



CITIZEN SCIENCE PROGRAMS

Enjoy the outdoors while contributing to:

1. Aussie Backyard Bird Count, 19-25 October 2020. Register [here](#).

The 'backyard' can be a park, patch of forest, the beach, or the main street of town. Each count should be completed over a 20-minute period and you can count as many times as you like during the week.



2. The Great Cicada Blitz <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/the-great-cicada-blitz-nsw-australia>. Open now and until end of season in 2021. This project was started by Dr Nathan Emery, a recent speaker at an OFF Zoom meeting and is hosted by iNaturalist. The website helps to identify species.

See also: Cicada Mania website: <http://www.cicadamania.com/>, OR Nathan Emery's new book: <https://www.cicadamania.com/cicadas/category/researchers/nathan-emery/> and interesting reports on the ABC website: search on Nathan Emery.

3. Wild Pollinator Count: <https://wildpollinatorcount.com/>
8-15 November 2020. This is run by Dr Manu Saunders and Karen Retra in their own time and without funding. It is a great way to learn more about the native pollinators in our gardens and bushland.

BIRD NEWS

Birdlife Australia reports that releasing captive-bred Regent Honeyeaters into the wild leads to the location of a hitherto unknown flock of wild birds: <https://birdlife.org.au/media/one-regent-leads-to-more-regents/>

In not so good news though, Birdlife Australia, a foundation member of the Places You Love Alliance (PYL), also carries an audit report by the EDO for PYL on the risks of the Commonwealth Government handing environmental responsibilities to states & territories: Devolving Extinction?: <https://birdlife.org.au/media/govt-rollback-of-nature-laws/> and report: <http://www.placesyoulove.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/201004-EDO-PYL-Devolving-Extinction-Report-FINAL.pdf>

PLANT PANDEMICS

The Plant Pandemics Just Keep on Coming, How the world's trees got so sick. Humans aren't the only ones affected by pandemics. "Tree-killing microorganisms, like the microfungus responsible for Dutch elm disease, have been criss-crossing the world for centuries, shipped along with exotic trees and shrubs, timber and wood products, even packaging. In the 20th century, a slew of epidemics hammered home the message that hitchhiking bacteria and fungi—the rusts and blights and their kin—and the fearful fungus-like phytophthoras are seriously bad news for agriculture, forestry, and natural wooded habitats. Yet despite those woeful experiences and the tougher biosecurity measures that they prompted, the number of arrivals is rising." (The Atlantic) https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2020/09/worlds-trees-got-so-sick/616506/?utm_source=feed

FERAL ANIMALS

ABC TV has an interesting series of short videos about feral animals in Australia: Meet The Ferals looks at the devastating impact feral animals have on Australia's environment and agriculture and how farmers control introduced pests like cats, pigs, goats, rabbits and wild dogs: <https://iview.abc.net.au/show/meet-the-ferals>

RUSSEL VALE COAL MINE

Illawarra Residents for Responsible Mining (IRRM) has asked if OFF or members can make a submission to the NSW Independent Planning Commission (IPC) on the Russell Vale coal project. The NSW Government wants the IPC to approve a new metallurgical coal mine - underneath Sydney and Illawarra's drinking water catchment - risking our water, climate and health of the local community. The proponent, Wollongong Coal, has a questionable record and should not mine under our water catchment. The 'Revised Russell Vale Underground Expansion Project (MP09_0013)' has been referred to the IPC for a decision by 7 December, 2020. **You can make a written submission** up to 5pm Tuesday 27 October 2020, either by email (ipcn@ipcn.nsw.gov.au), post (Level 3, 201 Elizabeth St Sydney NSW 2000) or the IPC's online portal: www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/have-your-say IRRM has prepared a submission guide. <http://irrm.org.au/underground-expansion-project/>

SAVING BILBIES

The Save the Bilby Fund is a national charity launched in 1999 to help build an insurance population of 10,000 bilbies in Australia by 2030. The fund aims to breed and release captive bilbies into a predator proof area in Currawinya National Park (SW Qld) to build a population of around 400. Their CEO, Kevin Bradley, shows how they go about their work at the Bilby Sanctuary in this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzXkHhMayqs&feature=youtu.be&mc_id=ebab548067&mc_eid=985880e1d0
The fund also encourages the sale of Easter Bilbies instead of Easter rabbits.

