



O.F.F. NEWS



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

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Issue: 2001/01

January/February 2001

SOCIETY NEWS

Greetings to all our members. Welcome to 2001 and what promises to be an interesting and eventful year. We hope you enjoy our excellent monthly meeting/information nights and become involved in as many walks and outings as possible. A lot of effort has gone into the 2001 programme to provide variety, interest, education and enjoyment. Why not make a New Years resolution to introduce at least one other family to the Society? Similar walks and talks cost \$10 or more in other organizations – with OFF they are absolutely free.

*** Robin Dickson advises that there are two rooms vacant at Smiggin Holes Chalet for the OFF holiday between 10th-17th February. Costs for 5 nights are \$181.50 per person. Ring Robin on 9580 5663 for details.

*** Annual Subscriptions are now due. **Please note that fees for 2001 are \$16.** Some people are sending in \$12, unaware of the increase approved at the meeting in November. The 2001 Programme will be available at the February meeting.

*** Have you been to Poulton Park lately and walked the new mangrove boardwalk? What about inspecting the continuing work at Lime Kiln Bay or at Moore Reserve? OFF has been closely involved in obtaining the grants for these projects, so pop down and see how they are developing.

The Good News

It is pleasing to note that Sydney's beaches have actually improved their water quality over the past 10 years. This is mainly due to the construction of the deep ocean outfalls. Storm run-off, however, is still a major problem.

A male and female koala cub have been born to the monitored koala population at Wedderburn, thus increasing the small numbers of the area.

The Bad News

The Georges River continues to be under threat. It simply can't cope with increased urban growth and urban consolidation. Up to 96% of the faecal coliforms in the river come from sewer overflows and urban stormwater runoff is having an increasing impact.

A Healthy Rivers Commissioner report of 6th November recommended that the remaining natural lands in the catchment should be afforded the highest protection, and that upland swamps should be transferred to NPWS. River corridors must be managed to retain or restore native vegetation.

Comments from Hon. Treasurer on the state of OFF finances (see Financial Report on page 2)

The Society's funds as at 31-12-2000 were **\$4179.89** (which included Presidents Fund of \$1245.79 – used exclusively for donations). After deducting subscriptions paid in advance of \$292.00, the balance of \$2642.10 represents approximately 1 year's subscriptions at the current membership level of 170 and a subscription rate of \$16.00.

The increase in the subscription rate from \$12 to \$16, approved at the November 2000 General Meeting, was necessary due to increased newsletter postage costs (method change), public liability insurance increase and loss of income due to loss of members.

Over the past 3 years, the Society, in association with Kogarah Council, has applied for and received environmental grants of \$284,980.00, mainly Federal Government Natural Heritage Grants, for restoration of Georges River estuaries and environs, specifically in Poulton Park, Moore Reserve and Shipwright Bay. Payments to date for work done total \$82,500.25, while \$35,424.52 is held in our cheque account and \$172,090.00 in term deposits. Interest earned to date of \$5,328.70, less expenses of \$293.93, has been applied to the projects.

Meetings are held at the **Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street, Oatley.**

(near the corner of Letitia Street)

Please make yourself known as you come in.

It is intended that meetings commence promptly at 7.45 pm.

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

Coming Events

February 5 (Monday). ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. The first meeting for 2001. Hear reports on what OFF has been doing in the past year. Election of committee and your chance to comment on the management and direction of your Society. Perhaps you might even consider joining the committee.

The AGM is usually brief. As usual, it will be followed by **members' slides** and a **light supper**. Bring along those interesting slides of places you have been or of Society activities. Also, please bring a plate of food to contribute to the success of the evening.

March 3 (Saturday). The first outing for the year. **Coastal Illawarra Walk : Wombarra to Thirroul.** About 8 km. Leader : Cliff Crane. More details and meeting time at next meeting or next *OFF News*.

FINANCIAL REPORT OF OATLEY FLORA AND FAUNA CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.

By John Watters, FCPA, Hon. Treasurer

Receipts and Payments : Year ended 31-12-00

<u>Credit balance as at 31-12-99</u>	\$6634.21		
<u>Receipts</u>		Lions Fair (Oatley)	45.00
Subscriptions	1537.00	Administration Exps.	131.14
Donations	155.00	Debits Tax	41.20
Functions/Trips	1640.00	Kogarah Council (Grants)	63866.25
Sales – Books/Plants	86.00	PO Box rental	48.35
Trash/Treasure Stalls	425.00	Annual return/Const.Changes	69.00
Interest	259.35	Printing O.Park Flora	<u>990.00</u>
Term Deposits (Grants)	96332.61		<u>69464.76</u>
Term Deposit (OFF)	<u>2000.00</u>	<u>Credit balance as at 31-12-00</u>	39604.41
	102434.96	<u>Less funds held for Poulton Park/Moore Res.</u>	
	109069.17	(Natural Heritage Grants)	35424.52
		<u>Total funds of Society</u>	<u>\$ 4179.89</u>
<u>Payments</u>			
Donations	650.00 (note 1)	<u>Note 1. Donations.</u>	
Subscriptions	295.55 (note 2)	Colong Found. for Wilderness \$100; Aust. Bush	
Functions/Trips	1443.00	Heritage Fund \$50; Total Env. Centre \$500.	
Newsletter Postage	1110.68	<u>Note 2. Subscriptions</u>	
Programmes	196.00	Georges R. Env. Alliance \$20; Kuringgai Bats	
Uniting Church	240.00	\$30 (2 years); NPA \$58.55; Nature Con. Council	
Public Risk Insurance	338.59	\$154; W'life Pres. Qld \$33.	
		<u>Further comment on Page 1 of this newsletter.</u>	



OFF NEWS

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Issue: 2001/02

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February/ March 2001

Congratulations to all the newly elected committee members, especially those who have joined the committee for the first time. A special welcome to **Cliff Crane**, OFF's new Chairman and a big thanks to outgoing Chairman **John Winters** who decided not to seek re-election but to stand as one of the Vice Chairman. John was Chairman for 5 years and did an excellent job, both behind the scenes and as spokesperson at the meeting nights. For the first time in 29 years, **Harry Whaite** is not one of the committee; meetings will not be the same without his background knowledge and contribution to debate. Harry was Hon Treasurer of the Society for 21 years and Membership Officer for the last 8 years.

A full list of the committee will be on the back of the Programme which will be available when membership fees are paid. And...don't forget, if you have not renewed your membership, annual subscriptions are now due. They are \$16 per family for 2001. Membership lapses on the 31st March.

SOCIETY NEWS

*** OFF has received a Coastcare Grant of \$22,000 on behalf of Kogarah Council for regeneration of native species and community education in Shipwrights Bay Reserve, a narrow reserve running along the bay at Blakehurst west of Tom Uglys Bridge. A narrow walking track starts at the bottom of Castle Street and it is a pleasant walk through the reserve, but it has problems with encroaching gardens and the disposal of garden waste from adjacent houses.

*** A special thanks Jim Gardner, Life Member since 1968, who has sent the Society a generous donation to cover expenses of sending *OFF News*.

*** The developers are at it again!! This time at the bottom of Llewellyn Street, Oatley, within the Foreshore Protection Zone, where it is proposed to divide a block into 3 and to remove a number of large native trees.

OFF has cooperated with Hurstville Council's Bushcare officers to identify areas with problem weeds in Oatley Park. We hope that some funds will be allocated soon and that work on the more badly affected areas will begin soon.

Barrington House trip. 12 rooms have been booked for the trip in September. Details later, but if you are interested, please let Robin Dickson know.

Clean Up Australia Day, Sunday 4th March

This year we will be helping the Poulton Park group clean up the creek and mangrove areas of Poulton Park. Society members are urged to participate in this very practical expression of environmental protection. Meet for registration between 8am and 8.30am at the corner of Moreshead Drive and Kyle Pde. Bring gloves, solid shoes (gumboots?) and some insect repellent.

Sydney's Population Future – a Forum

A forum on the most important issue of Sydney's ideal population and its long term impact on urban development and consolidation is to be held on Sat.3 March at Sutherland Entertainment Centre (8.40am to 5.00pm). Speakers include Bob Walshe of Sutherland Environment Centre, Dr Mary White, Hon Philip Ruddock, Minister for Immigration, and many others experts. Cost is \$38 (\$26 concession), including lunch. Unfortunately it is on the same day as our walk, but it is an interesting alternative for those not going on the walk. For registration and details phone 9528 6091.

LIME KILN BAY UPDATE

The contractors have now finished their onsite work and Hurstville Council has taken over management. Large amounts of weed material have been removed to restore the wetland. Water quality is being improved though the construction of two Gross Pollutant Traps which remove solids and floating rubbish from Waterfall Road stormwater outlet and the Riley Street channel.

