



O.F.F. NEWS



Published by
OATLEY-FLORA-&-FAUNA
CONSERVATION-SOCIETY-INC.

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Since 1955

OFF website: <http://off.oatleypark.com/>

Issue 1/11

Jan/Feb 2011

AGM FIRST MEETING OF 2011

Best wishes for 2011 to all our members and friends are extended by the 2010 Committee. The first meeting this year will be the Annual General Meeting on Monday, 7th February, when the 2011 office bearers and Committee will be elected, followed by slides/pictures and a light supper, as detailed overleaf.

URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

The Federal Government has released a discussion paper on options for how to manage growth and sustainability for Australia's biggest urban centres. The paper, *Our Cities – Building A Productive, Sustainable and Liveable Future* is open for comment and feedback, until 1st March. www.infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure/

CONSERVATION SUCCESSES

The Wilderness Society reports some successes in 2010. In NSW, after a 4-year battle, the Tillegra Dam project on the Williams River was finally scrapped. In Victoria, 45,000 hectares of forests in East Gippsland, including Goolengook, and a significant section of Yalmy River were protected in new parks and reserves. In Queensland, the wild Wenlock River was protected from a destructive strip mining operation. In Tasmania, the timber industry agreed to pull out of native-forest logging, ending decades of conflict with a solution that protects jobs and forests. Unfortunately, Gunns is now threatening to renege on its agreement if certain new conditions are not met.

BIODIVERSITY

One species and five sub-species of Australian birds when last surveyed ten years ago, were listed as critically endangered. They are now thought to have been extinct for many years. This means a 25 per cent increase in the number of extinct Australian birds, with the likely culprits being habitat loss, interbreeding and introduced predators. So says environmental scientist Professor Stephen Garnett of Charles Darwin University, NT, the co-author of a new study. Australia's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act has up until now listed 23 species and subspecies of birds as extinct. <http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/>

GORILLAS IN CRISIS

The Humane Society reports that in ten years, with civil war, refugee crises, coltan mining, and massive illegal hunting the number of eastern lowland gorillas in the south of the Congo has gone from 25,000 to 5,000 with pressure still mounting. The Society is looking for financial support for its program in the area. <http://www.hsi.org.au/>

Note that Coltan is a mineral ingredient in making mobile phones. Recycling our old phones may be one way for us to help a little in reducing the pressure on the gorillas.

SPOTLIGHTING OATLEY PARK 26TH NOV

A keen group of spot lighters gathered at Oatley Park for the fauna spot lighting, the last field event for 2010. The warm balmy conditions were perfect. We first brushed up on a few interesting calls of nocturnal birds and mammals waiting for the light to fade. Heading off to the bottom gate we saw Grey-headed Flying Foxes (Megachiroptera) heading out from their roost to feed on flowering eucalypts. A small insectivorous micro bat (Microchiroptera) flew about above our heads so we could conveniently compare its differing size and flight behaviour to the flying foxes. We saw a Tawney Frogmouth peering at us with red eyes in the light before flying off. We then spied two Common Ringtail Possums peeking out from their nest hollow in an old dead eucalypt. A Common Brushtail Possum appeared, with its black brushy tail, and ran nimbly along the branch. Several Grey-headed Flying Foxes were seen feeding upside down on the nectar in the flowering Sydney Red Gum (*Angophora costata*). We eagerly checked our bat harp traps set up that afternoon but alas, no micro bats were caught. We heard the call of the Owlet Nightjar, and, as we ambled out beside the oval, we were serenaded by a pair of Boobook Owls or Mopokes, the latter name from their "mopoke" call, one of the loveliest sounds of the Australian bush at night. [Report by walk leader: Debbie Andrew.]

BIRD VISITORS TO OATLEY

On December 21st 2010, a pair of Little Lorikeets flew over Moore Reserve wetlands and landed in one of the fringing she-oaks before flying up into a large eucalypt. On December 18th, a small flock of Figbirds* fed on native figs in a tree at the entrance to Seymour Reserve. In late November and early December, an Owlet Nightjar was heard calling loudly in the early hours from a back yard with plenty of trees in Woonoona Street. On January 3rd, a male Darter was spotted flying over Moore Reserve. It came low as if inspecting the wetland but flew off over Hurstville Road. [A note from David Waterhouse]

*Figbirds (*Sphecotheres viridis*) are part of a worldwide family that includes the orioles. Males have bare, red skin around the eye, contrasting against a black crown and grey neck and throat. The remainder of the body is olive-green, with a white under-tail area.



Male Figbird feeding on a berry
Photo: Bill Cameron © Bill Cameron

PHYTOPHTHORA DIEBACK

Check on this devastating plant killer before your next walk in the bush. http://www.rbgsvd.nsw.gov.au/plant_info/

Meetings of the Society are held at the Uniting Church Hall Fredrick St [cnr Letitia St] Oatley starting at 7.45pm, usually on the fourth Monday of the month.

Visitors and accompanied children are welcome to all meetings and excursions.

COMING EVENTS

Feb 7th (Monday) 7.45pm Annual General Meeting with the election of officers and review of the work of the Society. If you are interested in nominating for the committee, please contact Liz Cameron. If you have interesting photos please bring them for a "PowerPoint presentation", [sorry no slides, must be digital photos on CD or memory stick!]. The meeting will close with a social supper - please bring a plate.

Feb 28th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting. Gary Schoer is speaking on "Kimberley by Sea - an expedition into the lands of the Wandjina and the Gwion Gwion (or Bradshaw) rock art".

March 5th (Saturday), Field Day to Dharawal State Conservation-Minerva Pools. Leader: **Graham Lalchere**
T 95803107 [Details in the next OFF News]

Mar 6th (Sunday) Clean Up Australia Day -OFF members and friends will be working in the area noted in the next OFF News.

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY OF OATLEY FLORA AND
FAUNA CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC. FOR YEAR
ENDED 31.12.10. Lesley Wylie, Hon. Treasurer**

Credit Balance- 01.01.10		\$6,727.53
Receipts		
Subscriptions	\$3,650.00	
Donations	\$1300.00	
Sale - Plants	\$151.00	
Annual Dinner	\$1,920.00	
Annual Dinner Raffle	\$145.00	
Sale – OFF Caps	\$340.00	
Sale – OFF Mugs	\$7.00	
Meeting Stall Sales	\$250.00	
Interest	\$1.20	
Oatley Lions Festival Refund	\$120.00	
Total Receipts -31/12/10		\$7,884.20
Department Fair Trading	\$47.00	
OFF Caps	\$1,273.25	
Printing/Postage	\$837.20	
Australia Post Box Rental	\$79.50	
Printing Programs	\$244.30	
Annual Dinner	\$1,770.00	
Insurance	\$749.52	
NCC Membership	\$200.00	
Donations (see Note)	\$1,400.00	
Lions Oatley Festival Stall	\$120.00	
Oatley West P.S. Re-planting	\$312.00	
Oatley P.S. Re-planting	\$150.00	
Narwee P.S. Vegetable Garden	\$50.00	
Oatley Uniting Church Hall Hire	\$275.00	
Sundries	\$261.14	
Total payments		\$7,618.41
Balance at 31/12/2010		\$6,842.82
Add Cash Management Trust A/c	\$8,903.71	
Total Society Funds		\$15,746.93

Notes: This report has not yet been audited

- Donations of \$200 went to The Colong Foundation, Birds Australia, WIRES, Kuringai Bats, Wilderness Society, Australian Bush Heritage, and Total Environment Centre.
- The Society's funds at 31.12.10 were \$15,747 including \$1,398 in *The President's Fund* from which donations go to selected conservation groups, [as noted above].
- Included in the Society's funds are subscriptions for 2011 of \$1,450 paid in advance.
- Generous donations of \$720 have been received with the 2011 subscriptions so far, and these will go into the *The President's Fund*.

Thank you.

OATLEY BOWLING CLUB SITE

At its September meeting, Hurstville council resolved to prepare a plan of management for the Myles Dunphy Reserve. The whole Reserve (except for the Scout Hall) is currently classified as a natural area under the Generic Plan of Management for Natural Areas. At its December meeting, Council resolved that the Plan of Management apply only to the Natural Reserve excluding the former Bowling Club Site. The budget for the plan is about \$40,000. Council can then submit an application (to itself) to rezone the former Bowling Club site to Residential and to reclassify it as Operational Land. Once it is classified as "operational" it would be open to lease for seniors' housing, and it can be sold.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS 2011.

As expected, "glitches" with the new electronic bank transfer system have occurred. We have already received several anonymous transfers. As outlined in the renewal notice it is IMPERATIVE that you enter your name in the twenty-character reference field of the transfer document. If you receive a reminder notice for non-payment of your 2011 membership subscription, and have already paid electronically, please phone Robin Dickson on 9580 5663 so that we can sort out the problem.

Briefly

Kim Wagstaff is to be congratulated on receiving **Kan Oatley Electorate Community Award**. O.F.F. nominated Kim in due recognition of his enthusiastic contribution to the community and to conservation.

Colong Foundation continues the battle for the wilderness. <http://www.colongwilderness.org.au/>

Earth Hour will be held on Saturday March 25th between 8.30- pm and 9.30 pm local time.

Clean Up Australia this year is on 6th March. Details in next O.F.F. News and at the February monthly meeting. www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au/

Bush Regenerator's Handbook, the third edition from The National Trust of Australia (NSW) has just been released. <http://www.nationaltrust.com.au/>.

Snowy Mountains 2011. Our annual trip to Smiggins Chalet is from 12th to 19th February. [Costs are \$102 double or twin share, \$47 extra adult in room, \$81 single, and \$39 per child]. There is still time to make a late booking - contact Robin Dickson as soon as possible on 9580 5663

You are a clever pup, but stop winning every time!





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Issue 2/11

Feb/Mar 2011

THE AGM 7th FEBRUARY

Congratulations to Julian Sheen who was re-elected as President and to the elected committee members, named in the attached 2011 OFF Program. In his presidential address, Julian spoke of Sustainability. He called for a change in our values if we are to attain a level of sustainability providing a good life for all the people on the planet. Sustainability must support a human dignity dependent not just on money, possessions, and consumption, but on what we really require to live well - sufficient food, health, work, and shelter for all people. He noted that here shelter has come to mean an ever-larger house, requiring more energy to heat and cool. He gave this as an example of the failure to address the needs of the many that are so very far from living well. He cited a UK annual survey, *The Wild Bird Count* that is appropriately assessing one element of a self-defining environment. Without authentic sustainability, human dignity is essentially fragile and ephemeral - here today but gone tomorrow

SECRETARY'S REPORT FROM LIZ CAMERON

Oatley Flora & Fauna has a large and loyal membership. Thanks to Robin Dickson's friendliness and efficiency, our membership remained above 300 last year. Alan Fairley oversaw the speakers' program that included the very popular "Birds in Backyards" presentation by Dr Holly Parsons. Alison Gilroy took over as Field Officer from Janet Austin last year and organised 12 very successful field activities that attracted an average of 15 participants. 54 members and friends attended the Annual Dinner organised by Robin Dickson and Alison Gilroy. The December Picnic in Oatley Park attracted many long-time members. OFF's history of actions to protect Oatley Park was summarised by Alan Fairley for the St George Magazine published in July. OFF members contributed actively to national, state, and local programs including Clean Up Australia, Streamwatch, and native plantings at Oatley West PS and in Lime Kiln Bay. Your committee wrote in support of six conservation campaigns by fellow organisations. Successes in issues for which OFF had lobbied included creation of River Red Gum National Parks and Reserves, and the temporary removal of Dharawal SCA from BHP Billiton's plans for longwall mining operations.

The Hurstville Council assured OFF it would be consulted on the Plan for Myles Dunphy Reserve. OFF has representatives on Hurstville Council's Tree Management Working Party and continues working to protect native trees and vegetation. Melina Amerasinghe and Jason Cockayne were instrumental in OFF's successful application for a grant of \$7,000 from the Lower Georges River Sustainability Initiative. Aiming to 'Attract Small Birds to Gardens for Greater Catchment Sustainability', OFF is running free 'Birds in Backyards' workshops in 2011 for St George and Sutherland residents, with some native plants and garden advice for the participants.

VALE HARRY WHAITE [1912-2011]

It is with great sadness that we note Harry's passing. Throughout his lifetime, Harry was a champion of the environment and worked constantly to help maintain true environmental integrity. With his scientific background, he was exacting in what he did. He was a passionate bushwalker and photographer, walking with such identities as Paddy Pallin and Myles Dunphy. Walking mainly in the Blue Mountains, he mapped a section of the mountains with a colleague, and in recognition, the Geographical Names Board has registered a Mount Whaite in the Blue Labyrinth area of the Mountains National Park. He was a staunch believer in conservation and rehabilitation, preserving habitat, species diversity, and harmony with nature. In his effort to encourage conservation Harry was actively involved with many environmental and community organisations. He was a dynamic member of OFF; he was on the committee for all of 29 years, and a knowledgeable and popular walk leader. Although in 1999, in his late eighties, he withdrew from the committee, he rarely missed the monthly meetings after that, and the President noted his unusual absence from the February 7th meeting, just hours before he died.

