

SUTHERLAND BUSHWALKERS NEWSLETTER

December 2025



President's Ponderings

As I sit to write this pondering, more than 150 members have already renewed their membership via Bilby, our new on-line system. Member feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with most feedback praising the ease of renewal. If you didn't receive a reminder from Bilby to renew, please check your spam or junk folder, and if that is unsuccessful, email bilbysupport@sutherlandbushwalkers.org.au and someone will be in touch to help.

The social highlight of the club's year, the annual Christmas barbecue, is just around the corner. I look forward to catching up with you there. If you haven't been before, it is a great opportunity to grab a cuppa and a barbecue breakfast and to catch-up with other members. There will also be a catch-up in January. See our activities page for more details on both catch-ups.

Our AGM will be held on the 25th of February. This is an important milestone for our club as we will vote to amend the constitution and by-laws. Please consider coming along to ensure that we can continue as a club. There is no pressure to volunteer, but without a quorum to vote at the meeting the club will not be able to operate. If you have thought about joining the committee, please let a committee member know so we can have a chat.

As this is the final ponderings of the year it would be remiss of me not to wholeheartedly thank our Activity Organisers and our hard-working committee. Without the efforts of these people, we would not have the successful club that we do. Thank you all.

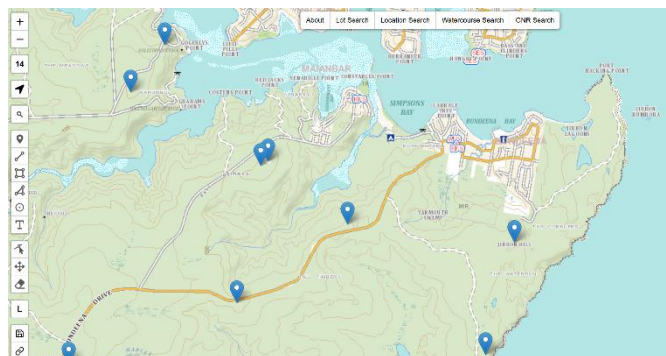
On behalf of the committee, I wish everyone a joyous Christmas and a wonderful New Year with lots of opportunities to walk, paddle and ride.

Cheers

Ken

Spotlight on a Great Bushwalking Resource

At the last BNSW General Meeting, guest speaker **Alex Allchin**, former President of BNSW, gave an engaging presentation on his impressive project: a comprehensive compilation of maps tailored specifically for bushwalkers. Many of our members may already be familiar with his website – bushwalkingmaps.com – but for those who aren't, it's well worth a look.



RNP map with trig stations marked in an overlay

The site brings together a range of map layers and overlays, allowing users to explore terrain, tracks, parks, access points, and much more. It's useful as a planning tool, whether you're preparing a weekend wander or mapping out a more ambitious multi-day walk. Shaune noted that the sheer number of overlays available makes it both powerful and enjoyable to use.

A big thank-you to **Alex Allchin** for making this resource available to the bushwalking community, and for continuing to develop a tool that helps all of us get out into the bush with greater knowledge and confidence.

Take a look at: bushwalkingmaps.com

Also look for NPWS alerts at
<https://npws.bushwalkingmaps.com/>

Thanks, *Shaune Walsh*, we are grateful for this contribution and for continuing as our delegate to Bushwalking NSW.

Dharawal National Park
25 August 2025

This walk covered three short walking trails veering from the 10B cycling track in the northwest corner of the Dharawal National Park (Wedderburn). Given the proximity of the park to Sydney's urban fringe, the fauna in this part of the Park is in relatively good condition.



Not quite swimming time yet!

We welcomed a couple of guests and two new members of the club doing their first walk.



Plenty of water in the river system

The recent rains were evident on the Minerva Pool track but nothing that was impassable. What we did see was some impressive water flows into Minerva Pool as the water runoff continued. Next, the Jingga Pool track was a different beast - a great cardio workout due to the steepness of about half the track. The third trail was an easy, short and flat section to a lookout over O'Hare's Creek.

Ray Madden



Minerva Pool

Loftus, Kangaroo Ck/ Engadine Ck.
Sunday 12 October

Thank you to the small group who joined my 2nd walk as a leader - on a very warm Spring Sunday.

The walk was a well-known route from the Old RNP Visitors Centre at the top of Audley hill, down to Audley and over to the head of navigation for Kangaroo Creek, the junction of Kangaroo and Engadine Creeks. From the RNP office, we went down the Bridal Track and across the causeway and the Varney Bridge to the head of navigation on Kangaroo Creek. For something different, we returned to the cars via Reids Flat and Grays Point. The path up to the Florence Pde Fire trail was steep and a bit of a scramble. We finished with a stop at the Bungoona Lookout.



