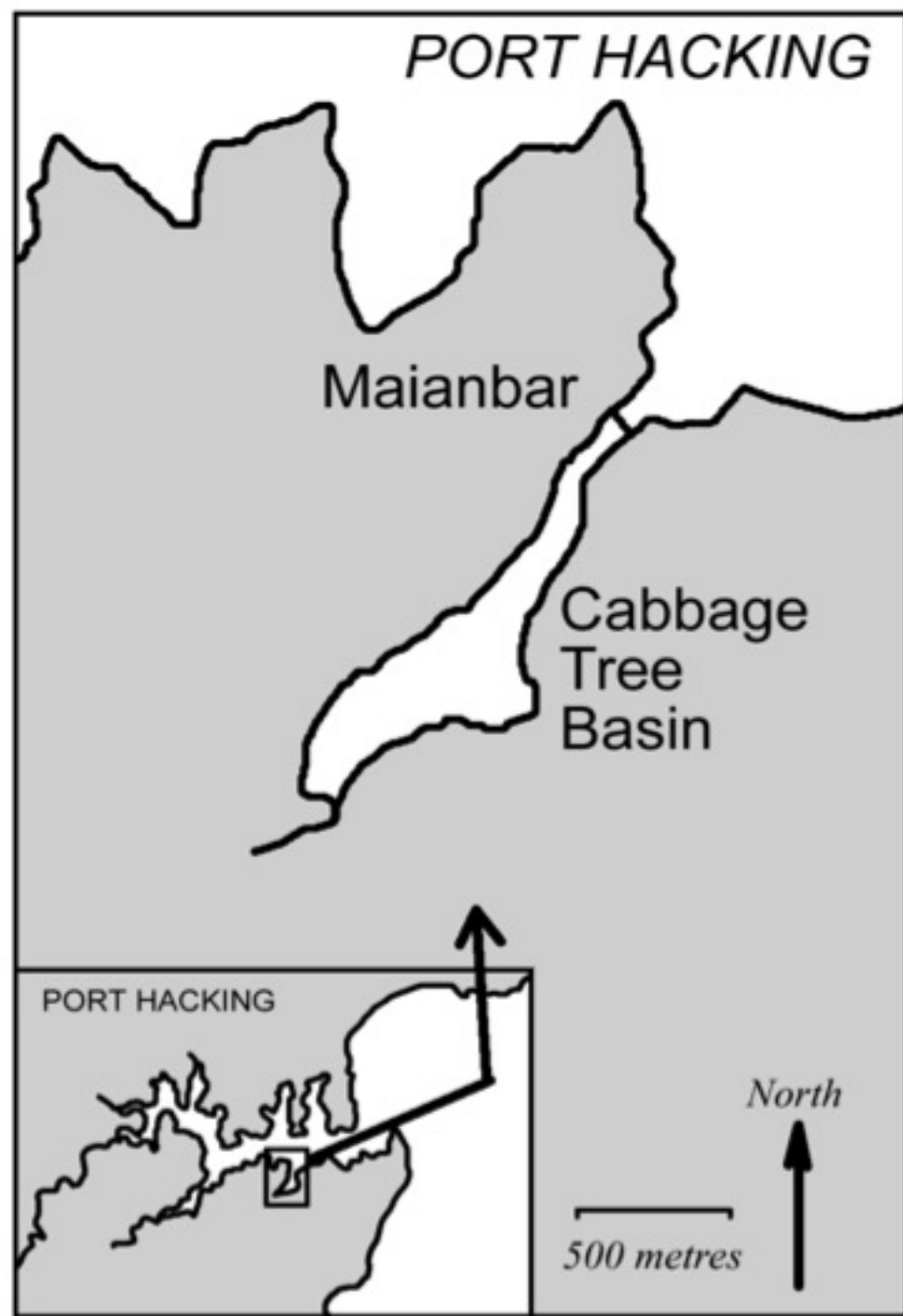
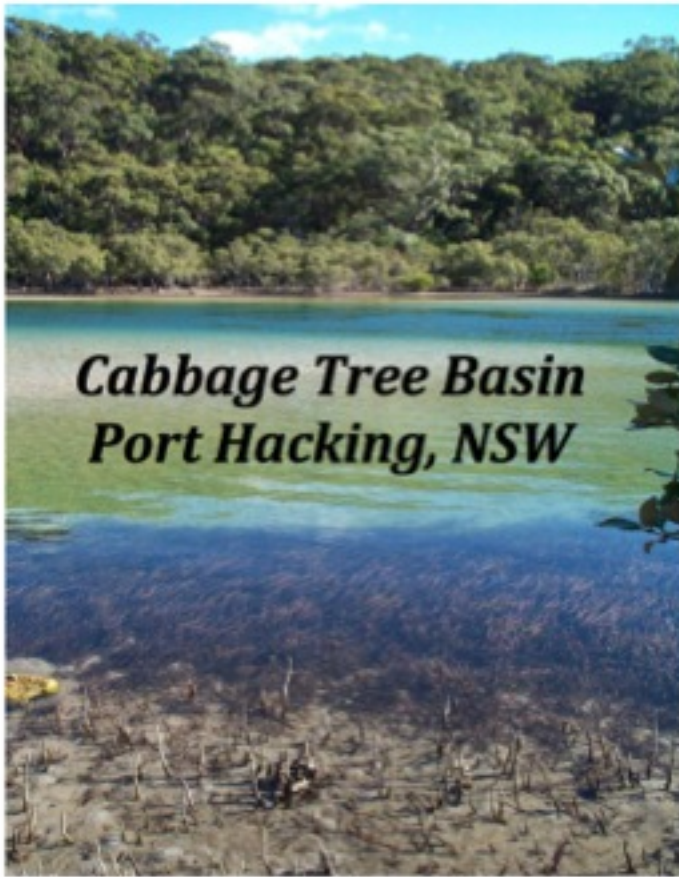


