



# O.F.F. NEWS

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

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Issue: 2002/01

January/February 2002

## **WELCOME TO ANOTHER YEAR OF O.F.F.**

There always seems to be issues arising to confront conservationists and which need our attention. We can never rest on our achievements and think the job is done. Some of the issues of concern to conservationists in the year 2002 have already emerged in the media. The obvious ones are the level of hazard reduction in bushland, the role of national parks in the protection of biodiversity, the culling of deer and other feral pests and the desire of the kangaroo industry to shoot more of our national symbol.

There are unresolved issues as well – tree removal and over-development of our suburbs; the quality of water in the Georges River and protection of its catchment; the A.D.I. site at St Marys; the sad state of a lot of our flora and fauna; the protection of our coastline from the excesses of development – all these continue to be a problem.

You can help by simply renewing your membership, thereby contributing to a strong Society. You can also find out more about the issues and at the same time enjoy yourself by coming along to our monthly meetings and walks. Why not resolve to introduce at least one other family to the Society? The more people who know about us, the more effective we can be.

## **SOME THOUGHTS ON THE BUSHFIRES**

In an attempt to attribute blame for the extent of the recent fires, conservationists have come under fire, especially from conservative elements on talk-back radio. Criticism of the lack of fuel reduction burns to reduce fire hazard is unjustified.

Consider some facts:

- No amount of hazard reduction will prevent crown fires whipped along by strong winds.
- A number of areas burnt at Christmas had been the subject of hazard reduction as recently as 3 months before.

- NPWS has no power to prevent hazard reduction agreed upon by local communities and the bush fire service.
- There is a need to balance property protection with the protection of natural diversity.

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

The Society's funds at 31.12.01 were \$4305.92 which included the President's Fund of \$1420.59. The balance - \$2885.33 – compares with \$2642.10 as at 31.12.00.

As indicated in the December 2000 report, there were increases in 2001 for OFF News printing and postage of \$288 and Public Liability Insurance of \$88. The policy of the Society is to maintain a reserve of no less than one year's subscriptions and this is confirmed with the balance of \$2885.33.

No Natural Heritage Grants were received during the year. The capital value of grants for Moore reserve, Poulton park and Shipwright Bay held at 31.12.01 is \$155,590. Term Deposits held at CBA Mortdale are \$148,472, plus funds of \$19,988 held in our cheque account, giving a total of \$168,460. The difference of \$12,870 represents interest earned on the investment in term deposits and is to be applied to the projects in accordance with the terms of the grants.

### Note 1. Donations.

Milo Dunphy Fund \$100; Aust Bush Heritage \$50; A.D.I. Residents Action Group \$100; Tas. Cons. Trust \$100; Total Environment Centre \$500; Bird Soc \$80.

### Note 2 Subscriptions.

Nat Parks Assoc \$53; Nat Cons Ccl \$154; SthWest Env Centre \$25; Colong Fdtn \$25; Wliffe Pres Fd Qld \$33.

**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS are now due.  
Membership is \$16 per family.**

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 4 (Monday). ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.** The first meeting for 2002. Hear reports about what OFF has been doing in the past year followed by elections of the new committee. This is your chance to comment on the activities, 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** and get-together after the holiday break. Please bring a plate of food to contribute to the success of the evening. Also, bring along any interesting slides of places you have been or of Society activities.

**March 2 (Saturday). FIELD DAY.** The first outing of the year. A good one to start with. **Bird-watching in the Royal National Park.** Led by Steve Anyon-Smith, author of a very good book on birds in Royal and Heathcote (pre-fire). Despite the damage to the park by fire, at this stage this walk is still on. More details in the next *OFF News*.

### FINANCIAL REPORT OF OATLEY FLORA AND FAUNA CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.

By John Watters, Hon. Treasurer

**Receipts and Payments : Year ended 31.12.01**

<u>Credit balance as at 31.12.00</u>	\$39,604.41		
		- Postage	916.20
		- Labels	104.38
<u>Receipts</u>		Printing Programs	190.00
Subscriptions	2,418.00	Debits Tax	28.50
Donations	389.40	Uniting Church - Donation	240.00
Annual Dinner	1,450.00	Fee - Annual Return	37.00
Sales-Plants/books	132.80	Public Liability Premium	423.50
Trash & Treasure/Stalls	852.00	PO Box Rental	49.50
Interest	75.60	Administration Expenses	167.34
Term Deposits Drawn		Lions Fairs -Oatley/Lugarno	95.00
Down (Grants)	<u>36,500.00</u>	Kogarah Council(Grants)	<u>51,924.52</u>
	<u>\$41,817.80</u>		<u>\$57,128.19</u>
	\$81,422.21		
		<u>Credit balance as at 31.12.01</u>	24,294.02
<u>Payments</u>		<u>Less Funds held from Natural Heritage Grants</u>	
Donations (note 1)	930.00		<u>19,988.10</u>
Subscriptions (note 2)	290.00		
Annual Dinner	1,353.75	<b><u>Total Funds of Society</u></b>	<b><u>\$4,305.92</u></b>
O.F.F. News Printing	378.50		



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## WISE WORDS ON THE RECENT FIRES

A letter to the S.M.H from Penny Figgis, Vice-president of the Australian Conservation Foundation, is worth repeating. It reads (in part) :

*The easy "destroy all fuel"[solution] suggested by instant experts would require constant burning of vast areas and leave our bushland an eroding, scotched earth devoid of ferns, orchids, native grasses, wildflowers, flowering heaths and shrubs.*

*It would mean the destruction of the habitat and feeding areas of much of our already beleaguered wildlife.*

*By all means let us review fire management and continue sensible hazard reduction and plan the location of housing better, but let us not destroy the beauty, biodiversity and amenity of the bushland most Australians love.*

And from Phil Koperberg, Commissioner, Rural Fire Service, reported in the Daily Telegraph :

*People want to live on the urban-bushland interface. If we keep burning this amenity then people will live in a perpetual state of burnt country...The responsibility of fire protection does not rest solely with the agencies; individuals have a responsibility. You have to look at where you build your home.*

## DRAGON MYSTERIES

In view of the fact that Sea dragons are the subject of our next meeting, this article from the *Leader* some time ago provides some interesting details.

*In the seagrass and flotsam near the Potter Point sewage outfall lives the elusive weedy seadragon. These mysterious creatures, a relative of the sea horse, are found only in Australia's southern waters and one of the largest populations is at Botany Bay. Dragon Search is an organisation set up to find out more about the weedies.*

*"We know about their biology but there's hardly anything we know about how they live under water, how they travel, whether they are active at night or even if they are monogamous."*

*Unlike sea horses, seadragons swim like a fish. They feed on plankton, larval fish and small shrimp. Each spring, females deposit a cluster of bright orange eggs onto egg cups that form from swollen blood vessels on the tails of weedy males. Seadragons are a bio-indicator. These delicate creatures can warn us when their seagrass environment is on the verge of collapse.*

Jenny Stokes

## CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

Do your bit for a cleaner local environment. Join us for Clean Up Australia Day on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> March to work on the mangrove area of Poulton Park. Meet at 10 am on the corner of Kyle Pde and Morshead Drive. It's planned to finish about midday. Bring along hat, garden gloves and drink.

