



# North Head Sanctuary Foundation Inc

## Custodians of North Head

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Newsletter No 145 November 2020

### Education Room - Bandicoot Heaven

We are closed until further notice due to COVID-19.

Please have a look at our website if you need information regarding identification of plants etc.

### Native Plant Nursery

We are currently revamping the area across from the Bandicoot Heaven which had to be cleared/thinned out as it was in a bushfire Asset Protection Zone. We had a visitor when working there on 29 September, who walked up to one of our volunteers and found something to eat under her foot.



Photo Ian Evans

If you would like to join us, please call in any Tuesday or Friday morning between 8am and noon to have a look.

To join us one needs to be a member of North Head Sanctuary Foundation. For more details, please send an email to [northhead@fastmail.com.au](mailto:northhead@fastmail.com.au)

### Controlled burn that escaped

On 17 October, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Fire+Rescue conducted a hazard reduction burn along the southern boundary of the North Head Wastewater Treatment Plant, east of Bluefish Drive.

Unfortunately, the fire escaped and continued burning overnight and burnt most of North Head from the sandstone wall that runs east-west at the southern end of the planned burn area, all the way to the cliff-lines at Fairfax lookout. The Hanging swamp was burnt; walking tracks were destroyed. Fortunately, the gun emplacements, tunnels, most of the Memorial Walk and buildings at North Fort were not damaged. On Sunday night the fire re-ignited and burnt more bush at the southern end. The fire burnt about one-quarter of the remaining area of the threatened ecological community

called Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS) which remained on North Head. This is about 15% of the ESBS left in Sydney and is therefore a significant loss for NSW because ESBS is classified as "Critically Endangered". The fauna in the burnt area did not fare well.



Photo Wayne Parkes

### Have your say: North Head Sanctuary

The Harbour Trust wants your input for North Head.

Please complete the survey, if you have not already done so

<https://www.harbourtrust.gov.au/en/our-news/join-the-conversation-on-north-head-sanctuary/>

### \$40.6 Million for Harbour Trust Heritage Sites

Over the next four years the Harbour Trust will receive \$40.6 million from the Federal Budget for a range of works. North Head will receive part of these funds for Restoration and conservation of the WWII gun emplacements, observation posts and tunnels.

Restoration works to the exterior of Building1 which is the Barracks and the Other Ranks Mess which is inside this building.

Photo Ian Evans





## Not good now, but our bushland will recover

Judy Lambert

Many who know and love North Head's bushland are feeling sad, or even angry, at the impacts of the escaped Bluefish Hazard Reduction burn on Saturday 17 October.



However, like many of Australia's ecological communities, our coastal heath has evolved with fire and needs fire at appropriate intervals to keep it strong and diverse. As time goes on, we'll see green shoots emerging from the blackened remains. Fire stimulates the germination of many seeds and ash beds provide nutrients that assist the growth of new seedlings. With gentle rain often enough to keep the soil moist, and with weeds and rabbits controlled, the

coastal heathland will recover – much of it likely to be even more vigorous and diverse than it was before the fire. And, as the bushland comes back, so too will the animals and other creatures that live there.

The botanical surveys done after previous Hazard Reduction burns at North Fort and near the Third Cemetery in 2012 and in the area behind the CrossFit gym in 2018, as well as work by other ecologists, lift our confidence of good recovery over time.

Photos Same location near North Fort, **Top:** Before fire (2012)  
**Middle:** Immediately after fire (Sept 2012)  
**Bottom:** Five years later (2017)

## Netting exclusion experiments at North Head

Angela Raña



Whilst walking around North Head over the past few months, visitors may have noticed a few Banksia trees that have been covered in bird netting. These netted trees are part of an experiment being run as part of my PhD project, which is being completed in collaboration with the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC).

This project is investigating the reintroduction biology of the eastern pygmy possum (*Cercartetus nanus*), brown antechinus (*Antechinus stuartii*), and bush rat (*Rattus fuscipes*) into North Head. The reintroduction of bush rats onto the headland first began in 2011, and ongoing monitoring by AWC indicates that there is now a well-

established population on North Head. Eastern pygmy possums were first reintroduced by AWC in 2016 – 2017, and brown antechinus reintroductions commenced in 2017.

To investigate whether these reintroductions are having positive ecosystem-wide effects, we are using bird netting to conduct exclusion experiments. This netting is intended to exclude birds, but to allow small mammals access to the trees' inflorescences (flowers). Netting has been deployed over the winter flowering season of *Banksia marginata* and *Banksia ericifolia*, and I will soon be collecting the netting and recording the seed count on the study trees. I will then compare the seed count of netted trees to the seed count of control trees to determine whether the reintroduced small mammals are contributing to the pollination of the Critically Endangered Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub. This work is valuable, as North Head is home to about half of the remaining Critically Endangered Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub, and preliminary work shows that bush rats may contribute to the pollination of this community. Additionally, eastern pygmy possums are known to rely heavily on Banksias, and there is some evidence of brown antechinus acting as pollinators. It is therefore possible that these small mammal reintroductions will further aid in the recovery and persistence of Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub.

## Getting to know our plants: Another good use for QR codes

Judy Lambert

If you've walked along North Fort Road and the track across to the Third Cemetery any time since September, you'll hopefully have seen some small yellow plastic name tags.

Each of the labelled plants is a species that is part of Critically Endangered Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS).



It's not too long ago that QR codes were only known to the more technology-savvy among us, but now they are used for many things. When we

planned (many months ago) to replace the names tags that have in the past helped visitors identify some of the key plants in the bushland, we decided to include a QR code, which will lead you to the relevant page of our website where you can find out much more about the species.

Depending on which mobile phone you have and how recent it is, you may be able to just point your phone camera at the QR code on the sign to get that information, but other mobiles will require you to download a free QR & Barcode reader from an online app store.

We'd like to hear your reactions to these new name tags, as we'll need to complete this trial before getting an approval from the Harbour Trust to expand the system. (email: [twsombat@iinet.net.au](mailto:twsombat@iinet.net.au))