



North Head Sanctuary Foundation Inc

Custodians of North Head

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Newsletter No 196 July-August 2025

NHSF Annual General Meeting

Judy Lambert

Saturday 13 September at 2pm at Bandicoot Heaven.

Our guest speaker, recommended by fellow members of the Sydney Fungal Studies Group, Dave Noble has agreed to give a talk on '*Fungi: the neglected kingdom*'. A long-time bushwalker & keen nature observer, Dave will illustrate his talk with plenty of slides. Members and friends are welcome.

A formal notice of the meeting and call for nominations for office-bearers and general committee members will follow shortly.

Birds on North Head

Matthew Taylor

In terms of habitat for birds, North Head is not that special. It is mostly coastal heath & shrublands (which supports relatively low numbers of bird species) with a little bit of wet forest, a tiny strip of littoral rainforest and a thin strip of ridge top woodland. It also has no permanent water bodies for wetland birds.

What it does have is an impressive list of unusual and unexpected avian visitors. Who would ever expect to see a Noisy Pitta, pottering about near the oval in dense shrublands. Not!! But there it was. It should have been in dark wet rainforest many miles away. And why would a Pacific Heron be flying over Bandicoot heaven one day? Looking for a large expanse of wetland with fish and frogs I'm guessing. No luck on North Head! Perhaps what brings these unusual visitors to our neck of the woods is more to do with North Head being an island of natural vegetation in a sea of heavily modified urban development extending many kms up and down the coast. Birds migrating up and down the coast or moving between wetland sites might think "Bloody 'ell, where am I supposed to find food and shelter around here" - and stop off in the most natural looking bit of vegetation to catch their breath and reconsider their plans. This probably applies to a recent sighting of another wet/rainforest bird the Brown Cuckoo Dove seen at Collins Beach.

But we do have some regular, if uncommon, visitors at NH. Like the Spangled Drongo, a winter visitor to the Sydney area from warmer points further north. And the posse of Painted button-quail that were hanging around the Avenue of Honour for a while. A recent treat was another rainforest pigeon. Bill & Nicci Raffle pick up the story of its discovery....

Rare Spottings at North Head

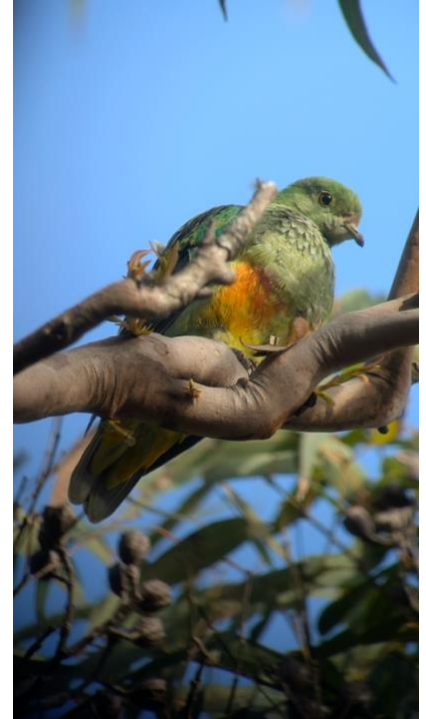
Nicci & Bill Raffle

We are members of the Cumberland Bird Observers Club (<https://www.cboc.org.au/>) and local residents with a keen interest in bird watching on North Head.

On one of our regular (non club) walks on 23 May we were fortunate to spot a juvenile Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove (*Ptilinopus regina*) within the littoral rainforest along Collins Beach Road.

A bit of a rarity in these parts, this was the first time it had been recorded at North Head on eBird.

Rose-crowned Fruit
Dove (juvenile)
Photo: Bill Raffle



Another first-time report for North Head was in September 2024 when we spotted a Rainbow Bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*) in an area close to the Quarry between Bluefish Drive and Shelly Beach carpark.

Rainbow Bee-eater
Photo: Bill Raffle

On a recent outing we led for 23 members of the Cumberland Bird Observers Club, and in perfect

winter weather conditions, our group was welcomed into the grounds of the Barracks by a female Golden Whistler, followed by sightings of Australian Magpies, Red Wattlebirds, Rainbow Lorikeets, Australian Brush-turkey's and the sounds of Eastern Whipbirds.

As we headed down Collins Beach Road members spotted a Tawny Frogmouth sitting on a branch, conveniently located at eye level, close to the road.

