



O.F.F. NEWS

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OATLEY FLORA & FAUNA CONSERVATION SOCIETY



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January/February 1987

GREATER DAINTREE ACTION CENTRE

We have received letters from Colin Gibson who is back in the Cape Tribulation area and is acting as honorary secretary for the above Centre. He tells us that in the Cape Tribulation area so far over 13000 signatures have been collected for a petition to the Commonwealth Parliament asking that the Greater Daintree and wet tropics be listed as World Heritage by 31st December 1987. Copies of this petition will be available for signing at our monthly meetings, and Colin hopes that all OFF members will sign it.

Colin has been mapping the Daintree Coastal Wilderness which extends north from Cape Tribulation to the Bloomfield River, and he has sent a copy of his map. Early in December he walked Emmagen Creek and he writes as follows:

'Emmagen is very beautiful but it is intended for a road-base quarry. This is very sad, but so too is most of the news from Daintree. Letters to the Douglas Shire Council, Queensland and Australian Governments are needed. This area is unique and it is heartbreaking to see so many bulldozers in action. I know the focus is on south-eastern N.S.W. and Tasmania, but this will be a bitter loss indeed. If there are no gains on behalf of the tropical forests soon, there won't be anything left.'

Harry Whaite intends to show some slides of the area at the next meeting. Be there and sign the petition!

In another letter, Colin tells of the Action Centre: 'This place has remained a real thorn in the side of the Douglas Shire Council which is still producing media releases of some force condemning the "dirty greenies" of Cape Tribulation to smokescreen the rainforest issue. I have seen sections of the road again and although I had seen a lot of it before, I was shocked anew by the disaster. The so-called "tunnel through the rainforest" section from Cape Tribulation to Emmagen is absolutely obscene. The canopy is cracked open almost right down to the beach in places and it is a mess.'

The Council's ultimate intention to turn this road into a bitumenised highway is in no doubt. They are declaring it all the time and have recently had Ian Sinclair up here in the pouring rain and managed to get along about two kilometres of the new road which was sufficient for him to announce his support for further works to the tune of many millions of dollars should his coalition win the next election. What must be kept in mind is that the road is still only a fair weather road; it will become inaccessible when the wet returns.

The Original Blockade Site still attracts a great many to stop, sign petitions and talk about the issue. I have seen two busloads of tourists line up without murmuring a word to sign the world heritage petition here. That is why the Council would dearly love to be rid of this place.'

RECENT PUBLICATION

'A-Z OF CHEMICALS IN THE HOME' - published by the Toxic and Hazardous Chemicals Committee of Total Environment Centre. Nearly 200 entries; chemicals ranging from aerosols to wood preservatives are discussed. Written in easy to understand language, with 30 illustrations. The first comprehensive guide of its kind in Australia. Details from TEC. Telephone 27 4714.

NEW FEES FOR 1987

At the recent Annual General Meeting, new fees were set for the coming year. The meeting heard from our Hon. Treasurer, Harry Whaite, that an increase was necessary because of the rise in postage costs and a three-fold increase in the price of duplicating paper for OFF News.

The new fees are: Household (individual adult, family) \$6.00
Concession (pensioners, students, etc) \$3.00

Fees may be paid at our next meeting or through the mail to the Hon. Treasurer, P.O. Box 52, Mortdale. 2223.

COMING EVENTS

Meetings are held on the 4th Monday of the month at the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street (near corner of Letitia Street), Oatley. Visitors and children are welcome at all meetings and field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.

February 2 (Monday). 7.45 p.m. First meeting of the new year. A bits and pieces night, followed by social supper. Bring along 6 to 10 slides so we can repeat the entertainment of the November meeting. Also please bring a plate of food to help with the supper. It is expected that programmes will be ready for distribution at this meeting.

February 23 (Monday). 7.45 p.m. Dr. Howard Barker, Education Officer, Royal Botanic Gardens. FROM THE PAST TO THE BI-CENTENNIAL PLANS. A talk on the history of the Gardens, looking into the future with the planned Campbelltown Native Plant Garden and the Cold Climate Gardens at Mt. Tomah.

February 28 (Saturday). Follow-up to talk. Outing to Botanic Gardens. Meet at the Gardens' gates opposite Public (Mitchell) Library at 10 a.m. Contact: Val Boyan - telephone 533 1013.

CHRISTMAS BELLS IN OATLEY PARK

Back in 1981, a wildfire burnt out about seven hectares of Oatley Park on the slope above Lime Kiln Creek. In late spring that year, a Christmas Bell plant (Blandfordia nobilis) was found flowering in dense scrub. The area has been kept under observation since then, but no further flowers have been seen.

In October last year, another flowering plant was found close to the road leading into the park past the oval. It was subsequently pinpointed by an unknown person who placed three empty bottles radially around the plant. Some time in December the bottles were found lying side by side nearby, and there was no sign of the stalk bearing the seed capsules. It is suspected that they have been taken for growing at home.

A few decades ago, Christmas Bells were not uncommon in Oatley Park and, despite increased visitation, we have been hoping for a permanent reappearance of this plant. We can only hope that some of the seeds reached the ground before the stalk was picked and that they will germinate at a future date. Harry and Olive Whaite.

(Can anyone add to this story? When was the last time you saw Christmas Bells in Oatley Park? Were there many in the past? Where? Does fire stimulate growth? Ed.)

THREATS TO STREET TREES

Following the item in last OFF News, it is interesting that the latest 'Heritage Conservation News' has the following article from the Heritage Council:

'It would seem that many local government authorities may see the removal of street trees as an easy solution to concerns about public safety hazards, maintenance problems, conflict with road upgrading proposals, etc.'

In many councils, responsibility for the street trees lies with the engineering department and the maxim 'trees and traffic don't mix' appears to prevail. Horticultural advice may be available from the council's parks and garden staff, but their opinion is not always sought before final decisions are taken on the future of street trees.

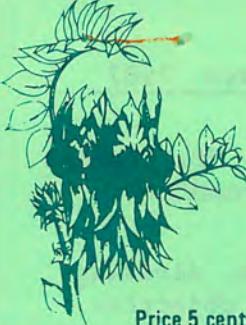
There is a disturbing trend for councils to respond to the requests of the uninformed or of a few disgruntled residents to remove street trees. Many of these requests are made in response to occasional falling branches, blocked drains or leaves on lawns. The consequences of these problems are acknowledged. However, there is sufficient expertise available to assist councils to make decisions which are informed and more accurately reflect the true position.

Street trees are a community resource with considerable amenity values - aesthetic, cultural, physical and monetary. Their care and management should be given due consideration by councils in accordance with guidelines based on sound research and acceptable arboricultural practices.'

FRIENDS

Bill and Sylvia Keech, Cec and Rita Sainty, send seasons greetings to all their friends at O.F.F.

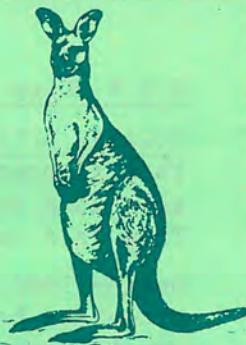
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VALE JOHN BLACKER

On 20th January 1987, John Blacker died after a short illness. John was President of this Society, a committed and active conservationist and a close friend of many members. At the Society's Committee meeting on the 27th January, it was agreed that it would be proper for a tribute to John to be given at the next ordinary general meeting, as soon as possible after his death. As minutes of ordinary meetings are not kept, it was moved that the text be printed in O.F.F. News. This would serve two purposes in so far as it would become part of the records of the Society and every member would be able to read it. The following is the eulogy given to the OFF meeting on Monday, 2nd February 1987 by Bernie Sargeant.

EULOGY ON JOHN BLACKER

"I was and am honoured to have been asked to give this eulogy on my very good friend, John Blacker. John had been President of the Society for ten years. Many of you will have known him all that time and some for even longer. Each of you is aware of his many qualities, first and foremost of which was his innate goodness. All who knew him, or even met him but briefly, would have recognised that John was a good man who influenced all those around him for the better.

Every member of the Society has and will continue to hold an image of John based upon one or more of his many attributes. Because of the diversity of his character, your individual recollections will cover a great range of circumstances but your personal memory will be unique to you. Whatever one's view of life and after life, that part of John will be with us always. We know that the Society and its future were in his thoughts in the weeks leading up to his death.

My own personal image of John, particularly in the context of the role which he perceived and which he carried out as our President, was his total giving of himself as a friend to all with whom he came in contact. At the Annual Dinner in October 1985, I was talking to the guest speaker, Neville Gare, about my impression of the reasons for the vitality and viability of the Society. These I attributed to the intense local (i.e. Oatley) identification and loyalty of so many Oatley-resident members. But added to these feelings are the links which exist between so many of you over many years, which are based upon other community activities such as P and Cs, Scouts, fund-raising activities, etc. Many of the members are friends from or in other spheres which results in the unique family atmosphere which pervades every meeting which we enjoy together. John Blacker in his ten years as President added to that atmosphere by his every action either individually or in groups by being a friend to each and every one of us. All of us here tonight and every member of the Society has lost by his death not only our leader but also a very true and good friend.

In closing I will tell you in outline a conversation I had with John soon after the Annual General Meeting in November last year. I commented on his re-election and congratulated him. John had some misgivings since he said that all other office bearers had received commending speeches on the year's work. This was said jokingly as was the comment that maybe he was a figure-head only. This sentiment I immediately and firmly disagreed with. At the same time I made a mental note to ensure that at the A.G.M. in 1987 I or someone else would give due recognition to John's performance in the Society so that he would know how we all feel. Unfortunately, circumstances have changed and John will not be leading us in 1987. Instead we are now faced with his passing. It seems appropriate for us to express our thanks for all that he has done for the Society, for Oatley and for each of us individually. Therefore I ask you all to join with me in an active expression of our appreciation of John Blacker by a round of applause as if he were here with us now to accept it."

The meeting endorsed this tribute by acclamation.

KOGARAH MUNICIPALITY BUSH REGENERATION: ANNUAL REPORT 1986

This 17 page report was sent to Kogarah Council from the National Trust. The Council sent us a copy. It is well worth reading and may be borrowed from the Committee. This is a summary (compiled by Ida Carder):-

During 1986, one team of four regenerators worked for four hours per week, dividing attention between Oatley Pleasure Grounds and Oatley Point Reserve. The objective was to remove weeds and restore species indigenous to the area. Unfortunately, regeneration work has been largely restricted to secondary weed control and only 11% of the year's work was given to primary weed clearance. However, regeneration of native plants has been steady in treated areas.

In Oatley Pleasure Grounds there is little natural regeneration of eucalypts, possibly because there is a lack of seed from the aged trees. Seeds have been collected from young Blackbutts outside the Grounds for replanting.