Neil with some weekend walkers at Bungoona Lookout

We had a couple of visitors on their first walk with the group and hopefully they enjoyed our company and the "Guided Experience".

Neil Cowley

My Birthday on the ZIG ZAG railway -

Organisers : Kay Rogers & Alan Hickey
17th - 22nd November.

There was the usual end of day tradition, "happy hour", but for me there was a surprise one evening.

My fellow campers and friends presented me with birthday cake, candles and song. This truly was unexpected, a huge surprise and quite humbling. Then a few drinks with cake and a happy hour was underway. During the course of the evening our leader Kay made car sharing arrangements for those going to next day's adventure on Zig Zag railway, just to reduce the number of vehicles used. The first plan did get changed to a second plan during the happy hour but the leader had spoken.



Happy Hour

Next morning no-one can remember what the "plan" is including the leader!

Birthday girl arrives at designated spot and on time (as per my memory) to find I've been left behind. OH NO. I've been forgotten already, well that was short lived fame.

By chance along comes my saviour, Lyndell, in her car so four of us proceed to Clarence Station.

An apologetic & very concerned leader rang to see if I was still at designated spot but relieved to know I have hitched a ride making this plan three. You did so well all week with your organisation, Kay, so all is forgiven.

ZIG ZAG engine 218 was all steamed up and was a magnificent green, 1942 ex US Army supplied loco for WW2 and sent to the Pacific. It was nicknamed a "MacArthur" model but the Aussies just call it "The Yank". For two hours we switch back and forth down the valley to bottom points. Mist and rain did not dampen our enthusiasm nor did the coal soot in our faces when we hung out the windows. NOW my birthday prize was a ride in the engine while disengaging and re-engaging the engine to carriages at one of the turn points. My mate, Don, the fireman/stoker gave us a talk on how it all

happens from coal shoveling to boiler pressure to signal messages to make it all work. Carol and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and I consider this a highlight of my day.

Fun and laughter from us all, it was the perfect birthday day for me. Thank you to my friends for sharing the day. It was much appreciated and your company made not only the day but also the week.



Big smiles after a birthday ride in locomotive 218 - The Yank!

Thank you Kay and Alan for organising the week. Walk leaders stepped up to take us on some beautiful tracks but failed to advise us on the number of steps likely to be encountered. Fun and laughter were the ingredients for a Blue Mountains escape.

Vanessa



Vanessa blows out the candles - with her hand

Day Walk for Visitors Saturday 25 October 2025

Ken recently led a special Visitor Day Walk designed to help prospective members (guest in Bilby speak) experience a club activity without the usual challenge of finding a free spot on the program. With many walks filling quickly, this initiative offered newcomers a welcoming and accessible introduction to bushwalking with the club.



Ken, 8 guests and a new member in Palona Cave

The route followed the Forest Path, continued along Lady Carrington Drive, and then headed up Palona Brook to the limestone cave. Twelve walkers took part, including eight guests, and many of those guests have since become members.

During the walk, Ken covered several practical topics: how to book activities, what to pack, and the importance of being self-sufficient on the track. He highlighted essential items such as rain jackets and basic first aid supplies, as well as how to manage minor bush annoyances like scratches, leeches, ticks and snake bites (as rare as snakes are!).

Everyone enjoyed the outing and the friendly, social atmosphere on the trail.

A big thank-you to *Ken Newman* for organising this valuable and successful initiative.

Light Pollution: A Hidden Threat to Wildlife

Most of us are aware that light pollution makes stargazing difficult – a disappointing reality for anyone who enjoys looking up at a clear night sky. But the impacts of artificial light reach beyond astronomy. Increasing research shows that **light pollution and ongoing urbanisation are having serious effects on wildlife, particularly birds.**



Swarms of lorikeets have been seen at night at Miranda Fair

Many bird species rely on natural light cues for their daily rhythms. Artificial lighting can disrupt these cycles, leading to **sleep deprivation**, disorientation, and increased stress. Over time, this can affect migration patterns, feeding behaviour, and overall health. What seems like a simple streetlight to us can be a major disturbance to creatures that depend on darkness as much as daylight.

For bushwalkers who spend time in natural environments, understanding these impacts highlights why preserving dark skies matters – not only for our enjoyment, but for the wellbeing of the ecosystems we walk through. Reducing unnecessary lighting, supporting dark-sky initiatives, and being mindful of our own light use when camping all help to minimise our footprint.



Azure Kingfisher at night

A short, accessible summary of recent findings can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/mw8c5mdx>.

Thanks, *Janice McLeod* for bringing this to our attention.

Middle Harbour Walk 13 October 2025

This walk covered five reserves on the south side of Middle Harbour in the Willoughby Council area. Middle Harbour was visible for most of the walk as we traipsed from hilltop to water level several times over the 14 kilometres.

