

# Aboard Sengo



## Back to where it all began...

### HEADING SOUTH OF THE BORDER

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### KUR-RING-GAI CHASE NATIONAL PARK

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### ROYAL NATIONAL PARK: A BRIEF VISIT

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## Heading towards Victoria

### but first 'Back to Where it all Began.'

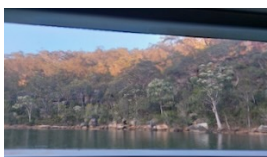
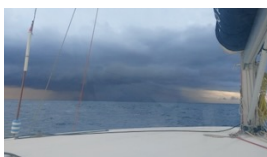
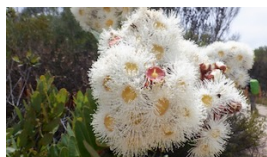
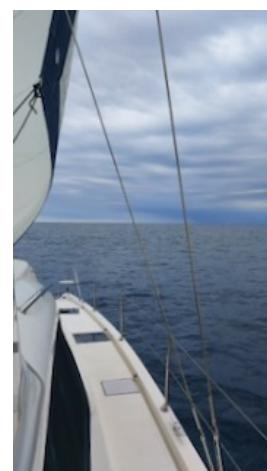
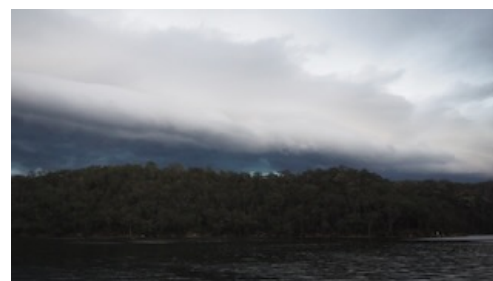
Our aim was to be in Melbourne, Victoria, at the end of the year for the start of the Festive Season. So, in order to achieve this, we had to start heading south. We haven't been south of the Queensland border for some time, due either to compulsory government regulations, or specialist health requirements. Now, there was no excuse. All we had to do was wait for the right weather.

The only commitment we had made on the way was to visit friends and family in, and around, Sydney. As we were starting this journey fairly late in the year, any other hiatus suffered during November would be enforced, and weather related.

As it turned out Sengo ended up spending ten days in November in one of the nicest places on the cruising route: Kur-ring-gai Chase National Park. This was not planned as such, but came about because of the timing around when we got to Broken Bay and when after that we could dock the boat, and, waiting for the weather window to leave the Broken Bay area. We took possession of Sengo in Pittwater in 2014 and initially spent around six months in the Broken Bay Area and Kur-ring-gai Chase National Park. It is a lovely place - particularly during the week without the weekend crowds!

In between moving and catching up with people, we did quite a lot of wet weather watching; there was quite a lot of wet weather!

The theme for the month was however 'southerly migration.' At the beginning of November we were on the Gold Coast, Queensland. At the end we were in delightful Kur-ring-gai Chase National Park, New South Wales, waiting for an opportunity to head further south.

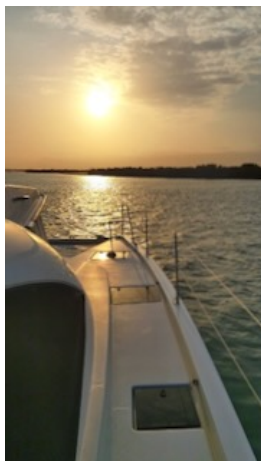


## Gold Coast, Queensland

### Tiger Mullet Channel

#### Sitting out strong winds.

1st November 2023. We were definitely not in the doldrums today; it was very windy! I could add quite a few more superlatives but I don't think I need to. So, for today's notes there is not much more to say. We read a lot, and played a few hands of Rummiking. The only 'boat job' was fixing (almost) the perspex door of the electrical panel



### Tiger Mullet Channel to south of Currigee Campground, South Stradbroke Island

#### Becoming an obstacle!

2nd November 2023. There was no wind when I opened my eyes but by 0650 it had picked up a bit. It wasn't strong, but it was enough to flap the front covers. Bush birds could be heard from shore. A plane flew past - from the sound of it, it seemed quite low in the sky.

At 0930 we had had breakfast (entertained by our usual Brexit YouTube), moved some stuff around in the front lockers, I had studied some Italian, and Andrew was back on the computer, being his usual 'space junkie.'

At 1200 the anchor was lifted, luckily, this time, without any issues: the bridle clip didn't fall off, as has been its habit lately, and there was no residual substrate. At 1215 we were through Whalleys Gutter (lowest depth seen on gauges was 0.9m below the keel), and had turned south. One engine went off and the genoa was furled out.

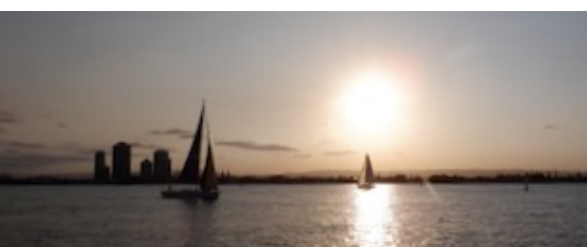
There was 'sort of' room to anchor at Crab Island at Runaway Bay. There were three crab pots about half way between the starboard mark and the most northerly yellow mark; not ideal but there should however be room for us, on a temporary basis, if we put the anchor down between the crab pots and the starboard mark. The anchor went down easily and I only put out 35 meters of chain. We dropped the tinnie and Andrew headed off to pick up the water-maker contractor. He was back in short order and the workman got on with the job. I looked behind us just to see where the boat was lying in terms of its proximity to the crab pots, and thought something looked a little strange. Where there had been two closer crab pots and one slightly further away, there was now one closer crab pot and two slightly further away. Perhaps one is dragging? I didn't think any more about this until Andrew pointed at a different crab pot - floating past! What! And then I looked out the back again. Two of the original three pots had gone, and soon the one floating past couldn't be seen either. In the end I think the last stalwart was actually picked up. Our old anchoring spot was now actually clear of obvious crab pots (I didn't want to think about those buried underneath like our experience in early 2020), and we could have, if we had wanted to, repositioned the anchor to somewhere a little more convenient, and safer, for overnight. But we chose to head to south of South Currigee Campground instead. We haven't anchored there for a very long time. The anchorage is next to the main channel and if vessels decide to reach the speed limit of 40 knots, an almighty rock ensues. Unlike our usual spot north of here, at the end of the Coomera River, there is no relief at a low tide, although generally boat traffic does drop off at night. But first we had to get there! After Andrew dropped the contractor back to the Runaway Bay Marina fuel jetty we were ready to go.



To our north, just outside the Runaway Bay Marina area, a large group of small sailing dinghies was racing around, and across, the channel. As long as we could get our anchor up without disturbing them they shouldn't be an issue. To the south, however, was a large number of much bigger vessels, of various sizes and elks, racing up and down the main channel. And we had to get through them! From a positioning point of view we had right of way BUT only if we were sailing. Because we were under motor they had right of way and, of course, we all hit the confluence, where the channels meet, together. The wind wasn't exactly strong but they were all sailing at a fair clip. It was hard to see where we might get an opportunity to cross; the wall of boats looked impervious. In the end we rounded the yellow mark, and proceeded up, north, toward most of the oncoming traffic, and crossed the flotilla in a gap that was just big enough; we didn't have a lot of room to spare. We got through the southerly heading yachts with no real issues, but did end up getting rather close to a northerly sailing one; there was an obvious 'chat' onboard that yacht with crew members pointing at our position. It was however, clearly a social race; beverage bottles were seen in almost all hands.

We put the anchor down at 1715 at an old anchor mark: flanked to the east and north by less-than-fancy boats. We were well inside the channel mark but a few minutes later those southerly boats were now heading north toward us. Cripes! We've become an obstacle. We are in the middle of the race!

Of course there were now bow waves from the racing yachts to contend with, but fortunately any rock was minimal, and other boat traffic was relatively light for the rest of the evening. When it got dark the 'clear sky' wasn't all that spectacular because of light pollution, and the light breeze was just a little too cold for us to comfortably sit outside and admire the Gold Coast in its night-lit glory.





## Out the Seaway and 'South of the Border'

3rd to 5th November 2023

3rd November 2023. I was up at 0330 to stretch my back. I read a bit before going back to bed for a couple of hours but got up for the day at 0730. True wind at the Seaway was blowing 5 knots.

Andrew had been up since 0630. We had breakfast at 0915. At 0930 wind at the Seaway was blowing 8 knots and predictions were that wind speeds were going to increase.

I prepped the outside of the boat by wiping the clears and the hatches, and putting covers on the hatches where I had them. Morning bird calls included the usual chorus of bush birds, cries of whistling kites, and clucks of white-bellied sea eagles.

We started lifting the anchor at 1015. The bridle gave me a bit of grief again but all was fully up at 1030. At 1040 the main sail was up and we were heading towards 'the exit.'

There was a sleeping little pied cormorant on the starboard mark adjacent our anchorage, and a couple of terns on the port mark further south. A little black cormorant flew past as we exited the Seaway.

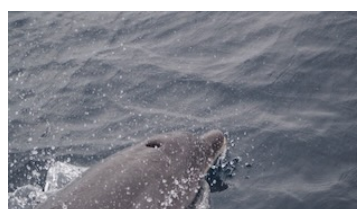
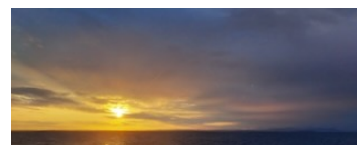
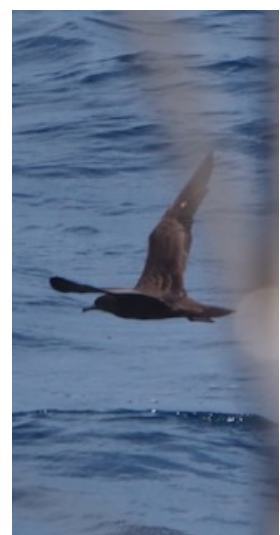
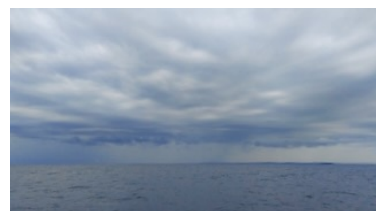
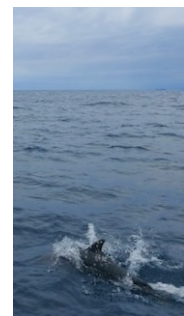
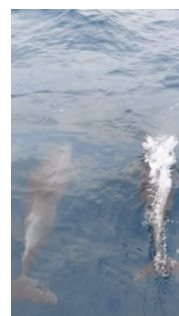
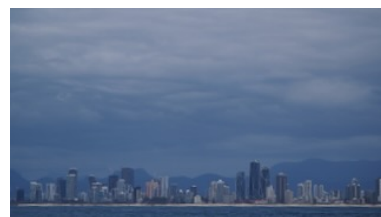
We were out of the Seaway at 1055 ...avoiding the fishing boat coming in at

an odd angle. The engines were off, the genoa out, and we were heading along our rum line at 1100. The wind was blowing 9 to 10 knots True. There were grey clouds to the west.

Our initial sail along the rum line (towards the outside of Point Danger's rocks) was smooth and our SOG was 5 to 6 knots.

As wind speed increased our SOG got up to 10.5 knots. But the stronger winds couldn't last, and wind speeds eventually dropped further than expected. At 1810 an engine went on just as we were about to get wet from a passing shower. At this point, we were just south of Ballina. At 1830 the engine went off again. At 1845 the wind picked up - it was now blowing 15 to 20 knots. Bellissimo!