## E-MAIL OF NEWSLETTER

Members are encouraged to receive their *O.F.F. News* by e-mail. This saves the Society the costs of postage and the labour of members. Please give your e-mail address to John Winters at the meeting.

## CASSOWARY UPDATE

Satellite images have identified the illegal clearing of 52 ha of cassowary habitat near Bramston Beach, 80 km south-east of Cairns. Cassowaries are nationally endangered and now restricted to twelve fragmented rainforest communities. The land owners responsible were ordered by the Planning and Environment Court in Cairns to plant 11,000 trees, remove cattle and undertake weed control for five years until the canopy has reformed. Further prosecution is pending.

(reported in *Bush Heritage Newsletter*)

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## Coming Events

**February 25 (Monday).** David Bell from the Marine and Coastal Community Network will share his extensive knowledge of some very special animals - **Sea Dragons and their underwater world.** This is the meeting which members were looking forward to last year but had to be cancelled.

**March 2 (Saturday).** **FIELD DAY.** The first outing of the year. A good one to start with. **Bird-watching in the Royal National Park.** Led by Steve Anyon-Smith, author of the very good little book *Birdwatching in Royal & Heathcote National Parks.* We will be looking in some of the areas around Audley which did not get burnt. You are sure to see a lot of birds and at the same time find out how the fires affected the birdlife in the Park. Meet 8.30am (early start is best to see birds) at Wattle Forest car park. This is along the road to the right 100 metres after the Audley weir, over the wooden bridge and about 1 km to the meeting point. We will have morning tea at Wattle Forest, then move back across the bridge walking along Lady Carrington Drive to Jersey Springs (2.7 km each way). Lunch at Jersey Springs.

Bring: binoculars, bird I.D. book, drink and lunch.

**March 25 (Monday).** Dr Alan Millar of the Botanic Gardens. Talk on Seaweeds around the coasts of Sydney.

### DEER IN ROYAL NATIONAL PARK

Alan Fairley and Fred Bell attended a large "Community Workshop" at Audley on 23<sup>rd</sup> January. It was part of NPWS's desire to get community input into the deer problem in the Park. Despite an excellent scientific report presented by Andrew Moriarty of University of Western Sydney which clearly showed the damage 2600 deer are doing to the Park's ecology, there was a great range of opinions expressed from "all animals, including deer, have rights" to "shoot the lot of them". A workshop report with a list of views has been printed and will be available at the next meeting. Whilst public consultation is a necessary part of the programme, the lack of quick action is worrying. Every day delayed is another day that the Park is being damaged by the deer, a situation made worse by the recent fires as the deer are competing directly with native animals for food resources. The Royal N.P. was created to preserve our native heritage. It is not a reserve for "cute" introduced animals which threaten the whole biodiversity of the park.

### LOOKOUT FOR FIRE ANTS

Environment groups have been asked by NSW Agriculture to alert their members about the fire ant problem. These are the latest introduced pest and have been detected in Brisbane. Not only do they inflict a painful burning sting, but they invade backyards and parks preventing people from enjoying these grassy spaces. They displace other ants by aggressively competing for food and living areas and subsequently attack small mammals and reptiles. They can change the ecology of an area permanently. And they are probably heading south !!

What to look for. A small (2-6 mm) reddish brown ant, which is very aggressive and agitated when disturbed, nesting in a small dome mound up to 40 cm high.

What to do. If you suspect you have fire ants, ring NSW Agriculture on (free call) 1800 888 251 and, if possible kill some with insecticide and send them to NSW Agriculture, Taxonomy Unit, Forest Road, Orange 2800.

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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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March/April 2002

### 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 27/28<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup> 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 \_\_\_\_\_ and he will arrange for the changeover.



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## Coming Events

**March 25th (Monday).** Dr Alan Millar, from the Royal Botanic Gardens, will give us an insight into the fascinating world of seaweeds, with a special emphasis on those around Sydney and nearby coastal waters.

**April 6th (Saturday).** **FIELD DAY.** Explore the local wetlands in West Oatley. A similar walk last year was very popular. This will be a little different. The walk is from the bus shelter on the eastern side of Oatley railway station. Meet there at 9.45am. Length: 7 kms, taking in Oatley Park and Lime Kiln wetlands. Lunch at Sandy Bay baths (Oatley Park) about 12 noon. Not too difficult; returning to Oatley station about 3 pm. Leader : **Cliff Crane** : phone 9580 8488.

**April 22nd (Monday).** **Nicholas Carlile** to tell us about the recent re-discovery of the Lord Howe Island Lobster. You may remember when Nicholas spoke to us previously on his work with terns on Cabbage Tree Island.

### O.F.F. NEWS

\*\*\* At least 11 OFF members helped clean up the edges of Oatley Bay at Poulton Park on **Clean-up Australia Day**. The usual collection of plastic bottles, plastic bags and bits of foam were found. Although lots of bags were filled and discarded car seats, car parts and other large items were found, the general consensus was that the litter around the foreshores was not too bad.

\*\*\* 25 people attended the last walk **bird spotting** along Lady Carrington Drive in Royal National Park. This large number was not ideal to observe, but those in front or near our leader Steve Anyon-Smith recorded 50 species. Of special note were close-ups of two lyre-birds, a family of crested shrike-tits, black-faced monarch, olive-backed oriole, brown warblers, brown pigeons, rock warblers, a wedge-tailed eagle soaring high above and lots of lewin honeyeaters. Alan Fairley has printed out a list of the sightings which will be available at the desk next meeting.

\*\*\* Steve tells us that he has just recorded the 300<sup>th</sup> bird species for Royal N.P. – a **superb fruit dove**. This makes the Royal one of the best national parks in Australia for observing birds.

\*\*\* Still on the topic of birds. Last year David Waterhouse produced a brochure for the Society

titled **Observing Birdlife in Oatley**. It is available for the cost of printing (50 cents) at the meetings. He has now followed that up with another short pamphlet, **Observing Birds Nesting in Oatley**, which lists native birds seen nesting in Oatley East and comments on behaviour of these birds. It also encourages all members to be active observers of our local bird life and to contribute to local knowledge. Only a few copies of this pamphlet have been produced and they are available from the desk at the meetings.

\*\*\* Following our last meeting – the contacts for those who find **sea dragons** washed up on the beaches are:

Phone 9436 0176 Fax 9436 0376

email

asn.au

\*\*\*Following up on the important issue of **fire ant** detection and identification, we now have a brochure available. Please take one from the desk at the meeting.

### From the Committee

- ❖ The Society has written to Kogarah and Hurstville Councils asking for an explanation of how their Open Space Acquisition Fund

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Hon. Editor : Alan Fairley, P.O. Box 448, Oatley 2222. Ph : 9570 8222



## O.F.F. NEWS

and Open Space Embellishment Fund work, what income was gained and what works have been funded.

