



RHHFFPS

Wallumetta

Newsletter of the Ryde-Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna
Preservation Society Inc.

Website: <http://rydehffps.org.au/>

Member of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC)
and founding member of the Powerful Owl Coalition

No. 305

APRIL

2024

We acknowledge the Wallumedegal, original inhabitants of the Ryde – Hunters Hill area.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

On Sunday 24 March the Parramatta River Catchment Group celebrated the 10 years since the start of its program 'Our Living River'. The vision was to make the Parramatta River swimmable again by 2025 and the celebration was at Bayview Park Canada Bay. This is the site of the latest swimming spot opened under the program.

The vision implied that if the river was swimmable again it would mean that its environmental health has been restored. There is more work to be done and more swim sites are planned with the swim site at Bedlam Bay Hunters Hill to be opened before long.

The Society actively participates in the PRCG and in particular in connection with biodiversity matters. The PRCG meets quarterly for reports and setting priorities on progress towards meeting its vision for the river. Information about the activities of the PRCG can be found on the website www.ourlivingriver.com.au

A major initiative getting underway is the River Bank Naturalisation and Planning Priority Corridors project. This aims to restore native vegetation in priority areas along the river bank and involves three stages. The first due for completion in June 2024 is to conduct a literature review, undertake riparian catchment mapping, and identify preliminary priority sites for restoration and to develop riparian planning controls/LEP clauses for member councils.

The second stage due for completion in June 2025 is to finalise planning policy and controls, conclude selection of riparian restoration project sites, develop concept designs, and coordinate approvals for the capital works program.

The third stage due for completion in June 2026 is to undertake capital works at priority sites.

The Society is participating in the project because river bank naturalisation is a high priority for biodiversity. Ten years of effort is coming to fruition and as evidenced by the river bank naturalisation project, the good work of the PRCG will need to continue for some time yet and is worthy of our continued support.

Frank Breen

President

In this issue:

- [President's Note](#)
- [Coming Events](#)
- [Past Events](#)
- [News from Field of Mars](#)
- [Wildlife](#)
- [Bushcare](#)
- [Visitor Centre](#)
- [The New Heart of Ryde](#)
- [Councils Race Climate Clock to Save Trees](#)
- [NCC – Verdant Energy](#)
- [Ban on Mining in NSW Coastal Waters](#)
- [Plastic Packaging](#)
- [Remove Microplastics from Drinking Water](#)
- [Fast Charging Batteries](#)
- [Membership](#)
- [Win a new rug!](#)
- [RHHFFPS Committee](#)

COMING EVENTS:

RYDE DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY (RDHS) MEETING – 10am SATURDAY 8 JUNE 2024

“History of the Field of Mars Reserve” – talk by Kelvin Ward, early Secretary of RHHFFPS

On the Saturday after World Environment Day, the RDHS monthly meeting will be held in the Field of Mars Environmental Education Centre. It will feature a talk about the formation and early activities of RHHFFPS and its members from our early years in the 1960s. You will also learn how the Field of Mars Reserve’s bushland was almost lost forever!

In addition to the RDHS, all RHHFFPS members are welcome to attend.

A barbecue-and-salad lunch will be provided at the Visitor Centre afterwards.

WILDFLOWER WALKS – Sunday 21 July

We have become accustomed to great displays of wildflowers in the Reserve and these are usually at their best during July! Guided walks will be led by Society members; more details will be notified in the June edition of Wallumetta, and by email closer to the date.

BIRD WALKS – Sunday 25 August

Our resident expert Cathy Goswell will lead these walks, departing from the Visitor Centre at 8.30am and 10.30am.

PRE-ELECTION FORUM – Saturday 31 August

With local government (Council) elections being held on 14 September, we plan to hold one of our traditional forums for candidates to expound their ambitions to achieve and support positive environmental outcomes.

MUSIC ON MARS – Sunday 22 September - back by popular acclaim!