The bush itself seemed in good condition and some recent trail trimming had widened the footpad and ensured some of the spikier plants were away from arms and legs. Some wildlife (goanna, red-bellied) scuttled off on our approach while the brush turkeys were more nonchalant. =



On the Scenic Route track in Harold Reid Reserve

Public transport doesn't always get a good rap, but it worked well for all of us - on-time for getting there and away.

Ray Madden

Thermal Drones Reveal Hidden Koala Community in the Snowy Mountains

Some of us have now been lucky to spot a koala in Heathcote NP after the discovery of a significant population there a few years ago. Now a previously unknown group of koalas has been discovered in a remote part of the Snowy Mountains – and the finding is being described as “*incredibly exciting*.” Using thermal-imaging drones, researchers were able to detect the heat signatures of koalas that had remained unseen in the rugged landscape.

The story, shared via the ABC app, highlights how new technology is helping scientists better

understand and protect vulnerable wildlife. It's encouraging to know that such pockets of biodiversity are still thriving out there. Something to look out for on our walks in the mountains.



Koala sighted in Heathcote National Park

And for a bit of fun – the report also mentioned “*koala karaoke*”, a delightful description of the vocalisations captured during the survey. A reminder that the bush is full of surprises, both seen and heard!

This discovery offers a hopeful boost for koala conservation and a wonderful example of how innovation can support the wild places we enjoy walking through.

[Read the full story on ABC news](#)

Thanks for this exciting news, *Janice McLeod*.

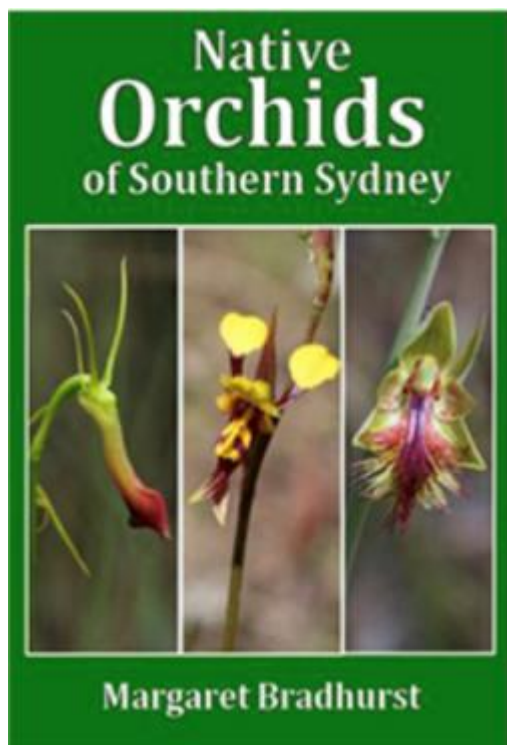
Identifying Local Orchids

If you have been out and about and seen a few orchids along the side of a track in the bush, remember the book *Native Orchids of Southern Sydney* (2016) by Margaret Bradhurst. Margaret is a member of the Australian Plants Society Sutherland Group, Bushcare enthusiast, keen photographer and long-time Sutherland Shire resident. This is THE resource on local orchids with over 180 great photos in a compact easy to use 68-page full colour book.

It is available for sale online through the Friends of Royal website at:

www.friendsofroyal.org.au/product/native-orchids-of-southern-sydney-copy

Rhonda Daniels



Book Cover

Is Your Home Ready for Bushfire Season?

With the bushfire season upon us, it's a timely reminder for all members to ensure their homes are prepared. Janice McLeod, one of our club members and a dedicated bushfire brigade volunteer, has shared some useful information and advice from the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) to help us get ready.

The RFS provides a range of practical resources to assist households in improving their bushfire preparedness – everything from property checklists to planning guides. These materials can be found on the OneRFS website:

OneRFS Toolkit:

<https://one.rfs.nsw.gov.au/our-organisation/One-NSW-RFS-Toolkit>

To help spread awareness quickly, the RFS has also released two short bushfire-preparedness videos:

- [30-second video](#)
- [15-second video](#)

These clips highlight simple steps we can all take to reduce risk and improve safety.

As we enjoy our time on the trails this season, let's also make sure the place we return to, our home, is as safe and fire-ready as possible.

Vale Tracy Cleary

Many of you that have been long-term members of the club will remember, Tracy Cleary.

Tracy passed away on the 17th of September after battling a long-term illness.

Tracy was a loved and respected member of Sutherland Bushwalkers, leading and participating in bushwalks and cycle expeditions as well as performing the role of Membership Officer for a few years. She was often the voice of reason and common sense at committee meetings. Tracy will be missed by all that knew her. The club's thoughts go out to Jeff and family.

