



# Killcare Wagstaffe Trust

## Newsletter

**April 2018**

Annual General Meeting

Sunday May 6th at 9.30 am  
at the Maitland Bay Information Centre.

All visitors and residents are welcome

Guest speaker. TBA

### **Fox Baiting**

After hearing rumours that NPWS was considering removing the funding for fox baiting in Bouddi national park, a decision was taken at the February general meeting to write a letter to the Minister seeking clarification. Mark Attwooll and Jon Charles wrote the letter

We have received correspondence from the NPWS that the fox baiting will continue and we understand that this decision represents a change of heart prompted by the enquiry by the ministers office.

The fox baiting by the both National Parks and the Council has been responsible for the return of many small and large mammals in our area. Particularly noticeable has been the increase in swamp wallaby sightings and bandicoot scrapings.

The program will run from the 31st May to the 25th July.

### **Meeting with Mayor**

At the last general meeting the committee expressed dissatisfaction with our relationship with the current council. Correspondence has not been answered and early signs that the council was taking its regulatory role more seriously have not resulted in better outcomes. A decision was taken to seek a meeting with the new mayor.

Committee reps meet with the mayor and senior council staff on the 19th of March . We had ample opportunity to have our say and, while we are not holding our breath for radical changes in the way that development proposals are approved, we at least have some other avenues to have our concerns about local planning issues heard and responded to.

One great outcome from the meeting was that Deb Holloman was asked to apply to be on the recently reconstituted COSS committee. We understand that she has been accepted. The Coastal Open Space System (COSS), in operation since 1984, consists of over 70 natural reserves which are set aside for plants and animals, nature-based recreation and to preserve the bushland character of Gosford. Permanent preservation of these lands is uncertain mainly due to it being unique to the old Gosford Council. It

has proved very difficult to get the State Government to agree on a E5 zoning which would enshrine protection. However the fact that the committee, which had been disbanded by the last Council, will be back in operation means that there will at least be some oversight and possibly some expansion of this important community resource.

## Mosquitoes on Bouddi Peninsula

This summer we had another of those periodic spikes in mosquito numbers on the peninsula. Mosquitoes are annoying and can also be carriers of disease. They have always been prevalent in this area, especially in late summer and early autumn and some years are worse than others.

It would be interesting to know how the Aboriginal people who lived here for thousands of years coped with mosquitoes. The shell middens and engravings at the Daleys Point site indicate that they collected food from Cockle Bay and camped on the ridge above. One of the first European observers (Collins) reported that Aboriginal people had smeared fat and oil on their skin and he believed this was to protect them from mosquitoes.

Mosquitoes in this area pose only a minimal risk of disease. The mosquito monitoring program conducted by NSW Health at Killcare Heights and Empire Bay has not detected any carrying Ross River virus and only very occasional detection of Barmah Forest virus. These are the most common mosquito borne viral diseases in Australia. Both are debilitating but not fatal and the infection rates are low.

Although this monitoring has detected about 15 species of mosquitoes, only 2 species occur in appreciable numbers - the Saltmarsh Mosquito (*Ochlerotatus vigilax*) and the domestic container mosquito (*Ochlerotatus notoscriptus*). It is the Saltmarsh mossie that spikes in numbers.

Between the Liberty and the Empire Bay turnoff, the Cockle Bay Wetlands and Nature Reserve are a hidden gem. The best access is on the track opposite Empire Bay Primary school behind the interpretation board. The Nature Reserve was established in 1992 to protect "the most important areas of unspoilt wetland within the Brisbane Water area".

Most significant are its saltmarshes. Saltmarshes are globally threatened and have been declared an endangered ecological community in NSW. They contain a unique flora, provide habitat for migratory birds and a rich feeding area for fish. The Reserve is home to threatened species: in addition to the 6 vulnerable species of microbat there are yellow-bellied gliders, squirrel gliders, the eastern chestnut mouse, regent honeyeaters, osprey and the bush-stone curlew.