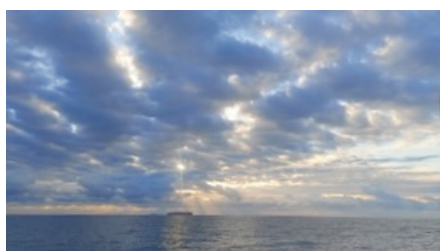
At this stage our travelling companions, for short periods anyway, had been dolphins, flying fish and shearwaters. And one unidentified tern.



4th November 2023. We weren't quite where I expected to be when I took over shift at 0000. I convinced Andrew to help me gybe which would have been great for a time but... the wind moved as I expected it to, but then I had to plan to avoid a ship! At the time of passing however True wind speed had dropped to around 3 knots. An engine went on at 0153. And off again at 0222.

I was off shift from 0300 to 0600. Andrew didn't record the details but he had the engine on for less than an hour on his shift. I got a better sleep; It was still in two tranches like the last break, but I knew I had slept deeply when the alarm had to wake me up!

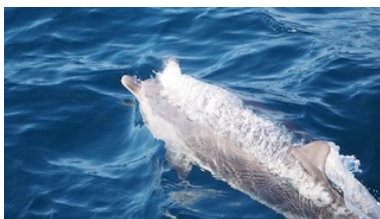
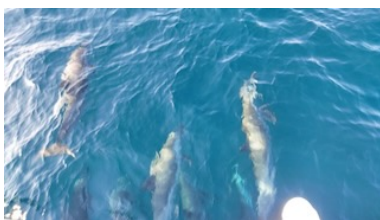
I spotted my first wildlife of the day (a shearwater) at 0635.



Noise was carrying well over the water, and I heard what I thought was a muted engine; a

helicopter perhaps... but then I spotted three ships!

We had a small pod of dolphins visit us at 0735 - for a few minutes. And then more at 0755. Or was it the same troupe, taking a break from a feeding frenzy to the west, leaving a lone shearwater to keep watch on the larder?

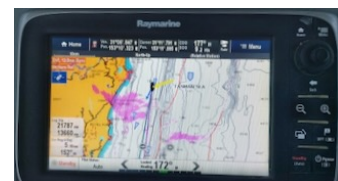
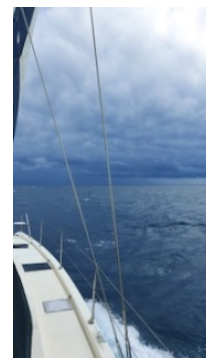
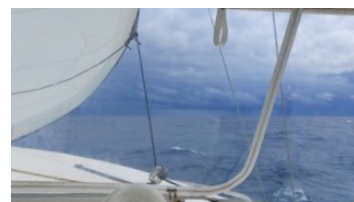


At around 0820 a juvenile little black cormorant flew past: so close that for a moment I thought he was going to land.

Another avian passenger (like last month) perhaps? Perhaps not!

The wind was north-west. Slowly it turned to north-east. It picked up around 1200 just as Andrew took over shift. Before I handed over the helm I saw 11.1 SOG on the gauges. At one point during Andrew's shift boat speed got to 12.7 SOG -but that was not the most exciting part of the day.

The most exciting part of the day, but not the most enjoyable, was the storm/s off Port Macquarie. To be fair we could see the storm/s in the distance. With reception we were checking the rain radar and wind speeds of the north-easterly heading storm from locations further to the south west. Taree, to the south-west of Port Macquarie had recorded thirty-four knots. Andrew contemplated putting a reef in the main sail. Then we decided against it. Then after surviving our first bout of storm we decided, before the main storm came through, to reef anyway. So in 'very' grumpy seas we turned the boat around and reefed the main. Lightening was rife, The engines went on. And then one decided to go off!



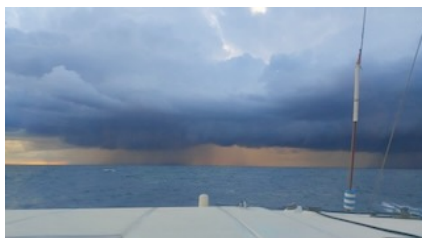
What! That's not useful! Not that we were intending to necessarily use the engines for anchoring



yet, but anchoring with one engine is not easy. But in the middle of a lightening storm the usual practice is to turn the engines on because if the lighting takes out your electronics then at least your engines are already on if you need them (with modern engines electronics are needed to start them). But that wasn't our main concern. The grey-out meant we lost the little mono who had exited the Seaway just behind us (somehow they had caught up to us but I suspect they had used their motor a bit more than we had). We knew they were close - we didn't want to run into them on one of our manoeuvres, having turned the radar on to negotiate the easiest, less intense, route through the storm.

5th November 2023. We turned the corner around Seal Rocks a little earlier than expected, at 0050, and put in a bee-line Goto for outside Broken Bay. Because we were leaving the Continental Shelf, and therefore, the assistance of the East Coast Current, both 'boat speed' and 'speed-over-ground' dropped a little. Now all I needed was phone/internet reception to work out if we were going to beat the oncoming strong south-east wind!

Well, it wasn't initially 'strong wind' that mucked us up. It was nearly 'no wind'. When I got up at 0620 (my alarm hadn't gone off at 0555) we were east adjacent Newcastle. Port Stephens was to our north-west. When I had put the Goto to Broken Bay into the chart plotter, we were travelling fast enough to get there by early afternoon. Now, we would be struggling to get there before midnight! The two rain storms to our east seemed to be tracking south, adjacent our pathway. And then they weren't. The



wind changed and increased and we turned off the wind toward the mainland for a smoother ride. This allowed Andrew to check the port engine to see if he could determine why it had shut-off yesterday. What it also meant was that we had to make a decision. The entrance to Broken Bay was 56nm to the south west of us, with its own, persistent, as we had been watching the rain radar, rain system. Port Stephens was 16nm to our north west. The storm we were outrunning was still chasing us and winds were getting stronger. We made the decision to retreat to Port Stephens. Yes, it meant going backward, but it also meant we could stop and take a break; the oscillation between storms, lightening and no wind had really worn us out. As we eased away slowly to the north a new rain system developed to our north-east. And it got bigger, and windier, and closer! And Andrew had to hand steer so we didn't run into the rocks below the Fingal Island lighthouse. True winds got up to high twenties, rain became heavy. Finally we dropped the genoa as we followed the purple line and lined up with the leads into Port Stephens.



The Genoa was furled before we entered between the Heads, and the main sail was dropped before the cardinal mark at north of the western end of Shoal Bay. The rain was thick and coming down in large drops.

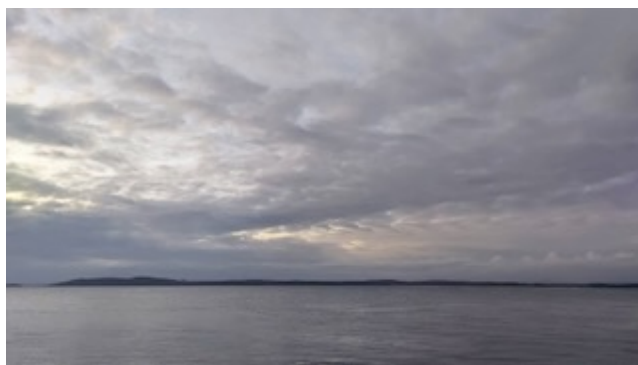
There seemed to be a few boats in Shoal Bay but we decided we would try Nelson Bay for a mooring. One of three moorings was occupied, by a boat we had followed down the coast, and that we had passed north of Seal Rocks. I had noticed when I had taken up this morning's shift that they were no longer in the expected area on the chart plotter, and I had suspected that the



boat had come in here. We took the mooring closest to the marina, the middle mooring not looking the 'standard' pink. Before I had got a cuppa however the middle mooring was taken by another cat.

It was raining as we came into the moorings. Of course it practically stopped after all was hitched up at 0930. We had been travelling 46 hours (we are now in Australian Daylight Saving Time - Queensland doesn't have daylight savings). There were people on the beach and we initially thought they were crazy being out in the rain, but on closer inspection it seemed as if there was an event being run just above the sand line. I took off my wet weather gear (I can't remember the last time I wore it), and hung it on the line under the back of the hard top to dry (but with a rain-filled atmosphere expected for some hours to come, I suspected it would be a while before I put it away).

Whilst the rest of the day was grey, most of the rain stayed away. Winds were calm and it would have been a great opportunity to get off boat to stretch the legs. But we had other priorities. At 1430, after a break, and a sleep for a couple of hours from 1100, Andrew found himself in the 'engine' room. Fortunately the only issue with our engine was a worn impeller in the water pump. We had a spare. It was installed. At 1530 the engine was back to normal. What a relief that was!



## Port Stephens to Broken Bay

(To Hallets Beach, Kur-ring-gai Chase National Park)

6th November 2023. The alarm was on for 0530. At 0544 it was blowing all of two knots...winds weren't due to be strong but hopefully they were stronger outside, off the coast. Parrots (species unknown) called from land.

We dropped the mooring at 0558. The main sail was up at 0610 just as the sun emerged over the top of the hill behind the Nelson Bay township. We were through the Heads under motor at approximately 0640.

Engines were turned off around 0720 and a heading GOTO was placed on the plotter for just outside Broken Bay.

At 0745 we were weaving through crab/cray pots - in 68 plus meters of depth. Really! We were travelling at 7 to 8.9 knots SOG. Seas were smooth. The ship Lily Fortune changed direction to pass us..bless their cotton socks (or maybe they were just changing their direction to head to Newcastle Port?)

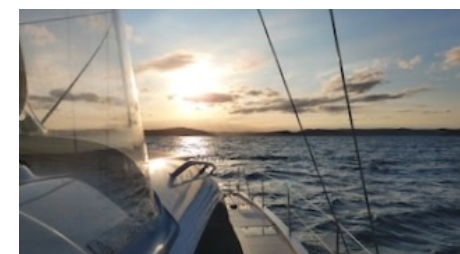
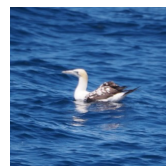
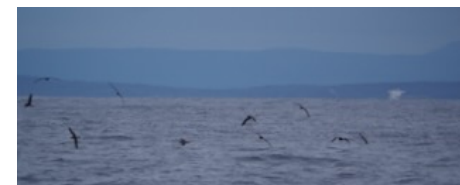
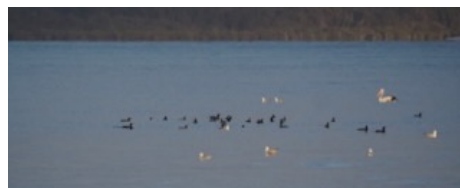
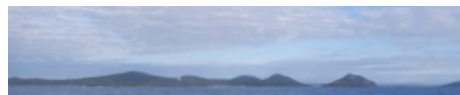
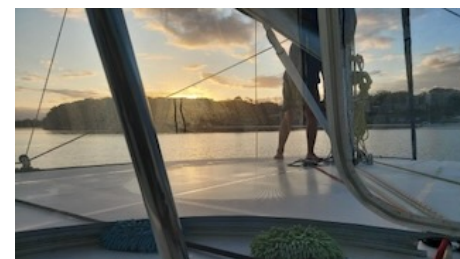
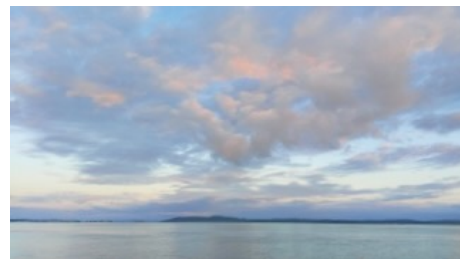
The wind died off a bit just south of Newcastle and we turned into it to keep up some speed - this gave us a SOG of 4 to 5 knots - in the wrong direction! Engines went on at 1620...if they hadn't we were not going to be able to anchor before it got dark. As it turned out, we didn't anyway!

