

# Our Natural Environment



Our local area of Bawley Point, Kioloa and Termeil is a unique natural environment. Our community know how special this place is and ALL the experts, including National Parks, Coastal, Fisheries, First Nations elders, Geologists, ANU & Wollongong scientists, Ecologists, Biodiversity Conservation Trust, AGREE that this area is super special as a biodiversity hotspot.

It is recognised as unique in state of NSW, nationally in Australia and internationally.

We love our unspoilt beaches & pristine ocean, our gold & green bell frogs in our ponds, lace monitors in our veggie garden, the sound of black cockatoos overhead, with bush to beach, with spotted gums and bangalay sand forests, see the beauty of our landscape with the majestic Budawang range, Murramarang ridgeline, Mount Durras and Mount Gulaga as our backdrop, bookended by Murramarang and Meroo National Parks, With Marine Park and sanctuaries, Brush Island Reserve, Murramarang Aboriginal Reserve and a green belt running from Meroo to the southern end of Murramarang National Park.

Our local village and surrounds are regarded as a biodiversity hotspot because of the rare, endangered and threatened wildlife, exotic endemic plants & vegetation, landscape, ocean life and unique geology.

The experts urge that we can NOT take this unique natural environment for granted & it should not be captured by single interests or lost by poor planning decisions.

Just as the Batemans Marine Park is intentionally aligned to Murramarang National Park area, as we are bookended by National Parks, there is a case for protection status as a “National Park hamlet”.

It is clear we have a thriving & engaged community who value access to and preservation of natural environment. The community have embraced self-sustainable properties with tank water, sewerage and an innovative community Micro-grid for electricity. The high value on the quality of our natural environment underpins tourism, it is why people buy and come here, for recreation & well-being.

## **50% of the Shoalhaven is National Park**

- 2019/2020 black summer fires burned **85% of the 5 surrounding National parks in local area**
- Murramarang National Park comprises 12,000 hectares
- Many in the community are actively campaigning to stop logging the local area state forest, with a keen interest to understand what the mandate is for the forest if/when logging stops and a preference it becomes National Park.

### **The importance of our Green Belt and Bio-Diversity Corridor**

- Significant Threatened & Endangered wildlife here in local environment, plants, vegetation & wildlife.
- We have endangered and threatened species here, including recent evidence of breeding. Loggerhead turtle recently laid 88 eggs. A Leopard Seal was recently found on local beach, Orcas have been known to visit, Humpbacks, endangered Southern Right Whales take refuge here, Red tailed glossy black cockatoos and their feed trees, Gold & Green Bell Frogs, Powerful Owl, Koala, threatened Flora, Eastern Pygmy, Grey Nurse Sharks, fairy penguins, Lace Monitors and more.
- Coastal planning and management calls for protection of our creeks, lakes, ocean and headlands, ridges and greenbelts as landscape, from further development.
- ICOLL's - Intermittent Lakes & lagoons are unique globally. It is important not to flush out our local lakes & estuaries. These are unique and precious ecosystems and habitat. They are recognised as such and protected. Very high ocean and lakes water quality is critical for oyster industry, which absolutely rely on water quality.
- We have special trees, including Ol' Blotchy, the largest and Big Spotty, the tallest spotted gums in the world. We also have pockets of Forest Red Gum at ANU and Bundle Hill and on other properties locally, which is known as Koala food trees. This creates an important and rare opportunity for Private Conservation.
- Experts agree that where private properties have broken the green belt corridor, by clearing, it is important that the continuity of wildlife corridors be re-established.

### **We are a unique 'National Park hamlet', bookended by National Parks. There is a clear argument that it is in the national interest to preserve these coastal hamlets.**

- There is not much coast that is left in a predominantly natural state.
- Areas that have good soils have been cleared in a lot of areas e.g. Bermagui.
- It creates an enclosure for threatened species, for perpetuity.
- Coastal hamlets are vulnerable.
- Culturally rich heritage areas e.g. Murramarang Aboriginal Reserve which National Parks manage
- Coastal Bushwalking tracks, access to national parks to attract international and interstate, NSW and ACT visitors.
- Urbanisation provides clear evidence to support the need to preserve these hamlets.
- If people can't experience preserved natural environment's, they don't appreciate it. This local area creates an opportunity for people to come and see and experience and value the natural environment and to appreciate and understand need for conservation.
- Many believe it is critical we preserve the natural environment in this locality.

## Geology

- The geology in this local area is of interest to geologists and enthusiasts. Bawley Point is formed by a remarkable rock type, essexite, an igneous rock intruded into the Permian sediments of the southern Sydney Basin. We have “really old deposits” in Murramarang. Singing Stones beach was recently confirmed as having iceberg origins. Geologists call these stones drop stones, or ice rafted debris, and many such pebbles have washed up on the strip of coastline that includes Singing Stones Beach. There are only very discrete times in Earth's history when it happens, and we happen to have those rocks here. The geology here has become an attraction internationally.