STOPPING DENGUE FEVER

Next year mosquitoes infected with bacteria to stop other mosquitoes transmitting the dengue virus will be released into the wild. Scientists in Australia have found a fruit-fly bacterium called *Wolbachia* that infects *Aedes* mosquitoes, makes them less able to carry the dengue virus, and halves their lifespan when only elderly insects transmit the disease. Some 100 million people in the tropics get dengue fever, and it kills some 40,000 each year. <http://www.newscientist.com/>

MYRTLE RUST

People can easily spread this in infested plant material including cut flowers and nursery stock, on clothing and dirty equipment including containers and pruning shears, and on contaminated timber products. www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/

PHYTOPHTHORA DIEBACK

Phytophthora (pronounced fy-TOFF-thora) is a devastating plant killer attacking plant roots, destroying the food and shelter of many animals. It is a soil borne water mould spreading naturally in water or roots, and unaware humans help it spread. Check on this devastating plant killer before your next walk in the bush. http://www.rbgsvd.nsw.gov.au/plant_info/

Since OFF's program for 2011 is attached, this month's edition is being distributed by post to members. It is also on the website.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE OFF FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS WERE IN THE HANDS OF THE AUDITOR AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS.

Meetings of the Society are held at the Uniting Church Hall Fredrick St [cnr Letitia St] Oatley starting at 7.45pm, usually on the fourth Monday of the month.

Visitors and accompanied children are welcome to all meetings and excursions.

COMING EVENTS

Feb 28th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Gary Schoer**, Secretary NPA Southern Sydney, speaking on "**Kimberley by Sea**" - an expedition into the lands of the Wandjina and the Gwion Gwion (or Bradshaw) rock art".

March 5th (Saturday), Field Day to Dharawal State Conservation Area-Minerva Pools. Leader: Graham Lalchere T 95803107 [Details below at *Field Day Dharawal*]

Mar 6th (Sunday) Clean Up Australia Day -OFF members and friends will be working in the Myles Dunphy Reserve and Oatley Park. [See *Clean Up Australia* below].

Mar 26th (Saturday) Earth Hour occurs around the World between 8.30 and 9.30pm in the local time zone.

March 28th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Louise Egerton** publisher and co-author of "Wildlife of Australia", speaking on **Counting Our Blessings: Biodiversity in Australia**.

April 2nd (Saturday), Field day to La Perouse to Malabar via Cape Banks and Little Bay. **Leader: Alan Fairley**

April 18th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Matthew Mo** speaking on **Sydney Region Lizards**

May 1st (Sunday), Field day to Lane Cove National Park - Boyles Creek Leaders: Janet & Graham Austin

FIELD DAY DHARAWAL

The Field day on Saturday March 6th involves a relatively easy walk of about 3-4 Km with an option of swimming. Meet at 9.30 am at the locked gate at Victoria Road, Wedderburn (directions available if required). The main part of the walk is to Minerva pool on Stokes Creek. After morning tea [and a swim for those inclined], we may then go to other pools, if the group would like to do so. One of these other pools will be down the steep and very slippery Jingga Track. Only those sure on their feet may want to try this one, but the reward will be worth it, leading to a beautiful large pool with waterfall on O'Hares Creek. Bring hat, lunch and water, strong walking shoes/boots and bush-walking stick, as the tracks may be steep and slippery in places. [Leader: Graham Lalchere, T 0430 968 260.]

LONGWALL MINING UNDER DHARAWAL

BHP is in temporary retreat on its plan of mining under Georges River headwaters, but it is likely to return. An easy way to lobby against the mining is at www.otfordeco.com/Dharawal.

SMIGGIN HOLES -

Some 14 OFF members and friends gathered at Smiggins in mid February. The weather was cool, with cloud, mist and fog, a perfect setting for the alpine area and in contrast to the dreadful weather prior to our departure. Our walks included Mt. Stilwell and beyond, Schlink Pass, Porcupine Rocks, Rainbow Lake, the Waterfall Walk, Palaibo Track, Spencer's Creek, Perisher Village and the Old Summit Road. There were enjoyable drives to Guthega, Island Bend, Jindabyne, Thredbo, Khancoban and Nimitabel. A special treat was a successful evening platypus spotting. On 16th Feb, the day of his funeral, we had a remembrance evening sharing reminiscences of the good times at Smiggins with Harry Whaithe. While visiting the Wild Brumby Schnapps Distillery we were fascinated by a chance display of professional skills by a clever sheep dog demonstrating perfect on-point control over a plastic horse. Once again a great week! [Report by Robin Dickson]

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

On Mar 6th, OFF's team is working in Myles Dunphy Reserve on the northern side. Meet at River Rd, off Mulga Rd from 8.30. Bring hat, gloves, sturdy shoes/boots or gumboots, water, sunscreen, and some rubbish bags. Some are also gathering at Oatley Park at the car park near the Castle at 10.30.

LOCAL PLANTS ON SALE

There will be a small selection of local native plants on sale at the next OFF meeting. They include Bush Pea (*Pultenaea daphnoides*), Eggs and Bacon (*Dillwynia retorta*), Prickly Moses (*Acacia ulicifolia*), Tick Bush (*Kunzea ambigua*) and Red Bottlebrush (*Melaleuca*

hypericifolia). Most are small shrubs and ideal for immediate planting. Price is only \$2.00 per tube. Funds raised will go to help plantings at Oatley West Primary.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2011

Have you paid your membership fee yet? You can opt to pay by direct bank transfer but make sure your name is on the transfer. Bank details are on the membership form. The fee is \$25 per family.

Briefly

The Green Corridors of Southern Sydney, a film produced by the Southern Sydney Branch of NPA is being previewed on Wed 23rd Feb, 8pm, Multi Purpose Centre, 123 Flora Street, Sutherland. Supper served after. [Info from Gary Schoer, 9570 1813]

Australians for Sustainable Development (AfSD) has recently formed to present a united front in opposing the Part 3A planning process and its lack of transparency, particularly at Barangaroo. <http://afsd.org.au/>

Joseph Banks Native Plants Reserve, Manooka Plc Kareela is one of the very few specialised gardens in Sydney devoted entirely to Australian native plants. <http://www.anbg.gov.au/>

Henry Gold's wilderness photographs will be on show at the Bondi Pavilion Gallery from May 31st to raise funds for the Colong Foundation [Details later]

Earth Hour is on Saturday March 26th between 8.30- pm and 9.30 pm local time.

Conservation Issues: With the State elections rapidly approaching, electors are encouraged to ask their candidates to define their conservation objectives.

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area embraces over a million hectares of natural bushland extending from the Southern Highlands to the Hunter Valley. A significant report on the area can be found at www.worldheritage.org.au/

Paper choice. The Wilderness Society calls on us not to buy paper produced from our beleaguered native forests. <http://www.wilderness.org.au/articles>

We are being watched!





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Issue 3/11

Mar/April 2011

KIMBERLEY BY SEA

Gary Schoer spoke of the Kimberley Coast at the last OFF meeting. Travelling on the ship "Coral Princess", he took spectacular pictures that he showed during his talk. On the Wandjina rock art sites he spoke of the need for traditional "refreshing" of the paintings when white pipeclay, of limited durability had been used as backing. He mentioned as an example of this art the paintings of Donny Woolgoodga the designer of the spectacular 35 meter high Wandjina for the Sydney Olympic Games. The red Gwion Gwion (Bradshaw) figures, on the other hand, are more firmly held in the rock grains and some have survived for an astounding 17,000 years.

Gary described his travel up the Prince Regent River to King's Cascades, where a crocodile had taken Ginger Meadows soon after Australia won the Americas Cup. The threat of crocodiles has prevented a full assessment of the marine values of the region, now threatened by a major LPG plant north of Broome. He made the case that further industrialisation of the region would compromise one of the world's longest unspoiled coastline.

GARDENS OF STONE

To promote low impact visitor experiences and its reservation as a state conservation area, the Colong Foundation and the Blue Mountains Conservation Society have developed a Visitors Map in full colour, covering the entire Gardens of Stone region. Priced at \$7.50 plus \$1.50 postage it has much of interest about the other side of the Mountains. More at www.colongwilderness.org.au/ and www.bluemountains.org.au/

NEW CONSERVATION AREAS?

The Colong Foundation reports that Genowlan Mountain and Mount Airly in the Capertee Valley have been included in the Mugii Murum-ban State Conservation Area. With colonies of endangered plants, interesting canyons, large pagoda mazes and the relics of diamond and gold mining, it is a key part of the Gardens of Stone Reserve proposal. Its inclusion in the conservation area seemed to promise the end to proposed intensive coal mining, but Premier Kenneally said on 4th March that mining would still be permitted there.

SYDNEY WILDFLOWERS

A new website presents a collection of Sydney-region wildflower images, almost all from National Parks. Many of the flowers are quite small and easily overlooked and the focus is to present the small detailed structures of the flowers together with varying conditions of light and shade. www.sydneywildflowerimages.com

EARTH HOUR 2011

On March 26th, hundreds of millions of citizens, from a hundred different countries, will unite in lights out. Earth Hour is a call to action. It starts with a flick of the switch at 8:30pm, in a collective display of commitment to protect the planet, sending a message about saving electricity, rather than about actually saving any electricity during that one short hour! www.earthhour.org.au/

BIRDS IN BACKYARDS WORKSHOPS

This year OFF is conducting four FREE Birds in Backyards workshops, an initiative of Birds Australia. The workshops educate people on the importance and means of attracting smaller birds into their gardens. Bookings are essential. More information from Jason 9570 8559 <mailto:jay.shaz@hotmail.com> or Liz 9580 6621 <mailto:lizc@pacific.net.au>

COAL AND GAS STRATEGY

The NSW Department of Planning is inviting feedback from community and industry on the directions and issues relating to coal and gas strategy.

The Department is leading the preparation of the strategy with assistance from key Government agencies, and seeking community, industry and other stakeholder input. The main aims of the strategy will be: i) To guide sustainable development of the coal mining and coal seam gas industry, ii) To minimise adverse health, environment, agricultural and land use impacts of the industry and iii) To strengthen communication between Government, industry and the community on coal mining and gas production matters. See www.planning.nsw.gov.au/. You can respond to coalandgasstrategy@planning.nsw.gov.au or post: Coal and Gas Strategy Department of Planning GPO Box 39 SYDNEY NSW 2001 Closing date: Friday 15 April 2011

TASMANIA'S SO CALLED MORATORIUM

The Tasmanian State and the Federal Government announced on 15th December 2010 that within three months there would be a moratorium placed on logging of high conservation value trees in Tasmania. On March 17th, three months and two days later, eight conservationists took action to halt continuing logging operations in the Counsel Forest in Tasmania to highlight the urgent need for logging operations to cease immediately. See more at: <http://www.nativeforest.net/>

HENRY GOLD'S IMAGES OF THE WILD

An exhibition of wilderness photographs will be at the Bondi Pavilion Gallery, Bondi Beach, May 31 to June 12 to raise funds for wilderness conservation by the Colong Foundation. Henry will be featuring his colour images of wilderness, including colour panoramas for the first time, and his stunning black and white photography. Since 1967, countless numbers of Henry Gold photographs have served to publicise nature conservation. www.colongwilderness.org.au/GoldGallery/

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Have you paid your OFF subscription for 2011? Subs remain at \$25 per person, or family living at the same address. You can pay by cash or cheque at the monthly meeting, post [cheque or money order] to the Secretary [address below] or by direct bank transfer [details on your yellow renewal form -do not forget to include your name]. March 31st is usually the cut off date.

Meetings of the Society are held at the Uniting Church Hall Fredrick St [cnr Letitia St] Oatley starting at 7.45pm, usually on the fourth Monday of the month.

Visitors and accompanied children are welcome to all meetings and excursions.

COMING EVENTS

Mar 26th (Saturday) Birds in Backyards workshop, an initiative of Birds Australia at Carss Park [fully booked]

March 28th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Louise Egerton publisher and co-author of "Wildlife of Australia", speaking on **Counting Our Blessings: Biodiversity in Australia**.

April 2nd (Saturday), Field day to La Perouse to Malabar via Cape Banks and Little Bay. Approx 11 km. Moderate walk along coast and cliff tops. See Henry Head fortifications, historic Coast Cemetery, Little Bay, coastal scenery. Meet 9.30am at La Perouse bus terminal. Drive or take 7.43am train from Oatley to Central, then bus 393 from Eddy Ave at 8.59am to La Perouse. **Leader: Alan Fairley** Tel. 9570 8332.

April 16th (Saturday) Birds in Backyards workshop [fully booked]

April 17th (Sunday) Additional Field Day: Bird walk along Lime Kiln Bay Circuit Walk (See OFF website at: <http://off.oatleypark.com/limekiln.html>). The walk will start at 8 am and take 1-2 hours. Please notify Jason Cockayne phone 9570 8559 or <mailto:jay.shaz@hotmail.com> if you wish to take part.

This activity complements the Birds in Backyards workshops sponsored by OFF as a 'getting greener' project, and funded through the Lower Georges River Sustainability Initiative. A second bird walk will be held in Poulton Park, on Sunday 8th May - [details later].

April 18th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Matthew Mo speaking on **Sydney Region Lizards**

May 1st (Sunday), Field day to Lane Cove National Park - Boyles Creek Leaders: Janet & Graham Austin

May 23rd (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Brendon Bell**, Education Officer, Sutherland Astronomical Society.