Oatley Point Reserve has copious quantities of eucalypt seeds on the ground but regenerating seeds are invaded by rainforest species (such as Pittosporum) which restricts eucalypt growth. An introduced plant, Polygala, restricts growth of the wattle understorey and thus deprives the eucalypts of nitrogen available from the roots of legumes. The regenerators have been removing Pittosporum and Polygala.

Proposals for 1987

- (a) Measures to reduce effects of stormwater which causes erosion, brings nutrients undesirable for the indigenous species, and encourages prolific growth of weeds such as privet. A community of rushes and sedges will be established near the stormwater pipes to absorb some of the water and nutrients. Removal of major weed infestations will then commence.
- (b) Plantings of natives grown from propagated material collected in the area will take place as weeds are removed.
- (c) Camphor Laurel, which infests Oatley Pleasure Grounds, will be removed with herbicide.
- (d) A comprehensive landscape/regeneration plan for the degraded areas within the Pleasure Grounds.

Funding. The Trust requests that a team of six be employed by Council for 1987 to enable greater control of weed infestations. The team would work 4 hours per week as in 1986. The cost of a team of 4 was \$11,220; for a team of 6 this would be \$15,566.

POSTSCRIPT - from Kogarah Council Minutes, 3/11/86

"That Council not concur with the recommendation of the National Trust that two additional skilled regenerators be employed ... however, an amount of \$11,220 be provided for the 1987 Estimates."

(Ed. Note: The topic of Bush Regeneration will be the subject of our June meeting when Graeme Quint, Research Officer for the National Trust, is our guest speaker.)

DAINTREE ACTION

The fight for Daintree Wilderness continues. Colin Gibson, Secretary, Greater Daintree Action Centre has sent us a copy of a long letter to Mr. B. Cohen, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment. Here are a few extracts.

"As far as negotiating for rainforest preservation is concerned, we do believe that there is an 'alternative track to go down', but we perceive it to be the slow ponderous road to ruin. That is why we believe that World Heritage nomination must come before it is too late. Of course it would take more than a 30km road to cause irreparable damage to the whole of the Wet Tropics as much as it would have taken more than one dam on the Franklin River to annihilate the entire South-West, or more than one uranium mine in Kakadu; or for that matter more than a few blows of a sledgehammer to reduce the statue of David to rubble."

The road destroyed the integrity of the Daintree Coastal Wilderness, one of two wilderness areas identified in the Greater Daintree Region (the other being the larger Daintree Wilderness which is inland), which itself is merely a part of North Queensland's Wet Tropical Region. The Daintree Coastal Wilderness is the ONLY Australian rainforest coastal wilderness - one of the very few in the world that are roadless and undisturbed. It is no longer in that condition. The damage can only be rectified by the closure of the road and restoration of walking track status."

* With this issue of OFF News we are dispatching programmes to those people who have not yet received them. We have plenty of copies, so if you need more, they can be collected at meetings or outings. If you phone Olive or Harry Whaite on 57 6459, programmes will be sent with the next OFF News.

* OFF Conservation Society continues to grow. The Hon. Treasurer reports an increase of 40 adult members in 1986. Help add to this number in 1987 by bringing a friend to a meeting or outing, or passing on a copy of OFF News or the programme.

* Friends of John Blacker are invited by Betty Blacker to join her at Oatley Park on Saturday, 21st February at 10.15 a.m. Bring morning tea and/or picnic.

PORT HACKING - SOLVING THE SHOALING PROBLEM

No doubt you have heard something of the furore created by the proposals of the Department of Public Works to reduce/eliminate shoaling in Port Hacking. Letters for and against various 'solutions' have been appearing regularly in the local papers. The Public Works Department and the Minister, Laurie Brereton, have argued that if nothing is done the eventual build-up of sand between Lilli Pilli Point and Burraneer Point would be so great that in some places the estuary would effectively be choked at low tide. Dredging to maintain navigation channels has been going on for many years but it is an increasingly expensive solution. The Department issued a glossy document to residents of the Sutherland Shire outlining six alternatives. Its 'best solution' is to build a spit or tombolo off Cabbage Tree Point (Bonnie Vale) using sand dredged from Simpsons Bay. This would make Simpsons Bay a sheltered water recreation area and would cause a natural scouring of estuary channels. This would cost an estimated \$6 million and take about two years to complete.

Such plans have been criticised in detail by conservation bodies, such as the Total Environment Centre, National Parks Association (Southern Sydney), National Trust and local action groups such as the Port Hacking Protection Society. One fear is that such work is just stage one of a scheme to bring tourism and boating on a large scale to Port Hacking. The 'solutions' to the shoaling problems have been tightly linked with proposals for new marinas at Lilli Pilli and at Bonnie Vale. New marinas would result in extra car parks, picnic facilities and inappropriate impact on the southern shoreline. The elaborate solutions suggested do not appear to be aimed at solving an existing coastal problem, but rather at creating entrepreneurial opportunities. Major marina and tourist development of Port Hacking is incompatible with the low-key uses of the Port and the natural environment of the Royal National Park.

The National Parks Association has taken the position that no works of any kind should be allowed other than the continued maintenance dredging of existing channels, e.g. Cronulla-Bundeena ferry service channel. A submission by the Port Hacking Protection Society suggests that the dredged sand be transferred to the shore of Bate Bay immediately north of Cronulla where it will nourish the beaches and dunes. It describes the Bonnie Vale tombolo as "the most ill-considered, disruptive, uncompromising, aggressive, devastating and insensitive of all the options". In its sheer scale, it will have a sweeping effect on the whole appearance of the Port. New marinas and boat ramps would result in a vast increase in water traffic, bringing noise, pollution and damage to sites along the national park coastline where there is little or no policing. All this in Sydney's most natural waterway which deserves protection from overuse and exploitation.

The Total Environment Centre in its submission "Waterway Development - The Future for Port Hacking?" also comes down firmly for the option of maintenance dredging to allow boat users waterway access, whilst preserving the natural character of the Port and protecting the needs of other Port users. The Centre opposes large scale dredging because it would increase the turbidity of the Port, create a disposal problem for the sand, silt and alluvium dredged up, have a profound effect on the sea grasses and other aquatic flora and kill bottom dwelling organisms which would be affected by increased turbidity and reduced oxygen levels. This submission presents detailed arguments against increasing the marina and boat ramp facilities, emphasising the adverse effect on natural resources and the way the Public Works proposals would only worsen the conflict between incompatible users of the Port and the Royal National Park.

OFF has copies of these submissions. They may be borrowed on the meeting night.

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March 2 (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 a.m. at kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7458.

March 23 (Monday). 7.45 p.m. Betty Bird, member of Museum Society Work Party, will tell us about EASTER ISLAND, that remote dot in the eastern Pacific best known for its mysterious stone statues. An absorbing and entertaining evening.

NOTE: Notice is here given that there will be a Special General Meeting on March 23 for the purpose of electing a President. This meeting will precede the ordinary meeting, so members are asked to be present at 7.45 p.m.

At this Special General Meeting the following motion will be moved:
"That this Society establish a Special Fund as a tribute to the work of our immediate past President. Money for this fund shall be raised at special functions during the year and designated for donations to worthy conservation projects, such expenditure to be at the discretion of the committee."

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The National Parks Association has established a Southern Sydney branch, which meets at Gymea Community Centre, Gymea Bay Road (next to the hotel). The next meeting is on Wednesday, 4th March. Topic: Birds of Botany Bay. Speaker: Allan Morris. This meeting will be followed by a walk to Towra Point led by Allan Morris.

Ring Gary Schoer (570 1813) for details.

Australian Conservation Foundation has changed its meeting night to the 4th Tuesday of the month. Meetings are held in the Lilac Room of the Australian Museum at 7.15 pm. A charge of \$3 is made. Next meeting is 24th February. A film on ULURU (Ayers Rock), followed by a talk by Penny Figgis, ACF Councillor in N.T., "STATE OF CONSERVATION IN AUSTRALIA'S CENTRE", including pictures from Alice Springs, Ayers Rock and Kakadu.

NEW BOOKS FOR NATURALISTS

Hurstville Library has recently purchased the following books:-

Australian Native Plants for Rockeries and Ground Cover (Frances Hutchison). Contents include creating a landscape, ground-covering plants, bulbs, annuals, perennials and ferns.

The Seabirds of Australia (Terence Lindsey). National Photographic Index of Australian wildlife.

Gregory's Camping Guide. A comprehensive guide to outdoor living, including 50 selected national parks with maps (Victoria and N.S.W.).

GOANNA IN OATLEY PARK. A note from Harry Whaite

A week or so ago, I noticed a large lizard high up in a tree near Webster's Lookout in Oatley Park. Closer inspection showed that it was a young goanna or lace monitor (*Varanus varius*), 50 to 60 centimetres long. It was being watched with some apprehension by a young magpie.

Prior to the 1981 bushfire, which burnt out about seven hectares of the park above Lime Kiln Creek, these animals were often sighted by me either there or lower down Lime Kiln Bay. It is comforting to know that some of these animals have survived that fire.

Did some member fail to get a receipt after paying his/her subscription at the meeting early this month? If so, please inform Harry Whaite?

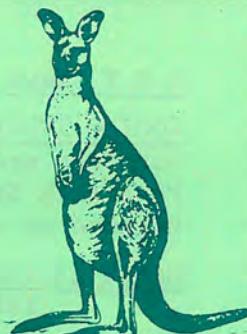
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Woodchipping in South-East N.S.W.

Harris-Daishowa (Australia) Pty. Ltd. has recently issued its 'Final Environmental Impact Statement', a document prepared as a supplement to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Eden Woodchip Operation. This company has applied for the renewal of its woodchip export licence up to the year 2009. The document argues that the Eden woodchip operation 'can be conducted without long term adverse impacts on the environment.' (The Society has a copy of this Impact Statement; it may be borrowed at the next meeting.)

The Nature Conservation Council is concerned at the way the woodchip is progressing, and believes that it is imperative that there is a vigorous show of support by the conservation movement for the establishment of the two national parks in the area. The importance of these parks, covering the Coolangubra and Tantawangalo State Forests, has been well documented and their national park status is supported by the N.S.W. Minister for Planning and Environment. Both areas are listed on the Interim Register of the National Estate, but are threatened by woodchipping activities. Coolangubra is possibly the best arboreal mammal habitat known in Australia, and Tantawangalo is a vital water catchment area for a number of local towns. Both areas contain a significant number of rare and endangered plant species.

The future of these proposals depend upon the Minister's capacity to gain Cabinet approval and evidence of widespread public approval will be vital. Members are asked to send a letter to the Premier, Mr. Barrie Unsworth, expressing support for the national park proposals.

A simple but very impressive memorial to John Blacker was held in Oatley Park on Saturday, 20th February. In one of John's favourite parts of the park, we heard his son, Martin, read these words:-

"Rock stays
earth stays.
I die and put my bones in cave or earth.
Soon my bones become earth...
all the same.
My spirit has gone back to my country...
my mother."