PAST EVENTS:

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY Sunday 3 March 2024



Led by Alfred Vincent, our Society held a successful private Clean Up Australia Day event, with our team of members clearing rubbish from Buffalo Creek and its adjacent shores.

Meanwhile, the nearest public site was managed once again by 1st East Ryde Scout Group, with over 40

members and others who cleared 20 bags of rubbish – mostly plastic wrapping and bottles – from around Magdala Park and the Lane Cove River Walk between Epping Road and Sugarloaf.

*Photos by Evelyn, Waste@Ryde (City of Ryde Council)
Published with permissions from members and parents.*

RHHFFPS AGM

This was held on Saturday 16 March at the Field of Mars Visitor Centre. Our annual reports were presented, and afternoon tea served afterwards. The winning prize-winning ticket was drawn in our raffle – see more details on the last page.



NEWS FROM THE FIELD OF MARS

Our committee has had further consultations with City of Ryde Council staff, about the proposed pathway from the Buffalo Creek footbridge to the Visitor Centre veranda. Plans for this are now being finalised. It seems likely that it will come at bridge level to the vehicle access road, and a separate path may be constructed to lead directly out to the road from the accessible toilet (on the western side of the Visitor Centre), with levels adjusted to remove the step by the veranda.

There was some minor flood damage to the tracks in upper areas of the Reserve during summer rainstorms, but bushcare volunteers cleared away fallen trees and debris to keep the tracks open.

WILDLIFE

The usual birdlife has continued to roam around the Visitor Centre with ducks, turkeys and ibis being commonly seen. And wildflowers have enjoyed the mix of hot, dry and wet weather in summer.

Correction: the first photo in page 3 of the February Wallumetta was incorrect. The plant shown in the photo was *Scaevola ramosissima*. Here is Pamela's *Patersonia sericea* photo:



Glades Bay Owls

Some residents in the vicinity are objecting to the bushes planted in the Glades Bay Road Reserve as part of the City of Ryde's 'Protecting Trees With Hollows' project undertaken in 2021. Community feedback is sought on the "**Restoration of Glades Bay Road Reserve at Ross Street**" project which has protected native plants, native animals, and their habitat, whilst still providing recreation opportunities for the local community.

Society members have been active in promoting the planting and growth of native trees and shrubs in this area, and we encourage you to undertake the online survey to support the City of Ryde Council's efforts with this project. We need to protect this valuable nesting area.

Please do the survey by following this link: <https://www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/HaveyourSay/Have-Your-Say/Restoration-of-Glades-Bay-Road-Reserve-at-Ross-Street> - deadline is 2 April.

BUSHCARE

All volunteer sites within the Field of Mars Reserve are now back in full operation, weather permitting. A recent fortnight of dry weather made weeding a little more difficult, but the return of rain has been welcome to soften the soil and promote growth of desirable species. Where riparian areas are cleared – particularly at the Monash Road site – there is often very quick colonization by native species of *Sigesbeckia* and *Persicaria*. Both are annual plants which grow prolifically with the effect of discouraging return of undesirable weeds. They may also choke out native seedlings, so in some places they are considered to be Australian native weeds!

VISITOR CENTRE

Society members Karen and Lyn have been busy cleaning and tidying our resources in the centre and we thank them for their efforts. There has, however, been a recent disappointment with the computer kiosk no longer working. We are currently investigating its repair or replacement.

JOIN OUR VISITOR CENTRE TEAM! to keep the Visitor Centre open 9am-5pm on weekends and public holidays. Our roster of 4-hour shifts is negotiated according to members' availability. No specialised skills are required, and Alfred happily provides the training needed.

Most visitors' questions are answered in the maps and range of free leaflets we have available.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO "THE NEW HEART OF RYDE"?