DHARAWAL STATE CONSERVATION AREA

On the day before Clean Up Australia Day, we had a great turn-out of 28 curious walkers to see what the little known Dharawal State Conservation Area has to offer. The north-western end has some magnificent pools accessed by short walks along fire-trails and tracks from a road put down originally for a housing sub-division (thankfully still-born). The plan was to go to 3 of these pools, with easy exits available between each, for those who did not feel like tackling the increasingly steep and slippery trails as we progressed from Stokes Creek crossing pool (good), to Minerva pool (better) (also on Stokes Creek) to the O'Hares Creek pool (best!) at the bottom of the Jingga Track.

And this plan worked well, with most participants going to the first two pools and some swimming in Minerva. Since OFF member Sharyn Cullis had organised a clean up day, we also made a point of picking up a bag of rubbish to leave the area better than we found it. Thanks to Matthew for going the extra distance to the end of the pool! As a reward, Four Black Cockatoos greeted us with a flyover at Minerva Pool.

The majority of walkers then made it down the Jingga track for a look at this splendid pool, approximately 70-80 by 30-40 metres. While some went swimming again, the rest started back up the track in light rain, which had been threatening for much of the day. Thanks to Trevor for collecting more rubbish while swimming.

This area contains some outstanding pristine bush and streams, and deserves to become a National Park to protect it from long-wall coal mining and coal seam gas extraction as proposed by BHP and other companies. [Note Anti Coal Seam Rally in the next column.]

Note. On this walk OFF successfully trialled a method of disinfecting footwear with 70%/30% mentholated spirits/water to restrict the spread of Phytophthora, a devastating plant killer attacking plant roots, destroying the food and shelter of many animals. OFF will continue this practice in all future walks in our precious bushland areas. Graham Lalchere reporting on DSCA walk and clean up

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

This year OFF decided to attempt two clean up sites: Myles Dunphy Reserve and an area below Websters Lookout in Oatley Park. Myles Dunphy should not have needed as much attention this year following its clean up in 2009 and cleaning up by Bushcare as they go about their work. So, we decided to target the considerable amount of rubbish in Oatley Park that was

hidden in the bush and appeared to have been thrown off the lookout or left by surreptitious users of the bush. So, thirty eight OFF members and friends, including some on kayaks, toiled away from 8.30am to 1pm and collected the equivalent of approximately 35 bags of rubbish and recyclables (6), including a tyre, chairs, a folding bed frame, a microwave, an air conditioning unit, milk crates, an ironing board and a hockey stick. The amount collected from Myles Dunphy was a surprise, and more may have been collected in the OFF area in Oatley Park as the Lions Club, who ran the after clean up BBQ, also had a clean up site in the park. Following their hard work, participants then enjoyed the BBQ in the Oatley Park "Castle".

Briefly

Sue Howard, nominated as a member of the OFF Committee, was warmly welcomed by the other members at their March meeting.

Caring for the Coast, the Environmental Defenders Office publication on threats to coastal environments and on how to apply the law to achieve better environmental outcomes is available free. T9262 6989 or <mailto:education@edo.org.au>

Earth Hour is on Saturday March 26th between 8.30 pm and 9.30 pm local time. [See the note above]

Anti Coal Seam Gas And Mining Rally Several hundred protestors gathered on March 20th in Martin Place to send a strong message to politicians and political parties that destructive mining is a major issue in NSW. secure.wilderness.org.au/

Things often look different in hindsight!





O.F.F. NEWS



Published by
OATLEY-FLORA-&-FAUNA
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Issue 4/11

April/May 2011

DHARAWAL STATE CONSERVATION AREA

Good news is that Premier O'Farrell has replied to OFF's query to indicate that his government will establish a new 6,000-hectare National Park south of Sydney to protect the sensitive DSCA. This will be in addition to the existing 600-hectare Dharawal Nature Reserve. He wrote that this announcement forms part of his plan to protect and rehabilitate the Georges River.

THE ATLAS OF LIVING AUSTRALIA

Following national collaboration between CSIRO, Australian museums, herbaria, other biological collections, and the Australian Government, the Atlas is online. It has millions of records about the distribution of Australian flora and fauna, and even records in our own suburb. <http://www.ala.org.au>

BARANGAROO

EDO notes that Australians for Sustainable Development Inc ("AfSD") will argue in the Land and Environment Court against the former Minister for Planning's last minute approval of the fourth modification to the Concept Plan for the Barangaroo site. The most controversial change in the latest modification is the hotel proposed over Sydney Harbour.

MYRTLE RUST ALERT

Myrtle Rust is a serious new plant disease that is spreading in both home gardens and in the bushland. It produces masses of powdery bright yellow spores on infected plants. Older lesions may appear dark brown (hence its rust name). It affects plants of the Myrtaceae family that include some of our best-loved native species – Eucalyptus, Angophora, Callistemon, Leptospermum, and Melaleuca. It is easily spread on infected plants, clothing and dirty equipment, including pruning shears. Everyone should learn to identify Myrtle Rust and report any sightings to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881. For precautions and images of the disease, visit the web site. www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/

EARTH HOUR 2011

On Saturday 26th March, Earth Hour swept around the globe as people switched off their lights. With a record-breaking 134 countries participating, the global community showed a significant commitment to a sustainable future, in spite of wide spread scepticism about both the goal and the means of achieving it. www.earthhour.org.au/

Correction On the March 5th field day to the Dharawal State Conservation Area, as an OFF initiative, the walkers disinfected their footwear against Phytophthora, using a mixture of 70% methylated spirits and 30% water. Unfortunately, two uninvited letters, "n", and "o", crept into the spelling of **methylated** in some copies of last month's OFF News!

HARRY WHAITE

On behalf of Harry Whaite's family, I would like to thank the members of OFF for their kind words of sympathy and consolation on his death, and for all they did for and meant to Harry during his life. Harry joined OFF in the early 1950s when he moved to Oatley, and it was always an important part of his life. In his final years, as his contemporaries died, OFF became his only social outlet. The warmth of the welcome offered, the stimulation of the talks, and the friendships gave him a connection with the wider community that he valued greatly. We would like to thank those who attended his funeral, and those who held the session in his memory at Smiggins. It was very comforting to know that our Dad had so many friends who appreciated him and will miss him. [Message from Jennifer Whaite]

Jennifer on behalf of the Whaite family has donated some of Harry's extensive collection of books to members of OFF. They include a number on flora, fauna, national parks, and similar topics. They will be available, free of charge, at the back desk at the April OFF meeting, on a first come, first served basis.

WATTLES BEGIN TO BLOOM

Most think of wattle blossoms as announcing the arrival of Spring. However, a visitor to bushland parks around Oatley will see wattles flowering as early as April or May. Of the ten species of Acacia (wattle) found in Oatley Park, at least four flower in late Autumn. Three species are common; they are 1) Sweet-scented Wattle (*A. suaveolens*) [photo], with long flat phyllodes ("leaves") to 12cm, 2) Sunshine Wattle (*A. terminalis*) with bipinnate leaves, and 3) prickly Moses (*A. ulicifolia*) with needle-like phyllodes. Number 4), (*Acacia hispidula*), is less common, occurring in small patches beside the track above Lime Kiln Bay. My mother used to comment, "the wattles are early this year", but if Spring is the peak season then there are always some "early" wattles in flower. [Note by Alan Fairley]



BIRDS IN BACKYARDS WORKSHOP 26 March

Our first workshop included participants from four council areas. Dr Holly Parsons showed the ways of restoring bird friendly habitats. Armed with their share of 160 plants given by the Menai Wildflower Group, the work shoppers returned home very keen to create bird friendly gardens. Our next workshop, already booked out, is on 16th April at Carss Park. Other workshops will be in August or September. Those interested in taking part should contact Jason 9570 8559 <mailto:jay.shaz@hotmail.com> or Liz 9580 6621 <mailto:lizc@pacific.net.au>

Meetings of the Society are held at the Uniting Church Hall Fredrick St [cnr Letitia St] Oatley starting at 7.45pm, usually on the fourth Monday of the month.

Visitors and accompanied children are welcome to all meetings and excursions.

COMING EVENTS [Including some additions not in the published program]

April 17th (Sunday) Field Day: Bird walk in Lime Kiln Bay Wetlands. Meet at the wooden steps in Waterfall Rd, Oatley West. The walk will start at 8 am and take 1-2 hours. Bring binoculars, walking boots and hat to see what wildlife you can spot. Contact Jason Cockayne phone 9570 8559 or just turn up.

A second bird walk will be in Poulton Park, on Sunday 8th May - [details below]. These walks complement the Birds in Backyards workshops sponsored by OFF as a 'getting greener' project, and funded through the Lower Georges River Sustainability Initiative.

April 18th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Matthew Mo speaking on Sydney Region Lizards

May 4th (Wednesday) Planting Day Along Kimbers Creek. Lime Kiln Bay Wetland Volunteers have organised a planting day to complement last year's plantings and to complete the work set out under the Communities Water Grant funding from 2005. So far, the work has fortified the embankment with sandstone boulders and removed the large willows from the creek. The aim is to increase the habitat value along the riparian zone adjacent to the creek. Previous plantings have been very successful in creating greater diversity and giving opportunities for fauna to use the area for habitat. Come along with trowels, gloves and appropriate sun protection and footwear to help complete this worthwhile project. Meet at scout hall on Glen Road at 8am to conclude at 12pm. Morning tea will be provided. Contact Jason on 0411 744 715 for catering purposes.

May 7th (Saturday), Field day Upper Lane Cove Valley, Lane Cove National Park. 5-6 kms. Meet at Cheltenham Station car park (Sutherland Road) at 9.55 am. Drive or take the 8.26 am train from Mortdale to Town Hall, then the 9.08 am train to Cheltenham. We will walk down Day Rd. to no. 56 for morning tea and a visit to Ahimsa, the National Trust Wildlife Sanctuary; continue along Byles & Devlins Creeks, then the Step track & part of the Great North Walk before walking back to Cheltenham Station. Possible sightings of Eastern Water Dragons, Turtles, and Eels. Bring lunch and water. Wear sturdy shoes and a hat. **Walk leader Janet Austin** Tel. 9579 2375 & mobile 0448833811 on the day. [Note May 7 is the correct date; last month's "Coming Events" was incorrect]

May 8th (Sunday) Additional Field Day: Bird walk in Poulton Park, Hurstville Grove, looking at some small birds that need a dense understorey of shrubs for shelter, food and nest sites. We hope it will inspire you to plant bushier gardens and attract these birds to your backyards. The walk will start at 8 am and take 1-2 hours. Meet at the steps in Whitfield Parade that lead down to Poulton Park (approx. opposite No. 38). An hourly bus service stops in the next street (ask for details). **Leaders: Liz Cameron & Graham Fry.** Tel. 9580 6621; lizc@pacific.net.au

May 23rd (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Brendon Bell, Education Officer, Sutherland Astronomical Society.

May 28th (Saturday), Field day: Barren Grounds, Robertson - Cook's Nose with Leaders: Liz Cameron & Graham Fry

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

Louise Egerton publisher and co-author of "Wildlife of Australia", spoke at the 28th March meeting on Biodiversity in Australia. She referred to Australia's unique wildlife, its colourful parrots, venomous snakes, its abundance of hopping marsupials, and the strange, egg-laying Platypus, as just some of the players in a marvellous story beginning hundreds of millions of year ago, and only here. With pictures of the subjects and of the continents combined in the supercontinent, Gondwanaland, Louise spoke of the process of evolution in Australia, geographically isolated from the rest of the world for so long, with its animals developing in response to the changing climates and habitats. She described some of the influences on their day-to-day life, of finding partners, caring for their young, protecting themselves, and obtaining food and shelter.

LA PEROUSE TO LONG BAY - Sat April 2nd

Strong southerly winds only slightly dampened the enthusiasm of the 15 people on this coastal walk. The compensation was the spectacular crashing waves stirred up by the winds. We visited the fortifications on Henry Head dating back to 1880s, the rusting wreck of the *Minmi*, washed up on the rocks one night in 1937, and the forlorn Coast Cemetery, burial place of over 2000 people many of whom were infectious disease patients from around 1900. We were blessed with the sight of a lone bull seal resting on the rocks; also seen were a Reef Heron, a White-faced Heron, a Blue-tongue Lizard and a couple of Ravens stealing golf balls and flying off with them in their beaks. Lunch was below a protected cliff line on the shores of lovely Little Bay. [Report by Leader Alan Fairley]

Briefly**Books of interest**

Dharawal: The story of the Dharawal speaking people of Southern Sydney. Available from the Authors, Les Bursill, or Mary Jacobs, 10 Porter Rd Engadine 2233 for \$22 posted.

Kurnell. A 58 page colour booklet available free from Kurnell Visitor Centre or Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority, T 9895 7898.