Upon entering Broken Bay:

- Plan A was to anchor just south-west of Barrenjoey Head, Pittwater
- Plan B was to travel up towards the confluence of Cowan Creek and the Hawkesbury River and head into America Bay and find a public mooring
- Plan C was to anchor off Patonga Beach, but the swell looked like it was following in to that spot.
- Plan D was to pick up a mooring at Hallets Beach.

We had dinner of a dehydrated left over meal from our hiking adventures as we entered Broken Bay (to a setting sun) whilst we contemplated our destination.

The mooring at Hallets Beach was picked up with the help of the spotlight, in the last vestiges of natural light at 2005. Of the five moorings at that location - the other two occupants were a medium sized mono and a large powerboat.





## Kur ring-gai Chase National Park

7th November 2023. We both woke up around 0730. What a wonderful calm sleep..which we wouldn't have got at a couple of the other anchoring choices.

Swallows landed on the rigging and lifelines - ah, such a normal, and almost missed, occurrence. This location has limited reception and we checked the weather. What our movements were to be from here-on was discussed over breakfast.

The forecast was for oncoming northerly winds so we decided to move. The mooring was dropped at 1208. The new mooring was picked up across the way in Little Shark Bay at 1230. Ironically the waves, as small as they were, had followed us in. For some time I reasoned that they were just flowing around the point. The wind picked up a bit, but not excessively, and the little black cormorant, on top of one of the moorings and whom we had passed within a meter or so on the way to picking up one of the back moorings, was still there. A large power boat arrived and tucked behind the point. They must still have reception as I heard the start of the Melbourne Cup; we had none.

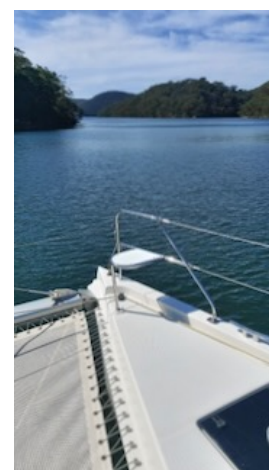
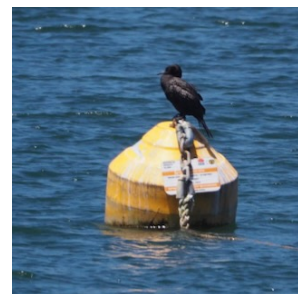
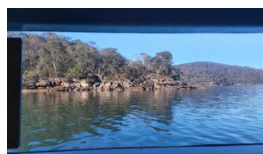
By mid afternoon the wind and waves were still coming into the bay. And the waves were getting bigger. Because we had no internet reception, we couldn't check if the forecast had changed, but the wind was coming from the south-east, not the north-east as predicted. Ironically, in the current winds, the mooring we had left earlier on the other side of the waterway was better protected.

Eventually we decided to move again. So we dropped the mooring and headed obtusely across the waterway, towards Yeoman's Bay. Ideally we would have liked to pick up one of the moorings in Castle Bay, an area which is protected by nearly all wind angles. However it is popular and the four moorings were already occupied. Travelling further south we headed to the bottom of Yeoman's Bay, where only two of the five moorings had occupants. To be as civil as possible we chose to pick up the mooring furthest from the existing boats, disturbing a little black cormorant seated on top. I wonder whether it was the same bird that we had seen this morning? We dropped the mooring at Little Shark Bay at 1536. The mooring was picked up at Yoemans Bay at 1550.

By sundown the other two moorings were occupied, a mono coming in very shortly after us, and a cat who had also come down the coast.

Birds. Silver gulls, pelican, little black cormorant, white-bellied sea eagle. We heard currawongs, eastern whip birds a kookaburra, and lots of bush bird song.

Boat Jobs: A few wipe down dirt jobs were done or started; helm station, some of the back cockpit, lounge window. We discovered an internal leak



late at night; this was not useful because we don't know where the water came from and, no rain was expected to test it for the next few days.



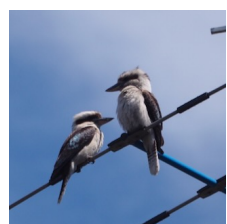


## Cottage Point Kiosk

8th November. I woke up at 0555. I initially got up to some heavy sounds out the back as I thought a large bird may have landed. It was gone by the time I got there. I went back to bed. We were both up for the day at 0640. Bush birds, like diseases, were calling from shore.

We left Sengo at 0745 and returned at 1215, after breakfast at the kiosk, and then, a walk up a hill. There are no 'walks' at Cottage Point so the only real option is to follow the access road that leads, eventually, to Terry Hills. We didn't go anywhere near that far, turning around at the high point, 45 minutes after we tied the tinnie off to the ancient, little, stepped wharf.

We had been discussing what we were going to do from here. Until we sort out a berth in Pittwater it is best to have internet reception if we can, although I was hoping to head to Bobbin Head for some walking. There is no internet reception there, or at least there was none last time we visited. On the way back from the kiosk we noted that three moorings were free at Castle

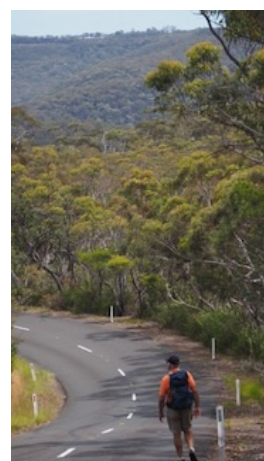
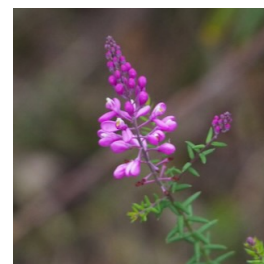


Rock but I wasn't sure we would have reception. The end of Yoemans Bay only had two boats in it. The cat that came in last night was still there but had shifted moorings. We did the same, moving around to a mooring with a bit more line of sight to Jerusalem Bay - where I suspect the internet reception comes from.

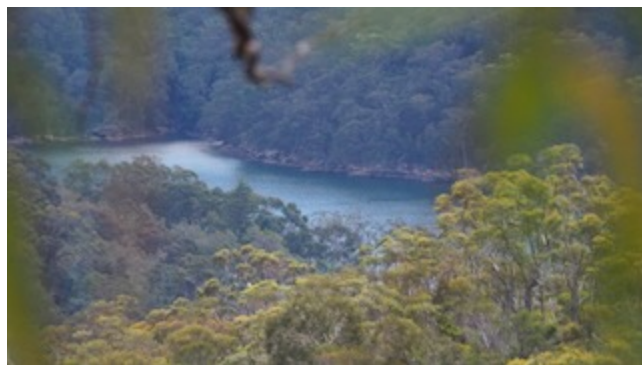
We had heard a channel-billed cuckoo at the anchorage before we left boat, but saw a few flying across the waterway whilst we were having breakfast. A whistling kite also soared across our vision to a nearby roost.

The road we walked up reminded Andrew of our NZ trek; not well maintained, windy and narrow.

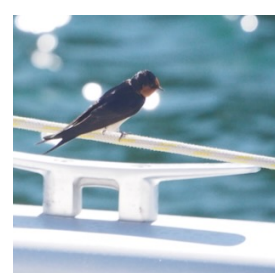
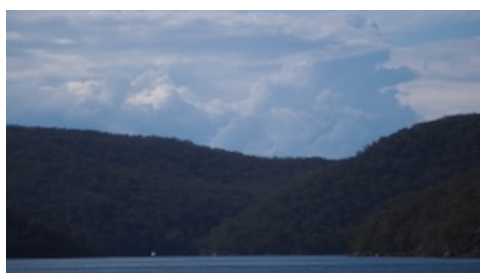
Birds: not many. Apart from those already mentioned we saw a New - h o l l a n d honeyeater, wrens, a noisy miner, and swallows.







Close encounter! I didn't get the whole scene in the photo but you can see the mast!





### Yoemans Bay to Houseboat Bay

9th November 2023. I was up around 0600. There was a small cloud below the hill-top to our north. Bush birds, eastern whip birds and white-bellied sea-eagles could be heard. Channel-billed cuckoos and currawongs had their moments. Swallows landed on the lifelines, the tinnie, and the davits. All sorts of trills and cheeps came from shore. It was still.

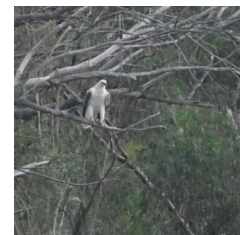
We dropped the mooring around 0930 and headed north. A little. 'Trying for an outer mooring at Little Shark Bay. I figured, as we had picked up emails coming onto the inner of the moorings at this bay a couple of days ago, but then lost signal, then perhaps an outer mooring may be far enough out to pick up any appropriate electronic waves. It wasn't.



Our options were to then go back to Hallets Beach where we had got sporadic phone reception the first time we were here (and I remember an interrupted conversation with Spotlight Gosford several years ago), or go further into the river system. I still had my eye on Bobbin Head. I had already enquired with the cafe if they had wifi just in case we couldn't get it on boat. In the scheme of things, contact with the outside world was only imperative in one case: we had put in a request for a two-week term on the collector jetty at Royal Motor Yacht Club. We hadn't heard back from them, and really needed

to know a timeline before we disappeared into the internet-free ether. But I didn't want to put our lives on hold

waiting an unknown period of time. So with wifi reception still available we emailed off to the marina to let them know of our movements. Phone reception gave us three bars near Castle Bay and then nothing, so phone calls could not be made.



Making a doughty decision we headed toward Bobbin Head and picked up a mooring at Houseboat Bay at 1055. Wifi reception was possible. A skeric of phone reception was available but not enough to keep the connection. It didn't matter: fortunately an email had arrived with a confirmed date on dock for next Monday!

The expected 1100 tranche of rain from [windy.com](https://www.windy.com) was nowhere in sight. Beautiful blue skies surrounded us. And practically no wind. A couple of pleasure boats passed..either toward, or away from, Bobbin Head/Apple Tree Bay. We were however prudent enough not to take off for an afternoon walk after our lunch of pumpkin muffins (I had cooked the pumpkin this morning

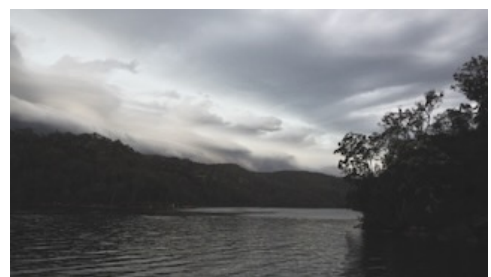
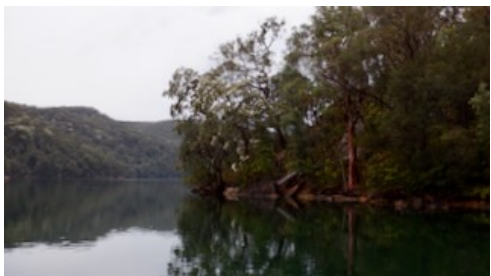
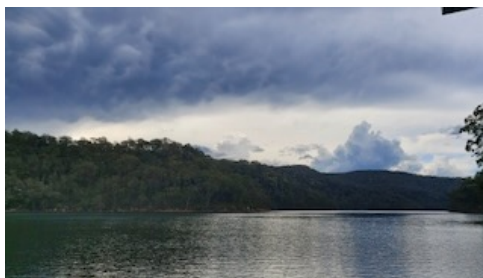




before Andrew got up). Because of the lovely conditions we had opened the house up, side port-lights, front and back covers. But by 1430 thunder was starting to rumble from the west. The graphics on the bom.gov.au app were not as dramatic as those from the bom.gov.au website. By 1500 I had shut the side port-lights and put the front cockpit covers back on. Then I sat in the back cockpit, facing west, listening to the growing volume of the thunder (stupefying at the two mad jet-skiers still frolicking about), and waiting for the rain

Rain started in earnest around 1545. For a while I soaped up some of the deck until it got too wet. Counting the difference between lightening and thunder seemed a breeze until 1714 when they were almost instantaneous!