Then to the strains of Mozart's Piano Concerto in B flat K450, we quietly reflected on our loss and bade farewell to John.

The peace and beauty of the surroundings and the dignity of this simple memorial was an intensely moving experience. We are grateful to Betty for inviting us to share this with her and her family. Lunch followed in the playground and this was a friendly gathering that would have met with John's full approval.

A recent letter from Gary Punch, M.P., Member for Barton, and resident of Oatley, commends the Society for its concern for matters like street trees and flora of Oatley Park. He also noted the concern expressed in OFF News for the Cap Tribulation area. "This is a matter," he writes, "on which I have received several pieces of correspondence from the Rainforest Conservation Society of Queensland. Like your society, and many others in the community, I share your concern about the Daintree's future. Like the environment generally, it is a subject where I believe the Government must, and is, play a positive role." As a positive indication of his interest, Mr. Punch has applied to join OFF.

The Society has written letters supporting the proposal of Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society to include a small area of ridge and gully at Faulconbridge in the Blue Mountains National Park. This area contains at least 3 uncommon eucalypt species, including the Faulconbridge Mallee, Eucalyptus burgessiana.

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March 28 (Saturday). Field Day. Walk along Lady Carrington Drive, Royal National Park. Meet 10 a.m. at Audley kiosk. Leader: Val Boyan. Contact 5331013 for further details.

April 6 (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 a.m. at kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7458.

- * National Parks Association (Southern Sydney): Next meeting: Tom Grant to speak on Platypuses in Royal National Park. Wednesday 1st April at 7.30 p.m., Gymea Community Centre, Gymea Bay Road. There will be a follow up walk to Bola Creek.
- * Increasing attendances. The Society is pleased at the number of people who have attended recent OFF functions. There were 92 at the last club night, and over 70 at the field day in the Botanic Gardens.
- * Plants Patenting. Detailed information has been received about Plants Variety Rights legislation. Any member interested in examining this information, may borrow it at the next meeting.
- * ECOS, Summer issue. This excellent magazine from CSIRO contains articles of interest to all conservationists. This issue has items on European wasps in Australia, strange floating islands in Victoria, water bombing of bushfires and the effects of land clearing on Western Australia's cockatoos.
- * OFF membership fees are now due for 1987. They may be paid at our next meeting or through the mail to the Hon. Treasurer, P.O. Box 52, Mortdale. 2223.
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Concession (pensioner, student, etc) \$3.00

- * From the Colong Bulletin No. 100. Some thoughts of the Hon. Bob Carr, Minister for Planning and Environment:

"The conservation argument must be seen in an international context. Acid rain has fatally poisoned the great forests of Europe. The lowland rainforests of South East Asia will have been cleared by the end of this century. Desert is spreading through the world by a size equivalent to double that of Belgium each year. The pressure of increased population is dooming many of the world's great natural areas.

And in Australia? A fluke of history has given our people possession of a vast and unusual continent. It has plants, animals and landscapes that have bedazzled visitors since Sir Joseph Banks. We are an affluent and intelligent nation. With great natural areas left, we have the chance to do better at conservation than any other people on the globe.

"As a nation we get few opportunities to achieve excellence, few opportunities to leave others gasping in admiration at our accomplishments. We would be wrong to let this one slip through our fingers."



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WILDERNESS IN N.S.W.

What has happened to the N.S.W. Wilderness Act? This is the question being asked by the Wilderness Society and other environmental groups. In May 1985 the Minister for Planning and Environment, Mr. Carr, announced the establishment of a working party to advise him on a Wilderness Act. The result of this initiative was that the working party submitted their report to the Minister twelve months later. In the interim, the National Parks and Wildlife Service shelved their wilderness dedication programme and have not dedicated any new wilderness areas since May 1985. Mr. Carr has stated that the Government is committed to introducing wilderness legislation this year. Internal government hurdles seem to be preventing this from happening.

An Inter-Departmental Committee of senior public servants is about to review the recommendations of the Wilderness Working Party. If they take too long it is feared that the Wilderness Act may be lost.

Identifying Wilderness

There is general agreement amongst conservation groups that wilderness is characterised by: remoteness from significant human development; remoteness from mechanised access; it looks substantially untouched; and the area's natural species and processes function largely undisturbed. The Wilderness Working Party identified 36 wilderness areas throughout the State, with an estimated core area of 1.8 million hectares. About 321,000 hectares has been declared wilderness in N.S.W. and 1.3 million hectares is undeclared wilderness within the national parks system. There are six wilderness areas which need to be consolidated within the national parks system - Coolangubra, Deua, Guy Fawkes, Mann, Ettrema and MacDonald. These areas are currently State Forest, vacant Crown land or are only partly within national park boundaries.

The Wilderness Act should provide a strong and effective mechanism for protecting the areas of N.S.W. that remain in a wilderness condition. The Wilderness Society is urgently requesting all concerned people to write a short note to the Premier, Mr. Barrie Unsworth, Parliament House, Sydney, 2000, urging the Government to place a 2 months' time limit on the Wilderness Inter-Departmental Committee and to uphold its commitment to introduce wilderness legislation this year.

Suburban Spraying

How often do you hear people say that they don't see as many birds or butterflies in their gardens as they used to? And yet the very same people probably use pesticide sprays on their garden plants which kill 'good' insects as well as 'pests', especially the caterpillars which are the larvae of the lamented butterfly. Thoughtless gardeners often use agricultural chemicals and mix them to make them stronger. Not only are the insects killed indiscriminately, but birds die as a result of the chemicals passing along the food chain.

Publication Received

- * Beach Dunes - their use and management. A glossy booklet prepared jointly by the Soil Conservation Service and the Public Works Department. Contains information on coastal evolution, the dune environment, the function of dune vegetation, problems of management and rehabilitation techniques. Despite the good intentions of the publication, hardly a mention is made of the thorny question of 4-wheel drive access to beaches and the damage they cause to dunes.
(Editor's note: Three months ago I sent a letter of complaint to NPWS regarding the damage to the dunes in Myall Lakes National Park by 4-wheel drive vehicles. I am still waiting for a reply.)

KOSCIUSKO CAPERS By Harry Whaite

Unlike last year, this year's week at Smiggin Holes was perfectly fine, though with a biting wind at high altitude. Our party was smaller - only twenty three in all - but with the usual spread in interests and walking abilities.

In order to get our walking legs, the first day's outing was from Perisher Village to the Porcupine. Some deviated left in order to climb Mount Duncan and in doing so, struck several sections of the old road to Bett's Camp. This was replaced by the present summit road in 1909.

Another easy trip followed the ridge from Rennex Gap northward to the Giant's Castle. Last year, in adverse weather conditions, we had tried to follow the track via Panorama Point but had failed. This year we by-passed that point and were delighted to find an open four-wheel-drive track leading the whole way. Because of limited time, noone climbed the Castle to see the 'interesting view' from the top, but perhaps this can be done on a future occasion.

At various times, some members of the party followed the walks in the vicinity of Sawpit Creek. These are ideal for those who feel that they haven't the strength and fortitude to tackle the Main Range.

Three longer excursions were carried out satisfactorily. On one, most of us visited the Blue Lake from Charlotte Pass, some even going on to the top of Twynam and some even tobogganing down a large snow drift on the side of that mountain. We lunched near the outlet of Blue Lake, but the wildflowers were not as abundant as during the previous January. With some trepidation, the party agreed to return to the Snowy crossing via Hedley Tarn. This time we kept to a higher level and completed the traverse in an hour's actual walking. Surprisingly, last year's 'horror trip' took only ten minutes longer!

Another day we followed the Summit Road for four kilometres to Merritts Creek crossing, then the snowpole track towards the Thredbo ski lifts. At the top of the Rams Head Range we turned south-west to North Rams Head on the slopes of which we lunched before climbing its rocky peak. Our return to Charlotte Pass was a tripartite affair, some following the old track from Dead Horse Gap to Rawson Gap, some returning along the snowpoles, and only one investigating the steel walk which runs from the Thredbo ski lifts to within 1½ km of Rawson Gap.

Possibly the most challenging walk was the round trip from Guthega Pond past Guthega Trig, over the Consett Stephen Pass to Mount Tait, then down past Gills Knobs back to the dam. Some difficulty was experienced in finding the start of the track but after that all was pleasant walking and climbing, and Mount Tait was reached soon after lunch. There was some further difficulty in finding the way down to the dam from Gills Knobs since the uppermost pole of the abandoned ski tow, which serves as a marker, had fallen over. However, we were back at the cars by half past four.

Despite some occasional arduous walking and climbing, noone commented adversely on the outings and we hope that Norm and Win Tonkin will again open Smiggins Chalet for a week next January.

A NEW EUCALYPT - AN ICE-AGE RELIC

(From an article in New Scientist, 30 October 1986)

Researchers at the National Botanic Gardens in Canberra are nurturing a seedling of a rare eucalypt that may well be the first of its kind to germinate since Australia's last glacial epoch began some 10,000 years ago. The seedling was the only one to emerge from a batch of seed from what is Australia's newest and rarest eucalypt, found near Braidwood N.S.W. in November 1985. Only five specimens of the eucalypt are known, all of them growing in a single cluster less than 10 metres across. The plant is so different from other eucalypts that botanists originally thought it was a member of the genus Eriostemon. Germination experiments suggest that it is an ice-age relic, the sole survivor of a species that grew in the region during the last glacial epoch. Conventional techniques of germinating seed failed, and the only seedling appeared after the seeds were stratified between layers of soil in a refrigerator. It is no longer cold enough at Braidwood for seeds to germinate naturally, so the small group of trees survives by suckers from a large lignotuber.

- * Congratulations to Bernie Sargeant who was elected as President of this Society at the Special General Meeting on March 23.
- * This Special General Meeting also adopted a resolution to establish a 'President's Fund' as a tribute to the work of our immediate past President. A number of special fund-raising projects are being planned to raise money for this fund, including a barbecue and a trash-and-treasure sale. It is hoped that the fund can be built up quickly so that it can commence operating in the way it was envisaged. Cash donations would be gratefully received. Send your cheque to the Hon. Treasurer, P.O. Box 52, Mortdale, 2223 or see Harry Whaite at the next meeting. Indicate that your donation is for the President's Fund.
- * Have you a conservation issue which you would like to tell people about? It is OFF policy to provide 5 to 10 minutes at the end of the monthly meetings for the discussion of conservation or related issues. If you would like to address the meeting, make arrangements in advance by ringing the President, Bernie, on 57 6854.
- * Reflecting on a list of OFF committee members from 1955 to the present, it is obvious that one of the reasons for the continued success and growth of Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society is the dedication and stability of its members. Consider the following: Ida Carder has been a committee member for 21 years (Hon. Secretary for 11 years); Harry Whaite has been Hon. Treasurer for 12 years; Val Boyan has been Field Officer for 18 years. Long serving members in the past included Doris Newboult (1955-1971), Cec Sainty (1959-1969) and Nes Grundy (1967-1983).