Cockle Bay Saltmarsh



Saltmarsh is a vegetation community that lies just above the mean high tide mark. It is dominated by hardy, salt tolerant plants such as Samphire. It is inundated only occasionally by the high spring tides and in the meantime it dries out, concentrating the salt to levels that even mangroves can't tolerate. (See <http://www.killcarewagstaffetrust.org.au/saltmarsh-and-mangroves.html> for more info)



*The Saltmarsh Mosquito*

The female saltmarsh mosquito lays its eggs on drying soil and at the base of vegetation on the edge of depressions in the saltmarsh. These then dry and become dormant. A couple of king tides at the right time floods the saltmarsh leaving the pools of water that the mosquito larvae need to survive. Heavy rain can also provide the necessary pools. Although the breeding occurs in Cockle Bay and Empire Bay it appears the adults head for the hills and spread across the Bouddi peninsula.

There have been plenty of studies that have documented mosquitoes in the diet of a range of animals such as fish, frogs, lizards, birds and bats. The importance of mosquitoes in the diets of these animals is uncertain. What is certain, however, is that these animals are an integral part of that important ecological community.

After each spike in mosquito numbers there is always some discussion about mosquito control. Council has examined the options from time to time. The serious contenders are problematic. A bacterium (Bti) that disrupts the gut of the larvae can be sprayed over the wetlands. This is very expensive and has to be done within a very short window of time so has a high failure rate. Another biochemical method is to spray methoprene that disrupts the growth of all insect larvae. It is toxic to fish and other aquatic life.

There have been some spectacularly misguided attempts at mosquito control. During the 1940's the government spread the Mosquito Fish or Plague Minnow (*Gambusia holbrooki*), a native of North America, into as many east coast waterways as possible as a control agent for mosquitoes. It didn't work and now this fish is recognised as an aggressive and voracious predator. Research has documented its impact on fish, invertebrates and frogs including a link to the decline of the Green and Golden Bell Frog (*Litoria aurea*).

*Female 60mm*



*The Mosquito fish or Plague minnow*

*Male 35mm*



Some have even tried to use the mosquito numbers to argue for mangrove removal. Mosquitoes don't breed in the mangroves, unless they are very poorly drained, because the daily ebb and flow of the tide brings the fish that would feed on their larvae.

In the absence of any serious risk to health we feel that any attempts to interfere with the ecology of a protected area in order to reduce what is only a temporary irritation is unwise. We would campaign against any attempts to do so.

## **Maitland Bay Information Centre**

One of the Trust's important activities is keeping the Maitland Bay Information Centre open and managing the sale of publications. It is one of the very few volunteer run centres in the National Parks system. It is open for 8 hours on most weekends,

The volunteers do a great job in providing information about not only the Bouddi NP but also the whole peninsula. Last year there were 3300 visitors, which is a substantial increase on previous years. This year there were 101 visitors on Australia day alone, which is possibly a record for a single day.

If you would like to join the team contact Deb Holloman on 0404 082 817

## **Flannel Flower Track**

We have alerted the NPWS to the deteriorating state of the Flannel Flower track behind Wagstaffe. Erosion is occurring as a result of regular use of the track by cyclists, despite this activity being prohibited by National Parks. The deeply gouged track now channels water, causing erosion in heavy rains.

National Parks has informed us that remediation works have been planned for the next financial year.

## **Colourbond Fence on Wards Hill Rd.**

The colourbond fence erected on the boundary of No 49 Wards Hill Rd. has been contested by the Trust and the Community association (WTKCA). The fence was erected without a DA which was required under the rules for the E4 zoning. Complaints from the associations resulted in a request from Council to demolish it. In response the owner has applied for a building certificate, a process which doesn't allow for community consultation.

This is an ongoing issue. We will continue to campaign for the removal of the fence. Although the loss of visual amenity might be considered trivial, it is worth remembering the words of our founding President, Alan Strom, that the degradation of our area often takes the form of death by a thousand cuts - the accumulation of many, often small, bad planning decisions. We believe that allowing the fence to remain would be a good example of exactly that.