Birds: white-bellied sea-eagle, little pied cormorant, currawongs, cravens and friar birds. Some small bird song and at 1520 it was the only noise, apart from the rumble of thunder to the south, and the mad jet skiers going up and down the waterway in front of us. No serenity will be seen here for a short while.



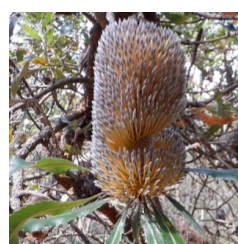
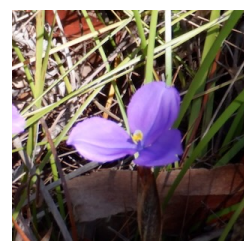
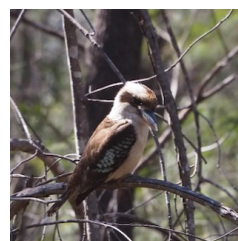
## Discovering the Discovery Centre



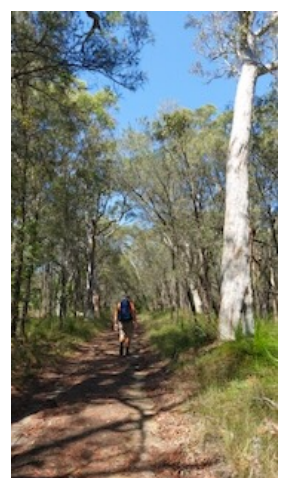
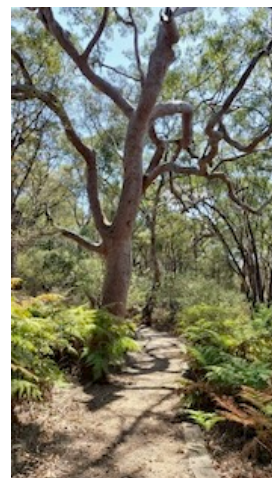
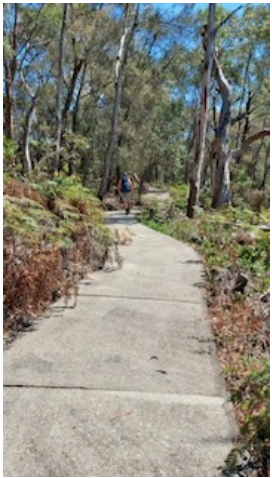
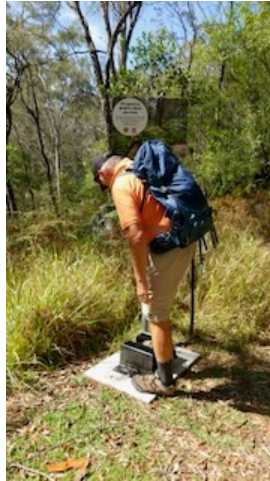
10th November 2023. I wanted an early start. Of course, I didn't get one. By the time we left Sengo it was after 0900, and we started walking from the boat ramp at Apple Tree Bay at around 0934. In the end, the delay didn't matter, the expected afternoon rain didn't come, and the weather was lovely. I had envisaged a shorter walk today: an AllTrails 5km jaunt from a car park coincided with a loop which was listed by itself from a different direction. We started in a third location following half the loop, diverting to the carpark near the Discovery Centre (but not on the exact track, an enclosed interps park has been established blocking the original track), and returning via the rest of the loop, with a fancy lunch at the Waterfront Cafe at the Empire Bobbin Head Marina thrown in for good measure.

We were back on board Sengo around 1445. As we approached the back of the boat Andrew noticed something a bit strange with our port prop: we were fortunate that the water was so clear. After a cuppa Andrew donned himself in his stinger suit (I suspect the jellyfish here are harmless compared with the nasties up north, but better to be safe than sorry) and dove under the boat to investigate. Grabbing a knife he extricated the offending item..which turned out to be a torn and frayed mix of a washing hanging line. Neither of us are claiming responsibility but it was just as well we noticed it. Who knows what damage may have happened if we had run the engine too long with that wrapped around the prop.

We had discussed options for tomorrow. The tracks north to the train-line and down creek from Apple Tree Bay were blocked off or officially closed. The circuit we had walked via the Sphinx Memorial some years ago was open, as was a potentially smaller loop via civilisation. Either one of those options was doable and useful for training, and I was leaning toward the latter as it would have been partially along a new track for us. But then I had a thought. What if we used tomorrow morning's calm weather and got our kayak out. Ideally we would start from the bottom of Smiths Creek, my favourite spot in all of the Kur-ring-gai Chase waterways. But we had to get there. It was getting late on a Friday afternoon. Would there be a mooring free?







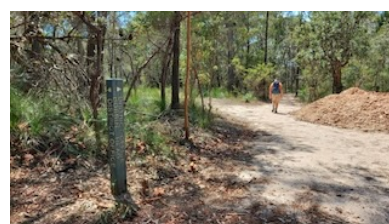
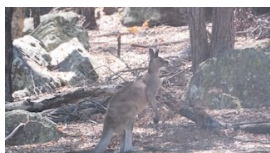
We had, at Apple Tree Bay, already seen one group of power boats head out together, no doubt on their weekend group-tour. Other single power boats had passed, although some were heading upstream rather than down. We dropped the mooring at 1550 and headed toward our preferred destination.



A couple of powerboats passed us and both seemed to head down Smith's Creek. The biggest boat pulled into the first bay on the right, picking up the last available mooring there. The second small bay has three moorings and one of these was available but we still thought we would check the very bottom. A large gin palace had made its way up Smiths Creek and I had assumed that perhaps it had dropped a mooring and one





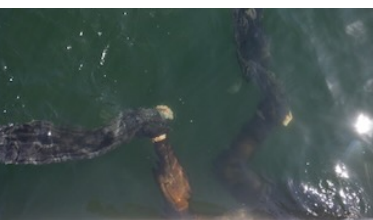
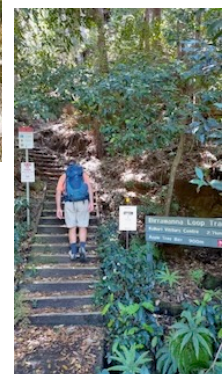


would be free. Alas, all five moorings were taken, and other boats had anchored so there wasn't a great deal of room available. We high-tailed it back to the free

mooring at Twilight Bay, picking it up at 1645.

Birds at the new mooring area ..unidentified bush birds, yellow tailed black cockatoos, glossy black cockatoos, friar birds, currawongs (were heard).

Birds along the walking trail. Kookaburra, blue wren, noisy miner, bush birds, currawong, raven?, and a silver gull on the waterway on way back to boat





## Paddle in Smiths Creek

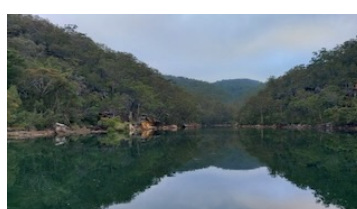
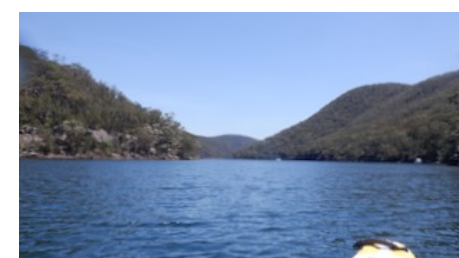
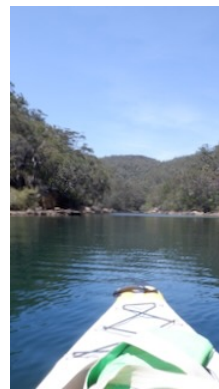
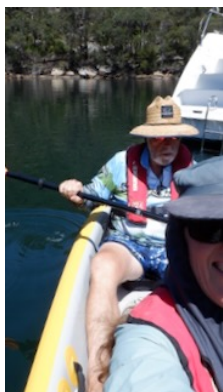
11th November 2023. At 0600. Still. Quiet. A few small fish were jumping behind boat and the dawn chorus had started. It got louder at 0630 and then tapered off again. I finally got around to reading the faq's in Merlin. I suspect the reason I cant use the App to identify bird sounds is because there are none listed for Australia. Essentially it looks like it is a case of citizen scientists who contribute the recordings, and few in Australia have done so. A pity, as the process was really useful for identifying birds in Canada. I have a different App (and old-fashioned physical field guides) for visual identification.

We got the kayak out this morning. Blowing it up was relatively easy. Fitting it with its accessories also easy... because... we left the rudder off!

We haven't used the kayak often and every previous attempt has been remembered for Andrew's grumpiness. This has primarily been with regard to fitting and using the rudder, and extra paid-for accessory that never really worked. We left the rudder off... and... no grumps! We had a lovely paddle down into the upstream navigable end of Smiths Creek and back to boat. It was so nice to be able to say I'd enjoyed the activity and there was no swearing from the seat behind me! I didn't even feel too bad after it, undulating the paddles for the strokes usually gives me sore arms and a sore back. Perhaps, finally, I've worked out what technique I should be using!

Because we had been on the mooring last night, and it was the weekend, we thought we should, in fairness to others, move. We

grabbed a mooring at Little Shark Bay for the night, picking it up at 1505. A very large powerboat came in to pick up the mooring in front of us (way too big for the mooring). It stayed a few hours but then moved on ... . thankfully. Whilst we were on a mooring there was no issue with contrary anchor movement, but the boat seemed that close I felt we could have shaken hands with the occupants!





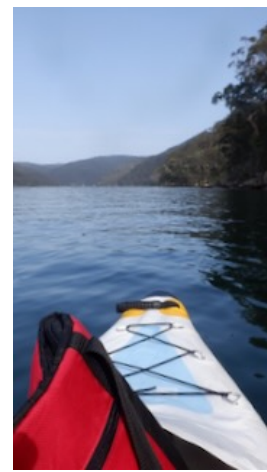
## To Towlers Bay..Pittwater

### But first....kayaking into Jerusalem Bay

12 November 2023. When I got up this morning the sun was up, there was hardly a breath of air, and the other boats in the anchorage, the two on moorings and the anchored vessel, seemed to be laying in the opposite direction to us. This was a bit strange as there was an incoming tide, and supposedly a southerly change had come in overnight. We couldn't check because we had no internet reception, but by rights, all boats should be facing south. A little black cormorant had taken residence on the free mooring.

This morning I couldn't undertake my normal habit of the word challenges whilst waiting for Andrew to get up so I read instead.

