



Welcome to the newly elected OFF Committee for 2021. President, Kim Wagstaff, was elected again and we welcome Adrian Polhill as a new Vice-President following Alan Fairley's retirement from the committee after 47 years. We also welcome Lesley Wylie back to the committee as our new field Officer; Lesley served as Treasurer for some years. Past President, Julian Sheen, is standing down from the committee and we thank both him and Alan for their years of service.

SECRETARY'S REPORT, SUMMARY: Liz Cameron

Highlights:

- Stronger liaison with Georges River Council - provided early comment on some draft strategies; made submissions on 7 draft plans; received allocations from 2 Councillors; Discretionary Funds for OFF programs.
- Some recommendations for GRC Draft LEP2020 adopted – strengthen Foreshore Scenic Protection Area and consider implications for biodiversity; Deb Andrew led OFF's contribution to the Biodiversity Study commissioned as a result.
- Climate Action Strategy developed by Adrian and team, for promotion to Council and community.
- Oatley 2021 Calendar sold out, thanks Rodger, Vicki, James and Sonia.
- Native revegetation programs highly successful thanks to Matt; OFF Bushcare teams worked over 450 hours; members helped regenerate a rural property near Gunning.
- Signed agreement with Greater Sydney Landcare Network and GRC to increase tree canopy in LGA.
- Research grants of \$6,000 disbursed to three postgraduate students.
- Clean Up Australia Day site in Lime Kiln Bay had 65 helpers.

Campaigns:

- Many ongoing because the issues remain unresolved; co-operative action with other environmental organisations strengthens our impact.
- Water quality in local waterways – lobbied authorities, Streamwatch sampling and rubbish audits, reported sewage overflows, liaised with Georges Riverkeeper, Clean Up Australia Day site in Lime Kiln Bay, took part in Paddle Against Plastics.
- Koalas – Save our Koalas Day of Action, signatory to proposal for constructed road crossings, lobbied three tiers of government to protect Upper Georges River koala population.
- Threats from mining – made submissions and/or addressed hearings to oppose three mining projects under Sydney's water catchments and Santos Narrabri CSG project.
- Threats to Kosciuszko NP – e-petition to NSW Parliament re control of feral horses; open letters to politicians re impacts of Snowy 2.0.
- Tree destruction in the LGA – documented numerous examples at development sites; requested Council establish Significant Tree Register and place all tree permit applications on its website.
- Oatley Park – reported damage, overuse and potential hazards; recommended/achieved remediation on some tracks and car parks.
- Aid for wildlife impacted by bushfires – assisted Water for Wildlife with grant administration, water stations and nest boxes, co-ordinated donations of food and materials by local businesses.

Communication and Activities

- OFF has a new website and email address. Eleven issues of OFF News produced by Graham Lalchere with help from Alan Fairley and the editorial team. Facebook page run by James reaches a wider and more diverse audience.
- Membership almost 300.
- OFF nominated the following for awards: Graham Lalchere (Banks Volunteer Award), Alan Fairley and Matt Allison (St George Community Environmental Achievement Awards) and OFF itself (St George Community Group Achievement Award).
- Two successful pre-Christmas street stalls held in Oatley and Mortdale.

- Nine meetings held; March meeting cancelled and subsequent meetings via Zoom. Average audience was 40 including some visitors. Five presentations uploaded on YouTube.
- Field activities recommenced in June; 6 walks attracted an average of 12.5 participants - satisfactory considering restrictions on numbers. Leslie Wylie will take over Field Officer role from Graham Fry this year.
- Annual Dinner was cancelled but 38 attended the Annual Picnic in Oatley Park.

Liz will resign as Secretary at the end of this year and hopes a member will gradually take over the role in 2021, to ensure a smooth succession.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS 2020, SUMMARY: Kim Wagstaff

Well we have come to the end of an eventful year. As we heard in Liz's report OFF has covered a lot of territory not only in terms of issues but also ranging from local to state and national. And all within the confines of a continuing global pandemic superimposed on an evolving climate emergency of increasing proportions. We put in a huge effort towards delivering our mission. Given this, we might well ask: 'What's ahead?' 'Can we keep going?' 'What will drive us to keep going?' I have been reflecting on this. Here are some drivers to think about.

1. The moral imperative

The Pope's 2015 encyclical applying Catholic, Christian and general ethical principles argues that humans have a responsibility to take care of the natural environment, both as something important to humanity and as something valuable in itself. Francis interprets humans' 'dominion over the earth' as a responsibility to 'protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations'. John Broome, Oxford University professor of moral philosophy reached similar conclusions from secular ethical principles. Ethical behaviour requires each individual to take responsibility for their emissions by eliminating them or offsetting them. Each tonne of GHGs is reasonably expected to impose extra damage on someone, somewhere. That the victim is unknown does not diminish the responsibility.

2. The wonder of nature

Many people have discovered or rediscovered the healing qualities of actually getting out in the backyard or local bushland. You don't realise how good it is until you lose that opportunity. Connecting with nature is truly one of the most invigorating and eye-opening experiences we get to enjoy across our landscape. Not only does it bring a rich appreciation for protecting the delicate balance of nature, it also enriches our mental health.

3. A knight in shining armour?

Recently, the Biden administration made climate change its focus, announcing a series of new executive orders designed to elevate climate "as an essential element of US foreign policy and national security". John Kerry's appointment as Mr Biden's climate ambassador and a much more aggressive approach to global warming by the White House has put fresh pressure on the Morrison government to commit to net zero emissions by 2050.