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

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It is intended that meetings commence promptly at 7.45 pm.

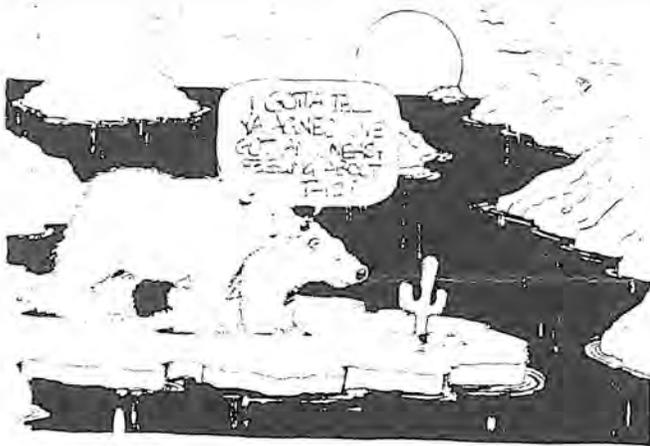
Visitors and children are welcome to attend all meetings and field days.

Coming Events

February 26 (Monday). David Keith, Senior Research Scientist with National Parks and Wildlife Service, will talk on plant ecology, research on plant populations and vegetation mapping. He will be discussing the life and times of Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea*), a group of plants he has been studying for 10 years. He is currently working on several interesting projects including local eucalypts.

March 3 (Saturday). The first outing for the year. **Coastal Illawarra Walk : Wombarra to Thirroul.** About 8 km. Leader : **Cliff Crane.** A leisurely walk all along the coastal rocks and beaches, stopping to look, perhaps a splash in the surf or rock swimming pools. No sheer drops, just a couple of spots that need a little care. Lunch on grassed headland near the Headlands Hotel. There's a bistro/snack bar at the hotel for those who don't want to carry food. The walk is exposed so bring a hat, some block-out and some fluids. Catch train to Wombarra, leaving Hurstville at 9.02 am (Sutherland 9.11 am). Meet in second last carriage. Arrives Wombarra 9.54 am. It is intended to catch the 3.05 pm train from Thirroul, arriving Hurstville at 3.58 pm. If the day dawns a shocker - or if the weather is doubtful - Cliff will leave a recorded message on phone 9580 8488 from 7 am onwards. If the weather beats us on 3rd March, we could try again for the 10th.

March 26 (Monday). Tony Saunders talk on Birds in the Backyard.



Cartoon from *Black 'n White 'n Green*, published by Envirobook, a book of over 100 environmental cartoons. Copies of the book are available from meeting night at the special price of \$5.00 (a reduction from \$15.95).

LOCAL FORESHORE PROTECTION

Kevin Greene (MP for Georges River) has given details in his *Community Report* of the new laws to protect waterfront areas in Oatley, Riverwood,

Lugarno and Peakhurst. This means that from now on a density figure of 500 square metres will be required where two or more dwellings are proposed. This is in contrast to the 315 sq.m. in other areas. A map of the Foreshore Scenic Protection Area is available at the OFF meeting.

It was pleasing to see Kevin Greene at our Annual General Meeting. He was introduced to the meeting and gave a short address to members.

PRIVET NOW A NOXIOUS WEED

Both Large and Small-leaved Privet have been declared noxious within the City of Hurstville by the NSW Agriculture Dept. Privet has long been recognised as a problem for people with respiratory difficulties, especially asthma, and is a major nuisance in our native bushland as the seeds are spread by birds. Public and private landowners must now take action to control this problem plant. To report any privet sightings or to discuss methods of removal, call Julie McInnes (Hurstville Council) on 9330 6228.



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March/April 2001

WALK THE VICTORIAN ALPS IN FEBRUARY 2002.

After 11 years of February walking in the Kosciuszko National Park some 'regulars' feel they would like a change in 2002. A 'temporary booking' has been made for use of the Leeton Alpine Ski Club lodge at Mt. Hotham between Saturday 9th and Monday 18th (inclusive). About twenty people can be accommodated in twin or double bed rooms with hand basin - we share the male and female showering and toilet facilities. The lodge has a prime position, at 5500 feet, with a great outlook over surrounding tree covered mountains. Individual frig and freezer compartments, communal (large, well-appointed) kitchen / dining area, ample lounge. Limited store shopping, coffee shops and bar in village centre. Local walks. Own bed-linen, towels, and food. \$21 per night per person - minimum 5 days. **Need to know firm interest by 25 March to secure booking.** Allocations have to be on a "first come - best dressed basis". **Phone Cliff Crane 9580-3269.**

URBAN CONSOLIDATION AT ITS WORST WHAT IT MEANS FOR A COMMUNITY LIKE OATLEY

The end of Llewellyn Street, Oatley, is a pleasant quiet zone with remnant stands of beautiful old Blackbutt trees providing shade for residents and home for numerous native birds. Long thin blocks of land run down to river frontages and large spreading Angophoras frame the water views. Huge Jacarandas over 100 years old flower brilliantly in spring and can be seen from across the bay. It is still possible to find remnants of the original vegetation in the form of large Native Cherry, Cheese Tree and Persoonia.

But - a typical story unfolds - a prized waterfront, having only a single level fibro and tile home on it, sells for what is reputed to be "well over \$1Million". It becomes known the new owner is a Hurstville Councillor .. apprehension broods as to redevelopment potentiality for lessening local enjoyment of tranquil setting life-style, and loss of trees and bird habitat and loss of habitat and corridor for fauna. Concern is lessened by gazettal of Hurstville Council's Foreshore Scenic Protection amendment (FSP) to Hurstville LEP, trumpeted as a wonderful new restrictive planning control, including requiring a minimum 500 m² of land per dwelling. All relax though when the Councillor seeks approval to establish only a dual occupancy - even that right down the rear of the land toward the waterfront, involving minimal effect on trees and ecology generally. *Virtually unnoticed is that the new FSP code has been used to get a 3-storey and a 2-storey dwelling dual occupancy approved whereas only one 2-storey and one 1-storey would have been permitted under the code provisions otherwise applying!* Generally, not a bad outcome? But then, pretty much before the ink

is dry on that approval, the Councillor/developer now shoots in a D.A. for approval to sub-divide the land into 3 blocks: a (now to become battle-axe) 1010 m² lot at the rear waterfront end where the approved 3-storey/2-storey dual occupancy will be sited, another battle-axe middle block of 550 m², and a 450 m² street fronting block. **O.F.F. objects** as do some 13 nearby owners on a range of grounds, significantly as to ecological/tree preservation/ habitat matters and as to the front block in any case clearly not meeting the FSP 500 m² code requirements. News that Council had approved a unanimous recommendation from the 11 councillor Development Assessment Committee, relayed to the O.F.F. meeting on 26th February evoked disappointment, anger and frustration - sentiments heightened by knowing the developer to be a Councillor .. and even more heightened by the revelation Councillor (and O.F.F. member) Phillip Sansom had moved the motion for approval. The meeting agenda did not allow time for discussion of the "news flash". Phillip - who has been seen as friendly to the environment, and supportive of introduction of the FSP code - has since asked the Society for an opportunity to speak briefly to an O.F.F. meeting to "set the record straight" as to his part in the proceedings. He says the dealings left Council little alternative but to grant approval and that he, Phillip, had been instrumental in having caveats and covenants imposed on title to the lots which he says guarantees the best possible result as to retention of significant trees. O.F.F. Executive in the meantime have seen various reports of Council officers, and terms of the Sansom motion referring to "tree-preserving" caveats and covenants, and will allow Phillip 15 minutes (absolute maximum) at commencement of the 26th March meeting to speak in clarification of his (and Council's) position in approving an initial (generous) dual-occupancy and then almost immediate (generous) subdivision. Phillip's "address" will be strictly confined to significant questions agreed by O.F.F. executive members with Phillip prior to the meeting. Those agreed questions, and a written digest of reports usually given verbally to the monthly meeting, will be in a printed handout to members and guests when they arrive at the meeting. No questions to Phillip from the floor of the meeting can be allowed in the interests of orderly progress of the meeting; we must allow our March guest speaker **Tony Saunders** proper time for presentation of '*Birdscaping Gardens/Birds in Back Yards*' for our benefit and enjoyment... and, talking of **Guests**, Tony's presentation is anticipated to be top-notch, and **you are urged to use the attached invitation to invite another person/people to come along.**

**HAVE YOU PAID YOUR \$16 DUES FOR 2001 YET?
IF NOT WE URGE YOU TO DO SO NOW! WE
WANT YOU AS A MEMBER!!
(BUT PLEASE NOTE OUR CONSTITUTION
REQUIRES RECEIPT OF DUES BY 31 MARCH
ELSE MEMBERSHIP LAPSES)**