N.S.W. URBAN WILDLIFE SURVEY

World Wildlife Fund Australia and the Gould League of N.S.W. have begun planning a community based survey of wildlife in urban areas of N.S.W. This project, which is partially sponsored by the Australia Bicentennial Authority, will be publicly launched in September 1987. It aims to bring wildlife and people together by encouraging the community to become involved in the survey.

Observations of wildlife will be made not only in bushland areas but also in household gardens, local parks and other habitats within the urban environment. Wildlife survey kits will be made available to interested groups and individuals in early August. Wildlife records collected during the survey will eventually be used in the compilation of a book on the wildlife of urban N.S.W.

The World Wildlife Fund and the Gould League invite OFF members to become involved. At present they are seeking volunteers to assist in activities such as:

- * organising and leading survey activities;
- * identifying local wildlife for the general public.

Through this project it is hoped to raise the general level of community awareness of wildlife and conservation issues. OFF Conservation Society will be involved as a group, but if individual members are interested in participating, you should contact the Survey Coordinator directly (preferably before May 15).

Contact: John Pastorelli, P.O., Box 150, Beecroft, 2119.

Telephone: 875 4649.

GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK

The Federal Government has allocated \$6.57 million in its 1986-87 budget for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. This includes \$1.25 million for payment to the Queensland Government for day-to-day management, \$764,000 for the second year of the research programme on the crown of thorns starfish and \$350,000 to enable the Authority to commence the operations of the Reef Wonderland Aquarium.

\$450,000 has also been provided to cover part of the cost of arrangements for aerial surveillance of the Barrier Reef region. This cost is shared with other Federal Government departments.

Latest Publications

ECOS. Autumn 1987 - articles on koalas, soil erosion, beech and fungal disease and incinerating liquid wastes.

Wildlife Australia. Autumn 1987 - articles on Orange-bellied Parrot, Bungle Bungles, mangrove insects and sea-lions.

COMING EVENTS

Meetings are held on the 4th Monday of the month at the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street (near corner of Letitia Street), Oatley. Visitors and children are welcome at all meetings and field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.

April 27 (Monday). 7.45 p.m. BATS: MYTHS AND REALITY. A talk by Nancy Pallin, a worker with the Kuring-gai Bat Colony. Nancy expects to bring some live Fruit Bats.

Note: The Group which Nancy Pallin represents has spent a lot of money in their fight to protect the Kuringgai Bat Colony. Normally an admission charge is made for their talks, but it was agreed that, as no admission fee is ever made at OFF meetings, members will be asked to make a donation to help defray the expenses of the Bat Group. So.... bring some money to contribute to this worthy work.

May 2 (Saturday). Field Day. Walk: North Head (Manly). Meet at Oatley Station in time for the 8.50 a.m. train. Change at Town Hall for Circular Quay where we will catch the ferry to Manly. The walk to North Head (part of Sydney Harbour National Park) takes about 1 hour from the ferry wharf. Leader: Val Boyan. Contact 533 1013 for further details.

May 4 (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 a.m. at kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7458.

- * National Parks Association (Southern Sydney): Next meeting. Tim Flannery to speak on Mammals of Papua-New Guinea. Wednesday 6th May at 7.30 p.m., Gymea Community Centre, Gymea Bay Road.
- * National Parks Association. 1987 lecture series: N.S.W. Wetlands. Eight lectures from March to October at the Australian Museum, College Street. The fee for the course is \$30, or \$5 for a single evening. There will also be 5 field trips. Contact Heather Roy, 918 9259, for details.

Coal waste: a small victory

In January, OFF wrote to the Metropolitan Lands Office expressing concern about the dumping of coal waste on Crown bushland. It was being used on fire trails and access roads, but was washing away with the first heavy rains causing siltation of streams and becoming very aesthetically displeasing.

On March 4, the Regional Manager, Lands Department, replied as follows:

'As soon as this Office became aware of the dumping of coal waste near Waterfall, action was taken to rectify the situation. The Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board has now removed the dump and has agreed to rehabilitate the site to the standards of the Soil Conservation Service. The use of coal waste as a road base has not been authorised by this Office and action is being taken to ensure that no other Government Authority uses such material where it may be of danger to the environment.'

Recycling

Comalco Aluminium Limited has advised that in 1986 the aluminium can recycling programme registered an Australian record - about 950 million cans were returned for recycling (over 2.6 million cans a day). The can collecting public received about \$15 million for returning these cans. It is estimated that there are over 7 million Australians saving or collecting aluminium cans for recycling, and their returns represent about 53 per cent of all the cans sold last year.

What do you do with your cans ... and paper ... and bottles??

Attendances at Society gatherings continue to be very pleasing. There were 95 at last club night to hear an enthralling talk about Easter Island by Betty Bird. About 45 members and friends enjoyed the delightful weather, interesting companionship and the beautiful walk along Lady Carrington Drive on our last field day.

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May/June 1987

THE KU-RING-GAI BAT COLONY

About 60 people attended our last meeting to hear Nancy Pallin's most interesting talk on bats. With her were three of her 'babies' - three different species of Flying Foxes. At the end of the meeting, a collection raised \$93 for the Bat Colony Committee to assist them in continuing their work. The following points were made during the talk:

Bats are widespread throughout the world, with over 1000 current species. In fact, bats comprise a quarter of all mammal species. This large group of furred animals which suckles its young has often been misunderstood. Is this because they are nocturnal? Bats are found everywhere in the world except in the extreme polar regions, so they figure in the fables and folklore of many lands. In some cultures they are believed to bring good luck, but sometimes they have been feared as bloodsucking vampires or carriers of disease.

Bats do not deserve the malevolent image. The truth is that they are beneficial. They feed on insects which are pests of human food crops; they pollinate the flowers of many kinds of plants from ecosystems as diverse as rainforests and deserts; they disperse the seeds of the fruits they eat helping the forests to regenerate. Through ignorance, humans are severely reducing bat populations. In Europe many bat populations have declined by 90% in the last 20 years and are endangered. Even in Australia, bat roosting sites are being destroyed, such as the limestone caves at Mt. Etna in Queensland.

The Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony is the largest and most important maternity colony of the Grey-headed Flying Fox in southern N.S.W. This colony is situated in a forested valley in the northern Sydney suburb of Gordon. The bats disperse to feed all over the greater Sydney region, and it is probable that the bats seen feeding in your local fig tree are from the Gordon colony. They feed on nectar and pollen from the flowers of our native trees; commercial orchards are raided only when native food sources are scarce. The bats arrive in September for the birth of their single young and remain until autumn to mate. They then disperse to follow the flowering of native forests in eastern N.S.W.

The protection of this valuable wildlife site was ensured in 1985 by the purchase of land to enlarge the reserve. Flying Foxes were made a protected species of this State in 1986. The long term conservation of the reserve is threatened by the deterioration and death of the trees and rampant growth of vines and other weeds. A Habitat Restoration Project is under way to remove weeds, control excess drainage, plant seedling trees and encourage natural regeneration. The Bat Colony Committee is in need of funds for this project. You can assist in a number of ways:

- * Make a tax deductible donation by sending a cheque to The Australian Conservation Fund, 672B Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn, Vic. 3122. Indicate that the donation should be spent on the Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony.
- * Subscribe to 'Friends of Bats Newsletter' - \$6 a year from the Treasurer, 11 Warrandoo Street, Gordon. 2072.
- * Purchase of t-shirts, stickers, posters, etc. to increase public awareness; available from Bronwyn Wood - telephone 959 3228.

SALT PAN CREEK WATERWAY PARK

The Bankstown City Council has received a Bicentennial grant to develop a waterside park along the western side of Salt Pan Creek. An exhibition of the proposed 'landscape improvements' is on display in the Bankstown Administration Centre until Friday, 29 May 1987, 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Interested members are encouraged to inspect these plans and make written comments on them to Council. The general concept of improvements including landscaping and bush regeneration in an area which has been degraded seems commendable, but care will have to be taken to preserve the few patches of native bushland remaining, to protect at least two rare plant species which are known to occur and to construct the walkways, bicycle track and viewing facilities so that they are in sympathy with the environment.

COMING EVENTS

Meetings are held on the 4th Monday of the month at the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street (near corner of Letitia Street), Oatley. Visitors and children are welcome at all meetings and field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.

May 25 (Monday). 7.45 p.m. Ian Perkins of the Wilderness Society returns to enchant us with beautiful slides and an interesting talk on Dangers to the Wilderness. Wilderness in N.S.W. was featured in the last issue of OFF News and Ian will update what is happening around the State, especially in the South-east (Eden) forestry area.

May 30 (Saturday). Field Day. Walk from Mt. Ku-ring-gai Station to Bobbin Head. Catch train from Oatley Station at 8.50 a.m. Change at Town Hall for Hornsby and Mt. Ku-ring-gai. This is an easy walk of about two hours, following a spur down to Cowan Creek, then around the beautiful coastline to Appletree Bay. Picnic lunch at Bobbin Head. Return to Turramurra Station by bus. Contact: Val Boyan, 533 1013.

June 1 (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 a.m. at kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7458.

PRESIDENT'S FUND. Donations are currently being received for the President's Fund, established at the Special General Meeting. It is hoped to reach a target of \$500 or more by the end of the year from cash donations and special functions. Once this target is reached, we can then make grants to worthy causes. Donations should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer.

NORTH HEAD OUTING

On this month's outing, 37 members and friends braved the hazards of the trans-harbour trip to Manly and a 4 km walk, mainly along roads, to the Park Hill section of the Sydney Harbour National Park. This area was gazetted over fifty years ago, and in the intervening period there has been much wear and tear on its heathland. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is currently working to repair the damage. Several lookouts, connected by a good track, have been constructed in the vicinity of Outer North Head and these give strategic views over the Harbour and city, and up and down the coast. Unfortunately, the day was both cloudy and hazy, and not conducive to good photography.

On the walk back, Val Boyan introduced a variation by leading us down to Fairy Bower, then to Manly Beach and back along the Corso to the wharf. Due to an earlier cancellation, our ferry was crowded, but we survived the trip and were home at a reasonably early hour. Harry Whaite.

THE FRIENDS OF THE HACKING RIVER

O.F.F. continues to be involved in the FOHR group. Following the Heathcote by-election which brought attention to conservation issues of the area, FOHR has developed a list of issues which need investigating in the Hacking River catchment and surrounding areas. Some of these issues are:

- * Planning for protection of Port Hacking;
- * Development control for Helensburgh and environs;
- * Management of the promised Garawarra State Recreation Area;
- * Weed removal and control in the Hacking River catchment;
- * Domestic waste management for Helensburgh and Oftord;
- * Coal washery waste, its disposal and management;
- * Ribbon development between Heathcote and Waterfall and the need to protect the bushland in this area;
- * Additions to Heathcote National Park to rationalise its boundaries and to protect its integrity;
- * Investigate the future status and importance of O'Hares Creek.