EXPLORING THE NATIONAL PARKS OF THE BOURKE AREA

In early September, some OFF members and friends had a wonderful two weeks exploring the national parks around Bourke and Wilcannia. The trip was organised by Deb Andrew and was timed to see the wildflowers which were abundant at this time and this year because of the good autumn rains they were particularly brilliant. In addition, the wildlife were all taking advantage of the good conditions and budgerigars were especially common seemingly nesting in any available tree hollow. It was great to see the country in such good conditions and perhaps even more important were the large numbers of tourists who were holidaying in outback NSW rather than overseas. Many of the towns we visited were booming with tourists filling all available accommodation and spending money in the local cafes and shops and combined with the good agricultural conditions should ensure that country Australia will be one area that benefits from the COVID-19 restrictions. Overall a wonderful experience, and may be repeated.



LITTLE BUSHCARE PROGRAM AT OATLEY WEST EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

OFF has been invited to help children at this newly-opened GRC centre learn to care for and respect the local bushland and contribute to providing more native flora and habitats for native animals. Initially this will involve some planting at the Centre, probably between 9.45 and 11.15 am on a day in November. Later we plan some excursions to Oatley Park and perhaps more plantings in nearby Stevens Reserve. Participating OFF members need a Working With Children (WWC) check: <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-working-children-check> Please contact Liz Cameron if you are interested in helping – elsmere02@gmail.com or phone 9580 6621.

Coming OFF Events in October/November 2020

OFF Full Year Events Calendar at: off.oatleypark.com/program

OFF will continue with the monthly guest speaker program for 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, we must conduct these meetings on-line, using the video conference application Zoom, which you can download for free via this link: <https://zoom.us/> or from Play Store (Google) or App Store (Apple). You should run a test before meetings to ensure you can connect on the night. You will receive an invitation prior to meetings or use the link below.

Note that some OFF presentations and earlier movies can now be found on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCd_PLK8og40D0ekuYAys3lQ

26 October 2020 — Presentation from Turtle Rescue NSW on crucial work saving animals from urbanisation

Turtle Rescue NSW is part of Wild Conservation, a professional fauna management company, and is a family operated firm dedicated to the care of Australian wildlife, both captive and wild. Turtle Rescue works to ensure the best possible outcome for displaced or threatened native wildlife, and provides a volunteer service to the greater community by taking in injured or displaced turtles for release into suitable habitat in the wild

Kane Durrant, snake catcher, reptile expert, and passionate wildlife conservationist will tell us of efforts to save turtles from urbanisation.

Please login before 7.30pm: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3742141020?pwd=i_daK5memiUVeVb7bERgr5WgKybj2w

November 1 & 2 (Sunday & Monday), 2 walks in the Central Coast: Patonga to Pearl Beach & return, and Bouddi Coastal Walk.

Day 1. Meet at 10am in the car park at Patonga Boat Ramp, the eastern end of Patonga Beach. NPWS: A moderately challenging day walk through red gums and eucalypts, the Patonga to Pearl Beach walking track takes in a stunning lookout and ends at the ocean in either direction. 3km one-way, 2 hours, grade 5.

<https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/walking-tracks/patonga-to-pearl-beach-walking-track>

It is also possible to drive to the Pearl beach-Patonga fire trail and take a level walk to the cliff top. We walk along the cliff tops with great views of Broken Bay. Gradual downhill graded track into Pearl beach. Plenty of shady trees along most of the walk. Coffee and lunch at a cafe or bring our lunch and swim at Pearl Beach. Walk back to Patonga. Or car back (need to leave a car at Pearl beach).