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(near the corner of Letitia Street)

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Coming Events

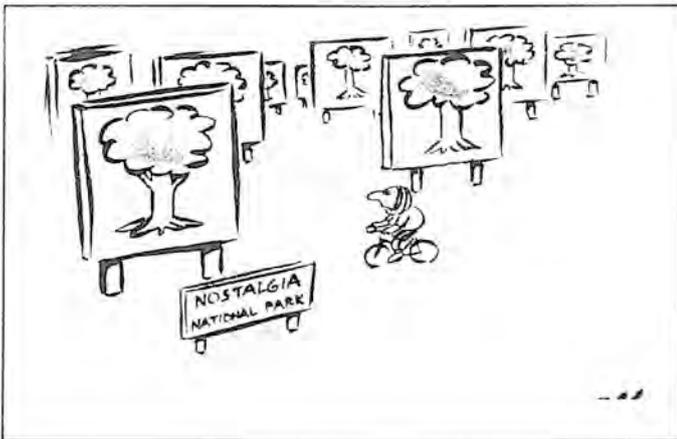
March 26 (Monday). **Tony Saunders**, of the Cumberland Bird Observers, will talk on Birdscaping Gardens. All you need to know about attracting native birds to your backyard. Tony, who lives in Lawson in the Blue Mountains, will share some of his bird watching experiences with us.

March 31 (Saturday). FIELD DAY: Oatley Park and Oatley - Como Walkway. In the morning we walk around Lime Kiln Head and down to Lime Kiln Bay to see the wetland rehabilitation. Later we walk around the other side of Lime Kiln Bay. After lunch we will cross the bridge to Como via the back streets of Oatley and Myles Dunphy Reserve. After coffee (or tea) at the boatshed or in Como Pleasure Grounds we will return to Oatley.

Meet at the main entrance to Oatley Park (at the end of Oatley Park Avenue) at 9.30 a.m.

Leaders - Win Tonkin & Janet Austin - ph. 9579 2375.

April 23 (Monday). **Mike Patrick (NPWS)**. Talk on Christmas Island.



Cartoon from *Black 'n White 'n Green*

REPORT ON SMIGGIN TRIP

The week at Smiggin Holes Chalet was again most enjoyable. Twenty six O.F.F. members took the opportunity to enjoy the bracing air, the good walks and the companionship. Activities were limited for a couple of days by stormy weather, including very heavy rain, but when it cleared everyone got out and did their own thing. There were walks to The Porcupine, Dead Horse Gap, Ramshead, Blue Lake and Main Range Circuit, as well as shorter strolls along Waterfall Track and to Rainbow Lake. Evening get-togethers were followed by slides from all around the world.

CLEAN-UP AUSTRALIA DAY: AN OPINION

“ The assumption that we can clean up our environment once a year is one of the most

misguided ideas government has ever come up with. Year after year the most well-meaning members of the community give up a Sunday to pick up what the most thoughtless members (majority) of the community throw away. It makes government look good, yet government isn't doing anything to stop the rubbish from coming. And unless we keep on pressuring government, this throw-away mentality will go on.”

Frank Miller, in *Environment NSW*, Dec 2000.

BUSHCARE IN HURSTVILLE CITY

Currently there are 11 Volunteer Bushcare Groups with 200 registered volunteers. Sites, such as Evatt Park, Myles Dunphy Reserve and Peakhurst Foreshore are visited weekly or monthly. There is also a Native Nursery Group which collects, cleans, identifies, packages and stores seed from local plants. Over 1000 plants have been propagated for use in reserves. If you want to be involved, ring Julie McInnes on 9330 6228.

- GRIN AND BARE IT!

"It isn't pollution that's harming the environment. It's the impurities in our air and water that are doing it."

- (Former)Vice President Dan Quayle



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MORE ON LLEWELLYN ST. SUB-DIVISION

The OFF Committee has invited Councillor Philip Sansom to put his views in writing regarding this matter as reported in last *OFF News*. Philip has responded with the following (unedited):

"As a member of O.F.F. some comments in the March/April *OFF News* relating to the sub-division at 68 Llewellyn St. Oatley were incorrect and misleading. Imputations regarding my environmental record were distressing. I appreciated the chance to address the March meeting and was encouraged by expressions of support then and afterwards. There are some issues that have clearly been misunderstood.

The Foreshore Scenic Protection Area (FSPA) Local Environment Plan (LEP) amendment which I worked for over three years to introduce applies, amongst other environmental controls, a density control for medium density development. With, say, four villas, you need 2,000 square metres (m²) i.e. one dwelling per 500m². This is not a minimum lot size, but a density control. My efforts in achieving the FSPA has meant over 2000 additional blocks cannot be developed beyond a single house. The sub-division code has different requirements. The 1994 LEP requires a minimum 450m² for the front block and 550m² for any subsequent blocks. The sub-division complied with this (and if the right of way is included the front block is c.504m²) and is consistent with the FSPA density control. The conditions include a covenant to protect 26 trees (with four trees to be removed) and a provision to protect the tree and root zones with pier and beam construction of foundations and footings.

I included these conditions to cover concerns raised by some people, including the O.F.F. submission. The DA was advertised for longer than usual and 14 submissions were considered seriously by both officers and myself. Rejection would have certainly seen it approved, without extra conditions, by the Land and Environment Court costing ratepayers up to \$40,000. I believe this would have been irresponsible, resulting in less environmental controls. I have been an advocate for O.F.F. on many occasions and look forward to working together on environmental issues.
Regards,
Philip Sansom."

We have also written to Hurstville City Council questioning the procedures which allowed sub-divisions to take place with little regard to the environmental impact on the area and its local community. We hope this will bring this unfortunate incident to a close. It certainly highlights the need for a community organisation like OFF which is willing to fight doggedly and without compromise to protect the local environment from poor planning decisions.

REMINDERS

** Cliff Crane wants to know if there is anyone else interested in going to Mt Hotham (Vic) early next year. See him at the next meeting for details.

**About 30 members have not paid their 2001 membership fees. Membership lapsed at 31st March, so if you are one of those who has forgotten, please send your \$16 NOW.

RALPH NEWBOULT – A SAD LOSS

Most members will know that Ralph Newbould died suddenly while on a bushwalk on 8 November 2000. Ralph was an OFF member for 10 years and led numerous walks and made many friends in OFF. He loved the bush and was a strong environmentalist. He completed a bush regeneration course and probably knew more about suburban weeds than anyone in the Society. His knowledge, commitment and friendship will be missed by all who knew him.

NOTES FROM THE PAPERS

"At a time when Australian greenhouse emissions have increased by 17 per cent since 1990 (Australia agreed to increase by only 8 per cent above 1990 levels by 2010), the Federal Government has approved three brand new coal-fired power stations. Yep, that will help reduce our emissions. Nice one." (S.M.H.)

"The ongoing civil war in eastern Congo has brought one of mankind's closest cousins – the eastern lowland gorilla – close to extinction. Until the mid-1990s, the Kahuzi-Biega National Park was one of the largest areas of pristine habitat left in Africa. Then the Hutu militia (responsible for the 1994 Rwandan genocide) took refuge in the area. Many fighters have survived for years in the once uninhabited forests by hunting "bushmeat" – including gorillas and elephants"

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Coming Events

April 23 (Monday). Mike Patrick, Regional Manager, Royal National Park, will talk about **Christmas Island**. Mike was Government Conservator on Christmas Island. His main role was to manage the scientific programmes relating to environment protection on Christmas and Cocos/Keeling Islands. He has some fascinating slides and information on the flora and fauna of these remote islands.

April 28 (Saturday). **FIELD DAY.** Blue Mountains: Lockyer's Road, Mount York area. A selected walk along a road less travelled. About 10 km in typical mountain country (walking staffs recommended). The walk commences at Mt York Memorial Park. Meet at 9.45 am in the car park at the end of Mt York Road. To get there, turn right off the Great Western Highway at the Mobil Service Station into Mt York Road (just beyond Blackheath). About 2 hours drive from Oatley. After a quick "cuppa", we'll proceed down the historic Cox's Road, then cross the flat paddocks to the lower rest area for the lunch break. We'll proceed back to Major Lockyer's Road turn-off and the up-hill return to the car park. A good 6 hour walk. Reasonable fitness required. Leaders : Dorothy & Len Rootes, phone 9580 7574.

May 28 (Monday). Eric Whitby - Talk on Bees.

