

# Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society

## Secretary's Report to the 69<sup>th</sup> AGM 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024

So here we are having seen off the “pandemic era” with most of us intact. After a very difficult 2 years, in 2023 we resumed in person monthly general meetings at Oatley Uniting Church. And aren't we all glad about that. Thank you to the committee and our members for their resilience, patience, and persistence through the difficulties of 21/22.

As a new dare I say “green” incoming secretary in 2023, I would firstly like to thank Liz Cameron for 11 years of service in the role. Also, for her assistance in bringing me up to speed with what the role entails. Thanks also to Kim for being the “Super Sub” in 2022 and for giving me some guidance as well.

### Highlights:

#### 2023 Banks Volunteer of the Year Award

OFF's nominee Geoff Francis received an award on 11 October presented by David Coleman MP and Senator Jane Hume. A stalwart member and active in many forms of conservation for more than 20 years. Thanks to Liz for compiling the submission.

#### Significant Tree Register

This became a reality after several years of lobbying including a specific meeting with GRC in June, when Geoff Innes suggested a number of improvements, most of which were not taken on board. 253 nominations (individual trees/groups of trees/whole streets of trees) were submitted, however only 2.5% of the nominations were accepted. An underwhelming outcome to say the least.

Note: During the discussions with GRC, Geoff learnt the Council had already implemented a Tree Asset Management System that included over 32,000 street trees maintained in the TreePlotter database...which was welcome news.

#### OFF Research Grants

Research grants of \$5900 were allocated to 3 students. A significant and ongoing leg up for the new generation of PhD students we should be proud of.

Many OFF members participated in the National Tree Day planting activities on July 30. LPA ran a very successful event at Evatt Park Lugarno with great appreciation to Matt for assisting them with the planning, and the coordination of tasks on the day. GRC also held an event in Beverley Hills.

#### GSLN

The relationship with GSLN strengthened due mainly to the efforts of Adrian who is a strong advocate for their Creating Canopies in Greater Sydney project. One of the local success stories recently promoted by GSLN is the plantings conducted by OFF members, St George

Mens Shed and Cr Natalie Mort and Cr Peter Mahoney at Carlton Cres Carss Park in 2022. Phenomenal growth in that period, congrats to all involved.

In addition, Adrian, Graham L, Matt, Sonia, James, Vicki, Susan Ghosn compiled a list +30 sites (estimated 20,000 trees) for planting events in 2024. After meetings with GRC & GSLN and support from Cr Peter Mahoney, GRC will soon announce 9 sites (estimated 10,000-15,000 trees in total) for planting in 2024.

Liz successfully lobbied Council's Open Spaces Engineer for an accessible bench seat to be installed near Myra Wall Garden in OP. The seat was installed in October from surplus inventory with minimal red tape in the end. Well done, Liz.

#### Clean Up Australia Day

OFF continued its 31 year participation in Clean Up Australia Day in 2023, the location was planned for Jinna Reserve but had to be moved to Poulton Park due to the sewage overflows in Lime Kiln Bay. (more on that later). It was a little shy of the record attendance in 2020 of 65 with 59 people registered but all volunteers were enthusiastic, and we had Second Mortdale Scouts and Oatley Lions participating.

Councillor Peter Mahoney was elected Chair of GRC's Environment & Planning Committee.

#### Stream Watch

With the appointment of a full time coordinator by GSLN in July the program finally got legs again. However, the chemical testing kits didn't arrive till September. Nevertheless, we are up and running again. Thanks to all involved.

### **Campaigns:**

#### Damage to our Natural Bushland

2023 saw several incidents that caused serious damage to OP's bushland and public spaces. Illegal mountain bike tracks continued to be a problem and acts of outright vandalism occurred in December in the Adventure Park due to council's contractor not locking the gates at dusk. OFF continued to fight for mitigation and remediation (including for Kyle Williams Reserve) and for GRC to value our bushland areas as a natural asset, not just another area requiring council resources.

#### Save Glenlee

OFF continued the fight to Save Glenlee including attending a rally in May, sending several letters to council (who are unanimously onboard), state & federal MP's. An intrepid OFF group also protested outside the offices of our local MP's. We formed an alliance with FoG & LPA and through our combined efforts and those of GRC, Penny Sharpe finally agreed to attend a meeting in August. Unfortunately, attendees had to sign an NDA and to date an IHO has not been issued by Minister Sharpe but, even though the property was put up for sale again it did not sell.

Georges River Biodiversity and Foreshore Studies (LEP2021 - FSPA revisited)  
OFF made submission before the March 31 closing date. However, GRC has provided not a hint of a response since.

#### SF23/5420 Public Submission

Oatley Park Plan of Management and Master Plan – With input from many of the committee Kim compiled a submission and lodged it on December 15. Let's see what comes back this year.

