



O.F.F. NEWS



Published by

OATLEY FLORA & FAUNA
CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.

No: 93/1

January/February, 1993

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FAMINE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The appalling scenes of starving people in Somalia seen almost every night on television are a horrible reminder that famine is largely the result of man's neglect and mismanagement of the environment. The African continent - especially those lands on the fringe of the Sahara - have experienced recurrent catastrophes which have been followed by periods of relative prosperity during which people forgot, or deliberately ignored, the errors of the past and the laws governing the balance of nature.

In better times, stock numbers were increased with no thought about the results of over-grazing and the obvious deterioration of the vegetation. This lack of foresight and 'live for today' attitude has resulted in drought, desertification, famine and ultimately to social chaos and civil war as groups pillage their neighbours in order to survive

There has been a pattern of disastrous droughts in the lands around the Sahara. In 1913, famine struck the southern fringe of the Sahara and an estimated one million people died. Yet, gradually, life began again and flocks and herds were built up slowly, despite semi-famines in 1924 and 1935. In 1944, overstocking led to the deaths of 7 million sheep out of a total of 10 million in Algeria. A fresh disaster struck in 1972-4 when 90% of the herds died from lack of water and food and hundreds of thousands of desert tribesmen died from starvation.

Today the Sahara is still dying, with once fertile land becoming barren sandy or rocky wastelands. Yet the population, despite the droughts, continues to grow. Does this simply mean more people are facing the prospects of an early death? The answer is probably *Yes* as long as they continue to practise the self-destructive habits of their predecessors as they plunder the dwindling vegetation and sink ever-deeper wells. The lessons are obvious for Australia: the clearing of marginal lands such as mallee and the greedy practice of overstocking lands for short-term profits must cease and careful planning must ensure the wise management of our inland water reserves.

SAND MINING AT KHAPPINGHAT

A Commission of Inquiry has recommended that part of the proposed Khappinghat Nature Reserve be mined for sand. Mineral Deposits, a company owned by BHP-Utah Mining, will be allowed to mine sand along the fore-dunes of the eastern half for three years. A number of interesting things have come out of this sorry episode. **Firstly**, the Labor Party has accepted the Commissioner's findings even though Khappinghat is one of the 20 new parks promised by the ALP. Apparently, a degraded park is better than no park. **Secondly**, neither the Government nor the Labor Opposition supported the Independent MP, Peter Macdonald, when he introduced the Khappinghat Nature Reserve Bill. Indeed, a Labor spokesman attacked the environment movement for collaboration with the Independents. **Thirdly**, Mineral Deposits and its parent company have over 80,000 hectares of leases, applications and exploration licences on the North Coast of NSW. **Fourthly**, the Minister for Natural Resources, Hon Ian Causley, showed his understanding of sand-mine rehabilitation by his comment that "on the North Coast there are three or four of the most magnificent golf courses that would not exist but for sand mining. The area was sand mined, left in good condition then rehabilitated with golf courses".

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Fees are now due. They are the same as last year: \$10 for full membership; \$7 for concession. Fees include subscription to *OFF News* (11 issues a year). You may renew directly at the next club night OR send a cheque to: Hon Treasurer, P.O. Box 52, MORTDALE. 2223.

Wildlife Rescue

For help with injured animals, ring Sydney WIREs office on 975 1633.

OFF helps TEC

OFF has made a donation of \$300 to the Total Environment Centre to help it with its valuable work.

Meetings are held at the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street,
(near the corner of Letitia Street), Oatley.

Visitors and children are welcome to attend all meetings and field days.

Please make yourself known as you come in

It is intended that meetings commence promptly at 7.45 pm

COMING EVENTS

February 1 (Monday). ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. Reports and election of officers. Your chance to comment on the running of the Society. Come along and say hello to everyone at this first meeting after the break. Supper and opportunity to chat at the end of the AGM. Please bring along a plate of food.

February 22 (Monday). By popular demand. A spokesman from the **WATER BOARD.** Michael Mathias from the Environment Management Unit will talk about the Board's bushland management programme with special mention of the Gungah Bay project. Find out how the Water Board is spending **your** money collected from the special levy. Time for audience questions.

Note : The Society's 1993 Programme should be available at this meeting on payment of fees.

February 27 (Saturday). FIELD DAY. Details to be advised in next *OFF News*.

WORONORA/MENAI BUSHLAND

The National Parks Association has prepared a paper for the NSW Government's consideration on the future of the remaining natural lands of Woronora and Menai. Following the dropping of the mega-tip plan for Lucas Heights there is an urgent need to make a clear and considered decision on the bushland areas in the western part of Sutherland Shire. There are still fine areas of natural bush along the Woronora River and west of Menai along Barden and Mill Creeks. The NPA proposes to protect them by giving them national park status. In a two part plan, it firstly suggests that all Crown land be added to the existing Georges River National Park and, then, the creation of a new Woronora River Valley National Park. Such a park expanse would give more protection to the rare plants and animals in the region than does the current Georges River NP which is far too small (only 250 metres wide). The values of the proposed park are outlined in the report. The area contains 9 endangered or rare plants, poorly conserved shale forest and saltmarsh, several threatened or rare animal species on Schedule 12 of the NPWS Act and

Aboriginal sites, including hand stencil caves and rock engravings. If established, the new park will provide badly needed passive recreation opportunities for the increasing urban population and may take some of the strain off the Royal National Park.

This whole area is expanding rapidly and if the opportunity is not taken now to conserve the area it will be lost forever beneath a myriad of environmentally insensitive development proposals.

A copy of the report which contains a detailed map of the park proposals will be available at the next OFF meeting for short-term loan.

A definition. Heard at a recent meeting.

What does a Water Board engineer mean when he talks of 'The Gross Trunk Drain' ?

Answer : The Georges River.

Audley Fish Ladder

The Royal N.P. is to build a fish ladder to assist fish to pass the barrier posed by the Audley weir. \$11,500 was raised at a recent fund-raising event.

Hon. President: Graham Quint, 16 Evans Street, Peakhurst 2210 534 3239

Hon. Secretary: Keith Underwood, PO Box 52, Mortdale 2223 570 1149

Hon. Editor: Alan Fairley, PO Box 148, Oatley 2223 570 8332



O.F.F. NEWS



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February/March, 1993

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FEDERAL ELECTION

The green vote could once again be important in deciding the outcome of the coming Federal elections. Conservation issues have been given a back seat to the economic problems and at a time of one million unemployed it is understandably difficult to bring conservation into the centre stage of political debate. Yet the issues are just as important as they have ever been. Neither Government nor Opposition has inspired the confidence of the environment movement. At the time of writing, neither side has issued its Environment Policy. We can make some judgements of the Labor/Keating Government on what its record is on environmental issues and also on what it has not done. Lack of space prohibits a detailed list of positives and negatives, but the issue is dealt with in the latest copy of *Total Environment Centre Newsletter* (Vol 11, No4). Copies of this article will be available at the next meeting night.

This article also lists the major green issues at the Federal level as seen by the TEC. These include

- *Dedication of a Jervis Bay National Park and cancellation of the munitions depot and jetty
 - * No renewal of woodchip export licences from forests of high-conservation value .
 - *Major tax concessions for investment in waste minimisation technologies.
 - *The upgrading of The Department of the Environment to a full Cabinet role.
 - *Discussion with States to dedicate new national parks and wilderness areas.
 - *Strong Threatened Species Conservation Act
 - *A National Wilderness Act
 - *Commitment to refuse export licences for new uranium mines.
 - *Mandatory targets for industry to reduce greenhouse gases.
 - *Foreign aid to be used for ecologically sustainable development
 - *Sales tax exemption on 100% recycled products.
- (Election comment by Alan Fairley, P.O.Box 148, Oatley.2223.)

*MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

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GEORGES RIVER FORUM

The Society was represented at a recent meeting of the Georges River Forum in the Ministerial office of Terry Griffiths, the Forum's Chaiman. The purpose of the meeting was to have a co-ordinated plan for making applications for grants to improve local bushland. OFF has committed itself to apply for grants to improve the bushland strip along the Oatley-Como walkway and parts of Poulton Park and also to have a tree study done of Oatley.

THANKS TO HARRY

The Annual General Meeting passed a vote of thanks to Harry Whaite who has stepped down after 21 years as Hon Treasurer of this Society. Harry will continue his involvement on the committee as Membership Officer and organiser of the distribution of *O.O.F. News*. Few people can remember this Society without Harry as Treasurer and his thoroughness, incredible memory and dedication have been a major reason for the success of the Society.