SOCIETY NEWS

- Up to 45 people, including a number of children, attended the last field day, inspecting local parks, such as the new work at Lime Kiln Bay.
- About 120 people were at last meeting to hear Tony Saunders talk about attracting birds to our gardens. Val Douglas reports that his talk was "fabulous". Many people requested Tony's list of bird-attracting plants - this will be available at the next (April) meeting.
- Also at the April meeting will be a form letter for those who want to object to the expansion of Bankstown airport.
- The Wilderness Campaign has requested members to write to National Parks & Wildlife Service asking for greater wilderness protection. Information will be available at the next meeting and a form letter will be presented for signature.
- Hurstville City Council has exhibited its plans for a boardwalk around Lime Kiln Bay and connecting footbridge over the

bay from Oatley Park to South Peakhurst. Committee members have inspected the plans and prepared a comment.

- Planning for 2001 Annual Dinner is proceeding.
- OFF has received a copy of the NSW Government's White Paper "Review of Plan Making in NSW". If you are interested in the reforms the government proposes to make in the planning system, please borrow the information from the desk at the next meeting.

VOLUNTEER BUSH CARE GROUP

A new group has been formed for Oatley Park. If you have some spare time, it would be great to get involved.

Meets : Every Wednesday, 9.00 - 12.00, at Douglas Haig Street (bottom gate of Oatley Park).

Contact Council's Bushcare Officers Jason Cockayne (on 0411 744 715) or Vicki Willes (on 9330 6228).



Issue: 2001/05

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URBAN CONSOLIDATION POLICY DEGRADES OUR SUBURBS

Urban Consolidation is just a euphemism for fitting as many villas and town houses as possible onto suburban blocks and sub-dividing large blocks into smaller units. It is happening all over Sydney because it is the preferred policy of the NSW Government. And it is causing more and more anger in the community. We have seen it operating in Llewellyn Street and no doubt you have experienced it near where you live.

A new example is in River Road, West Oatley, just opposite the railway station. Here developers propose to build 8 villas by demolishing a beautiful old house at No.4 and also to put 8 town houses on two blocks at No.16 and 18. The proposal for 16-18 is particularly worrying from an environmental point of view. The site is too small for the plans require extensive infilling and excavation work for garages and infrastructure. The plan requires that three large blackbutt trees and the large red mahogany are to remain on site, but the danger is that these trees will die from construction work or changed drainage. The tree cover of these two blocks is part of the streetscape of large blackbutts in the adjacent Mulga Road. For more than 25 years conservationists, including Milo Dunphy and members of OFF, have fought to preserve these blackbutt stands as they are a historic and significant feature of the area. In addition, a large old smooth-barked apple is marked for removal simply because it is "old". Large trees like this are important habitats for nesting and feeding birds, as well as being loved by local residents.

If the developments meet State Government guidelines, Local Councils find it difficult to reject the applications. Local community pressure may have the effect of modifying the proposals.

Of course, it is argued that without Urban Consolidation the suburbs have to spread into bushland environments around the city's fringes. This is causing serious environmental problems, as evidenced by the conflict over the ADI site at

St Marys (see April 2001 *National Parks Journal*). Closer to home, I recently joined a group of concerned residents at Menai who are trying to prevent more valuable bushland being released for housing sub-division. Perhaps the only answer is to set a limit to Sydney's population.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

Jim Douglas attended a recent public meeting at Parliament House on this burning issue at which speakers included Prof Adrian Gibbs (Virologist), Steven Druker (Alliance for Bio-diversity) and Dr Tim Carr (Committee against GE Food). His assessment of the meeting is as follows:

"I can't really adequately summarise this two and a half hour meeting. It consisted of a presentation of a good deal of factual material about the USA and Australian situations, with commentary not unexpectedly unfavorable to the way Genetically Engineered (or Modified) Organisms (especially foods) were being introduced without adequate investigation or precautions. Many detailed references were given.

Perhaps the most useful brief report I can give is to repeat some of the messages about action.

- *Write to the retail chains concerning adequate labelling (which unfortunately is not legislatively required to be at all complete). Draw attention to their power to influence their suppliers to segregate GE food. (It can be done, e.g., Sainsbury in the UK). Just keeping them aware of concerned customers is a help.*
- *"Adopt a politician" at State or Federal level: keep them well informed of your concerns.*
- *Look for labelling and when possible, buy accordingly.*
- *Discuss it with your friends.*

I thought it a successful meeting, attended, of course, largely by the already converted."

More on GE food

There is an excellent two page article entitled "Genetically Engineered Food – why we don't need it" in the latest copy of the Total Environment newsletter (Issue 1, 2001), available at the desk on meeting nights.

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

Please make yourself known as you come in.

It is intended that meetings commence promptly at 7.45 pm.

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

Coming Events

May 28 (Monday). Eric Whitby, professional apiarist, will talk about the life of bees and their role as "garden friend". Mention will also be made of native bees. Eric will have honey and honey products for sale for those of us who may be interested in making a purchase.

June 2 (Saturday). **FIELD DAY.** Please note the change from the official programme. Walk in Royal National Park : **Waterfall-Uloola Falls-Heathcote.** A medium walk of about 12 km. With lots of stops, it should take 5-6 hours. A service trail takes us from Waterfall to Uloola, then a good bush track via Karloo Pool to Heathcote. There is a short but steep ascent from Karloo Pool. We will detour to see the Aboriginal rock engravings near the falls. A walk especially suited for those who travel by train. Meet at Oatley Station for the 8.50 am train, or at Waterfall at 9.15 am. Leaders : Graham and Janet Austin, Tel. 9579 2375.

June 25 (Monday). Peter Sage returns with Scenic Southern Africa.

SOCIETY NEWS

- The talk on Christmas Island was excellent – full of interesting facts which combined a detailed knowledge of the island's natural features with historical and cultural details. Some people said that they wished that every meeting could be so good.
- Coxs Road walk. "An excellent day for this type of walk. There were 16 walkers and 5 "wanderers" (those who wandered around the top and drove down for lunch). All enjoyed (sort of) the down and up grades on both roads. We were amazed that horse-drawn carts were supposed to travel the roads. Everyone completed the walk within the time frame, although no one wanted to repeat the journey too soon." Len Rootes.
- OFF has successfully requested Hurstville Council to re-activate the Tree Preservation Working Group following the increasing concern about the loss of trees associated with sub-division and urban consolidation. No date has yet been set for the first meeting. Philip Sansom has been appointed Chairperson.
- It is interesting to note that a motion was carried at the Nature Conservation Council (NCC) Annual Conference regarding the failure of local Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). It reads "*that the NCC investigate*

possible means by which Tree Preservation Orders in NSW, with particular reference to western Sydney, may be more successfully implemented."

KOGARAH COUNCIL'S PUSH FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY

Those living in Kogarah Council area will no doubt be aware that Kogarah is pushing for a special levy of 7.5%. This proposal is part of the Council's draft Management Plan (2001-2005). After public exhibition and comment, it will go to State Government for approval or rejection.

The money raised by the levy would be committed to maintaining and improving the environment of the municipality. According to the *Leader* (17-4-01), projects could include upgrading the stormwater systems to cut pollution into the Georges River, the clean-up of bushland in Moore Reserve, Carss Park, etc., the developing and promoting of public transport and education on waste reduction. All very deserving causes, but will ratepayers want to pay an additional \$44 plus per annum??

IN THE MAGAZINES

The recent *National Parks Journal* (available at desk on meeting night) asks "Where have the small mammals gone?" and looks at the effectiveness of clearing control laws in NSW. It's worth a read.

Hon. Secretary : Robin Dickson, P.O. Box 52, Mortdale 2223. Ph : 9580-5663

Hon. Editor : Alan Fairley, P.O. Box 148, Oatley 2223. Ph : 9570-8332



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O.F.F. NEWS

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June/July 2001

OBSERVING BIRD LIFE IN OATLEY

If you enjoy the birds of our suburbs and want to know more about where to see them and what you are looking at, then you will be interested in *Observing Birdlife in Oatley* written by David Waterhouse and printed by OFF Cons. Society. The short (4 quarto pages) account records all recent sightings and is the basis of a bird list for the Oatley area. Only a few have been printed and it is intended to give copies to local libraries and schools. There are a few spares and they will be available from the desk at meeting nights for 50 cents to cover printing costs.

A NOTE ON HONEY (FERAL) BEES

People at last meeting enjoyed the informative talk by Eric Whitby on the honey bee. There was, however, some feeling that honey bees were a threat to Australia's natural ecosystems. A letter from OFF member and environmental consultant, Deryk Engel, has confirmed this feeling. In questioning whether a talk on bees is somewhat contradictory to the aims of a conservation society, Deryk says:

'Competition from feral honeybees is a Key Threatening Process on Schedule 3 of the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. The identified impacts of bees on natural ecosystems include loss of tree hollows, removal of pollen and reduced seed set in several species of native plants'.

He suggests that feral bees have far greater ecological impacts than removal of trees in residential developments.

A copy of the determination is available at : <http://www.npws.nsw.gov.au/news/tscdets/p010420a.htm>.