HORSE-RIDING IN NATIONAL PARKS

Many national parks are suffering from illegal horse-riding. Some horse-riding is permitted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Blue Mountains, Ku-ring-gai and Kosciusko National Parks. The National Parks Association is trying to highlight the track damage and erosion which horses can cause, and a meeting has been organised at Terrey Hills so you can see for yourself what is happening in the Ku-ring-gai Chase. Meet the NPA on Sunday, 31 May at 9.30 a.m. at the corner of McCarrs Creek Road and Yulong Avenue, Terrey Hills. A large attendance is needed to show the government that many people are deeply concerned about this matter.

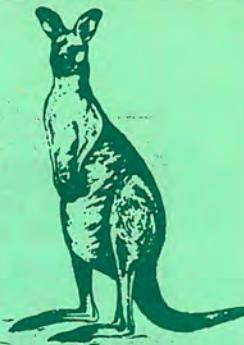
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WOOD COLLECTING FOR LOG FIRES

Many people are concerned over the trend towards wood fires in urban areas and the impact of illegal wood collecting on our parks and bushland areas. Such concerns appeared to be justified by the following advertisement which appeared recently in the St. George Express and the Sutherland Shire Voice.

'Form a chain - blaze bills. Heating costs can be saved' was the bold heading. 'Why not form a chain gang to cut your winter heating bills? Grab a few mates and a couple of chain saws, and head into the bush for firewood that will not burn a hole in your pocket ... People living in the bushy fringe suburbs like St. George will have little trouble getting their hands on dead wood. Also, scout around new road-works for trees felled during the excavation process. A bit further afield are state forests at Moss Vale and Wyong, but first get a permit from the Forestry Commission. The company provides full instructions for people who haven't used a chain saw before.'

Although written in the form and guise of journalism, it does appear to be a direct advertisement for a major hire company. However, because of its article form, the reader must get the impression that the newspaper is endorsing the ideas and the product. The tone and implications of the advertisement are quite irresponsible. The encouragement of bands of 'mates' to grab their chain saws and cut wood from St. George bushland is a reversion to the era when the destruction of our environment was carried out without regard for ecological concerns, the community good or the future. At a time when the State Government has introduced controls over local bushland in the form of the Urban Bushland Policy and resident action groups are doing their utmost to protect the few remaining pockets of local bush, one can only deplore such attitudes.

Local council regulations prohibit the collection of fire wood in the bushlands of St. George. Despite this, wood is cut illegally and it is common to catch people in Oatley Park with their chain saws removing both dead and alive timber. Kogarah Council aldermen report that wooden park furniture and signs are often cut up by wood collectors. The fact is that there is NOT plenty of free wood in or around Sydney and ads such as this encourage illegal acts and vandalism.

BOBBIN HEAD OUTING - 30 MAY

A virtually cloudless day provided the background for our party of fortyeight on the walk from Mt. Ku-ring-gai Station to Bobbin Head. At the park boundary, we performed the standard ritual of stopping for morning tea, so it took two hours to cover the four kilometres from the station to our lunch spot at Appletree Bay.

Then followed a 1½ kilometre road walk to the bus stop at Bobbin Head. Because of a possible limited number of seats on the bus, nearly half the party elected to follow the track from Bobbin Head up to Mt. Colah Station. This is about seven kilometres long but more than half the distance, from the Kalkari Visitors' Centre onward, is a 'road bash'. Nevertheless, all enjoyed the day's outing. Harry Whaite.

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE FORESTS. 87 people were present at our last meeting to see the fine audio-visual presentation of the Wilderness Society and to hear an outline of the problems in the Eden area from Ian Perkins.

WANTED. A printer who will print our 1988 programmes at low cost. If you know of such a person, contact the Programme Officer, Val Douglas (57 7783).

EXPEDITIONS. Winter is traditionally a time when OFF members head off on a variety of expeditions. This year is no exception, with at least 14 going on a trip to Greece, Yugoslavia, Austria and Britain, and others driving around Australia. There should be lots of good subjects for our next members' slide night.

COMING EVENTS

Meetings are held on the 4th Monday of the month at the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street (near corner of Letitia Street), Oatley. Visitors and children are welcome at all meetings and field days. Please make yourself known as you come in. *** It is intended that meetings will commence promptly at 7.45 p.m.

June 22 (Monday). 7.45 p.m. Graeme Quint, Research Officer, National Trust, will tell us about NEW INITIATIVES IN BUSH REGENERATION. Illustrated with slides. Both Kogarah and Hurstville Councils are spending ratepayers' money on bushland regeneration. Are they getting it right? Is it worth the money? What more can be done? Come along and hear the answers to these and other questions.

June 27 (Saturday). Field Day. Walk from Little Wobby Beach to Broken Bay Sport and Recreation Centre. Two parties - easy and somewhat harder. Tickets to Hawkesbury River Station (Brooklyn). Catch train from Oatley at 8.20 a.m. Change at Central to the 9.15 a.m. Wyong train. Catch the 10.30 a.m. boat to Dangar Island and Wobby Beach. Return by the 3.00 p.m. boat from Little Wobby. Contact: Harry Whaite - 57 6459.

July 6 (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 a.m. at kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7458.

VAL'S WHITE ELEPHANT DRIVE

In an effort to raise cash for the O.F.F. President's Fund, I am asking members to donate any unwanted goods you may have around your homes. Items such as crockery, glassware, kitchenware, ornaments, electrical appliances (working or not), tools, toys, books, records, sporting goods, jewellery, clothing, etc. In other words, anything you can think of. As long as it is not too large to be handled by an able bodied woman. You can bring donations on the next meeting night, or contact Val Boyan who will arrange to collect them.

When I have collected a sufficient quantity, I intend selling all items (I hope) at the TRASH AND TREASURE MARKETS LIVERPOOL. Contact: Val Boyan, 533 1013.

WIRES WILDLIFE ART EXHIBITION - JULY 4 TO 19

The NSW Wildlife Information and Rescue Service (WIRES) is organising an art exhibition with a difference. Some of Australia's most prestigious artists will be exhibiting works on a wildlife theme. It will feature painting, sculpture, pottery and photography; the works will be for sale.

WIRES looks after native creatures in distress: the sick or injured victims of road traffic, pet attack, poisoning and so on. The Service was launched only in March 1986, but already has taken 6000 calls and helped animals and birds of more than 100 species.

The exhibition will be held in the Long Gallery, Australian Museum.

THE ELECTIONS - JULY 11

The vote of conservationists can have a significant effect on the election result, especially in marginal electorates. The Australian Conservation Foundation and the Wilderness Society have launched a joint campaign to encourage people to 'vote for the forests' - to vote for the political party or individual who will do the most to protect Australia's forest. The Commonwealth Government can have a direct influence in the protection of those forests in Tasmania which are designated World Heritage, the wet tropical areas of Queensland, and (as Ian Perkins told us at our last meeting) in the wood chip decision in the Eden area.

If you wish to help this campaign by distributing pamphlets, being present at polling booths, writing letters, etc, contact Jennifer Catt at the NSW ACF Office, telephone 27 1497. This is a chance to become involved and to make a practical contribution to conservation.

SALT PAN CREEK PARK. Seven members of OFF committee recently inspected the route of the proposed walkway along Salt Pan Creek. The track will pass along a narrow bushland corridor between mangroves and the backs of houses. There seems to be no problem with the track from an environmental point of view, except for the need to protect the rare salt-marsh plant, Wilsonia backhousei, which occurs in one isolated location.

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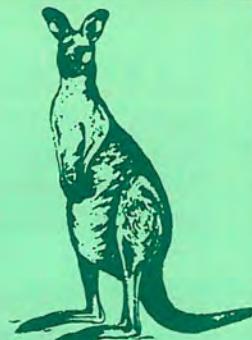
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WOOD COLLECTION AND CHAIN SAWS - PART 2

There has been considerable reaction to last month's editorial on the use of chain saws in local bushlands. The Society and a number of members wrote letters of complaint to The Express and to Kennards Hire. The National Trust and Australian Conservation Foundation also became involved. Extracts from OFF News and two other letters were printed in the newspaper.

In a reply to the complaints, Kennards Hire said that the offending article was a press release prepared by a public relations consultant, and 'due to an oversight' no mention was made of the fact that 'people should get permission before going on to any property'. A new press release has been prepared and will be circulated to the media; extracts from that press release are quoted below:

"Firewood *** Where do you get it?"

Take care when looking for firewood around Sydney. The National Trust says bushland in the Sydney area falls into three broad categories - privately owned land, Crown land and reserves. Reserves may be under the control of local councils or the National Parks and Wildlife Service. In all cases, you will need the permission of the owner or the controlling body before you can enter or remove trees for firewood. State environmental laws protect many public bush reserves. Even the removal of dead trees can destroy valuable habitat for fauna, including parrots and marsupials."

NEW DIRECTIONS IN WEED CONTROL

Last meeting heard Graeme Quint and Roger Lembit tell how the National Trust has modified the Bradley Method for the control of weeds in urban bushland. Tests have shown that this Method tends to encourage rainforest fringe plants like Blueberry Ash and Pittosporum in shaded areas. One problem is that small urban bushland patches have a larger proportion of nutrients, especially phosphorus. The contentious issue of fire in such reserves has been examined by the setting up of test quadrants in Oatley Park and Evatt Park. The natural ecological balance is damaged by burning too often (e.g. every two or three years) and by the total absence of fire. If fire is absent for 50 - 100 years, eucalypts do not regenerate. Trees die from the combined effects of excessive nutrients, changed run-off patterns, borer attack, changed soil levels and excessive vines and weeds. In Oatley Pleasure Grounds there are many old dead eucalypts and no new seedlings.

The Trust has planted eucalypt seedlings in various areas. In the volcanic soils of the gullies in Evatt Park, rainforest trees, such as Coachwood and Red Olive-plum, have been re-introduced. The hand removal of lantana, privet and wandering jew has led to a noticeable increase in ferns, small twiners and herbaceous native plants.

A seven page Information Sheet 'Urban Bushland, Conservation and Management' is available from the National Trust.

BYRON BAY AND OCEAN SHORES

Billinudgel, just north of Byron Bay, is a beautiful part of our coastline, with extensive wetlands, rainforests and fringing golden beaches. Some of the biggest paperbarks in NSW form a canopy over Bangalow Palms; littoral rainforests contain a unique association of Yellow Pear Fruit, Bennet Ash and White Hazelwood; the area is home to at least 14 rare and endangered animals and is a winter feeding ground for migratory birds.

For almost 20 years real estate developers have tried to destroy the area with canal estates, marinas and urban developments. In 1985 the Heritage Council stalled this development when it placed an interim conservation order over the area. The order has now expired and the bulldozers are waiting. The Ocean Shores Development Corporation owns about 300 ha of coastal land in the area and is awaiting development of 450 lots.