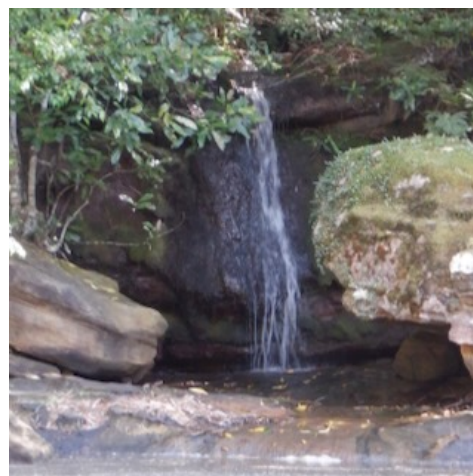
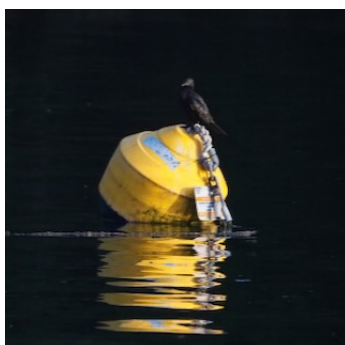
At 0835 we left Sengo and paddled around the point into Jerusalem Bay. Conditions were still relatively calm and there wasn't a great deal of boat wash to contend with yet, at this early hour on a Sunday. The cruising guide we have notes the issue with the bay we were in was the boat wash from vessels plying up and down the waterway.



There weren't a lot of bird calls, although the adjacent land when we turned into Jerusalem Creek was predominantly still in shade. Still, there hadn't been a lot of dawn chorus when I got up either: or was it perhaps because we had slept through dawn?



We saw three small waterfalls on today's paddle, and spots where water has recently been running, or has left stains on the rock some time ago. A stingray was





spotted, along with lots of fish, both in numbers and species. The spot of the day however was the python - although I was restricted in creativity because I only had my waterproof camera with me. We paddled to the extent of both inlets up the top of the Bay and to the back of Pinta Bay - where we got out to stretch the legs and back for 15 minutes. We were back on Sengo at 1045.



Sengo was on her own when we got back, but as we were eating an early lunch a power cat came in and tied up on the furthestmost mooring from us. Before heading off we made some water...it was likely to be clearer here than the bay we were going to anchor in overnight.

Birds: little black cormorant, little pied cormorant, pied currawong. We heard swallows, channel-billed cuckoos and lots of bush birds

The mooring was dropped at 1400. Our anchor was down in Towlers Bay/Morning Bay in Pittwater at 1515.



## Into the marina - tying up for a couple of weeks : Royal Motor Yacht Club

13th November 2023. When I got up at 0600 it was blowing 16 knots True and it was grey outside. We were facing south east. It wasn't yet raining but that state only lasted 5 minutes. The kayak fortunately had been turned over last night when we wiped it down. It was going to get more of a wash this morning.

Andrew emerged just as the rain came down.

The wind dropped but the drizzle continued. In a short break I pulled fenders and ropes out of the front locker and set them up. We weren't hurrying. The wind was supposed to drop further still and the drizzle disappear, but we ended up not waiting. As per last time we secured the boat in the rain, the rain stopped just as all was tied off. I was expecting to have to wedge in between two boats but we had a clear run to land. We had asked for help but in hindsight it would have been easier without the inexperienced lad they sent us. Swirling the rope around a cleat without tying it off to manoeuvre a boat may work for a light monohull or a dinghy, but not something you want to risk with a twenty tonne cat that will use it to pivot! And when I insisted he secure the rope so Andrew could use it, the lad created some fancy eclat tie over the entire cleat configuration that would have been a nightmare to get off in a hurry should the need arise. Next time I get on dock I will insist the marina send experienced staff!

The oddity of the day didn't stop there. The marina office wasn't occupied so we went to have a shower before we logged in. I had forgotten the only thing I didn't like about this marina: the lack of privacy in the showers...no in-cubical benches here!

I managed a couple of loads of washing in the evening - at the Club Laundry. There was some confusion over whether the cycle cost \$3 or \$4 (\$3 for dryer, \$4 for washer) and I managed to 'throw' washing detergent all over me - not exactly endearing me to the task..

I wasn't really taking much note of the bird-life today. Silver gulls flew around and we heard a 'mopoke' late at night.

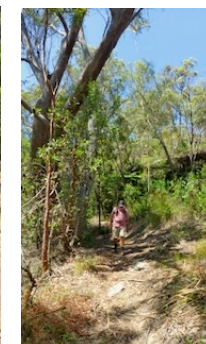
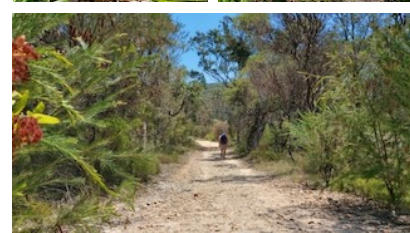
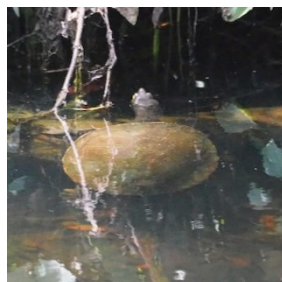
## Picking up the car and a shorter than expected walk

14th November 2023. I think it was around 0720 when we left boat this morning. I had tentatively suggested we leave at 0715 but I had to go back because I had forgotten to turn the gas off. The service stairs at the back of the club building seemed blocked off (I wanted the 'up' exercise) so we started our uphill walk via the driveway. I was out of breath by the time I got to the top of the hill....

The bus runs every ten minutes and we had arrived at the desired stop between busses. Like Victoria and Queensland, New South Wales runs a plastic bus ticket. We haven't used ours for years. We had no idea how much was on our cards and we were both surprised to find the balance above zero. There was enough on each card to get us to our required destination.

The bus we took was toward Manly - actually I think every bus caught from the bus stop we used goes to Manly. We got off at Dee Why and walked to the car hire place. We had booked a small car (but not inexpensive - everything is expensive these days. And this is Sydney!). It was a hybrid. Neither of us had driven a hybrid before - in theory our fuel costs should be lower.

I had planned on a 10 plus kilometre walk today - to a lookout overlooking Cowan Creek in Kur-ring-gai Chase National Park. But this morning I found I had some (hopefully) minor pain underneath my right foot. So, with short notice, I searched All Trails for a shorter walk. I found one that didn't look too hard, although it was listed as a there-and-back walk with a steep downhill to start with, and therefore a steep uphill to finish with. The access point from where the AllTrails walker had started was obscure. It was that obscure that we couldn't see it from the car, the small cul-de-sac where the walker had started from was full of yet to be collected rubbish bins so, not wanting our hire car to be in the way of a garbage truck, we moved to the next obvious spot for access; the next dead ended road along. We didn't get all the way to the end of this little road as at the end, where the access track was supposed to be, we could see a new house build under construction. I, incorrectly as it turned out, assumed the house was being built on top of the access, so we went for plan C to park the car; on the main road; here a badly defined track was situated adjacent the creek. When we finally got to what was the 'starting' spot for the walk we wondered how





anyone would find it. Yes, it did have a National Park sign, but it wasn't obvious; the track clearly not used by lots of people.



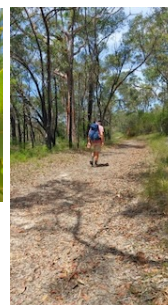
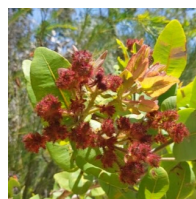
So we made our way along what was labelled as the Frenchs Creek to The Cascades Track, listening to lots of varied bird calls causing a ruction (some from the same bird - a friarbird was having a lovely time in a patch of wetter forest mimicking its neighbours), and admiring the birds we did see; wrens, firetails, kookaburras, and honeyeaters.



When we got to the cascades we saw dragons, a turtle and a couple of English tourists! The cascades themselves would have been more spectacular if there had been more water flowing over them.



In the end we walked the 'there' but followed an alternate route back, ensuring a varied landscape and some extra wildlife experiences (we spotted monitors and an echidna on the alternate track).

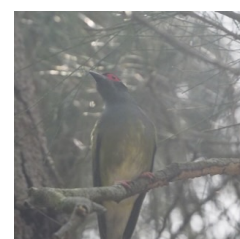


We had nibbled on muesli bars and apples on track, and Andrew suggested finding a cafe for a cuppa now we were back at the car. As it was now into the early afternoon we wondered where we could find one with a nice outlook that would be open when we got to it....certainly the Queensland cafes we have come across lately have a habit of closing at 1400 or 1500. Using www. I found several options that sounded good (I wanted somewhere with a view) that were likely to close before we got to them. In Mona Vale we found one that was supposedly open until 1700. And it looked like it might have water views. It wasn't exactly what we expected - mostly takeaway - there was seating but there was a half sided fence between the eating area and the parkland adjacent the bottom of Pittwater. The car park was also a paid parking area. We almost had a fit at the cost..... whilst we paid for this spot we will be determined to avoid paying for parking again.



At the cafe we saw white ibis, silver gulls and a fig bird

We were back at boat a little after 1500 and read for most of the rest of the afternoon.



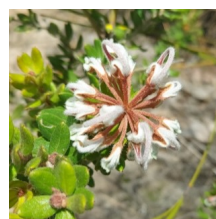
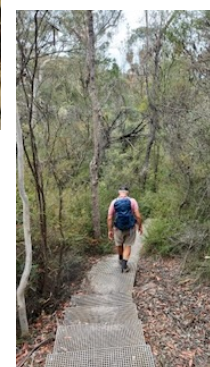


## Manly Memorial Park Circuit.

15th November 2023. For the second day in a row I postponed the 10km walk to overlook Cowan Creek. Like yesterday, we had a task to complete in the morning before we could consider recreation. Yesterday, it was picking up the car. Today it was dropping a paddleboard off to see if it could be fixed. Whilst today's drop off location was a bit further away from the planned walk than yesterdays task, and we did start later than expected, it was neither of those factors that changed our plans. It was the forecast weather. We have discovered that the [windy.com](https://www.windy.com) forecast doesn't necessarily match up with the forecast from [bom.gov.au](https://www.bom.gov.au) around the north of Sydney area, and whilst bom.gov.au had a 25 pc or less chance of rain where I wanted us to walk, windy.com had gone from a potential 3mm rain yesterday, to a potential 12mm first thing this morning, to a potential [13.mm](https://www.bom.gov.au) by the time we left the repair shop!

So, like yesterday, I took a bit of a quick look at the AllTrails map for a closer, hopefully drier, option - and I found a 7.4km (ish) circuit at Manly Lake. Parking on-site would have cost us \$25 for 2.5 hours so we moved the car a couple of hundred meters and it cost us nothing (regularly done by the locals apparently).

There was a bit of 'up' on this track, but with total elevation gain at 190m it was easily doable. According to graphics, the red zone for going 'up' was if we walked in an anticlockwise direction. By walking in this direction we found



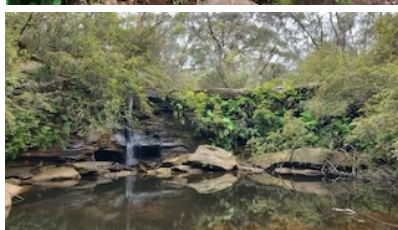
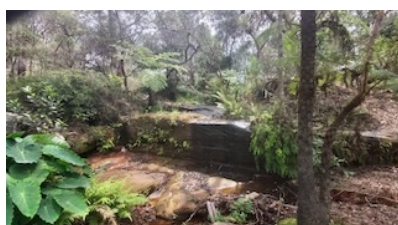
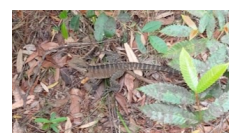
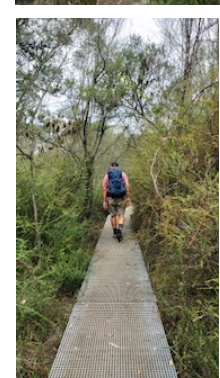
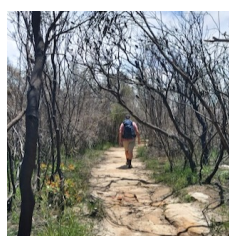
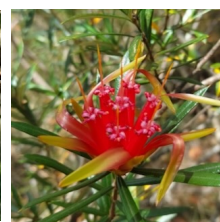
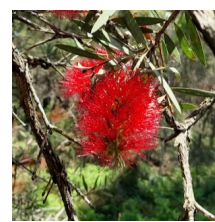


not only that we seemed to be going against the flow, but we found that rather than going 'up' 'heartbreak hill' we actually went 'down' it. Admittedly we did stop for lunch halfway down the steep bit. During this break we spotted only two people - one, a woman walking two dogs, and the other, a cyclist going up - what a mad, mad, fellow.