**“Sun, sea and sand,
a watery view of the Royal
and its surroundings”**

Dr. Ron West
ANCORS
University of Wollongong

Cabbage Tree Basin (2000)



Overview

- Introduction
- Historical significance
- Estuarine resources
- Conclusion and recommendations



The Basin - June 2011

Cabbage Tree Basin

- **Introduction**

- Cabbage Tree Basin is one of the most significant water bodies within the Royal National Park.
- It represents an area of high visitation, at the edge of the Bonnie Vale Camping area.
- Cabbage Tree Basin also has a surprising, controversial and significant history:
 - Whereas marine fish culture has only recently become a significant industry in Australia, the embryo of that industry lies here, in this small "pristine" corner of Port Hacking.
 - Cabbage Tree Basin was, in fact, the site of Australia's first marine fish hatchery and contained a number of fish pens.

Cabbage Tree Basin

- **Historical Significance I**
 - Sites with considerable indigenous significance are scattered around around the Basin, including hand prints, spear sharpening sites and shell middens.
 - Some of these were described in a Linnean Society publication in the late 1800s.



Cabbage Tree Basin

- **Historical Significance II**

- Port Hacking was also the first estuary in Australia to receive some status as a marine “reserve”, in that the waters have been closed to commercial fishing for over a century.



Cabbage Tree Basin

- **Historical Significance III**

- The Basin also has special significance as the site of Australia's first fish hatchery.
 - Funding was obtained in the late 1800s to build a fish hatchery and grow-out ponds.
 - Cabbage Tree Basin was selected as an ideal site and described at the time as a “miniature harbour”.
 - English sole were transported to Cronulla from England in a specially built ship, which took months and stopped at many locations to enable feeding.
 - The English Sole were released into the fish pens in Cabbage Tree Basin.

The Basin “Fish Ponds”



The grow-out and holding pens continued to operate in Cabbage Tree Basin until 1914, when the SMH reported (16th Feb 1914):



“Last week the whole of the fishes in the State hatcheries at National Park died. Not a single one escaped. Even the hardy crayfish fell victim to the mysterious epidemic.”