#### Removal of Vegetation from our Reserves

Brian took the fight up to the GRC General Manager Mr Tuxford in a letter campaign that lasted most of the year. In the end while he gave some ground on signage, he seemed stubbornly determined to ignore Brian's valid points about consistency across the various Plans of Management (PoMs) and we decided not to push it any further. I'm sure Brian will keep an eye out for the new signs.

#### Synthetic Turf Playing Fields

Adrian led our campaign on this issue, ably assisted by Graham L, Kim, Anne, Vicki, and other OFF members. Armed with the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer's report, other facts from an AUSMAP webinar, a Notice of Motion tabled by Councillor Peter Mahoney to GRC and photographic evidence from the 3 fields in our LGA; it was pointed out to GRC at a Council meeting they are not even complying with their own PoMs. In March 2024, it will be 2 years since the initial survey at Poulton Park playing field..... and 2 years of in-action by GRC.

#### Mangrove Deterioration in LKB

Many of our members raised their voices on this issue possibly related to sewage overflows, including Councillor Pete to the council meeting in May. The Leader & SMH also published articles and we finally got the attention of Sydney Water. However, Georges RiverKeeper determined that it was most likely caused by the larvae of the Native Mangrove Moth. Mangroves are important to fish life in our local waterways as well as producing high outputs of oxygen, so vigilant monitoring of their health is always warranted.

#### Koalas & GSKN

OFF and individual members made submissions to different campaigns run by GSKN relating particularly to the inappropriate housing development around Appin & Mt Gilead. A donation was made to the community group lobbying for proper signage on Heathcote Rd and a letter sent to the state Labor MP for Heathcote.

### **Activities & Communication**

#### Re-greening Country Activities

\*Moorlands (near Gunning, NSW). In the last 3 years more than 9,000 trees and shrubs were planted, adding to the +60,000 trees Vince Heffernan had already planted on his biodynamic lamb farm. Many OFF members and hundreds of volunteer planters from NSW, ACT and Victoria, led by Adrian and Janine have supported this amazing ecological transformation

which has resulted in the endangered Superb Parrots now breeding at Moorlands as well as many other birds.

\* Burradoo (Bowral). Approximately 1300 trees were planted along the banks of the Wingecarribee River. In Nov 2023, James, Sonia, Geoff and Adrian supported this 'river health improvement' project which was established >25 years ago by the Southern Highlands Landcare group.

Locally, Mat Allison continued to maintain many previous planting sites in addition to working with Kogarah Bay Progress Association to plant and maintain several sites funded by the Fed Govt QE Silver Jubilee celebration.

GRC Historical Markers Program – Myles Dunphy

A submission was lodged in April nominating a marker for Myles but we were unsuccessful.

Menai Wildflower Volunteer (MWF) Nursery

Adrian and Janine assisted Lloyd Hedges and the MWF volunteers with the growing of 15,000 trees for the 'Glossies in the Mist' project funded by NSW NPWS as well as >2,000 trees for various Rotary Adopt A Tree projects. Adrian secured an agreement to grow 10,000 trees and shrubs for GSLN, to be planted in 2024. Geoff, Vicki, Graham L, Graham F have/are supporting MWF with this exciting project.

Engagement with GRC

2023 was a record year for OFF members attending and speaking at GRC meetings. Kim, Matt, Graham, L, Adrian, Geoff, Vicki, Susan G, Sonia spoke passionately on various environmental issues, in addition to the many members who made written submissions. Many of these issues were initially raised by James, Cr Peter Mahoney and recently Cr Ben Wang, who have worked tirelessly to raise the profile of OFF and encourage positive engagement with GRC Councillors and staff.

General Meetings

We held 10 General meetings in 2023 with people attending both in person at Oatley Uniting Church Hall and via zoom. The average attendance was 35. We started the year with an AV set up that was making things difficult for everyone, including presenters. Utilising a discretionary grant from Councillor Mahoney we were able to purchase a new lapel mic, new speaker and new laptop, which greatly improved the experience for all.

A fascinating range of guest speakers (live /zoom) engaged the members on topics such as nest boxes, Olive Pink Botanic Garden (Alice Springs), grey-headed flying foxes, Saving our Species/Superb Parrot, platypus, kelp forests, plants of Arnhem Land, wattles and the social science of weeding.

Field Days

In all, 8 Walks were held with an average attendance of 13 but by far the highest at 25 was for the May 28 walk along the Jinga Track in Dharawal NP to remember Sharyn Cullis. Thanks to Deb & Lesley for their words about Sharyn on the day. And thanks Lesley & Matt for planning and leading their walks.

### Membership

We started the year just shy of 300 members. Unfortunately by the end of 2023 that has dropped to 279 registered/financial members.

### Market stalls

OFF had successful stalls at 6 events during the year selling calendars and plants. These included the Oatley Lions days, National Tree Day and 3 separate street stall events in Oatley & Mortdale in December. Thanks to all who assisted and/or manned the stalls.

Scott Shade

Secretary