The A.G.M. also recognised the help of those who hand delivered many of the newsletters each month. The delivery of 100 newsletters each month cuts costs from \$7 to \$4 per member. The helpers are : Bess McPhee, Bill Hall, Bev Watters, Coral Serisier, Win Tonkin and Bill Benson (I hope we haven't left anyone out!!).

Late note The work party on Sunday March 7th at Gungah Bay replaces that scheduled for March 13th.

Meetings are held at the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street,
(near the corner of Letitia Street), Oatley.

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COMING EVENTS

February 22 (Monday). By popular demand. A spokesman from the **WATER BOARD**. Michael Mathias from the Environment Management Unit will talk about the Board's bushland management programme with special mention of the Gungah Bay project. Find out how the Water Board is spending **your** money collected from the special levy. Time for audience questions.

Note : The Society's 1993 Programme should be available at this meeting on payment of fees.

February 27 (Saturday). FIELD DAY. Walk from Bundeena to Gibbon Point, Royal National Park. Aboriginal engravings and beautiful cliff-line views. Not a long walk but there will be some scrambling and the track is at times a little rough. Catch the 9.30am ferry from Cronulla (Gunnamatta Bay) to Bundeena. A train leaves Mortdale at 8.58am, arriving Cronulla at 9.23am. As this only gives you a few minutes to get down to the wharf, you may prefer to catch the earlier train. Ferries return from Bundeena at 3pm and 4pm. Leader: Mamie Clark. Tel:546 3570.

March 7 (Sunday) NATIONAL CLEAN-UP DAY This year the focus on the clean-up is on the foreshores. O.F.F. has decided to concentrate its effort on Gungah Bay Reserve, just west of Oatley Station. Already the regenerators from the National Trust have been at work in this reserve and we are keen to get the area in good condition in time for a rededication and renaming by Council later in the year. A big attendance is needed!! Meet 9.00am at the car park behind the Bowling Club down River Road. Bring morning tea, lunch, working gloves and mosquito repellent.

KOSCIUSKO REPORT

Once again OFF members and friends spent two glorious weeks at the end of January at the chalet at Smiggin Holes. The first week was a full house and included about 40 children. Despite some wet and foggy days, there were walks to the Summit, Blue Lake, Mt Carruthers and Guthega. There were lots of alpine flowers, beetles, grasshoppers and an alpine funnel web spider looking for its mate. Bill Benson helped run most of the activities (although NOT the tee off by a keen golfer from the Kossie summit). In the second week, another 40 enjoyed perfect weather. Beverley Watters reports that the wildflowers were some of the best ever seen. There were trips to Mt Stillwell, Watsons Crags,

North Ramshead, Porcupine, Mt Tate and Rainbow Lake. There was even time for some relaxing. The whole week was finished off by dinner at the Man From Snowy River Hotel.

FERAL ANIMALS IN KOGARAH

Kogarah Council has written to the Society seeking our help. The Council is seeking some input as to what degree feral animals such as cats and foxes impact on the local environment. If you are aware of feral animals in local bushland near you and if you have noted any evidence that local wildlife is endangered by these feral animals, please let us know by writing a brief note to the Secretary. This is a great opportunity to get something done about this problem.

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O.F.F. NEWS



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No: 93/3

March/April, 1993

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BUSHLAND PROJECTS PROGRESS

Local bushland regeneration projects are moving at a rapid pace. National Trust's contract work for the Water Board in Gungah Bay Reserve (Myles Dunphy Bushland Reserve) is now half completed with massive clearance of weeds such as privet and lantana. OFF works monthly in this reserve supplementing the Trust's efforts and our own area of restored bushland is spreading dramatically. On the 6th March (Clean-up Australia Day), about a dozen or so intrepid OFF members braved the rain to clear rubbish and weeds. Thanks to those who ventured out on such a dismal day!!

The Environmental Trust Grant received by OFF for the restoration of Yarran Road Reserve, Oatley, is now being applied, with the National Trust completing several sessions of major weed removal. The clearing of the "plug" of weed trees at the end of the cul-de-sac entrance to the reserve will reveal a breathtaking view of the Georges River.

Unfortunately, the Trust team has found that many native trees have been cut down at the western end of the reserve and liaison has commenced with the local residents to seek their help in protecting the reserve from any further vandalism.

Also of interest to OFF members is the news that Water Board funded regeneration work will commence on 15 March in Lime Kiln Bay. This will remove the last major infestation of privet and help the Lime Kiln Bay Society's members in their fifteen year old regeneration program at that site.

More information will be given at the next OFF meeting on the monthly OFF regeneration work. Please come along; we need your help! Remember, many hands make light work. Restoration of these reserves will be a major breakthrough in our efforts over many years to protect our local bushland.

WATER BOARD TALK

About 85 people were present at last meeting to hear Colin Jones and Michael Mathias from the Water Board tell us about the problems and achievements of bushland management and regeneration.

JUNK MAIL VICTORY

An interesting letter in the latest copy of *Conservation News* (February 1993) gives hope to those who object to the never-ending piles of junk mail which end up in the letterbox. It often seems that a NO JUNK MAIL sticker is not enough. One conservationist has had a victory over Australia Post. After many complaints and having got the run-around, he eventually complained to the Ombudsman. The result was that from early 1993 Australia Post will cease to deliver unaddressed "householder" mail to letterboxes or Post Boxes which display NO JUNK MAIL stickers.

The message is clear:

* Get yourself a NO ADVERTISING MATERIAL or NO JUNK MAIL sticker. They are available from Oatley Post Office for \$1.

* If you continue to receive junk mail through Australia Post (identifiable by the "postage paid" inscription) complain to your post office manager.

* If you continue to receive junk mail through private delivery contractors, complain to the company doing the advertising, making the point that you will certainly NOT buy their products.

* If your junk mail has a postage-paid return envelope included, post it back with a message saying you do not want unsolicited material. The company will have to pay the postage costs. If enough people do it, this could be quite expensive for the advertiser.

* If you receive personally addressed unsolicited material, you can ask the Australian Direct Marketing Association, 10th Floor, 52-59 Clarence Street, Sydney, to have your name and address removed from their mailing lists.

BANKSTOWN REGENERATION

Bankstown Bushland Society reports that two bush regeneration teams are working in various parts of Bankstown, including The Crest, Deverall Park, Airport Reserve, Ashford Reserve and Lambeth Park. Tree planting days are to be arranged in autumn. If you live in the Bankstown area, you might like to help. Volunteers can ring Francine on 602 8095 or Janet on 724 3124.

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COMING EVENTS

March 22 (Monday). Wildlife photographer **Ken Griffith** will show his slides and talk about REPTILES AND FROGS. All the charm and excitement of these fascinating creatures without them being in the same room as you.

March 27 (Saturday). FIELD DAY. Walk in the Royal National Park. The Couranga Track and Forest Path. walk will descend from Waterfall via the Couranga Track through heath and bushland to the Hacking River, then follow the Forest Track through beautiful rainforest. Return via the same route. Meet at Waterfall Station car park at 9.30 am. Train from Mortdale 8.49 am or Oatley 8.51 am. Leader and contact: Val Argall Tel. 579 1874.

ANH MAGAZINE

If you are interested in subscribing to AUST. NATURAL HISTORY MAGAZINE at a discount rate (\$5 off your initial annual subscription) under a scheme which also guarantees a \$5 contribution per subscription to O.F.F. funds, please contact the Hon Secretary, Keith Underwood on 570 1149.

Australian Natural History has been described as Australia's leading nature magazine. There are four issues per year.

The discounted rates are (usual rates in brackets):

- * 3 year subscription (12 issues) \$66 (\$81)
- * 2 year subscription (8 issues) \$48 (\$58)
- * 1 year subscription (4 issues) \$25 (\$30)

A THANK YOU TO NANCY BEATTIE

Nancy Beattie has reluctantly decided to discontinue her Flower Study Day in Oatley Park. For about 15 years nancy has led a group of interested people on the first Monday of the month to identify and scientifically name native plants. She was assisted for a time by Pat Akkarsdyke who is now an assistant ranger in the national parks. Pat was one of Nancy's first pupils and is now himself an expert in plant identification. The success of the project in Oatley Park was due to Nancy's remarkable knowledge of and enthusiasm for native plants. She has always been a very patient teacher, repeating information without any sign of impatience.