Animals. There were plenty of eastern water dragons spotted, and some small lizards. Quite a few butterflies were also seen but they were all too quick to even take photos of for later identification, and it didn't help that my good camera battery went flat about half-way around the track.

The terrain was varied, along with the vegetation; an interps board at the picnic area describing several distinct plant communities.

Birds. Coot, purple swamp hen. Great cormorant? Pallid cuckoo, red browed finch, falcon ?, brush turkey, white ibis grey butcherbird, magpie, pacific black duck, wood duck, hard head, honeyeater (black white head yellow on wings). A pelican was sitting on the top of the light pole on the bridge at Narrabeen. superb blue wren, kookaburra, common myna, rock pigeon at the food court at Westfield, channel billed cuckoo, welcome swallows



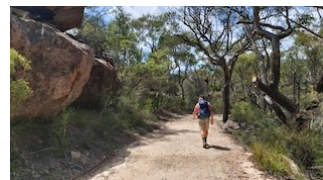
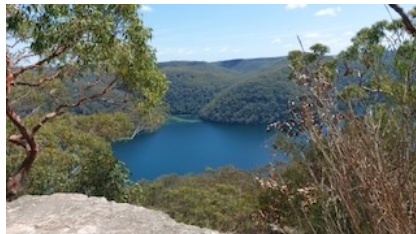
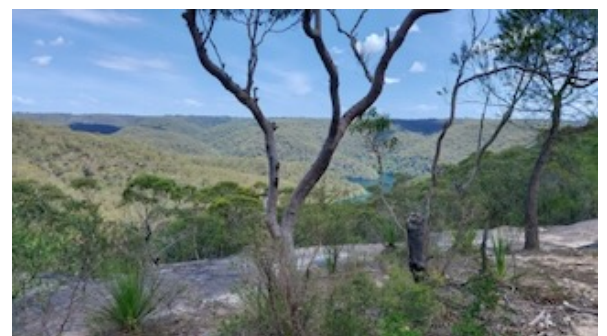




## Third time lucky

### Cowan Fire Trail and Long Fire Trail

16th November 2023. Finally, on the third attempt, we got to the viewpoint over Cowan Creek on the Long Fire Trail. The weather looked good and my feet were fine. The there-and-back walk to Peach Trees Lookout is 10 kilometres long, but I was inspired by a walker's comments in the AllTrails App that they had walked the Cowan Track as well. I managed to drag Andrew along and complete the out-and-back Cowan Track on the way back, despite the fact we were both a little tired. The day was hot and we were probably both over it a bit by the time we got back to the car, but the lookouts/views at the end of each track were definitely worth it. All up we walked around 14 kilometres on these tracks.

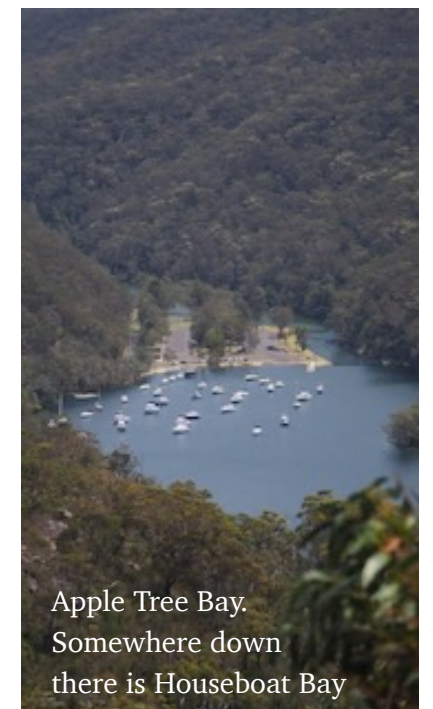
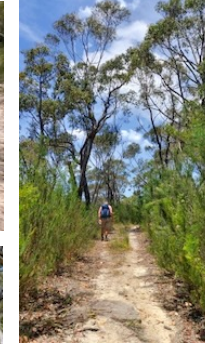




We didn't see any walkers on this track but there were a couple of cyclists.

Birds: Little wattle bird, honeyeater, channel-billed cuckoos heard, corella, white faced heron, little pied cormorant

We did a quick shop on the way back to boat



17th November 2023. Yesterday was mostly blue skies, although some cloud in the latter part of our walk provided relief from the sun. Yesterday evening skies were grey, and the first shower with the increasing southerly winds came down just before dark. This morning at 0015 it really came down. I tried to rescue the washing on the back line but it was probably just as wet by the time I threw the items inside as it was when I put them on the line last night. I got wet: and I was standing under cover!

The wind was up at my usual, these days, wake-up time of around 0500. I was in no mood to get up. We had had a lovely sleep; 20-plus km of walking yesterday (14 km of trail and 6km of normal shopping and around-the-boat stuff), and a lovely warm shower helped. We finally dragged ourselves out of bed just before 0700. Andrew saw 25 knots on the gauges but it was down to 18 when I went out. Apparently North Head at the entrance to Port Jackson to our south got to mid-thirties sometime overnight.

I put some of the washing back on the line...it was still cold and a bit damp out there but most of the rain had gone, and some of the washing in the helm station, a lot wetter than I would normally but hopefully the 'greenhouse' effect would help it dry quickly.



The back doorstep mat was soaked! As it was tucked slightly under the back carpet I guess we are going to have to air that out too...it probably needs a good hose-down..it is not going to get it for a week considering our plans...and knowing the forecast is for rain anyway. We still have a leak over the cupboard!

We had guests for lunch today (well a cuppa on boat and lunch at the Club restaurant). They were four delightful individuals whom we met on our most recent Kimberley sojourn. Whilst today's socialising was a lovely relaxing affair it was to be the start of a very busy few days of catching up with people.



## The road trip begins

### To outer Sydney -catching up with family

18th November 2023. Our alarm was on for 0630 but we got up at 0545. We had scheduled our departure for 0700. Whereis.com suggested that it would take 1 hour 21 minutes to get to our destination, but given we knew there was at least one lot of road works along that route, I wanted to allow more time. In the end we had a seriocomic journey; we encountered no roadwork issues, but two wrong turns and two toilet stops had us arriving with only a couple of minutes to spare.

The contrasts along the roads during today's drive ranged from suburban Sydney to outer fringe lifestyle properties; from affluent houses to run down and unmown properties. The paddocks on the fringes were occupied by cows, miniature ponies and one very unhappy boat! (The ribs were falling off and there was a tree growing through it!)

We ended up catching up with seven direct family members, and three adopted family members, some of whom we had not met before; the lunch of twelve a busy, and far-too-short, affair.

Dinner was a more serene catchup with my cousin and his wife at a local tavern.

### Outer Sydney to 'Just outside Canberra'

#### More catching up.

19th November 2023. The alarm was on for 0615 but we woke up before it. Breakfast had been ordered for 0700. We left Richmond at 1015, and took the 'country' route to connect to the main road to Canberra, this included driving past the area that is being developed for the new airport. We had a break at Marukan to stretch our legs (and get a cuppa).

We got to a friends' house for lunch in one of Canberra's suburbs at 1240. It sounds cliched, but after a delightful catchup we headed south east, getting to other friends around 1630. A cuppa, a chat, a walk around the property and a delightful dinner. We went to bed at 2130.

#### 20th November 2023

Our journey took a vaguely planned hiatus today. We stayed another full day with our friends outside Canberra - a six year absence means a lot of catching up!

### Outside Canberra to Jervis Bay

21st November 2023. We left our 'just outside Canberra' friends around 0930 and headed east. The friend we wanted to catch up with near Jervis Bay was busy this evening, so I figured if we could get to her for lunch we could still have a good catch up, and she would still get to her evening social event. We booked a hotel nearby her place so we wouldn't have a long drive this afternoon. The universe managed to turn the day to our advantage, as not only did we have several hour's catch up with our friend, we managed to get invited to join her group for the weekly trivia (complete with the event's addlepated host), as there were two team places free. Not only was this a boon but our hotel happened to be across the road from the trivia venue. Overall the team didn't place, but they did win the bonus prize - which means they go into a draw for some money, and Andrew won 'heads and tails,' and came home with a bottle of wine (although one of our team members suggested we dilute it with soda water or something similar; apparently the brand is quite agricultural).

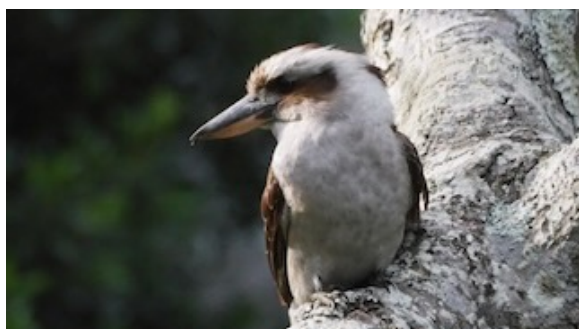
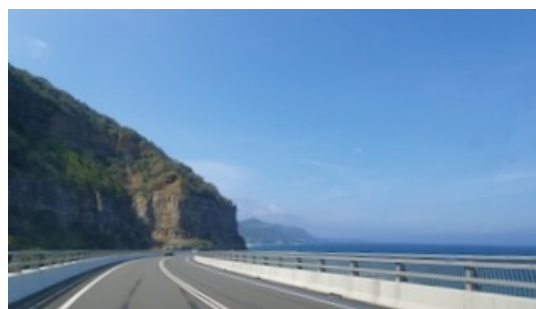
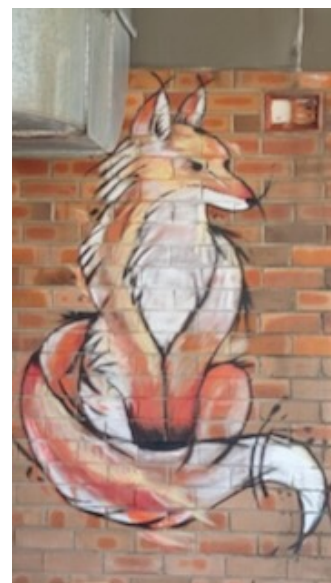
## Our own time again

### To Royal National Park

#### Jervis Bay to Bundeena:

22nd November 2023. We couldn't leave early today; we had another catch-up scheduled. Again with a friend we haven't seen for several years. She works afternoon shift so there was a morning coffee set for a coffee shop in Vincentia. Once she had left us we made our way north from Jervis Bay towards Bundeena in Royal National Park, taking the back roads where we could. It was almost mid afternoon when we got lunch; the 'cafe' near the inlet at Shellharbour near the entrance to Lake Illawara that I had seen on Google Maps, was closed, and the only other obvious places for lunch around the area were fast food joints all cognate with each other. And then I found the The Happy Fox; an unexpected gourmet delight in the middle of working class suburbia!