Sydney Morning Herald, 20-2-1914

Mr Frank Farnell, Chairman of the NSW Fisheries Board & Trustee of the Royal National Park (as quoted in Sydney Morning Herald, 20th February 1914):

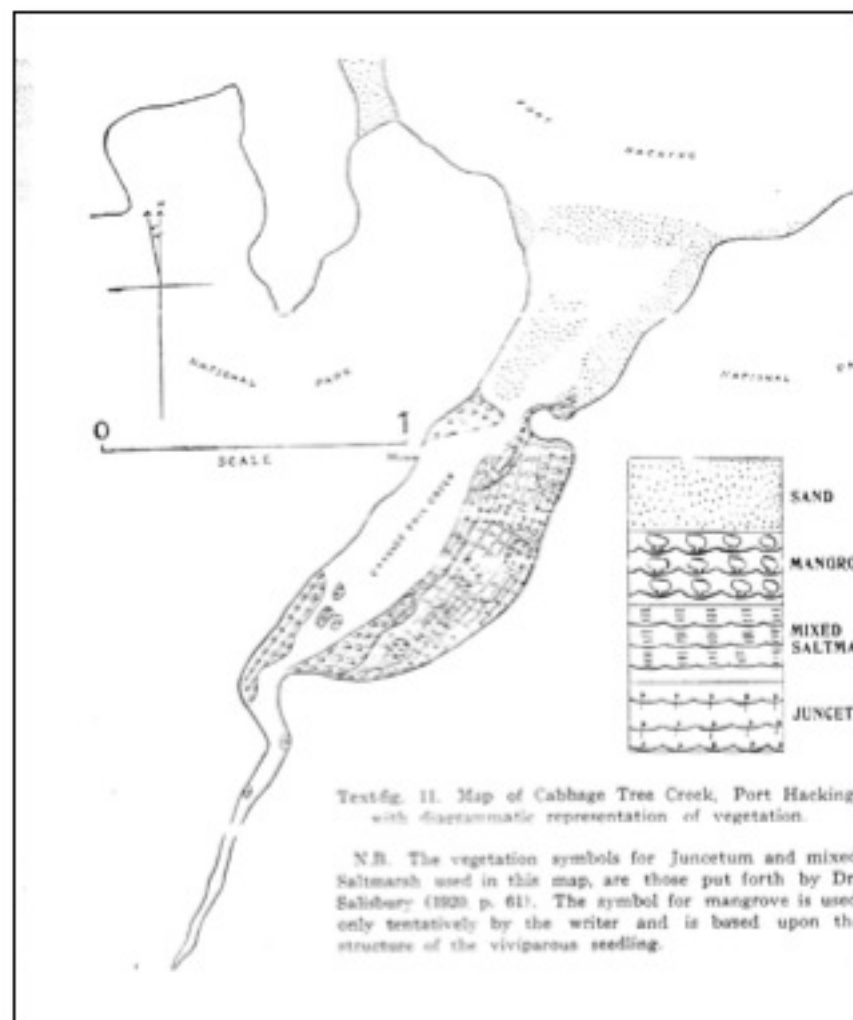
“... I may say that the idea of introducing new species into our marine waters originated from people not associated with the Fisheries Department. The Fisheries Board was not asked for advice.

The only consultation was in connection with paying the bill for £1,560. The scheme was worked by political influence and it resulted as all political canker-worm schemes deserve to end.”

Cabbage Tree Basin

- **Historical Significance IV**

- Interestingly, because of the hatchery and other interest in the RNP area, the mangroves and saltmarshes were described in considerable detail in the 1920s, again in a Linnean Society publication (Collins 1921).



Cabbage Tree Basin

- **Estuarine Resources**

- Seagrasses: currently not widespread but large losses occurred due to sand movement after the construction of the Bundeena/Maianbar Water pipe and bridge.



Cabbage Tree Basin

- **Estuarine Resources:**

- Mangroves: The basin contains about 37% of Port hacking mangroves, and the areas have increased over the last century.



Looking over the river mangroves (*Aegiceras corniculatum*) into the Basin in 1920s (from Collins, 1921). This site is now composed of a densely forested mixed mangrove community of >3m height. As a consequence, the Basin's waters are not visible.

Cabbage Tree Basin

- **Estuarine Resources**

- Saltmarsh: The basin contains 94% of Port Hacking saltmarshes. These areas have decreased over the last century, mainly by the expansion of mangroves.



Cabbage Tree Basin

- **Conclusions and Recommendations**

- Cabbage Tree Basin is an area of great historical significance and scientific interest, and is an integral part of the Royal National Park.
- The Basin should be protected and managed as part of the RNP.
- This historical significance and scientific interest should be better taken into account in the management of the RNP, including specific information made available for the many visitors to the Basin (e.g., as part of the walking trail).