Our sincere thanks to Nancy for all she has done and best wishes for her future from all who attended those days in Oatley Park. (Ida Carder).

NOXIOUS PLANTS

A list of the State's noxious plants was recently published in *The Leader*. The list contains 30 species, many of which like blackberry, lantana and pampas grass we are all familiar with and others which are not so common in the St George area. As conservationists, we all should be very aware of what species are declared noxious. The Act requires every occupier of private land to take reasonable and effective measures to eradicate the listed plants from their land. We could assist in this regard by reporting to our local council any noxious plants we see in our area. A copy of the full list of plants will be available at the desk at next meeting night.

BATS LEAVE BOTANIC GARDENS

The flying-foxes which had taken up residence in the Palm Grove of Royal Botanic Gardens have been moved by non-destructive methods. The most effective strategy was to disturb them with loud noises two hours after they had settled into their morning sleep. Drum beating at 105 decibels and bell ringing for 12 days without a break resulted in most of the colony leaving. Some continue to feed in the Gardens at night but roost away - probably in the Gordon Bat Colony.

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O.F.F. NEWS



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OATLEY FLORA & FAUNA CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.

No: 93/4

April/May, 1993

Price 10 cents

RENEWED BUSHLAND THREATS

It is an axiom of conservation that victories are never won completely and that battles must be continually fought. Such is the case with local bushland remnants at Moore Reserve and Wolli Creek Reserve.

Moore Reserve The push to develop this reserve between Oatley and South Hurstville is on again. This Society has been fighting to preserve its passive nature for many years. Only two years ago, local residents, supported by OFF, thought they had achieved an agreement with Kogarah Council in which sporting fields were rejected in favour of landscaping and replanting for passive recreational use. Now Council has appointed a consultant to re-examine the options for the reserve and sporting interest groups are strongly pressing the very projects which have already been rejected. This Society has made another submission and it is hoped that our actions will once again be supported by residents surrounding the reserve and Kogarah Council will finally take the wishes of the majority into consideration and not continue to pander to sectional interests.

Wolli Creek This valley, lying between the East Hills rail line and the escarpment of Earlwood, is the last remnant of natural bushland in the inner south of Sydney and contains an outstanding variety of habitats in its narrow confines. In a stretch less than 4 km long, there are mangrove stands, extensive wetlands, heathlands, dry open woodlands, an impressive cliff line and even a small pocket of rainforest. The Wolli Creek is the only stream left in the whole catchment of the Cooks River that retains its natural vegetation and animal life. For many years the valley has been the focus of an intense and, at times, bitter conservation battle to save it from destruction. Since 1948 there has been a road reservation through the valley and in more recent years successive governments have pushed for a freeway to be constructed along this route. A major planning inquiry (the Kirby Inquiry) in 1979/80 recommended the release of the road corridor between Tempe and Beverly Hills and that the land should be returned to the public as open space. This did not

happen. Now the completion of the M5 Tollway which ends at Beverly Hills has led to a renewed push to have the "missing link" through Wolli Creek constructed. There is no doubt that a freeway will destroy the natural beauty and conservation value of the valley as well as substantially ruining it as a recreational amenity.

Wolli Creek represents the classic conflict between the conservation of urban bushland and those opposing values which regard public parkland as cheap transport corridors. A National Trust report on the valley concluded that its value to residents as a scenic, educational, scientific and recreational resource "cannot be overstated".

YARRAN ROAD REGENERATION

Take a walk some day down to the end of Yarran Road, Oatley, and have a look at the regeneration work being carried out in this small reserve by the National Trust team with a grant obtained by this Society. The team has been attacking the most obvious weed invasion, especially around the end of the cul-de-sac of Yarran Road and along the railway viaduct. Larger species, such as lantana, small-leaf and large-leaf privet, sweet pittosporum and morning glory have been physically removed and poison painted on their stems. Large clumps of fish-bone fern have been sprayed with Glyphosate; other herbaceous weeds derived from dumped garden refuse have also been sprayed with a weaker solution of the same herbicide. Hurstville Council has assisted in taking away the debris. Logs have been placed on the slope to stabilise the soil, to slow down water flow during rain and to assist the formation of litter dams which greatly enhance the germination and growth of seedlings. The central part of the reserve is of good quality and now the fringe weeds have been removed you can fully appreciate its beautiful setting and the views over the Georges River.

MAIN ROADS CLEANUP

The Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) are advertising a new service for cleaning litter from main roads. Just ring toll free 008 816 770 and tell them where the litter is and a team will go and clean up.

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COMING EVENTS

April 17 (Saturday). Bush regeneration and work party at Gungah Bay Reserve, west of Oatley Station. Meet 9.00am in car park of Bowling Club..

April 26 (Monday). David Waterhouse, author and educator. Many members will know of David's books on the natural history of the Newcastle region. For many years David has been interested in the relationship between rainforest birds and their food source, especially the important link between native pigeons and the Illawarra rainforest. His talk is entitled **Illawarra's Pigeons**. A unique opportunity to hear about an unusual research project and to share David's depth of knowledge about the birds of Sydney region.

May 1 (Saturday). **FIELD DAY. PALM BEACH TO AVALON.** Walk part of the Bicentennial Coastal Walk. Distance: 8 km., taking about 3 hours. The walk is mostly along roads, but a highlight is a narrow cliff-top track to the high point of Bangalley Head. (This is optional, and you may wish to wait at the bottom for the group). The views from the Head are truly magnificent. Other than the ascent to the Head, there are two other ascents along the route as roads climb out of Palm Beach and Whale Beach. Those fit/keen/with extra time may wish to walk along the rocks to St Michaels Cave or, at the end of the walk, take the track up to Barrenjoey Lighthouse (an extra 1 hour 30 minutes). Meet 10.00am at car park on the southern end of Avalon Beach (Avalon Parade) where we will transfer to half the cars to convey everyone to Palm Beach. Give yourself 1 hour 30 min to drive there. The Palm Beach bus 190 from Wynyard goes to Avalon, but you will need to leave Oatley/Mortdale early if you travel by public transport. Leader and contact : Alan Fairley, tel. 570 8332.

SOCIETY NEWS

* The hall was packed with about 90 people for our last meeting when Ken Griffiths showed his excellent slides of frogs and reptiles of the Sydney region.

* The Society is in the process of obtaining quotes for the replacement of the slide projector used at meeting nights. If you have any contacts or have a projector in reasonable condition which you wish to sell, please see Alan Fairley at the next meeting.

* Recent pamphlets received which may be of interest to members include:

Natural Heritage and the National Trust

The Water Board and the Bush

Georges River Catchment Management Committee

Each is available from the desk at the next meeting.

LABOR MUST DO MORE

The return of the Federal Labor Government for another three years is a mixed blessing for conservationists. Its last Parliamentary term under Paul Keating was particularly disappointing. Its forest policy did not guarantee protection of old growth and wilderness. Opportunities for action were not taken on Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD). Federal Cabinet appeared to want environment questions to go away so it could get on with the issues surrounding unemployment in the recession.

On the other hand, there is a strong Labor commitment to clean water Australia-wide, and especially in the Murray-Darling Basin. They have proposed a comprehensive nature reserve system by the year 2000, a national inventory of pollutants and a wilderness inventory.

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No: 93/5

May/June, 1993

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CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF *O.F.F. NEWS* !!

This year is the 25th anniversary of this newsletter. It was first published in February, 1968. The pages of *O.F.F. News* over those years chronicle the important conservation battles both locally and Australia-wide. For this reason, the newsletter is an important historical document. It is hoped that a full set of *O.F.F. News* can be kept at the new Hurstville Historic Museum at the old Bakery. The editor is currently compiling an index to the newsletter to allow researchers easy reference.

In those 25 years there have been only five Hon. Editors :

Beatrice Goldstein	Feb. 1968 - 1970
Ida Carder	1970 - Feb. 1972
Olive Whaite	April 1972 - Jan. 1975
Betty Weekes	Feb. 1976 - Nov. 1983
Alan Fairley	Jan. 1984 - present.

In the first edition, it was reported that the Tasmanian Government intended to go ahead with its proposal to flood Lake Peddar and that the N.S.W. Conservation Council was to oppose application for mining leases in the Coolong Caves area. Lake Peddar, of course, was tragically lost; the Coolong Caves were eventually protected.

BUYING RAINFOREST LAND

The Australian Bush Heritage Fund is a Tasmanian organisation run by Bob Brown which raises money to purchase land for nature preservation. Its first venture on the 'mainland' is to buy blocks of Daintree rainforest which are threatened by a vast carve-up for roads, power lines and housing.