Completed in 1964, the Ryde Civic Centre was a landmark strategically placed on Hatton's Flat – a hilltop near Top Ryde Regional Shopping Centre. It was a classic example of 1960s architecture, with a glass curtain design and external walls of red texture brick. The original plan was for it to be flanked by a town hall on one side, and a library building on the other. In 1972 the Ryde Civic Hall was built, with the library accommodated on the lower level of the same building. Over the years, with increasing demands for Workplace Health and Safety compliance, the buildings were modified but it eventually became clear that the library did not comply with modern standards; in particular emergency evacuation from the lower level was very restricted.



The whole complex – civic centre building, hall and library – was closed down in 2016, with safety and maintenance issues being the official reason. Initial plans were to redevelop the site as high-rise apartment buildings, with council offices and facilities on the lower levels, but these were strongly opposed by residents of Ryde. This led to "The New Heart of Ryde" proposal for the Civic Centre site with the Civic Centre and Civic Hall demolished to make way for a new entirely publicly owned complex without any residential development. The space was to house public meeting rooms, offices, childcare facilities, commercial and retail facilities, a plaza and open space, on-site parking and Council chambers. Community consultation of the project found 85% of respondents supported the project, and the \$110 million project was tendered to Taylor Construction Group in January 2020.

With a change of some councillors following elections in 2021, the political persuasion of the City of Ryde Council also changed. There were further delays and issues, culminating in the resignation of the contractor... but by then the existing buildings had already been demolished.

There has been much recent discussion and speculation in radio, television and newspaper media, and reportedly the issue is in the hands of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

It is now claimed that finance earmarked for the development does not exist or is insufficient, and the latest proposal is to spend millions of dollars (reports vary between \$4m and \$14 m), to fill the hole which has remained undeveloped and closed to the public. It is alleged that the water sitting in the excavated area is now a breeding place for mosquitoes.

Editor's Comment: If this amount of money is to be spent, we believe there should be many preferable solutions considered. One would be to turn the area into a passive recreation area featuring a small lake planted out with Australian native water plants and stocked with suitable



fish, which would take care of insect larvae; and surrounding this, there could be grasses, native shrubs and trees which would require relatively low maintenance. Members of the public could then enjoy access to the area until the proposed buildings are afforded.

Photo by Anthony Segart published in The Sydney Morning Herald November 8, 2023, in article: "This civic centre is a hole in the ground. Council needs \$113m to fill it."

STREAMWATCH

City of Ryde Bushcare, in conjunction with Sydney Water, monitors the water quality of local waterways including Buffalo Creek and Strangers Creek. Bushcare groups have been monitoring near their sites on a monthly basis, using testing kits supplied by Streamwatch. The tests include (but are not confined to) turbidity, acidity/alkalinity, and content of chemicals and suspended organic matter. The photo shows Society members and City of Ryde Natural Areas Project Officer checking out a new kit.



COUNCILS IN RACE AGAINST CLIMATE CLOCK TO SAVE TREES

From an article by Anthony Segart, published 5 March 2024 in the Sydney Morning Herald – p.29

In a response to rapidly increasing urban heat, local councils are adopting new tree management policies to save old trees from destruction and increase tree coverage.

Trees that provide shade and shelter can reduce surrounding temperatures by up to two degrees.

A spokesperson for Georges River Council said its revised tree management policy is drafted “with a renewed focus on the enhancement and management of trees to facilitate the delivery of council’s adopted 40 per cent urban canopy target.” The new policy focuses on increasing the number of trees on private property, since “the outlined canopy target cannot be reached by increasing canopy cover on public land alone.”

Mayor Sam Elmir said: “We really value protecting our local flora and fauna. We believe that this Significant Tree Register is a step in the right direction to safeguarding Georges Rivers’ trees from any adverse impacts that may be caused by the urban environment.”

Most councils have also created significant tree registers – lists of trees in their LGAs that have unique cultural, historical, aesthetic or environmental value.

Trees on Randwick City Council’s Significant Tree Register may only be removed or significantly pruned after development consent is given by Council, in addition to regular tree permits.