Field Guide to the Bushland of the Lane Cove Valley, by John Martyn, www.step.org.au/books.php

Henry Gold's Images of The Wild A photographic exhibition is at the Bondi Pavilion Gallery, Bondi Beach, May 31 to June 12. See the Wilderness Gallery at www.colongwilderness.org.au/GoldGallery/



Biodiversity under threat



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GROUND ORCHIDS IN OATLEY PARK

If you walk in Oatley Park in late May or early June and you look carefully at the ground layer, you will probably notice one or more of the five species of terrestrial orchids that flower in the park at this time of year. They occur throughout the park but especially in sheltered shady areas. The most common is Pixie Caps (*Acianthus fornicatus*), with up to 10 tiny green-mauve flowers up a stem less than 20cm tall. White Fingers (*Petalochilus pictus*) may also be spotted. It has a single white to pink flower with petals spread out like fingers. Three Greenhoods flower in late autumn. Sharp Greenhood (*Pterostylis acuminata*) [pictured] gets its name from the long pointed apex of the hood.



Blunt Greenhood (*P. curta*) can be identified by its twisted labellum. Tall Greenhood (*P. longifolia*) may have a stem up to 40cm with about seven pale green flowers. Twenty orchid species have been recorded for Oatley Park. Most flower between September and January but are seldom seen.

FLYING FOXES IN MYLES DUNPHY RESERVE

In late March 2011, over 4000 individual bats were counted in this colony. They do not seem to be using the reserve trees as a nursery as no young have been observed. The flocks of bats flying north over West Oatley may come from the Kareela colony. In the absence of flowering gums, they have been observed feeding on Lilly Pilly and Native Figs.

ENVIRONMENTAL DECISIONS IN NSW

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW (of which OFF is a member) has expressed concern about the new NSW Government's move to break up the Environment Department and shift responsibility for key environmental decisions to Industry and Investment. CEO Mr P Clarke says that it is like putting the fox in charge of the henhouse, potentially compromising the protection of the State's environment. Mr Clarke says, "In coming years there are some significant environment policy decisions facing NSW, from the future of marine parks to regulation of the logging industry. Our community needs full confidence that these decisions will be taken free of undue interference from industry. A healthy resilient environment is a key responsibility of government. We should be asking the new government for assurances that our natural world, marine habitats and urban areas will get the appropriate attention they need for a sustainable future."

Members of OFF Committee will be monitoring the situation carefully.

HOUSEHOLD SUSTAINABILITY

The current NSW Office of Environment & Heritage notes that households consume a significant proportion of available resources each year, and that the decisions about sustainability in the home make a real difference to environmental impacts around the state. Households use 70% of Sydney's total water consumption, and are the second largest users of mains water after agriculture. The average home contains more chemicals than were found in a typical chemistry lab a century ago, and Australians are the second highest waste producers in the world, throwing away 3.3 million tonnes of food a year, equivalent to a quarter of the total food supply. Consumption of resources and commodities continues to grow at rates that cannot be sustained indefinitely, putting pressure on natural resources; economic and social progress that significantly impact on the environment. www.environment.nsw.gov.au/

CONSERVATION HUNTING?

The Fishers and Shooters Party [FSP] in the Upper House of Parliament will be pushing for legislative changes to enhance the activities of licensed shooters, hunters, anglers and 4WD owners, in what they call "conservation hunting". FSP wants the right to shoot feral animals - deer, wild pigs, goats, foxes and rabbits. With some 875 national parks and reserves in NSW, almost 9 per cent of the state, there would be a lot of gunfire facing bushwalkers. FSP also wants game parks on privately owned rural properties, so that visitors can shoot deer and pigs. However, the SMH in reporting this quotes Premier Barry O'Farrell as stating that his government will not be pandering to the demands of the FSP for recreational shooting in national parks, and for the end of marine parks.

GREATER BLUE MOUNTAINS WORLD HERITAGE AREA

The Heritage Area embraces over a million hectares of natural bushland from the Southern Highlands to the Hunter Valley. From Sydney's back fence, wild escarpments rise westward to the crest of the Great Dividing Range and the farmlands of the Central Tablelands. The Area consists of eight individual nature conservation reserves - Yengo, Wollemi, Gardens of Stone, Blue Mountains, Nattai, Kanangra-Boyd and Thirlmere Lakes National Parks and the Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve. The creation of this integrated series of nature conservation reserves protecting the Greater Blue Mountains region represents one of Australia's greatest conservation achievements. Over a fifty-year period from the 1930s to the 1990s, conservationists fought a series of battles against great odds to protect the region's natural ecosystems from exploitation. A dynamic picture of much of this is to be found at <http://www.worldheritage.org.au/>

Meetings of the Society are held at the Uniting Church Hall Fredrick St [cnr Letitia St] Oatley starting at 7.45pm, usually on the fourth Monday of the month.

Visitors and accompanied children are welcome to all meetings and excursions.

COMING EVENTS

May 23rd (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with the speaker, **Brendon Bell** of the Sutherland Astronomical Society. [See the note below]

May 28th (Saturday), Field day: Barren Grounds, Robertson - Cook's Nose 6km, about 3 hours. Meet at 10 am in the picnic area, about 1km from the entrance to the Reserve. The walk is through heath land to a lookout on the escarpment that offers spectacular views. There are some steep sections and the track is likely to be wet in places. Winter-flowering banksias attract a variety of honeyeaters to the area. There is an option of several short walks (1-2 km) close to the picnic area. Bring lunch, water, sunscreen, and wet weather gear. Wear sturdy shoes and a hat. **Walk leaders: Liz Cameron & Graham Fry. 9580 6621 (mob 0427 169 490).**

June 27th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Clive Baker** speaking on **Trekking in Kokoda**

July 2nd (Saturday), Field day: Lane Cove Reserve - fantastic Fungi. Leaders Robin Dickson and the Kearneys

July 25th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Ken Griffiths** speaking on **Photographing Nature**

July 31st (Sunday) Field day: Blue Mountains National Park - Lockley Pylon Leader: Alison Gilroy

August 22nd (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Margaret Bradhurst** speaking on **Sydney's Native Orchids - month by month**

August 27th (Saturday), Field day: Royal National Park Burning Palms. Leaders: Julian and Annette Sheen

SYDNEY REGION'S LIZARDS

About 60 people were present at the April meeting to hear Matthew Mo's talk on Sydney's lizards. Special focus was on Matt's research project on the Broad-tailed Gecko in Oatley Heights Park. He examined 14 sites; with up to 30 individual lizards present at some of them. All were on rock outcrops where they liked vertical walls, ceilings, and crevices. Although most were nocturnal, some showed up during daylight hours. One finding was that the lizards do not seem to move very far and appear very territorial.

SUTHERLAND ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Brendon Bell, Education Officer of the Sutherland Astronomical Society Inc (SASI) is our speaker at the May 23rd monthly meeting. SASI started in 1961 with a small group very interested in astronomy, initially called the James Cook Astronomers Club. They constructed the Green Point Observatory on Council land in Oyster Bay in the mid 1960s. The observatory now has a meeting hall seating 50 people, a state-of-the-art 35cm telescope, a 15cm refractor, and a variety of impressive binoculars for members' use. The activities of the Society include Deep Sky, Planetary and Variable star observing, Occultations, Grazes and Eclipses, Photography and CCD imaging as well as Public Education Courses. Brendon will expand on some of these activities as his talk progresses. www.sasi.net.au/

BIRD NOTES FROM OATLEY

A) At the end of March a flock of about 30 Topknot Pigeons (a rainforest species) was seen flying over the railway line near Boundary Road. These birds can travel up and down the coast for 100s of kilometres looking for fruit, but they are seldom seen in Oatley.

B) April and May are the months to look and listen for Yellow-faced Honeyeaters flying over the suburbs. Last year a flock of over 100 of them were seen overhead in Wonoona Parade.

C) In March and early April, chicks of Dusky Moor Hen were still visible in Moore Reserve wetlands with some young Swamp Hens. A pair of Moor Hens nested in an isolated clump of reeds in the middle of the pond. Four chicks hatched but none survived for more than a few days (predators unknown).

WALK IN LIME KILN BUSHLAND SANCTUARY

On 17th April, ten keen bird watchers, including two little grand daughters, braved the threat of heavy rain to go bird spotting in the wetlands. We were fortunate enough to see a small flock of Rose Robins and a circling hawk, abruptly warded off by noisy miners and

aggressive magpies. A nesting Sulphur Crested Cockatoo took over an empty tree hollow, and we saw European Honey Bees taking up another part of the scarce fauna real estate in the park. Overall, we noticed fewer birds after the heavy rain, but as the day warmed up, they began to stir. The changing plant communities along the L.K.B. circuit offer something different every time you do the walk. All had an enjoyable morning. [Report by leader Jason Cockayne]

Briefly

World Ocean Day 8th June. Designation of World Oceans Day by the UN provides an important boost to those organisations and individuals deeply committed to ocean conservation and improving the health of oceans. www.squidoo.com/world-oceans-day

Gardens of Stone are at risk from open cut coal mining. Sat 14th May is to be a day of demonstration to help protect this icon. For more info go to www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/campaigns/

Kurnell Peninsula - a guide to the plants, animals, ecology and landscapes by Virginia Bear. Book launch Thurs 12th May 5.30 Central Library, Belmont St, Sutherland. RSVP: Nerida Gill 9895 7794 or <mailto:nerida.gill@cma.nsw.gov.au> More at <http://xa.yimg.com/>

Australian Plant Society provides great information about our native flora. Details about our neighbours, the East Hills Group of the Society are at <http://easthills.austplants.com.au/>

Images of The Wild: Exhibition of photographs by Henry Gold is on from Tuesday 31 May to Sunday 12 June, 10:00am to 5:00pm daily at Bondi Pavilion Gallery. www.colongwilderness.org.au/GoldGallery/

Ecology of Pymont Peninsula 1788-2008, Tuesday, 7th June, 10.30am Friends Room, State Library for a talk by Dr John Broadbent on his studies of the area. Booking essential 9273 1770 or <mailto:bookings@sl.nsw.gov.au>



Biodiversity!



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CANE TOADS FOUND LOCALLY

Cane Toads have been discovered in the ponds of an industrial estate at Taren Point (Sutherland Shire). And they are in large numbers. In November 2010, over 500 were reported and captured. Officers from Sutherland Council, Dept of Conservation and CMA developed a control plan have surveyed at night, used detector dogs and trapped as many as possible. Five Cane Toad Musters have been held using volunteers. Due to these actions the Cane Toad population has been severely decreased and it is hoped to confirm eradication within 3 years.

The alarm has been rung as this population is near a number of other freshwater wetlands, including Kurnell and Golden Bell Frog habitat. And of course, the wetlands around Oatley would be ideal breeding places. Females carrying tens of thousands of eggs have been captured. Given how quickly they have spread in Northern Australia and caused the mass death of local native fauna, we all should be concerned. Local Councils are on the front line for surveying and control and the State Government should be providing adequate funds for effective control measures.

THREAT TO GARDENS OF STONE N.P.

In December 2010, Coalpac announced a proposal to open cut mine 1088 ha of Ben Bullen State Forest adjoining the Gardens of Stone National Park just north of Lithgow. If approved, heaps of waste rock will replace the scenic woodland vistas along the highway near Cullen Bullen village. It would mean the loss of Box Gum Woodland listed as a Critically Endangered Ecological Community and Vulnerable *Eucalyptus cannonii* woodland. There has been no scientific assessment of plant species richness of the lands to be cleared. If approved, the open cut would have highwall faces up to 100 metres high directly adjoining the scenic pagoda features for which this area is famous. The mine will be in an area proposed as Stage 2 of Gardens of Stone.

OFF members can keep up to date with the progress of this proposal by contacting Keith Muir at Colong Foundation or logging in to Blue Mts Conservation Society at www.bluemountains.org.au. Or write to The Hon Barry O'Farrell at Parliament House, Sydney asking him to ban open cut mining in Ben Bullen SF.

OFF has a field weekend to Gardens of Stone on 29-30 October so we can see the area for ourselves. More in next OFF News.

WALKS REPORTS

We had a beautiful sunny Autumn day to walk down Day Rd Cheltenham to our daughter's home for a generous morning tea. Afterwards 15 walkers wandered through "AHIMSA" to the "Hut of Happy Omen" to hear about its builder Marie Byles. We then continued along Byles & Devlin's creek through pristine bushland crossing 4 creeks without incident noting the damage done by the recent heavy rains. After a leisurely lunch we retraced our steps back to the train.

[Report by Janet Austin]

BARREN GROUNDS NR – COOK'S NOSE TK Saturday 28th May

Fine mild weather attracted 17 to Barren Grounds, including a French university student interested in birds. On a short diversion to admire the view from Illawarra Lookout we encountered a lethargic Highland Copperhead soaking up a patch of sun, and a fresh wombat burrow. Honeyeaters were busy in the amber and golden flower heads of *Banksia ericifolia* and the French lass spotted a family of Southern Emu-wrens. The track to Cook's Nose, where we lunched, was muddy and rather slippery but the lookout afforded panoramic views of the Kangaroo and Shoalhaven Valleys. A Grey Goshawk glided past at eye-level and an apple rolled over the edge, eliciting a cry of 'Rock'.

[Report by leaders Liz Cameron & Graham Fry].

OFF Hon. Secretary: Liz Cameron, P.O. Box 52 Mortdale 2223 Ph: 9580 6621 <mailto:off@oatleypark.com>;

Guest Editor : Alan Fairley

COMING EVENTS

June 27 (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting. Clive Baker speaking on "Trekking the Kokoda Track". Clive first walked the Kokoda Track in the mid 1980s, beginning a love of Papua-New Guinea and its villages, people, battlefields and trekking. He has written the "Kokoda Trek" walking guide and co-authored "Battle of Milne Bay". He operates a self-publishing book business with over 200 books on Australians at war and runs his mail-order War Book Shop. He will have a few of his "Kokoda Trek" book at the meeting.

