

## **Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society Inc. (OFF)**

### **President's Address to AGM 7 February 2022**

Well we have come to the end of another eventful year.

As we heard in Liz's report, OFF has covered a lot of territory not only in terms of issues but also ranging from local to state and national. We have put in a huge effort towards delivering on our mission.

I just want to highlight a few of our successes in the last few years:

#### **Tree/shrub planting and follow up maintenance**

In 2017, OFF members committed to various 're-greening' events and on-going maintenance in an effort to reverse the impacts of building larger and larger houses and subsequent destruction of the native habitat.

Over 4 years in excess of 7500 plants were planted and maintained at 4 sites: Boorea Reserve, Moore Reserve, Gannon's Park and parts of Hurstville Golf Course. OFF members and the public contributed more than 1150 hours to these projects. In 2021 we have added to these totals with 140 hours of volunteer labour invested and 950 trees and ground cover species planted at 2 sites in Peakhurst in conjunction with Greater Sydney Landcare Network and GRC;

These re-greening events represent a win for the community, a win for wildlife and a win for the environment. OFF will continue to strongly encourage all GRC future plantings to focus on dense planting of small trees, shrubs and ground covers rather than just on isolated tall trees.

#### **Research Grants**

OFF Research Grants have proved to be very successful. Many of the winning recipients from previous years have given presentations at OFF meetings. Those of you who were privileged to either be present or watch the presentations via zoom or YouTube I'm sure would be very satisfied that our consolidated, donated funds are going towards significant research projects which are enhancing our knowledge of Australia's flora and fauna.

Once again, in 2021 universities were advised that OFF had \$6000 available to assist students with their research. Eleven applications were received from students at the University of NSW, UTS and La Trobe University (joint study with UNSW) and 3 were chosen to receive \$2000 each towards their projects. The winners are very grateful to OFF members for donating the monies which can be leveraged with those from other sources to accomplish more comprehensive research.

We look forward to hearing about their research in the coming year as part of OFF's regular talk series.

#### **Membership numbers -**

have been maintained if not increased slightly and we are forging and leveraging connections and partnerships with other local organisations including: Oatley Heritage and Historical Society, Oatley Lions, Friends of Glenlee Association, Kogarah Bay Progress Association, National Parks Association Southern Sydney Branch; Sutherland Shire Environment Centre; Greater Sydney Landcare Network; Colong Foundation for Wilderness; and umbrella environmental groups including: Nature Conservation Council of NSW; Environmental Defenders Office; and Total Environment Centre; to name just a few. Working together certainly energises us all and increases our influence and the likelihood of positive outcomes from our combined effort. OFF should continue to build on this successful strategy.

#### **The year ahead –**

**Nature photographic exhibition** – This initiative pursues OFF's core business of raising awareness of our native flora and fauna. To be held in May/June at Hurstville Museum and Gallery, using the photographs and possibly videos of local photographers, OFF seeks to highlight the biodiversity that makes our bushland rich and special – the beautiful, unusual and overlooked plants and animals that live around us. We are endeavouring to take our message to a wider audience and I encourage all members to participate in and spread the word about this important event.

**Oatley Park Plan of Management and Masterplan (OPPoM&M)** - OFF was started by a group of local residents who were defending the local bushland from being pillaged. OFF has defended the integrity of the iconic Oatley Park ever since, (ie: for more than 60 years). The latest issue is inappropriate and over-use from, in particular, mountain bikes in bushland and car parking. Council has announced the development of a new OPPoM&M and is seeking local users' views. We must contribute strongly and comprehensively to this process to ensure the high value of the Park's flora and fauna is recognised and given the top priority for management actions.

**More on climate change action** - Climate change issues will be prominent this year with a Federal election in the offing and the increasing reportage of the worsening global warming situation. Many of our projects and campaigns underpin action on climate

change and we must highlight that point in all our representations and communications with governments at all levels as well as the general community.

**Georges River Council (GRC) relations** - I believe we can look forward to not only, much better communication and cooperation with GRC, but also greater acceptance of our aims and objectives for the local environment, with the recent election of 7 new councillors, in particular those from Georges River Residents and Ratepayers including Oatley resident and OFF member Peter Mahoney. The group's statement of environmental initiatives, for which they will strongly argue, aligns well with OFF's aims in its projects and campaigns. OFF representatives have been encouraged by the tenor of initial discussions.

### **Vote of Thanks**

#### **OFF Committee**

I'd like to thank all the committee members for their support and encouragement and for their contributions across the myriad of issues and projects and campaigns that you have heard described earlier. For raising and following up issues and conducting discussions to arrive at largely consensus-based decisions and for all the hard work in keeping OFF running effectively and efficiently.

I'd like to mention in particular **two committee members who are retiring** from their current committee roles.

In this regard a special thanks goes to **Liz Cameron** for her huge effort in the role of Secretary for 13 years. You have heard, in Liz's report, all the activities that we have undertaken in the year and this has been a year of restricted movement and face to face communications! This level of activity has been increasing in the last decade of OFF's existence which would not have been possible without Liz's tireless contribution to OFF's work. Supporting and keeping track of the range of projects that have been undertaken has really kept OFF up to date with current issues and growing in capacity to protect and enhance our natural environment and has underpinned the achievements of the whole Society.

Thankfully however we are not saying farewell to Liz as she has agreed to stay on the committee as an additional member. From there, I'm sure Liz will make a great contribution using her huge knowledge of not only OFF's projects, processes and procedures but also her environmental expertise in a range of OFF activities. Thank you so much Liz!

The other person is **Robin Dickson**. Robin is retiring from the committee after 28 years, filling the role of Secretary for 11 years and that of Membership and Welfare officer for 17 years. Robin's good natured dedication to the role of chasing up and recording memberships as well as following up member welfare issues has really contributed to the high and increasing membership numbers by filling that vital role of two way communication, keeping members in touch with OFF and OFF in touch with members. As a continuing OFF member, I'm sure we'll be frequently calling on your vast knowledge of the background to OFF's many activities, events and campaigns. Thank you very much Robin.

Finally, **thank you to all members** for your support of, and participation in, OFF activities. Please continue to provide your feedback on our activities, events, and campaigns both how they could be improved and suggestions for new ones. Together we can work to protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment – locally and globally.

Kim Wagstaff

President