Conservationists are being asked to write to the Hon. Barrie Unsworth and the Hon. Bob Carr, Parliament House, Sydney, asking for (1) a permanent conservation order and nature reserve over the Billinudgel/Yelgun wetland and (2) an environmentally sensitive, low-key plan for the North Coast, with adequate buffer zones to protect important areas.

COMING EVENTS

Meetings are held on the 4th Monday of the month at the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street (near corner of Letitia Street), Oatley. Visitors and children are welcome at all meetings and field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.
*** It is intended that meetings will commence promptly at 7.45 p.m.

July 27 (Monday). 7.45 p.m. Bernie Clarke, President of Botany Bay Protection Council, and well-known authority on Town Point and anything connected with Botany Bay, will speak on the DEATH OF BOTANY BAY. A stimulating and thought provoking evening. Excellent slides.

August 1 (Saturday). Field Day. Easy stroll along the foreshores of the Georges River Recreation Reserve. Meet corner Henry Lawson Drive and Carinya Road, Picnic Point at 10 a.m. There is plenty of parking. Bring lunch. Contact: Val Boyan, 533 1013. This will be an excellent introduction to the subject of the August meeting when Dr. Fred Bell will talk about the environmental problems of the Georges River.

August 3 (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 a.m. at old kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7458.

September Barbecue - advance notice !!

Members and friends are invited to a barbecue at the home of Lesley Cox, 129 Mulga Road, Oatley, on Sunday, 13th September, from about 12 noon. Cost will be about \$7 all inclusive (to be confirmed in next newsletter). Bring your own chair. Bookings are being taken now. Ring Val Douglas on 57 7783 or see her at the next meeting.

Another advance notice

Mark the weekend of 7-8 November in your diary. That's our next camping weekend. Venue: Glen Davis.

AUSTRALIAN WILDFLOWER SPECTACULAR

This year's native plant 'Spectacular' will be held on 19 and 20 September at the Castle Hill Showground, 9 am to 5 pm. Entrance: \$3.00; Concession: \$1.50; children accompanied by an adult: free. A free bus departs hourly from Parramatta Station. All interests catered for: children can make ornaments or do leaf rubbings; learn how to propagate from seeds or cuttings; plant sales and the usual wonderful displays. A bush band will add to the outdoor atmosphere.

PRESIDENT'S FUND. Donations are still being received for this special fund. About \$200 has so far been collected; it is hoped to reach a target of \$500 by the end of the year. Donations should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer.

LITTLE WOBBY AND POINTS EAST

- Harry Whaite

Where is Little Wobby Beach? Before the trip practically everyone had asked that question, so, on a Saturday in late June, fifty-six members and friends found out.

A quick boat trip from Brooklyn via Dangar Island brought us to the Sport and Recreation Department's wharf at Little Wobby. Here we split into two parties - I took the 'harder' one up a steep gully on to the dividing ridge, whilst Bernie nobly took the 'easier' group by road around Juno Point direct to the main Sport and Recreation Centre on Little Patonga Bay.

The weather was pleasantly cool with a clear blue sky: the magnificent views across the Hawkesbury River and Broken Bay were enjoyed by all. The 'easier' party reached Little Patonga Beach after about one hour's walk; the 'harder' party took two hours, but this included the ritual morning tea stop on top of the ridge.

We all returned to Little Wobby by the road and lazed in the warm sun whilst awaiting the boat. Back at Brooklyn and Hawkesbury Station, a train to Sydney was not long in coming, and we were all home by 6.00 pm.

HAVE THINGS CHANGED?

From OFF Minutes 31 years ago: Concern was expressed about the destruction of plants in Oatley Park and about the cutting down of living trees for bonfires on Empire Day. The Council was asked for plans of local parks and reserves and to consider treatment of white ants in the trees of Oatley Park.

In November 1969 the OFF Committee expressed concern about Hurstville Council's policy of burning off in Oatley Park.

In 1959 there were 101 senior members and 39 junior members of the Society. Nine meetings were held with an average attendance of 50 adults and 13 juniors. The year's profit was Two pounds six shillings and five pence (\$4.65) and membership fees were 6/-.

Hon. President:	Bernie Sargeant, 13/2 Jersey Road, Mortdale. 2223.	57 6854
Hon. Secretary:	Lesley Cox, P.O. Box 52, Mortdale. 2223.	579 3782
Hon. Editor:	Alan Fairley, P.O. Box 148, Oatley. 2223.	570 8332



O.F.F. NEWS

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GREATER DAINTREE NEWS

Many thanks to those who have signed the petition asking the Federal Government to propose the Greater Daintree and wet tropic area for listing as a World Heritage. We have collected just over 80 signatures, which is only 30% of our adult membership. Surely we can do better!

We will shortly be forwarding our copies of the petition to Colin Gibson, our representative on the spot. He was back in Sydney earlier this year, and he then described the damage that had been done by that time. The so-called "tunnel through the rainforest" had been invaded by Merremia peltata, a convolvulus-type vine; there was an incredible amount of litter - dumped cars, empty cans, smashed bottles. A gravel pit was being planned for Emmagen Creek and a works depot for the base of the Cowie Range. The swimming pool at Tachalbadga Creek had been ruined and the campsite ripped out by a bulldozer. Melissa Creek ("the best freshwater supply of the whole area") had been filled with sediment to a depth of 15 centimetres. The best natural campsite in Bloomfield, at the northern end of the area, had been flattened by bulldozers.

But not all news is bad. Support for the listing has come from people of some authority in North Queensland. They include Mr. Warwick Purser, the regional director of the Far North Queensland Promotion Bureau, Mr. Jim Wallace, one of the most successful tour operators on the Great Barrier Reef, and Mr. Tom Pyne, the chairman of Mulgrave Shire. The North Queensland branch of the Australian Workers' Union has given its full support to World Heritage listing, even though its members include the forestry workers. A comprehensive article by Joseph Glascott on this support and other relevant matters appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald on 7 July.

As predicted by the conservation movement, the road through the Daintree rainforest has become a financial embarrassment to both the Queensland Government and the Douglas Shire. They have proposed a \$3 toll on tourists to help pay for its upkeep, much to the ire of the local public. The Cape Tribulation-Bailey's Creek Development League, consisting of local residents, has called for an end to funding of the road through the rainforest. It is worth recalling that, four years ago, the Queensland Main Roads Department advised against its construction on the grounds of need, cost and environmental effects.

When, on World Environment Day last June, the Prime Minister announced the Federal Government's intention to nominate the north-east Queensland rainforests for the World Heritage List, both the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Wilderness Society stated "the Government has made a correct, historic and popular decision."

It now remains for the Federal Government to implement that decision!

Lord Howe Island - Regional Environmental Plan

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW has requested support for the Lord Howe Island Preservation Movement which is taking court action to have the Regional Environmental Plan for the Island declared invalid. Despite Lord Howe Island being one of Australia's few World Heritage sites, conservation objectives are not recognised in the REP. Changes in land use zoning have allowed for residential development in floodprone lands, and settlement on land that had previously been used for agriculture. Vacant Crown Land with completely undisturbed native vegetation is threatened by settlement expansion. Breeding grounds of the Fleshy Footed Shearwater, and the habitat of the Lord Howe Island woodhen will be disturbed, despite the fact that both species are currently listed as endangered species. The NCC urges support of the Lord Howe Island Preservation Movement in any way possible. Funds are urgently needed to meet court and campaign costs. Donations may be sent to the Lord Howe Island Preservation Movement, C/- 176 Cumberland Street, Sydney.

COMING EVENTS

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** It is intended that meetings will commence promptly at 7.45 p.m.

August 24 (Monday). 7.45 p.m. Well-known authority, Dr. Fred Bell, Senior Lecturer in Physical Geography, the University of NSW, will speak on THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS OF THE GEORGES RIVER.

August 29 (Saturday). FIELD DAY. Walk in the Heathcote National Park. Meet at the Woronora River bridge, Heathcote Road, at 10 a.m. Excellent wildflower walk. Bring lunch. Contact: Val Boyan, 533 1013.

August 31 (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 a.m. at the old kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7453.

September 13 (Sunday). 12 noon. BARBECUE. Members and friends are invited to a barbecue at the home of Lesley Cox, 129 Mulga Road, Oatley. Cost: \$7 all inclusive. Bring your own chair. Bookings are being taken now. Ring Val Douglas on 57 7783 or see her at the meeting.

PRESIDENT'S FUND

Val Boyan recently shared a stall at Leppington Market where she sold OFF white elepharts making \$191.00 for the President's Fund. Congratulations Val!

WALKS AND FIELD TRIPS - Field Officer

While every care will be taken to avoid accidents and anyone becoming separated from the party, the organisers cannot accept responsibility for your safety. This is not to imply that the bush is unsafe. If approached sensibly it is no more dangerous than the city. Here is what you can do to look after yourself and avoid giving the organisers and the rest of the party unnecessary trouble.

What to wear: Sturdy, comfortable shoes. The soles should be of rubber with a tread pattern. Be prepared for weather changes. Some form of protection from rain - nylon or oilskin parka, waterproof cape - should always be carried.

What to bring: Unless told otherwise, assume that there will be no water or opportunity to light fires. A light backpack to carry your lunch etc. is preferable to a handbag. It leaves both hands free to help you over rough spots. It is recommended that you bring minor first-aid items such as bandaids, adhesive tape, elastic bandage, tweezers etc.

What to bring back: All your waste paper, plastic and tins, but NO native plants.

In the bush: Stay in sight of those ahead of you. Do not hurry ahead and if you reach a fork in the track, wait for the rest of the party to catch up. If you do become separated, stay where you are. When you are missed, someone will retrace the route, and the further you have departed from it, the longer it will be before you are found. If you are confident that you can look after yourself in the bush and you decide to deviate, tell some responsible person what you intend to do and we will write you off. The same applies if you decide to return home early.

O.F.F. SECRETARY

O.F.F.'s excellent secretary, Lesley Cox, has given notice that she intends to resign from this position at the Annual Meeting in November. Lesley has carried out her job most efficiently and conscientiously for which she is sincerely thanked by O.F.F. members. If anyone is interested in nominating for the position of secretary, please contact Lesley who will be pleased to give details of the job.

PATAGONIA AND POINTS NORTH

Harry and Olive Whaite are planning to go to Patagonia next February. The tour, run by Tony and Connie Groom's InterNATIONAL PARK tours, lasts 36 days, but is not cheap - over \$6000 per person. The region is said to beat Alaska. Full details are not yet to hand but if any members of O.F.F. are interested, ring Olive or Harry on 57 6459.

BHP AWARDS FOR THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

BHP has launched the Bicentennial BHP Awards for the Pursuit of Excellence to mark Australia's bicentenary, and is seeking nominations for six categories, one of which is 'Environment'. Many people have worked with skill and dedication in the environmental field. Who would you nominate? Suggestions at next meeting.