Vale Judith Turner

Judith Turner's family would like her bushwalking friends to know that she passed away on Friday 14th November, in hospital, in the company of her family. Judy was an interesting, enthusiastic & kind person who lived life to the full, an inspiration to many. She LOVED being in the bush, especially extended backpack walks, and also organised walks and camps for the club. She was always ready to use her extensive bushwalking experience to help others, and to provide advice.

Vale George Crispo

Many of you that have been long-term members of the club will remember George Crispo. George actively contributed to our club. He held committee positions, participated in cycling trips, and was Walk Leader of trips. George joined Sutherland Bushwalkers in 1994 and was the Treasurer from 1997-2002.

Annual General Meeting Wednesday, 25 February 2026

Stapleton Community Centre, 3A Stapleton Ave.
Sutherland

All members are invited to attend our annual General Meeting. The agenda for the AGM will consist of:

- confirming the minutes of the previous AGM
- presentation of the financial report
- presentation of the President and Committee report
- election of the Club Office Bearers

In addition to the standard AGM agenda items, members will also be voting on the adoption of an updated Constitution.

More information will be provided closer to the date.



Have you changed your email?

If you have a new email address, then you will need to change this detail on Bilby so that you can continue to receive information about walks and activities. Navigate to your 'My Account' area in Bilby by clicking on your name in the top right corner. Now click on the 'Contact' tab (shown below Account) and there is an 'Edit' button on the right that will allow you enter a new email address. It will ask you to retype it to ensure there are no typos and then send you a code which you must respond to so that the system can verify the existence of that email. If this is not done, then the email address becomes unverified and no emails or messages will be sent to you.

It is also important to let the club know via our info@sutherlandbushwalkers.org.au email so that your email is updated in our system, too. If we don't know about the new email, then this may be your last newsletter!

Who else is walking with you?

It is often nice to know who else is on the activity that you have booked in for. You might want to see if there is someone to share a ride or a train trip with. Bilby allows you to see who else is on the activity. To do this, Log in to Bilby and click on your name in the top right corner. Then choose 'My Bookings' and a list of walks and activities that you have booked on will be listed. Choose the activity you want to check by clicking on the 'View Details' button for that activity. When the details are loaded, click the 'Participants' button on the left and you will see all valid participants.

Have you walked with them before?

Our club is fairly big and you may forget who you have walked with, somewhat embarrassing when they know you and you have no idea who they are! Bilby allows you to check what activities you have in common with a person on your walk and that might help you remember a fellow walker. Follow the above instructions on 'Who else is walking with you?', click on the details button for the person and scroll down to see past and future activities that you have in common with them. If you are lucky, they may also have put their photo into their account, so you can see what they look like.

Don't forget that 'Bilby Help' is available.

- Bilby documents are on our club website.
https://www.sutherlandbushwalkers.org.au/?page_id=15983
- In the Bilby system use 'Help and Support'
- Or email directly to
bilbysupport@sutherlandbushwalkers.org.au



A warm welcome to our new members:

Liz Hogan	Joseph Nigro
Anthony Poole	Susan Leslie
Nicole Pollett	Kris Boundy
Gary Allen	Ann Kirschner
Kelly Devine	Michelle Lim
Graham Smith	Greg Horth
Kim Brookes	Kym Stapleton

Q3 Club Activity Stats (Jul, Aug, Sep)

Sutherland Bushwalking Club now has 346 registered members and we participated in 47 club activities during Q3 2025.

Activity Type	Number of Activities	Number of Participants
Day Walk	36	296
Morning Walk	7	78
Paddle	2	12
Multi-day Walk	0	0
Multi-day Trip	0	0
Track Work	2	35
(Data from Activity Organiser's Trip Reports)		

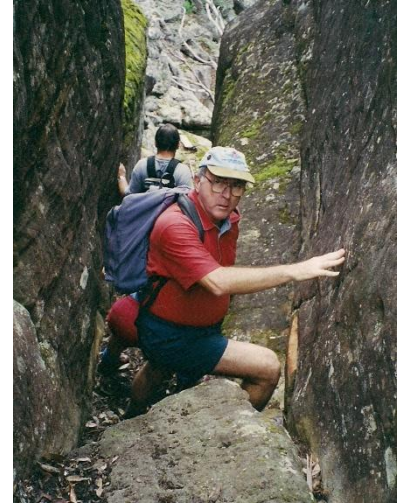
Some Memories of Judith, Tracy and George



Allan Bunt congratulates Judith Turner as she receives a club badge at the Christmas BBQ. Judith Turner joined in May 1995.



Tracy Cleary
A favourite photo from her family



George - 30th anniversary
Coolendel March 2000 - photo by
Erika Springstub

More Club Photos from our Facebook post



Snowy Mountains with Shaune and Beatrice



On the Tram with Vilma



Yeramba Lagoon with Deirdre



Royal coast with Gareth