- ❖ We are to approach both Oatley and Oatley West Primary Schools to arrange for the awarding of a book prize for environmental interest among students.
- ❖ Val Douglas and helpers have prepared a "Show Bag" for give-aways at various Lions Fairs and similar functions.
- ❖ Programmes for 2002 have been printed. Collect your from the meeting or telephone Lesley Cox on 9579 3782.
- ❖ OFF is to provide a display at Moore Reserve Open Day on Sat. 6<sup>th</sup> April.
- ❖ Fred Bell has inspected a creek in Poulton Park which was of concern to an OFF member and has had discussions with Kogarah Council officers.
- ❖ A letter of thanks from the Society has been sent to Val Douglas for her 25 years of continuous service on OFF's Committee. Although no longer on the Committee, Val continues her valuable work for the Society.
- ❖ Following Paddy Mackenzie's suggestion that the Society make a donation to the Bush Fire Appeal, the Committee has suggested that many members have already made personal donations to that worthy cause and that members' individual donations would be more appropriate than one from the Society.

Jess Browne is just one of our members who continue their membership with the Society even though they can no longer attend meetings or outings. We thank all those members who continue to support the Society and enjoy getting their *OFF News* even though for reasons of travel, infirmity, etc, they cannot attend activities. Such support is greatly appreciated

### **SPECIAL PLEA FROM HON.TREASURER & MEMBERSHIP OFFICER**

Quite a few O.F.F. members have not renewed their Society membership for 2002

If you are one of these , PLEASE pay your \$16 before the end of March when memberships lapse

### **National Parks Under Attack**

It is clear from recent media comments on the bush fires and feral animal (deer and brumby) removal that there is a group of people in our community who are antagonistic to the values of national parks. It is also becoming clear that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is increasingly giving in to those interests.

Take the issue of 4 Wheel Drive access to parks. Whenever tracks are closed to protect the environment from erosion or wilderness areas are proclaimed, the 4WD groups make a fuss, the NPWS meets their representatives and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) often results in their being rewarded with park access. More than 40% of NPWS coastal reserves still permit recreational beach driving. NPWS has even constructed a new campsite at Yuragir N.P. which is only accessible by 4WD and the Myall Lakes N.P. Draft Management Plan allows vehicles on kilometres of beach.

Supporters of recreational use of parks often dominate regional advisory committees making it difficult for NPWS staff to properly manage the park and to protect its natural values from inappropriate use.

There is also a strong horseriding lobby which wants access to sensitive sub-alpine areas in Kosciuszko as well as to trails in Sydney parks. The NPWS has prepared a draft horseriding policy that significantly weakens the existing policy and even avoids acknowledging the adverse impacts of horseriding.

Then, of course, there is the ski lobby who always want to expand their villages into Kosciuszko. The NSW Government has stripped NPWS of its resort management powers and intends to take away planning consent from NPWS and give it to the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning. Then ski resort and lodge owners with leases in the park will not need to get NPWS consent before proceeding with a development proposal.

(Details from *National Parks Journal*, Dec.2001)

and assists in ensuring that the Society remains financially sound and locally relevant.

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Issue 2002/04

# OATLEY FLORA & FAUNA

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April/May 2002

## **MOUNTAIN BIKES IN ROYAL N.P.**

Concern is being expressed at the number of cyclists on mountain bikes using walking tracks in Royal National Park and causing erosion with their tyres.

The National Parks Association has developed a policy with which many OFF members will agree.

*"Mountain bikes should not be allowed off track in any circumstances, on designated walking tracks, fire trails where the gradient is too steep and on erodible soils and those areas that are impossible to supervise."*

The NPA also advocates the closure of fire trails that are no longer needed, and suggests that to leave them open leads to difficulties in enforcing the Plan of Management.

## **LORD HOWE LAND LOBSTER**

Nick Carlile has sent us the following notes on his talk at our next meeting.

"Isolated in the South Pacific, 600 km north east of Sydney, lies the tropical paradise of Lord Howe Island. Until its discovery in 1789, this remote, coral-fringed, volcanic peak had been silently eroding undisturbed for the last 6.5 million years – long enough for this speck of land to develop a suite of unique plants and animals.

One such species is the Lord Howe Island Phasmid (*Dryococelus australis*). Known to the islanders as the Land Lobster, the Phasmid has long been considered one of the heavyweights of the arthropod world. Growing to a length of 15 cm and exceeding 1 cm in width, this species once dominated the night-time forests of Lord Howe Island. They were known to rest during the daytime in hollow logs and tree cavities from which they would emerge after dark to feed in the forest canopy.

Once widely spread across the island, the Phasmid's numbers suddenly dwindled then quickly disappeared soon after black rats found their way ashore from a grounded supply ship in 1918. It was considered, sadly, to be the final "hurrah" of this extraordinary animal.

Its rediscovery by scientists from the NPWS in 2001 is an almost unbelievable story. The adventure of its rediscovery and the recovery plans for the species are the subject of the talk for OFF."

**Next meeting** Craig Shephard, Senior Ranger, NPWS, Pest Species Management, has been invited to speak for 10-15 minutes before Nick Carlile. He will update us on the deer management plan and its implementation in Royal National Park.

**Last walk** Walk leader Cliff Crane had 19 members and 9 visitors for a much enjoyed 7-8 km trek of Myles Dunphy Reserve, unmade streets of Oatley, Oatley Park and Lime Kiln wetlands. The weather was excellent.

**Botanic Gardens (Herbarium) visit** Dr Allan Millar, whose March talk on seaweeds so enthralled us, has offered to show OFF members his workplace and the Herbarium collections. Two separate days have been arranged; the inspection will be about an hour from 10.30 am.. The days are : Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> May; or Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> May. Places are limited and will be booked on a "first in, best dressed" basis. Contact Cliff Crane on 9580 3269 after 6.30 pm.

## **Moore Reserve wetlands : official opening**

Cliff attended the official opening of these wetlands on our behalf on Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> April. Next day, there was an Open Day at which Kogarah Council, OFF, Streamwatch and Lions had an information stall. Those who were there thought it very successful, as a lot of interested local people attended. Alan Fairley led two walks around the reserve, explaining the natural features and identifying some of the native plants. The wetland is looking very good at the moment. The water plants have thrived and most of them are flowering at the moment.

**Did you know ?** National parks in NSW total 5,387,055 hectares, about 6.72% of the State's land area.



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## Coming Events

**April 22 (Monday).** **Nicholas Carlile** will tell us about the rediscovery of the Lord Howe Island Land Lobster. You may remember Nicholas from Sept 1999 when he spoke to us on his work with Goulds Petrel on Cabbage Tree Island. He has been on TV recently talking about the success of that project, so we will be able to get an up-date as well as hearing about his new work on Lord Howe Island.

**April 27 (Saturday).** **FIELD DAY.** Exploring **La Perouse Peninsula.** Beautiful coastal scenery and historical interest. Walk from La Perouse to Cape Banks, the northern headland of Botany Bay. Distance about 6 km return. See the historic gun emplacements at Henry Head dating from 1881. Walk out onto the isolated Cape Banks to inspect the rusting wreck of the "Minmi" (1937). Lots of bird life and heath flowers. The track is good to Henry Head, but narrow, eroded and maybe wet beyond. Meet at Snake Pit, opposite the bus terminal at 9.30am. Bring drinking water and lunch; binoculars would be useful. You should have time at the end of the walk to inspect Bare Island Fort and the excellent La Perouse Museum. Leader : Janet Austin , phone 9579 2375.

