale was seen desperately trying to free her distressed calf. There has been much talk, especially of recent, that shark nets need to be removed now but if not permanently especially during whale migration time.

Bycatch is a major problem for shark nets! By catch is when unwanted fish and other marine creatures are trapped in these shark nets.

Here are a few facts from just five shark nets in 2018:

- 420 animals caught
- very few were released alive
- 8 dolphins killed
- 9 turtles killed
- more than 100 Ray's killed
- 34 protected hammer heads (not targeted) killed

Although many marine creatures can be successfully released from shark nets many are left with short- or long-term injuries. This includes gill lacerations making it hard to breath, loss of fins making it hard to swim, permanent damage to the mouth making it hard to catch and eat prey.

Do shark nets actually save lives? It has not been proven that shark nets are saving lives.

I'm not talking about netted pools that provide a safe enclosure for swimmers, I'm talking about shark nets that are 150m long and suspend 500m off shore. Sharks can swim over, under and around them.

When did you last hear off a swimmer being attacked or killed by a shark?

It is majority spear fisherman or surfers who are usually out at dawn and dusk which is shark feeding time.

I believe we can achieve better protection for beach goers by using the money we put into shark nets towards more lifeguards, beach patrolling helicopters, drones and other environmentally friendly equipment.

The nets need to be continually maintained.

They are not 100% percent shark proof.

They kill thousands of other marine creatures.

They are a waste of money.

People are risking their lives to release all the marine creatures.

I strongly believe they should be removed. I call them "killer curtains" they do more harm than good.

Darcy Meikle

Aged 10

Wetlands in Dubai

In case you get sick of shopping when stopping off in Dubai en route to somewhere else, you can always visit a wetland! That's if we are allowed to travel again! There are two in the United Arab Emirates. On our recent trip through Dubai to Europe we visited the Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary. It is a Ramsar site¹. That means that it is a wetland of international significance. Note that the Ramsar Convention is 50 years old in 2021 and this is the first of a series of articles to celebrate that date!

The Convention on Wetlands came into force for the United Arab Emirates on 29 December 2007. The United Arab Emirates presently has 2 sites designated as a Wetland of International Importance, with a surface area of 13,020 hectares. The other site is called Wadi Wurayah National Park.



Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary. 29/08/07; Dubai; 620 ha; 25°11'30"N 055°19'20"E. It is officially designated as a National Protected Area. It is located at the end of the 14 km-long Dubai creek within the northern part of the Emirate of Dubai. "A rare site in the arid Gulf region, this natural coastal wetland consists of low-lying saline flats, lagoon, intertidal mud and sand flats and mangrove swamps that serve as an important habitat for more than 450 species of fauna and 47 species of flora"². I suspect it was part of a much larger wetland that has since been resumed for the massive expansion of this burgeoning city.

¹ Ramsar Site no. 1715

² http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-pubs-annolist-annotated-ramsar-15830/main/ramsar/1-30-168%5E15830_4000_0

During winter, it regularly supports more than 20,000 waterbirds belonging to 67 species and acts as a critical staging ground for migratory waterbirds along the East African-West Asian Flyway. A number of globally threatened species such as the Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* and Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* are seen in the area; more than 3,000 Greater Flamingoes *Phoenicopterus ruber* have been counted, and more than 1% of the regional population of Broad-billed Sandpipers *Limicola falcinellus* migrate through in autumn and spring.

Located in the heart of Dubai city, the site receives an average of 10,000 visitors annually and could become a valuable conservation and educational centre. Mind you, local taxi drivers do not know the way to the site and there are no bus stops closer than 5km away. Be prepared to walk. A visitor centre that will serve as the Regional Centre for Excellence in Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) is planned with the goal of promoting awareness of wetland ecosystems and wetland management in the Arab region but at this stage there are just two bird hides and they have few facilities³. There are no toilets on site. The two bird hides are some distance apart, as well, and there is no internal access from one hide to the other.⁴



Flamingos at Ras Al Khor

Despite the drawbacks, the site is worth visiting and it is pleasing that there is at least some understanding of the need to protect nature in this small part of the Middle East.