July 2 (Saturday), Field day: Fantastic Fungi with Robin Dickson and the Kearneys. Special Arrangements. See Below.

June 25th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting. Ken Griffiths. Photographing Nature.

OFF'S COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Members of the Society have been involved with the activities of other groups over the last two months.

*Jason Cockayne led a Birds in Backyards walk around Lime Kiln Bay and Liz Cameron and Graham Fry led one around Poulton Park.

*Members continue to attend the monthly Stream Watch activity in Myles Dunphy Reserve.

*Sharon Cullis led a group to study stream invertebrates at Dharawal SCA, a Georges River Combined Councils initiative. An article about Sharon's work appeared in "The Leader".

*Alan Fairley spoke to two separate groups in Oatley Park as part of Hurstville Council's Heritage activities.

* Liz and Alan spoke to a group from the Australian Indian Network in Oatley Park.

OATLEY PARK THIS MONTH

Some plants flowering in Oatley Park in June/July.

Red Five Corners (*Styphelia tubiflora*). Small shrub with pointed leaves and conspicuous red tubular flowers. Plateau and slopes.

Black-eyed Susan (*Tetratheca ericifolia*). A small shrub with whorled leaves; flowers pink with 4 petals and a dark centre. On the plateau near the lookout but uncommon.

Needle Bush (*Hakea sericea*). A medium shrub with needle-like leaves and abundant white flowers. Found chiefly on the plateau.

Finger Orchid (*Petalochilus pictus*). Formerly called *Caladenia*. Ground orchid to 30 cm tall with white to pink flowers. Plateau and slopes.

Coneseeds (*Isopogon anemonifolius*). Erect shrub with stiff divided leaves. Flowers yellow on terminal cone-like heads. Widespread on plateau.

See the full Oatley Park list (over 300 species) in *Native Plants of Oatley Park* - \$4.00 at meeting night or see it on the web site : off.oatleypark.com

NEXT OFF FIELD DAY

Saturday July 2nd. Fungi Walk in Lane Cove Bushland Park with Ray and Elma Kearney. (We will remember their talk to OFF meeting in June 2010). We will observe seasonal & endangered fungi in the Hygrophoraceae Family. Meet 9.30am at the Osborne Park Kindergarten Centre – the upper building adjacent to the tennis court – in a lane called Osborne Place off Richardson St in Lane Cove. (Park at the back of the tennis courts).

Allow about 1 hour to drive from Oatley. Morning tea/coffee & biscuits will be provided. After which we will spend about 2 hours in the park for our observations. Walking is mainly on bushland tracks with a couple of inclines – quite suitable for persons of average fitness levels. There may be some slippery patches if the weather is damp. Lunch and discussion will be held back at the Centre, finishing about 1.30pm. Bring lunch, water, wet weather gear and a mug. **Booking is essential. Ring Robin Dickson, 9580 5663, mob. 0459 340 133.** The Kearneys want to know numbers, so please ring Robin by Thursday 30th June if you plan to attend.

MEMORIES OF WIRRIMBIRRA

We have been contacted by Chris Lloyd who has been employed by the National Trust to develop a strategic plan for Wirrimbirra Sanctuary at Bargo. Given OFF's long association with Wirrimbirra (we used to have work parties there and Thistle Harris was our very first speaker at an OFF meeting), he wonders if any OFF member has recollections of Wirrimbirra's early days so he can retrace some of its early history. Contact Chris on chris.lloyd@wiyanga.com.au. (Chris' mother Alice Lloyd was OFF Hon. Secretary in 1970 and 1971. Now aged 86 and living in Brisbane, she still remembers the friends she made in the Society.)

BIRD WALK IN POULTON PARK

Sunday 8th May

Twelve people attended this walk, which complemented the Birds in Backyards workshops that Holly Parsons of Birds Australia is running for OFF's *getting greener* program. We pointed out the small birds that might be attracted to gardens if a variety of native shrubs were planted for food and shelter. A male Golden Whistler was the first sighting and Superb Fairy Wrens, Red-browed Finches, Eastern Spinebills and Silveryeyes were also seen. On the mangrove boardwalk Lesley Cox pointed out a sign recognising the contribution of OFF to the protection of Poulton Park. The walk finished with morning tea in our sunny backyard.

[Report by leaders Liz Cameron & Graham Fry]



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CONSERVATION-SOCIETY-INC.**



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Since 1955

OFF website: <http://off.oatleypark.com/>

Issue 7/11

July/Aug 2011

Sydney Golden Wattle (*Acacia longifolia*). Flowering now in Oatley Park



BIRDS OF OATLEY PARK

In a recent email to OFF, Warren Mallard made some interesting comments on the birds he remembers from Oatley Park in the 1950s. He notes, "Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters were the most prevalent, and there were colonies of Dusky Wood Swallows nesting at the end of Lime Kiln Bay. Grey Thrushes also nested in the area. A White-breasted Sea Eagle nested for a number of years in a large *Angophora costata* at the end of Lime Kiln Bay, but left once Peakhurst houses sprang up. Southern Yellow Robins were common, nesting with Silvereyes in the Melaleuca forest of Lime Kiln Bay. There were two species of Quail also in the park, and there were no Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Noisy Miners, Rainbow Lorikeets, or Scaly-breasted Lorikeets."

Warren's notes open up the question of how different is the birdlife now. Official lists are from about 1975 based on much earlier observations. One list contains 114 species; another more than 145, so there is a need for a new list for Oatley Park, Lime Kiln Bay, and Oatley Heights Park, noting behaviour and locations. It will take some time to complete, as a number of birds are summer visitors or only vagrants. The completed list will then go on the OFF website. If you have records of recent bird sightings, please send them to Alan Fairley.

<mailto:a.fairley@bigpond.com>

SOME GOOD NEWS

The *Colong Bulletin* notes that Genowlan Mountain and Mount Airly near the Gardens of Stone have been preserved as a 3,650 hectare State Conservation Area after a 30 years campaign.

The historic site of Yerranderie has also come into public ownership after Ms Val Lhuede donated this 467 ha property to the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife.

http://www.colongwilderness.org.au/media_releases/MR04032011.htm

GETTING GREENER

OFF's *Getting Greener* project for the Lower Georges River Sustainability Initiative [LGRSI], funded by the NSW Environment Trust is proceeding well.

- Dr Holly Parsons of Birds Australia ran two Birds in Backyards workshops in March and April; 40 people attended and 300 native plants, propagated by the Menai Wildflower Group and Jason Cockayne, were given to the participants.
- Twenty people joined bird walks in autumn at Lime Kiln Bushland Sanctuary (led by Jason Cockayne) and Poulton Park (led by Liz Cameron and Graham Fry). Jason has conducted seven garden inspections to advise on how to make backyards more attractive to small birds.
- The final two free *Birds in Backyards Workshops* will be on Saturday 6th August (Carss Park Community Gardens) and Saturday 17th September (Illawong Rural Fire Service Brigade Station). Both will run from 10 am to 12 noon. Bookings for the workshops are essential. Please contact Liz Cameron (ph. 9580 6621, lizc@pacific.net.au) or Jason Cockayne (m: 0411 744 715, jay.shaz@hotmail.com).

MARINE PARKS (MORATORIUM) BILL

The NSW Upper House passed this Bill on 23 June. It is now in the Lower House. The bill would suspend the creation of new marine parks, and prevent the Government from making a regulation to extend sanctuary zones, for five years. The Government has proposed amendments linking the length of the moratorium to the conclusion of the forthcoming independent review of NSW marine parks. The Government anticipates the audit report by 31 December.

ENERGY CONUNDRUM

In his book *Chaos, Collapse, And Survival* Peter Goodchild comments that the problem of the world's diminishing supply of oil is a problem of energy, not of money. Everything in the modern world is dependent on oil and other hydrocarbons. From these we get fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, lubricants, plastic, paint, synthetic fabrics, asphalt, pharmaceuticals, and many other things. We are dependent on these for manufacturing, for transportation, for agriculture, for mining, and for electricity. As the oil disappears, so will the means of supporting the billions of people who now live on this planet. The current favourite for alternative energy is solar power, but to meet the world's present energy needs using solar power, we would need an array of collectors covering about 550,000 km², the size of France. The production and maintenance of this array would require vast quantities of hydrocarbons, metals, and other materials, indeed a self-defeating process.

<http://www.countercurrents.org/goodchild130311.htm>

Meetings of the Society are held at the Uniting Church Hall Fredrick St [cnr Letitia St] Oatley starting at 7.45pm, usually on the fourth Monday of the month.

Visitors and accompanied children are welcome to all meetings and excursions.

COMING EVENTS

July 25th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Ken Griffiths speaking on Photographing Nature

July 31st (Sunday) Field day: Blue Mountains National Park - Lockley Pylon Leader: Alison Gilroy. The walk is about 6 kms. The start is some 1.5 hours by car from Oatley. Leave Great Western Highway at the main turnoff to Leura, up to the roundabout, turn right, and go straight ahead to Roosevelt St, turn left, then right into Highland Ave. Meet at no.79 Highland Ave at 9.30am where we will have morning tea. We will then drive down the Mt Hay road for 11 kms to Lockley's Pylon walk. The walk is along a rather rough undulating bush track, but with no major climbs or descents, and stunning views east, back to the city, and west and north. Bring the usual - lunch, sturdy walking shoes, woolly hat, and gloves (can be very exposed on the ridge). Rail track work rules out trains; car sharing will be arranged. **Ring Alison on 9580 5557**

July 31st (Sunday) National Tree Day, for more information see <http://treeday.planetark.org/>

August 22nd (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Margaret Bradhurst speaking on Sydney's Native Orchids - month by month

August 27th (Saturday), Field day: Royal National Park Burning Palms. Leaders: Julian and Ian Pitt

September 11th (Sunday) Additional Field Day to complement Birds in Backyards workshops: Bird walk in Poulton Park, Hurstville Grove, looking at some small birds that need a dense understorey of shrubs for shelter, food and nest sites. Walk starts at 8 am for 1-2 hours. Meet at the steps in Whitfield Parade leading down to Poulton Park (approx. opposite No. 38). **Leaders: Liz Cameron & Graham Fry.** Tel. 9580 6621; lizc@pacific.net.au

CLIVE BAKER

Clive gave a very interesting presentation at the June meeting on Trekking in Kokoda. He described the terrain, the people living in the area, the tourism and recalled significant events there during WW11.

Born in England in 1941, Clive's family migrated in 1951. As a teenager, he took up bushwalking, spent time in the army reserve commandos, and developed a taste for outdoor adventure. In the mid-1980s, he walked the Kokoda Trail, and that began a love of Papua New Guinea, exploring battlefields, mixing with villagers and trekking. For a while, he organised and led trekking trips to Kokoda and other destinations, more as a lifestyle rather than a money earner.

Clive's interest in military history led to his co-authoring *Battle of Milne Bay* and *Kokoda Trek* walking guide. He developed, and is still running the mail-order on-line War Book Shop that, among other things helps with tracking wartime relatives. www.warbooks.com.au/

FANTASTIC FUNGI WALK

We were lucky to have lovely weather for our walk on 2nd July. 15 of us enjoyed a wonderful morning with the Kearneys in Lane Cove Bushland Park. The setting was idyllic and we spent a couple of hours scrambling around the banks of the creek and finding surprises everywhere we looked. Whilst we were told "the season" was two weeks past its peak, we were all fascinated with the many different types, sizes, and colours of the assemblage. We felt privileged to be guided by people so willing to share their knowledge and their wonder of the whole area. All had a great time. [Walk Report by Leader Robin Dickson]

GARDENS OF STONE WEEKEND OCT 29-30th

At the June meeting John Watters outlined the proposed program for examining the Gardens of Stone on the October 29th weekend.

Keith Muir, Director of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness is to be the leader. Keith spoke at the 2009 September meeting on the threats to this magnificent area. Over 1088 hectares of public forest are now at risk of exclusive occupation and destruction by open cut coal mining.

We will be travelling to the area in 4WD vehicles. Accommodation for the Saturday night is for participants to arrange. There are a range of cabins at the Lithgow Tourist and Van Park, and Lithgow has five motels. Details of meeting places and vehicle sharing will be available closer to the date.

Please let Alison Gilroy [9580 5557] or John Watters [9534 1096] know if you are interested in taking part in this weekend away.

MAY PLANTING DAY AT DAIRY CREEK

It was a fun event with 22 volunteers planting 600 seedlings along the newly named Dairy Creek, upstream from Lime Kiln Bay wetland. The plantings complimented earlier work by H.C.C. Bushcare volunteers to increase biodiversity and provide habitat along the creek. The Menai Wildflower Group and the Bushcare volunteers propagated seed earlier collected from the reserve. The opportunity to increase the numbers of *Baeckea linifolia* from a single remaining species has proved encouraging; newly planted seedlings are doing well. Thanks to all participants, on completing the work to give a little back to the local environment. [Report by Jason Cockayne]

Briefly

The Keepers and the Kept. Former reptile zookeeper Taronga Zoo, and Melbourne, and London, Terry Boylan, talking about his new book at Hurstville Library, 21st July: 7pm, bookings 9330 6142. <http://hurstvilleimg.blogspot.com/2011/>

Wilderness. To see why wilderness has become so confused a term look at www.wildernesstruths.com

Mining Law in NSW: An Environmental Defenders Office discussion paper looks at the legal framework regulating mining, identifies key inadequacies with the system, and recommends changes See it on <http://www.edo.org.au/edonsw/>

Animamundi Film - Sydney Premiere, Aug 25th Chauvel Paddington, an innovative documentary about the planetary animal called the Earth and the human animal. <http://animamundimovie.com/>

Who came up with that rubbish about the climate changing?





