



North Head Sanctuary Foundation Inc

Custodians of North Head

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FrogID: People power in frog conservation & our North Head frogs

Judy Lambert

At our quarterly meeting in March, we heard a very interesting and informative talk by the Australian Museum's lead scientist in frog identification and conservation, Dr Jodi Rowley.

Jodi is a Northern Beaches 'original'. It is nine years since Jodi's team recognised that we knew too little about frogs across Australia. Since then, Jodi and her team have developed and managed the FrogID app to engage the community in citizen science about frogs.

Jody told us that Australia has 257 recognised frog species. Forty of them are threatened with extinction. Key threats are habitat moisture modifications, predation by introduced fish species eating their tadpoles, the *Chytrid* fungus, which causes skin infections, and climate change.

Since Jodi and her colleagues developed the easy-to-use FrogID app, about 100,000 people have registered as users. They have contributed 1.26million records of frogs and contributed to some 30 scientific papers (see <https://www.frogid.net.au/science>). Mapping of frog distribution across Australia has been vastly improved.

Five species are among the current 933 records for North Head – the Common Eastern Froglet, Striped Marsh Frog, Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog, Peron's Tree Frog and Wallum Rocket Frog. Despite reports that the threatened Red Crowned Toadlet occurs at North Head, no records have yet been created by the FrogID app.

Thank You Jodi for your wonderful talk!



Brown Striped Marsh Frog

Peron's Tree Frog

Photos: P Macinnis

Why not download the FrogID app and get recording! <https://www.frogid.net.au/get-involved#3d45b2b6-c3a2-532a-b00b-4124c646a>

Save the date!

The next general meeting will be held on **Saturday 14 June at 2pm**. Further details, including speaker, will be forwarded to members closer to the date.

Rabbits: Recurring plagues since early European settlement

Judy Lambert

Since the early days of European settlement feral rabbits have had destructive impacts on Australia's native vegetation and farm production. The first rabbits are reported to have arrived on the First Fleet in 1788, then spread hugely after Englishman Thomas Austin introduced them to south-western Victoria in 1859 for hunting.

Since European settlement, boom & bust seasons have seen rabbit numbers grow, followed by control with a succession of viruses or other biocontrol agents, most notably myxomatosis in the 1950s, then from 1995 onwards, various strains of Calici virus. Each new control agent is initially fairly effective, but with development of resistance over time, numbers build again.

There are good reasons for the saying "Breeding like rabbits". Under good conditions when food is abundant, each pair of rabbits can produce about 180 individuals within 18 months, and can disperse widely across the landscape. They become mature once 3-4 months old, each litter has a gestation period of just 28-30 days and it is common for them to have 4-6 kittens in a litter and several litters a year.

Some people see rabbits as cute & cuddly pets, but when present in high numbers they are known to have direct impacts on more than 300 of Australia's threatened plant and animal species. In semi-arid areas, scientists have shown that just one rabbit on a two hectare area can severely damage some plant species. Researchers have estimated that rabbits cost Australian agriculture more than \$200million in lost production each year.



On North Head, we have shown that unless protected by exclusion fences, fresh regrowth after Hazard Reduction burns is adversely affected by rabbits.

Photo: Plant growth inside & outside rabbit exclusion fence 3yrs after a Hazard Reduction Burn near Third Cemetery.

Recent good seasons across many parts of Australia have seen rabbit numbers increase nationally such that it is now estimated that the rabbit population across the country exceeds 200 million. Our native plant Nursery volunteers are all-too-familiar with the damage caused by rabbits, which have been present in increasing numbers in recent years.



Nursery volunteers, Nick and Mark, making rabbit-proof plant cages.

With rabbit numbers high and the damage they cause escalating, Greater Sydney Local Land Services is coordinating a release of the most effective strain of Calici virus in areas including North Head and Mosman's Headland Park, early in March. The virus, which is harmless to humans and to other animal species, is laid out in a carefully controlled and monitored process.

Nursery update

Nursery volunteers are pleased with their success in growing *Isopogon* and *Petrophile* from seed in late 2024 and early 2025. These plants will need another 6 months in the nursery before planting out.



The Last Quarantine Victim of Pneumonic Influenza

Kaye Lee

On the eastern side of the cemetery lie the remains of most* of those who succumbed to pneumonic influenza at the Quarantine Station in the epidemic of 1918-20. Overall some 43 people died in quarantine of the deadly disease[#], the unlucky last being a man called Martinson or Matterson who passed away on 7 July 1919.⁽¹⁾

Recorded as Pat and P. Martinson in Quarantine records^(1,2) and P. Matterson on the Inwards List of

Crew and Passengers signed off by Ship's Master R. Bidwell of the SS Commonwealth⁽³⁾, Patrick was from Croydon, either 44 or 50 years old, and was a Lamp Trimmer+ on the SS Commonwealth, a ship that had previously being used in the war effort as HMAT 73.

With peace a reality, the SS Commonwealth sailed from Plymouth on 17 April 1919 bringing home nearly a thousand war weary Australian soldiers⁽⁴⁾. She arrived in Sydney from Melbourne on 12 June 1919 with 468 troops aboard as well as 'Lampie' Matterson. What must have been a very exciting time for many proved otherwise for Patrick, who was admitted to the Quarantine hospital on 27 June and died 10 days later.

Matterson's grave, like those of many others who died from pneumonic influenza are without headstones or markers, with Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub now covering their resting places. One exception is that of the grave of Arthur Thomson, from the Barque Woodburn, which sits just west of the easterly path that runs to the south in the cemetery. Arthur now has a re-created marker, the original removed for safe keeping. Other exceptions are the magnificent gravestone with cross atop of Military Nurse Elizabeth McGregor and the adjacent cement slabs that mark the resting places of some of the young soldiers from the SS Medic who, like Matterson, were all victims of the pneumonic influenza. Looking north and east from these graves (as shown in the image below), you can get some idea of where Patrick Matterson and his unmarked companions in death lie also.



Photo: Kaye Lee

* The body of Mon Yik was exhumed on 10/4/1929 for transfer to China and that of Alice Syme also exhumed and transferred to Melbourne.

A total of 935 were admitted with the disease during that time. Of 254 patients admitted in 1918, 25 or nearly 10% died, but of 681 patients admitted in 1919, 19 or just under 3% succumbed to the disease - a remarkable decrease in mortality, with 1920 having no deaths recorded at all.

+ Downloaded from Trove <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/69628096?searchTerm=lamp%20trimmer>
Interesting article on Lamp Trimmers

(1) Downloaded from National Archives of Australia 13/03/2025
<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRretrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGALLERYVIEWER.aspx?B=10971462&S=35&N=49&R=0#/SearchNRretrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=10971462&T=P&S=39>

(2) Downloaded from National Archives of Australia 13/03/ 2025
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(3) Downloaded from <https://www.marinersandships.com.au/1919/06/media/046com.jpg>
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(4) Downloaded from Trove <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12383483/17/03/2025>

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