Saving the lot would require \$60 million, but the Fund has set its sights on a small but vital fraction of this area. High priority blocks, based on scientific assessment, will be purchased first. The ABHF is appealing for funds for this worth cause. You can become a regular supporter of the Fund or simply make a donation for this project. Send your cheque to ABHF, 102 Rathurst Street, Hobart . 7000 .

OVERDUE SUBSCRIPTIONS

By early May, about 80% of members had renewed their annual subscriptions. With this issue of the newsletter, reminders are being sent to the remainder. If you receive nothing, it is reasonable to assume that you have paid.

Harry Whaite Membership Officer

DEER IN ROYAL NATIONAL PARK

The Society has written to the National Parks and Wildlife Service supporting the reduction or elimination of the introduced deer in the Royal N.P. The NPWS and the Park administration have received a lot of misinformed and emotive criticism of their recent actions, but people who know what enormous damage to the Park's habitats caused by the deer can only applaud their removal.

The whole idea of a national park is to protect native flora and fauna; these parks are often the last remaining refuge of Australian species and any exotic species which threaten native species must be removed. It was a mistake to introduce deer into the park last century, just as it was a mistake to introduce rabbits or lantana or cane toads into Australia. Deer have the advantage of being 'cute' but they are no less a pest - a fact that has been recognised for many years during which time numbers have been kept under tight control. From an environmentalist's point of view, deer are just giant rabbits destroying the vegetation as they graze and causing erosion with their hooves. The media has been hoodwinked over this issue by a combination of self-interest groups, shooters, anti-park forces and the misinformed.

FIELD DAY AT PALM BEACH

A perfect autumn day greeted the 28 walkers who attended the last OFF Field Day. A highlight was the ascent of Bangalley Head, where on a flat rock high above the ocean, the group enjoyed lunch and the superb view north to Broken Bay. Later in the day, some of the group walked un to Barrenioev Head.

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(near the corner of Letitia Street), Oatley.

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COMING EVENTS

May 24 (Monday) Return by popular request. Michael Scotland and his underwater photography. The topic for this talk is **World War 11 Shipwrecks in the south and western Pacific Oceans**. All who were present last June to see Michael's slides of marine life on the reefs will know what an informative and memorable night it was. This promises to be just as good.

May 29 (Saturday). FIELD DAY. A 15 km walk in **The Valley of the Waters**, Blue Mountains. The walk begins at Wentworth Falls Station, then along Darwin Track, to National Pass, Lillians Bridge, Golf Course and to Leura Station. Plenty of steps, but also lots of views and waterfalls. Bring morning tea, lunch, water, jumper and a raincoat.

Trains: Depart Oatley 7.06 am, Mortdale 7.08 am, arrive Central 7.36 am. Depart Central (country platform) at 8.02 am, arrive Wentworth Falls 9.49 am. Return from Leura 3.31 pm or 4.31 pm. Meet on trains, 2nd carriage from front upstairs. If travelling by car, meet at Wentworth Falls railway station overpass at 9.50 am. Leader: Ralph Newbould. Tel. 579 4889.

T.E.C. ONE DAY WALKS

The Total Environment Centre runs monthly walks and tours as a means of raising funds for its campaigns and administration costs. The next walk is on Sunday, 30 May, and will be a cliff walk from Coogee to Bondi. In addition to spectacular eroded cliffs and extensive ocean views, the group will be joined by a member of the local historical society for an hour's exploration of the Waverley Cemetery. Cost is \$20 and bookings should be made in advance to the T.E.C.. Tel. 247 4714.

NEW NATIONAL PARKS?

By the time this newsletter gets to you, the fate of a Parliamentary Bill to add 56,000 hectares of land to the national parks estate should be decided. The Independent M.P., Dr Peter Macdonald, has introduced the Bill which, if passed, would immediately dedicate 9 key areas around N.S.W. as either national park or nature reserve. Given the low level of national park dedication in recent years and that only about half our ecosystems are adequately sampled in existing parks, this would be a significant achievement, but it would only be the equivalent of one average western grazing property.

CAT CONTROL

Did you know that in NSW there are 475,000 cats in Sydney and 441,000 in outside areas - a total of 916,000 - and this is a conservative figure!!

This huge number of cats is jeopardising the survival of native fauna. The combination of feral, stray and domestic cats is a potent mixture for our wildlife. In fact, the "harmless moggie" is known to kill and eat more than 100 native species of birds, 50 mammals, 50 reptiles, 3 frogs and numerous invertebrate animals.

The NSW Government is moving to educate the community about the dangers of cats to wildlife. The Animal Welfare Branch of the NSW Agriculture Dept. is preparing draft legislation for community consultation on the control of domestic pets.

What can be done?

The options include:

- * *registration of cats*
- * *microchip, collar or disc identification*
- * *night confinement of cats*
- * *encouraging desexing*
- * *restriction of cats per household*
- * *education about responsibilities*
- * *appropriate fees for ownership*

Hon. President: Graham Quint, 16 Evans Street, Peakhurst 2210 534 3239

Hon. Secretary: Keith Underwood, PO Box 52, Mortdale 2223 570 1149

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O.F.F. NEWS



Published by

OATLEY FLORA & FAUNA CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.

No: 93/6

June/July, 1993

Price 10 cents

'SOFT' ISSUES MANAGEMENT

A thought-provoking editorial written by Milo Dunphy occurs in the latest issue of the Total Environment Centre Newsletter (Vol 12, No 1). In this editorial, Milo asks the question "What happened to the environment movement during the Federal election? His answer to this question raises a number of important issues not just relating to the last election but also to fundamental questions about the direction of the environmental debate and its hijacking by corporate interests and Government departments.

In seeking the reasons for the burial of environmental issues, Milo asks:

"Were the corporate exploiters able to use their advertising budgets to engineer a conspiracy of silence? Have ten years of corporate propaganda about *excellence*, *restoration* of mining sites, *recycling* cans, *regrowing* forests and the like finally dissolved the critical ability of the media.?

Perhaps the Government departments' substitution of a soft environmental agenda for hard issues has finally captured the public mind. Tree planting, land care and Economically Sustainable Development are much safer political topics than stopping the beach-miners at Shoalwater Bay, the woodchippers at Eden or cancelling the proposed munitions depot at Jervis Bay. Are the economic rationalists right? Are jobs and the economy far more important than the environment? Or is it the fault of the environment movement itself?"

(The Newsletter containing the entire editorial will be available at the next meeting night. Also in this edition are articles about protecting Wolli Creek and coastal wetlands of N.S.W.)

RAOU INFORMATION

Following a request from the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union, O.F.F. is pleased to include a flyer on this excellent group for the information of our members. Over the years, the RAOU has provided speakers at our meetings free of charge and RAOU members have led field trips for O.F.F. activities.

HORSE-RIDING IN NATIONAL PARKS

Not long ago I was walking in the upper reaches of Middle Harbour down from St Ives in what is now Garigal National Park. Current Government policy is to allow horse-riding in this area and it was quite obvious what damage was being done to the park from this activity. The track itself was badly eroded from the impact of horses' hooves. The presence of horse dung on and beside the track was visually unattractive, but more serious was the spread of weed species beside the track, the seeds of which had obviously been spread by the dung. I was quietly walking along admiring the plants and listening to the birds, when two horses came thundering around the corner, completely destroying the relaxing experience. Nothing could more clearly reinforce the view that horse-riding is a totally inappropriate activity within a national park.

Like a good activist, I wrote a letter of complaint to the National Parks and Wildlife Service. NPWS's response was that horse-riding is allowed on designated tracks in the northern section of Garigal National Park, that environmental damage caused by this activity is well recognised by the Service and the issue of horse-riding in Garigal and Ku-ring-gai Chase N.P. is under review. This issue is examined by Heather Roy in the April 1993 edition of *National Parks Journal*. In an article entitled "Hard Hooves Give Parks a Hard Time", she looks at the problems caused by horses in parks. A telling point is the cost of such activity. Recently the NPWS spent \$68,000 to repair six kilometres of track in Ku-ring-gai Chase. The Service itself estimates that for every kilometre of horse trail in the Chase it receives \$400 in permit fees, but spends \$4000 in maintenance. Given the financial crisis facing the NPWS and the fact that horse riders contribute a paltry \$5000 per annum in permit fees, tax-payers are, in effect, subsidising the destruction of the parks.

