



BIRDS ON FARMS

At OFF's February meeting BirdLife Australia Project Coordinator, Margot Oorebeek, enlightened us about citizen science project, Birds on Farms, which assesses woodland bird communities in agricultural landscapes.

Since the arrival of the first European settlers, much of Australia's woodland area has been cleared for agricultural use. Less than 10% of the original woodlands remain.

BirdLife Australia's Birds on Farms monitoring project originally ran across southern Australia from 1995-1997, before restarting in Victoria in 2017. The types of birds detected on a farm can be an indicator of the property's environmental health and the sustainability of agricultural practices. The results of the more than 5,000 surveys across 300 properties show that revegetation areas support as many bird species as remnant woodland. Because the two habitat types support slightly different bird communities, the highest number of bird species was found in sites with a mix of remnant woodland and revegetation.

A more in depth look at specific habitat characteristics shows the benefits of mistletoe and hollow-bearing trees for the woodland bird community, but also highlights the huge impact Noisy Miners are having, with 24% fewer bird species recorded in areas with Noisy Miners. The Birds on Farms project is now using results of the program to assist landholders in developing Habitat Restoration Plans for their properties.

Margot's talk can be viewed on OFF's YouTube channel [here](#).

SPIT TO MANLY

On 25th February OFF had perfectly magnificent weather for a walk from Spit to Manly, with 14 people joining, including new members. The harbour was sparkling and blue, dotted with white boats and a few fluffy white clouds were scattered in the brilliant blue sky. We saw a number of native flowers in the Sydney Harbour National Park section of the walk and had a few swims in the lovely Middle Harbour bays, including Reef beach. As we approached Manly people went to find ice-creams, a cool drink, and some had another swim at Manly Harbour beach. A bonus was watching the Sail GP racing on our ferry ride back. Thanks Lesley Wylie for organising. A fabulous excursion. Photos of the day can be seen in OFF [Google Photos](#)

RECYCLING

Further to last month's item on recycling, here is another scheme:

RecycleSmart is an organisation endeavouring to make recycling easy and accessible for everyone. For a small fee they will pick up a variety of recyclables, including soft plastics, clothes & textiles, E-waste, keeping valuable resources in circulation. More information [here](#). OFF has also asked Georges River Council to participate in RecycleSmart.

Remember the next **E-Waste** collection is 4 May at Carlton Depot, 78 Planhurst Road, Carlton. Note: this collection includes fluorescent lights.

MOBILE PHONE APPS TO CONSIDER DOWNLOADING

Trees Near Me NSW has been developed by the Department of Planning and Environment. It shows you what plants are growing now, and what used to grow, in all areas throughout our state. It lists the plant communities and you can drill right down to details on individual plants.

Birdly was developed by Bird Life Australia. It is a bird identification app specifically designed for mobile phones, making the most of cutting edge technology for bird image and voice recognition.

TREE VANDALISM PETITION

Bridget Kennedy, Independent Councillor on Lane Cove Council, spoke recently on ABC radio on tree vandalism after the worst act of tree vandalism in council's history. She has started a [petition](#), in which a key point is to include trees in Councils' asset registers as 'natural assets', and to allocate

a budget for a collaboration of councils to undertake pilot projects to integrate natural capital/asset reporting in balance sheets.

ATTRACTING WILDLIFE TO YOUR GARDEN (Graham Fry)

While many of us are prompted to establish native gardens due to the spectacular flowering displays there is another group of native plants enthusiasts who are more interested in attracting wildlife rather than the visual attraction of native plants. There are a number of types of wildlife that are attracted to plants such as birds, mammals, insects and even some species of reptiles. The most obvious beneficiary of our plantings are birds, notwithstanding that insects are probably more abundant in both number and species present.