4. Social interaction through shared interests

It has been a difficult year to actually physically get together particularly with our regular general meetings being held solely by Zoom. I know many members are missing this so it makes it even more important to keep communicating in other ways. It is not only very helpful but also truly amazing to understand that there is a huge array of large and small groups out there with similar interests and concerns and pursuing similar issues as we are here in Oatley. We can take comfort in being a part of this widespread diaspora of environmental campaigners.

5. Hope

And finally, the one word I keep coming back to is hope. A deceptively simple word that describes a powerful force which has arguably never been more important. More than just a feeling, hope is a motivator, a driver of action and a light in dark times. Hope makes us work for a better tomorrow. In the year ahead I hope we'll all keep on working to protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment locally and globally. Our belief that there can be a better, cleaner future will enable us to do some great things for our natural world.

Both addresses will be published in full on the OFF web site

Coming OFF Events in February/March 2021

OFF Full Year Events Calendar will be at: <http://www.oatleyflorafauna.org.au/index.php/program/>

OFF will continue with the monthly guest speaker program for 2021. As reported last edition, we will also return to face-to-face meetings, in the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick St Oatley. **Meetings will also be available** on-line, using the video conference application Zoom, which you can download for free via this link: <https://zoom.us/> or from Play Store (Google) or App Store (Apple). You should run a test before meetings to ensure you can connect on the night. If this is possible, you will receive an invitation prior to meetings or use the link below. See below for more details of the arrangements for this meeting.

Note that some OFF presentations and earlier movies can now be found on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCd_PLK8og40D0ekuYAys3IQ

22 February 2021 — Sir Joseph Banks – his life and legacy

Rhonda Daniels, long-time member of Australian Plants Society, Sutherland Group shares the life and legacy of Sir Joseph Banks, patron of natural sciences. As a young man, Banks collected many plant specimens in 1770 on Captain Cook's *Endeavour* voyage, followed by a long life supporting scientific discovery. Recognising the 250th anniversary in 2020, Rhonda will highlight the botanical and scientific legacy of Banks including being remembered in the *Banksia* genus and many place names including Joseph Banks Native Plants Reserve at Kareela.

28 February Sunday – Ku-ring-gai Chase NP, Bairne Track

A gentle 10.5 km out-and-back fire trail walk through classic Sydney coastal bush (scribbly gums, banksia, angophora, sprinklings of wildflowers and native orchids) to beautiful cliff-top views overlooking Pittwater and Broken Bay. \$12 entry fee to the Park, meet at Terrey Hills Tavern carpark on Mona Vale Road at 10.00 to arrange car-pooling. Estimated finishing time 14.00, so bring refreshments. After-walk drinks back at the Tavern. Good exposure to sea breezes but the walk may be postponed if the forecast temperature exceeds 30 deg. Leader: Adrian Buzo 0406 860 628 (on the day).

7 March 2021 (Sunday) – Clean Up Australia Day 8.30 to 11.30. OFF site will be in mangroves and along creek-line in Poulton Park. Meet in Morshead Drive Reserve at corner of Morshead Drive and Kyle Parade. Bring hat, sunscreen, water, insect repellent, gumboots if possible. Contact Supervisor Liz Cameron 9580 6621 for more information.

Website: <https://www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au/fundraisers/elizabethcameron/poulton-park--south-hurstville>

2021 Activity Program

This year's program is now full with the exception of the October long-weekend. If you wish to lead or propose an activity on this weekend, please contact Lesley Wylie on lesleyd40@gmail.com or 02 9570 9198 with your idea.

As noted in the Jan/Feb OFF News, general meetings will now be held in the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick St Oatley. However, under the current COVID -19 restrictions, numbers in attendance will be limited to 30 plus speaker and assistants.

For the meeting of 22 February it is intended to conduct the proceedings at the church hall whilst simultaneously using Zoom conferencing in the usual way. The limited number in the hall means those wishing to attend are required to register in advance

Attendance will be restricted to OFF members and some preference will be given to those who are not able to access Zoom
You can register by emailing oatleyff@gmail.com or ringing Robin Dickson on 02 9580 5663. You will be notified prior to Monday 22nd if your request to attend the meeting has been accepted.

COVID requirements and information for attendees

A yoga class uses the hall immediately prior to our OFF meeting and surfaces will have been wiped clean
Do not attend if you feel unwell

On arrival please check your name is on the registered list of attendees and check-in via the QR code or the sign-in book (for those without smart phone and/or COVID app.) People who have not had their registration confirmed in advance will be refused entry

Hand sanitiser will be available. All attendees are requested to wear a face mask
Seats will be arranged to facilitate social distancing.

**Attendees should remain seated for the duration of the meeting
Please wait until you are outside the Hall before having a chat.**

Members who have not renewed their 2021 membership are reminded that fees are now due.

BRIEFLY SPEAKING

OATLEY PARK BUSHCARE group is normally on second Saturday each month starting 12.00 pm, except January. Meet at the entrance on Oatley Park Avenue. New participants welcome, please contact John Kensett - GRC Bushcare Officer, m: 0435 963 643.

LOCAL BUSHCARE Members can assist by volunteering to maintain OFF planting sites each month on the Thursday after general meetings (except December) at 8.00 am. On Thursday 25 February, we will be working at Lower Gannons Park, off Vale Lane, Peakhurst.

STREAMWATCH Details Heather Stolle 0425 291 879. This activity usually takes place on the Tuesday morning (9.00 am) after OFF General Meetings. This month we will be at Dairy Creek on 23 February.

EDO (Environmental Defender's Office) has thanked OFF for its donation of \$180.50 raised from sale of produce and native plants contributed by Bev Watters, Graham Fry, Melina Amerasinghe and Jan Douglas. It will contribute to the EDO's legal challenges against new coal projects that fuel climate change, its efforts to reform inland water laws and its support for protecting koalas.