AUSTRALIAN BUSH HERITAGE FUND

OFF has made a \$50 donation to this worthwhile fund. Through the support of such donations, the fund has purchased land throughout Australia for the protection of nature. Its latest purchase is Carnarvon Station, adjoining Carnarvon National

Park in Queensland. It has bluegrass communities and a diversity of habitats which make it a most valuable addition to our natural heritage. Individuals can help **buy back the bush** by donations sent to : Australian Bush Heritage Fund, Reply Paid 101, Hobart, Tas. 7001.

NOTICE ABOUT MUOGAMARRA TRIP

A trip to see the wildflowers at Muogamarra Nature Reserve is included in OFF's 2001 Programme for 1st September. Unfortunately Muogamarra is not taking group bookings for this day. We are trying to organise a mid-week trip to see the wildflowers, but if you wish to go on the Saturday as an individual, ring 9457 9853 for bookings and information.

OATLEY PARK BUSHCARE

Hurstville Council's Bushcare Officers are keen to recruit new volunteers to assist with regeneration activities in Oatley Park. The group meets each Wednesday morning from 9am to 12 midday and on the fourth Saturday of the month from 1pm to 4pm. No prior experience is necessary.

This is your opportunity to be part of an important and rewarding community project. For further details, call Vicki Willes on 0411 744 330 or Jason Cockayne on 0411 744 715.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF PARKS

A Government report on "The Contribution of Warrumbungle National Park to regional Economic Development" has clearly shown the importance of parks to the local economy. The annual revenue from paid accommodation associated with visits to the park is estimated at \$683,000 and the gross regional effects generated are \$3.7 million, including \$1.38 million in household income to the equivalent of 66 people. Such a report should certainly silence those rural and logging interests who have opposed the creation of national parks because grazing and logging are not permitted in national parks.

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Please make yourself known as you come in.

It is intended that meetings commence promptly at 7.45 pm.

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

Coming Events

June 25 (Monday). **Peter Sage** returns with Scenic Southern Africa. Peter, a wonderful photographer, will share his travel experiences of South Africa and Zimbabwe. He will tell us about plants and animals he has photographed in his travels and share with us the magnificent scenery of coastal and mountain regions, including the Victoria Falls. A fascinating evening for all.

June 30 (Saturday). **FIELD DAY.** Walk from **Bundeena to Marley**. The coast of Royal National Park is brilliant at this time of year. About 10 km return. With lookout stops and lunch, it will take us most of the day. The track is a little up and down but there are no really steep climbs. Beautiful coastal scenery, an untouched beach and lagoon and the possibility of seeing migrating whales off-shore. Catch train to Cronulla from Mortdale at 8.53am; ferry leaves Gunnamatta Bay, Cronulla, at 9.30am. Leader : Val Boyan, phone 9533 1013.

July 23 (Monday). **Debbie Andrew** of NPWS will tell us about her research on Quolls.

SOCIETY NEWS

- Kevin Greene, MLA for Georges River, will attend our July 23rd meeting to tell us about a Community Awards scheme he is trying to start up. OFF has indicated its support for such a scheme.
- Our stall outside the Commonwealth Bank, Oatley, on Saturday 19th May was a success. A number of members contributed time to tell passers-by about the Society. Locals seemed interested and often expressed concern about issues such as over-development, tree removal and foxes. The stall and its helpers gave the Society a public face and we expect to gain a few new members from the activity. Special thanks to our Publicity Officer, Jan Douglas, who organised the morning.
- July 29th is National Tree Day and we have asked Hurstville and Kogarah Councils if they can organise an activity which OFF members can become involved in.
- The first meeting of the Tree Management Working Party was held at Hurstville Council Chambers on June 7th. Alan Fairley represented the Society. The meeting revised a committee which lapsed in 1998. A number of issues concerning OFF and the local community have been raised.
- OFF has written to Hurstville and Kogarah Councils asking them to consider the use of Foxoff baits to kill foxes in local reserves. This uses 1080 poison in controlled situations. Currently 11 Councils from the northern side of Sydney are using this method but our Councils seem to be reluctant to act.
- The Austins report a lovely walk for the last field day. 18 attended, including some new members. Highlights were the Aboriginal engravings near Uloola Falls and the lyrebird calling as they climbed up from Karloo Pool.
- Concern has been expressed to the NSW Minister for Environment about the increasing number of deer in Royal National Park. A herd of 80 were seen recently at Era, including many newly-borns. It is thought number have increased from 800 to more than 3000 over the last few years. They have a huge negative effect on the Park ecology, especially on the fragile and unique littoral rainforest vegetation. The Society has asked that the Deer Control Committee as set up in the Plan of Management be re-activated. You can help by sending your own letter to the Minister. It is public pressure that is needed.

Hon. Secretary : Robin Dickson, P.O. Box 52, Mortdale 2223. Ph : 9580-5663

Hon. Editor : Alan Fairley, P.O. Box 148, Oatley 2223. Ph : 9570-8332



O.F.F. NEWS



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July/August 2001

TREE MANAGEMENT IN HURSTVILLE

Hurstville Council recently reconvened its Tree Management Working Party. It was attended by 4 Councillors (including Bill Pickering and Merv Lynch), 7 Council Officers (including Development Assessment Officers, Tree Management Officers and the Council Engineer) and a few interested residents (OFF was represented by Alan Fairley). Philip Sansom chaired the meeting.

Genuine concern was expressed about the reduction of trees as a result of development approvals (DAs). Often the destruction and its solution is beyond the control of the Council, as State Government planning controls permit urban consolidation and refusal by Council more than likely will lead to as successful challenge in the Environment Court.

Discussion included

- new policies and procedures to identify and protect trees on DA sites. This could include an independent arborist's report on trees that must be retained or may require removal or lopping, followed by an inspection and report of the Council's Tree Management Officer (TMO).
- the possibility of a bond per tree, refundable after a final tree inspection.
- need for a tree survey of the Foreshore Scenic Protection Area to identify important tree cover.
- Council is willing to prosecute offenders but there is a difficulty as the courts require evidence. It was suggested that neighbours should photograph the trees before and after the developments.
- amendments to the Tree Preservation Order.

MORE ON LOCAL TREE PRESERVATION

*Hurstville Council reports that there are now 2000 properties which cannot be developed as they are in the Foreshore Scenic Protection Zone.

*There are now 150 volunteers involved in Hurstville Council's Bushcare Program, with up to 100 regular participants, 2 bushcare officers and 11 sites. Council's bushcare budget is close to \$½ million a year.

*National Tree Day activities will be celebrated with a tree planting at Heritage Park, Boatwright Ave, off Forest Road, Peakhurst. Starting 10 am. All OFF members are encouraged to participate.

TRACK NOTES

- Have you checked out the newly constructed mangrove walkway in Poulton Park? Kogarah Council has done a nice job and information boards give recognition to the contribution of Oatley Flora and Fauna.
- The Hurstville side of Salt Pan Creek has a new pedestrian link and mangrove walkway. The Council has published a brochure titled "Riverwood Wetlands" which is worth getting hold of.
- The development of a pedestrian access loop around Lime Kiln Bay is progressing. The proposal involves upgrading existing tracks, construction of a timber bridge over the bay, elevated boardwalks in some tidal areas and a bridge and staircase over a side creek. 32 public submissions were made following exhibition of the proposal. OFF has a copy of the objections and Council's comment on them and is keeping an eye on the work.

To report Fox Den sightings in the Hurstville Council area contact Julie McInnes on 9330 6228.

Did you know? NSW spends \$24.80 per hectare managing its national parks, Victoria spends \$9.60, Tasmania spends \$10.40, and Queensland only \$5.50. (From *Moonbi 99*, the journal of the Fraser Island Defence Organisation).

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

Coming Events

July 23 (Monday). **Debbie Andrew**, OFF member and National Parks and Wildlife Service Research Officer will report on the results of some of her studies. Hear about those interesting Australian marsupials, the **Quolls**.

July 28 (Saturday). **FIELD DAY.** Walk the **Duck River Track**. An easy walk through parklands and some remnant native bushland. Discover the delights of this new area. Plenty of time for strolling with lunch along the way. Meet at the end of Everley Road, South Granville (north of Chester Hill). For details, contact leader Heather Mackey, 9528 7071.

August 27 (Monday). **Ken Griffith**, photographing wildlife. **Frogs, snakes and lizards.**

“NO-TAKE” AQUATIC RESERVES

NSW Fisheries is currently proposing 15 rocky shore and 7 estuarine Aquatic Reserves along the NSW coast. A group of conservation societies led by the Australian Marine Society is pushing to have all the marine life within these areas totally protected, that is, that no commercial or recreational fishing should occur. It does seem odd that all land-based animals are protected in terrestrial national parks but marine animals are not protected in aquatic reserves.

