



# North Head Sanctuary Foundation Inc

## Custodians of North Head

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### Next Meeting

Will be on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 2pm at Bandicoot Heaven, Building 20 on North Fort Road.

Our speaker will be Mark Tozer, an ecologist who has an extensive record of research into Threatened Ecological Communities in NSW, including Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS). Come along and hear Mark's thinking on managing for the future of ESBS. Everyone welcome.

### Education Room - Bandicoot Heaven

#### New volunteers needed

We are open on **Saturdays and Sundays between 10am and 4pm**. Please call in, have a chat and see our new echidna poster.

We need to recruit new volunteers to help provide visitors with information about North Head and its bushland.

Anyone interested should contact Judy Lambert (email: [twswombat505@gmail.com](mailto:twswombat505@gmail.com) or phone 0427 217 580).

### Native Plant Nursery

The Nursery grows mainly Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub plants for planting by our volunteers into degraded areas of North Head.



Photo Peter Macinnis

One area is the frog habitat which is near Bluefish carpark. After rain the area where the volunteers are working is under water.

You are welcome to join us. There is always planting, weeding (never ending), and maintenance to be done in one of our many areas.

Please call in any Tuesday or Friday morning between 8am and noon. In really hot weather we may not work, or may leave early due to the heat. Email [northhead@fastmail.com.au](mailto:northhead@fastmail.com.au) if you would like to join us.

If you would like a copy of our monthly newsletter, please email [northhead@fastmail.com.au](mailto:northhead@fastmail.com.au)

### Things you might not know about echidnas

Judy Lambert

Those spiny little animals you might see waddling about on North Head have many interesting aspects to them, some better known than others.

Although to some extent filling a niche in the landscape similar to South America's 'spiny anteaters' and porcupines and hedgehogs that are widely dispersed across the world, echidnas come from a very different ancestry and are found only in Australia and PNG. All Australian echidnas are short-beaked species - Latin name: *Tachyglossus aculeatus*, *Tachyglossus* = fast tongue, *aculeatus* = spine.

Along with their close relative, the platypus, echidnas are some of the oldest living creatures, having evolved between 20 million and 50 million years ago.

Only the platypus and the echidna lay eggs and suckle their young. They are the only members of the Monotreme family.

Their egg is laid into a backward-facing pouch that develops only during breeding.

Within about 10 days the tiny, hairless puggle about the size of a jellybean, emerges.

Female echidnas don't have nipples - puggles suckle from pores on the mother's abdomen.

By the time they are a few weeks old, the young echidnas have grown hair and spines. They leave their mother's pouch and are placed in a shallow 'burrow' while mother goes off to gather food.

When about six months old, the young are ready to leave the nursery 'burrow' and live independently, often seen exploring their surroundings.

Their 'beak', which is really a long nose equipped with electro-sensors that detect movement as well as being sensitive to smell, plays an important part in seeking their food (mainly ants and termites).

Once located, food is gathered up in their fast-moving sticky tongue, which is up to 15 cm long. Lacking teeth, they grind their food between their tongue and hard little plates on the floor of their small mouth. Kept in captivity, they need some fine soil added to their food to aid digestion.

Sensitive to noise, their ears are slits on the side of their head, often hidden under their hair and spines.

Their spines are a modified form of hair strengthened with keratin, like our fingernails.

Their main defences are to roll into a ball with spines erect, or to quickly dig into the ground.



In some ways echidnas are part way between warm-blooded mammals (and humans) and reptiles. The normal body temperature in echidnas and platypus is around 32°C (lower than most mammals) and is less well maintained in both hot and cold conditions. In cold conditions, and when heavily stressed, they enter a state of torpor - a 'hibernation' in which their metabolism slows down and temperature drops, from which they can emerge more quickly than other animals that hibernate.

They don't sweat, so when too hot they'll flop in a puddle or even go for a swim.

Their hind limbs face backwards like those of lizards – better for digging. This adds to their 'waddling' gait, which is part of their novel appearance, but doesn't mean they can't get up some speed when necessary.

During mating season (usually June to September) echidnas form 'trains' in which a line of males pursues a single female until one male prevails when the female is ready to mate.

Although the average life-span of an echidna is reported to be about 14-16 years, some echidnas in captivity have lived as long as 40-50 years.

### *Sericornis frontalis*



Photo Ian Evans

"White-browed Scrubwrens are mostly dark olive-brown above, while the throat is buff grey and the flanks, belly and rump are dull rufous. They have a white line above the eye and another below the eye. The area around the eye between the lines is black, becoming greyer near the ear. The eye is light cream. Males and females are similar, but the females are slightly duller, particularly on the face. Subtropical and tropical populations are more yellow underneath, males having an almost black facial mask. Other populations along the southern coastline have dark

streaking on the throat. Young White-browed Scrubwrens are similar to the adults, but are generally duller, with more chocolate-brown backs and duskier faces."

From

<https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/Passeriformes/Acanthizidae/Sericornis/Sericornis-frontalis>

### Third Cemetery

Jenny Wilson

Evening News (Sydney, NSW:1869- 931), 21 April 1900.

"The Plague. THIS MORNING'S NEWS.

Another case of plague was reported at about midnight, making the total number of cases for Friday three. The patient, Charles Roffey, who resides at James-street, Woollahra, was subsequently seen by a medical officer of the Health Department, who diagnosed the case as one of plague. There are eight contacts.

The case of a youth named Charles Pitt, who resided at Sims-street, near Flinders-street (and whose death was reported on Friday afternoon), was regarded as being suspiciously like plague. A post mortem examination held later in the day, however, showed that the deceased had not succumbed to plague. Martin Curtis (whose name is now given as Richard Martin Curtis), who resided at Dowling-street, Paddington, died on Friday evening at the Quarantine Hospital. The number of rats caught, paid for, and cremated on Friday was 243. The Colonial Mutual Fire Insurance Company, Limited, 78 Pitt-street, has added bubonic plague to the list of diseases already covered under their combined accident and sickness policy, without extra premium. A public meeting was held at the Town Hall on Friday evening for the purpose of forming a citizens' vigilance committee to assist the Government and the municipal authorities in their efforts to stamp out the plague. Alderman Dr. Graham, M.L.A., presided, and among the speakers were Hon. B. R. Wise; M.L.A. (Attorney-General), Right Hon. G. H. Reid, P.C., M.L.A. Hon John Hughes, M.L.C., Messrs. J. Barre Johnston, A. G. Ralston (Mayor of Burwood), Rev. E. T. Dunstan, Mr. J. S. Brunton, and others. A letter was received from the Mayor, intimating pleasure in accepting the proffered assistance of the citizens. It was decided —"That in view of the serious outbreak of bubonic plague that has occurred in the city and suburbs, this meeting is of opinion that it is desirable that a committee, to be called the citizens' vigilance committee, should be formed, to co-operate with the Government and municipal councils, in their efforts to stamp out the disease, and to assist in the formation of local committees in the metropolitan area." Those present were formed into a committee to put the objects of the meeting into effect. The present unsatisfactory methods of disposing of garbage is likely to lead the early establishment of a destructor by the councils of the northern suburbs, acting in co-operation."

Richard M Curtis aged 17 died on 20 April 1900 and was buried in grave no 91 and Charles George Roffey aged 16 died on 22 April 1900 and was buried in grave no 92.