Spotted Pardalotes were spied in the canopy above, and further on a Little Wattlebird, Grey Fantails, Brown Gerygones and a White-browed Scrubwren were seen amongst the foliage. A call from above alerted the group to a Spangled Drongo.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoos perched throughout the littoral rainforest which borders Collins Beach Road. Flocks of Silveryeye (incl. Tasmanian Silveryeye) moved through, along with a female Rose Robin, two male Scarlet Honeyeaters, a male Golden Whistler, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, a Large-billed Scrub wren, Eastern Whipbirds, a Red-whiskered Bulbul, and Variegated Fairywrens. All this before turning to walk back up the road. Repeated performances from some of these birds on the way up was consolation for the uphill climb.

Heading along Bluefish Drive and out to the Quarry brought sightings of New Holland Honeyeater, Variegated Fairywrens, and calls of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos. Sharp eyes spotted Mistletoe birds, and a juvenile White-bellied Sea-Eagle soared across the horizon.

A circuit around the Memorial and Fairfax tracks included sightings of Little Wattlebirds, Welcome Swallows, New Holland Honeyeaters, Red Wattlebirds, Laughing Kookaburra, Silver Gulls, a White-bellied Sea-eagle, Willie Wagtails, Pied Cormorant, and a Mistletoebird to wrap up a very special day.

Blooming Now

Acacia longifolia

Photo: Peter Macinnis



Anniversary of the Last Burial – 3rd Cemetery

Kaye Lee

One hundred years ago this month the very last burial was carried out in the Third Quarantine Cemetery. The body of Samain, a 29 year old Javanese crew member of the SS Tasman, who died of generalised tuberculosis on 17 August 1925, was laid to rest on 18 August⁽¹⁾.

The SS Tasman had been travelling from Singapore to Melbourne with 34 passengers on board and docked in Sydney at Wharf No.2 Darling Harbour on Sunday, 2 August at 2.25pm⁽²⁾. It would seem that the ship, captained by Master J J Claasen, may have detoured into the quarantine area of Spring Cove before that however, as Samain was admitted into quarantine that same day. This was a time when tuberculosis was rife in Australia. A Commonwealth Royal Commission had been convened just a few months earlier in Sydney to tackle the problem⁽³⁾, so quarantine admission for a person on board the Tasman suspected of having tuberculosis would have been the safest course of action.

Little is known about Samain himself, his death certificate revealing only that he had been a Fireman & Trimmer on board the Tasman, and had been born in Java (modern day Indonesia⁽⁴⁾). What we do know from the Record of Deaths at the Quarantine Station is that he died, not in the main Quarantine Hospital, but in the Seamen's Isolation Hospital (SIH), his death in that hospital the only one of the more than 242 recorded in the Death Register⁽¹⁾.

The Seamen's Isolation Hospital was originally built for returning WW1 soldiers and merchant seamen suffering from venereal diseases. It was situated at Collins Flat, just north of what had been the 2nd class accommodation at the Quarantine Station and later the Lynes buildings during WW1. Apart from venereal disease sufferers, the SIH was also used for those suffering from tuberculosis as well as some of the huge number of pneumonic influenza patients that were quarantined at North Head in 1918-19⁽⁵⁾. The former site of this hospital is now the home of the Australian Institute of Police Management.

Though Samain's body was the last to be buried in the Third Cemetery, his demise was not the last recorded death at the Quarantine Station. The final death was that of Mrs Greta Mallett on 1 March 1962. She had been a passenger on the liner Strathmore sailing from Manila. Originally suspected of having cholera, Mrs Mallett was found at postmortem to have died from a bowel infection complicated by a serious circulatory disease of the liver – the infection not requiring quarantine⁽⁶⁾. Her body was therefore able to be privately cremated.

1. <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=314138> NAA: C526, Register of deaths at quarantine station Page 70 retrieved 12/07/2025
2. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/159967333> retrieved 15/07/2025
3. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/16197075> retrieved 10/07/2025
4. New South Wales Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages; Death Certificate Reg. No. 14844/1925
5. Kelleher, Carmel Patricia (2015). Quarantine Station North Head 1900-1984: a history of place. Macquarie University. Thesis. <https://doi.org/10.25949/19441526.v1>
6. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/104925080?searchTerm=cholera%20strathmore> retrieved 13/07/2025