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Issue 8/11

Aug/Sept 2011

OATLEY BOWLING CLUB SITE

OFF News in March 2007 first noted that Hurstville Council was to begin detailed studies of this site, for the purpose of redevelopment. *The Leader* recently reported [12th August] that, despite continuing community opposition, Council is now moving to demolish the Bowling Club buildings, and will spend \$90,000 of ratepayer's money to do so. In the four years, all applications for community use have been refused; destructive vandalism followed. Demolition is the first step in handing over to developers this iconic public land. It served the community for more than 50 years, and is part of (but oddly carved off from) the Myles Dunphy Reserve.



[Up to date detail in www.friendsofoatley.com/ and *The Leader*]

COAL AND GAS

"A Coal and Gas Plan needs to provide a framework where mining intensity will be reduced to protect the other natural resources of a region. Why should low value coal with high ash content always be mined, as dirty coal produces more greenhouse gases per unit energy? And why should long wall mining developments always propose full extraction under drinking water catchments and vital headwater swamps or under cliffs? The answer is that obviously the political process steps in and mining intensity is moderated, as we have seen in relation to sensitive water supply catchments" [Keith Muir in www.colongwilderness.org.au/]

FOOD VERSUS FUEL

Biofuels currently account for about 0.5 per cent of Australia's transport fuels, according to the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics. These are sourced mainly from the wastes that accrue when wheat and sugar crops are processed into food. However, to devote entire plantations to energy production is controversial because of the potential to displace important food crops. Warren Flentje, an expert on carbon capture, University of Melbourne, says fuel from the agave plant, from which tequila is derived, is not likely to cause such a problem. "With food crops there is the 'food versus fuel' issue. However, agave is a marginal crop growing well in semi-arid regions that are otherwise useless for food crops." www.australiangeographic.com.au/

WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

There is no simple definition of 'sustainability'. In fact, there may be as many definitions as there are people trying to define it. Most definitions will include: a) living within the limits of what the environment can provide, b) understanding the many interconnections between economy, society and the environment, and c) equitable distribution of resources and opportunities.

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/sustainingourevironment.htm

WATTLE DAY – 1ST SEPTEMBER



Wattle as the national floral emblem was virtually accepted as a floral emblem to mark Federation in 1901, but was not proclaimed as such until 1988, when the Golden Wattle, *Acacia pycnantha*, was the selected species. In 1992, the Commonwealth and States agreed to hold

Australia's Wattle Day on September 1st, the first day of spring. The golden wattle is an evergreen, spreading shrub or small tree. It grows in the under storey of open forest, woodland and in open scrub in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. When in flower, the golden wattle displays the national colours, green and gold. As one species of a large genus of flora growing across Australia, the golden wattle is a symbol of unity. Wattle is purpose-built to withstand our country's droughts, winds, and bushfires. The resilience of wattle represents the spirit of the Australian people. www.australiaday.org.au/

MARINE SANCTUARIES

The Australian Government is about to establish a national network of marine sanctuaries in federal waters right around our coast. The Wilderness Society notes that



the plan could result in the largest network of marine sanctuaries in the world, but that recently released plans for the proposed sanctuaries off WA and SA miss critical hotspots for marine life. These include threatened blue whales, dolphins, and sea lions [pictured], and allow for oil drilling off Kangaroo Island and Margaret River. www.wilderness.org.au/

PREVENTING UNSUSTAINABLE LOGGING

Environmental regulations intended to prevent unsustainable logging and protect threatened species are frequently breached in NSW's native forests, according to an Environmental Defender's Office report to the Nature Conservation Council NSW www.nccnsw.org.au/

DOGS' FUR SALE

The Humane Society International notes a widespread and rapidly growing selling of dog fur clothing from China across Australia. The Society is asking people to let the Government know that its current inaction is unacceptable, and that stronger labelling laws and greater border diligence is needed. www.hsi.org.au/

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COMING EVENTS

August 22nd (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Margaret Bradhurst speaking on Sydney's Native Orchids - month by month

August 27th (Saturday), Field day: Burning Palms Magnificent coastal scenery of the Royal National Park, brilliant views and wonderful flora and fauna. Some uneven track and a challenging climb out. Total distance about 10 km. Wear stout walking shoes and bring lunch and water. Meet 9.30 am at parking area at the Garie Road turnoff at Bertram Stevens Drive. We will then drive to Garawarra farmhouse. The walk starts there.
Leaders: Julian Sheen and Ian Pitt 0415428744

September 11th (Sunday) Additional Field Day. Bird walk in Poulton Park. Hurstville Grove to complement Birds in Backyards workshops. It involves looking at small birds needing dense shrubs for shelter, food, and nest sites, with the aim of inspiring the walkers to plant bushier backyards to attract these birds. Walk starts at 8 am for 1-2 hours. Meet at steps (opposite 38 Whitfield Pde) leading down to Poulton Park.
Leaders: Liz Cameron & Graham Fry. Ph. 9580 6621 lizc@pacific.net.au

September 17th (Saturday) The final free Birds in Backyards Workshop will be at Illawong Rural Fire Service Brigade Station from 10 am to 12 noon. Bookings are essential. Please contact Liz Cameron (ph. 9580 6621, lizc@pacific.net.au) or Jason Cockayne (m: 0411 744 715, jay.shaz@hotmail.com).

September 26th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Dan Bickel of the Australian Museum talking on "Tears of the Gods", the history and science of Amber

October 9th (Sunday), Field Day: Royal National Park - Karloo Pools Leaders: Jan Douglas and Dave Crawford.

October 24th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Philip Moore speaking on a Trip to the Great Victoria Desert (WA).

October 29-30th Field Weekend: Gardens of Stone National Park - Lithgow. Leaders: Keith Muir and John Watters. [See note below]

November 4th (Friday) OFF Annual Dinner Early note for diaries!

PHOTOGRAPHING NATURE

Ken Griffiths spoke on wild life photography at the July 25th meeting. He described some technical developments in cameras and the photographic advances that followed. He demonstrated how improvements in timing and focus allowed detail and precision that was previously not possible.



His marvellous examples included pictures of crashing waves, with a view of the splashing water previously only available to a spectator for a fraction of a second, and some delightful birds landing and taking off, with one snapping at a tiny insect, and both bird and insect in view. We also saw a lovely picture of a curiously friendly goanna in its very correct colours [not quite the one pictured]. <http://www.australianphotography.com/>

WALK 31ST JULY "LOCKLEY'S PYLON"

Thirteen people enjoyed morning tea at Highland Rd Leura, before driving the 11kms along the Mount Hay Rd to the start of the walk in the northern side of the Blue Mountains National Park. The weather was cloudy initially, but sun was lighting up the wonderful sandstone cliff line by lunchtime, giving wonderful views west to Govett's leap, and Perry's Lookdown, to the east right down the Grose Valley, and to the north across to Mount Banks. On our return, vistas were also to be seen right down to the harbour bridge.

The vegetation was quite varied, with heathlands interspersed with woodland. Boronias (both pink and white), banksias, and many wattles were in flower. There was evidence of wind shaping up on the ridges, as the prevailing winds were from the south-west. We were back at the cars by 15.00. [Report: Leader Alison Gilroy]

RECYCLING FOOD SCRAPS

Food scraps such as banana peels, apple cores, vegetable trimmings, bones, eggshells, and pizza crust are a wasted resource in landfill. As they decompose,

they generate methane, but when composted, they produce oxygen, valuable to soil and plant health. They can now be safely collected and processed, and a growing number of municipalities provide special food scrap bins. www.woollahra.nsw.gov.au/

GARDENS OF STONE WEEKEND OCT 29-30th

Participants will be travelling to the area in 4WD vehicles and will arrange their own accommodation for the Saturday night. There are a range of cabins at the Lithgow Tourist and Van Park, [58 Coerwull Road, Lithgow, ph.6351 4350 www.tourism.lithgow.com/accommodation.html] and Lithgow has five motels. Details of meeting places and vehicle sharing will be available closer to the date.

Please let Alison Gilroy [9580 5557] or John Watters [9534 1096] know if you are interested in taking part in this weekend away.

Briefly

Native plants, vegetation and climate change topic for the Friday Aug 26, 8pm meeting of the Australian Plants Society Parramatta & Hills District, Barton Hall, Hopetoun Village, off David Rd Castle Hill [Details from Wendy Goonan, ph. 96863149]

Oatley Park & Surrounds Photos on the OFF website <http://off.oatleypark.com/?p=1413>.

Red Dog now in cinemas, about a dog that made a significant impact in the Pilbara in the 1970s.

Wildflowers, Kuring-Gai Festival of 28th August 420 Mona Vale Rd St Ives <http://xa.yimg.com/kq/>



Do you know who I am?



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Sept/Oct 2011

MYLES DUNPHY AND BOWLING CLUB SITE

From early in the 1940s there were requests from local community organisations for Hurstville Council to declare the bushland northeast from Gungah Bay as a reserve. Council finally agreed to do so up to the Waratah street line. While part of the area had been subdivided years before, it was largely inaccessible for housing, and parkland was the best choice. However, the blocks from Waratah Rd to the railway were still considered viable housing blocks, and some were allocated for war service housing. It was later realised that swampy conditions made a through road impossible. As noted in a 1973 report, Council bought up more than two acres of the isolated blocks for "park purposes", probably before the end of WW2. Myles Dunphy suggested this, and a government parklands grant of £500 covered half of the bill. Council then declared the purchased area part the Gungah Bay Bushland Reserve. When some of the community protested at Council taking over "war service" blocks, it responded with an assurance that the land was "parkland" and would remain permanently in public hands. The site is shown on the Council's own LEP map with the words Myles Dunphy Reserve written right over the site of the club, so it is difficult to see how Council can now argue that it is not part of the Reserve and must be excluded from the plan of management being prepared.

Council's development application to demolish the Oatley Bowling Club is on exhibition for public comment until **Sept 23rd**. Details can be found at <http://www.hurstville.nsw.gov.au/>.

COAL SEAM GAS AND WATER CONSERVATION

Gas is clearly a valuable asset, but the methods used and the places chosen for extracting it are being fiercely debated. The coal seam gas industry concedes that extraction will 'inevitably' affect aquifers. Surely, this requires urgent action by the NSW government to ensure the protection of the state's drinking water supplies, rivers, and aquifers. The Nature Conservation Council of NSW is calling for an immediate moratorium on coal seam gas extraction until a comprehensive extraction strategy can be developed. It points to the importance of input from the community, farmers, and independent scientists. www.nccnsw.org.au/. The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is also concerned about rampant exploration and exploitation of gas and the threat to water sources. It notes continuing Coal Seam Methane exploration in the mountains, and drilling near Warragamba Dam.

GARDENS OF STONE

In 1994, a Gardens of Stone National Park was created covering 15,000 hectares and joining Wollemi National Park on the northern part of Newnes Plateau. Other large landscape features include the outstanding mesas of Donkey Mountain in the Wolgan Valley and Pantoneys Crown in the Capertee Valley. Pantoneys Crown is the centrepiece of the commanding view of the valley from Pearsons Lookout on the Castlereagh Highway. However, Gardens of Stone is an unfinished park. The state conservation area classification allows underground coal

mining to continue. Environment groups, including the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, have advanced a plan to protect much more of this unique landscape, by extending the park and creating a new state conservation area over adjacent plateaus and escarpments. These are presently state forest and Crown land. The overall proposal is known as Gardens of Stone Stage 2. www.habitatadvocate.com.au/

MARINE PARKS

The NSW Government has announced its Independent Scientific Audit Panel for Marine Parks. The Government's aim is to ensure "the right balance between the sustainable use of the marine environment and the conservation of marine biodiversity." Written submissions are invited by **Friday 30th Sept.** www.marineparksaudit.nsw.gov.au/

HISTORY AND SCIENCE OF AMBER

Amber has fascinated people from time immemorial, and long traded from sources along the Baltic Sea coast. Admired and used in jewellery and works of art, it is also an object of great scientific interest, as it provides a clear window to past life. Amber is the hardened and fossilized resin of ancient trees. It frequently contains inclusions of trapped plants and animals, and providing some finest fossils known, where tiny insects look as if they were just alive. Amber provides a snapshot in time, and is a great source of information about past environments. Now Australia has a major amber find, recently discovered in Cape York, washed up on remote beaches north of Iron Range. My talk will review the history, occurrence, and study of amber. [Note by our September speaker, Daniel J. Bickel]

LIME KILN WETLAND SAVED

The Leader's *Georges River Magazine* of Aug 25th recalled the long drawn out community battle of nearly thirty years, and the eventually successful action in conserving wetlands in their natural condition. It is to be hoped that the community will be again successful with the entire Myles Dunphy Reserve.