The National Parks association is calling on us to show our concern by writing to the Minister for the Environment (N.S.W.) and the NPWS.

Meetings are held at the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street,
(near the corner of Letitia Street), Oatley.

Visitors and children are welcome to attend all meetings and field days.

Please make yourself known as you come in

It is intended that meetings commence promptly at 7.45 pm

COMING EVENTS

June 28 (Monday) A look at the **UPPER GEORGES RIVER**. Sharyn Cullis, educator, environmental activist and member of the Georges River Catchment Management Committee will detail the problems facing the upper reaches of the river and how they affect the water quality of the whole river. The source of the river is in Water Board and Army land east of Campbelltown. There the water is clear and drinkable; steep-sided and spectacular gorges protect the river and are the habitat for many rare and uncommon plant species. Many Aboriginal cave paintings and rock engravings occur in the area. See slides of this beautiful and little-known part of Sydney and hear what is currently threatening its environmental values.

July 3 (Saturday). **FIELD DAY**. A walk along the shoreline of Sydney Harbour . **THE HERMITAGE RESERVE and NIELSEN PARK**. This walk of about 4 km is by track through part of Sydney Harbour National Park and combines beautiful scenery with historical interest. There are stunning views across to the City and the Harbour Bridge. We will be taking it easy and exploring the small beaches and headlands along the way. At the end, it is intended that we inspect Vacluse House (entry fee is \$5.00 , \$3.00 concession). Catch train from Oatley 8.36 am or Hurstville at 8.43 am (meet in second carriage from the front). Change at Town Hall for Circular Quay where we get bus 324 or 325 to the Sacred Heart Convent, Rose Bay. (Anyone travelling by car should meet us outside the Convent about 10.00am). Leader: Alan Fairley, tel. 570 8332.

***Please note that this field day is different from that printed in the 1993 Programme.

July 10 (Saturday). Gungah Bay Reserve Bush Regeneration. Work continues on this West Oatley bushland. OFF has been helping the National Trust team so come along and lend a hand for a couple of hours. Meet at 9.30 am in the car park behind the Bowling Club just west of the railway station.

T.E.C. ONE DAY WALKS

The Total Environment Centre runs monthly walks and tours as a means of raising funds for its campaigns and administration costs. The next walk is on Wednesday, 30 June and will explore the interior and exterior of Sydney University. Meet at 10.30am at the University Clock Tower. Cost is \$25 and bookings should be made in advance to the T.E.C.. Tel. 247 4714.

LOCAL NEWS

Kogarah Council has produced a report on the impact of cats on native wildlife. The Council has resolved to embark on a cat education programme that brings to the attention of cat owners problems to natural wildlife that can be caused by free roaming cats. It has also set aside \$2000 for the

preparation and distribution of a pamphlet informing cat owners of their responsibilities.

(Yet another reminder of the effect of cats on our wildlife is in an article *CATastrophe* published in May 1993 edition of *Habitat*).

A more cryptic resolution of Kogarah Council is that "Council include a worm factory as part of its waste minimisation program" and that "Council promote and sell the worm factory to the residents of the Municipality in conjunction with composting campaigns with the objective of reducing the overall amount of waste going to landfill".

Hurstville Council has responded to our enquiry regarding the use of rainforest timbers by informing us that "it is Council's current policy to use only timber guaranteed not to originate from rainforest or old growth forest sources".

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O.F.F. NEWS



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July/August, 1993

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PROTECTING THE GEORGES RIVER

At our last meeting night, Sharyn Cullis spoke about the problems facing the Georges River, especially in its upper catchment. Sharyn is an ex-geography teacher and is currently setting up a Field Studies Centre at Chipping Norton Lakes, one of the most degraded sections of the river. She is also a member of the Georges River Total Catchment Management Committee, which co-ordinates policies of the various bodies associated with the river and encourages community participation. This Committee has a membership of 6 State Government representatives (such as the Water Board, EPA), 4 from Local Government, commercial interests and only 1 Green interest, so it is often difficult to get positive action.

Water quality Numerous discharges affect the quality of the river's water. There are 27 licensed water dischargers. These include 8 Municipal swimming pools, 3 sand mines, 3 coal mines and 2 Army sewerage treatment works. In wet weather sewerage overflows from treatment pipes; there are 454 such points in the total catchment. Urban run-off is also a major problem. Litter, fine sediments, nutrients from gardens, micro-organisms, oils and heavy metals are all washed into the river. Prospect and Cabramatta Creeks each add massive pollutant load and 80% of this is attributable to urban run-off.

Sharyn pointed out that the water quality of the major tributaries of O'Hares and Stokes Creeks was very good but the middle reaches of the main stream have major problems. New urban developments at Appin, Macarthur and upper Cabramatta Creek are causing increased turbidity. 23,000 new residences are being built at Hoxton Park within the catchment.

The middle reaches of the river have urban and industrial development on clay floodplains. In response to flooding, Local Councils, such as Fairfield, have developed engineering "answers" - concrete banks and walls, clearing of natural vegetation to allow swifter drainage and the piping of natural wetlands which would normally help absorb some of the water and slow down its flow.

Some examples of bad practices Fairfield Council

Instead of maintaining and regenerating streamside vegetation along creeks like Orphan School and Prospect Creeks, understorey vegetation has been completely eradicated. Wildlife habitats have been completely destroyed and replaced by grassed areas that require continued council expenditure on mowing. The value of vegetation in storing and slowing floodwaters has also been ignored. Allowing floodwater to move with unimpeded velocity has disastrous downstream consequences in terms of exacerbating bank erosion, increased flooding and turbidity. The folly of channel clearing and bank earthworks is clearly demonstrated at Canley Vale High School where, following such action, the creek bank is eroding more rapidly, threatening both student safety and a stand of the endangered Blue Box tree.

Wollondilly Council

Poor drainage design in the urban subdivision in Kennedy Grove, Appin, has resulted in the removal of top soil and a resultant siltation of the river. Weeds from the drains are also colonising the river bank. The water quality of the river near the Appin Bridge is often thoroughly disgusting with a mixture of oil and coal dust forming a thick ooze.

Sand extraction, Hollywood Park

The Public Works Department administer this area as part of the Chipping Norton Lakes Authority. Concerns have been expressed about the inadequate five metre buffer zone between the extraction site and the adjacent waterway. Estuary Management guidelines assert that buffer zones should be an adequate width to protect "ecologically sensitive areas, especially wetlands". The Fisheries Department insists on 30 metre buffers to protect mangroves.

Hurstville Council

Hurstville Council has no policy to prevent or control contaminated water from flowing into stormwater drains. Thus, contractors cutting pavers simply wash their waste water, thick with sediment, straight into the drains and eventually into the Georges River.

Meetings are held at the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street,
(near the corner of Letitia Street), Oatley.

Visitors and children are welcome to attend all meetings and field days.

Please make yourself known as you come in

It is intended that meetings commence promptly at 7.45 pm

COMING EVENTS

July 26 (Monday) An environmental and historical look at the city of Venice, Italy. Dr Albani will present a talk on **The Lagoon of Venice**. An examination of the changes that have occurred because of this city's unique setting, its present problems and what the changes might mean for the future.

July 31 (Saturday). FIELD DAY. Walk in the Lower Blue Mountains. **Blue Gum Swamp and Grose Mountain**. A distance of about 17 km, all on fire trails or tracks, but with some steep grades. Excellent views along the Grose Valley. No public transport. Turn off the Great Western Highway at Springwood and follow Hawkesbury Road to Winnalee. Turn off into White Cross Road which ends in a cul-de-sac adjoining the National Park. Park in White Cross Road rather than the Park for security reasons. Meet at 8.50am for a 9.00am start. The walk will take 5-6 hours. Contact: Lesley Cox, 579 3782.

T.E.C. ONE DAY WALKS

The Total Environment Centre runs monthly walks and tours as a means of raising funds for its campaigns and administration costs. The next walk is on Sunday, 25 July, and will explore Marsden and Macarthur country around Parramatta. Meet at 10.00am at Hambleton Cottage, 63 Hassall St., Parramatta. Cost is \$25 and bookings should be made in advance to the T.E.C.. Tel. 247 4714.