**May 27 (Monday).** Dr Buz Wilson of Australian Museum will talk about marine animals around the coast of NSW.

### FUNDS FOR LAND PURCHASE

OFF strongly supports two environmental funds set up to purchase land and protect natural areas. These are the **Australian Bush Heritage Fund** and the **Dunphy Wilderness Fund**. From time to time the Society has made small donations to these funds and we encourage all OFF members to consider making a donation to what are very worthwhile causes.

Australian Bush Heritage Fund aims to purchase prime natural habitats throughout Australia to protect as great a diversity of fauna and flora as possible, and to manage that land effectively. They already have properties in Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania and elsewhere, and have just purchased an outstanding property in WA between Stirling Range and Fitzgerald National Park. It is an area of great biodiversity and of national conservation significance.

Donations can be made to the Fund, Reply Paid 101, Hobart. Tas. 7001.

Website :

Dunphy Wilderness Fund aims to acquire private land to consolidate and protect wilderness areas. It was established in 1996 by the NSW

Government to honour the contribution made by the Dunphy family to conservation in NSW. Milo Dunphy was an Oatley resident and member of OFF. The Fund has already purchased 32 properties totalling 38,000 hectares, including areas in Wollemi, Kanangra-Boyd, Tuross and Guy Fawkes. Donations over \$2.00 are fully tax deductible. Every \$100 donated could buy a hectare of pristine wilderness.

Donations can be made to : Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife, GPO Box 2666, Sydney. NSW. 2001.

- Did you know ? Paddy Pallin camping goods store in the City donates 20 cents to a frog research group every time you do not take a paper bag for your purchase. What a commendable idea!! Are you doing your bit to help reduce the paper and plastic bag wastage ? IGA Supermarket and Bakers Delight at Oatley are two stores which hand out excessive plastic bags. A polite refusal when offered a bag and a comment about reducing plastic in the environment might eventually get the message through to such stores.





Issue 2002/05

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### GEORGES RIVER LAND SELL-OFF

There is concern about the fate of a three kilometre stretch of Defence Land along the southern side of Georges River between Mill Creek and Sandy Point. This pristine parcel of publicly owned bushland is in danger of being sold for development by the Federal Government. It has recently been transferred to the Department of Finance and Administration (DOFA) for "divestment". It seems certain that the land will be carved up for residential development.

The site contains important ecological values. Even DOFA acknowledged that "the tidal flats along Georges River and Mill Creek support an estuarine vegetation complex. This complex is in excellent condition and has high conservation value. It supports a range of wading and wetland birds as well as native amphibian species."

Rather than being sold to developers, the land should be immediately included in the Georges River National Park. The land on the opposite side of the river is already part of the park and the NPWS has formally requested that the land be transferred to the State for inclusion in the park.

OFF has written to the Federal Government opposing the sale.

(from *Total Environment*, 2002, Issue 1)

### ENVIRONMENT AND POPULATION

Australia's population debate has been ignited again by the recent National Population Summit and statements from big business and political leaders. It is often an emotional debate in which the facts become blurred, but there have been some worthwhile comments in the media.

One was a response to the Federal Minister, Mr Hockey, who called for a boost in Sydney's population to 8 million by 2050. Peter Woods, NSW local government chief called this proposal "abject stupidity". He added that if we continue down the path of urban consolidation with all the apparent water pollution, air pollution, traffic congestion and social dislocation, we will inherit the same disastrous situation that we see in other

cities in the world. Australia was already the most urbanised country in the world, he said, and Sydney had almost reached its optimum size.

Another newspaper article (by Jenny Goldie, S.M.H.) is headed "Damaged environment demands we cut our population" and argues that immigration must fall within the bounds of ecological sustainability.

*"As more and more asylum seekers press on our shores, we need to know how many people this country can sustain. Social and economic considerations have dominated the debate about population policy but ultimately it is an environmental matter. No nation should grow beyond its resource limits.*

*Australia's population can only grow within its ecological limits. Unfortunately, with our population of 19.4 million and at our standard of living, we are not living sustainably. We know this because all the environmental indicators – soil, water, forests, biodiversity and atmosphere – are declining."*

### ENGINEERING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Two projects reported in *Engineers Australia* (Feb 2002) are showing that creative engineering can be a solution to environmental problems.

- A Sydney-based company has recently completed the construction of an automated worm farm in Lismore, NSW, which processes the organic and green waste from more than 10,000 householders, reducing Lismore's total waste stream by more than 50%. The company constructed and runs the \$6.5 million worm farming facility.
- \* A Melbourne-based company is planning a unique solar power station in the Mildura area, which will cover almost 2000 ha with a 1 km tall tower at its centre. Instead of using photovoltaic cells to convert sunlight, a collector made from either glass or UV-resistant plastic and about 5 km diameter would use the sun's radiation to heat the air underneath it.





# O.F.F. NEWS



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July/August 2002

## EXPLORING MYLES DUNPHY RESERVE

Myles Dunphy Bushland Reserve preserves a remnant of the Turpentine-Blackbutt Forest which once covered much of the Hurstville district in pre-settlement times.

Most of us glimpse it briefly as we pass Oatley railway station along Mulga Road. It is a little-known 'Cinderella' sort of reserve compared with the other Oatley bushland remnants. Few people, except those taking a short cut, visit the place. To all but a handful, it is 'that patch of scrub behind the bowling club'.

This is a pity because it has an interesting flora. The lower sections close to the creek are choked with introduced plants, such as privet and lantana as well as garden-escape flowers, but the vegetation of the slopes higher up are still largely natural.

The dominant trees are Blackbutt and Smooth-barked Apple ('Rusty Gum'), with Turpentine and Snow-in-Summer (a paperbark) more prominent closer to the creek. Other large trees present in lower numbers include Red Bloodwood, Cheese Tree, Stringybark, Scribbly Gum and the odd Sydney Peppermint. These eventually give way to Swamp Oak and Grey Mangrove as the creek empties into Gungah Bay.

The understorey consists largely of She-oak, Mock Orange (*Pittosporum*) and several kinds of wattle, with a sprinkling of Elderberry, Panax, Needlebush (*Hakea*), Green Grevillea, Port Jackson Fig, Banksia, Pine-leaved Geebung, Mock Olive, Poison Peach, Hopbush, Bleeding Heart, Blueberry Ash and various native peas. Vines include Sweet Sarsaparilla, Running Postman, Apple Berry, Purple Pea and Wombat Berry.

The ground cover layer includes a lot of Kangaroo Grass and Bracken, with some Rainbow Fern, Dianella Lily, Mat Rush, Rice Flower, Native Heath, and even a few colonies of ground orchids, including winter flowering White Fingers (*Caladenia*), Nodding Greenhood and Pixie Caps.

