

The Harrington-Crowdy Coastal environment



Harrington is located on the northern shore of the Manning River delta. A long sand-dune links Harrington township to Crowdy Head in the North; and north again is the long beach of Crowdy Bay National Park.

Harrington breakwall

One of the most significant features of Harrington is man-made in the form of the rock breakwall that helps maintain an open entrance to the Manning River. Walk along the breakwall to the south and travel 1.5 kms up the river. You may be lucky and see sea dolphins surfing the currents under the bridge. Walk a shorter distance to the north, past Harrington lagoon formed by the breakwall and end at the ocean.

Little Tern breeding area

The endangered bird, the Little Tern, breeds on the sand spit in the Harrington Inlet (as well as the southern side of river, towards Farquhar Inlet/Old Bar). The beaches and sand spits used as nesting sites are also used for recreation, and hence their nests are often disturbed by 4WD vehicles, dogs, bathers and fisherman. Nestlings fall prey to a variety of animals including gulls, foxes, cats, dogs, rats and eagles. Of an estimated thirty-one breeding pairs at Harrington in 1994/95 only four flying young were produced with 'Silver Gulls' taking most of the eggs and young.

Harrington Lagoon and saltmarshes

Saltmarsh vegetation and mangroves are found on the edge of the lagoon. Saltmarsh is listed as a Vulnerable Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act. Marine vegetation, including saltmarsh and mangroves are protected where they occur in saltmarshes and more generally by the Fisheries Management Act 1994.

Shorebirds, including those listed as threatened internationally, are frequently seen foraging in this location along with birds of prey such as Osprey which often hunt in the lagoon.

Harrington Beach sand dune and vegetation

Harrington beach south of Crowdy Head is long, often windswept, and relatively isolated. The present dunal system along the coastline, sometimes referred to as Holocene Sands, was formed some 6,000 years ago where the present sea level was established.

Harrington Rainforest

A short walk through the best section of the littoral (coastal) rainforest at Harrington, starts at the sign on Crowdy Head Rd Harrington (a few hundred metres north of the caravan park, towards Crowdy Head) and goes through to the lagoon. This sub-tropical rainforest which has great diversity of species is formed on old sand-dunes. The rainforest once stretched north from here to Crowdy Head. Extensive sand mining for heavy metals undertaken between 1964 & 1972 took its toll on the rest of the rainforest.

This pocket of rainforest was saved from sand mining because it was Reserved for graves.

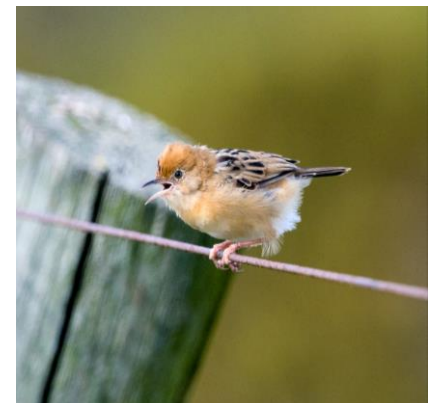
The regeneration of previously mined coastal vegetation has been slow. However remnants of rainforest, known as the 'string of pearls' are now forming canopies along-side coastal scrub to reinstate the coastal corridor. Extensive work has been under-taken in this locality to control Bitou Bush, which is recognised as a 'Weed of National Significance'.

A brochure on the Harrington Rainforest Walk can be found at <http://www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/Outdoor-Facilities/Cattai-Wetlands>

Wetlands

A pocket of Swamp Forest dominated by Broad-leaved Paperbark, *Melaleuca quinquenervia*, separates the main core of rainforest from the Caravan Park to the south. Flooded Gum *Eucalyptus grandis* is also found here.

You may see a small distinctive bird, called the Golden-headed Cisticola, in the saltmarsh. They build a small dome-shaped nest of grass amongst the rushes and low shrubs.