ADVANCE NOTICE

Here are three important dates for O.F.F. members to note in their diaries:

** 28 August Bus trip to Mt Annan Botanic Gardens.

** 16 October Annual Lions Club Market Day in Oatley at which OFF has a stall.

** 30-31 October Camping weekend, this year at Green Patch, Jervis Bay.

JULY WALK

Twenty four people enjoyed the last walk along the Sydney Harbour foreshore, Nielsen Park and the inspection of Vacluse House (and its kiosk). The only sour note was the enormous amount of rubbish to be seen washed up on the beaches of the little bays we passed.

NEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT

Conservationists have been pleasantly surprised to find a strong environmental flavour in the new Local Government Act 1993. The requirement for councils "to have regard to the protection of the environment in carrying out their responsibilities" is the result mainly of the Independent M.P. Peter Mc Donald who insisted on its addition during the drafting of the Bill.

The Act requires all councils to prepare an annual management plan which, as well as outlining capital works to be carried out and services provided, must include particulars of "activities to protect environmentally sensitive areas and to promote the ecological sustainability of the area undertaken by the council."

An Annual Report is also to be produced giving particulars of the state of the environment in the area, including unique landscape and vegetation, polluted areas, waste management policies, environmental restoration projects and development proposals likely to affect sensitive land.

There is strong opposition to the Act from some councils and already Kogarah Council has protested to the local M.P.s that the Act "will place a financial burden on Council and direct resources away from other environmental issues".

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O.F.F. NEWS

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August/September, 1993



Price 10 cents

RIVER IN CRISIS

In the last edition of *O.O.F. News* we reported some of the problems facing the Georges River. However, newspaper reports seem to indicate that the Hawkesbury-Nepean Rivers are facing a more immediate crisis. A Water Board study indicates that users of those rivers are four times more likely to get throat infections, diarrhoea and other gastro-intestinal illnesses.

Urban run-off is probably the greatest threat to the quality of the river systems around Sydney. In the Hawkesbury-Nepean system, there is run-off from farms, fertilisers and urban run-off combined with the effluent from over 60 sewerage treatment works and raw sewage from ferries and pleasure craft. These nutrients overload the river and cause a growth of algae that can poison the water and destroy the food chain and aquatic life. Algal blooms have already occurred from Camden to Gunderman - more than two thirds of the river.

Urban growth. The bulk of Sydney's growth is planned in the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment area. About 350,000 new dwellings are proposed by the Department of Planning for the catchment. A city the size of Bathurst is currently under construction at Glenmore Park, adjoining Mulgoa Valley Nature Reserve. Sediment, heavy metals, detergents, oils, pesticides and surface run-off all enter the creeks and river systems from this urban development.

Waste disposal. Numerous rubbish tips lie within the catchment. Evidence is emerging that the toxic waste depot at Castlereagh has leaked. Nearby, a 290 hectare site has been chosen to dispose of 23 million cubic metres of waste over 25 years on bushland susceptible to flooding. These depots are a threat to the river's biological and recreational resources.

Extractive industries. Extraction and dredging in the river causes banks to collapse and releases silt into the river. The result is loss of fish habitats. Coal mines in the Upper Grose and Cox's Rivers have resulted in them being contaminated with heavy metals

Weed infestation. Over 50 km of river banks are losing or have lost their tree cover and are eroding and collapsing. In its place are spreading infestations of blackberry, lantana, castor oil plant, fireweed and other exotics. Widespread spraying with herbicides has failed to stop their spread and adds a further toxic load to the river.

River craft. Large cruisers and speedboats are helping to cause bank erosion with their bow wash. Some section of the river need strict controls over boat speed and types of craft allowed. The river also receives raw sewage from many of these craft due to the short supply of pump-out facilities along the river.

CURRACURRONG MARINE ZONE

The Southern Sydney Branch of the National Parks Association have produced a pamphlet outlining their proposals for a Curracurrong Marine and Estuarine Protected Area. The proposal is for a Marine Park covering the off-shore area from Port Hacking south to Bald Hill (Stanwell Park) and a Marine Recreation Area for most of Port Hacking.

Details can be obtained from the N.P.A. Project Officer (Tel. 570 1813 between 7.30pm and 9.30pm) or by writing to : N.P.A., P.O. Box 67, Oatley.2223.

If you support this proposal, you are urged to write to the two local M.P.s, Ron Phillips (Miranda) and Malcolm Kerr (Cronulla).

NORWEGIAN WHALING

Greenpeace is appealing to all conservationists to join in an international boycott of Norwegian products in a concerted effort to stop the killing of Minke Whales. Norway is defying the 1986 ban on commercial whaling. Greenpeace is asking us not to buy these Norwegian products : tinned sardines, frozen salmon, tinned herrings or kippers, fish fillets, frozen fish or smoked salmon. Further information about the campaign can be obtained from Greenpeace by phoning 008 815 151.

Meetings are held at the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street,
(near the corner of Letitia Street), Oatley.

Visitors and children are welcome to attend all meetings and field days.

Please make yourself known as you come in

It is intended that meetings commence promptly at 7.45 pm

COMING EVENTS

August 23 (Monday) SPRING BUSH FLOWERS Our annual celebration of the coming of Spring. Discounted native plants from Altra Nursery. Test your knowledge on our plant quiz. See slides of local bushland plants and learn how to identify them. An audio-visual presentation by Graham Quint. Lyn Whiley will briefly outline National Trust's role in urban bushland. A few rare and endangered seedlings for sale. **Bring a friend and bring some money.** Val Boyan will also have her bric-a-brac for sale. An interesting and a fun evening.

August 26 (Thursday). SPRING WILDFLOWER WALK . A follow-up to our meeting night. Jenny Quint will lead a walk through bushland at Evatt Park, Lugarno. Planned for 2hrs 30min; stay for lunch if you can. Meet at 10.00 am at the entrance to the Rainforest Walking Track at the rear of the ponds, Evatt Park. Jenny will be looking at rainforest and wildflowers on this delightful foreshore walk. Ring Jenny on 534 3239 at 8.00am if the weather is doubtful.

***Note: This walk is additional to the published programme.

August 28 (Saturday). FIELD DAY. Bus trip to Mt Annan Botanic Gardens. Beautiful Spring flower displays. See the Terraced Garden, the Proteaceae collection and the Wattle Garden. Bus departs Oatley Station (east side) at 9.15 am. Return by 3.30 pm. Cost: \$10.00. Be early with names and money. If possible, ring and book with Val Argall on 579 1874 or Val Douglas on 580 7783 and pay at the next meeting night.

September 11 (Saturday) Next working party at Gungah Bay Reserve. Meet 9.30 am in the car park behind the Bowling Club just west of Oatley Station. Bring gloves, morning tea and lunch.

T.E.C. ONE DAY WALKS

The Total Environment Centre runs monthly walks and tours as a means of raising funds for its campaigns and administration costs. The next walk is on Sunday, 29 August and will explore Walter Burley Griffin territory at Castlecrag. Cost is \$25 and bookings should be made in advance to the T.E.C. Tel. 247 4714.

ANNUAL CAMP IMPORTANT NOTICE

This year's camping weekend will be held at Green Patch on Jervis Bay on the 30th and 31st October. We must book the sites well in advance. If you intend coming, please inform Val Argall on 579 1874 soon.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

An excellent audience filled the hall for Dr Albani's presentation of **The lagoons of Venice. In his inimitable style, Dr Albani educated and entertained as he outlined the history of Venice and the environmental problems it now faces.

**Twenty seven people braved the winter weather to attend our last field day in the Lower Blue Mountains. Reports indicated that it was a great success.

A NOTE FROM THE USA

Amount of land in the U.S. that has been deforested for livestock production : 220 million acres.

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O.F.F. NEWS

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STARCKE WILDERNESS

To most Australians, Cape York is a wild, remote paradise...coral reefs, lush rainforest, sparkling lagoons, and miles of deserted coastline. Yet this rugged, wild country is in danger of being trampled to death. Large numbers of tourist developers, eager to cash in on the unique richness of this area, are gearing up for a massive assault.

The Starcke Wilderness which lies between the Normanby River and the Coral Sea, is a region of deep sandstone gorges, freshwater wet-lands and lush mangroves, and is home to a rich array of animal and bird life. Golden Shouldered Parrots, rare and endangered, have been sighted in Starcke's woodlands and wetlands. Off the coast, Australia's largest community of dugongs graze off extensive seagrass pastures.

The Starcke Wilderness area, originally purchased from the Bjelke Petersen government for as little as \$30,000, is now threatened by the proposed development of a 'frontier style' hunting, fishing and shooting resort.