Over twenty species of birds occur regularly, including most of the usual suburban natives such as rosellas, kookaburras and butcherbirds. The weed-choked gully is the haunt of a resident colony of the introduced red-whiskered bulbul and a number of spotted turtle doves. The good news is that other familiar introduced species such as Indian mynahs, starlings and domestic pigeons rarely or never occur. Small-bird-chasing natives such as noisy miners, ravens and currawongs are in low numbers.

This factor, plus the thick cover, has enabled a small population of typical 'bush birds' to hang on. These include: blue wren, golden whistler, spinebill, pardalote, red-browed finch, silvereye, brown thornbill, grey fantail, white-browed scrub-wren, fantailed cuckoo and olive-backed oriole. In winter, a pair of rose robin and spangled drongo also take up residence. All of these are likely to be seen on the lower track of the slope closest to the bowling club.

by David Waterhouse

## ACF TAKES A LEAD

The Australian Conservation Foundation is soon to move into a new headquarters in Carlton (Melbourne) which will embody "green" principles. It will operate with 90% water saving and 65% energy saving, using solar energy, natural light and ventilation. Timber in the building comes from plantation forests, and emphasis has been placed on using recycled materials. It is hoped to use the building as an example in campaigns for more environmentally friendly buildings.

## BARREN GROUNDS COURSES

Members may wish to know of courses coming up at Barren Grounds (Tel: 4236 0195 for details and costs).

Nature Writing with Bill Lines, author of "Taming the Great South Land". 27-29 September 2002.

Wildflowers of the Heath, with Alan Fairley. Two days, Sun 15 Sept and Sat 9 Nov.

Wildlife Survey Techniques, mist netting to harp trapping. 11-13 October.

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

**July 22 (Monday). Peter Sage.** Peter returns to OFF to take us on a photographic tour of **Switzerland's mountains.** We all remember his photographs from scenic Southern Africa and outdoors in England. This time it is snow-clad alps, rack railways and scenic villages.

**July 27 (Saturday). Field Trip.** Duck River Bush Track. A pleasant walk through a bush regeneration site, continuing along Duck River. Bring your lunch and water. Meet : 10 am at Boundary Road, Auburn outside Everley Park. Leader : Heather Mackey tel: 9528 7071.

### Advance Notices

August 26 (Monday). Talk on Pygmy Possums in Royal National Park.

September 22 (Sunday). Lugarno Lions Festival.

October 11 (Friday). OFF Annual Dinner. Details later, but mark the date in your diary.

October 19 (Saturday). Oatley Lions Festival.

### Change of programme.

The "Earth Garden" people are unable to come to our meeting on September 23. The new speaker will be Margaret Bradhurst, whose topic will be "Native Orchids of the Local Area".

### Society Notes

Concerns about Tree Lopping. Kevin Greene, MP for Georges River, has replied to our letter about Energy Australia's procedures regarding tree trimming. He has written to the Minister for Energy, Kim Yeadon, asking for the current guidelines to be reviewed. He writes "Recent experience indicates that the procedures used resulted in damage to local street trees due to the severe 'lopping' that has occurred. Residents have contacted me expressing their distress caused by these actions. It would be appreciated if you could investigate the matter of Energy Australia's tree maintenance guidelines".

#### Action

If you are having trouble with the lopping of street trees, either contact Kevin Greene immediately on 9580 9349, or write to The Hon Kim Yeadon, Governor Macquarie Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney. A photograph of the damage would be a good thing to have.

\*\*\* OFF has made donations of \$50 each towards a brochure to save Mill Creek bushland and to NPA for the protection of Kosciuszko.

\*\*\* Committee members have examined the Draft Plan of Management for Heinrich Reserve at Lugarno, focusing mainly on proposals for bush regeneration and weed control. Hurstville Council seems to have developed a good plan which should ensure the survival of this important bushland reserve.

\*\*\* Sydney Water has replied to our letter raising concerns about an offensive smell in Poulton Park Creek. This is caused by sewage overflows which occur from time to time. Sydney Water recognise that there is a problem. There are 5 discharge points along the creek which overflow after heavy rain and from seepage from cracked pipes. Sydney Water says that it regards this as a sensitive area and explained measures it intends to apply to fix the problem.

**Did you know?** Many of the major weeds which cause problems throughout Sydney bushland, such as broad-leaf privet, blackberry, lantana and honey locust, began their Australian life as hedges at John Macarthur's Camden Farm. They were among the hundreds of exotics which Macarthur imported.



# O.F.F. NEWS



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## HOUSING PROPOSAL FOR WEST MENAI

The *Leader* (July 25) let the cat out of the bag by announcing a proposed huge land development to house up to 6000 people for the north-west of Sutherland Shire. Local conservationists have known of such a plan for some time but this was the first public release of the proposal. The plan is for land previously granted to the Gandangara Aboriginal Land Council and consists of most of the bushland you now see as you drive along Heathcote Road west of the Rubbish Tip, including the valley of Mill Creek and areas down towards the Georges River.

A lot more will be said about this proposal as the appropriate Development Applications are made and as the public becomes aware of the huge environmental problems which will accompany any such land development. At this early stage, however, let us consider these points :

- the area has some of the finest and most extensive natural habitat left in the Sutherland Shire;
- it is not degraded land, despite its use by 4 wheel drives and trail bikes. It has heaths rich in plant species and rare clay-soil ironbark forests;
- the area contains a number of rare and endangered species, including the largest population of *Allocasuarina diminuta ssp mimica* known in all Australia;
- increasing the number of people will put stress on the already busy road system around Lucas Heights;
- strip development along Heathcote Road will lead to the joining of Sutherland and Liverpool with continuous housing;
- run-off and erosion will cause further degradation of the Georges River.

## Smiggins in January 2003

Members interested in going to Smiggin Holes in mid January for the annual 7 days fun in the Snowy (alpine walks or just relaxing) are asked to

contact Robin (tel: 9580 5663) to record your expression of interest. Details later.

## True Food Guide

Greenpeace has produced a 28 page guide to help people choose GE free foods. We have ordered 10 copies and they will be available free of charge at the next meeting.

## Grevillea Park Open Days

A number of OFF members have enquired about when the Grevillea Park at Bulli will be open. The Spring dates of opening are : September 21-22, and 28-29. There is a \$4.00 entry fee, but it is worth it as the park is a great spot to visit at this time of year.

## VACANCY – HON. TREASURER

After 10 years as Treasurer of OFF, John Watters will not be nominating for the position at the AGM on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2003.

Any member willing to accept this position should contact John or our President Cliff Crane.

John will assist the new Treasurer during the changeover and on a continuing basis if necessary.

## Barren Grounds Courses

A brochure has been received listing up-coming courses and will be on display at the next meeting. Or you can phone Barren Grounds on: 4236 0195 for details and costs.

## Economic Growth and the Environment

“Even suggesting that a future world may not necessarily involve economic growth is enough to cause most conventional economists to hyperventilate. But common sense tells us that we can’t go on indefinitely increasing our resource use and putting pressure on natural systems. About half of the earth’s surface has now been transformed for human needs. Telling people that growth can go on forever is the well-trodden path to political popularity but is just irresponsible.”