GEORGES RIVER NATIONAL PARK

A new Plan of Management is being prepared for the Park. The river and surrounding country has been important to Aboriginal people for thousands of years, and the park conserves important cultural places and some of Sydney's best river habitat for native plants and animals. Periodic review is required to ensure that its management is responsive to any emerging issues. Since the last plan of 1994, there have been many changes around the Georges River with a bearing on the future of the Park. Individuals and organisations are invited to contribute information and ideas relevant to the Plan of Management. www.environment.nsw.gov.au NPWS Metro South West Region, PO Box 44, Sutherland 1499

ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

"In my view, the number of convictions suggests either a pattern of continuing disobedience in respect of environmental laws generally or, at least, a cavalier attitude to compliance with such laws." Justice R A Pepper, NSW Land and Environment Court, 8 June 2011. www.nccnsw.org.au/

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September 26th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Dan Bickel** of the Australian Museum talking on "Tears of the Gods," the history and science of Amber [See note above]

October 9th (Sunday), Field Day: Royal National Park, Karloo Pool about 7km, difficult descents. Meet at Heathcote Station car park at 9 am, then via bottle Forrest management track. Initially a very steep rocky decent with large uneven drops into Kangaroo Creek. Track work so no trains*. **Leaders: Jan Douglas, Dave Crawford 0431 712 111.**

October 24th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Philip Moore** speaking on a **Trip to the Great Victoria Desert (WA).**

October 29-30th (Field Weekend): Gardens of Stone National Park - Lithgow. Allow 2½ hours from Oatley to Lithgow, if going up on Saturday, and note the need for an E tag on the M7. Meet at 9.30 am at the car park of the Lithgow Valley Plaza, Bent St, near the large pine trees. Cars can be left there for the day when transferring to 4WD vehicles. [More below] **Leaders: Keith Muir and John Watters [mob 0419 471 038].**

November 18th (Friday) OFF Annual Dinner [Details below]. * Oct 9 RNP field day - more detail at next meeting.

GARDENS OF STONE WEEKEND OCT 29-30th

Participants will be travelling to the area in 4WD vehicles, and will arrange their own accommodation for the Saturday night. Some may like to book in on Friday night. There is a range of cabins at the Lithgow Tourist and Van Park, [58 Coerwull Road, Lithgow, ph.6351 4350] and Lithgow has five motels... It is important to book early to avoid missing out. Maps and further information will be available at the October meeting. www.tourism.lithgow.com/

BURNING PALMS WALK

It was a great day; cool with a bit of cloud when we all met at the Garawarra farmhouse for our walk down to Burning Palms beach in the Royal National Park. Nineteen set off along the fire trail, one of the prettiest in the park. The pace was measured for there were many flowers to identify, admire, and photograph. First to spot an orchid (ten metres from the start) won applause. I will not mention his name but his initials were AF. From the fire trail, we walked onto the bush path descent to the sea stopping at Werrong Lookout for brilliant views down the coast. Palm Jungle was, as always, a place of mystery as we picked our way carefully through the fallen palm fronds. Lunch was in a clearing overlooking the sea. Then out onto the grassland. Unfortunately, the track has become a muddy trench in places.

From down near the seashore we looked up at the towering cliffs where we had been a couple of hours before. On Burning Palms beach we stopped to enjoy the waves, a paddle and, for one intrepid, a swim. Two of the party made the detour to Figure of Eight Pools. Then began the climb up Burgh Ridge, pausing for more great views, and a rest. We all made it back to the top in good time to agree that it was a very pleasant day. [Report by walk leader Julian Sheen]

SYDNEY'S NATIVE ORCHIDS – MONTH BY MONTH

Margaret Bradhurst, Sutherland Shire photographer, bush regenerator, and native plant enthusiast spoke on local native orchids at the August meeting. Renowned for her knowledge and admiration of orchids, her beautiful slides displayed many orchids of the southern Sydney area in calendar order, beginning with those flowering from August. A summary of her talk here could not do it justice. This *Caleana major* (Flying Duck Orchid) was one of special note, if not the most beautiful.



The 2011 Annual Dinner is on Friday 18th November, 7 pm at South Hurstville R.S.L., 72 Connells Point Rd, South Hurstville in the South Lounge. Cost is \$35 per person.

There will be platters of finger food for appetizers followed by a buffet with hot and cold food, dessert served with ice cream, and coffee and tea to finish.

Please indicate if there is a requirement for gluten free. Drinks can be purchased at the bar. Singers are expected.

Prior booking is essential. **Alison Gilroy and Sue Howard** will be taking bookings and payment at the September and October meetings. Alison can be contacted on 9580 5557. Each guest is asked to wear a (loud or zany/frivolous) shirt.

The donation of suitable raffle items would be warmly welcomed.

LIONS FESTIVAL - OATLEY - 15TH OCTOBER

Each year, on the 3rd Saturday in October the streets and parks of Oatley are transformed into a sea of stalls, entertainment, rides, and music. OFF runs a stall each year, and is looking for volunteers for the day, or any part thereof. Please contact Alan Fairley closer to the time on ph. 95708332. For more information go to www.oatleylions.org.au/oatley-festival.html



Briefly

Sustainable House Michael Mobbs will talk on the revised edition of his book on planning to build or renovate a sustainable home on Thurs, 22nd Sept at Hurstville City Library, 7.00pm, Cost: Free. RSVP: Bookings essential. Phone 9330 6142 <http://sustainablehouse.com.au/>

The Green Corridors of Southern Sydney is a 30 min DVD by NPA (Sthn Syd) on the Royal National Park and related conservation areas in a bid to rally us to do more to defend vulnerable bushland. This is available on monthly loan at OFF meetings. <http://www.youtube.com/>





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Issue 10/11

Oct/Nov 2011

PREHISTORIC FLORA

Our Grevillea, Banksia and Waratah are members of the very large proteaceae family, named after Proteus, a minor god in Greek mythology. Protea were present when dinosaurs ruled the earth. They were separated with the breakup of the continents Gondwanaland. Major classes are found in South Africa, Australia and South America. 800 species are in Australia, 550 found in the south west. <http://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/>



OATLEY PARK IN SPRING

Wildflower species blooming in Oatley Park during the September-November period include:

- Eggs and Bacon (*Dillwynia retorta*)
- Wedding Bush (*Ricinocarpus pinifolia*)>
- Shiny Guinea Flower (*Hibbertia nitida*)
- Blue Dampiera (*Dampiera stricta*)
- Fuchsia Heath (*Epacris longiflora*)
- Rough Wax-flower (*Philothea scabra*)
- Green Spider Flower (*Grevillea mucronulata*)
- Pink Spider Flower (*G. sericea*)
- Red Bean (*Kennedia rubicunda*) [Alan Fairley's list]



BIRDS IN OATLEY PARK

The Park provides a sanctuary for many species of birds, some of which nest within its boundaries. Others simply use the park and its tidal boundaries as part of their wider search for food and shelter, returning regularly to the park, but nesting elsewhere. It is difficult to say exactly how many bird species can be found within the park at any one time; numbers vary depending on the season and availability of food. A hundred and forty five species are currently listed on the OFF website.



LOGGING FORESTS

The Wilderness Society and conservation colleagues in Tasmania have released a damning report showing continuing logging in important native forests supposedly protected under the Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement. www.wilderness.org.au/

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage has confirmed further logging breaches on the State's far south coast. *Forests New South Wales* has been notified after inspections in the Badja State Forest, west of Moruya, and the Bodalla State Forest. The anti-logging group *South East Forest Rescue* made 17 allegations, and two breaches were found in relation to the logging of rocky outcrops and hollow bearing trees. www.abc.net.au/news/

CAMPHOR LAUREL: A PEST TREE

It was introduced to Australia as an ornamental species about 1822 and established in the Sydney Botanic Gardens in 1854. Its value as an ornamental tree was actively promoted in municipal parks, gardens and school grounds. 10 years ago, OFF News noted that this tree was a pest, invading natural habitats all along the coast, with its root system damaging pipes, fences, foundations, and preventing the growth of other species. It reported that Kew Gardens in U.K. found the roots of camphor laurels to be covered with tiny oil exudation glands that seasonally pump toxins into the soil and water courses, and impact on native wildlife. Surprisingly still well regarded by some, camphor laurel is now a declared noxious weed, but not in all local government areas. www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/

LANDCARE AWARD: GEORGES RIVER HEALTH

The *Community River Health Program* of Georges River Combined Councils' Committee received the top prize in the Urban Landcare category of the biennial Landcare Awards. The river health program was celebrated as one of "thirteen of the state's most impressive environmental achievements" of the year by the NSW Landcare organisation. The ceremony was held in Parkes on 6th Sept, at the NSW Landcare and Catchment Management Forum.

Some of our members have been involved in sampling in areas of the Georges River in the last two years. Program coordinator Carl Tippler will be speaking to us on Nov 26th on his research on the health and quality of the aquatic ecosystem www.georgesriver.org.au/

LAND USE AND FOOD

The Sydney Food Fairness Alliance is organising a gathering in Penrith as part of Crave Sydney International Food Festival to discuss sustainable land-use issues. As Western Sydney faces rapid urbanisation over the next 30 years, equitably priced fresh produce for the region and for Greater Sydney will be threatened. Wed, 26th Oct 7 – 9 pm, Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre, 597 High St, Penrith. RSVP <mailto:info@sydneyfoodfairness.org> <http://sydneyfoodfairness.org.au/>

THE LEURA GARDENS FESTIVAL

The Festival from 1st to 9th Oct was a great success, despite the torrential rain on some days. There were magnificent displays of azaleas, rhododendrons, dogwoods, and camellias. The photo gallery can be viewed on the internet at <http://www.leuragardensfestival.com/photo-gallery>

PROTECT OUR NATIVE ANIMALS IN THE BUSH

- ✚ Stay on walking tracks in bushland.
- ✚ Admire wild flowers and plants – do not pick them.
- ✚ Leave natural features such as fallen timber on the ground.
- ✚ Leave yabbies, tadpoles, and water bugs in the creeks.
- ✚ Remove all your rubbish from the bush.
- ✚ Use your compost bin for garden green waste.
- ✚ Walk, rather than ride a trail bike.
- ✚ Keep equipment and boots clean. Spray with 70/30 mix of metho & water to stop spreading the fungal disease, *Phytophthora*.
- ✚ Keep pets at home, particularly cats, and especially at night.

Meetings of the Society are held at the Uniting Church Hall Fredrick St [cnr Letitia St] Oatley starting at 7.45pm, usually on the fourth Monday of the month.
Visitors and accompanied children are welcome to all meetings and excursions.

COMING EVENTS

Oct 24th (Monday): 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Phillip Moore** speaking on his **Trip to the Great Victoria Desert (WA)**. Philip is co-author of *Native Plants of the Sydney Region*, and author of the excellent handbook *A Guide to the Plants of Inland Australia* (2005) with photos of plants and desert communities seldom seen, including Lake Eyre in flood visited on the way to WA.

Oct 29-30th (Field Weekend): Gardens of Stone National Park - Lithgow. Allow 2½ hours from Oatley to Lithgow, if going up on Saturday, and note the need for an E tag on the M7. Meet at 9.30 am at the car park of the Lithgow Valley Plaza, Bent St, near the large pine trees. Cars can be left there for the day when transferring to 4WD vehicles. [More below] **Leaders: Keith Muir and John Watters** [mob 0419 471 038].

Nov 18th (Friday) OFF Annual Dinner South Hurstville R.S.L. [Details below].

Nov 26th (Saturday): Field day Wolli Creek - Two Valleys Walk. This is a Bird Walk, combining with the Menai Wildflower Group. Meet at Bexley Nth railway station at 8am and walk to Tempe station along the valley to see where the Wolli Creek Preservation Society has been remediating degraded bushland. See many birds, and possibly climb Nanny Goat Hill, Turrella. Expected to finish about 1pm; bring morning tea and lunch. **Leaders: Jason Cockayne and Sharon Pearson.**

Nov 28th (Monday): 7.45pm: Regular monthly meeting and social supper with **Carl Tippler**, Georges River Health Coordinator, speaking on **Macro Invertebrates of the Georges River and Tributaries**. [See note above]

Dec 12th (Monday afternoon): OFF Christmas Picnic. [Details next OFF News]

THE VALUE OF OFF MEMBERSHIP

Before electronics, all OFF members were posted copies of our newsletter as one benefit of membership. Today many people, members or not, have access to the internet and can read the newsletter at any time. Of course the worth of OFF membership extends beyond the newsletter, however important it may be in communicating events and ideas. Certainly our field days and meeting nights offer interest, learning and good friendship; and these events are open to visitors, who are warmly welcomed.

The core of our membership is not what we get out of our society but what we give to it. We give commitment, both active and passive, to our values and ideas:-

- o Interest in Australian flora and fauna
- o Protection for the natural environment
- o Understanding of the need to conserve our environment and resources
- o Cooperation with similar groups to achieve these aims at all levels.