Our garden has been planted out initially with a goal to attract birds, so many nectar producing plants such as grevilleas and banksias were added. Over the 30+ years we have lived in our house we have planted over 160 grevilleas of which 45 are still alive and 37 banksias with 12 still growing. Sadly, the many plants that were planted were to attract small honeyeaters such as eastern spinebills and yellow-faced honeyeaters, and this was the case for the first 10-15 years until around 2000 when noisy miners arrived. Since then the small birds have disappeared and the nectar producing plants are now very popular with the miners!! Even the larger honeyeaters such as little and red wattlebirds have also been driven out by the miners.

However, it is not all gloom. Parrots have thrived and we regularly have up to six species seen in our plantings. The bird that probably gives us the greatest thrill is the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo. While this species is not rare it is relatively uncommon and so we are happy when we see them in our garden. And what are they eating? They absolutely love the fruits of *Banksia ericifolia* – Little Eric. They have been regular visitors for over 20 years and generally arrive in autumn but in recent years they are coming earlier and this year they were first recorded on the 1st February. We have up to four birds feeding and they normally spend hours systematically extracting every seed from the fruits. They are very tolerant of us and we can be within 3-4 metres of them without disturbing them.

Interestingly, the "Little Eric" banksia is supposed to grow to 2m, however ours is now around 5-6m and is level with the house guttering, not really a small banksia. We have other banksias including *B.serrata* and *B.integrifolia* in the garden but the cockatoos don't seem to be interested in these fruits, particularly the *B.integrifolia*, which drops its seeds so the cones hold nothing for the cockatoos.



CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

Sunday 3 March 2024. OFF coordinated 2 sites:

- **Jinna Reserve, Peakhurst Heights (Lime Kiln Bay wetlands)**
61 people registered, including members of OFF, 2nd Mortdale Scout Group, Oatley Lions, and the Georges Riverkeeper (Rob Dixon), who baked and donated a large batch of delicious muffins for the volunteers
32 bags of rubbish were collected, incl 4 bags of recyclables (suitable items were removed for Return and Earn, with donation to go to EDO).
More unusual items included: Discharged fire extinguisher, Gas cylinder, 2 crab pots, 4 tyres, 1 shopping trolley, 2 traffic cones, 1 builder's bulk bag and 30 m of heavy duty weed barrier fabric. Passers-by accepted Oatley Park brochures and several expressed interest in OFF activities.
- **Kyle Williams Reserve, Kyle Bay**
32 attended including OFF members, neighbours and 1st Kyle Bay Sea Scouts. Georges River Councillors N Mort, K Landsberry and P Mahoney also joined us. 13 bags of rubbish were collected, mainly small pieces of plastic and glass. There appeared to be less rubbish compared to 2 years ago, a welcome improvement. Photos of the day can be seen [here](#).

Coming OFF Events in March/April 2024

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

Meetings are held in the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick St Oatley, starting at 7.30pm. Meetings will also be available on-line, using the video conference application Zoom. If you are on the OFF News email list, you will receive an invitation by email prior to meetings or use this link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3742141020?pwd=i_daK5memiUjVeVb7bERgr5WgKybj2w Note: Some OFF presentations & movies can now be found on [YouTube](#)

18 March – Interactions of Mammal and Reptile Predators in a Mixed-use Coastal Ecosystem

Brendan Altng is a final year PhD Student at the University of New South Wales, and an OFF research grant recipient and he will be presenting results from his PhD project into interactions between dingoes, an apex predator, and 3 mesopredators - quolls, foxes and goannas. Apex predators, such as dingoes, can exert strong influences on smaller predators, suppressing their numbers, and benefitting smaller species in different ways.

Brendan's work is part of the Myall Lakes Dingo Project, which has been ongoing on the mid-north coast of NSW since 2019. The project aims to improve dingo management through collaboration with local residents, national parks, indigenous groups, and council.

16 March 2024 (Sat) – Wingecarribee River Kayak or Walk at Burradoo near Bowral. Joint field day with Southern Highlands Landcare Network.

Meet 9am at Bong Bong Common, 8/10 Railway Rd, Burradoo.