With a 50 miles Pacific Ocean frontage to the Great Barrier Reef, (60,000 acres coastal freehold land plus 400,000 acres of 40-year government leases) the area was recently advertised in the Wall Street Journal for \$18 million by George Quaid Holdings (notorious for the devastation of the Daintree rainforest).

The Wilderness Society believes that the Queensland government should buy back the land and return it to its original custodians, the Guuguu-Yimithirr people.

Although displaced by gold miners in the 1800's, and relocated at the Hopevale mission, the Guuguu-Yimithirr have continued to visit Starcke and care for their country.

The Wilderness Society in Cairns has been working with the Guuguu-Yimithirr to help protect Starcke. Media exposure has helped focus public attention on the issue. However urgent action is needed to prevent the sale to developers from going ahead.

What you can do!

Write to: The Premier of Queensland, Mr Wayne Goss, Queensland State Parliament, Brisbane. 4000

The Prime Minister, Hon Paul Keating, MP and the Minister for the Environment, Sport and Territories, Ms Ros Kelly, Canberra. 2600

AUSTRALIA RATIFIES CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY - 18/6/93

Ros Kelly, Min for the Environment, Sport and Territories, "through implementation of the Convention all countries can come together in an effective partnership to halt the global loss of biological diversity. Australia has a special role to play in protecting global biodiversity as we are one of approximately 12 countries containing almost 70% of the world's species." Senator Gareth Evans, "It is in our economic and environment interests to take strong and decisive action under the Convention to maximise the benefits to be gained from a healthy environment and ecologically sustainable development".

**Meetings are held at the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street,
(near the corner of Letitia Street), Oatley.**

Visitors and children are welcome to attend all meetings and field days.

Please make yourself known as you come in

It is intended that meetings commence promptly at 7.45 pm

COMING EVENTS

September 23 (Thursday) GIRRAHWEEN PARK, WOLLI CREEK. Spring walk.

Meet 10 am at corner of View Street and Sutton Avenue, Earlwood. Short, easy walk along track to Nanny Goat Hill, Turrella, looking at bush regeneration, wildflowers and birds. Bring lunch. Contact: Jenny Quint, 534 3239.

September 25 (Saturday) FIELD DAY. Spring tour of Georges River bushland reserves. Meet at 9.30 am at Riverwood Park (William Road). Tour will proceed to Adam Street reserve Lugarno, Lugarno Parade Reserve; then to Oatley, Lime Kiln Bay Reserve, Yarran Road Reserve, and finally Gungah Bay Reserve where it is intended to have lunch. Members of the National Trust regeneration teams will be tour guides. Contact: Jenny Quint, 534 3239.

September 27 (Monday) HURSTVILLE COUNCIL AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Chris Little, City Engineer, Hurstville City Council, will talk about the Council's policies, plans and actions regarding environmental issues. Come along and hear about local concerns and achievements.

October 9 (Saturday). Next working party at Gungah Bay Reserve. Meet 9.30 am in the car park behind the Bowling Club just west of Oatley Station. Bring gloves, morning tea and lunch.

SMIGGIN HOLES

Win and Norm Tonkin's chalet at Smiggin Holes will be available for us again early next year. Come and enjoy a week or a fortnight walking in the Snowy region. Dates: 22 to 29 January; 29 January to 5 February 1994 inclusive. Ring Keith Underwood (570 1149) for bookings and details.

T.E.C. ONE DAY WALKS

To raise funds the Total Environment Centre runs monthly walks and tours. **Birds and Breakfast in the Botanic Gardens** is their next outing on Sunday 26 September, meeting at 7 am. Cost is \$20 and bookings should be made in advance to the T.E.C. Tel. 247 4714.

1994 AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL PARKS POCKET DIARY

Just arrived!! Now available at meeting. Ideal for sending overseas. Just \$9.00.

ANNUAL CAMP - IMPORTANT

Camping weekend will be at Green Patch on Jervis Bay on 30 and 31 October. Sites must be booked in advance. Please contact Val Argall on 579 1874 soon if you are coming.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

91 people enjoyed the **Spring Bush Flowers evening and enthused over specimens, slides and the amazing transformations shown in local parks and schools.

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GEORGES RIVER COALITION

At our June meeting, Sharon Cullis told us of some of the problems facing the Georges River. She urged that groups interested in the river form a coalition such as exists for the Hawkesbury and Nepean Rivers. The high degree of media attention and Government funding for the Hawkesbury-Nepean system can be directly attributed to the Coalition of Hawkesbury and Nepean Groups for the Environment or CHANGE. (It certainly helps to have a catchy acronym. How about Georges River Environment Action Team - that would be GREAT!!).

As a consequence of interest expressed by environmental groups along the Georges River, a meeting has been called to discuss the formation of a combined group. Initially this coalition would help individual groups keep in touch with catchment issues and, where appropriate, lend support.

The meeting has been organised for Saturday 30 October at 10.30am at the Chipping Norton Field Studies Centre. Unfortunately, this date clashes with our Annual Camping Weekend, but at least one of the committee members will represent O.F.F. If any OFF member is interested in attending, please ring Alan Fairley on 570 8332. Dr David Hughes, founder of CHANGE, and Nick Chapman, Secretary of the Georges River Catchment Management Committee, will address the meeting.

The Georges River has one of the most densely populated catchment areas in the country, and, as we all know, it faces many pressures. Urban development continues to encroach on rural and natural areas on the edges of the catchment and new sand mining developments have recently been approved along the river. These issues have major consequences for the people who live within the catchment. Our Society welcomes the formation of an active coalition of interested groups which can monitor what is happening along the river and have a say in the changes which are occurring. What happens upstream is going to have a real impact on our way of life.

CONSERVATION IN THE U.S.A.

On our recent holiday in the United States, a few impressions were gained about conservation and national parks which contrasted with what is occurring here in Australia. First, there seems to be a greater awareness of the conservation ethic amongst the public. Supermarkets ask "plastic or paper bag" at the check-outs; paper bags have recycling or conservation messages on them; there are often containers to recycle paper and aluminium cans outside shops. And the road-sides are kept clean by a system where a company, group or individual adopts a 2 mile stretch of road for which they are responsible for keeping clean and a road sign publicises who has adopted that stretch of road.

On the other hand, the forests of Oregon are still being heavily logged and the hunting ethic is still strong. Even species such as black bear, elk and alligator are shot in the open season and vast areas of forest and game reserves are set aside for shooting. The concept of animals being for sport is reinforced in some States where the road signs say "Game Crossing". The legal and illegal shooting of everything that moves is a blow to the tourist industry as you hardly ever see wild animals outside of national parks. One boat operator of a swamp tour in the Louisiana bayou lamented to us that his two "tame" alligators that he took people to see had recently been shot at night by hunters after their heads for sale in New Orleans.

National Parks are heavily visited, putting great pressure on them. Camping grounds are often full and visitors are turned away. You must have a permit and planned route for all wilderness walking. To prevent pollution and excessive car use at major centres like Yosemite and Grand Canyon, free park buses take visitors from one point to another. Hotel and restaurant concessions are allowed in national parks which down-grades their natural values. Horse riding is also allowed in most parks. The widespread use of huge recreational vehicles (RVs) means that roads have to be wide and camp grounds large.

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(near the corner of Letitia Street), Oatley.

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Please make yourself known as you come in

It is intended that meetings commence promptly at 7.45 pm

COMING EVENTS

October 25 (Monday). EXPEDITION TO COOPERS CREEK. A combination of history and the fascination of the Australian outback. A talk by historian and Burke and Wills expert, Richard Quilty, who has led a number of trips tracing the route of these tragic explorers. Something different!! A night to bring along your friends to introduce them to the Society.

October 28 (Thursday). MID-WEEK WALK. Jenny Quint leads another of her popular local bushland rambles. Gannons Park to Lugarno. See the newly-constructed Heritage Gardens, walk beside Boggywell Creek and end your walk at the historic Heinrich Steps and old wharf overlooking Oatley Park. An easy walk, one way or return. Some cars will be left at the end to convey walkers back to the start. Meet at 10 am at the Heritage Gardens, Boatwright Avenue, Gannons Park. Ring Jenny on 534 3239 at 8 am if the weather is doubtful.

October 30 and 31 CAMPING WEEKEND. The Society visits Green Patch on Jervis Bay, a beautiful area with plenty of good walking or just relaxing and looking at the coastal scenery and wildlife. Good swimming. As we must book all sites in advance, please inform Val Argall if you intend going. Telephone Val on 579 1874 for bookings and further details or see Val at the next meeting night.