## ANU Coastal Education and Research

- ANU campus map the local area for its unique natural environment, environmental and social changes. This area is huge physical laboratory. This is itself is a unique to our area and compelling opportunity to train the next generation of professionals & community members in managing local areas, in terms of physical, social & economic coastal areas.

## Private Conservation

- The Cleary Property is a great example of a regeneration and conservation project to be a wilderness and wildlife sanctuary

## Future Development

- Future development must be sustainable and consistent with existing and planned infrastructure that is affordable to the community.
- It should respect the character of the three villages and be consistent with the ambitions and outcomes envisaged by the community strategic plan being developed now.
- It must rigorously follow the existing planning and environmental laws & processes, including timely community consultation.

## Our unique, rare, endangered biodiversity

**Precious environments** supporting native wildlife ... on public land these are largely managed by Shoalhaven City Council. Bawley Pt Reserves. These include:

- Bangalay Sand Forest \*(e.g. narrow strip of forest behind Gannet Bch;
- Swamp Oak Flood Plain Forest \*(e.g. narrow strip alongside creek behind Cormorant Bch; along Butlers Crk lagoon Mmarang Dr beach side of ANU Coastal Campus
- Coastal Wetland (esp SEPP 14 \* freshwater wetland e.g. between Lurnea, Rosemary, Murramarang and Terragong)
- Resilient Remnant and Regrowth Bushland ... native forests behind beaches (Cormorant Bch, Bawley Bch Rsv), and on headlands (O'Hara Hd, Willinga Lake)

These forests and woodlands host many species of \*Microbats, \*Powerful Owls. Adjacent nature reserves and National Parks host 4 species of marsupial \*Gliders.

\*Classified as endangered plant communities/species

Some remnant patches of **Endangered Plant Communities** .. largely on private land or Natl Parks:

- Lower Illawarra Grassy Woodlands (predominantly Forest Red Gums and Woollybutts with native grasses underneath)
- Woodland copses of mature Black Oak trees *Allocasuarina littoralis* (post-2019 fire remnant patches within NPWS and also on private land) ... these are feed trees essential to rare and endangered Glossy Black red-tailed Cockatoos).
- Rare plant environments on some volcanic rock atolls. *Leionema curruthersii*

**Beach dune - lagoon environments** (Managed by Council or National Parks) where endangered shore birds try to nest Aug to Feb.

North/Willinga Beach, Murramarang Beach, Racecourse Beach, Kioloa Beach, Island Beach, Bull-Pup Beach

Shorebirds classified as endangered or critically endangered species: Hooded Plover, Pied Oyster Catcher, Red-capped Plover.

Many BP-K beaches (including Merry Beach) and National Park beaches patrolled for sea urchins and foxes.

### **Lakes, Creeks and wetland environments**

In addition, the region has water bodies such as Willinga Lake, Cormorant Wetland, and ephemeral wetlands on private properties; there are associated water courses and creeks. A number of these flow through urban areas into our local wetlands. These water bodies are all important components of the local ecology hosting many varieties of birds and aquatic species, reptiles, amphibians, incl Green and Golden Bell-frogs, Nankeen Night Herons. Large areas surrounding these are regularly visited by a wide range of other native birds.

### **Our Environment guardians**

Volunteers' resident in the 3 villages, Kioloa, Bawley Pt and Termeil, have worked for many years to combat exotic weed invasions, incl Weeds of National Significance (WONS weeds). These efforts, by Kioloa Bushcare and Bawley Point Bushcare groups, maintain the flora and fauna biodiversity in the areas described above. This local native flora and fauna diversity is a natural amenity appreciated by the overwhelming majority of residents in our area. Bushcarers are supported by SCC Council. Other volunteers are Shorebird guardians, supported by National Parks and Wildlife; Birdlife volunteers supported by Bird Life Australia; rock graffiti cleaning vols supported by SCC Council; Clean-up (bushland and beaches) vols supported by SCC Council.

Wildlife Carers and Rescuers locally and through WIRES, ORCCA and other organisations are also very active in caring for injured or impacted wildlife.

**What we can all do to support this?**

- It is important that dogs are not off leash on any on leash beaches or in no dogs' zones, for the protection of these habitats and vulnerable species.
- Respect local road speed zones to help protect our local biodiversity and wildlife.
- Please dispose of garden waste in appropriate ways. Do not leave or scatter garden waste in bushland areas, or near local estuaries or lakes & lagoons. This includes grass cuttings and weeds.
- Help manage weeds and invasive species out of our local gardens and native bush.
- Join a Bushcare or Wildlife group and offer to learn & contribute.