If you support the ‘no-take’ proposals, you are urged to write to the Minister for Fisheries, PSRC, Private Bag 1, Nelson Bay 2325. Robin Dickson has a sheet with information which may assist in writing the letter.

FIREWOOD AND ITS SOURCE

Smell the smoke in the air when you go outside these evenings? It is bad enough that open fires adversely affect pollution levels, but a new report on firewood collection and use in Australia asks us to consider where that log on the fire came from.

The national consumption of firewood is 6 million tonnes a year. Landclearing in Queensland is the major supplier of Sydney’s quality firewood (mainly ironbark and box logs). The report highlights the importance of dead trees for biodiversity and lists critical areas where firewood harvesting may have to be banned. Big money is involved in the industry, with wood worth \$40-\$50 a cubic metre in Queensland being sold for \$125 by the time it reaches Sydney.

NEWS FROM OVERSEAS

Vanishing vultures. World wildlife is in a sorry situation when even vultures of India are becoming extinct. Since the 17th century, the Parsi of India have left their dead on a hill and vultures would descend in hundreds to strip the flesh from the body. Now only about a dozen vultures remain, not enough to fully consume the 1000 bodies placed on the hill each year. The birds also help dispose of the bodies of cows sacred to the Hindus. It is believed that an unidentified infectious disease is to blame. Scientists are trying to develop a captive breeding program using disease-free birds.

Vanishing marshland. Pictures from space show that the great marshland at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates in southern Iraq has dwindled by 90 per cent in 25 years. The marshes are an important site for migrating birds and provide nutrients for fish-spawning grounds. And, of course, the Marsh Arabs have a unique culture dating back 5000 years. The marshes began to dwindle and turn into salt deserts when dams were put across the rivers and made worse when Saddam Hussein embarked on massive drainage schemes. The UN regards the change as a major ecological disaster, comparable to the deforestation of Amazonia.

Poisoning the Arctic. The Inuit (Eskimos) of the Arctic are having their food poisoned through toxins which travel in ocean currents and winds. Seals and whales, staples of their diet, have become deposits for the world’s 12 most toxic chemicals which pass through the animal fat into the Inuits and even through breast milk.



O.F.F. NEWS



Issue: 2001/08

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August/September 2001

KOGARAH AND TREE POLICY CHANGES

Some members of Kogarah Council are trying to weaken the Municipality's Tree Policy. Acrimonious debate took place at the July Council meeting at which two of OFF members attended – Mamie Clark and Sharyn Cullis. The draft new policy is on display for public comment for a month. It is essential that all OFF residents of Kogarah Municipality write and express concern about the effects of the proposed changes. Letters written before the Council met are no longer valid, so you will need to write again in response to the request for public comment.

Some matters of concern include :

Criteria for removing a tree

"The tree has blocked or is likely to block views and removal will allow access to lost views or allow retention of views". This opens up a huge opportunity for residents to get rid of trees all along the Georges River and bays. It flies in the face of State Government and community groups who are trying to preserve the tree cover along the foreshores.

"The tree, in the opinion of the Councillor Tree Committee (CTC) is out of character with the area by virtue of its species, location, maintenance requirements, size and existing number of trees." This is far too wide; it allows almost any tree to be removed for any reason. What expertise does the CTC have? Is the community represented on the CTC?

OFF members are encouraged to get a copy of the draft policy from the Council or Council library and make comment on it in writing before the closing date.

Death of Stan Martin

Late in June I had a telephone call from Mary Martin to say that Stan had died early that morning after a series of short stays in hospital. Olive and I attended the cremation service early the following week.

Most members will remember that, for many years prior to Frank and Nancy Artlett, Stan and

Mary had looked after the name tags at Society's meetings.

Stan's interest in conservation dated from his membership of the Sydney Bush Walkers in the 1940s and 1950s. My records indicate that he was a member of O.F.F. prior to 1972, but their membership lapsed at the end of 1996 after they moved from Oatley to Roselands. At this stage, I am not aware of Mary's plans for the future.

(Harry Whaite)

BARRINGTON GUEST HOUSE

A group from OFF is going to Barrington Guest House at Salisbury, via Dungog, from Sunday 23rd September to Friday 28th September (Barrington phone 4995 3212). Costs will be the same as last year, i.e., \$360 per person with en suite facilities, and \$265 without own facilities. Please contact Robin Dickson if you are intending to go, phone 9580 5663.

Fox Trapping Success. Hurstville Bushcare reports that several fox traps have been set up in local bushland. At least one fox has been caught. If you know of the location of a fox den, contact Council officers on 9330 6228.

Privet now a noxious weed. Both small and large leaf varieties of privet have been declared noxious weeds within Hurstville.

Cronulla-Kurnell sand hills development. Conservationists and local residents are trying to prevent 500 homes being built on an important 380 hectare site just north of Cronulla. Unfortunately, the State Government's Minister for Urban Affairs, Dr Refshauge, appears to support the sub-division. The area should be added to Botany Bay National Park.

Atlas of NSW Wildlife. This Atlas is designed to make natural resource data more readily available to the community. It contains more than 1 million records of flora and fauna. Information can be obtained from the following websites:

[flora plantnet.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au](http://flora.plantnet.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au)

[fauna www.austmus.gov.au](http://fauna.www.austmus.gov.au)

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Coming Events

August 27 (Monday). Ken Griffith, wildlife photographer and author of a number of books on topics such as frogs and reptiles. Ken will talk to us about the plants and animals in Royal National Park and the Sydney region. Ken has been with us before; this time he will share with us some photographic tips. An opportunity for everyone who wants to learn more about photographing wildlife.

September 1 (Saturday). **FIELD DAY.** (Note : change from the printed programme). **KURNELL PENINSULA.** Leisurely walk along the cliff tops to Tabbigai and Cape Baily Lighthouse. A beautiful walk at this time of year with heath wildflowers and plenty of birdlife. About 8 km return, without steep ascents but with some sandy patches. Bring lunch and drinking water. Meet at The Discovery Centre in the National Park at 10 am. If you drive in you will need to pay an entry fee per car. The alternative is to park at Kurnell township and walk into the park. Unfortunately, public transport is not practical as the bus service from Cronulla is infrequent. Leader : Robin Dickson, phone 9 580 5663.

September 5 (Wednesday). **EXTRA FIELD DAY.** **Muogamarra Nature Reserve.** A guided walk through this wildflower wonderland. Cost: \$6.00 per person. Meet at 10 am in the car park which is 2 km inside the reserve. Muogamarra is 3.5 km north of Cowan on the Old Pacific Highway, about 1hr 40mins from Oatley. If you wish to attend, please let Robin know on 9580 5663.

September 24 (Monday). Talk on the search for **Sea Dragons.**

HURSTVILLE COUNCIL BUSHCARE

Bushcare is looking for keen volunteers at its 11 Bushcare sites.

- ✓ Learn to identify weeds among our local native vegetation and their various removal techniques.
- ✓ Help out with our planting of local seed in our nursery group.
- ✓ Have a fun day out and learn new skills.

Our most recent site is at Oatley Park. We meet every Wednesday from 9 am to 12 midday, and once a month on the 4th Saturday of the month at the Douglas Haig St entrance gates. All OFF members who are free on Wednesdays are urged to assist.

For more information about any of our sites, contact the Bushcare Officers Jason Cockayne on 0411 744 715 or Vicki Willes on 0411 744 330.

SOCIETY NEWS

* About 60 people planted hundreds of small trees at Heritage Park on National Tree Day, Sun. 29th July. The park is behind Gannons Park at Peakhurst and is worth a visit. Others planted seedlings at Poulton Park in Kogarah Municipality. Did YOU do your bit for the local environment?

* Dates for your diary. 1. Lugarno Lions Festival, Sunday, 23rd September. 2. Oatley Lions Festival, Saturday, 20th October.

* Tenders have been called by Hurstville Council for the Lime Kiln Bay Walkway.

O.F.F. ANNUAL DINNER

19th October 2001, at Mortdale RSL

New chef, new menu – 3 course meal for \$25 per person. Come along for a good social night. Transport can be organised for those who need it. We do need to know who will be coming so we can finalise the booking. Final date for booking is 5th October. You can contact Lesley Cox by phone on **9579 3782** or email dad@ar.com.au if you want to come along. Val Boyan will be collecting names and money at the next meeting.