Kayaking: bring your own gear and kayak. The kayakers will launch in the river, return paddle towards Berrima (11km round trip). Then drive to meet the walkers at Cecil Hoskins Nature Reserve

Walkers: Walking beside river for approx. 5 km and ends at Cecil Hoskins Nature Reserve for a picnic.

Car-pooling will be arranged at the meeting point so cars will be available at the end of the walk to return walkers to the starting point.

Expecting to finish around 2pm at the picnic site. Please bring water, snacks and lunch for the picnic. Leader: Adrian Polhill. Contact 0424 478 498.

13 April (Saturday) - First re-greening event for 2024 with Greater Sydney Landcare Network. Beale Reserve Peakhurst, 1500 plants. This planting includes 1000 tube stock from the Menai wildflower volunteer nursery. Register on Eventbrite [here](#). Share to your network as well.

Advance Notice: 15 April – General Meeting: Fungal Biodiversity. Vanessa McPherson and Prof Michael Gillings.

Advance notice: 28 April (Sunday) -- Field Day: Grays Point to Audley Loop via Hacking River. Lesley Wylie

Meetings of the Society are at the Uniting Church Hall, Frederick St Oatley from 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm, usually on the third Monday of the month. Visitors and accompanied children are welcome at meetings and field days. As noted above, the meeting is accessible on-line using ZOOM.

BRIEFLY SPEAKING

OATLEY PARK BUSHCARE group is normally on the second Saturday each month starting 12.00 pm, except January. The next session will be on 13 April. Please check with Bushcare officer on 0435 963 643 before coming.

LOCAL BUSHCARE Members can assist by volunteering to maintain OFF planting sites on a Thursday either 1 or 2 weeks after general meetings (except Dec) from 8.00 am to 11 am. Next month we will be back on 28 Mar at Gannons Park supervised by a GRC Bushcare Officer and welcome new bushcarers. <https://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/Council/Volunteering>

STREAMWATCH takes place on the Tuesday morning (9.00 am) 1 week after OFF General Meetings. This month we will be at Myles Dunphy Reserve on 26 March. Please check by ringing 0430 968 260 before coming.

CITIZENS CLIMATE LOBBY meetings are 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>

MEMBERSHIP. Members who have not yet paid their membership fees are again requested to do so, now that the year is well advanced.

TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

OFF made a submission to Georges River Council's draft revised Tree Management Policy. OFF stressed that penalties for urban forest tree vandalism should be substantially increased and trees should be recognised as natural assets in the Framework of The Local Government Act.

It should be noted that the Significant Tree Register (STR) has now been incorporated in the GRC Tree Management Policy. When the final STR and the current round of nominations are published, OFF will promote submissions for next round of nominations.

The OFF submission can be viewed [here](#).

PASSING OF LONG-TIME MEMBER WIN TONKIN

Former member of OFF, Win Tonkin, passed away on 28/2/2024.

Win was a member of the OFF committee from 1971-75. She resigned from OFF in about 2019, ending a membership of over 50 years.

OFF News 2017/3 (March/April 2017) reported:

“Robin Dickson and Liz Cameron visited Win Tonkin in Longueville to present her with the OFF certificate of recognition for her long-term membership – 49 years! We took mementos of her long connection with the Snowy Mountains – photos, fond reminiscences by Lesley Cox of OFF visits to Win's and Norm's Chalet at Smiggin Holes, and a story on 'Scottsdale', a Bush Heritage property that formerly belonged to the Tonkins. Win gave us a warm welcome and we were delighted to find her settled amongst her favourite belongings in such an attractive neighbourhood.



Robin Dixon (L) presenting Win Tonkin with her certificate

Win and her husband Norm started the tradition of OFF members spending one or two weeks in summer in the Snowy Mountains, commencing in 1985. They made their Smiggin Holes Chalet available to Society members for a week in February and Lesley and Peter Cox remember “at least 40, all keen walkers and many botanisers, heading off for places such as Watsons Crag, Mt Townsend, Mt Tate, Hedley Tarn or The Chimneys.”.