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Hon. Secretary: Lesley Cox, P.O. Box 52, Mortdale. 2223. 579 3782

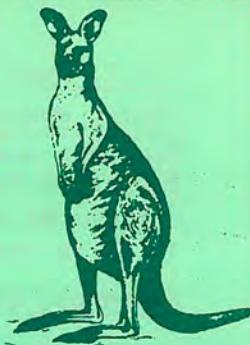
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INTERNATIONAL PARK TOURS RAMBLE THROUGH EUROPE AND ENGLAND. Keith Underwood
On June 13 thirteen Oatley residents, mostly OFF members, left Sydney for a six week sightseeing and walking tour of Europe and England. Commencing in Greece, the tour itinerary included Athens and the ancient sites of Old Corinth, Mycenae, Epidaurus and Olympia, the mountains of the Central Peloponnese and Delphi. The party then flew to Yugoslavia visiting Dubrovnik, the Gulf of Kotor, Zagreb, the Plitvice National Park, Lake Bled, Lake Bohinj and Triglav Alpine Park. Across the Julian Alps into Austria we travelled by bus to Salzburg, the Berchtesgaden saltmines, Innsbruck, through Liechtenstein and on to Bernese Oberland in Switzerland. A short flight from Zurich deposited us at Heathrow. From London by train we were catapulted north to Durham (260 miles in 190 minutes). After a coastal walk in the North York Moors National Park we moved further north to Hadrian's Wall and the remnants of Roman forts, and then west to the calm, reflective beauty of the Lakes District. Our tour ended with stops at Coventry with its controversial cathedral, Stratford and the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of Julius Caesar, Oxford and its famous university, and finally back to London. The tour included cities, towns and villages; ancient and mediaeval sites; cathedrals and museums; parks, countryside and mountains; and the populousness of summer tourism with, for contrast, the quiet isolation of remote mountain walking. A special feature was the opportunities for walks of differing degrees of difficulty ranging from not walking to joining a select but small group of "tiger walkers" who periodically donned walking gear and with ropes, alpine axes and similar paraphernalia disappeared for days at a time into the mountain mists. Diversity of experience was the keynote and while ruins or mediaeval cities did not elicit unanimous appreciation, all were in agreement in their enjoyment of the natural splendour and physical activity provided by the numerous walks.

Some of the things we saw and did:

- A walk through the Plitvice Lakes. Sixteen lakes and tarns spill over into each other in foaming cascades and waterfalls. Walking tracks and boardwalks across the water run from Labudovac to where the lower lakes rush into the Korana River. The system is very much alive and dynamic with sedimentation of calcium and magnesium carbonates interacting with special kinds of algae and moss to form new travertine barriers and change existing ones. The floor of the surrounding forest of towering beech trees has thick brown leafcover interspersed with wild strawberry and other vegetation, with daylight gently percolating the forest canopy - an incredibly beautiful and magnificent natural phenomenon.
- Throughout the Austrian and Swiss countryside an abundance of meadow and cultivated flowers presented a visual smorgasbord of geranium, daisy, primula, campanula, roses, forget-me-not, violet, alpenrose, gentian, dianthus and many more.
- As a contrast, the orderliness of the Salzburg Mirabell Palace gardens with roses, begonias, marigolds, salvias, hollyhocks, manicured lawns, and a conservatory of indoor plants (lilies, croton, balsam, rubber plant, hibiscus, fuchsia, bromeliads, orchids, bougainvillea - to mention some examples) introduced a more formal kaleidoscope of shape and colour.
- The mountains of Innsbruck and Bernese Oberland provided opportunities for walks of an arduous nature, at least by OFF standards, and the enjoyment of rugged alpine scenery. Treks from Reichenbach Falls to Grindelwald and from Stechelberg to the hotel at Obersteinberg left many of us exhausted and gasping, but exhilarated by the views. The rugged, awesome character of the alpine terrain in the Bernese Oberland was a distinct contrast to the calmer, more peaceful aspect of the Lakes District in England.
- A disquieting feature in Europe was the clearly perceptible haze - heat haze, pollution or both - which partially obscured distant views.

Overall the tour was a wonderful experience leaving many warm recollections of incidents and fellow tourists as well as a wealth of visual memories.

COMING EVENTS

Meetings are held on the 4th Monday of the month at the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street (near corner of Letitia Street) Oatley. Visitors and children are welcome at all meetings and field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.
** It is intended that meetings will commence promptly at 7.45 p.m.

September 28 (Monday). 7.45 p.m. Dr. Woody Horning will present the second part of his series on Antarctica: THE SNARES - A CASE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF A SUBANTARCTIC ISLAND. Don't miss this one!!

October 5 (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 a.m. at the old kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7458.

October 10 (Saturday). FIELD DAY. WALK - MOUNT KEMBLA. Meet at the Mount Keira turnoff on Princes Highway at 10 a.m. Contact: Val Boyan, 533 1013

October 17 (Saturday). CLEAN-UP - OATLEY PARK - 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Meet at the main gate near the Oval. Bring a thermos for the usual OFF morning tea break.

November 7 and 8. CAMPING WEEKEND - GLEN DAVIS. See next OFF News for details.

November 21 (Saturday). ANNUAL DINNER - Peakhurst Bowling Club. Full details next month. Keep this date free.

SMIGGIN HOLES - 16-23 January 1988

Due to popular request, Win and Norm Tonkin have offered to open their chalet at Smiggin Holes again in January 1988, as they did in 1986 and 1987. Anyone interested in spending a week in the Snowy Mountains may contact Bernie Sargeant for details on 57 6854. He will be collecting the names of those who wish to make a firm booking.

COBOURG PENINSULA

With best wishes from Alan and Chiew Fairley in N.T.

We have just returned from five days at Cobourg Peninsula at the very top end of Northern Territory. To get there we drove over 570km from Darwin, the last 275km over a dirt track which varies from stretches of bull-dust to irritating corrugations and cleverly concealed pot-holes. A special permit has to be obtained to pass through the Aboriginal Arnhem Land; only 15 permits per week are granted. Because of the difficulty of access, most people fly in from Darwin.

It is a remote, quiet spot, with sandy beaches, a hot tropical atmosphere and a feeling that this is one of the last unchanged places in Australia. Most people spend a few days in Cobourg for the fishing, but for us it was a change to see the varied bird life, explore the coastline with its reefs and shellfish and try to identify some of the monsoon forest plants which are so different from those around Sydney. Of special interest are the ruins of Victoria Settlement which lasted from 1838 to 1849 and was an attempt to establish a British colony in Northern Australia. It is reached by a 40 minutes boat trip across Port Essington. A few stone walls and foundations have survived the cyclones and ravages of time. Buffalo, bantang (Bali cattle) and Timor pony roam the Peninsula, descendants from those brought to Victoria.

Cobourg Peninsula is a National Park and is surrounded by the Territory's first Marine Park. It is managed so that the traditional Aboriginal occupiers still live in small settlements within the park and still use its natural resources such as turtle, eggs, fish, and carry out traditional land use practices, such as dry season burning. It is difficult for southern conservationists to get used to the sight of constant fire and smoke-filled skies. We camped beneath Coast Casuarina, ate oysters and cockles, had native rats raid our tent and generally had a quiet time before leaving to return to the relative civilisation of Kakadu National Park.

GREAT BARRIER REEF CRUISE OF BIRD BREEDING ISLANDS

This seven day cruise departs 4 October 1987 and costs \$700 ex Cairns. The itinerary is Cairns, Lizard Is., Stapleton Is., Flinders Is., Quoin Is., Forbes Is., Charade Is., Cairns. Activities include birdwatching, snorkelling, reef walking, fishing, swimming, bird counts and bird surveys. If you are interested, contact Venture Out, P.O. Box 82, Katoomba. (047) 82 5022.

JOURNALS: Current journals which may be borrowed at monthly meetings include: National Parks Journal, July, Special issue "Bicentennial Greenbelt Proposals for the Sydney Region" with articles on National Park extensions in Sydney Region; WOLLI CREEK BUSHLAND; Heathcote National Park; Additions to Georges River State Recreation Area. East Gippsland Coalition News, July, Timber Industry. HABITAT AUSTRALIA, August, rainforests; science and technology; Kakadu Stage III; nuclear winter.

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IT'S ANNUAL DINNER TIME AGAIN !!!

The OFF ANNUAL DINNER is on Saturday night, November 21st at Peakhurst Bowling Club, Holley Road, Peakhurst. Time: 7.30 pm. Cost: \$13.50 per head. A delectable smorgasbord meal with hot and cold dishes. This year's special guest speaker is David Sheppard, Recreational Planning Coordinator for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. His topic will be 'The NPWS - 1987 and Beyond'. We would like definite bookings and payment at least two weeks before the dinner, preferably on the night of the October 26 meeting. Bookings to Ida Carder (57 5909) or Julian Sheen (579 2746). COME ALONG AND BRING A FRIEND.

MOUNT CORICUDGY LOGGING

The Wilderness Society reports that logging is proceeding at Mount Coricudgy within the Wollemi wilderness. This area abuts the north-western boundary of Wollemi National Park. In addition to the area's wilderness value, it forms the catchment of a number of creeks flowing through the heart of the Wollemi wilderness. You could add your voice of protest by writing to the Minister for Planning and Environment, C/- Parliament House, Sydney, calling for logging to cease and for the wilderness values to be protected by the addition of Mt. Coricudgy and the Great Dividing Ridge to the national park.

WILDERNESS ACT - UPDATE

In the April/May OFF News we asked 'What has happened to the NSW Wilderness Act?' A media release by Mr. Carr, Minister for Planning and Environment, on August 15 committed the government to 'the passage of a wilderness act in the approaching session of Parliament'. He also promised to announce three new wilderness national parks and to amend the National Parks and Wildlife Act to ban mining in national parks. The Wilderness Society wants the government to go even further - that the legislation should require the NPWS to map all remaining unprotected wildernesses and to dedicate them as national parks within three years. Why not another letter to Mr. Carr congratulating him on his announcements and/or asking him to ensure that a strong Act is passed?

MURRAY-DARLING PROBLEMS

The latest copy of ECOS (Spring 1987) comments on the 'historic agreement of March this year to form a Murray-Darling Basin Commission'. This is the result of growing concern about widespread land degradation, poor water quality, rising ground water levels, loss of wildlife and vegetation, over-grazing and clearance. Annual production losses due to salinity, wind and water erosion, soil acidity and soil decline have been put at \$220 million in cropping land alone. The article quotes this amazing statistic: more than 1.3 million tonnes of salt flow over the South Australian border every year - that's 2.5 tonnes every minute. This salt comes from up-stream activities, such as the clearing of native vegetation and irrigation. The agreement between the Commonwealth and the three states along the Murray will mean that for the first time these governments will coordinate management approaches to this much-exploited and battered resource.