Professor Ian Lowe, quoted in *Colong Bulletin*, July 2002.

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

**August 26 (Monday).** **Ayesha Tulloch**, a zoologist will talk about **Pygmy Possums** in the Royal National Park. Ayesha has conducted an extensive research project on these tiny mammals and will have some fascinating stories to tell. Find out how wildlife has survived the bushfires of last Christmas.

**August 31 (Saturday).** **Field Trip.** Heathcote-Kangaroo Creek-Heathcote( Royal N. P.). We will walk along the Bottle Forest Track, then down to Kangaroo Creek, along to Karloo Pool and up to Heathcote. Bring lunch and water. Meet 9.15 am at eastern side of Heathcote Station. Train leaves Oatley at 8.50 am. Leader : Janet Aitken, tel. 9790 2211.

### Advance Notices

September 23 (Monday). Margaret Bradhurst's talk and slides on "Native Orchids of the local area".

September 22 (Sunday). Lugarno Lions Festival.

October 19 (Saturday). Oatley Lions Festival.

### Change of programme.

Professor Michael Archer has rescheduled his visit to OFF to talk about the **Riversleigh fossils** to our November 25<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Jeffrey Ray has kindly swapped dates and will instead present his South American slides on October 28<sup>th</sup>.

### Catch up with friends at the OFF ANNUAL DINNER

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October at Mortdale RSL in the upstairs function room, 6.30 pm for 7.00 pm.

#### 3 course dinner for \$25.00 per person

A delicious menu, with Thai beef salad entrée, either baked lamb or chicken with vegetables as the main and baked berry cheesecake for dessert. There will be bread rolls and tea, coffee and dinner mints.

Val Boyan will take your name and collect money at the next two meetings. You can also give Val a call to register a booking (tel: 9533 1013). Last day for payment is Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

### Society Notes

\*\*\* The Society wishes to send as many *OFF News* as possible by email. It is more cost effective and saves time and effort in wrapping and postage. You also get your newsletter more

quickly. If you have email and have not yet given your details to John Winters, please see him at meeting night or phone him on 9153 7766.

\*\*\* Seen in Oatley Park last month : one frightened ferret, obviously dumped by some unthinking person.

\*\*\* Sighted in Lime Kiln Bay in mid July – a White-necked Heron. An addition to the birds in Oatley brochure.

\*\*\* Additions to the Oatley Park Plant List

1. *Zieria smithii* - small shrub beside road down to Lime Kiln Bay
2. *Cassinia laevis* – single shrub on Headland track
3. *Pterostylis longifolia* – ground orchid on slope above lower gate
4. *Crowea saligna* – one plant flowered 21<sup>st</sup> June on rock shelf near picnic ground
5. *Melaleuca linariifolia* – large paperbarks beside Lime Kiln Bay just out of Oatley Park.

Have you got your copy of "Native Plants of Oatley Park"??? Just \$4.00 at the meeting.

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



Issue 2002/09

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September/October 2002

## LIME KILN BAY – THEN AND NOW

Once overgrown with weeds, silted up and polluted, Lime Kiln Bay has been changed for the better by a recent rehabilitation scheme. Earlier last century, the catchment would have looked different, but how different I didn't really know until one day recently when I met Don McMinn, an octogenarian who lives in Bay Street and has known Lime Kiln all his life. He has been interested in nature since boyhood and has observed the changes in flora and fauna which have taken place in the area over the decades.

He recalls that the belt of mangroves fringing the lower part of Lime Kiln Creek only came into existence after World War 2 when much clearing for suburban growth took place upstream. Previously there had been saltmarsh and grassy flats before massive amounts of silt built up to allow mangrove seeds to become established. Much of the lower part of the golf course across the creek was an extensive reed swamp destined to be replaced by a rubbish dump in the late 1970s before the greens were laid.

Until the 1950s or early '60s, Bay Street residents could see across to Penshurst, as there was no tree cover on the slopes leading down to the creek. Today it is well wooded. In pre-war times, the area was largely covered in Tick Bush (*Kunzea ambigua*), remnants of which survive in the grounds of Oatley West Primary School, as well as Banksia scrub and an understory of native peas, etc. Few large trees existed as they had been cleared largely for firewood in those days of wood fires.

The creek was still fringed with Swamp Oak and some paperbark and reeds, but it ran deep in pre-war days and was fringed with Dog Rose (*Bauera*). There was a dairy and an orange orchard on the flats away from the creek. At one stage, the stream divided and flowed over a waterfall which emptied into a deep pool called "The Devil's Hole". Large eels and other freshwater fish were there for the taking.

There were lots of Long-nosed Bandicoots on the flats and Water Rats and Swamp Rats in the boggy places.

In rock crevices up the slopes in the '20s was a colony of Cunninghams Skinks. Kids and cats would bring home a rich diversity of reptiles. These included : Goannas, Bearded Dragons, Burtons Legless Lizards, Diamond Pythons, Leaf-tailed Geckos, Brown Snakes, Green Tree Snakes, Whip Snakes, Black Snakes, Blue-tongued Lizards, water Skinks and Water Dragons. The last few still survive but the rest are now long gone.

Wild ducks, ibis and spoonbills did not occur then as now, but Red-eyed Tree Frogs bred after rain and Stubble Quail called from the grass and could be heard on still evenings. Yellow-tufted and New Holland Honeyeaters nested in the shrubs. Peewees by the hundred flocked to roost.

Whipbirds, Double-barred Finches and Rufous Whistlers were common and Wood-swallows and Jacky Winters nested each year in the few tall trees. None of these birds occur locally today.

Don recollections made me much more aware of the changes which have taken place over the years and gave me a whole new perspective on the natural history of Lime Kiln Bay.

by **David Waterhouse**

## CATCHMENT BLUEPRINT

The Southern Sydney Catchment Management Board is developing a Catchment Blueprint for the Georges River and Botany Bay. Fred Bell and Graham Austin have attended meetings and drafted a OFF submission. This submission criticizes the expansion of Botany Bay Port between its present location and the airport runway. This would destroy important migratory bird habitat at Penrhyn Inlet. On a broader scale, we believe that any new port should be constructed at Newcastle where the jobs are needed. Expansion in Sydney goes against Premier Carr's whole idea of reducing migrant intake in Sydney and encouraging them to find employment in regional areas.

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

**September 23 (Monday).** Margaret Bradhurst to speak on "Native Orchids of our area". Margaret is a member of the Native Orchids Study Group and has found and photographed most of the orchids in southern Sydney. You will be amazed at the variety and beauty of our local orchids. Margaret comes highly recommended by those who have heard her presentation and seen her slides.

**September 28 (Saturday).** FIELD TRIP. Ku-ring-gai Wild Flower Garden. Walking in the bushland of these gardens. Plenty of wildflowers. The Gardens are 3 km beyond St Ives along Mona Vale Road, about 1 hour drive from Oatley. Meet at the Visitor Centre at 10 am. There is a fee (\$3.00) for entry. After morning tea, we will split into two groups. Group 1 will do the easier walk around a 2 km sealed internal road. Group 2 will walk Mueller Track, a medium bushwalk of about 3 km taking 2 hours. Bring lunch and drinks. Contact : Graham and Janet Austin : 9579 2375.