Woollahra Council adopted a register two years ago, amending one it has had since 1991. Their document says, “In recognising the municipality’s Significant Trees, meaning can be brought to the past, allowing a richer understanding of the present. The concept of heritage is always changing with time, and the way people interact and assign value to their surrounding environment.”

The City of Sydney, one of the few councils to have an interactive registry available online, has 2674 trees listed as significant and worthy of protection.

Foresight is required when considering what trees to put on the registers. Trees are living, changing organisms; Woollahra Council’s registry document adds, “Immature trees of little historic and visual significance today may in time achieve great significance and value to the community.”

TREE VANDALISM – an email from Lane Cove Councillor Bridget Kennedy

Help put pressure on the State Government by signing this petition which calls to legislate for much higher penalties for tree vandalism so that they adequately reflect the value of this critical natural asset, as well as requests recognition of council trees as natural assets within the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework. This issue is bigger than the recent dreadful vandalism in Longueville with reports of illegal tree killing and vandalism massively increasing... go to:



https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/la/Pages/ePetition-details.aspx?q=spDO_eQ0f3NWsj0g5VtjWw

NEWS FROM THE NATURE CONSERVATION COUNCIL (NCC)

VERDANT ENERGY CARRIES ON...

You may remember our report in Wallumetta, February 2022, about Verdant Energy planning to source timber from our state forests to burn for electricity at the Redbank Power Station. After a mammoth community effort this was stopped... But they haven't given up! Now Verdant is seeking to use a loophole that allows them to use forest cleared on private land. The proposed biomass generator seeks to take advantage of NSW's 'do what you want and we won't look' habitat clearing rules, which allow landowners to clear native habitat without oversight.



And they are **claiming that this will be good for nature and climate.**

They have also been making misleading statements that imply the plan involves invasive species. But burning green wood chips emits 50% more CO2 per megawatt hour of energy produced than coal, and undermines investment in genuinely clean energy.

This proposal is to burn native forests, bush, grasses and regenerated or uncleared paddocks, thus removing valuable habitat, including at-risk forest ecosystems. The scale is truly scary - 850 000 tonnes of woodchips is more than the entire native forest logging industry in NSW produces. Thousands of hectares of native forests and bush within a 300km radius of the Hunter, Central Coast and North Coast risk being cleared. NCC has already spoken to key members of the press, debunking claims that this proposal would "help decarbonise the electricity system" and "be ecologically sustainable".

GOOD NEWS FROM THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

The NSW government has legislated a ban on oil and gas mining in NSW coastal waters.

This makes NSW the *first Australian state* to ban oil and gas along its coastline. A better future is possible when governments are accountable to the community instead of the fossil fuel lobby.

The legislation also bans the building of pipelines in NSW coastal waters that would facilitate offshore gas mining in Commonwealth waters, as proposed by the controversial PEP-11 project.

SUPERMARKET PROGRESS ON REDUCING PLASTIC PACKAGING?

(Boomerang Alliance news to supporters)

Last year in the first independent audit of plastic on Australia's supermarket shelves, The Australian Marine Conservation Society and Boomerang Alliance uncovered a significant lack of progress in reducing unnecessary plastic packaging. Five months since [Australia's first independent report](#) was released, unnecessary plastic that continues to surround us in supermarkets. And less than 20% gets recovered. Most of it ends up in landfills or littered. By reducing the amount of plastic on our supermarket shelves, we can drive down the estimated 145,000 tonnes of plastic pollution that flows into Australia's oceans every year.

Following up on their top 5 recommendations, Boomerang Alliance are pleased that Woolworths has phased out integrated single-use plastic straws and cutlery in their own-brand products and has a requirement that all products stocked on their shelves do the same by the end of 2024.

But they are disappointed that no supermarket has committed to ensure loose fresh produce is the same price or cheaper than pre-packaged fresh produce, and no supermarket has committed to reducing the volume of single-serve or small portion items.