Our Society can have no influence on local or global affairs without our strong commitment, made stronger by a wide and identifiable membership. The value of OFF membership then lies less in what you receive by becoming and remaining a member than what you offer. It means the continuing success and influence of our society as a whole: a good example of the sum of us being greater than the individual parts. [Julian Sheen, President]

GARDENS OF STONE WEEKEND OCT 29-30th

We will be touring the area in 4WD vehicles. You need to arrange your own accommodation for the Saturday night; some may like to book in on Friday night as meeting time is 9.30am on Saturday. Maps and further information will be available at the October meeting, and look at www.tourism.lithgow.com/. Bring the makings for lunches and tea breaks each day. All are welcome to dinner on Saturday night at the Secret Creek Restaurant at modest cost and BYO. At 6pm, prior to the dinner, we will have an inspection of the sanctuary at a reduced fee of \$10 pp.

KARLOO POOL WALK - 9th Oct

7 met at Heathcote and walked the 7km loop to Karloo Pool via Bottle Forest Management Track. Wildflowers made the bush a picture - including waratahs, gymeas, Patersonia (Purple Flag), pea flowers and grevilleas. The track gave beautiful views of Kangaroo Creek, rocky rapids, wide, still pools, and glimpses of wildlife. We saw skinks, water dragons and a very large fresh-water crayfish. After lunch beside the creek, a short stop at Karloo Pool (with 20 or so others), we were back at Heathcote by 2.30pm. [Jan Douglas]

DHARAWAL NATIONAL PARK

The Premier has announced that 98.7% of the area previously gazetted as a state conservation area will be

absorbed into the DNP. It sounds like good news in that there will be no undermining of the national park, but SMH reports [17th Oct] that an area in the middle of the park can still be mined in a compromise agreement with BHP Billiton.

OATLEY LIONS FESTIVAL, SAT 15th OCT

Once the threatening rain clouds passed over, the Oatley Memorial Park was a hive of activity. OFF stall was popular as usual with people obtaining information, buying native plants, renewing acquaintances and being told about the activities of the Society. Thanks to all those who helped set up and demolish the marquee and staff the stall from 8am to 3pm. The Festival is always a positive promotion for OFF and a reminder of our role and presence in the community.

[Report by Alan Fairley]

The 2011 Annual Dinner is on Friday 18th November, 7 pm at South Hurstville R.S.L., 72 Connells Point Rd, South Hurstville in the South Lounge. Cost is \$35 per person. There will be platters of finger food for appetizers followed by a buffet with hot and cold food, dessert served with ice cream, and coffee and tea to finish.

Please indicate if there is a requirement for gluten free. Drinks can be purchased at the bar. Singers are expected. Prior booking is essential. **Alison Gilroy and Sue Howard** will be taking bookings and payment at the October meetings. Alison can be contacted on 9580 5557, and Sue on 9579 1718.

Each guest is asked to wear a (loud or zany/frivolous) shirt.

The donation of suitable raffle items would be warmly welcomed.

Briefly

Georges River "Photo Contest" Submit your photos (no larger than 5MB) to info@georgesriver.org.au by 27 Oct with "Georges River Photo Contest" in the subject line. Photos may be past or present. All entries must have a caption indicating the place photo was taken, and name of photographer. More at www.georgesriver.org.au

Food scraps Kogarah Council is examining means of collecting food scraps to provide plant nutriment.

Sydney's Cumberland Plains: To find out what is happening there go to the website of Western Sydney Conservation Alliance at www.wsca.org.au



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Hon. Editor: John Davoren



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MOUNT WHAITE

Mt Whaite is a feature, a rocky rise in what is known as the Blue Labyrinth in the Blue Mountains, south of Wentworth Falls. The area is a tangle of low mountains and deep ravines. Some 550 meters above sea level, it is named after our own Harry Whaite who explored and mapped the area as part of the Warrigal Bushwalking Club in the late 1930s. A group of OFF members including Harry's daughter Jennifer struggled to climb Mt Whaite on 21st October. Access is off the Red Ridge fire trail and the Tableland Road. There is a locked gate and you need to walk about 3.5 km beyond that before you enter the bush. Then you veer left into thick bush. After that the going gets tough because there is no track. The terrain is not especially steep, but the bush is dense and uneven and the line of sight very limited. Navigation is difficult but with Ian Pitt's compass skills we made it to a smooth rock plateau on which there was an old cairn; perhaps one of Harry's mapping markers. From there it is another 600m of thick bush with the "mountain" often out of sight. The climb is not difficult but involves a scramble up rocky escarpments. The summit is a tree-covered dome and around the edge is a cliff line with views of Mt Gibson and wild country all about. We completed the walk, made the climb and managed to return to the cairn and then the road safely. The walk had its challenges and was a suitable celebration of Harry Whaite's long life in conservation. It is expected that next year there be a further expedition to Mt Whaite to leave a memorial to Harry. [Julian Sheen]

BIRDS IN MOORE RESERVE

Kogarah Council has been altering the water levels in the ponds of Moore Reserve and it resulted in a number of unusual sightings of birds as the water alternated from full and deep to low with exposed mud. Seen in late September were 17 White-eyed Ducks, 7 Royal Spoonbills and a flock of 36 or more White Ibis. Nine species of birds were observed in bigger numbers than normal, showing the success of the ponding system. In October, a Moor Hen was nesting on the overflow grate. (David Waterhouse)

FIREWOOD AND BIODIVERSITY

The accelerated and ongoing removal, for firewood and other purposes, of standing dead timber and woody debris on the ground has been recognised internationally as a factor contributing to the decline in biodiversity. This generally involves removal of woody debris and relatively undecayed fallen logs. The loss of this material from woodland sites reduces availability of habitat, of hollows and the input of material to the litter layer. In NSW around 120 species of vertebrates use hollows in trees for nesting or shelter, with many invertebrate species dependent on fallen woody debris for survival. These, and associated fungi and bacteria, play an important role in the decomposition of wood and nutrient cycling in forest and woodland ecosystems. As firewood removal has a significant negative impact on the ecosystem, it is prohibited in national parks. www.environment.nsw.gov.au/

Recent reports of firewood collection in Oatley Park are of concern. If you notice any, please report it to HCC.

CARBON DIOXIDE [CO₂]

Some Sydney climate change sceptics recently scoffed at the idea of human activity contributing to global warming. For them "global warming has stopped", "CO₂ is not a pollutant, but part of the stuff of life", and "if the level of CO₂ were doubled, plants would love it". www.smh.com.au/opinion/

www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/
CO₂ is in fact a very healthy basic part of life – enlivening flora and trapping electromagnetic radiation as heat (noted back in 1896). Its heat retention across the planet is similar to the role of a garden greenhouse, hence "greenhouse gas". Without CO₂ the earth temperature could be -18°C.

However, scientists are of the opinion that increasing the amount of carbon dioxide will raise the heat retention. Containing carbon emissions is not aimed at cooling the planet, but trying to stop it getting too warm. The arguments continue, but ruling out the need for any controls seems similar to our earlier refusal to act on nicotine, aerosols, and asbestos. www.koshland-science-museum.org/

ORGANIC CLOTHING

Organic clothing is made from material grown or raised without the aid of chemicals. With natural fibers obtained from plants, animals or minerals, organic cloth is not subjected to potentially harmful chemicals. While not considered as fashionable as regular clothing, it is now more popular, environmentally friendly, longer lasting than the synthetic, and not a trigger for allergies and rashes. <http://www.goorganic.com.au/>

EXTRACTION OF COAL SEAM GAS

The Environmental Defender's Office [EDO] concludes that the legal regime regulating the exploration and extraction of coal seam gas in NSW lacks independence and rigor, and does not ensure a thorough environmental assessment of these activities. Its report is on line www.edo.org.au/edonsw/

ORCHIDS IN OATLEY



October saw a saprophytic Climbing Orchid (*Erythrorchis cassythoides*) [not this one] emerging from a mulch pile in the small park at the corner of Lansdowne and Baker St. Oatley. It climbed the base of a Smooth-barked Angophora and had many clusters of pale yellow flowers.

SNOWY MOUNTAINS 2012

Our annual trip to Smiggins Chalet is from Sat Jan 28th to Sat 4th Feb. [Costs per night are \$104 double or twin share, \$48 extra adult in room, \$82 single, and \$40 per child]. Please contact Robin Dickson on 9580 5663 for information and booking.

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Visitors and accompanied children are welcome to all meetings and excursions.

COMING EVENTS

- Nov 18th (Friday) OFF Annual Dinner** South Hurstville R.S.L. [Last minute bookings to Alison Gilroy 9580 5557].
- Nov 26th (Saturday): Field day Wolli Creek - Two Valleys Walk.** This is a Bird Walk, combining with the Menai Wildflower Group. Meet at Bexley Nth railway station at 8am and walk to Tempe station along the valley to see where the Wolli Creek Preservation Society has been remediating degraded bushland. See many birds, and possibly climb Nanny Goat Hill, Turrella. Expected to finish about 1pm; bring morning tea and lunch. **Leaders: Jason Cockayne and Sharon Pearson.**
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- Dec 12th (Monday) OFF Picnic in the Park**, This is our annual Christmas get-together. It will be in Oatley Park at the Steamroller from 5.30pm. **BYO** food, drinks, picnic chairs, table etc. Barbecues may not be possible if there is any fire danger. For any queries, ring Liz Cameron 9580 6621
- Feb 6^h (Monday) 7.45pm Annual General Meeting** with the election of officers. members photos and a social supper. Members are encouraged to bring and display interesting photos; 22.5 is the recommended benchmark!
- Feb 27th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting.**

GREAT VICTORIA DESERT TALK OCT 24th

Phillip Moore spoke of his recent trip to the Great Victoria Desert. He has made a number of trips to remote areas of Central Australia and is the author of a book on inland plants, so it is not surprising that his talk contained lots of images of a picturesque yet desolate countryside, and interesting flowering plants. He took us to places few of us would ever venture, west from Uluru into the Great Victoria Desert, along tracks flooded from recent rains and back via Lake Eyre. It was a rare chance to experience the beauty of Australia's outback without getting out of our comfort zone.

GARDENS OF STONE WEEKEND OCT 29/30th

After allocation into one of 8 4WD vehicles, 34 people ventured in convoy, on a rainy Saturday morning, from the meeting point at Wallerawang. Leading us was Keith Muir, Director of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness [note #] who had prepared a program of places to visit, all beautiful, wild, and threatened by either open cut or underground coal mining. All these places are in the proposed Gardens of Stone Stage 2 reserve proposal. We travelled initially through the beautiful (at the present time) Ben Bullen state forest, and had 2 stops and walks out to the edge of the escarpment, with views from the top of the Great Dividing Range to Portland. Stunning pagoda rock formations all along the escarpment are a particular feature of this area. After lunch we visited Newnes State Forest. First stop was Mayinygu Marragu, a site of Aboriginal significance, with artwork in a cave. Then we went up, and over an extremely rough, poorly maintained forest road to the 'Temple Of Doom'. We walked down to the edge of the escarpment, where there were stunning views out over the Wolgan Valley to sandstone cliffs and many fabulous rock formations (pagodas and pillars). Cracks were visible here of rock subsidence occurring after underground long-wall mining. On Saturday evening we toured the Secret Creek Wildlife Sanctuary, where The Australian Ecosystems Foundation [note *] has a breeding program for Eastern Quolls and Dingos. We then enjoyed a delicious dinner at their restaurant.

On Sunday morning we approached the Newnes State Forest from the eastern side, driving onto the plateau through a forest full of profusely flowering waratahs. Our first stop was a walk down to overlook the Carne Creek valley, (more stunning views and pagoda formations overlooking a secluded gorge filled with ferns). We lunched on the side of a beautiful upland (and endangered) swamp. Underground long-wall mining has drained 3 of the swamps already, and this swamp is threatened by further extensions of long wall mining. After driving back to Lithgow, we parted about 3pm. Many thanks to the drivers of all the 4WD vehicles who, for the 2 days, ferried us so safely from place to place! [Report by Alison Gilroy]

Want to lead a field day walk? Contact Alison on 9580 5557

BECOME AN OFF MEMBER!

How can you hear a great speaker every month, keep informed on conservation issues, help protect your environment, meet people in a stimulating and friendly atmosphere, learn about our environment, wildlife and native plants on family-friendly monthly walks, and all for \$25 (family) a year?. Easy! Join Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society. You can obtain an application form from the Membership Officer on 9580 5663, or from off.oatleypark.com/

Briefly:

OFF Committee 2012 We would like to hear from members interested in standing for the committee. If joining the committee appeals, please contact Liz Cameron on 9580 6621.

Membership fees For 2012 members can opt to pay their membership fee by direct bank transfer - [more details when the renewal notice is sent out]. The fee for 2012 will remain at \$25 per family. Donations will be gratefully received; this money is then donated to deserving other conservation bodies. \$2,300 was donated in 2011.

Colong Foundation for Wilderness # is Australia's longest-serving community advocate for wilderness. It monitors NSW wilderness areas, identifies threats and formulates site specific protection remedies. Details and how to join at www.colongwilderness.org.au

Australian Ecosystems Foundation Inc. (AEFI) * is a nationally registered Environmental Organisation dedicated to saving Australia's wildlife by protecting habitats and maintaining natural ecological processes. More and joining details at ausecosystems.org.au/

OFF November meeting Regular monthly meeting followed by a social supper. Val and Bev will be providing some craft and jams so don't forget your purse!

Christmas Bush, NSW (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*) is fully in flower at the moment in Oatley Park.

Needs more cat training?



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