We got to our little AirBnB studio a little later than expected around 1600. The hostess was on the front verandah but she had left instructions in her post box. The small fully self-contained unit behind her house is very comfortable, and was perfect for what we needed. Andrew settled in for the rest of the afternoon - he sent me out for shopping for dinner!





## Royal National Park

### Wattamolla - any 'what-way'

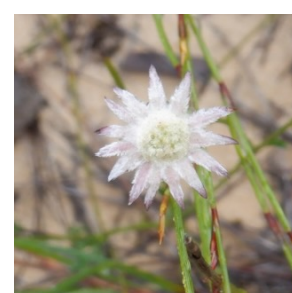
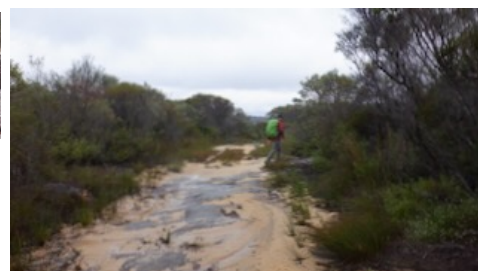
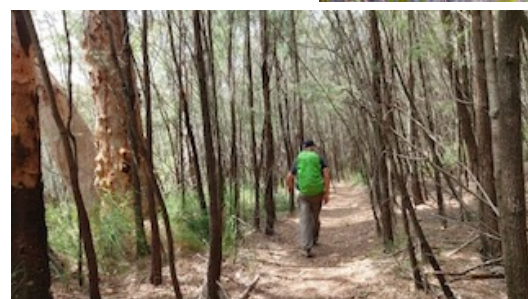
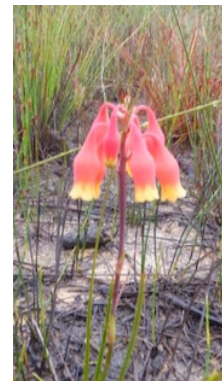
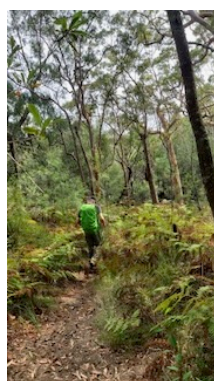
23rd November 2023. We had scheduled two days in for some walking before we got back to boat. My first thought had been to do some walking around The Blue Mountains but as the forecast predicted significant rain in that area we opted for Royal National Park instead, with a different predicted rain forecast, and closer to where we caught up with our Jervis Bay friends. Actually we opted for Jervis Bay to see friends as the main activity on the way back to boat; if we got any walking in at Royal National Park, that would be a bonus. Having settled in our accommodation in Bundeena we now had to decide how to fill in the time.

Of course, having not come in to the Park via the Royal National Park Information and Visitor Centre yesterday, we hadn't picked up any interps or suggestions for local walks. The little studio we were staying at provided some information, which was great.

The 20km there and back walk to Wattamolla was on the cards today. But the predicted wind, a strong southerly to south-easterly, may not have made a coastal walk comfortable. Having rejected the popular walk to Wattamolla however (part of the Royal National Park Coastal Walk) I reverted to my usual AllTrails App for some suggestions. We chose two shorter inland routes as a replacement -although we only completed one.

Our first choice of walk was a trail labeled in the App as a walk to Winifred and Anice Falls

It was raining when we parked the car. Given Andrew's usual refusal to start walking in the rain, he was contemplating whether to





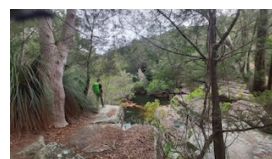
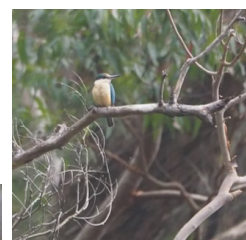
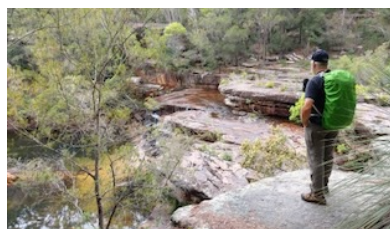
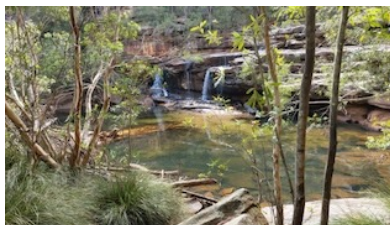
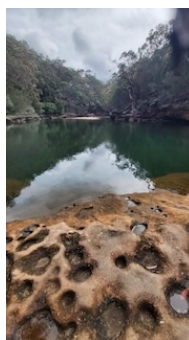
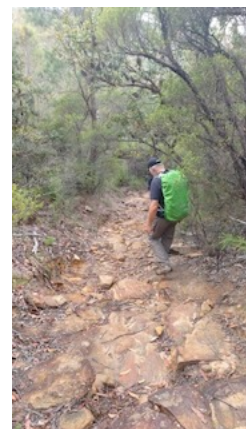
define what was coming from the sky as 'rain', or 'drizzle', and whether he had an excuse to not start walking at all. Eventually we trundled up the fire track - in the lightest of mists. Bush bird song was prolific but very little was seen in the scrub.

The track follows the fire trail for some time before reducing to a foot track. At a t-junction you can turn left to Winifred Falls or right to Anice Falls and Maianbar. We turned left getting to the Winifred falls for an early lunch, before following the lesser foot track to the point at the base of South West Arm Creek; one of the Port Hacking Inlets.

When we got back to the t-junction we continued straight getting to Anice Falls. Here we spotted a water dragon. This view isn't as spectacular from the track as the Winifred Falls, as here you are actually walking across the top of the falls.

Given the weather was still a bit finicky, we rejected the second planned walk, instead having a quick look at the Maianbar Settlement. There was a cafe/store, which we didn't go into, a boat ramp, which would only be relevant at high tide - it was low tide and the water was out quite a long way, and a walking trail back to Bundeena via wetlands - this would be an interesting trail but I would walk it from Bundeena where our base is (or may be in the future).

After having another nibble to keep the stomach growls at bay at the reserve with the boat ramp - consists of only a few car parks and a playground, we drove from here to Wattamolla to see what we had missed.





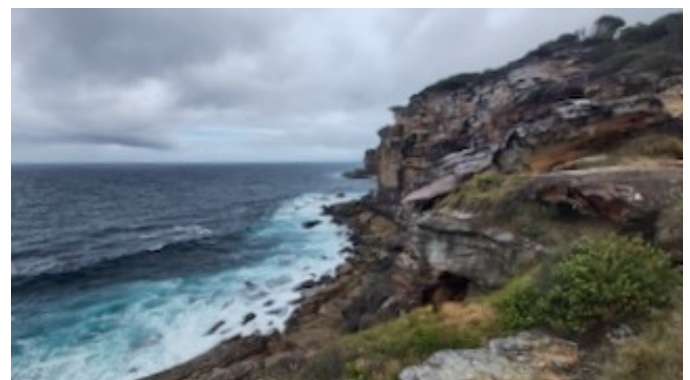
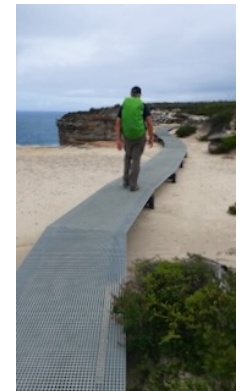
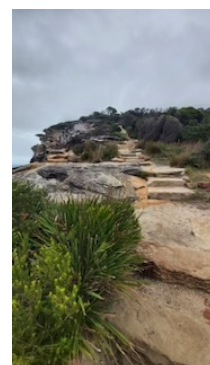
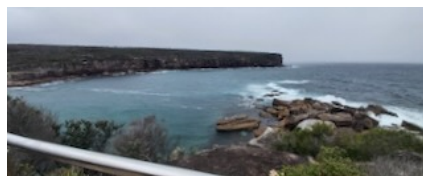
Wattamolla is clearly one of the most-used locations in the Park, and there is a ranger ticket booth to check for park's passes on the road in, just in case you came into the park, as we had done, via the back roads.



Clearly this is a popular day spot, and several picnic tables sit high on the hill near the carpark. The swimming spot is a steep track down to the water near where Wattamolla Creek reaches the sea. There is also camping here should you wish to make it a stop on the Royal National Park Coastal Walk. We walked a loop around Providential Point but I was looking forward to getting back to base. We were back at base around 1400.

Birds: A somewhat bedraggled new holland, honeyeater, wrens, kingfisher, pied currawong, magpie, cravens. We heard channell-billed cuckoos, and yellow tailed black cockatoos.

Animals: reptiles; small lizards, one monitor, and water dragon. And we had a possum (loud footsteps) on the roof overnight.



## Back to boat

24th November 2023. Rain was predicted. And rain it did. I had hoped for a morning walk before we left Royal National Park but conditions did not look as though they would be enjoyable. So we tidied up the little 'studio' we were staying at, and headed back to boat. This entailed heading through metropolitan Sydney; a long, convoluted, trip that involved several missed turn offs, and a couple of deliberate diversions to avoid getting totally stressed-out and mesmerised with Sydney's toll roads and road confluences. We eventually got back to the Royal Motor Yacht Club early afternoon. Lunch was delayed a few minutes more, as we said hello to Andrew's old 'skipper.' They were on their way south, waiting around the fuel dock to fill up.

We spent the afternoon reading.



## On dock all day

25th November 2023. Rain. We didn't do much. We couldn't do much. A walk was out. Yes, we could have possibly gone for a drive - but in the predicted rain? There was enough metadata on windy.com and bom.gov.au to suggest that that activity would not be worthwhile. So we stayed on boat. I managed one load of washing in the Club laundry. Between rain showers Andrew managed to replace the topper. Other than that we pumped up his repaired paddle board to test it (we had picked the repaired board up on the way back to boat yesterday), and we did lots of reading.





## When a 3 hour walk takes 7 hours!

### Dropping the car off and a slightly longer than expected walk.

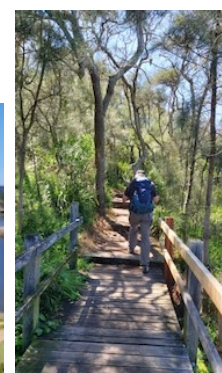
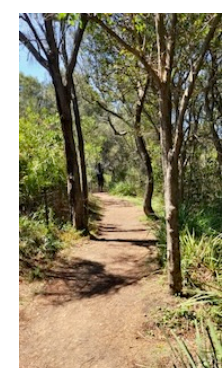
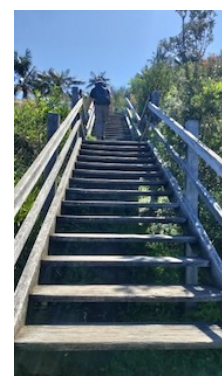
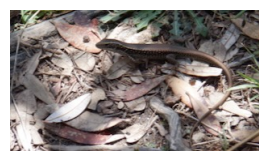
26th November 2023 When we looked at it yesterday, today's forecast had included a dry 0800 and 1100 tranche and then there was going to be a lot of rain. When we checked this morning the predicted rain had gone. Oh, why couldn't the day's weather be reversed with yesterday's...I would have loved a good walk yesterday. This morning however was gloriously sunny!