REMOVE MICROPLASTICS FROM YOUR DRINKING WATER!

From an article published by Imma Perfetto in *Cosmos*, 28 February 2024

Human-made plastics degrade into fragments over time and are now ubiquitous in our soil, air, and water. They threaten the safety of drinking water. Consumption of these tiny particles may affect human health, so simple inexpensive methods to reduce their consumption are needed.



But Chinese researchers have found that simply boiling tap water could help remove nearly 90% of the nano- and microplastics (NMPs).

The new solution has been outlined in a paper in *Environmental Science and Technology*, see <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.estlett.4c00081>

Photo credit – Eddy Zeng

Boiling tap water can trap nano- and microplastics inside limescale particles, which can be easily filtered out. As water temperature increases, the researchers found that CaCO_3 forms crystalline structures called incrustants that encapsulate NMPs. Over time, these incrustants build up like typical limescale and can be scrubbed away. Any that remain in the water can also be removed by pouring through a simple household filter – like a coffee filter. The kettle should be left to stand for 5-10 minutes after boiling to allow the incrustants time to precipitate to the bottom and for the water to cool down enough before drinking. A kettle with a rough internal surface is best.

FAST CHARGING LITHIUM SULPHUR BATTERIES

Fires and long charging times are proving to be a drawback of current lithium-Ion batteries, so researchers are now looking for ways to achieve safe and fast battery charging.

Nanotechnology researchers have shown that next-generation lithium-sulphur batteries can charge within five minutes.

These batteries are a type of lithium-ion battery with a sulphur cathode, and could theoretically store more than twice the energy of existing commercial batteries, with an energy of 550 Watt-hours per kilogram (Wh/kg) compared to existing batteries with an energy density of about 150–250 Wh/kg. This makes them potentially useful for many applications including electric vehicles, as well as large-scale energy storage applications including in power grids.



The University of Adelaide team examined the sulphur reduction reaction which governs the of Li|S batteries to improve their charge-discharge rate, and the results of their research is published in a paper by Professor Quiao in *Nature Nanotechnology* –

see <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41565-024-01614-4>

They investigated a variety of possibilities, and designed a nanocomposite electrocatalyst resulting in batteries that achieve an exceptional power-to-weight ratio and are able to achieve full charge/discharge in less than 5 minutes.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Thank you to all members who have renewed for 2024, and especially to those who made generous donations to your annual membership payment. Your financial support continues our work as a local environmental organisation, and improves our ability to support other environmental organisations whose work and influence extends beyond our local area.

NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!

Please pay by direct transfer to our Bendigo account: RYDE HUNTERS HILL FLORA AND PRESERVATION SOCIETY INC, BSB 633-000, Account number 190716589.

Include your name in the transaction description and email your name, address and phone number to rhffps@gmail.com

Or you may pay by cash: Complete and hand in form with payment in a sealed envelope at Field of Mars Visitor Centre, or post to: RHHFFPS, PO Box 552, Gladesville 1675.

NAME:

Address:

Phone:

Annual Membership (add \$10 for newsletter to be sent via Australia Post): \$

Individual \$ 15 (+ \$ 10)

Family \$ 35 (+ \$ 10)

Concession \$ 10 (+ \$ 10)

(Students/Pensioners) Donation

Total Payment:

Email address to receive your newsletter - please print clearly:

YARNKNIT WINNER

The Yarnknit donated by Holy Spirit Yarn Group was won by local person Elaine. She was delighted with her win, especially as the weather has started to cool. Elaine bought some tickets after walking through the Reserve with her daughter. She was impressed by the information and hospitality offered at the Visitors Centre and bought not only tickets but some relish on sale. Elaine appreciated the work done by the Society's volunteers and was happy to support their efforts.

Holy Spirit Yarn Group, members of which first met as parents at Holy Spirit Catholic School North Ryde, has donated another rug - see below.

This time next year YOU could be the lucky winner.