Issue: 2001/09

O.F.F. NEWS

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**OATLEY FLORA & FAUNA
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September/October 2001



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OF BAYS AND WETLANDS

September has been an important month for our local wetlands. On Sept. 8th, Hurstville Council's Mayor, Bill Pickering, officially opened Lime Kiln Bay Wetlands. At the same time, the design plan for the Lime Kiln Bay walkway was displayed for public comment. In Kogarah Municipality, the Council has been publicising the Poulton Park Mangrove Boardwalk and water has at last been added to the Moore Reserve Wetland. (*Finally, after 27 years since the tip closed was the comment of Graham and Janet Austin.*)

There is something delightfully ironic about Local Councils actually caring about our bays and wetlands. After all, it was the Council's in the 1960s and 1970s that did their best to fill in all the mangrove bays and it was groups like OFF Conservation Society that fought desperately to protect them from destruction. How the wheel has turned.

In 1964 Hurstville Council planned to fill Lime Kiln Bay to a depth of 9 metres with rubbish. A massive fight against the proposal ensued, resulting in partial success – the northern arm was lost to “reclamation” as garbage created the present golf course, but the main arm of the bay was saved.

The 1970s saw new major threats to the bays when Hurstville Council applied to tip rubbish into Gungah Bay and Jew Fish Bay and Kogarah Council did the same with Oatley Bay (Moore Reserve), a plan which included using dredged silt to reclaim Poulton Park. Local Residents' Action Groups and OFF fought hard against such destructive plans. The protest action had the effect of delaying Council action, and while some areas like Moore Reserve were lost, the pressure to dump garbage was taken off by the opening of the regional tip at Lucas Heights.

The attitude of Councils at this time was expressed in a classic view from Ald. Dick Swanton who said of the Lime Kiln Bay filling “*We are not destroying the environment. We are creating a new and more pleasing and useful environment. Instead of swampy sections of the*

bay, there will be an 18 hole golf course and areas of playing fields.”

Fortunately we have seen the end of such anti-environmental attitudes and Councils are now more willing to protect the natural environment than to destroy it or see it as expendable.

TREE PRESERVATION – KOGARAH

By now we hope that everyone has made a submission to Kogarah Council protesting against the proposed changes in the Tree Preservation Order. The closing date for submissions was 18th September and decisions should be made by Council at the end of September. Dr Refshauge, Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning (as reported in *The Leader*) has said that “Kogarah Council will not get away with cutting down trees. If Kogarah Council persists with the idea, it will have to change its Local Environment Plan (LEP). Its LEP will have to come to me, and I will not sign it”.

Now we should be writing to Dr Refshauge to convey community concern and to make sure he carries out his threat.

A special thanks to Brian Dale who was responsible for bringing this issue to the notice of the Sydney media and to Councillors Susan Gainsford, Michael Platt, Graeme Staas and Ann Field who fought the changes in Council.

OFF MUOGAMARRA WALK

Lesley Winters reports that although only four members went on this mid-week walk, it was a most wonderful day with lots of wildflowers and the knowledgeable guides showing them stands of waratah and a unique 5-petalled boronia. Despite threatening weather early in the morning, the day turned out fine.

National Parks Journal. The August 2001 edition of this journal has a disturbing article on current threats to Lord Howe Island and features on mining and its effects on national parks, including a look at the proposal to mine clay in O'Hares Creek (upper Georges River) catchment.

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Coming Events

September 23 (Sunday). Lugarno Lions Festival, Gannons Park. OFF will have a stall.

September 24 (Monday). Note change from advertised programme. Unfortunately the speaker on Sea Dragons is unable to attend. Lesley Cox has, however, been able to arrange something which may be just as interesting.

New Speaker : Jeffrey Ray presents *Antarctica* in pictures and music.

October 6 (Saturday). **FIELD DAY.** A stroll through **Castlereagh Nature Reserve** and a look at the clay and shale habitats of Cumberland Plain. The wildflowers should be at their best and we will be spending some time identifying them. This is not a difficult walk, just 2 hours on flat fire trails. After lunch we may have time for a quick look at the nearby **Windsor Downs Nature Reserve.** Meet at corner The Northern Road and Whitegates Road at 9.30 am (Berkshire Park, about 10 km north of Penrith). Give yourself an hour from Oatley. Bring lunch and drink. Leader : **Alan Fairley**, phone 9570 8332.

October 19 (Friday). **O.F.F. Annual Dinner.** See details below.

October 20 (Saturday). **Oatley Lions Festival.** OFF will have a stall.

O.F.F. ANNUAL DINNER

7 pm, 19th October 2001, at Mortdale RSL

Don't miss out !! New chef, new menu

A 3 course meal for \$25 per person. Come along for a good social night. Transport can be organised for those who need it. We do need to know who will be coming so we can finalise the booking. Final date for booking is 5th October. You can contact Lesley Cox by phone on 9579 3782 or email dad@ar.com.au if you want to come along. Val Boyan will be collecting names and money at the next meeting.

WALK REPORT –KURNELL 2nd September

Thank you and apologies to John Atkins, Education Officer at the Botany Bay Field Studies Centre who came forward (after the publication of our last *OFF News*) to let us know that he was the scheduled leader of this field outing.

Despite the inclement weather, 19 people met at the Discovery Centre after which we set off firstly into the forest area and then on to the heathland. John explained how historical and environmental information relevant to the area was conveyed to visiting school children and also outlined various types of activities aimed at developing interest and a caring attitude towards bushland.

To add interest to the magnificent views of our rugged coastline on a blustery squally day, we were all intrigued to learn that many years ago Muriel Harding had slept in one of the cliff dwellings (remnants of which can still be seen) when she made regular visits with her father to his friend Bert's fishing abode. She was able to point out gaps in the rock which made access to the undercliff shelves possible.

The walk continued along the Cape Baily Track to the lighthouse which was our lunch stop. The party split several times to cater for differing interests, for instance, heathland or sandstone cliffs and pounding seas, or, of course, whether one preferred wetter or drier feet. The black clouds also had some impact on choice with regard to viewing the gorges or heading straight back by the fastest possible route. All options were covered and varying stages of wetness experienced; however, a good day was had by all.

Robin Dickson

Southerly Buster, newsletter of the Southern Sydney Catchment Management Board, has some excellent information on the Georges River and the Board. Get your copy from the meeting desk.



O.F.F. NEWS

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Recognition of Volunteers

Hurstville City Council is to celebrate International Volunteers' Day on Tuesday, December 4th by holding a special mayoral reception to recognise outstanding volunteer efforts in the community. The reception will honour one volunteer from each community organisation.

The Council has asked OFF to nominate a person who has made "a significant impact" on our Society and who lives or volunteers in the Hurstville local government area. The Council has specifically asked for members' input into the nomination.

We invite you to nominate someone from the Society and to submit the name to Cliff Crane at the next meeting or by phone on 9580 3269.

Week in Snowy Mts

The annual week in Smiggin Holes will be on again in 2002. The proposed dates are 19-26 January. Let Robin know if you are interested so she can put you on her list (tel. 9580 5663).

Wanted for November meeting

Val Boyan always has a stall at the last meeting of the year. She is asking for donations of saleable items such as handcraft and jams. Ring Val if you can help (tel. 9533 1013).

Help for Tasmania's Little Penguins

For some time now Tasmanian Conservation Trust have been asking people to knit "penguin jumpers" which are used to rehabilitate penguins that have been caught in oil spills. Val Douglas has the pattern for these. As at the end of August 2001, the Trust had stockpiled 3100 jumpers.

They are now asking for financial assistance to overcome a problem on Bruny Island. There the main penguin rookery is on a narrow neck connecting north and south of the island. The penguins have to cross a main road to get to their burrows and many are hit by cars. The local conservationists wish to fence off both sides of

the road and provide underpasses so the penguins can safely access their burrows. The cost of fencing both sides of the 3 km stretch of road, plus associated culverts, is estimated to be \$100,000.

To help you help the Bruny Island penguins, OFF will have a donation box at the next meeting – so please bring some money.

Visit to Barrington Guest House

The 16 OFF members who stayed at Barrington Tops Guest House from 16th to 21st September had a marvellous holiday. The weather was fine and warm so that each day we were able to explore the surrounding rainforest with a guest house guide. We walked in the Williams River rainforest area, explored the World Heritage listed "Antarctic Beech Forest", visited the Allyn River historic church and saw the Chichester Dam. On most trips we saw some magnificent clusters of native orchids (various dendrobiums) in the trees and some ground orchids as well.

The guest house food and entertainment were superb. We can recommend a visit to Barrington Tops Guest House in September to anyone requiring a holiday that includes involvement with the natural heritage.

John Winters

Camphor Laurel – a pest tree

Camphor laurel, an east Asian tree, has long been a problem, invading natural habitats all along the coast of NSW. They spread by bird-carried seed into suburban gardens where they do a lot of damage to pipes, fences and foundations. It is widely known that they produce toxins which contaminate surrounding soils, preventing the growth of other species. Kew Gardens in U.K. has found that the roots of camphor laurels are covered with tiny but toxic oil exudation glands which seasonally pump three toxins into the soil and water courses. The leaching of toxins into watercourses is believed to impact on native wildlife.