Today however no planned bush walk would be undertaken, or indeed, possible; the car was due to go back at 0930..we dropped it off at 0810 with the aim of walking back to boat. I had quoted just under 13km to Andrew, to his agita - he was hoping for less. At some point this morning (whilst having refreshment at the NSSLSC...I cant say 'coffee and cake' because neither of us had coffee) I realised that the total distance may be wrong. I suspect I probably plugged the car hire place and the name of the suburb we were returning to into the computer program...which means an extra kilometre or so more when you extend the distance to the yacht club.

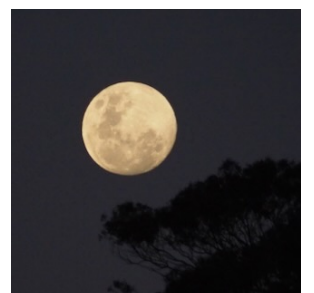
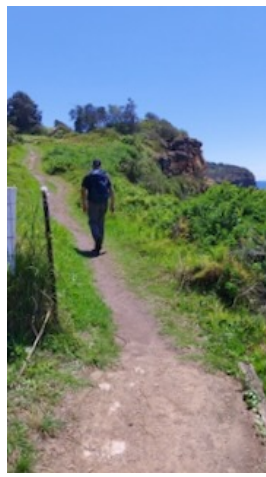
But given that Andrew didn't want to go off the main road, and then did, and didn't want to walk the beaches, and then he did, we ended up with a convoluted distance somewhat longer than expected.

We had cuppa at South Narabeen SLSC, enjoyed lookouts at Narrabeen Headland and Turimetta Headland, lunch at Mona Vale SLSC, and then came back along a longer route through the Mona Vale and Newport suburbs in the hope of avoiding the really big hill up Barrenjoey Road. We were back on boat a little after 1500! We had walked around 20 kilometres!

The only other activity of note was using the club machines to get some more clothes' washing done









## Back to Kur-ring-gai Chase National Park

27th November 2023. I had clearly had too much sugar over the past two weeks; my anxiety levels, whilst not extreme, were definitely high. It didn't help that the wind was blowing stronger than we would have liked for getting off dock - and in definitely the wrong direction for that task.

By just after 0830 we had disentangled ourselves (thanks on my behalf from three gentleman on dock) from the hard surface attached to land, and we were back on the water. Ropes were rolled up, engines were off and genoa was out a few minutes after negotiating the mooring field. Fenders, however, were not put away (I wanted to wipe them down before they went back in their locker).

Engines were back on at 0940. True wind speed was down to 0.6 knots (probably because we were in a wind shadow) and rather than drift uncontrollably around two fishing tinnies we revved up and motored between them.

We had contemplated trying for one of the public moorings in America Bay. However, with the coming weather and the fact we didn't want to spend what was likely to be close to a week (given the weather forecast), in amongst lots of boats (America and its adjoining Refuge Bay are filled with moorings and listed outside the National Park) we decided we might try for Castle Bay instead.

Castle Bay has four moorings. And a couple were available. Once we had tied up to a mooring we settled down to find some equilibrium; it had been a busy two weeks! We read a lot and watched some television - delighted we had internet reception here. I put some of the clothes that I had washed yesterday evening out the back to dry. Suspecting the fortnight had caught up to me I found myself with a bad headache; I went to bed early.



28th November 2023. The only noise heard this morning when we got up around 0630 was that of falling water. I don't remember if I knew there was a waterfall in here. The calls of bush birds started around 30 minutes later at just after 0700 but these were drowned out at 0715 by channel-billed cuckoos. And then the next door boat started making noise.

Morning skies were grey. Weather predictions had rain coming today - mostly in this afternoon. Windy.com had minimal rain predicted this morning.

At 1115 we moved to an adjacent mooring. There had been a mooring free all night and we contemplated, in order to stick within the rules, to pick it up. The free mooring had been briefly occupied this morning by some fishermen but they left. Should we, shouldn't we? The boat adjacent pulled his tender in and I thought we might nab his spot if he moves, less exposed than the one that had been mostly free, but he didn't seem if he was making up his mind. His engine was on and then it wasn't. At one point I thought perhaps they were just going to skip to the free mooring but I spotted a mono sailing boat coming in. There goes that idea. The small power boat did eventually leave, of course in the misting rain, so it wasn't entirely a dry move. We timed it well. Not



long after we had picked up the new mooring, the rain started coming down a bit harder.

Settling in after the move I ensconced myself in some recreational reading. Next time I looked up the bigger powerboat who had been our neighbour last night had also moved, to the mooring we had been on! Clearly the trend in sticking with the rules is catchy! Of course, given there had been a mooring free to start with all our moves were probably just amorphous. It rained on and off all day.

The 'achievement' of the day was publishing October's newsletter

We heard an eastern barn owl in the evening...the rasps had us confused for a while. We also heard currawongs and channel-billed cuckoos during the day. The only birds seen today were silver gulls.



29th November 2023. I thought I had heard distant thunder overnight but it may just have been wind. When we got up, just before 0800, the sounds were the occasional channel-billed cuckoo, something that sounded like willy wagtails tittering, and a distant plane. It wasn't raining. And the water was glass.

At 0810 it was raining again..admittedly I hadn't looked at the rain radar

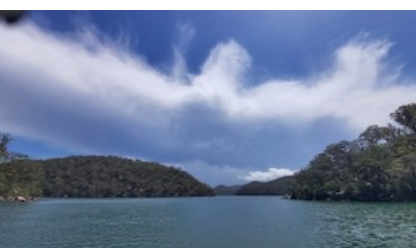
It didn't last long. I was concentrating on the morning word games when I thought I heard an engine. Andrew thought it might have been the kettle...until it stopped boiling. 'The stinky maybe,' he said. Maybe. I didn't look outside for another few minutes and then only when I heard a slight clack. I noticed the mooring with the 44 Benatau was free. Ah, not the stinky, the larger mono. But then I took a further look. The larger mono had moved to where the stinky was. The stinky was no where to be seen. 'Quick,' I said to Andrew. 'We are moving to be legal.'- again, like yesterday, it would have made not one iota of difference. By 0830 we were secured to the third mooring in this cove...assuming we still had reception. Now all we had to do was wait for a weather window to head south.

It was still not raining when we moved. It started to rain again at 0848...for a few minutes. Checking the radar it looked as though that might be the last of it. Wind predictions for the next week give us one comfortable day.. tomorrow... to start to head south. That would get us to Port Hacking. There are some rather grumpy predicted days after that and I am not sure I would want to sit them out there, either on a mooring or anchored. Perhaps we just make the decision to enjoy the next few days here and leave after the 'big grump.'

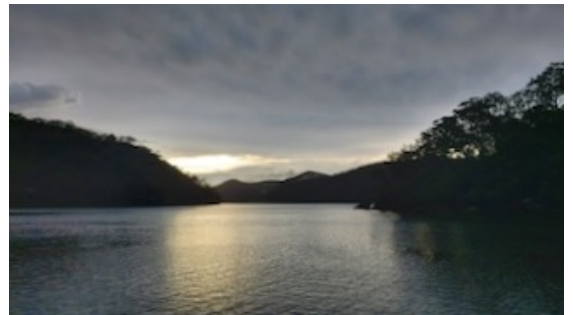
A mono came in to pick up the last mooring, the one we had been on last night. We were now outnumbered.

It was around midday when we heard the first grumble! But the skies were blue. Progressively the grey clouds filled in the sky to the south east of us, and then around us as well. The Sydney radar wasn't working on [bom.gov.au](http://bom.gov.au) so we had to be creative and extrapolate other radars. The bom.gov.au App eventually gave us a picture of what was going on out there. The 'weather' was mostly to the south west. We should be fine.. for a while.

We read a bit and I removed some rust from the deck that had been bugging me for some time. The rinsed rope was almost dry so that was brought into the back cockpit. One of the neighbours was drilling metal near his bow.



Whilst other places had their severe weather early in the day, we had ours just before 1730, lightening regularly flashing and thunder more regularly grumping whilst I was struggling to peel a pumpkin for soup for tonight's dinner. It got cold enough for Andrew to change into fleecy clothing, and the back seat, which we had been enjoying for the first time in ages, got shut away as the boat did slow pirouettes... and the rain angled in.





## Castle Bay to Houseboat Bay

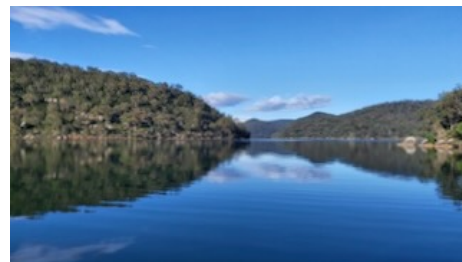
30th November 2023. We were up at 0720. No wind. 'Twas a stunning morning. A mono had its engine on ready to drop its mooring.

There was more blue sky than grey this morning. Windy.com had expected rain in the 1400 tranche (which means the time period starts around 1230) so our time for any sort of exercise was going to be morning. But from Castle Bay, if we wanted a land-based activity, we would need to get across to Cottage Point. Given that we had played musical chairs with the moorings here for three nights, and not wanting to wait to see if the occupier of the only mooring we hadn't occupied wanted to leave, we decided to move on. If we headed back down toward Bobbin Head we would get a choice of nice bush walks. Cottage Point offered only the one choice of walking up the hill along the access road.

After breakfast (and our usual Brexit Youtube entertainment) we dropped the mooring at 0806. There was little wind, and it was in entirely the wrong direction to be able to use it, so we motored toward Bobbin Head. Initially I had thought perhaps we would nab one of the two closest public moorings near the marina but we settled on the Houseboat Bay destination, picking up the mooring at 0854. There is a floating jetty at Bobbin Head but there is an obvious time limit sign (the length of which is useless if you want to go for a long walk), and we have learnt by experience that if the paddleboat operator is on-site then getting access to it is nigh impossible. The back of the boat ramp at Apple Tree Bay however has no timeline notice and we can tie the tinnie up on it closest to land and it is out of everybody's way. The closest public moorings to Apple Tree Bay are Houseboat Bay.

By the time we had ourselves sorted, checked whether we had enough fuel (although there was not far to row if we had to) and tied up at Apple Tree Bay it was 0940. The sky was mostly blue.

I wasn't planning on a long walk. And I wasn't planning on a hard walk. I just wanted to stretch the legs after a couple of days of being boat-bound. So, after leaving the tinnie we



followed Apple Tree Road to Bobbin Head and then the Warrimoo Track upstream Cowan Creek. The aim was to get to the junction where the track to the Sphinx Memorial turns off, and turn around and retrace our steps back down stream. We didn't get that far. At around 1040 when we noticed the sky was now more grey than blue we u-turned and retraced our steps. Given the colour of the clouds we didn't even risk a cuppa at the marina cafe. We were back at the tinnie at 1140. We were back on boat around ten minutes later.

It did rain this afternoon...all of about twenty drops. The only real shower before we went to bed was at around 2200 but that was light and didn't last long.

We spent the afternoon reading and the evening watching SBS On Demand.

Birdlife was minimal. A white-bellied sea eagle soared above our mooring location. A little black and a little pied cormorant were seen foraging throughout the day. Lapwings were spotted on the boat ramp and at the picnic area at Bobbin Head, and cravens made themselves known in several locations. Channel-billed cuckoos and eastern whipbirds were heard, as were rainbow lorikeets. Swallows flew around moored boats. In the bush a male superb fairy wren was attended to by two female relatives and a male koel was frolicking with his female partner. The odd spot of the day was a fluff-ball that initially looked like a quail. Except the colours weren't quite right. And the shape was just a little 'off.' My second thought was a juvenile brush turkey. This was confirmed by a friend later in the day.

Clouds. Fabulous. Wet to north and south

