



HABITAT USE BY ARID BIRDS UNDER LAND MANAGEMENT AND DROUGHT RELATED STRESSORS

At the OFF meeting on 28th June OFF research grant recipient Simon Gorta, an ecologist and UNSW research assistant, discussed his research conducted in semi-arid Sturt National Park and the adjacent pastoral properties of Lindon and Bollard's Lagoon Stations in South Australia over the dingo fence, during the height of the drought in 2019. He investigated how the bird communities in the region persisted during the drought and in response to the dingo fence separating the national park and pastoral properties, studying their abundances and community composition compared to similar studies in wetter, more resource abundant times. Simon is interested in how animals respond to environmental cues, and how to use our understanding of these responses to better manage our ecosystems.

You can view a recording of the talk at OFF's YouTube channel:

<https://youtu.be/6HE0rkWpaX4>

OFF PLANTINGS

In 2017, OFF entered into an agreement with Georges River Council (GRC) to revegetate some of the council reserves with a thick understorey of plants to create habitat for small fauna such as superb fairy wrens and finches. The initial project was in Boorea Reserve near Oatley railway station and since then other projects have been carried out in Moore Reserve, Gannons Park and in Hurstville golf course. Plants were purchased with funds from various government grants, with a small number also supplied by GRC at the planting events. The agreement with GRC required OFF to maintain the planting area for 3 years after the initial planting. To date OFF members have contributed at least 1150 hours to the project and have planted at least 7500 plants.

Since OFF started these projects there has been a marked improvement in the local environment near these plantings. It has been noticed that wildlife such as lizards and insects are much more common in the planted areas than in unplanted adjacent areas. At this stage it is too early to say that other fauna, in particular small birds have been attracted to the planted areas but all the indications are that the areas are suitable for them.

Finally, OFF strongly encourages GRC in future plantings to focus on dense planting of small shrubs and ground covers rather than just on isolated tall trees, thus achieving a balanced outcome.

Overall we believe that these plantings have significantly enhanced the Oatley and Lugarno environments and it should make us proud of being members of OFF.

Volunteer Hours and Plant Numbers

Year	Boorea Reserve	Moore Reserve	Gannons Park	Hurstville Golf Course	Total
2017	113	-	-	-	113
2018	96	135	-	-	231
2019	90	200	183	-	473
2020	135	108	91	-	334
Total Hours	434	443	274 s	-	1151
No. Plants	2500	800	2500	1700 *	7500

* Due to the danger of stray golf balls, these were planted by a contractor from GRC.

DOMESTIC CATS NEED TO BE KEPT AT HOME

We recognise that cats (like dogs) are very important companion animals for many of our members but they are not native to Australia and should be kept at home. Not only can roaming cats decimate populations of small reptiles, birds and mammals, they are also prone to injuries (from cat fights, dog attacks, vehicle collisions, etc) that incur expensive vet bills for their owners. Cat runs and cat harnesses are becoming more common and imaginative in design, providing plenty of stimulation and exercise for pets. A retired biologist in Mudgee has started a petition to prevent domestic cats roaming in NSW. The link to the petition, which contains more information: https://me.getup.org.au/petitions/a-petition-to-confine-domestic-cats-in-new-south-wales?just_launched=true

Please pass on the link to other contacts who are likely to support this petition.

OFF RESEARCH GRANTS

OFF Research Grants have proved to be very successful. Some of the winning recipients from previous years have given presentations at recent OFF meetings. Those of you who were privileged to either be present or watch the presentations via zoom or Facebook should be very satisfied that our donated funds are going towards significant research projects which are enhancing our knowledge of Australia's flora and fauna. Recently, universities were advised that again OFF has \$6000 available to assist students with their research. The application closing date was the 30th June, eleven applications were received. The OFF research committee will now review the applications and forward their recommendations to the OFF Committee for endorsement. So again your donations to OFF will go towards significant university research projects.

SYNTHETIC GRASS MAY BE GREENER BUT NOT GOOD FOR ENVIRONMENT

There has been an increased tendency for councils to use synthetic grass on sports fields. This grass may look greener and not need any water but is not good for the environment. At Poulton Park, walking near the fields, it's not difficult to find plastic filaments being blown off the fields and into the plantings nearby. There is also a high probability that these filaments will be washed down the adjoining creek and into Oatley Bay and the Georges River. Thankfully this issue has been raised by the Sydney Morning Herald (<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/fake-grass-may-be-greener-but-much-hotter-and-less-friendly-to-environment-20210312-p57a95.html>) and may lead to greater consideration of the environmental issues before a complete replacement of natural grass sporting fields.