**October 11 (Friday).** OFF Annual Dinner.(see below)

**October 15 (Tuesday).** ADDITIONAL MID-WEEK OUTING. DISCOVERING PETERSHAM with Keith Robinson. See stately homes of early merchants, the locations of two plane crashes and enjoy a Portuguese custard tart in Sydney's Little Portugal. A leisurely stroll. Meet 9.30 am at bus stop in Trafalgar Street opposite Regent Street near Petersham Railway station. Finish about 2.30 pm. Bring hat, lunch and water. The number of participants is limited to 15. Book with Mamie Clark on 9546 3570.

**October 28 (Monday).** Jeffrey Ray with his South American slides.

**ANNUAL DINNER :** Friday 11 October at Mortdale RSL in the upstairs function room, 6.30 for 7.00 pm.

**3 course dinner for \$25.00 per person**

Pay Val Boyan at next meeting or ring her on 9533 1013

### Society Notes

\*\*\*\* OFF will have stalls at upcoming Lions Festivals at Lugarno on Sunday 22 Sept and Oatley on Saturday 19 Oct. If you can help with the running of the stall for an hour or so, please let Alan Fairley know.

\*\*\*\* Don't forget to let Robin know if you intend going to Smiggins for the 7 days in mid January (tel : 9580 5663).

\*\*\*\* The Society will give book prizes to students of three Oatley primary schools for

excellence in environmental studies. It is hoped to present these books on Speech Night.

\*\*\*\* A submission has been made to Hurstville Council and all Councillors expressing concern about the uncertainty of ongoing funding for local bushcare projects. Council officers were pleased to have OFF input into the Plan of Management for Heinrich Reserve at Lugarno.

\*\*\* A brochure printed by National Parks Assoc. on conservation issues in western NSW will be available for all members at the next meeting.

### Report on the August walk

Janet reports that 13 people had an excellent day along Kangaroo Creek. The wildflowers were spectacular, including lots of ground orchids, wattles, waratahs and woody pears. Lunch was in the delightful surrounds of Karloo Pool.



# O.F.F. NEWS

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October/November 2002

## NOTE FROM THE NORTH COAST

Some older members of OFF will remember Betty Weekes, committee member and editor of *O.F.F. News* over 20 years ago. Betty now lives at Evans Head, still gets *O.F.F. News* and has sent a note to the Society responding to the Lime Kiln Bay article in last newsletter and wondering what has been the fate of Hawthorne Street Natural Area in Ramsgate which she worked hard to protect. With the Annual Dinner approaching, Betty sends her greetings to all who remember her and invites any of her friends who might be travelling north to call in and see her. Robin Dickson has her address.

## HURSTVILLE BUSHCARE FUNDING

In response to our letter concerning on-going funding for bushcare in the Hurstville Council area, the Mayor, Vince Badalati, has responded by indicating that Council is currently developing management plans for individual bushland areas. These plans will assist Council in budgeting for work priorities and setting up time frames and schedules for these areas.

The letter gives these interesting statistics :

"Council's total expenditure budget allocation for bushland management is \$497,826 for the year 2002/03. Council has 9.45 qualified permanent staff working on bushland management and there are approx. 60 active volunteers. Five years ago, total expenditure for bushland management was \$235,000 and involved only 6 permanent staff."

Detailed budgetary forecast for bushcare is in Council's Management Plan 2002-2005 available at Hurstville City Library or on the Council's web site : [www.hurstville.org](http://www.hurstville.org)

## MAJOR AWARD TO O.F.F. MEMBER

David and Devona Pilgrim, members of O.F.F. for many years, travelled to the United States in October for David to receive the Ray K. Linsley Medal for services to hydrology. David is an emeritus professor of the University of New South Wales where his research and promotion of

engineering hydrology have received world-wide acclaim. In particular, he was editor-in-chief of the large and comprehensive manual "Australian Rainfall and Runoff". This is the standard authoritative guide to the hydrologic design of water management structures such as dams, canals and drainage systems in Australia, and has become an important reference for similar works in a number of other countries. The Ray K Linsley Medal is regarded as the most prestigious prize in the world for hydrology and only one is awarded each year.

Report by Dr Fred Bell

## MILL CREEK, GEORGES RIVER

The fight continues to prevent the sale and development of Mill Creek Bushland. Sharyn Cullis told our last meeting of the importance of this stretch of riverside and the efforts of conservationists to save this area. The Federal Government intends to sell this 3 km of pristine bushland. A former military reserve, the land has now been transferred to the Dept of Finance and Administration for 'divestment' at full market value to developers.

A leaflet available at meeting nights encourages you to write to appropriate government departments.

## GOOD NEWS FROM THE MEDIA

Three welcome news items were reported recently

- scrapping of the charcoal project at Mogo, a victory for local residents who had opposed the destructive and polluting nature of the plant;
- scrapping of the F6 Freeway route through the southern suburbs and along Royal National Park's western boundary;
- the debate about a 25 cent charge for plastic bags.

## SEPTEMBER FIELD DAY

It was a perfect Spring day for the 23 people who explored Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden. The flowers were at their best and enjoyed by both groups who did the longer and the shorter walks.

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 28 (Monday).** **Jeffrey Ray** returns to take us on an armchair trip to South America. Jeffrey's spectacular photographs range from the edge of the sea, through jungle to the mountains.

**November 2 (Saturday).** **FIELD DAY.** A pleasant 8 km walk from **Patonga to Umina Beach**, via Warrah Lookout, Crommelin Native Arboretum and Pearl Beach. Classified as "Medium Grade" with an ascent of 230 metres. Magnificent views over Broken Bay and Pittwater. Catch the 7.59am train from Mortdale Station, and then the Palm Beach bus Route L90 at 8.50am from Town Hall (go down Druiitt St to Clarence St bus stop). Arrive Palm Beach Wharf about 10.30am. The ferry departs for Patonga at 11.00am. Be sure to alight from the bus at the ferry wharf on the Pittwater side of Palm Beach not the bus terminal which is at the beach itself. We expect to return on the 2.47pm bus from Umina and the 3.16pm train from Woy Woy, arriving at Sydney terminal at 4.40pm. Leader: John Blake, telephone 9570 4796.

**November 25 (Monday).** **Special event!!** Professor Michael Archer, Director of Australian Museum, with some fascinating tales of the Riversleigh fossil deposits in Queensland.

**December 9 (Monday).** Picnic in the Park. (details in next *OFF News*).

### SMIGGIN HOLES – 2003

Owing to the high level of member interest, accommodation has been booked at Smiggins Chalet Apartments from 18<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> January 2003. The cost is \$40.00 per person per night twin share. A single room surcharge will apply this year (price still being negotiated).

Phone Robin on 9580 5663 for bookings, if you have not already done so. At present, 15 names have been registered. Further details, including park costs, etc, will be printed in Nov/Dec *OFF News*.

### O.F.F. SUBSCRIPTION RATE – 2003

The matter of the subscription rate for 2003 was discussed at the committee meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> September.