ENDANGERED SPECIES LEGISLATION

It's not surprising if you are confused about the status of Endangered Species legislation. The State Government introduced a Bill called **'Endangered and Other Threatened Species Conservation Bill'**. This was unsatisfactory to many scientists and conservationists, so an alternative Bill, called the **Threatened Species Conservation Bill**, was introduced by Independent MP, Dr Peter Macdonald. In addition, the Commonwealth's **Endangered Species Protection Act** came into force in April 30 this year. This Act covers only Commonwealth lands and waters, not States. Both pieces of NSW legislation has been delayed by the NSW Parliament. A Legislative Committee has been established to examine the Government's Bill, the Labor Party's amendments to that Bill and Macdonald's alternative Bill. This Committee is to report back to Parliament in March 1994. Meanwhile, Parliament has extended the life of the existing **Endangered Fauna (Interim Protection) Act** by another two years. This Act does not protect fish, invertebrates or plants.

The need for comprehensive species legislation along the lines of the Macdonald Bill remains urgent. You could help by writing to the Hon John Fahey, Premier, and Bob Carr, Leader of the Opposition, c/- Parliament House, Sydney 2000 to express your disappointment that Threatened Species legislation has been deferred yet again.

More details on the battle for effective threatened species legislation can be found in *Threatened Species Alert*, a newsletter available at our meeting.

SMIGGIN HOLES

A reminder. Bookings for the week or fortnight walking in the Snowy Mts region are available. Dates: 22 to 29 January; 29 January to 5 February 1994 inclusive. Ring Keith Underwood on 570 1149 for bookings and details.

OUR ENVIRONMENT, OUR FUTURE

The NSW Government has produced a statement in book form setting out its policies and priorities for the environment. It is available for loan at our meeting night.

Hon President : Graham Quint, 16 Evans Street, Peakhurst 2210 534 3239

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GEORGES RIVER COALITION

Continuing concerns about development in the catchment, pollution, sand mining, toxic leeching into the waterways and inadequate bushland protection, brought numerous groups together on Saturday, 30 October, to discuss the establishment of a coalition to protect the river. It was felt that there was a desperate need for a strong voice to express those concerns, to monitor new developments, to lobby politicians, local councils and bureaucrats and to press for an overall plan for the whole river to replace the piecemeal approach which is evident at present.

The meeting was held at the Chipping Norton Field Studies Centre, where Oatley resident and past speaker at our meeting, Sharyn Cullis, is teacher-in-charge. Present were 24 people, representatives of such organisations as Georges River Catchment Management Committee, S.G.A.P., Liverpool Council, National Parks Association, Bankstown Bushland Society, Lugarno Progress Assoc, Liverpool Environment Committee, Botany Bay Protection Society and concerned local residents. Oatley Flora and Fauna was represented by Alan Fairley. Bob Wilson, former head of the Water Board and now consultant on the river to Liverpool Council, set the mood of the meeting with his concerns about the inaction and incompetence of politicians on issues affecting the river, the lack of monitoring of new developments and the need for a total view of the river's catchment.

The outcome of the meeting was very positive, with most people agreeing that a coalition of interested groups was needed. At a future meeting a steering committee will be set up to consider the details, such as executive structure, meeting frequency and funding. It is proposed to have a big launch of the coalition some time in mid February.

DUAL OCCUPANCY: CURE OR CANCER?

In an article in *The Hunter's Hill Trust Journal* (Oct.'93), a former Mayor of Hunter's Hill, Ross Williams, has described the trend to dual occupancy as "the urban cancer of the 1990s". He says that a threat to our urban environment and lifestyle looms on the

horizon as dual occupancy gathers momentum and will continue to do so as the full impact of new legislative changes take effect. Originally conceived as a means of enabling families to provide accommodation for relatives to enhance the extended family, the concept has become a "defacto subdivision of allotments with little opportunity for local input or control".

The intrusion of additional buildings into a neighbourhood causes much concern. These developments are not "granny flats", but three and four bedroom houses being erected in suburban backyards-backyards that up to now formed the breathing space desperately needed in our city and provided suburbs with much of their character. Such urban consolidation (= more dwellings on existing blocks) gives rise to other issues, such as lack of privacy, clearing of mature trees, increased traffic, storm water problems and the provision of community services.

Meetings of local residents, such as one of 700 people recently at Willoughby, are calling on the State Government to suspend its dual occupancy programme and to restore to local government the planning powers which were overridden by the dual occupancy legislation.

The full article by Ross Williams will be available for loan at our next meeting.

DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS

The environment is under attack from all sides. It is not just the large and obvious developments which are causing the problems, but thousands of small projects which, of themselves are relatively minor in an overall setting, but together are just as surely destroying our natural heritage. Consider a few recent proposals: a marina near Killalea Lagoon at Shellharbour, destruction of frog habitat at Greenacre, housing on bushland at Dundas, a township for 14000 people at Fern Bay, Port Stephens, development of urban bushland at Old Toongabbie and medium density housing on rare banksia scrub at Chifley.

The words of the poet, T.S.Eliot, seem even more prophetic today: "this is the way the world ends,

Not with a bang, but a whimper".

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COMING EVENTS

November 22 (Monday). A SAFARI INTO BUNGLE BUNGLE COUNTRY At this last meeting for the year, OFF member John Clark will take us on an arm-chair adventure through this wonderful area of northern Western Australia. A great way to end the Society's year.

Following the slides and talk there will be a get-together and social supper.. Please bring along some festive fare, such as cake, biscuits, sandwiches, nuts, fruit or sweets to make the night a memorable one.

THERE WILL BE NO MEETING OR FIELD DAY IN DECEMBER OR JANUARY. THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON FEBRUARY 7, 1994.

WEEKEND CAMPOUT at Green Patch, Jervis Bay, 30-31 October. Over 40 OFF members and friends delighted in the vividness of sea, sky and sand and the impressive scenery of Jervis Bay which so far is unspoiled by major development such as the once-proposed nuclear reactor and the more recent proposal to re-site the explosive depot from Sydney Harbour.

The Merri Beach walk on Saturday included views of Bowen Island, cliffs and heathland and was followed on Sunday by a walk to St George Head from Summercloud Bay. Glimpses of crystal-clear secluded beaches, complemented by panoramas of coastal scenery south to Ulladulla and Pigeonhouse Mt, inspired a dip to complete the day. As always, the variety of birds at Green Patch never fails to amaze.

(Val Argall)

A belated but sincere thanks to Val Argall who kindly volunteered to produce *OFF News* No 93/9 while I was away on holidays..Ed.

1994 DIARIES. Next meeting will be your last chance to purchase your National Parks Diary. An excellent Christmas present; it slips easily into a post bag. Just 4 left at \$9.00 each.

SYDNEY'S BEST BUSHLAND WALKS. A number of people missed out on obtaining a copy of Alan Fairley's new book at the last meeting. New supplies have arrived and will be available at the next meeting. Cost : \$12.00 (reduced from \$14.95).

SMIGGIN HOLES

There are still vacancies for the first week (22 to 29 January). Ring Keith Underwood on 570 1149 for bookings and details.

MEMBERS ACTIVITIES. 1993 has been another strong year for the Society with members being very involved in meeting nights and outdoor activities. The weekend camp was a good indication of this, as was the 100 plus people who attended the Burke and Wills night. One disappointment was the relatively few people (only 40) who came to hear the Hurstville City Council Engineer, Chris Little, talk about important local issues. Jenny Quint reports a pleasing demand for her weekday rambles. The 1994 programme now being prepared promises to be another fine mix of entertainment and information, with strong environmental themes. Anyone who wishes to become more involved in the Society, in planning these activities or in its conservation action, might consider standing for election at the A.G.M. Contact Keith Underwood on 570 1149 if you are interested.

BANKSTOWN BUSHLAND SOCIETY. OFF members would be welcome at two activities being organised by the Bankstown Bushland Society. The first is a short walk along the Salt Pan Creek Boardwalk on Sunday 21 November. Meet at 11.00 am at the bottom of Alma Road, Padstow. The second is an end of the year picnic at Monash Reserve, Henry Lawson Drive, East Hills on Sunday, 5 December from 11.00 am onwards. Phone 773 5649 for more details.

MOORE RESERVE. Kogarah Council's consultants have prepared Stage 2 of a report to enable the preparation of a Plan of Management for Moore Reserve. OFF has kept a close watch on this process and a number of members have made comments on the proposals.

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