In a motion to their July council meeting, Bayside Council considered a moratorium on construction of additional synthetic sports fields that incorporate crumbed rubber material until NSW Planning completes the investigation into sustainable alternatives to synthetic grass (Leader, 14/7).



Planting in Boorea Reserve near Oatley Railway Station

Coming OFF Events in July/August 2021

OFF Full Year Events Calendar: <http://www.oatleyflorafauna.org.au/index.php/progam/>

Due to the re-introduction of COVID restrictions, meetings will only be available on-line until further notice, using the video conference application Zoom, If you are on the OFF News email list, you will receive an invitation prior to meetings or use the link in the meeting details.

Note that some OFF presentations and earlier movies can now be found on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCd_PLK8og40D0ekuYAys3IQ

26 July 2021 — Landcare Programs in Greater Sydney

Madeleine Florin, the Greater Sydney Regional Landcare Coordinator with the Greater Sydney Local Land Services, will paint a picture of Landcare and Bushcare across the Greater Sydney region. She will discuss the partnerships and collaborations and some highlights from Landcare across the region. Prior to starting her current role 18 months ago, Madeleine worked in communications and community engagement roles for organisations advocating for regenerative agriculture (Soils For Life) and agroecology (ILEIA - Centre for Learning on Sustainable Agriculture in the Netherlands). Madeleine has a farming systems research background and has worked on research projects in Australia, Brazil and Mozambique.

1 August Sunday – Pindar Cave, Wondabyne (Brisbane Waters National Park)

Cancelled due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

29 August Sunday. Advance notice: Mount Keira Ring Track and Wollongong Botanic Gardens.

Medium walk.

The OFF Field Officer is now drafting next year's program and would welcome the participation of members. If you have any ideas for an outing or would like to lead one, please contact Lesley Wylie on 0400 562 085.

Meetings of the Society are at the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick 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. As noted above, the meeting is also accessible on-line using ZOOM. Please login before 7.30pm: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3742141020?pwd=i_daK5memiUVeVb7bERqr5WqKybj2w .

COVID-19 information

As noted above, the next meeting will only be held on-line.

Please do not attend the Uniting church Hall until notified

If you have not paid your 2021 membership fees you are no longer a member and are encouraged to re-apply for membership.

<http://www.oatleyflorafauna.org.au/index.php/membership/>

BRIEFLY SPEAKING

OATLEY PARK BUSHCARE group is normally on the second Saturday each month starting 12.00 pm, except January. However, due to the COVID lockdown, this activity is cancelled

LOCAL BUSHCARE Members can assist by volunteering to maintain OFF planting sites each month on the Thursday after general meetings (except December) at 8.00 am. But this session is cancelled due to the lockdown.

STREAMWATCH Details Heather Stolle 0425 291 879. This activity usually takes place on the Tuesday morning (9.00 am) after OFF General Meetings. This session is also cancelled due to the lockdown....

POWERFUL OWLS IN TROUBLE

Over the past 18 months, dead powerful owl specimens have been found across Sydney, Newcastle, west to the Blue Mountains and south to Shoalhaven. A dead powerful owl was also found in Lime Kiln Bay Wetlands last year. Some have been found to have died from internal bleeding or small wounds that should have healed naturally. It is suspected that the birds have eaten rats or mice which have ingested shop bought anticoagulant rodenticides. The increased use of these chemicals to control the current mouse plague in NSW is a huge concern. The poison doesn't go away but will affect whatever animal eats the poisoned mouse. This could greatly impact the Powerful Owl population as well as other wildlife.

THREATENED SPECIES ART COMPETITION FOR CHILDREN

Open from 5 June (World Environment Day) to 30 July. Run by Forestmedia Network Inc. and ACF, open to children aged 5-12.

Each child can choose one of Australia's many threatened animals or plants to research, create an artwork, and write a short explanation of their work. Copies of artworks and written explanations can be submitted by parents, guardians, teachers and program managers via ACF's website from 5 June. Exhibition of finalists' artworks will be held in Sydney in September, winners announced on Tuesday 7 September, Threatened Species Day. www.acf.org.au/artcomp

THE PLIGHT OF KOALAS - RAISING AWARENESS IN SCHOOLS

OFF has been supporting the campaign to improve protection for Koalas in a number of ways. We would like to extend this campaign to schools and motivate more students to care about Koalas. Last year three OFF members (Melina Amerasinghe, Sonia Baxant and James Deli) assisted a teacher at Peshurst Primary School to present this topic to her class. Please contact an OFF committee member if you would like to help to develop this program for local schools (email oatleyff@gmail.com or ring one of us; phone numbers on the printed 2021 OFF program).

OFF FACEBOOK PAGE

The OFF Facebook page is full of interesting stories and photos. Members can also contribute by forwarding items to the administrator.