LIBERAL PARTY POLICY ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Colong Bulletin has a post-election comment on the Liberal Party's attitude (official and unofficial) to the environment in both state and federal spheres. With a state election approaching, OFF members will be interested in Liberal attitudes to such issues as exploitation of national parks, wilderness legislation, the future of Kurnell and urban development. The Bulletin may be borrowed at the next meeting.

- * Members are invited to the 23rd A.G.M. of the Wildlife Research Foundation at Wirrimbirra Sanctuary, Hume Highway, Bargo on Sunday, 1st November at 2 pm.
Guest speaker: Mr. Graeme Wells, Director, National Parks Association.
- * The Lime Kiln Bay Group will conduct a native plant stall at the Oatley Lions Club Festival, Oatley Parade, on Saturday, 31 October.

COMING EVENTS

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*** It is intended that meetings will commence promptly at 7.45 pm.

October 26 (Monday). 7.45 pm. *** Change from the printed programme.

Unfortunately Terry Boylan, Curator of Reptiles at Taronga Zoo, is unable to attend our next meeting. He will be chasing a rare tortoise in Carnarvon Gorge (Queensland). Instead, Alan Fairley will show his slides and talk about his recent trip to The Top End, including Kakadu, Cobourg Peninsula, Katherine Gorge, Keep River and Bungle Bungle Mountains.

November 2 (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 am at kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7458.

November 7 and 8. Camping Weekend at Glen Davis. Meet at Glen Davis camping ground between 10 am and 12 midday. Glen Davis is an old shale mining town set below cliffs in the Western Blue Mountains. It is about 220 km from Sydney via Lithgow and Capertee, a 3-4 hours' drive. The camp site is a pleasant spot with shade, toilets, water and a shower block. (When I was there last year there were hot showers and no camping fees). Inspect the historic relics of the shale oil refinery on Saturday; optional walks on Sunday beneath the beautiful cliffs; plenty of wildflowers, some endemic to the area. Leader: Alan Fairley 570 8332. If you have no transport, it may be possible to organise a lift on a share petrol basis.

November 21 (Saturday). ANNUAL DINNER, Peakhurst Bowling Club. See details above.

GLEN DAVIS - A BRIEF HISTORY

A few notes on Glen Davis, especially for those going on the camping trip.
(From: National Trust Journal, June 1986)

'A virtual ghost town nestled comfortably in the Capertee Valley is all that remains of Australia's only attempt to commercially produce shale oil. Glen Davis still has the world's largest seam of high grade oil shale (torbanite); when operating it was one of only three refineries in the world producing from shale oil.'

Oil shale was first discovered in the Capertee Valley in 1865 by a local grazier. Mining began in 1891 and within a few years a number of operations had been established. Not much is known about this early period of mining but after the Newnes kerosene shale works in the Wolgan Valley finally closed in 1932, the New South Wales and Commonwealth Governments looked at the possibility of establishing a large replacement operation in the Capertee Valley. It was decided to mine, retort and treat the shale oil in the valley, and then to pipe the motor spirit over the mountain to the Wolgan Valley and to storage tanks at Newnes Junction ready for rail transport to Sydney.

The Government asked G.F. Davis of Davis Gelatine fame to undertake the proposed development. He agreed and a company known as National Oil Pty Ltd was formed to which both governments contributed funds. Between 1938 and 1940 the road into the valley from Capertee was upgraded, an old mine tunnel extended and a new town, known as Glen Davis, was built. Much of the obsolete plant at Newnes, including the old Fell Retorts, was brought to Glen Davis.

Crude oil was first produced at Glen Davis in 1940. By the following year the company employed 170 miners and produced over 4 million gallons. Incessant difficulties meant that only a fraction of the planned production of 17 million gallons was ever reached. Water shortages were a major problem until a pipe was linked to a dam at Oberon in 1943. As a result Glen Davis remains a rare example of an isolated village with a fully reticulated water supply. By 1947 a hotel, barracks, staff cottages and permanent housing had been built. The population of 1619 had access to school, hall, post office, cinema, bank, garage, chemist, butcher and general stores.

In 1950 petrol production dropped and operating losses rose. The works closed in 1952 and the houses were moved by road to new locations. The retorts, towering above the remains of the refinery, are a familiar landmark to visitors, and the whole complex is one of the most impressive, integrated and informative industrial archaeological sites we have left.'

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DAINTREE UP-DATE

The Greater Daintree Action Group and the Daintree Blockade Information Centre have recently produced The Blockade Report, a 40 page submission to the Federal Government World Heritage Inquiry regarding the future of the track between Cape Tribulation and the Bloomfield River in the Daintree coastal wilderness, North Queensland. This report outlines the dangerous nature of the new road, the damage caused to the forest (including tree removal, alien weed invasion and soil erosion), the spread of vandalism, introduction of feral animals, siltation of the fringing coral reef and the loss of the wilderness character of the area.

The recommendations of the report include:

1. The total closure of the vehicular track and appropriate measures to ensure swift establishment of natural regrowth;
2. The Blockade Site should be the end of the road, from where a Coastal Wilderness Walking Track should begin;
3. The upgrading and sealing of the Mulligan Highway to Cooktown;
4. Purchase of available freehold land in the Daintree area for inclusion in the National Park;
5. Replacing the present Douglas Shire Council by an Administrator who can sympathetically coordinate environmental protection, tourism, primary industry and the needs of the local people.

* Copies of the report are available from Greater Daintree Action Centre, Cape Tribulation, via Mossman, Qld. 4873. Cost \$7, including postage.

DUCK HUNTING IN NSW

The Minister for Planning and Environment, Mr Bob Carr, will be making a decision soon on whether the duck and quail seasons should be banned. The National Parks and Wildlife Service estimates that about 100,000 ducks are shot in NSW during the open season; of these 10% are crippled. Many protected species are also killed illegally by shooters, including the Freckled Duck, one of the world's rarest wildfowl. Because there are no accurate long-term population counts, for all we know hunters may be decimating the populations of the three species that may be legally shot.

Lead build-up is also a potential hazard. It has been estimated that 7.9 tonnes of lead representing 44 million pellets would be added to the aquatic environment in a single shooting day in NSW.

On the weekend of 23-24 October, the Nature Conservation Council passed a resolution calling for the NSW Government to stop the duck and quail open seasons. You can support this resolution by writing to the Minister, Mr Bob Carr, or to the Minister for Local Government, Mrs J. Crosio (who is responsible for animal welfare).

HOW IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP FEE USED?

Much of the money collected as membership fees is used for the day-to-day running of the Society, such as postage, printing and paper. An amount is set aside from fees to cover costs of OFF News. A large part of the remainder is donated to worthy conservation causes. Here is a list of donations made over the last three years.

1987 Total amount: \$305

Organisations: Fraser Island Defenders Organisation; South-east Forest Alliance; Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony Committee; East Gippsland Coalition; Lord Howe Island Preservation Movement; NSW Environment Centre Computer Fund; Oatley Lions Club.

1986 Total amount: \$326

Organisations: Friends of Hacking River; World Wildlife Fund; Oatley Lions Club; NSW Wilderness Society.

1985 Total amount: \$270

Organisations: Australian Conservation Foundation, Antarctic Action; Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony; Wildlife Preservation Society of Qld; World Wildlife Fund; NSW Wilderness Society; Oatley Lions Club; Friends of Hacking River; World Wildlife Fund, Bettong Study; ACF, Woodchip Fund.

COMING EVENTS

Meetings are held on the 4th Monday of the month at the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street (near corner of Letitia Street), Oatley. Visitors and children are welcome at all meetings and field days. Please make yourself known as you come in. *** It is intended that meetings will commence promptly at 7.45 pm. ***

November 21 (Saturday). ANNUAL DINNER. Peakhurst Bowling Club. Time: 7.30 pm
Prior bookings essential! Contact: Ida Carder (57 5909).

November 23 (Monday). 7.45 pm. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING followed by members' slides and supper. Presentation of reports on the Society's activities and progress over the past year; election of a new committee; discussion and general business. At the end of the AGM, slides will be shown. Bring along up to 10 of your favourite slides - perhaps of trips or beautiful places. Please bring a plate to help with supper.

December 7 (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 am at kiosk.
If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7458.

SOME RECENT SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

- * Oatley Park clean-up. About 20 members recently spent most of a Saturday morning cleaning up litter from Oatley Park. Rubbish was especially bad below the lookouts, and about 25 large bags of 'junk' (ranging from drug bongs to grass clippings) were left for the Council collection.
- * Oatley Lions Club Festival. On Saturday, 31 October, O.F.F. had an information stall at the annual festival in Oatley. It proved to be very successful with a large number of people stopping to talk or look at the display. Thanks to those volunteers who 'personed' the stand.
- * Last meeting. Attendances continue to please and are a sign of the health of the Society. Despite the fact that the advertised speaker on snakes was unavailable, about 90 people attended last meeting to see Alan Fairley's slides of The Top End.
- * Camp-out, Glen Davis. A good roll-up of about 40 people was present at our camping weekend. The weather was perfect and we had the camp site to ourselves. Activities included an inspection of the old refinery ruins, a walk down Capertee Valley to Running Stream, a climb up the Pipeline Track and a visit to the local museum. All agreed that it was a beautiful spot for a camp. A most enjoyable weekend!!
- * NCC Annual Conference. We were again ably represented at the two day Annual Conference of the Nature Conservation Council. A large number of issues were raised and motions passed. These included: support for better legislation to protect wild and scenic rivers; zoning along the Hawkesbury River; better treatment of sewage in the Blue Mtns; action to end woodchipping and duck hunting; condemnation of horseriding in national parks and the urging of governments to protect rainforests, promote forest research and end wood-chipping. Lengthy discussion took place on two major policy documents. The NCC Draft Policy on the Role of Aboriginal People in Nature Conservation in NSW outlined the potential for conflict and cooperation between conservation policy and aboriginal land use. The Tourist Policy promoted the idea that tourism should be based on conservationally sound management practices rather than current ad-hoc and unplanned approaches.
- * The Hon Treasurer reports that a net profit of \$291 was made from the barbecue held at the Cox's home. An additional \$77 was made from the raffles. The Committee expressed its thanks to Lesley and Peter for hosting this function.
- * Val Boyan's hard work in collecting odds and ends and selling them at the jumble sale resulted in a welcomed \$37 profit for the Society.
- * Harry Whaite reports that the President's Fund now totals \$1065. It is suggested that in the management and distribution of this money a base amount should be retained, a percentage be spent on incidental requests from conservation groups and a percentage be donated to a special project. Members will have a chance to discuss the management of this fund at the Annual General Meeting.

ANU Summer School. We have been advised of the following residential courses: Kosciusko (24-28 Jan. 1988), Rainforests of Southern NSW (3-6 Feb. at Kioloa, South Coast), Native Plant Identification (8-12 Feb. at Jervis Bay). Contact ANU, Centre for Continuing Education, GPO Box 4, Canberra, ACT. 2601. Tel.(062)493016.

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