Day 2. Meet in the car park at the eastern end of Putty Beach Road at 10am (after the Putty Beach camping ground). Bouddi coastal walk from Putty Beach to Maitland Bay return. Boasting beaches, boardwalks and birdlife, it's known as one of the most beautiful central coast walks. This relatively easy hike is characterised by sweeping views, shady rainforest and inviting picnic spots. 6km, Grade 3.

<https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/walking-tracks/bouddi-coastal-walk>

Over-night accommodation can be arranged at Patonga Campground if you wish to camp, as some members will; it is a lovely location and early bookings are recommended. More details are available from Adrian Polhill, 0424 478 498 or adrianpolhill@hotmail.com.

OFF Annual Dinner

After considering the on-going COVID-19 situation and current restrictions, the committee has reluctantly decided against holding our annual dinner this year. However, the annual picnic in Oatley Park is still scheduled to take place, so make sure to put that in your diary. Monday, 7th December.

Meetings of the Society are normally held at the Oatley RSL Sub-Branch Hall, 25 Letitia St, Oatley from 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm, usually on the fourth Monday of the month. Visitors and accompanied children are welcome at meetings and field days.

However, until the restrictions of the COVID-19 Pandemic are lifted, meetings will be held digitally using the Zoom application.

BRIEFLY SPEAKING

OATLEY PARK BUSHCARE group is normally on second Saturday each month starting 12.00 pm. Next month it will be held on 14 November. Meet at the main entrance in Oatley Park Ave. New participants welcome, contact John Kensett - GRC Bushcare Officer, m: 0435 963 643

LOCAL BUSHCARE Members can assist by volunteering to maintain OFF planting sites each month on the Thursday after general meetings (except December) from 8.00 am to 11 am. We will be back on 29 October at Moore Reserve, supervised by a GRC Bushcare Officer.

STREAMWATCH details Heather Stolle 0425 291 879. This activity usually takes place on the Tuesday morning (9.00 am) after OFF General Meetings. This month we will be at Dairy Creek on 27 October.

CITIZENS CLIMATE LOBBY meetings held at 2.30 pm on the second Sunday of every month. These meetings are now being held on-line using Zoom. The address is <http://zoom.us/j/7868786878>.

GEORGES RIVER COUNCIL is calling on community members to help manage high risk weeds: <https://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/Council/About-Your-Council/Media/Council-calls-on-community-to-help-manage-high-risk-weeds>

WARRIMOO TO BLAXLAND VIA FLORABELLA PASS

Sunday 11 October dawned as a perfect spring day for 11 OFF members to tackle Florabella pass, a short walk down from Warrimoo station. A short, rather rough descent down into the valley led to a most beautiful meander along and over a creek, passing a nice swimming spot. Highlights included springtime blooms such as native orchids and lots of flannel flowers. Also

impressive were the rock formations, especially the overhangs which would have afforded shelter in times past.

We stopped for lunch in a cave about 12.30 and were delighted to meet Annette & Julian Sheen, coming to meet and escort us to the Blaxland pub, We all agreed it was a most enjoyable, not too strenuous 3 hour walk, with about 330 metres descent and ascent. Highly recommended especially as it is so accessible, being only about an hour from Oatley by car, and very convenient to nearby train stations. The path is well-shaded for most of the way, although the valley seemed to be still suffering from drought. Recent rains in other regions of the state do not seem to have had any impact.

2021 CALENDAR.



With the theme of Gem of the Georges River, there are many beautiful pictures of our wonderful natural area, and information on OFF and other community event dates. It will shortly be available from the Mulga Road Bookshop, Povelli's Café, Mullan's Chemist and at pre-Christmas street stalls. Price will be \$10.

2020 MEMBERSHIP

In good news for the Society, we now have over 300 members and all are financial. A great result and many thanks to you and our membership officer, Robin Dickson, whom, no doubt, many of you have conversed with during the year! We would also like to welcome our latest 7 members, who tipped us over this milestone.

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