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

Coming Events

October 22 (Monday). Jason Cockayne, Bush Care Officer of Hurstville City Council will tell us about some aspects of his work with particular reference to bush regeneration in local bushland area. Also the role of volunteer groups and what is happening with the fox control program. Bush care is a relatively new role for local councils. Come and hear first hand what is being done, what priorities are set and how community funds are spent.

October 27 (Saturday). **FIELD DAY.** Walk **The Forest Track**, along the Illawarra Escarpment. An medium walk, 12 kilometres return, taking about 4 hours, plus lunch break. The track runs just behind the top of the cliff line through beautiful woodland, heaths and swamp communities. There are some ups and downs where the track crosses gullies and minor ridges, but the steepest ascent is only a height of 70 metres. Wonderful views of the Illawarra coastline, culminating in a panorama across Stanwell Park. The access road to the start of the walk is off the Princes Highway 2.8 km south of Darkes Forest turn-off, about 1 km beyond the Illawarra Golf Course. Take the Southern Expressway to Helensburgh turn-off, then the old Princes Highway. Bring drinks and lunch. Meet at the beginning of the access track beside the Princes Highway at 9.30 am. Leader : **John Blake**, telephone 9570 4796.

November 26 (Monday). Janet Aitken meanders through Mongolia.

WALK REPORT –CASTLEREAGH N.R.

A perfect spring day and lots of unusual wildflowers made the walk through Castlereagh Nature Reserve both interesting and enjoyable. Alan Fairley led 27 members and visitors around about 5 km of trails. All were amazed at the variety of the flowers. There were yellow donkey orchids and two species of bearded orchids; brilliant yellow jacksonia and pink kunzea; purple patersonia and numerous pea-flowers, including the leafless *Daviesia alata*. Highlights were our encounters with four of the localised and rare species : *Grevillea juniperina*, *Prostanthera scutellarioides*, *Dodonaea falcata* and *Micromyrtus minutiflora*.

After lots of stops and three hours of walking, the group had lunch together in a clearing off busy Northern Road. Plans to briefly visit nearby Windsor Downs NR came to nothing as the reserve was closed to the public. Most were delighted with what was a new area and some suggested a trip next year to another western Sydney reserve.

O.F.F.'s ACTIVITIES

This has been a busy few weeks. Just look at the range of activities we've been involved in. Have you participated in any of these?

- ✓ Annual Dinner
- ✓ A week at Barrington Guest House (16 people)
- ✓ Lions Festival, Lugarno
- ✓ Lions Festival, Oatley
- ✓ Representatives at the official opening of Lime Kiln Bay Wetlands
- ✓ Representatives at the official opening of Poulton Park Mangrove Boardwalk (did you see the photo of Robin Dickson in *The Leader*?)

The Society has made a donation of \$100 to the fighting fund to oppose building subdivision in the ADI site at St Marys. With elections approaching, now is a good time to pressure the government.



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Looking to the future

With a new year just around the corner and the environment apparently off the agenda for the Federal elections, a number of groups have been looking at where the conservation movement is or should be headed in the next few years.

One source of inspiration was the Nature Conservation Council Annual Conference held on 27/28th October, attended by our representative Lesley Cox. The big issues that came out of that conference included:

- the need for the Commonwealth Government to tackle land clearing and water management, especially in the Murray-Darling Basin;
- the issue of controls over greenhouse gases;
- the reform of the Land and Environment Court;
- the need to review regularly planning instruments;
- regulation of coal mining in water catchment areas;
- the need to accelerate the reduction of deer numbers in Royal National Park;
- greater control of feral and domestic animals.

Another view was expressed by environment reporter James Woodford in *S.M.H.* on 29th September. His view is that apart from the global problem of climate change, there are three national issues that require urgent attention.

The first is that our economic system is geared towards destroying the environment rather than protecting it. Virtually no economic incentives encourage people (particularly farmers and coastal developers) to protect the natural values of privately owned land.

The second problem is the way we manage our farming and rural landscapes. The salinity problem is unglamorous but the damage to land done by the timber industry is almost nothing compared to the vegetation removed each year by

farmers in the name of agriculture. Farmers are the nation's biggest salt producers.

Third, action has to be taken against feral pests, both plant and animal, of which the worst offender is none other than sheep. The extinction of 24 mammal species in the Western Division of NSW is directly due to sheep.

The Commonwealth Government's future planning can be seen in its **National Biodiversity Targets** listed in *Work in Progress. Australia's Commitment to the Environment*. Its 6 areas of highest priority assisted by the financial backing of the Natural Heritage Trust are:

- Protect and restore native vegetation and terrestrial ecosystems;
- Protect and restore freshwater ecosystems;
- Protect and restore marine and estuarine ecosystems;
- Control invasive species;
- Mitigate dryland salinity;
- Promote ecologically sustainable grazing.

As individuals, we might not be able to contribute much to alleviate global and national environmental problems, but we should be aware of them and support governments, agencies or conservation groups which are pushing for a better environment. At State and local levels, we should have our own set of priorities and develop appropriate behaviours which will bring those aims to fulfillment.

Royal Nat. Park Report – post fires

OFF member and NPWS researcher, Debbie Andrew, has produced a report which shows that up to 100 species of native vertebrates have disappeared from Royal since the fires of 1994.

OFF News by e-mail

It would save the Society a significant sum in postal costs if members received their monthly *OFF News* by e-mail. The other advantage is that the newsletter would be received "hot off the press". If you wish to change from post to e-mail for 2002, please send your e-mail address to John Winters at jww@optusnet.com.au and he will arrange for the changeover.

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

Coming Events

November 26 (Monday). Janet Aitken, OFF member, will take us on a fascinating journey through Mongolia. Come along to hear her tales of people and places.

There will be a **Social Supper** following Janet's talk, so come prepared for a great evening and bring a plate of goodies to share with OFF friends.

Val Boyan will have her annual pre-Christmas bargain stall as you enter the hall, with jams and crafts suitable for gifts. So, bring some money to the meeting. Funds raised go to OFF Presidents Fund for distribution to worthy causes.

December 1st (Saturday). **FIELD DAY.** Walk to **Gerringong Falls in Budderoo National Park.** An easy walk without any steep gradients, although the last 200 metres is down a rough track and along the creek bank. It is 6.6 km return, taking us 3 to 4 hours with lunch stop. Stand on the very edge of the falls looking down a spectacular cliff-enclosed gorge towards Upper Kangaroo Valley. The Gerringong Falls car park is 4.1 km down the Budderoo Fire Trail which turns off the Jamberoo-Robertson Road, 2.8 km from the top of Jamberoo Pass and the Barren Grounds turn-off. Meet at the Barren Grounds turn-off at the top of Jamberoo Pass at 10 am. This is about a 1 hour 40 mins drive from Oatley. Rumours are that NPWS plans to erect a barrier gate on Budderoo Fire Trail, so this could be your last chance to do this walk easily. Leader : **John Winters** : phone 9153 7766.

December 10 (Monday). **CHRISTMAS IN THE PARK: O.F.F. GET-TOGETHER.** Meet at the BBQ area opposite Steam-roller Park at 5.30 pm. BYO dinner and Christmas cheer, as well as chairs and tables for a relaxed social evening. The Park closes at 8 pm, so for those wanting to stay on, cars need to be taken out of the Park before this time.

A.G.M. 2002 . Next year's first Monday meeting will be the Annual General Meeting, followed by slides and supper. This will be on 4th February.

O.F.F.'s ACTIVITIES

***Because of the holiday season, there will be no field trip in late December. Planning for the year 2002 is well under way, with more great trips and talks to come. We hope to see you at one of our activities next year. Have a happy festive season.

***Want to find out more about our inland waterways, coastal development, land clearing of bush fires? Read what the Nature Conservation Council is doing in its latest brochures. See the OFF notice board at our next meeting.

*** 19 people attended the last walk on The Forest Track. It was a beautiful day with great scenery. All said that it was one of the best walks of the year.

*** A donation of \$100 has been made by OFF to the protection of Penguins in Tasmania (see last *OFF News*).

*****Smiggin Holes.** Accommodation has been booked from 19th to 26th January 2002. Cost is \$38.20 per person per night, ie, \$267.40 for the 7 nights. There is an entry fee of \$15 per car per day into Kosciuszko National Park (or you can purchase an Annual pass to all NSW parks for \$80). For holders of Pensioners Concession entry is free. Ring Robin for details and bookings on 9580 5663.

***More on the toxins of Camphor Laurel trees. The poison is a mammalian liver carcinogen called "safrole". For information contact Camphor Research Centre (Jo Friend) on 6688 6150.