Did you know? Harrington is the only known location where the Taree Fly (*Abbemyia taree*) is found. This is a member of the family Dolichopodidae which is

Other significant wetland areas such as swamplands and swamp forests occur in Crowdy Bay National Park and adjoining private lands under private ownership in the Great Swamp area east of Coopernook. These wetland communities are listed under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act and will also be recognised under the new Biodiversity Legislation proposed in NSW.

The Council managed 'Cattai Wetlands' are an excellent remnant of the original wetlands which would have existed prior to the drainage and reclamation era that came with settlement. For more information see <https://www.midcoast2tops.org.au/walks>

Crowdy Lighthouse

In 1878 the contract was obtained to build the lighthouse and keepers residence on the headland. (Note: the word brush is used to describe rainforest.)

"On reaching the headland their first thought was to pitch camp. After a few hours exploration they pitched camp near the bottom of the hill towards the bay where a nice streamlet of beautiful fresh water ran into a small bay...."

After they picked their spot, the next job was to cut a track from beach on the Manning side into their camp and up the hill to the side of the new buildings to cart the bricks and materials that was intended to be landed in the bay from Sydney.

At the time the whole headland was clothed with a beautiful brush right to the cliffs. They had to clear a half acre for the building, this land they burnt, after the fire they grew a fine crop of pumpkins, cucumbers and melons within 5 yards of the cliff." (Albert George Smith 1931.) Note: 'brush' refers to rainforest.

The light has a visibility horizon of 16 nautical miles or 26.9 km. It was converted to electricity in June, 1972. The Lighthouse has been listed on the Register of the National Estate by the Australian Heritage Commission for its cultural and historical significance.

Themeda grassland on Crowdy Headland

Grassland dominated by Kangaroo Grass, *Themeda triandra* (*syn T. australis*), occurs on the margins of Crowdy Headland as well as on rock ledges and cliff faces. This vegetation has been listed as an Endangered Ecological Community in NSW. These grasslands contain a variety of shrubs, herbs & lilies, many of which lie dormant in the soil as bulbs, corms, rhizomes or tubers until rainfall conditions are favourable. The shrubs are generally dwarfed growth forms due to the exposure to salt laden winds. Current threats to this grassland community are invasion by exotic grasses such as Kikuyu Grass and domination by Coastal Banksia regrowth (as a consequence of changed burning regimes since European settlement).

Kangaroo Grass or Themeda



Whales

Humpback whales and other whales can be observed each year from about May to August and later, migrating north to breeding grounds. From September to December they return to south to feeding areas in the Antarctic. Two notable 'strandings' have occurred at Crowdy Head - 66 False Killer Whales in 1985 and 30 Pilot Whales in 1960.

The old Quarry at Crowdy Back Beach – rocks 350 million years old

The Crowdy Head quarry operated from 1894 for 33 years. Between 1894 and 1904 the Harrington breakwall was built with rock from this quarry. The rock was transported to Harrington via a purpose-built tram-line. The quarry re-opened in 1964 to supply the building of the Crowdy breakwall and then again in 1972 for the establishment of Crowdy Harbour.

The geological beds exposed on Crowdy Head and at Pilot Hill in Harrington are lithic sandstone, siltstone, mudstone and tuff and have been dated back to approximately 350 million years ago to the early Carboniferous period. The sandstone and tuff has been derived from volcanic material deposited into a marine environment. When the polar icesheets were at their maximum extent (4 times from 10,000 to 1.6 million years ago) sea levels rose and fell by up to 200m, covering and exposing the continental shelf. Crowdy Head would have been an off-shore island at some point during these fluctuations. Diamond Head to the north and the 'Three Brother Mountains' are the result of volcanic activity some 245-208 million years ago. The geological beds were deformed by lava flows and intrusions.

Become involved

Why not join the Harrington Group of Manning Coastcare. Email: secretary.manningcoastcare@gmail.com

See: <https://www.midcoast2tops.org.au/manning-coastcare>