In view of increasing expenses, the rate for 2003 will be \$20.00 per family. It is worth

mentioning that \$20 represents outstanding value for the many benefits enjoyed by members. If you only attend one meeting night or one field day a year, you have already got value from your membership fee as it is common for other organisations to charge for what in OFF is free.

John Watters, Hon Treasurer

### SOCIETY NEWS

- John Watters and Val Boyan have been nominated by the Society for this year's Georges River Community Award and Hurstville Council's Volunteer Recognition Award.
- Lesley Cox and Fred Bell will represent OFF at the NCC Annual Conference in October.
- OFF is in the process of organising a web site through Padstow TAFE.



# O.F.F. NEWS



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## FIELD DAY REPORT – Sat.2<sup>nd</sup> November Walk from Patonga to Umina

A mild overcast day with accompanying northeasterly breezes was tailor-made for our 17 members who participated in this 8 km walk. Several view points on the climb from Patonga to where we joined the fire trail near Warrah Lookout revealed spectacular views over Broken Bay, Lion Island, Pittwater and Cowan Creek. As expected, the bush was particularly dry and no water was visible in any of the watercourses along the fire trail to Crommelin Native Arboretum where we had our lunch stop. Pearl Beach was as beautiful as ever but with a bus to catch to Woy Woy one could not linger too long. Our connections with the various forms of public transport were met as expected with the exception of the leg from Woy Woy to Hornsby where rail track work was in progress. The coach provided instead of the train and the electric train from Hornsby returned us to the city only about 30 minutes later than our scheduled time. All agreed that they had had an enjoyable day. John Blake.

## SOCIETY NEWS

\*\*\* Successful recent events include the Oatley Lions Festival, Keith Robinson's Petersham walk, the Georges River Community Awards and the Annual Dinner. A record 60 people attended the dinner at Mortdale RSL on 11<sup>th</sup> Oct and enjoyed the company as well as the excellent meal provided by chef Effie Hook and staff. On 30<sup>th</sup> Oct John Watters was presented with a community award by Kevin Greene MLA in recognition of his voluntary work for O.F.F.

\*\*\* Oops! Jan Douglas wishes to advise that the correct name of the reserve mentioned at our October meeting is **Boongara Reserve**. It's in Oatley West, between River road and Mulga Road, close to the railway underpass. There is a list of all the parks and reserves in Hurstville

Council area on the Council website : [www.hurstville.org](http://www.hurstville.org) under "Leisure". Kogarah has a partial list on its website at : <http://www.kogarah.nsw.gov.au/site/Environment/parks.htm#parks>

\*\*\* OFF representatives have been invited to attend the official re-opening of Oatley Pleasure Grounds on Thur 14<sup>th</sup> Nov at 11am. Important work has been completed in the reserve, including an upgrade of the creek gully and the building of a trash rack to stop sediments being carried down into the bay. Bush regeneration has also occurred, much of it carried out by OFF members under contract to the Council.

\*\*\* Committee member Margaret Schonell attended a NCC skills Workshop on 25<sup>th</sup> Oct. She reported that it was very worthwhile. Topics included negotiating skills, conflict resolution, fund raising, media and communication.

## AT LIME KILN BAY

\*\*\* The foot bridge over Lime Kiln Bay has been completed, so that there is now a link between Oatley Park and South Peakhurst. This means that you can walk in a circuit from Waterfall Road through Oatley Park and back along a new track below the golf course and around Oatley Heights Park. This walk is welcomed by OFF, although we still have some concerns (as expressed previously to Hurstville Council) that the route will be used by trailbikes into and out of the park.

\*\*\* Recently seen around the sedge margins of upper Lime Kiln Bay : a Japanese (Latham's) Snipe and Bailon's Crake – the first local record for both these species. Their presence is probably associated with the drought which has seen many inland birds flying to the east coast. It is interesting that at Yeramba Lagoon, at Picnic Point on Georges River, has also recorded a Bailon's Crake, as well as a Freckled Duck, a Pink-eared Duck and 3 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers – all very rare sightings.

**WANTED** Interested people to serve on OFF Committee for 2003.

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 25 (Monday).** A very special evening. We are pleased to welcome **Professor Michael Archer**, Director of the Australian Museum in Sydney, who will speak on the **Riversleigh fossils** and other fascinating aspects of his work in the world of palaeontology. This will be a wonderful way to conclude our 2002 program. As it is likely to be very popular, you are advised to get there early. Some notes about Mike Archer can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Val Boyan will have her annual stall at this meeting with Christmas odds and ends and Bev Watters famous home-made jams, so be sure to bring some money with you. Funds raised go to OFF Presidents Fund for distribution to worthy causes.

**November 30 (Saturday).** **FIELD DAY. Walk from Bondi to Coogee.** There's no worry about bushfires on this delightful coastal walk. Opportunities for a swim or two at Tamarama, Bronte or Clovelly. Inspect the historic Waverley Cemetery. Easy to moderate walk on a wide and well used track. Length : 6.5 km. Bring lunch and plenty to drink. Catch the 9.05am train from Oatley or Mortdale to Bondi Junction, then bus to Bondi Beach, arriving about 10 am. Leader : John Winters, tel 9153 7766.

**December 9. (Monday evening).** **CHRISTMAS IN THE PARK and GET-TOGETHER.** Join your committee and friends in a drink/barbecue/chat in Oatley Park. Meet between 5.30 and 6.00pm at the eastern car park around the edge of the picnic area. Bring your own food and drink, and a fold-up seat.

**Early 2003. AGM** is on 3<sup>rd</sup> February and the first meeting is on 24<sup>th</sup> February.

### A NOTE ABOUT SMIGGIN HOLES

Those members who will be going to Smiggins in January will already have received their information sheet. NSW Pensioners Concession Card holders who are eligible for free entry into national parks may apply for an annual free pass. If you wish to do this, contact Robin on 9580 5663. The Kosciuszko NPWS office advises that it does not necessarily require this pass (just showing your card at the entry gate will suffice), however, the annual pass may be convenient if you are a regular national park visitor.

### A BIT ABOUT MICHAEL ARCHER

Mike's biographical details, even in point form, would fill all this newsletter, so here are a few highlights :

Born in Sydney in 1945, he began his career in vertebrate palaeontology at age 11. Undergraduate at Princeton University (USA) and PhD in

Zoology at Uni of WA. Curator of Mammals at Queensland Uni. Professor of Biological Science at UNSW since 1989 and Director of Australian Museum since 1999. Produced a number of books and papers and received numerous awards, including inaugural Eureka Prize for the Promotion of Science. Well known for his work on the Riversleigh fossil beds in western Qld, and for promoting knowledge of fossils through publications, museum exhibits and volunteer expeditions to the site.

### WESTERN WOODLANDS CAMPAIGN

Conservation societies have combined their efforts into the Western Conservation Alliance to try to protect the few remaining woodlands in the area between Dubbo and the Qld border. It is working towards a more sustainable forestry industry, more national parks, plantations for timber and funding for farmers to protect their land. For more details contact website: [wca-info@npansw.org.au](mailto:wca-info@npansw.org.au)