³ The UAE submitted a detailed report to the latest COP of the Ramsar Convention and this can be accessed at <http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/cop11/nr/cop11-nr-uae.pdf>

⁴ http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-pubs-annolist-annotated-ramsar-15830/main/ramsar/1-30-168%5E15830_4000_0



Hoopoe at Dubai Creek



Bird Hide at Ras Al Khor

Bird List - Dubai

1. Little Cormorant *
2. Great Cormorant
3. Grey Heron
4. Little Egret
5. Intermediate Egret
6. Great Egret
7. Greater Flamingo *
8. Mallard
9. Marsh Harrier
10. Partridge sp
11. Black-winged Stilt
12. Kentish Plover *
13. Red-wattled Plover *
14. Redshank
15. Common Sandpiper
16. Curlew
17. Black-headed Gull
18. Lesser Black-backed Gull
19. Common Tern
20. Rock Dove
21. Collared Dove
22. Palm Dove *
23. Bee-eater *
24. Ring-necked Parakeet
25. Hoopoe
26. Crested Lark *
27. White Wagtail
28. White-eared Bulbul *
29. Red Vented Bulbul
30. House Sparrow
31. Common Myna
32. White Vented Myna
33. Asian Pied Starling
34. House Crow



White Eared Bulbuls

Community Engagement to better plan the management of our national park system

Royal National Park

Go to <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-management/community-engagement/royal-national-park>

Royal is suffering from overuse. There were over 6 million visits to Royal National park in 2018, putting it in the top two most visited parks in New South Wales. Limited travel to other locations has only put more pressure on this much-loved park.

Recently, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has seen a significant and sustained increase in visitors coming to Royal National Park to enjoy the beaches, lagoons and waterfalls, especially on sunny weekends and holidays.

While some of the responses to this use (and occasionally abuse) is a management response and while that is impacted by resourcing some of it is also due to good planning and a new draft plan of management will soon be released. We would love you to respond to that new plan when it is open for public comment.

Issues will include:

- Protection of the vast biodiversity of the parks
- Acknowledging connections between Aboriginal people and Country
- Management of increasing visitor numbers to ensure safe and enjoyable visitor experiences
- Managing recreational issues through a zoning strategy
- Providing a range of visitor experiences, including expansion of the mountain bike network and improved camping and visitor facilities.

A separate Mountain Biking Plan has been prepared. It is recommended that the reader refers to this document for specific details on mountain biking. The draft Mountain Biking Plan, draft Plan of Management and draft Planning Considerations report will be exhibited at the same time. This could be contentious and you will be assured your Branch will be making detailed submissions. Equally, your voice needs to be heard.

Bonnie Vale Campground

Planning for the remediation of the Bonnie Vale campground is underway. It is a complex issue due to asbestos but if you wish to follow the details go to

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-management/community-engagement/royal-national-park/closure-of-bonnie-vale-campground>

Kamay 2020

There is currently a consultation over the master plan for the Kurnell precinct. Note that the intention is to increase recognition of Aboriginal significance and help ensure balanced story-telling includes both Aboriginal and European history.

The Kamay Botany Bay National Park, Kurnell Master Plan aims to improve visitor facilities, support an increase in visitor capacity and enhance the Kurnell Precinct of Kamay Botany Bay National Park as 'a place of significance to all Australians that contributes to their sense of identity as Australians'. Does this match your interests or would you like a more significant focus on its natural heritage values?

Indeed, there are three options being considered. You can download those from the following site:

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-management/community-engagement/kamay-botany-bay-national-park-public-consultation/major-infrastructure-works>

National Parks and Wildlife Service has engaged 3 leading architects to develop the conceptual layouts shown in the Master Plan into design options for the new Visitor Centre and major precinct infrastructure improvements. These design options build upon the themes established by the Master Plan and take into consideration new information relating to bushfire risk and the site's sensitive environmental and archaeological values.

They would like to invite your comments and feedback on these concept designs.

What design do you prefer?

What features do you like?

How well does each design align with the ambitions of the Master Plan?

Comments close at 5.00pm, 4 December 2020.